



JOINT STATEMENT

RE: TSESHAHT AND CITY OF PORT ALBERNI ON RECENT ACT OF RACIST VANDALISM

Tseshahat First Nation and the City of Port Alberni are disgusted with the recent racist vandalism of “Every Child Matters” barricade located at the “Orange Bridge” during the late-night hours of Wednesday, January 14, 2026, between 9pm-11pm. We will not be deterred from the Truth, and we pray for those who carry so much hatred in their heart and choose to commit such acts. We hope this individual or individuals seek education about the Truth of Indian Residential Schools and hope Canadians will speak up during acts of racism such as this. Most importantly, we pray for Survivors who have already endured so much in their lives that incidents such as this may trigger them; we remind them that many of us support them in their healing.

Tseshahat First Nation had the Alberni Indian Residential School (AIRS) placed in its territory, in the heart of their community, without consultation, their consent and despite their opposition until leadership lead the charge of its closure in 1973. While many are aware of the history of AIRS, we remind people that the Survivors we know and see today were only children then, sent here from over 70+ First Nations spanning across British Columbia; this is our truth.

“We condemn these acts of hate and racism and declare that racist vandalism such as this is not welcome in our territory, that includes the entire Alberni Valley”, said Tseshahat Elected Chief Councillor, Wahmeesh (Ken Watts). “We will not allow these childish and racist acts to take away from the sacred work we continue to do for Survivors, those who passed as students of AIRS and the reconciliation work; walking hand-in-hand with Canadians to help educate about the history of Indian Residential Schools in Canada.”

“We strongly condemn this act of vandalism, which is unacceptable in our community. It highlights the ongoing need for education and understanding about our shared history and the impact of racism. The City of Port Alberni stands in solidarity with the Tseshahat First Nation as we work together to promote healing and awareness. We remain committed to creating a respectful environment where every child’s story matters. Let us all join in this important journey toward reconciliation and ensure that acts of hate do not define our community”. – City of Port Alberni Mayor, Sharie Minions

In 2022, Tseshahat First Nation worked collaboratively with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MOTT) as an act of reconciliation to bring back orange to the “Orange Bridge”, including the addition of “Every Child Matters” on a newly painted orange barricade. Only days later, the paint was defaced with racist and derogatory words. While Thursday evening’s act highlights that racism is alive and well in this community, we also know many Canadians condemn these acts and that is



shown through the hundreds who walk with us every year on September 30th, Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

#EveryChildMatters

Wahmeesh (Ken Watts)
Elected Chief Councillor
Tseshah First Nation

Sharie Minions
Mayor
City of Port Alberni

- 30 -

If you have information about this racist incident of vandalism, please call:
Port Alberni RCMP non-emergency 250.723.2424
report online at: <https://report.rcmp.ca/bc/en>
File#: 2026-551

