

# ꞖUUꞖATUMIN YAQCKꞖIIMITQIN

*“DOING IT FOR OUR ANCESTORS”*

## ALBERNI INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL (AIRS) - TSESHAHT FIRST NATION RESEARCH & SCANNING INITIATIVE/PROJECT

“GETTING THE ANSWERS SURVIVORS & THOSE  
WHO DIDN’T MAKE IT HOME, NEED & DESERVE”



**- WARNING -**  
THE FOLLOWING  
MAY BE  
TRIGGERING FOR  
SOME, SUPPORTS  
ARE AVAILABLE  
TO YOU THROUGH  
THE NTC BUT  
ALSO THROUGH  
THE FOLLOWING:

**IF YOU'RE IN NEED OF SUPPORT,  
PLEASE REACH OUT:**

**COUNSELLING SUPPORT**

250.242.0114

**QUU'ASA CULTURAL SUPPORT**

250.724.3939

**KUU-US CRISIS LINE SOCIETY**

1.800.588.8717 |

[WWW.KUU-USCRISISLINE.COM](http://WWW.KUU-USCRISISLINE.COM)

**TSOW-TUN-LE-LUM SOCIETY**

1.888.403.3123

**IRSSS CRISIS LINE 24/7**

1.800.721.0066

**24HR NATIONAL CRISIS LINE**

1.866.925.4419

**METIS CRISIS LINE**

1.888.403.3123

**HOPE FOR WELLNESS**

1.855.242.3310



## 1900-1973

---

A “SCHOOL” WE NEVER ASKED FOR, A SCHOOL WE DIDN’T CONSENT TO HAVING IN OUR TERRITORY & AN OPEN WOUND WE MUST LIVE WITH IN OUR COMMUNITY.

# Nuu-chah-nulth Lead The Closure Of AIRS 1973 & AIRS Survivors V. Plint

NUU-CHAH-NULTH LEADERSHIP CAME TOGETHER AND DECIDED THEY WANTED THE AIRS CLOSED AND DIRECTED THESE THREE LEADERS TO MEET WITH GOVERNMENT AND CLOSE THE AIRS IN 1973



**“Political pillars” Nelson Keitlah, Simon Lucas and George Watts were introduced by Darlene Watts who said, “these are our political warriors that were there when we made the decision that we wanted our own government on behalf of our chiefs. What we have today is the direct result of what these men did for us,” she said.**

Page 4 - *Ha-Shilth-Sa* - May 6, 2010

## Art Thompson remembered at totem pole dedication

By Denise Zinas  
*Ha-Shilth-Sa Reporter*

The pole, commissioned by Tsehahlt chief and council, was dedicated to the memory of Art Thompson, a former student of the residential school who, by being among the first to talk about the abuses he suffered in residential school, paved the way for others to begin their healing journeys.

“Art was one of the first people to come forward, as tough as it must have been, to challenge the church and government on the abuses he suffered,” said Darrell Ross of Tsehahlt.

Willard Oulic said Tsehahlt wanted to rid themselves of the bad memories of AIRS and they started by inviting survivors and their families to take part in demolishing one of the old buildings.

“We want to help people start the journey of healing and the vast survivors and anyone else that was impacted by that place to have good memories when they come here,” he said.

Tsehahlt’s goal is to replace anything left of AIRS with a wellness centre. According to Oulic, the wellness centre would be a place where people can build new memories and come to Alberni with a better feeling.

“We want everyone to remember Tsehahlt people as the ones who recognize the pain of everyone that went there, we want to be part of building positive memories,” he explained.

The pole, while dedicated to Art Thompson, is also shared by those that suffered inside the walls of the residential school.

The pole was raised in front of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council Building, the former site of Alberni Indian Residential School. A holly tree that once stood at the entrance of the old school was cut down in recent years because the sight of it was a painful reminder to AIRS survivors. It wasn’t long before more holly trees sprouted from the trunk but work crews leveled the remains of the tree, covering it over with gravel and the concrete foundation for the beautiful new pole.

Geordon Dick said he was first approached by Chief Councillor Les Sam about the project in 2005, not long after the conclusion of the Tsehahlt Market totem pole project. With funding in place, Dick commenced work on the log, transforming it into a magnificent work of art that features a thunderbird, an ancestor in a female form and an orca transforming into a sea wolf.

Dick and master carver Tim Paul started in the early days of the project, helping with design work. The pole is a tribute to residential school survivors and, in particular, Art Thompson who led the way on the healing path by publicly telling their stories in court.

The piece took 55 days to complete with the artists working eight to nine hours a day. Dick is grateful to his grandfather Allen Dick for giving him advice and inspiration for the project and to his fellow artists Erich Olenale, Kwawulth and Allen Spence, Haida Owen, who assisted with the work.

Dick said he never went to residential school but he recalls tearing down the old building in the summer of 1984 when he was in his early teens.

“Back then I never knew how much damage was being done behind those walls,” he said.

He hopes that the sight of the pole will bring positive changes for former AIRS students.

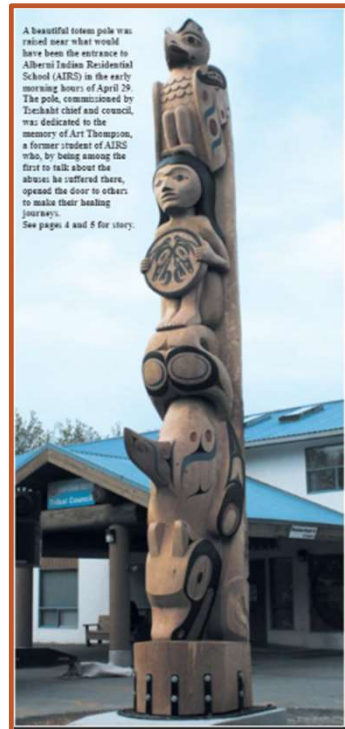
“I hope now they get a good feeling and good memories when they come to our reserve,” he said.

Allen Spence said that he feels fortunate to be part of the younger generation that is witness to a renaissance of the culture. “It’s good to see it thrive, to see had tun to good.”

Of the late Art Thompson, Dick said, “we’re because of him and our elders that held on to the network that helped us become who we are today.”

Carved by Tsehahlt artist Geordon

Continued on page 5.



A beautiful totem pole was raised near what would have been the entrance to Alberni Indian Residential School (AIRS) in the early morning hours of April 29. The pole, commissioned by Tsehahlt chief and council, was dedicated to the memory of Art Thompson, a former student of AIRS who, by being among the first to talk about the abuses he suffered there, opened the door to others to make their healing journeys. See page 4 and 5 for story.

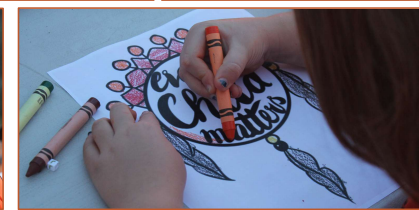
# KAMLOOPS

---

THE NEWS FROM KAMLOOPS REGARDING THE KAMLOOPS INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL & THE UNCOVERING 215 CHILDREN'S UNMARKED GRAVES SENT SHOCKWAVES AROUND THE WORLD & IMPACT TSESHAHT, SURVIVORS & THOSE FAMILIES WHO HAD FAMILY MEMBERS WHO ATTENDED AIRS.

TK'EMLÚPS TE SECWEPEMC HAVE BEEN TRUE LEADERS IN THIS WORK OF GROUND PENETRATING RADAR & HAVE BEEN WILLING TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCE EVER SINCE.





# EVENTS

DONATIONS



MEMORIAL  
COMMÉMORATION  
OVER \$100,000 TO  
DATE



TWIN CITY BREWING

CLOUD CITY APPAREL

DAVE RALLA REALTY

JAYS/LACE IT UP

MNP

MCGILL ENGINEER

CATALYST PAPER EXCELLENCE

ALBERNI VALLEY DRAG RACING ASSOCIATION

MOSAIC

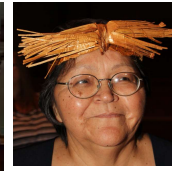
YESTERDAY'S FATE (MUSICAL GROUP)

PRIVATE/ANONYMOUS

MAA-NULTH & MORE

# GUIDED BY SURVIVORS

TSESHAHT DEVELOPED A SMALL WORKING GROUP SO THAT WE COULD PREPARE FOR FUTURE FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENTS. SURVIVORS HELPED CREATE A FRAMEWORK FOR OUR FUNDING & CONTINUE TO GUIDE US TO THIS DAY.





# Funding from BC & Canada

INPUT FROM SURVIVORS, HAWIIH,  
ADMINISTRATION & COMMUNITY



## ITEM

AIRS PROJECT COORDINATOR/PROJECT MANAGER/RESEARCHER (WILL CONDUCT ONGOING RESEARCH WITH RESPECT TO POTENTIAL SITES & COORDINATE SCANNING, ENGAGEMENTS ETC.)

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER, RESEARCHER & PROJECT ASSISTANT(S)

TSESHAHT ELDER & SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT

TSESHAHT YOUTH ENGAGEMENT, INFORMATION SHARING & KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

ACCESS PROFESSIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION SERVICES TO IDENTIFY & DELEGATE BURIAL SITES FOR TSESHAHT COMMUNITY USING GROUND PENETRATING RADAR (GPR) &/OR OTHER EQUIPMENT

EXCAVATION SURFACE PREP FOR SCANNING

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS

MEMORIAL & COMMEMORATION DISPLAY (LIST NAMES OF ALL THOSE WHO DID NOT MAKE IT HOME & CREATE ART PIECE. ALSO START COMPILING NAMES OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL WHO ATTENDED AIRS)

LEGAL COUNSEL ADVISORY SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ADVISORY SERVICES

CULTURAL/CEREMONY SUPPORT & CLEANING, BRUSHING & OTHER SUPPORTS

CLINICAL COUNSELLING SUPPORT FOR ANY SURVIVOR OF AIRS

TRAVEL SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS THROUGHOUT PROJECT

IDENTIFICATION POSTS FOR EACH SITE

VIDEO DOCUMENTARY OR PROCESS TO COMMEMORATE BURIAL, GRACE & CEMETERY RESEARCH

COMMUNITY HONOURING CEREMONY EVENT AT CONCLUSION OF PROJECT

# - OUR TEAM -

**ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ  
YAQCKᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ  
(DOING IT FOR OUR ANCESTORS)**

**\*\*\*TSESHAHT ALSO ACKNOWLEDGES THAT WE  
ALSO HAVE DOZENS OF COUNCIL, STAFF,  
COMMUNITY MEMBERS, VOLUNTEERS, PARTNERS  
(SPITFIRE, GEOSCAN, MILLENIA ETC), LAND  
CLEARING CREW, SECURITY & MORE**



**Nene Kraneveldt**  
Project Lead



**Leanne Harding**  
Project Coordinator



**Sheri Meding**  
Research Lead



**Dave Watts Sr.**  
Research Assistant



**Linda Pelech**  
Counselling Support



**Nazaneen Lauriault**  
Communications Consultant



**Wahmeesh (Ken  
Watts)**  
Elected Chief Councillor



**Vicky White**  
Executive Director



**Melissa Bigmore**  
Communications Liaison

# A COMMUNITY-LED, COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PROCESS

AREAS OF  
GROUND  
SURVEY ARE  
PRIORITIZED  
BY:

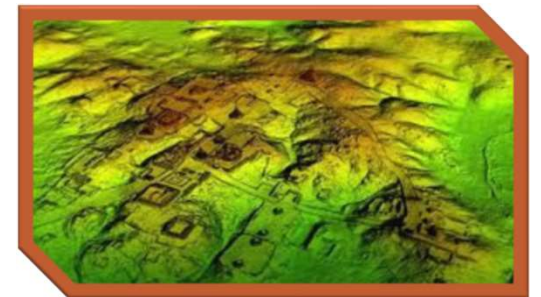
- ❖ SURVIVOR ACCOUNTS
- ❖ ARCHIVAL RESEARCH— DOCUMENTS, SKETCHES, PHOTOS, ETC.
- ❖ OLD AERIAL PHOTOS, MAPS
- ❖ TRADITIONAL USE STUDIES
- ❖ COMMUNITY INPUT

GROUND  
INVESTIGATIONS  
USE:

- ❖ LIDAR
- ❖ GROUND-PENETRATING RADAR (GPR)
- ❖ MAGNETOMETRY
- ❖ ELECTROMAGNETIC INDUCTION (EM)
- ❖ HIGH ACCURACY (+/- 15 CM OR BETTER) GPS/GNSS
- ❖ DRONE PHOTOGRAMMETRY AND PHOTOMOSAICS
- ❖ GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)

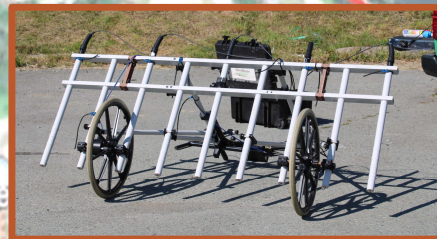
# TECHNOLOGY

LARGE AREAS IN TSESHAHT COMMUNITY  
(OVER 100 HA)





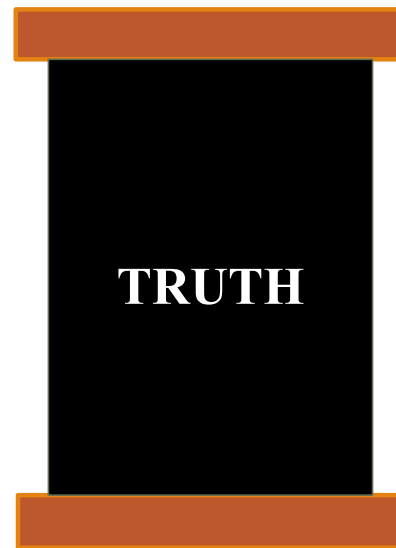
# SCANNING



# TRUTH BOX

---

- ✓ PHASE 1 COMPLETE, MANY PHASES TO COME
- ✓ GROUNDED IN OUR CULTURE AND SURVIVOR FOCUSED



# ANNOUNCEMENT: TRUTH, JUSTICE, UNITY, GROUNDED IN CULTURE AND SURVIVOR FOCUSED

“THERE IS NO RECONCILIATION  
WITHOUT TRUTH AND THERE CAN BE NO  
CHANGE WITHOUT JUSTICE,”

“SURVIVORS HAVE MADE IT CLEAR  
THAT 'YOU CANNOT HAVE  
RECONCILIATION WITHOUT TRUTH, AND  
JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY MUST  
OCCUR”



March 2, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OPEN LETTER FROM CHIEF WAHMEESH (KEN WATTS), čišaaʔath  
(TSESHAHT) FIRST NATION

Re: Alberni Indian Residential School (AIRS) Tseshaht First Nation's 26 Calls for Truth  
and Justice



# THE PATHWAY FORWARD & NEXT STEPS

---

CONTINUED  
HEALING &  
SUPPORTING  
SURVIVORS

DELIVERING  
RECORDS TO  
FAMILIES

HOST A SURVIVORS  
GATHERING(S)  
(50TH ANNIVERSARY  
OF AIRS CLOSING,  
DEBRIEF OF  
ANNOUNCEMENT,  
CALDWELL  
HALL TEAR DOWN)

ADD NAMES  
TO NTCR  
OFFICIALLY  
& IN A  
CEREMONIAL  
WAY

NATION  
GATHERINGS

CEREMONIAL  
MARKING OF  
SITES IN  
COMMUNITY  
(GEOPHYSICAL  
FEATURE OR  
SIGNATURES  
REPRESENTING  
A  
SUSPECTED  
GRAVES)



# OTHER WORK IN THE FUTURE



**MEMORIAL  
COMMEMORATION  
PROJECT**



**CALDWELL HALL TEARDOWN**

## PHASE 2

- DELIVER RECORDS TO FAMILIES
- SCANNING PHASE 2 PRIORITY AREAS
- HOST NATIONS TO DO CEREMONY & OTHER EVENTS
- FURTHER RESEARCH INCLUDING COMPILING NAMES
- ADDING NAMES TO OFFICIAL REGISTRY
- MARKING POTENTIAL GRAVE SITES
- TEAR DOWN INFRASTRUCTURE(\$35-40M) & BUILD NEW
- FURTHER ENGAGEMENT WITH MEMBERS & SURVIVORS
- ENGAGEMENT WITH THE UNITED & PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES
- MOU'S FOR FURTHER ACCESS TO RESEARCH & MORE

# LESSONS LEARNED & BEST PRACTICES

THIS ISN'T QUICK WORK, IT IS NOT A RACE, BUT SURVIVORS ARE PASSING AS WE SPEAK (TSESHAHT HAS ONLY SCANNED 11%, STILL MISSING RECORDS, STILL MISSING NAMES OF STUDENTS)

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF & MAKE SURE YOUR TEAM TAKES TIME TO CARE FOR THEMSELVES & SPACE TO HEAL

WE HOSTED MANY GATHERINGS NOT ONLY TO SUPPORT HEALING, BUT SUPPORT EDUCATION TO ALL CANADIANS

THINK OF SECURITY

PLAN AHEAD FOR LAND CLEARING IF YOUR TERRITORY IS ROCKY & FORESTED LIKE OURS

NEVER STOP PRESSURING GOVERNMENTS TO FUND YOUR WORK 100% & BUDGET FOR MORE THAN EXPECTED

SUPPORT STAFF, SUPPORT SURVIVORS, SUPPORT EACH OTHER. WHO IS GOING TO SUPPORT YOUR SUPPORT STAFF?

# LESSONS LEARNED & BEST PRACTICES

WE HOSTED MANY GATHERINGS  
NOT ONLY TO SUPPORT HEALING,  
BUT SUPPORT EDUCATION TO ALL  
CANADIANS

CANADA HAS BEEN GREAT WITH  
FINANCIAL SUPPORT,  
BC EVEN STEPPED UP!  
NOW IT IS TIME FOR THE  
CHURCHES/FAITHS TO DO THEIR  
PART

WHILE IT MAY FEEL LIKE THE  
WEIGHT OF THE WORLD IS ON  
YOUR SHOULDERS AS CHIEF,  
REMEMBER THAT THERE ARE  
PEOPLE STANDING BEHIND YOU,  
HOLDING YOU UP, ONES YOU CAN  
SEE & ONES CANNOT

SAFE SPACES FOR ALL CULTURES  
OF STUDENTS WHO ATTENDED

HIRE THE BEST PEOPLE YOU CAN  
FOR SCANNING & RESEARCH

# LESSONS LEARNED & BEST PRACTICES

WE DECIDED TO NOT JUST SHARE RESULTS, BUT SOLUTIONS & A PATH FORWARD

DRONE LIDAR WAS ONE OF OUR FIRST STEPS, WE RECOGNIZE WE SHOULD HAVE COORDINATED MORE WITH ARCHAEOLOGY & SCANNING COMPANIES

PUT SURVIVORS AT THE CENTRE

OVER 90 FIRST NATIONS HAD CHILDREN REMOVED FROM THEIR COMMUNITIES. PROVIDING SPACE FOR THEM TO COME HERE & DO THEIR WORK IS IMPORTANT, BUT WITH SO MANY LANGUAGES & CULTURES, SHARE INFORMATION ISN'T EASY

PARTNERSHIPS HELP, FROM GOVERNMENTS, TO SCANNING, ARCHAEOLOGIST, DONORS, ENGINEERS & MORE; COLLABORATION IS KEY.

SURVIVORS HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME WITH THIS & WANT TO SHARE A LOT WITH EVERYONE, YOU MUST BE PATIENT & NURTURING.

INTEGRATE CULTURE INTO EVERYTHING



# SHARE THE LOVE

WE KNOW THAT FOR MANY THEY HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME EXPRESSING THEIR LOVE OR SAYING THE WORDS, "I LOVE YOU".

SO, WE AS TSESHAHT WANT TO MAKE IT A PRIORITY TO SHARE WITH SURVIVORS:

# *WE LOVE YOU*



**SUPPORTS ARE  
AVAILABLE TO YOU  
THROUGH THE  
NTC BUT ALSO  
THROUGH THE  
FOLLOWING:**



**IF YOU'RE IN NEED OF SUPPORT,  
PLEASE REACH OUT:**

**Counselling Support**  
250.242.0114

**IRSSS Crisis Line 24/7**  
1.800.721.0066

**Quu'asa Cultural Support**  
250.724.3939

**24hr National Crisis Line**  
1.866.925.4419

**Kuu-Us Crisis Line Society**  
1.800.588.8717 |  
[www.kuu-uscrisisline.com](http://www.kuu-uscrisisline.com)

**Metis Crisis Line**  
1.888.403.3123

**Tsow-Tun-Le-Lum Society**  
1.888.403.3123

**Hope For Wellness**  
1.855.242.3310

**OUR THOUGHTS, PRAYERS & HEALING ENERGY ARE  
WITH ALL SURVIVORS DURING THIS DIFFICULT TIME.**