

# First Nations Summit

NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
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## **FNS saddened to hear of potential unmarked gravesites at Alberni Indian Residential School site**

**(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tseil-Wautuh), Vancouver, British Columbia** – Leaders of the First Nations Summit (FNS) are deeply saddened by today’s acknowledgment of sixty-seven known student deaths and announcement of seventeen suspected gravesites, found with ground penetrating radar, in the surrounding area of the former Alberni Indian Residential School in Port Alberni.

“Once again, we have yet another community announcing important results of ground penetrating radar investigations stemming from this bleak time in our history. Words cannot express our continuing sadness for the lost children whose unmarked gravesites continue to be found at former residential school sites such as the Alberni Indian Residential School. It is horrifying and unconscionable to understand the thousands of children cast aside in what has been confirmed as a Canadian genocide. We stand with the Tseshaht First Nation as they continue to progress through the various stages of their investigation into the potential unmarked grave sites within their traditional territory. Our thoughts are with all of the First Nations communities whose citizens attended this dreadful institution,” said Cheryl Casimer of the FNS Political Executive.

“The Indian Residential School system was created to strip the ‘Indian out of the child’. Residential schools were quite simply a direct attack on First Nations people and communities, especially our cultural practices and languages, with an end goal to assimilate us into Canadian society,” added Hugh Braker of the FNS Political Executive and a member of the Tseshaht First Nation. “The horrific physical and emotional abuses suffered by our children who attended residential schools continue to have devastating inter-generational impacts on our people and our communities to this very day. This genocide will go down as the largest blight on Canada’s colonial history.”

“Our thoughts also go out to all of the First Nations communities whose children went missing at the Alberni Indian Residential School. We hold up our hands to Chief Councillor Ken Watts and the Tseshaht First Nation leadership, as well as the technical team for undertaking this culturally sensitive work and for their actions to ensure the investigation leaves no stone unturned. To date, the federal government has not provided adequate funding to communities undertaking this work. We encourage the federal government to provide all necessary resources needed to complete this critical work. This work must continue to conclusion to provide our communities and citizens closure,” concluded Robert Phillips of the FNS Political Executive.

The FNS recognizes that these continuing discoveries could cause trauma for Indian Residential School survivors and their families. We encourage those who suffer emotional distress as a result of this information to contact the Indian Residential School Society (IRSSS) 24-hour support line at 1-800-721-0066 or visit their website at [www.irsss.ca](http://www.irsss.ca).

-30-

*The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. The Summit is also a NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Further background information on the Summit may be found at [www.fns.bc.ca](http://www.fns.bc.ca).*

### **For further information:**

Cheryl Casimer, FNS Political Executive  
Hugh Braker, FNS Political Executive  
Robert Phillips, FNS Political Executive

778-875-2157  
604-812-2632  
778-875-4463

