
STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
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Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

Minister's statement on racist acts in Port Alberni

VICTORIA – Spencer Chandra Herbert, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, has released the following statement regarding the recent defacing of the Orange Bridge in Port Alberni, which included Nazi symbols spray painted over the message of 'every child matters':

"We stand together with Tseshaht First Nation, residential school survivors and community leaders in condemning the repeated acts of racist vandalism in Port Alberni that have occurred over the last week and in previous years.

"Hate crimes, racist remarks and hate speech have no place whatsoever in Port Alberni, British Columbia or Canada. It is upsetting, it is hurtful and it takes us backwards. The Province actively denounces any acts of racism. We are committed to a province where everyone feels safe.

"The steady rise of residential school denialism in B.C. is deeply concerning. It seeks to erase or distort the truth of residential schools and the lived experiences of survivors and their families. It undermines reconciliation and it hurts everyone, especially those who should be supported to heal.

"The facts as they relate to residential schools have been heavily studied and litigated. There is no question about the horrors, abuse and cultural genocide. The latest attack also includes the use of swastikas, a symbol twisted by fascists in the Second World War to mean antisemitism, hate and genocide. It is a symbol that is triggering to many in the region. I raise my hands to leadership of the Tseshaht for their continued care in responding to this attack.

"The Alberni Indian Residential School was imposed on the people of Tseshaht First Nation, and the children who were taken there were from more than 70 First Nations. Through the ʔuuʔatumin yaqckʷiimitqin (Doing It for Our Ancestors) project, the Tseshaht First Nation has been working to help people heal and bring answers to those affected by the Alberni Indian Residential School. We fully support Tseshaht First Nation as they continue this work.

"This is the third time the Orange Bridge has been defaced. This repeated act of hate does not stop this work or erase the truth. It only reminds us that we all have more learning to do and that we need to work together as a broader community to stand against hate. Now, more than ever, we must lean in.

"We have an opportunity to build a better province together, recognizing the past and working to build a better future. We will continue building a province where every person in British Columbia can feel safe and respected, no matter who they are."

Support services available:

A national Indian residential school crisis line has been set up to provide support for former residential school students and those affected. Access emotional and crisis referral services by calling the 24-hour national crisis line: 1-866-925-4419.

The KUU-US Crisis Line Society:

- Crisis services for Indigenous people in B.C. are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, toll-free throughout the province: 1-800-588-8717
- Alternatively, individuals can call the adult/Elders line at 250-723-4050 or the children/youth line at 250-723-2040
- More information: <https://kuu-uscrisisline.com>

Métis Crisis Line:

- A service provided by Métis Nation British Columbia
- Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, toll-free throughout the Province at 1-833-638-4722

Learn More:

- A statement from the Tseshaht First Nation is available here: <https://facebook.com/Tseshaht/>
- Joint statement from Tseshaht First Nation and the City of Port Alberni: <https://tseshaht.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/2026-01-16-TFN-CoPA-Joint-Statement-Racist-Defacing-of-ECM-Barrier.pdf>

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