



Indigenous Education Report

September 2025

This report highlights the work of the Indigenous Support Workers (ISW), alongside the meaningful contributions of teachers, administrator 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.

Message from Director of Instruction, Indigenous Education - Building Connections

Ama Sah/Good Day,

As the school year begins, the collective efforts, dedication, and collaboration of staff and community members are recognized as vital in shaping the success of students. Meaningful progress continues to be made, with a shared commitment to ensuring every learner feels supported, valued, and empowered.

These shared insights are intended to spark reflection and inspire strengthened connections with students, families, and communities. In doing so, pathways are created that honour both academic achievement and cultural identity, moving forward with purpose and unity.

The primary objective for the Indigenous Education Department this year is to cultivate meaningful connections and establish a strong foundation that effectively supports Indigenous learners. The vision is to build a team environment grounded in communication and collaboration, where students are empowered to excel in their academic, cultural, and personal pursuits. By strengthening relationships, ensuring consistency, and developing accessible resources, the Indigenous Education Department will continue to grow into a strong and supportive foundation for students and families alike.

Respectfully and with gratitude,

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- 1.31 Enhancement Proposal and Role Model requests approved September

Introducing the newly appointed Director of Instruction, Indigenous Education

Donna brings over 17 years of experience in education, having served in leadership roles across British Columbia and the Yukon, including Classroom Teacher, Learning Support Educator, District Vice Principal of Indigenous Education, and Equity in Action District Lead. A fluent speaker of Naskapi and continues to learn the Tahltan language, she demonstrates a strong commitment to Indigenous language revitalization and inclusive education.

Her work has consistently advanced Indigenous education through innovative, values-based initiatives grounded in culture, language, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Donna also holds a Master of Education in Multiliteracies with a focus on Indigenous Education, complemented by specialized training in Special Education and Assessments.

In this role, she aims to support the district's efforts to strengthen relationships, advance equity, and foster student success across all communities.

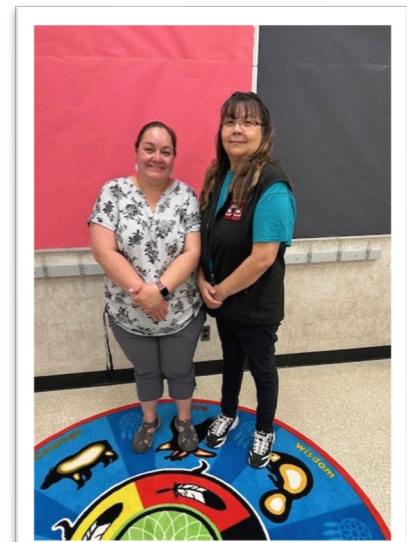


Beginning of School Visits

The importance of visiting and connecting with schools lies in the relationships built and the strong foundations established for collaboration and teamwork. During a recent visit to Kitwanga School, engagement with the Language and Culture Teacher focused on the important role of language and cultural programming in supporting student learning and identity development. These interactions highlighted the significance of fostering strong connections among staff, students, and the broader community.

As more individuals are met and deeper insight is gained into local culture and traditions, these visits continue to strengthen relationships, enhance cultural understanding, and contribute to the shared goal of advancing student success and well-being.

Rhonda was very willing to share her experiences and her deep pride in both her culture and her language. Her commitment to developing a program that best meets the needs of her school and students is both evident and inspiring.



Donna Mortimer, Director of Instruction, Indigenous Education, and Rhonda Morgan, Language and Culture teacher at Kitwanga Elementary School, introduced themselves and engaged in discussion.



Left to Right: Cheryl Watts, Education Coordinator, Donna Mortimer, Director of Instruction, Indigenous Education, Francis Racy, Interim Administrator

Making Connections and Building Relationships with Local First Nation Agencies

A visit was made to the Gitwangak Education Society, where we met with Cheryl Watts, Education Coordinator, and Francis Racy, Interim Administrator. Our discussion focused on supporting the Local Education Agreement and receiving an update on the newly established Indigenous Education Council for the District.

These conversations placed students—particularly Indigenous learners—at the center of the dialogue and emphasized the importance of collaboration,

partnership, and communication in creating the best supports for their success. The discussions also highlighted the critical role of teamwork with local agencies in strengthening pathways that ensure Indigenous students feel supported, valued, and empowered.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, September 30, 2025

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, also known as Orange Shirt Day, is observed each year on September 30th to honour Survivors of residential schools and acknowledge the ongoing impacts on Indigenous families and communities. Leading up to this day, schools across the district have organized meaningful activities including cultural workshops, storytelling, and guest speakers. These opportunities allow both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to come together in recognition, reflection, and continued learning.

We are deeply grateful to the Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members who will share their wisdom, and to the educators and ISWs who weave



Indigenous perspectives into everyday learning. This day is not only a time of remembrance, but also a call to action, encouraging students and staff alike to carry the spirit of reconciliation forward in their hearts, actions, and communities. It reminds us that reconciliation is not a single day, but a shared journey built on truth, respect, compassion, and hope for generations to come.

School Highlights

Nechako Elementary – Truth and Reconciliation Art Project



Two classes from Nechako Elementary are creating a collaborative art piece for display at the Kitimat Art Gallery in honour of Truth and Reconciliation. The project will feature three painted canvases — two from Grade 3 students and one from a Grade 1 class — representing the theme of “Three Sisters.” The artwork will also include a written passage constructed from magazine materials. Students began the project with splatter painting in shades of orange and will continue developing the piece, which will be exhibited throughout October. **ISW Lauren Alex**

Summer Reading Programs 2025

Summer Reading Programs were held in the communities of:

- Gitanmaax
- Gitsegukla
- Hagwilget
- Haisla
- Kitselas
- Sik-e-Dakh

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These programs provided students with opportunities to stay engaged with reading while also connecting to culture and community-based activities. By weaving together literacy, storytelling, and cultural learning, the programs encouraged children to continue building their skills over the summer months in a supportive and meaningful way. With the guidance of Elders, Knowledge Holders, and local facilitators, students were immersed in stories, hands-on activities, and traditions that strengthened both their literacy and their sense of identity.

Community Highlights

- **Gitanmaax** hosted a four-week literacy camp with 40 students, combining reading groups, journaling, storytelling, excursions to cultural sites, gardening, and community hikes. Each child left with books and literacy supplies to support continued learning at home.
- **Gitsegukla** held a month-long Summer Youth Cultural Camp with 14 regular youth participants. Activities included Gitksan language lessons, Elder-led storytelling, journaling, cultural workshops (weaving, beading, cedar rope making), water safety training, and excursions to Nisga'a and 'Ksan Museums. Youth also conducted family history interviews, connecting literacy to culture and identity.



Summer students on an adventure

These summer programs reflect the belief that learning does not stop when the school year ends, and that community-based literacy initiatives foster a lifelong love of reading while nurturing cultural pride and belonging.

Upcoming Events

District In-Service Day – September 26, 2025

This year's District In-Service Day will focus on *Honouring Truth & Reconciliation through Local Knowledge*. The day will begin with territorial welcomes and teachings from Knowledge Holders in the Gitksan, Haisla, and Ts'msyen regions, followed by a keynote session with author and educator Leona Prince – "Indigenous Brilliance and the Power of Story." In the afternoon, Principals and Vice Principals will guide school-based sessions engaging with Local Education Agreements (LEAs) alongside their staff.

Indigenous Education Council Meeting – October 7, 2025

It is with great pleasure that we announce the formation and initial meetings of the new Indigenous Education Council (IEC). The Council will serve as a collaborative forum to



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strengthen partnerships and guide our shared efforts in advancing the success and well-being of Indigenous learners. We look forward to working together in the spirit of respect, collaboration, and commitment to supporting students, families, and communities.

Indigenous Student Support Worker (ISW) Forum – October 10, 2025

We are excited to announce our upcoming ISW Forum, bringing together all Indigenous Student Support Workers from across the district for our first large in-person gathering of the school year. This forum will be an opportunity to connect, collaborate, and learn together, while also meeting Donna Mortimer, Director of Instruction, Indigenous Education, and engaging in shaping our shared vision for the work ahead.

The day will include time for relationship building, sharing ideas, and learning more about how we can work together for the educational success of all Indigenous students. We will also be joined by Zach Frankel (Vice Principal, Graduation Success Advisor, Terrace) and Tammy Bullied (Youth Support Worker), who will introduce themselves to the team and share how they can support.

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

School	Project	Knowledge Keeper/Elder
Caledonia	Cultural Identity, Intergenerational Trauma, Residential Schools	• Billy Morrison
Hazelton Secondary	Visual and Oral storytelling English First Peoples 11 and 12	• Phillip Stewart

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

Hazelton Secondary School:
• Indigenous Plants
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