

Our Learners

Personal and Cultural Identity

A positive personal and cultural identity is being conscious of, comprehending, and appreciating the elements that go into a sound self-concept. These elements include one's family history, heritage(s), language(s), beliefs, and viewpoints in a diverse society.

Positive personal and cultural identities are valued by those who are aware of how their personal and cultural narratives have shaped who they are. They demonstrate a strong sense of self-worth, self-awareness, and positive identity, growing into self-assured people who take pride in who they are and what they are capable of. They make positive contributions to society, their family, and their community in addition to their own well-being.

Learners at KCH understand that learning requires the exploration of one's identity. They can communicate pride in who they are and what they can do through multiple forms of expression.

The strengths of the learners at KCH emerge once they connect with staff. Once connected they are willing to take risks and make improvements in their lives. Many seek support to direct support for their mental health. For the 2023-2024 school year, 100% of the learners accessed guidance from Youth Support Workers or the Indigenous Education Support Worker. Outside agency support for mental health was accessed by 61% of learners.



“With the help of my sponsor, I was able to get the support outlets that I never thought I would’ve needed. I was able to gain back the work ethic I left in 10th grade.” Gr 12 student’s final English course reflection

“There are small opportunities that were offered to me that are building me up into a more confident person. Opportunities like being able to write and say the xa’isla months in front of people, being able to share my knowledge with the teachers, and others. All this leading up to the biggest offer I’ve said yes to – singing for the grads.” Gr 10 student’s year-end reflection

Learners at KCH are aware that learning involves patience and time. They can persevere in difficult situations and understand how their actions affect themselves and others.

Learners appreciate the multiple forms of engagement and expression that is valued at KCH. They feel an increased motivation and determination towards their work since they can often see themselves in the learning.



This is evident in the Place-based Learning Program that often makes explicit relationships to local xa'isla language and culture. The Trades Sampler Program, as well as Photography and Art, all present opportunities to demonstrate determination in pursuing personal forms of expression.



“I’ve loved the photography and the freedom [the teacher] allows me to have with it to express whatever we feel like as long as it fits the category we’re working on.” Gr 10 student’s year-end reflection

“The healing process is a long and hard journey, and sometimes to heal you have to spend a lot of time questioning. You have to question everything that’s ever happened to you, everything you’ve been taught, and everyone you know. It’s hard to put a fresh perspective on your own life, but you have to rethink everything from a new perspective.” Gr 11 student’s year-end reflection

Learners at KCH value diversity, defend human rights, advocate for issues, and interact ethically with others.

Staff and learners at KCH honour and respect diversity. Many learners feel comfortable being their authentic selves and further exploring who they are. Last year, one learner was exploring their gender identity and felt comfortable enough to transition to “he” within the school. Upon experimenting with that option, they felt comfortable returning to “she” later in the year.

Learners work alongside others in multi-grade classrooms, in the Trades Sampler Program, as well as in the Place-based Learning Program. During these interactions, learners will not only self-advocate but advocate for others.



“When you experience anxiety, depression, or stress, helping others not only makes you feel good, it also strengthens the structure of your DNA...There is this really important piece on the end of our DNA strands that protects them from damage over time and keeps us healthy longer as we get older. There is an enzyme (a kind of chemical) that helps to keep these shoelace tips healthy, and it’s called telomerase. Low levels of telomerase and short shoelace tips result in accelerated aging in the face of unremitting stress...There is very cool research that shows when you practice mindfulness and when you help others, your telomerase goes up in quantity, which helps you grow your shoelace tips back.”

Fleury, T., & Barthel, K. (2014). *Conversations with a rattlesnake: Raw and honest reflections on healing and trauma*. Influence Publishing

Our Focus

Sense of place—how we come to know places such as the homes, communities, towns, or local environments we inhabit—impacts our well-being. Sense of place also informs how we perceive and appreciate the value places offer us, such as an increased positive outlook for ourselves by understanding our personal value. The importance of recognizing the value of a sense of place, particularly concerning our well-being, is captured in these words from Wattchow and Brown (2011), “If you don’t know where you are, you don’t know who you are” (p. ix).

Every day at KCH, we continue to build a sense of place alongside the learners through compassion and a culture of care. In partnership with the learners, we develop a safe and welcoming environment that promotes a strong sense of belonging. This gives rise to particular goals that we have for learners at KCH.

- *Participate in learning that relates to yourself, the school, and the community*
- *Move beyond deficit thinking and recognize your strengths, needs, and goals*
- *Understand that success comes in different forms and, with support, take steps to reach that success*

Participate in learning that relates to yourself, the school, and the community.

In a previous Trades Sampler Program, learners built a greenhouse on the school grounds so that the school community could grow vegetables in the future. Learners in the Place-based Program discovered the traditional xa’isla method to harvest Devil’s Club and Cottonwood buds as well as the medicinal properties of these plants.



Almost all courses at KCH have a degree of flexibility built into them, allowing learners to explore various content that they may find more appealing. These courses also provide multiple forms of engagement and expression so learners are far more connected to their work.



Move beyond deficit thinking and recognize your strengths, needs, and goals.

All learners at KCH are welcomed, cared for, and valued. They are provided with a variety of opportunities to engage in learning that relates to themselves and others. Learners increasingly advocate for themselves in how they can engage with material in various ways, and how they can present their understanding. Further to this, learners develop trusting relationships with staff through the sponsor program, youth support, as well as outside agency support. Learners feel valued and heard and increasingly identify their strengths and communicate their needs.



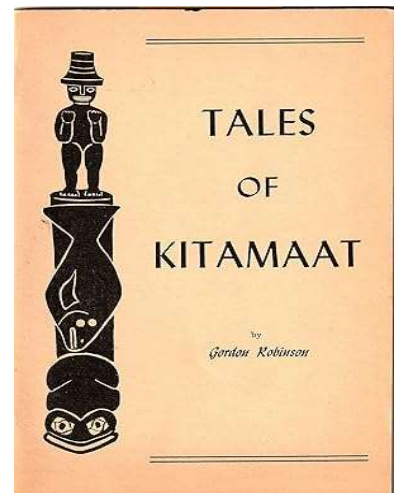
Through these supportive relationships, learners at KCH can ask themselves:

- How am I showing up?
- What do I have to offer?
- What is within and beyond my control?
- What choices do I want to make and why?

At the heart of understanding one's strengths, needs, and goals is responsible decision-making about oneself and others. Learners at KCH are frequently coached on what this can look like.

Understand that success comes in different forms and, with support, take steps to reach that success.

When first coming into KCH, many learners have a traditional mindset on what success looks like. This often involves a traditional classroom environment within a daily schedule. At KCH, learners develop their ability to regulate their learning through self-paced study toward a weekly requirement. They develop confidence in navigating how they will engage with the learning and how they can present their understanding. Learners can choose to engage in a variety of opportunities to demonstrate their success from harvesting traditional plants such as fiddleheads, growing vegetables in the school garden, taking care of our beehives, incorporating local xa'isla histories and stories into their English course, and using an interactive model to navigate a Workplace Math 11 course.



Our Next Steps

During the new school year, we will continue to facilitate opportunities for all students to realize their full potential in all areas. In addition, we feel that our students need to continue to grow in awareness of their strengths and challenges. To learn, our students need to feel connected and supported in their journey. We will support them in their growth in becoming leaders, contributors and enjoying a well rounded life.

We would like to go deeper in our relationship with the Haisla Elders. A tradition of sharing food through a feast has begun and relationships are developing between Haisla elders and students. Our goal in the coming year is to reciprocate the honor that was bestowed upon us and provide a feast for all to enjoy at the village. Along with the sharing of food, we have begun sharing history, experiences, language and culture.

In addition, we would like to establish a partnership with the District of Kitimat whereby we can share in the care and ownership of the green belt surrounding the school as well as local hiking trails that have become overgrown and repair structures that are aging. This partnership makes sense, because our students are familiar with these areas through their outdoor education program.

We would like to initiate a partnership with the local elementary schools where our students become leaders and mentors in the areas of natural resources such as bee keeping and fishing.

Moving forward we will delve more in depth with small group discussions and continue to build connections with the students to support them in their journey of self-awareness, mental health, personal growth and social responsibility. Some of our programs and teachings will be in the areas of:

- ❖ Open Parachute to continue teaching mental health skills using authentic peer voices. This program teaches emotional granularity, self-awareness, goal setting and self-advocacy.
- ❖ Red Cross Healthy Relationships which focus on communication skills
- ❖ Sexual Education and consent
- ❖ Formation of a Leadership Course for grades 10-12

KCH hopes to develop a broad program including personal growth, relationship, skill building and wellness.

Upon reading all our student reflections, not just the two listed, and reflecting on the students' messages, we feel confident that continuing our present programming and enhancing this programming with new initiatives and partnerships we will continue to address student needs and challenges.

Reflection 1 – “I think my first semester at KCH was all about coming out of my comfort zone and reaching milestones. If you had told me at the beginning of the year that my grades would be mostly A's and B's and that coming to school was fun, I wouldn't have believed you. I am so grateful to call KCH my school. I have made new connections and I got to meet new people. When I first started in September 2023, I was always quiet and was too scared to ask for help. As time went on, I became more comfortable and finally accepted that this is where I go to school, and I don't need to be afraid to ask for help. I will always be grateful for the staff as well. The staff here truly care about each student, and it shows. Some may not be as close with everyone, but a simple hello can make someone's day. I also feel very respected here. Mostly everyone is curious about Haisla/Indigenous culture and people are willing to learn and partake in hands on cultural activities. I really think that KCH being open to learning about indigenous history and traditions is a step to reconciliation. To reach reconciliation, it cannot just be indigenous people fighting for reconciliation. It needs to be in all walks of life. Our students get so much support and opportunities; we are very spoiled. Overall, Kitimat City High is an excellent school. I am happy to be coming back in September.”

Reflection 2 – “I think I had a pretty good year. It was fun, but also challenging at times. This school has been a great place for me to grow as a person, and work on my morals. At the beginning of the year, I was a short fused teenager, and as the year went on, I could see myself changing into a good person and a good student. At other schools I wasn't getting the help I needed, and they wouldn't help me understand. Here, I noticed the teachers want to help you understand and they want to help you do great in school. At Mount Elizabeth it almost felt as if they were trying to do the opposite because as I would fall behind, I would try to get help to understand it, but the teachers moved on so quickly, and it was hard to get a grip and understanding of the subject. I went from failing almost every class, to passing every class with at least a “B” letter grade. I really enjoy going to school here and really do look forward to coming back next year and having another great year. The staff at KCH were amazing and made the school feel like a great place to be. At the beginning of the year, I wanted nothing to do with it, and now we aren't even done this year and I already can't wait to come back. The students at KCH were kind and supportive of each other. I had a great year at KCH and I am proud of what I have accomplished. I think having connections with the adults really did matter because if it was a bad or off day, I could go have a conversation with an adult in the school and talk about how I was feeling, what I was working on, and what might've been bothering me. Having connections with the adults in the school was really important to me in a positive way and helped me get through the year.”

