



Indigenous Education Report June 2025

This issue highlights events and projects funded through the 1.31 Enhancement Proposals, Elders Knowledge Holder Program and the work of the Indigenous Support Workers (ISW), alongside the meaningful contributions of teachers and schools who bring these initiatives to life in classrooms and on the land.

Gratitude

Thank you to all Elders, Knowledge Holders, ISWs, Teachers, and community partners who continue to guide and inspire the learners. Your efforts are helping to nurture identity, culture, and pride.

National Indigenous History Month & National Indigenous Peoples Day

June is **National Indigenous History Month**, a time to honour the rich cultures, contributions, and histories of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples across Canada. Schools throughout the district have been highlighting Indigenous knowledge, traditions, and contemporary experiences in classrooms and school-wide events.

Leading up to **National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21**, many schools have organized special activities including cultural workshops, guest speakers, land-based learning, and community celebrations. These opportunities allow both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to come together in recognition, celebration, and continued learning.

We are grateful to the Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members who have guided these events, and to the educators and ISWs who continue to integrate Indigenous perspectives into everyday learning.

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Strengthening Relationships Through Collaboration: Local Education Agreement Forum for Principals and Vice Principals

Message from the Superintendent, Tracey MacMillan

On May 30, the Coast Mountains School District hosted a Local Education Agreement (LEA) Forum for Principals and Vice Principals—an important gathering focused on deepening understanding, strengthening relationships, and moving forward in partnership with Indigenous communities.

This meaningful event was a true collaboration. The forum was co-created with input from members of the Coast Mountains Administrators Association (CMAA), the Inter-Tribal Education Committee (ITEC), and district staff. Together, this collective group shaped the day's content, activities, and learning focus to ensure it reflected the voices and priorities of both school leaders and Indigenous partners.

A heartfelt thank you is extended to our principals and vice principals for their active engagement, openness, and commitment to learning together in support of Indigenous student success. Your presence and participation are essential as we continue to move forward in alignment with the values of equity, inclusion, and respect.

As we work toward the creation of the Indigenous Education Council, this year has also been one of rebuilding and strengthening relationships—with each other and with all partner Nations. We are especially pleased about the renewed relationships we are building with each of the ITEC members. We have made a conscious effort to move beyond the foundational expectations outlined in Bill 40 and instead centre our work in collaboration, trust, and shared purpose.

The LEA Forum was a strong example of this shift. ITEC members played an active role in shaping the forum—contributing to content development, co-facilitating sessions, and participating in a panel discussion. Their involvement brought vital perspectives and helped foster deeper dialogue between school leaders and Indigenous partners.

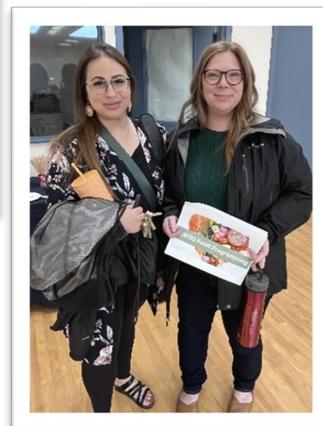
Special thanks are also extended to Lindsay Harder (Executive Assistant to the Secretary Treasurer and Secretariat to the Indigenous Education Council (IEC), and Vanessa Shirey (Administrative Assistant, Indigenous Education Department), whose leadership and coordination were instrumental in planning and organizing the forum.

Together, we are shaping a path forward where Local Education Agreements are not simply documents but living commitments—grounded in relationships, shared responsibility, and the belief that every student deserves to thrive.

Below are photos from the forum.



LEA Panel Members from L to R: Louise Ormerod (Principal, Hazelton High School); Marian Kotowich-Laval (Kitsumkalum Education Coordinator); Corey Killoran (Principal, Skeena Middle School); and Kassia Nameth (Principal, Kitwanga Elementary School).

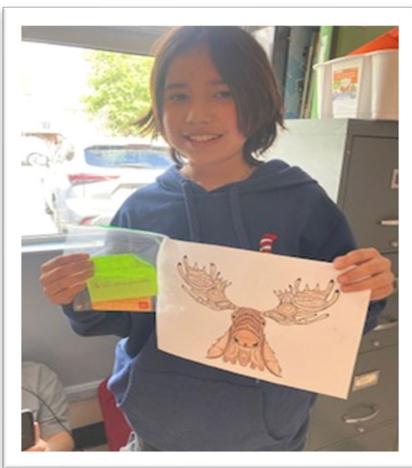


Moose Hide Campaign Day – Standing Up Against Violence

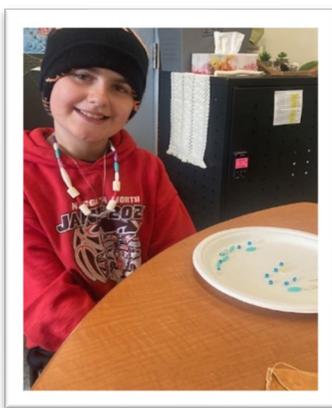
In May, some of our schools and staff took part in the **Moose Hide Campaign**, a nationwide movement aimed at ending violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people. The campaign encourages men and boys, alongside all Canadians, to stand up and speak out against gender-based violence.

Participants wear small squares of moose hide, symbolizing their personal commitment to reconciliation and safety. Classrooms engaged in age-appropriate discussions, watched campaign videos, and reflected on the importance of allyship and action. This year's campaign sparked powerful conversations about respect, consent, and the roles we all play in creating safer communities.

We thank everyone who took part and continue to support this important movement.



Photos above Students at Suwilaawks along with Indigenous Support Worker Roxanne Wright coloured some beautiful artwork in recognition of the Moose Hide Campaign. Photos Below Making Devils Club bead necklaces.



Students creating jewelry using hand-crafted beads made from Devil's Club stalks — a plant deeply respected in many Indigenous cultures for its powerful medicinal and spiritual properties. This activity combined cultural learning with hands-on creativity, allowing students to connect with traditional materials in a meaningful way.



Cassie Hall Students visit Kitselas Canyon

Ms. Jay's Grade 3 class and Ms. Koch's Grade 2 class from Cassie Hall had an unforgettable field trip to Kitselas Canyon. Students explored four traditional longhouses, marveling at fascinating cultural artifacts—including 600-year-old repatriated totem poles—and gained insight into the rich history of the Kitselas people. They also discovered the role of the Skeena River in local transportation, viewing impressive wooden replicas of riverboats that once traveled its waters.

One of the day's highlights was getting up close to preserved specimens of local forest animals such as wolves, bears, and beavers (no need to worry—they weren't alive!). Students also enjoyed a scenic walk down a well-maintained trail to admire the breathtaking canyon views. Along the way, they learned about the significance of local plants and the deep cultural connections to the land.



The fresh air, sunshine, and time around the fire made for a perfect outdoor learning experience. We were especially touched by the kindness of the staff, who went out of their way to build a welcoming fire for the children to gather around. A picnic lunch topped off the day, with students soaking up both knowledge and sunshine.

We are incredibly grateful to the hosts and tour guides at **Kitselas Canyon** for their warm hospitality and for generously sharing their history and culture with us. It was a day of meaningful learning, lasting memories, and heartfelt appreciation.



Jamie Koch

Skeena Middle School learns about Food Sovereignty



Knowledge Holder Shalene Pauls visited two Foods 9 classes to lead a rich and engaging session on Indigenous food sovereignty and the origins of our food. Students participated in thoughtful discussions around what food sovereignty means, and several shared personal examples of how they currently — or hope to one day — engage in traditional food practices.

Shalene also introduced students to local Indigenous plants and their traditional uses, including the significance of devil's club. In recognition of seaweed harvesting season, she brought freshly harvested seaweed for the class to prepare and sample. Together, students toasted the seaweed, cooked rice, and enjoyed a shared meal featuring locally caught, family-canned salmon.

This experience offered a meaningful connection to Indigenous knowledge, seasonal practices, and the importance of food in cultural identity and community well-being.

Teacher, Shaunecy Sperling

Salmon Release and Land-Based Learning at Kildala Elementary



This spring, the Grade 1/2 students at Kildala Elementary had the unique opportunity to raise Northern Coho salmon in their classroom, observing their development from eggs delivered in January through the alevin and fry stages, until they were ready to be released into the Kitimat River as parr. Throughout this experiential learning project, students explored the cultural and ecological significance of salmon. They learned about the traditional uses of salmon and its importance to many Indigenous communities across British Columbia. The project also deepened their understanding of local waterways, the salmon life cycle, and the relationships salmon have with surrounding plants, animals, and ecosystems. Connections to Indigenous art and storytelling further enriched the learning experience, highlighting the salmon's role in cultural identity and environmental stewardship.

The Grade 1/2 class partnered with the Kindergarten class for a field trip to Hirsch Creek, where each student released 3–5 young salmon back into the river. The day also included engaging, hands-on sessions with a conservation officer and two fisheries workers. Students learned about sustainability practices and examined aquatic insects and invertebrates that share the river habitat with the salmon. This meaningful experience reflected core Indigenous values of respect, reciprocity, and relationship with the land, and provided students with a powerful example of land-based learning in action. **ISW Carlos Taveres**



Drum Blessings Terrace Schools

In 2023/2024 the Indigenous Education Department purchased sets of drums for schools throughout the district that were made by students under the guidance of knowledge keepers. The drums were then gifted by the students to the schools. This year, we started the process of having the drums blessed by elders to breathe life into them so they can be used for students to learn about drumming, singing and culture. Elder **Anne McDames** from Kitselas blessed the drums at Ecole Mountainview, Uplands, Cassie Hall, Thornhill Elementary, Thornhill Primary, and Skeena Middle School during the first week of June. The plan moving forward is to complete the drum blessings for all schools that still need this to take place. **Indigenous Teacher Mentor Anna Ashley**



Indigenous Graduation Photo Shoots in Kitimat, Terrace and Hazelton



The Indigenous Education Department proudly continued an initiative launched by **Stephanie Louie** and **Tammy Bulleid** in the 2022–2023 school year: Indigenous Graduation Photo Shoots. What began in Terrace has since expanded to include high schools in Kitimat, thanks to the support of Indigenous Education Support Workers and Indigenous Education Teacher Mentor, **Anna Ashley**. In Hazelton thanks to **Stephanie Muldoe**, these photo shoots offer Indigenous graduates the opportunity to be photographed in regalia or attire of their choice, creating a space for cultural pride and personal expression. The goal of this initiative is to uplift and celebrate Indigenous students as they reach this important milestone. Moving forward, the vision is for schools to carry on this

tradition in a way that best suits their communities, continuing to honour and empower Indigenous graduates in meaningful and culturally respectful ways. **Anna Ashley**
Indigenous Teacher Mentor



Indigenous Graduation Photoshoot – Caledonia Secondary School This year, Caledonia Secondary School proudly hosted its 3rd Annual Indigenous Graduation Photoshoot—a two-day event celebrating the achievements of Indigenous graduates and fostering cultural pride among Indigenous students across Terrace.



This event provides an intentional and inclusive space for Indigenous youth to celebrate their identity, fostering a sense of belonging and connection within the school community. Historically, Indigenous peoples were excluded from public education and denied the right to openly celebrate their culture. Events like this represent meaningful steps toward *reconciliACTION*—recognizing and honouring Indigenous culture in the school environment. A strong sense of belonging contributes to increased confidence, resilience, and academic success. This

year, we’ve witnessed firsthand how this initiative positively impacts student outcomes and helps shape how Indigenous youth view themselves—not only within the school system but within the broader community. **ISW’s Stephanie Louie, Sheila Morgan, Desiree Quock, Tammy Bullied**

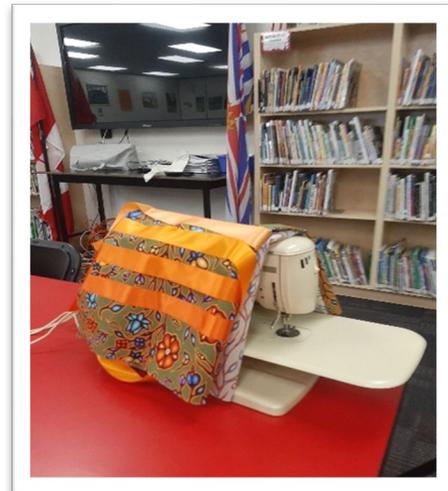
Bear Valley School – with Myra McMillan



Ribbon Skirt Making at Bear Valley School

Students at Bear Valley School in Stewart, BC, had the opportunity to engage in a meaningful cultural learning experience through the creation of traditional ribbon skirts, guided by **Indigenous Support Worker Myra McMillan**. Ribbon skirts are a powerful symbol of identity, resilience, and cultural pride in many Indigenous communities. With Myra’s support, students learned about the history and significance of ribbon skirts, including their role in ceremonies, celebrations, and as a form of resistance and self-expression. Each student thoughtfully selected their materials and designs, creating a personalized skirt that reflects their connection to culture and community.

The hands-on project not only helped students build sewing skills but also fostered a sense of pride, creativity, and cultural understanding. It was a beautiful expression of Indigenous identity and intergenerational knowledge sharing, and we are grateful to Myra for leading this important work.



Yarn-Woven Baskets at Bear Valley

School Students in Grades 5 to 7 at Bear Valley School explored the art of yarn-woven basketry, a more contemporary style of traditional basket-making. Just in time for Mother’s Day, they crafted beautiful, handwoven baskets that showcased their creativity and care. The project offered a fun and meaningful way



for students to engage in hands-on learning while making heartfelt gifts for loved ones.

Traditional Plant Knowledge Ecole Mountainview



Land-Based Learning at École Mountain View with Métis Elder Trish Paulson

In early June, students at École Mountain View School had the opportunity to participate in a land-based learning experience with **Métis Elder and Knowledge Holder Trish Paulson**. The visit included two plant walks: one

with two early primary classes (Kindergarten and a K/1 class), and another with a Grade 3/4 class. **Indigenous Support Worker Alexis Bright** and classroom teachers supported the sessions, which were held on the traditional territory of the Ts'msyen people in Terrace, BC.



Leading up to Trish's visit, Alexis had already been engaging students in plant-focused learning. Through presentations and hands-on crafts, students explored several plants growing in and around the forest near the school grounds, including cedar, Nootka rose, ferns, and soapberries. Lessons covered plant identification, natural habitats, and traditional uses—particularly those of the Ts'msyen peoples. Students also received activity booklets to deepen their understanding.

During the plant walk, Trish guided students along the perimeter of the school field, introducing them to a variety of local plants such as dandelions, buttercups, fireweed, birch trees, thimbleberries, comfrey, and horsetail. Students were highly engaged, eager to see, touch, and even collect samples of the plants to bring back to their classrooms—and in many cases, take home to share with their families.



This learning experience not only deepened students' knowledge of local ecosystems and Indigenous plant use, but also fostered a stronger connection to the land. It was a powerful example of how cultural teachings and outdoor learning can come together to enrich the school experience. **ISW Alexis Bright**

Nootka Rose Art Display

Beading and Bracelet-Making at École Mountain View



After Spring Break, Grade 6 students at École Mountain View began a loom beading project led by **Indigenous Support Worker Alexis Bright**. The project started with a lesson on the history of Indigenous beadwork, exploring traditional materials and how European contact influenced beading practices.

Students were invited to create either a bracelet, choker, or keychain. Alexis guided them through the design process, helping them determine the number of warp threads and select bead patterns. Their teacher, Laurie Talbot, was so engaged that she continued the project independently on days Alexis wasn't in the classroom, using resources provided to support student learning.

When asked, “How many of you found this challenging?”—every student raised their hand. And when asked, “Would you do it again?”—every hand went up again. Students were proud of their finished work and left the project feeling accomplished and connected to a meaningful cultural tradition.

Skeena Middle School making Cultural Vests for Feast Workers



A Grade 9 student, Payton, learning how to make cultural vests that will be worn by student feast workers at Skeena Middle School's year-end Indigenous celebration on June 20, 2025. So far, 21 vests have been completed through a team effort, each featuring a beautiful universal feather design generously donated to the school by Indigenous fashion designer Valerie Morgan. Payton was quick to pick up the sewing skills and showed great enthusiasm and

pride in contributing to this meaningful project. It was a joy to teach her today, and I'm so proud of her efforts. **ISW Martha Woods**

Locker Mural Project at Hazelton Secondary School

Hazelton Secondary School recently completed a vibrant and meaningful locker mural project, led by local artist Arlene Ness and supported by the Indigenous Education Department. While the project took longer than anticipated, it provided students with a deep and engaging learning experience in both design and painting.



Under Arlene’s guidance, students developed technical skills and gained insight into the artistic process — from concept to finished mural. Arlene’s talent, vision, and ability to bring ideas to life served as an inspiration to all who participated. The school is proud of the final results and looks forward to continuing this creative initiative in the years to come.

One especially impactful part of the project was the mural created by student Peyton Wesley, who collaborated with her father, Roger Wesley. Beyond contributing a stunning piece of artwork to the school, Peyton’s participation helped build her confidence and pride in her work, reinforcing her voice and presence within the school community.



These murals now serve as daily visual reminders of student creativity, cultural pride, and the power of mentorship in education. **Barb Janze HSS Teacher**

Caledonia

Year End Reflection Girls' Group 2024/2025

This has been a meaningful endeavor for our department. As with any new program, there were learning curves, but the experience has been both rewarding and transformative.

I am pleased to report that the feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. The group has served as a significant and empowering experience for the girls involved. The program has contributed to:

- Increased access to mental health supports
- Improved behaviour and interpersonal relationships
- Development of healthy coping strategies
- A strengthened sense of identity and belonging within the school community

The girls themselves shared powerful reflections, including:

- *“I felt totally supported and felt like I could talk about anything.”*
- *“The stigma was broken, and I was able to access other supports.”*
- *“New friends and a sense of community were created.”*
- *“Other people have gone through or are going through what I am”*
“I was able to talk to my parents about what I am going through.”

These statements highlight the deep impact this space has had on their personal growth.

ISW Stephanie Louie

Hazelton Secondary Students Explore Nisga'a Territory

From May 29th to 30th, students from Hazelton Secondary School (Grades 8–12) embarked



on an unforgettable land-based learning journey through **Nisga'a traditional territory**. Learners explored the awe-inspiring **Anhluut'ukwsim Laxmihl Angwinga'asanskwhl Nisga'a Park (Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park)**, visited **Lava Lake**, climbed the **Volcanic Cone**, and made their way to the ocean. A highlight of the trip was the visit to the **Nisga'a Museum / Hli Goothl Wilp Adokshl Nisga'a**, where students engaged deeply with the rich cultural heritage of the Nisga'a people.

Evenings were spent sharing stories around the campfire and singing under the stars, creating powerful memories and deepening the connection to land, culture, and each other.



A heartfelt thank you to our gracious hosts, and to **Ms. Samson, Mr. Rychlo, Ms. Hagen, and Ms. Fralick** for making this meaningful learning opportunity possible for our students.

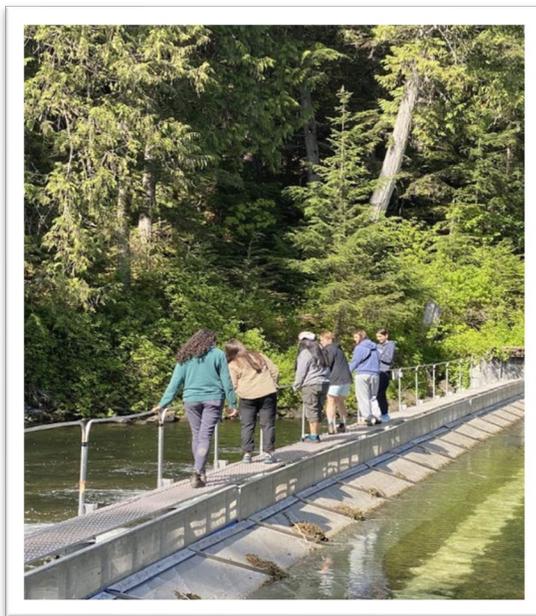
Hazelton Secondary Students Explore Women in Science



On June 4th, young women from Hazelton Secondary School participated in an inspiring Women in Science field experience. Students had the opportunity to learn about science-related careers from three incredible mentors: **Patience Muldoe** from Skeena Fisheries Commission, **Melissa Shirey** from Gitanyow Fisheries Authority, and **Darlene Vegh** from the Gitanyow Lax 'yip Guardian Fire Stewardship.

The group visited the Gitanyow fish fence and a cultural burning site, where students gained firsthand insight into the ways traditional Indigenous knowledge and Western science work together to support environmental stewardship and community well-being.

A huge thank you to HSS teachers **Stacey Brown** and **Stephanie Muldoe**, as well as **School District #82** and the **Inter-Tribal Education Committee**, for supporting this empowering and educational opportunity for students.



Gitanmaax Community Cultural Engagement & Celebration at Hazelton Secondary School

Message from the Superintendent, Tracey MacMillan

On Friday, June 6, Hazelton Secondary School was filled with the vibrant energy of culture, connection, and community as it hosted the Gitanmaax Community Cultural Engagement & Celebration. This special event brought together students, families, staff, Elders, and community members for a day of cultural sharing, Indigenous artistry, and traditional performance.

The celebration was a collaborative effort between Hazelton Secondary School and the Gitanmaax Band Government, whose partnership made this memorable day possible. The gymnasium and cafeteria were transformed into lively gathering spaces where over 20 Indigenous vendors showcased beautiful handmade items, apparel, crafts, and traditional foods. Throughout the day, dance performances captivated guests and highlighted the richness of local Indigenous traditions.

A very special thank you goes to our Indigenous Support Workers, whose vision, leadership, and organizational dedication were at the heart of this event. Their work behind the scenes ensured every detail was thoughtfully planned, making it a meaningful and inclusive experience for all who attended. Simply put, this event would not have been possible without them.

We also wish to extend heartfelt recognition and gratitude to Pansy Wright-Simms, Director of Education with the Gitanmaax Band Office, and Monica Simms, Education Advisor with the Gitksan Government Commission, for their steadfast support—not only in helping to make this day a success, but in their ongoing partnership with and support for the staff of the CMSD82 Indigenous Education Department. Their guidance and collaboration are deeply valued.

Events like this serve as a powerful reminder of what's possible when schools and Nations come together in the spirit of relationship and respect. Thank you to everyone who contributed their time, energy, and heart to this day of celebration—we are stronger together.



Pansy acknowledges HSS ISW's: Left to right are Grace Williams, Brianna Wright and Chante Simms. Missing from the photo is: Alberta Milton

Lindsay Harder (Executive Assistant to the Secretary Treasurer and Secretariat to the Indigenous Education Council (IEC), Pansy-Wright Simms (Gitanmaax Band, Director of Education), with granddaughter in front, Tracey MacMillan (Superintendent).



Elder/Knowledge Holder Role Model Program
*Reviewed and Approved by the Inter-Tribal Education Committee
 & Indigenous Education Department*

School	Project	Knowledge Keeper/Elder
Parkside	Indigenous Day Celebrations	• Tegan Anaka
Cassie Hall Elementary	Monthly Drumming	• Vivian Carlick, • Chris Peal • Roxanne Woods
Ecole Mountainview	Indigenous Day Drumming	Anne McDames

1.31 Indigenous Targeted Funded Projects – March/April 2025
*Reviewed and Approved by the Inter-Tribal Education Committee
 & Indigenous Education Department*

Hazelton Secondary School:
• Canoe's and Equipment
• Photography Equipment
• Nisga'a Valley Tour