



JUSTICE | HEALTH | FUNDING



Project Communications Narrative Report

# ʔuuʔatumin yaqck<sup>w</sup>iimitqin

(Doing it for our Ancestors)



# Project Overview

## Justice

Conduct independent legal investigations not led by the RCMP due to their history.

## Health

Establish an independent body to investigate medical records related to IRS.

## Funding

Secure funding to deliver information about student deaths at AIRS to families.

The Nuu-chah-nulth phrase "ʔuuʔatumin yaqckʷiimitqin" means "Doing it for our Ancestors." This project, led by the Tseshaht First Nation, aims to locate unmarked graves at the Alberni Indian Residential School (AIRS) site and connect with the ancestors of those who didn't return. It also provides wellness support to Survivors sharing their stories.

The initiative is built on four pillars: engagement, research, scanning, and memorialization, all focused on uncovering the truth about the past. While initially seen as a place of learning, AIRS was actually a site of trauma where children faced abuse and neglect, leading to significant harm and loss of life. This history highlights the need for education about Indigenous experiences to foster meaningful coexistence.

Guided by Survivors and community leaders, the project seeks answers and documentation of those lost at AIRS. It also provides counselling support for affected individuals. Ongoing research aims to fill gaps in historical records, and additional funding from the federal government is sought to deliver vital information to families. True reconciliation requires acknowledging these truths.

## Media Contact

Elected Chief Councillor  
Washmeesh (Ken Watts)

Miigwetch/Thank you for inviting us into your community through sharing your sacred ceremony. What an honour you have shared with us today. Again Miigwetch!

Shirley D. Johnson



# wik'ałin ɥasiik (We are not done)

The Tseshah̓t concept of *hishuk-ish-ts'awalk* embodies the deep spiritual connection between the spiritual and physical worlds. Before contact, distinct family lines and roles like *tutuupata* and *tluukwana* were well-defined, but these began to diminish with the onset of Colonialism, disrupting traditional seasonal rhythms and the economic landscape.

The *cišaaʔaɥ* (Tseshah̓t) First Nation has over 1,200 registered members, with their *ɥaaɥuuk* (territory) spanning from the Broken Group Islands, through central Barkley Sound, both sides of Alberni Inlet, and into the Alberni Valley and central Vancouver Island.

**1892**

Rev. John A. MacDonald establishes a day school in the Tseshah̓t Reserve.

AIRS BLUEPRINT



**1893**

The Women's Foreign Mission Society takes over the administration of the "Alberni Girls' Home." A new schoolhouse is built on 16 acres of Tseshah̓t land.

**1896**

The deaths of three students are reported to the DIA, two girls and a boy, one from chicken pox and the others from tuberculosis.

**1899**

A boarding school grant request is submitted by the PCC and approved. At this time it was able to accommodate 40 to 50 pupils. Alberni Indian Residential School is reclassified as a boarding school.

1982

**1892**

Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) funds the construction of residence and school. A grant is submitted for 10 pupils-in-residence, with a proposal to open the school the following year.



**1895**

The Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) provides a \$1,500 grant towards a new building for the Girls' Home.

**1896**

R.P. MacKay submits a request for a per capita grant for 35 boarders. The school has 18 to 20 children in attendance.

**1903**

PPC purchases the 160-acre parcel adjacent to the Tseshah̓t IR from the B.C. government.

**1904**

A request is submitted to increase the grant from 30 to 50 pupils, as the administration has insufficient funding "for the maintenance of 43 children" enrolled.

**1920**

Amendments to the Indian Act made April 1 by Duncan Campbell Scott made it mandatory for all First Nations children to attend Indian residential schools from ages 7-16.

LOT B1 SKETCH FROM FIELD NOTES



**1937**

AIRS destroyed by fire again. Enrolment is 115 pupils. A recommendation is made to rebuild the school to accommodate 150. Closure of Ahousah̓t AIRS is also recommended.



**1913-1941**

No attendance records are available.

**1925-1969**

The United Church takes over the school.

**1910**

The 'Indian Problem' was said many times, and formed the foundational ideology of Duncan Campbell Scott (Superintendent of Indian Affairs) amendments to the Indian Act.

**1922**

Dr. Bryce published "The Story of A National Crime - An Appeal for Justice to the Indians of Canada".

**1927**

The hospitalization of one student and death of another are reported following an outbreak of influenza, pneumonia and measles afflicting as many as 32 pupils.

**1942**

An Indian Agent notes "the health of the school is not good" while it is under quarantine due to five students suffering from the mumps. It was also noted 22 pupils stayed home over the summer holidays for various reasons.



**1943**

A measles epidemic affects 75 students, some of whom became very ill.

**1949**

AIRS is under quarantine for two months with a mumps epidemic affecting roughly 100 pupils. There are also 38 moderately severe cases of measles reported.

**1957**

A severe influenza epidemic affects 85 students, and a few cases of German measles are recorded.

**1964**

One of the classroom blocks is converted to a residence for 48 boarders.

**1942-1952**

Nutrition experiments are conducted by the Government of Canada, with support of the United Church of Canada.



**1948-1954**

Donald Bruce Haddock is a dorm supervisor at AIRS. He would later be convicted and charged with four counts of indecent assault.

**1959-1961**

David Henry Ford is a dorm supervisor at AIRS. He would later be convicted and charged with four counts of sexual assault.



**1945**

An inspection report notes a nurse at the infirmary at AIRS is unqualified.

**1951**

An influenza epidemic affects 184 students and half the staff.

**1957**

AIRS boarding students in Grades 7-9 attend school at A.W. Neill Junior High School.

**1966**

All boarding students are integrated into the Alberni and Port Alberni school system and classrooms are converted into additional boarding space.

**1969**

The Government of Canada takes over management of AIRS.

**1994**

First AIRS Memorial Gathering (3 day healing event hosted by NTC).

**1996**

The Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council publishes a book following the residential school research.

**1968-1969**

Michael Dennis Flynn is a dorm supervisor at AIRS. He would later be convicted and charged with sexual abuse.



**1992-1994**

The Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council conducts research to highlight the words and stories of the Nuu-chah-nulth people who were affected by residential schools.

**1973**

AIRS closes its doors in response to the dissatisfaction of the West Coast District Council of Indian Chiefs.

**1995**

Arthur Henry Plint, a supervisor at AIRS from 1948-1968, is sentenced to 11 years in jail for the abuse of 16 student boys.

**1996**

RCMP E Division investigated allegations of abuse at B.C. residential schools.

**2005**

A case brought forward by Survivors of AIRS (Blackwater v. Plint) determined that because both the Government of Canada and the United Church operated the school, they were both "vicariously liable" for the abuses experienced by students.

**2013**

Dr. Ian Mosby exposes in his 2013 research article detailing the unprecedented nutritional experimentation of Indigenous communities and residential schools.

**2019**

Tseshah̓t First Nation invites 203 B.C. nations to the Reclaiming of Lost Souls healing event for AIRS Survivors.

**2023**

August 2023 is the 50th anniversary of the closure of AIRS.

**2009**

Tseshah̓t First Nation hosts Survivors to witness the demolition of Peake Hall, a former AIRS dormitory.

**2014**

Sculpture by artist Connie Watts is unveiled. The art installation ensures people will never forget, or deny, what happened at AIRS.

**2022**

The ʔuuʔatumin yaqck\*miitigin (Doing It for Our Ancestors) project team is formed. Tseshah̓t First Nation-led Missing Children and Unmarked Graves research project begins.





cišaaʔaṭh (Tseshaht) First Nation hereby calls upon all levels of government (Canada, BC, regional or municipal), RCMP, organizations and churches/(faiths (United and Presbyterian) for Truth and Justice by implementing the following (as applicable):

"Getting the answers survivors and those who didn't make it home need and deserve"



#### Legend

1. Ahousaht First Nation
2. Cowichan Tribes (Somosha)
3. Ditidaht First Nation
4. Gwa'Sala-Nakwax'w Nations
5. Hupacasath First Nation
6. Hupacasath First Nation
7. Huxwiyall First Nation
8. Ka'yukw/Cher'kies'et' First Nation
9. Lyackson First Nation
10. Malahat/Muchahat First Nation
11. Mowichah First Nation
12. Nanwaga First Nation
13. Nanose First Nation (Snaw-naw-s)
14. Pachecoah First Nation
15. Pashmeh First Nation
16. Peshkuk First Nation
17. Sca'new First Nation
18. Sca'new First Nation
19. Songwam First Nation
20. Tla'w-ga'ah First Nation
21. Tlowah First Nation
22. Toquaht Nation
23. Tsartlip First Nation
24. Tsaww First Nation
25. Tsew First Nation
26. Tsew First Nation
27. Uchuck First Nation
28. We'wai First Nation
29. We'wai First Nation
30. Wicwac First Nation
31. Yawukw'at' Government (Ucluel)
32. Boston Bar First Nation
33. Chehalis First Nation
34. D'awad' First Nation
35. D'awad' First Nation
36. Gitanyow Nation
37. Gitanyow Nation
38. Gitanyow First Nation
39. Gitanyow Village Government
40. Gitanyow Village Government
41. Gitanyow Village Government

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#### cišaaʔaṭh (Tseshaht) First Nation Territory Map

cišaaʔaṭh Territory

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