



TSESHAHT FIRST NATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Re: Tseshaht celebrates grand opening of new Somass Hall with the support of from the Province of British Columbia and Government of Canada

Tseshaht First Nation is proud to announce today, July 31, 2025, we celebrate the Grand Opening of our new Somass Hall. Funding from both federal and provincial partnerships assisted in the replacement of a longtime and much beloved community hall after being torn down in late 2020. The former Somass Hall was built by Tseshaht members at the end of World War II and funded by the forestry company, Bloedel Stewart & Welch. That funding was secured as part of an agreement that was unlawfully authorized and implemented by Canada to allow Bloedel Stewart & Welch to build and operate the railroad tracks that once ran through the community, in the face of Tseshaht's adamant opposition.

The project broke ground mid-2024 and is fully funded thanks to significant investments made possible through key partnerships. Over \$3.45 million has been secured through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) under the Integrated Bilateral Agreement signed by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia (BC), with additional funding of over \$6.3 million coming from Indigenous Services Canada via the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal 41 (CHRT41).

The construction of this new approximately 7,000 sq ft community hall for recreation, practicing and sharing of culture, gathering and communal kitchen facilities will enhance food security for the most at-risk members of the community. The new Somass Hall will improve cultural opportunities and provide an important community gathering space.

“Tseshaht has felt the void in our community without having the old Somass Hall, as it seemed the perfect size for everything we did. The former Somass Hall carried a lot of history for our people culturally, spiritually, politically and so much more; our new Somas Hall will carry that continued progress improving the quality of life for our people”, said Wahmeesh (Ken Watts) Tseshaht Elected Chief Councillor. “A lot of this funding is aimed at helping keep Tseshaht children and families together and preventing children from going into care, so our whole lower level will be dedicated to children and family prevention programming including a new youth centre and office space, the main level will be our community hall.”

Signed in 2018, the Integrated Bilateral Agreement for the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program aims to support sustainable and inclusive communities, while driving economic growth by providing financial support to projects in BC focused on public transit; green infrastructure; community, culture and recreation infrastructure; and rural and northern communities' infrastructure. This agreement also includes a renewed commitment to the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.

“Tseshahat families, children and Elders will once again have a welcoming space to gather, celebrate and support one another,” said Christine Boyle, Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs. “Community spaces like Somass Hall are at the heart of community wellbeing, connection and culture. We’ll continue supporting infrastructure that makes life better for families today and for generations to come.”

Indigenous Services Canada supports the implementation of the 2021 Canadian Human Rights Tribunal 41 (CHRT41) as it relates to the First Nations Child and Family Services Program with guidance on how to request and access capital funding to support the delivery of FNCFS programming on reserve. In addition to the overarching principles outlined, the capital asset must support the delivery of services or activities related to prevention, protection and guardianship, First Nation representation service or post-majority support services for First nations youth aging out of care.

The new Somass Hall is already facilitating the creation of positive change for Tseshahat children, families and our entire community starting today and for the foreseeable future.



About ʔišaaʔath (Tseshahṭ) First Nation ʔišaaʔath (Tseshahṭ First Nation) has over 1300 registered members whose ḥaḥuuli includes from the Somass watershed including the entire Alberni Valley, the western portions of both Horne Lake and Cameron Lake, the Alberni Inlet and surrounding lands and watersheds to the Broken Group Islands of central Barkley Sound, and out to the Pacific Ocean. Tseshahṭ possesses Aboriginal Rights within the ḥaḥuuli [ha-houl-thee] (Chief's territory) owned by our tayii ḥawil [ty-ee ha-wil-th], including Aboriginal Title. For more information, please visit Tseshahṭ.com

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