

Indigenous Education Report



FEBRUARY 2026





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Gratitude and Acknowledgement

This report reflects learning, cultural connection, and relationship-based initiatives that took place across the district from January through February. These efforts demonstrate our shared commitment to supporting Indigenous students through culturally grounded education rooted in identity, belonging, and community. We extend our sincere gratitude to the Indigenous Support Workers, Educators, Administrators, Elders, Knowledge Holders, and Community partners whose dedication strengthens student engagement and well-being across our schools. Through collaboration and respectful partnership, Indigenous knowledge and culture continue to be honoured as living and essential aspects of learning.

Attendance & Engagement Focus

Improving Indigenous student attendance remains a district priority. Through layered supports, including Indigenous Support Workers, small-group programming, Elders-in-Residence, cultural mentorship, and the addition of the Indigenous Outreach Worker position, the district continues to implement proactive strategies that strengthen consistent engagement and re-engagement in learning.

These efforts align with the Indigenous Education Department's goals and the District's strategic priorities. They reflect our ongoing commitment to supporting Indigenous learners academically, culturally, and socially.

Update: Gitxsan Immersion Program Working Group

Work is underway to formally establish the Gitxsan Immersion Program Working Group. An initial meeting has taken place, bringing together School Administrators, Local Education Representatives, Elders, and District staff. This gathering marked an important step in strengthening collaboration and shared understanding in support of the program.



The Working Group will focus on updating, creating, and providing ongoing support for Gitxsan language and cultural resources to assist in the continued growth and development of the immersion program. Conversations to date have supported the development of an initial plan outlining areas of focus and next steps.

Implementation of this initial plan will begin as timelines are confirmed, with continued collaboration among partners guiding the work moving forward.

A Message from the Director of Instruction, Indigenous Education



Pictured Above (left to right): Tracey MacMillan – Superintendent, Charity Spalding – Indigenous Support Worker, and Donna Mortimer – Director of Indigenous Education

Ama Sah / Good Day

It was an honour to attend the Hoobiyee N'isga'a celebration at the Suwilaawks Community School and be part of such a vibrant cultural event. I have learned, Hoobiyee marks the Nisga'a New Year and the appearance of the first crescent moon, seen as the bowl of a traditional wooden spoon, which traditionally signals the renewal of life, the end of winter, and the promise of abundance in the year ahead with the return of saak (oolichan), salmon, and more.

The celebration was filled with a beautiful performance, traditional dance and song, storytelling, drumming, regalia, and community spirit, bringing together students, families, community, and outside agencies to share in culture, connection, and joy.

Seeing the Suwilaawks students engage with these teachings and proudly represent and participate in the traditions was inspiring. Their curiosity and respect for Nisga'a knowledge, from understanding the moon's meaning to witnessing cultural dance, reflect a deep celebration of Indigenous identity and the continuity of ancestral knowledge for future generations.

It was an honour to attend the Hoobiyee N'isga'a celebration at Suwilaawks Community School and be part of such a vibrant and meaningful cultural gathering. I have learned that Hoobiyee marks the Nisga'a New Year and the appearance of the first crescent moon, shaped like the bowl of a traditional wooden spoon, which signals the renewal of life, the end of winter, and the promise of abundance in the year ahead, including the return of saak (oolichan), salmon, and other seasonal harvests.

The celebration was filled with powerful drumming, traditional songs and dances, storytelling, and beautiful regalia, all reflecting the strength, pride, and continuity of Nisga'a culture. Students, families, community members, and partner agencies gathered together to share in culture, connection, and joy, creating a strong sense of unity and belonging.

This celebration reminds us that renewal brings hope and new beginnings. That message connects deeply to student learning, where each day offers opportunities for growth, reflection, and renewed understanding. Seeing Suwilaawks students engage respectfully and proudly in these teachings was inspiring. Their curiosity and respect for Nisga'a knowledge, from understanding the significance of the crescent moon to participating in cultural dances, demonstrate how cultural learning strengthens identity and enriches educational experiences.

Celebrating Hoobiyee also highlights the importance of honouring and uplifting the diverse Indigenous cultures within our schools. By creating space to recognize and learn from these traditions, we foster belonging, respect, and a stronger sense of community for all students while supporting the continuity of Indigenous knowledge for future generations.

Warm regards,



Donna Mortimer



Introducing Terrace CMSD 82 Indigenous Outreach Worker



Serving Terrace Area Schools

We are pleased to welcome Job Daniels to Coast Mountains School District as our newly appointed Indigenous Outreach Worker. Job is of Gitksan and Nisga'a heritage and brings lived experience, cultural grounding, and a strong commitment to supporting Indigenous youth through relationship-based, trauma-informed practice.

Job currently serves as an Indigenous Male Youth Mentor at Caledonia Senior Secondary School, where he supports young Indigenous men through culturally grounded mentorship, positive role modelling, and group programming that strengthens identity, confidence, and school engagement. His work focuses on building trust, fostering cultural pride, and supporting students in making healthy decisions that contribute to long-term success.

In addition to his mentorship work, Job brings extensive leadership and coordination experience through previous roles with the Gitwangak Band as a Recreation Coordinator and as a Role Model within Coast Mountains School District.

These roles included facilitating cultural workshops, traditional games, life skills programming, and community-based youth engagement initiatives.

Through his lived experience and personal healing journey, Job brings authenticity and relatability to his work with students. His approach is grounded in respect for Elders, families, and community, with a focus on breaking cycles, strengthening identity, and supporting Indigenous youth in re-engaging with education.

The addition of the Indigenous Outreach Worker position reflects the district's continued commitment to strengthening attendance, supporting re-engagement, and ensuring Indigenous learners feel connected, supported, and valued both at school and at home. This role enhances our layered support model and aligns with our Indigenous Education Department goals and district strategic priorities.

Suwilaawks Community School – Honouring Hoobiye Through Leadership & Community Partnership



Suwilaawks Community School honoured Hoobiye, the Nisga'a New Year, through a collaborative partnership with Kermode Friendship Society and community knowledge holders. As part of this initiative, Grade 5/6 students engaged in intergenerational learning by buddying with younger children at Kermode's daycare program. Under the guidance of community members, students learned traditional drumming, rhythms, and the cultural significance of Hoobiye learning culminated in a school-wide Hoobiye celebration and performance, bringing together students, staff, and families to honour the season and its teachings.



In addition to participating in drumming sessions, Grade 5/6 students stepped into leadership roles as cultural ambassadors. Through small-group classroom presentations, student leaders shared their understanding of Hoobiye seasonal significance, teachings, and traditions with peers across the school. This peer-led model strengthened student voice, mentorship, and shared understanding

prior to the school-wide celebration. The celebration engaged all 327 students in the school community, reinforcing cultural continuity and creating a visible, respectful space for Indigenous language, tradition, and community connection within the school environment.

Through drumming, storytelling, shared food, and performance, students experienced Hoobiye not only as an event, but as a living cultural practice rooted in relationship, responsibility, and pride.

- Contributed by: Charity Spalding, Indigenous Support Worker



The Hoobiye celebration engaged the entire school community in culturally grounded learning, reinforcing pride, belonging, and respect for Nisga'a traditions.

Kitwanga Elementary – Form line Art & Cultural Learning

Kitwanga Elementary School welcomed Darryl Moore, a Gitxsan/Nisga’a artist and graduate of the Freda Diesing School of Northwest Coast Fine Arts, through the Elder/Knowledge Holder Role Model Program. Over a two-week residency, Darryl worked with Grade 4/5 and Grade 5/6/7 students, engaging approximately 42 learners in hands-on form line instruction grounded in Northwest Coast artistic traditions.

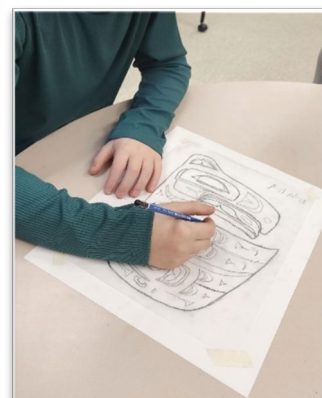
Students were introduced to the foundational elements of form line design, including ovoid’s, U-forms, S-forms, and traditional colour application. Through guided drawing, tracing, transfer techniques, and painting, students developed crest designs while learning the cultural origins, responsibilities, and protocols connected to First Nations art.



Instruction emphasized the importance of understanding the difference between appreciation and misappropriation, reinforcing that Indigenous art carries both cultural meaning and responsibility. Prior classroom preparation allowed students to enter the residency with foundational skills, maximizing engagement and creative confidence.

This learning experience supported Fine Arts curriculum outcomes while strengthening cultural identity, creative thinking, and personal responsibility. Through

mentorship and hands-on creation, students deepened their appreciation for Gitxsan artistic traditions and built pride in their own artistic expression. - **Contributed by Rhonda Morgan, Language and Culture Teacher**



Direct mentorship from a Gitxsan/Nisga’a artist strengthened students’ cultural understanding, artistic skill, and sense of pride. “First Nation Art is a cultural right and responsibility,” Darryl Moore

Thornhill Primary – Drumming & Cultural Preparation with Anne McDames

Thornhill Primary School welcomed Knowledge Keeper Anne McDames to work with students in Kindergarten through Grade 3's as part of the Elder & Knowledge Holder Role Model Program.



Anne has been supporting both students and staff in preparing for the school's year-end feast, providing guidance on cultural protocols, song selection, and appropriate preparation. In addition to planning sessions with staff, Anne has been working weekly with Grade 2/3 students, offering 30-minute drumming sessions to build foundational rhythm skills and confidence in preparation for their role in the celebration.

These sessions support early learning curriculum outcomes by nurturing multicultural awareness and deepening understanding of local First Peoples' culture and ways of life.

Students are not only learning technique, but also gaining knowledge of respect, protocol, and the significance of drumming within community gatherings.

Through consistent mentorship, students are developing cultural confidence and experiencing the importance of preparation, responsibility, and participation in community events. This ongoing partnership strengthens cultural continuity within the school and ensures students are meaningfully engaged in authentic cultural practice.

- Contributed by Sandra Kenmuir, Principal

Ongoing mentorship in drumming and protocol builds early cultural confidence, strengthens understanding of community traditions, and prepares students to participate meaningfully in shared celebrations.



Caledonia Secondary – Strengthening Connection Through Equity and Reconciliation

We extend our sincere appreciation to the Caledonia Connections team, Sheila Morgan, Desiree Quock, and Stephanie Louie for their thoughtful and dedicated work in creating supportive spaces for students and staff. Their leadership continues to strengthen truth and reconciliation efforts within the school community.

Working alongside administrators, students, and educators, the Connections team has been engaged in conversations and practices that support decolonizing education. This means recognizing the value of both Western and Indigenous approaches to learning and creating space for them to exist together. It is not an either-or model, but a both-and approach that honours diverse identities, perspectives, and ways of knowing.

Across classrooms, staff are embedding cultural knowledge and lived experience into learning, recognizing that students demonstrate understanding in different ways, and supporting land-based and culturally relevant programming. These efforts build upon meaningful work already taking place within the school, affirming and celebrating the strengths of both staff and students.

This work reflects an equity-focused approach, one that recognizes students require different supports and pathways to experience success. By responding to individual strengths, needs, and identities, Caledonia is helping students feel seen, respected, and valued within their learning environment.

When students experience this sense of belonging, the impact is visible. Increased attendance, stronger engagement in learning, and greater participation in classroom activities are early indicators of the positive direction this work is taking. For students who have historically experienced barriers in education, these changes are especially meaningful.

Through continued reflection, relationship-building, and collaboration, Caledonia Secondary is strengthening connections between students, staff, and community in ways that support long-term success.

This work reflects our shared responsibility to ensure Indigenous students experience education as a place of respect, identity, and opportunity.

Hazelton Secondary School – Cultural Learning & Connection

Elders in Residence Program



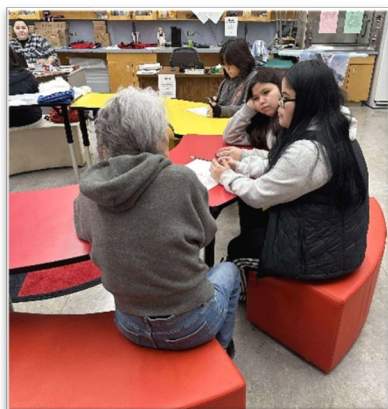
We are very pleased to share that our Elders-in-Residence program continues to grow and make a meaningful impact in our school community. Our Elders have been spending significant time in classrooms connecting with students, sharing their life experiences, and building relationships grounded in respect, culture, and community.

Students have had opportunities to engage with the Elders in Social Studies 10, English First Peoples 11 & 12, and BC First Peoples 12. During these visits, students are learning appropriate cultural protocols, including how to introduce themselves in a respectful way through a Gitxsan lens. Students are hearing stories, learning about identity, place, and where they come from, and gaining a deeper understanding of the importance of relationships within community.

The presence of the Elders has created a welcoming and supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable asking questions, listening, and reflecting. We are incredibly grateful for the time, knowledge, and care they share with our learners each week. Their involvement continues to strengthen connections between school and community while helping students better understand local culture, history, and ways of knowing.



- Contributed by Ryan McCann Vice Principal



The Elders in Residence program created a welcoming space for storytelling, cultural teachings, and relationship building. Early outcomes indicate strengthened student attendance, connection to school, and sense of belonging. Traditional arts learning further supported identity development and student engagement.

1.31 Indigenous Targeted Funded Projects 2025-2026

The following projects were reviewed and approved by the Indigenous Education Council & Indigenous Education Department to support culturally responsive programming, student wellness, land-based learning, language revitalization, and relationship building across the district.

Hazelton Secondary School:

- Indigenous Plants
- Elder In Residence
- Sparkle Project Hygiene

Cassie Hall Elementary:

- Laxgalts'ap Trip to explore the Nisga'a Territory/Outdoor Education
- Kitimat Trip to Explore the Haisla Nation and Hatchery Tour/Outdoor Education
- Swimming- Water Safety and Cultural Connections
- Salmon Journey
- Oolichan Journey- Skeena River
- Fried Bread Friday

Skeena Middle School:

- Connections Group
- Hoobiyee Dance Group

Kitwanga Elementary:

- Orange Shirt Project
- Cultural Connections Gitanyow Student Teaching Feast

Suwilaawks Community School:

- Outdoor Learning, Plants and Trees
- Hoobiyee and Leadership

New Hazelton Elementary:

- Primary Gitxsan Resources
- Intermediate Gitxsan Resources

Parkside Secondary:

- Tumpline Weaving

Caledonia Secondary:

- Connections Programming-Dudes and Girls groups
- Nisga'a Hot Springs and Museum
- Indigenous Supports

NTETC:

- Crest design for projects

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Elder & Knowledge Holder Role Model Program 2025-2026

Approved role model initiatives support cultural teachings, mentorship, and intergenerational learning across schools. These partnerships provided students with access to community knowledge, strengthened identity, and reinforced Indigenous ways of knowing as integral to learning.

School	Project	Knowledge Keeper/Elder
Caledonia	Cultural Identity, Intergenerational Trauma, Residential Schools Girls Group Facilitator Guys Group Facilitator Remembrance Day Novel Study Connection and Medicine Bags Form line Northwest Coast Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Billy Morrison • Lilian Bramley • Job Daniels • David Wells • Kimberly Godfrey • Erica Davis
Hazelton Secondary	Visual and Oral storytelling English First Peoples 11 and 12 Truth and Reconciliation Speaker Remembrance Day Sciences & Biology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phillip Stewart • Mavis Banek • Archie McRae • Taylor Wale • Skyla Lattie
Suwilaawks	Local Artist, Clans and Crests Paintings Feasting Drumming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sabrina Williams • Jenine Klein • Christopher Peal
Cassie Hall	Monthly Drumming Sessions Remembrance Day Feasting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christopher Peal • Roxanne Woods • Anne McDames • Jenine Klein
Majagaleehl Gali Aks	Language Immersion Elders/Knowledge Language Holders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shirley Lattie • Rosie Muldon
Thornhill Primary	Truth And Reconciliation Speaker Drumming Feasting Systems and protocol Story Telling and Cedar Mats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anne McDames • Jenine Klein
Kitwanga Elementary	Drum Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barry Sampare • Darryl Moore
Skeena Middle School	Elder in class local culture and History, Social Studies Project. Remembrance Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anne McDames • David Wells

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Ecole Mountainview	Feasting systems and protocol	• Jenine Klein
Kitimat City High	Art and Drums	• Sheila Duncan

