



Indigenous Education Report

January 2026

COAST MOUNTAINS
BOARD OF EDUCATION
SCHOOL DISTRICT 82

Gratitude and Acknowledgement

This report highlights the many learning experiences, cultural connections, and relationship-based initiatives that took place across the district from December through January, reflecting our shared commitment to supporting Indigenous students through culturally grounded education.

We extend our deep gratitude to the Indigenous Support Workers (ISWs) whose dedication and relational work continue to support student engagement, well-being, and success across schools. This work is strengthened through collaboration with school-based teams, including teachers, administrators, Elders, Knowledge Holders, and community partners, whose guidance and presence are essential to meaningful Indigenous education.

Together, these collective efforts create learning environments where Indigenous students feel seen, valued, and supported, and where Indigenous knowledge, culture, and identity are honoured as living and vital aspects of learning.

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A Message from the Director of Instruction, Indigenous Education

As we welcome the New Year, I want to take a moment to reflect with gratitude and look ahead with purpose and optimism.

The year before us offers an important opportunity to strengthen and renew our relationships with students, families, communities, and partners. Relationship building remains at the heart of Indigenous Education, and it is through respectful, reciprocal connections that we create learning environments where Indigenous students feel seen, valued, and supported to thrive.

This year, we are renewing our commitment to academic growth and student engagement. Regular attendance and active participation are essential foundations for success, and we



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encourage all students to remain connected to their learning every day. Together, we can create supportive and inspiring learning environments where Indigenous students not only achieve academically but also build the confidence to pursue their future goals.

Equally important is our partnership with families and communities. Families play a vital role in student success, and together we can continue to foster pathways that encourage Indigenous learners to explore their interests, develop their gifts, and envision a future filled with possibility, whether in education, careers, leadership, or community.

As we move forward into this New Year, let us do so with shared intention, hope, and commitment. By working together, we can continue to build learning experiences that inspire Indigenous students, honour the knowledge and resilience they bring, and celebrate their academic achievements along the way.

Wishing you all a year filled with growth, connection, and continued collaboration.

Respectfully,
Donna Mortimer
Director of Instruction, Indigenous Education

Indigenous Education Department - Building Connections This December

During the month of December, we have had wonderful opportunities to strengthen relationships with students, families, and communities. Through activities, Christmas lunches, and our Role Model programs, we were able to engage with students, celebrate their achievements, and inspire them to see the possibilities in their learning and future goals.

These moments remind us that learning is also about connection, mentorship, and creating supportive spaces where every student feels valued and encouraged.



Bannock making
at Caledonia



Christmas lunch at
Parkside with staff



Christmas Concert
at Cassie Hall



Connections Room
Christmas Party -
Caledonia



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FNESC Education Conference 2025 – Professional Learning & Networking

This year, Coast Mountains School District was represented at the FNESC Education Conference by a delegation of 7 Indigenous Support Workers, 1 teacher from Majagaleehl Gali Aks (Gitxsan Immersion), and 4 Vice Principals. Staff shared that attending was an impactful professional learning experience that strengthened understanding of Indigenous education priorities, culturally grounded practice, and relationship-based approaches to supporting Indigenous learner success.

The 2025 FNESC Education Conference, themed “Creating an Education System Worthy of our Children,” brought educators together in Vancouver to explore system-level shifts needed to better support First Nations learners, including ensuring students see their languages, cultures, and traditional values reflected in schooling and addressing “racism of low expectations.” The conference featured keynote speakers Duncan McCue and Niigaan Sinclair, along with plenary and workshop sessions focused on current priorities in First Nations education.



Conference programming included topics directly connected to district work such as improving attendance and sessions on the effective implementation of Indigenous Education Councils (IECs), reflecting the province-wide emphasis on meaningful Indigenous engagement in decisions impacting Indigenous students. Staff returned with renewed motivation and practical ideas to support culturally grounded learning, strengthen school-based relationships, and continue building collective capacity across roles. - **Contributed by: Taylor Murrell, Vice Principal**

Participation in this professional learning strengthened staff capacity to implement culturally responsive and relationship-based practices. Staff returned with increased confidence and practical strategies to support Indigenous student engagement, attendance, and inclusive decision-making at the school level.



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Kitimat City High – Indigenous Design & Art with Knowledge Holder Sheila Duncan

Kitimat City High students in Grades 10–12 participated in an Indigenous design and art experience led by Knowledge Holder Sheila Duncan, supported by Indigenous Support Worker Debbie Dilg and classroom teacher Kathy Bell. Learners worked to enhance previously created drums while learning about Indigenous design, the cultural significance of drums, and protocols of respect when working with them.



The sessions emphasized patience, self-belief, and cultural connection. Student reflections indicated a strong sense of pride and belonging among Indigenous learners, while non-Indigenous students valued the opportunity to learn alongside their peers in an inclusive environment. Feedback highlighted Sheila Duncan's ability to connect with learners and her willingness to continue supporting future cultural learning at the school. - **Contributed by: Debbie Dilg, Indigenous Support Worker,**



This experience supported Indigenous students in strengthening cultural identity, confidence, and pride, while fostering an inclusive learning environment for all learners. Student reflections indicated increased engagement and a strong sense of belonging. The collaboration between the Knowledge Holder, the Indigenous Support Worker, and the classroom teacher demonstrates how targeted funding supports culturally meaningful learning with positive impacts on student well-being.



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Suwilaawks Kindergarten Cultural Learning – Seasonal Teachings and Moose Hunting Traditions



As part of ongoing Kindergarten cultural learning, Indigenous Support Worker Roxanne Clayton shared seasonal teachings about traditional food gathering, focusing on the importance of feasts, clans, and moose hunting traditions. Students learned that Indigenous peoples gather food from the land throughout the year, with each season offering what is needed to sustain families and communities.

Through storytelling and visual supports, students were introduced to teachings about respect for Mother Earth and all living things. Roxanne shared how offerings are made before hunting to give thanks and ask for guidance, and how every part of the animal is used and preserved with care. Students also learned about the importance of working together to prepare and share food, particularly with Elders, reinforcing values of gratitude, responsibility, and community. - Contributed by Roxanne Clayton, Indigenous Support Worker

This hands-on and relational learning experience helped students connect cultural teachings to food, family, and care for the land, supporting early understanding of Indigenous knowledge as living, seasonal, and deeply rooted in respect.



Cassie Hall – Fried Bread Fridays

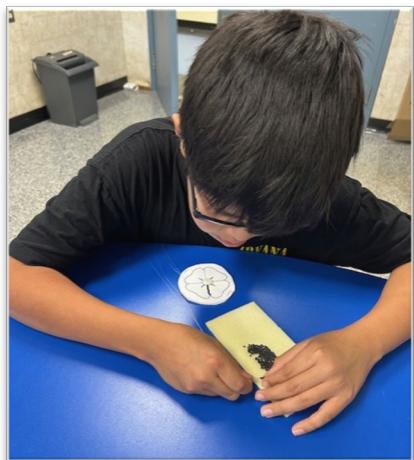
Cassie Hall Elementary continues to host Fried Bread Fridays as a monthly school-wide initiative that brings students together through shared food, culture, and community connection. Rooted in Indigenous traditions, the event provides students with an experiential way to learn about Indigenous culture while fostering inclusion, respect, and belonging across grades K–6. By gathering as a whole school to share fried bread, often alongside cultural activities students experience learning that is relational, joyful, and grounded in

community. Fried Bread Fridays have become a meaningful tradition that strengthens relationships, supports student well-being, and reinforces Indigenous perspectives as a living and valued part of everyday school life. - *Contributed by Kendra Leblond Vice Principal*

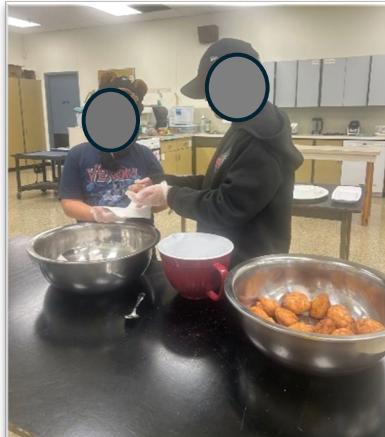
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Kitwanga Elementary School – Cultural Learning Through Hands-On Practice



Students at Kitwanga Elementary School participated in small-group cultural learning experiences focused on beading and Bannock making, and drumstick making. In the beading group, students created Remembrance Day poppies, taking pride in their work while learning patience, focus, and the cultural significance of working with their hands.



Students also took part in Bannock making as part of school and community connection. Bannock prepared by students was shared during a parent-teen meeting and later enjoyed by all four divisions in their classrooms. These experiences supported relationship building, cultural connection, and a strong sense of pride as students contributed meaningfully to their school community. **-Contributed by: Darlene Williams, Indigenous Support Worker**

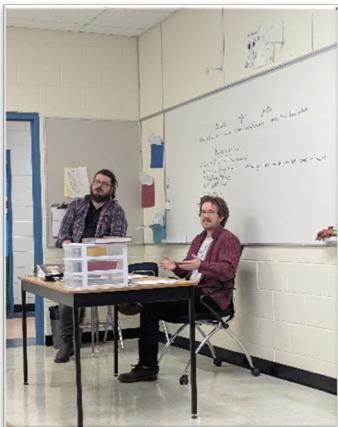
These activities supported student engagement, cultural pride, and a sense of belonging through hands-on, culturally grounded learning.



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Caledonia Connections – December Highlights



Throughout December, the Caledonia Connections team supported student engagement, cultural learning, and well-being through a combination of curricular enrichment, cultural celebration, and targeted supports. Guest speakers from the Upper Skeena Counselling and Law Society visited Law 12 classes, providing students with real-world perspectives on advocacy, justice, and systemic barriers facing Indigenous peoples in the North. These discussions encouraged critical thinking and empowered students to recognize the role of voice, values, and allyship in contributing to meaningful change.



Cultural connection and celebration were central to December programming. The Winter Solstice Feast, prepared by the Foods 11 class under the guidance of Chef Job Daniels, brought together students, staff, and community partners to honour academic achievement and cultural learning. Support from the Terrace Nisga'a Society through drumming and cultural presence helped foster an inclusive environment where students felt recognized and valued.



Recognizing the emotional challenges that can accompany the holiday season, the school prioritized student well-being. A culturally guided Talking Circle space provided students with a safe setting to connect and reflect. Small-group programming, including Dudes Group and Girls Group, focused on life skills, leadership, self-care, and peer support. - **Contributed by Stephanie Louie, Indigenous Support Worker**

Through guest speakers, cultural feasts, and small-group programming, students experienced learning supported leadership, resilience, and emotional well-being. These initiatives contributed to improved engagement and strengthened relationships during a season that can be challenging for many students.

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Caledonia Secondary – Nass Valley Learning on the Land

Caledonia Secondary students participated in a learning-on-the-land experience in the Nass Valley, deepening their understanding of Nisga'a history, governance, culture, and relationships to land. Visits included Hlgu Isgwit (Nisga'a hot springs), a sacred site used for ceremonial, medicinal, and spiritual purposes, where students learned about the responsibility to protect culturally significant places and the importance of respectful land stewardship guided by Nisga'a knowledge and law.



At Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Provincial Park, students explored the geological and cultural history of the land while learning about the park's significance as the first provincially protected area in British Columbia to be jointly managed by a First Nation and the Province. Through interpretive teachings, students gained insight into Nisga'a oral histories, the impact of the volcanic eruption on Nisga'a communities, and the role of Indigenous governance in land management and conservation.

The visit to the Nisga'a Museum in Laxgalts'ap allowed students to engage with the Ancestors' Collection while learning about the preservation and repatriation of Nisga'a cultural belongings. This experience deepened students' understanding of cultural continuity and resilience, while strengthening respect for Indigenous sovereignty and appreciation for place-based learning rooted in story and lived experience. - **Contributed by Sheena-Marie Turgeon, Indigenous Support Worker**



Students participated in learning-on-the-land experiences in the Nass Valley, deepening understanding of Nisga'a governance, history, and land stewardship. These experiences strengthened cultural awareness, respect for Indigenous sovereignty, and appreciation for place-based learning.



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Hazelton Secondary School – Cultural Learning & Connection

Elders in Residence Program



Hazelton Secondary School has launched its Elders in Residence program, following thoughtful community consultation and collaboration with local education coordinators. Elders have been welcomed into the Indigenous Support Room, where they have begun building meaningful connections with students through storytelling, teachings around genealogy, shared meals, and one-on-one conversations in a welcoming, relational space.

Early activities have included traditional food preparation, such as making fried

bread for the school community, helping foster comfort, curiosity, and a strong sense of belonging. The Elders in Residence program is supporting student well-being, cultural connection, and relationship-building, and will continue to enrich student learning throughout the coming months.

- Contributed by Ryan McCann Vice Principal



Traditional Arts Learning – Vest Making
Hazelton Secondary students are engaged in a traditional arts class project focused on making traditional vests. Through this hands-on learning, students are developing skills in cultural design and craftsmanship while learning about identity, patience, and pride in cultural expression. This project supports student engagement and creativity while reinforcing Indigenous knowledge as living and practiced through art. *- Contributed by Alberta Milton, Indigenous Support Worker*



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.



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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

Kitwanga Elementary

- Orange Shirt Project
- Cultural Connections Gitanyow Student Teaching Feast

Suwilaawks Community School

- Outdoor Learning, Plants and Trees

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

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
Suwilaawks	Local Artist, Clans and Crests Paintings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sabrina Williams
Cassie Hall	Monthly Drumming Sessions Remembrance Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Christopher Peal• Roxanne Woods• Anne McDames
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anne McDames
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
Ecole Mountainview	Feasting systems and protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jenine Klein
Kitimat City High	Art and Drums	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sheila Duncan



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Looking Ahead

- Continued expansion of Elders in Residence and role model programming
- Ongoing focus on attendance, engagement, and student wellness
- Strengthening land-based learning and community partnerships
- Continued professional learning to build staff capacity

Upcoming Events (February)

- **Hobiye (Nisga'a New Year):** Schools and communities will recognize Hobiye, celebrating the Nisga'a New Year and the return of the moon.
- **Louis Riel Day / Family Day (February):** Acknowledging the contributions of Métis leader Louis Riel and the importance of family and community.
- **International Mother Language Day (February 21):** A day recognizing the importance of Indigenous language revitalization and linguistic diversity.

