



NIC KWAK'WALA STUDENTS BUILDING ONLINE COMMUNITY

NIC Kwak'wala students are exploring language and culture in new ways and building an online community.

The language courses were transitioned to digital delivery this summer, bringing new opportunities for students to learn the language. The transition to digital learning has proven successful for students, thanks to the support from their instructors.

Kwak'wala courses are taught by two instructors and an NIC Elder in Residence, who answers questions, provides perspective, gives context to questions that emerge and helps with pronunciation.



NIC student Jeannine Lindsay took Kwak'wala language courses online this summer.

"We felt very connected to our instructors and our Elder Evelyn Voyageur," said Comox student Jeannine Lindsay. "We could send them a quick message asking what a word was and they would respond instantly."

The class offers students the ability to participate at their comfort level. Students are able to study from the comfort of their own home, focus on themselves and find a balance for their learning style.

For Lindsay, taking the course online gave her the opportunity to concentrate on her studies and more on herself.

"I felt it very easy to multitask," said Lindsay. "I felt more comfortable to go online and do research at the same time while I was in class. I had my computer set up, and I was listening to everyone, but I also had my book out and I'm taking notes."

The digital offering also allowed students from across the region to access the same class.

"I think being able to offer it online has really been easier for a lot of people to take it," said student Rory Annett, who lives on Quadra Island. "The people who are learning it are from Nanaimo, Victoria, Quadra Island, and Port Hardy, and are all able to join in on the same course and create a virtual community. If everyone had to attend physically, that just wouldn't be possible."

Annett and his wife took Kwak'wala Immersion 1 together this spring with goals to connect to the area they are living in and understand the culture.

"Learning to speak the language has been something I've wanted to do for a long time," he said. "It's a way to connect to the land."

For more information on all NIC's Indigenous Language courses, visit www.nic.bc.ca/indigenous-education.

Introduction

Kelly Shopland, Director, Indigenous Education

Gilakas'la,

As we prepared this edition of our Indigenous Education newsletter, we reflected back on the incredible changes we've seen in the last 9 months. COVID-19 has changed our world and impacted every aspect of our work and personal lives. For Indigenous Education at NIC, it also provided unique opportunities for us to rethink how we approach our educational work and our work toward connection and reconciliation.

We transitioned our language courses to online learning, with positive feedback from students who were able to access courses from across the region. The challenge of transitioning land-based cultural learning into an online format led to students building their community online and fostering connections that would not have been possible before.

This fall also marked a milestone for us at our Campbell River campus with the groundbreaking on our new Gathering Place. This new space has been years in the planning and will provide a new, indoor space for Indigenous students and the entire college community to use and enjoy. We want to thank the Gathering Place Committee for their guidance and leadership throughout consultation and design process.

As we look to the months ahead, we know there will be continued challenges in terms of program delivery and project development, but our last few months have shown the commitment, dedication and passion that our entire NIC community has in ensuring our students have the best experience possible.

If you know of a positive news story, project or activity that you want to share, please let us know: ab.ed@nic.bc.ca.

CAMPUS UPDATES

Construction begins on new gathering place at the Campbell River campus.

NIC breaks ground on new Gathering Place at the Campbell River campus.

The Gathering Place will provide a welcoming environment for Indigenous students and community to participate in gatherings, Indigenous education courses, workshops and events.

The building is designed by Alfred Waugh from Formline Architecture and will be adjacent to the current student lounge.

Designed to represent a drum, the formal Gathering Place is a Big House structure. The space includes both inside and outside spaces that can be used in a variety of ways.

The design was developed through consultation with representatives from local First Nations, Elders, students, Indigenous organizations and Chief and Council.

NIC will continue to consult with local Elders, Leaders and Artists to ensure the space is representative of the Liqwiltokw People.

Construction is expected to take about a year, but may be extended as a result of community feedback and protocol.



Construction crews break ground on the new Indigenous Gathering Place at NIC's Campbell River campus.



Artist rendering of the outside of the Gathering Place. The building features both indoor and outdoor spaces that can be used for gatherings, classes, ceremonies, carving projects and other events.

Artist rendering of the inside of the Gathering Place. The inside features Big House styling with seating around the outside walls. The interior of the building will be constructed using locally-sourced cedar and will feature carvings around the structural beams.



HIGHLIGHTS

NIC support services move online

NIC's transition to digital learning this fall has also included a shift for student services – moving online so students can access supports from wherever they are.

“Our goal this year was really to meet students where they are at and walk alongside them,” said Sarah Lawrence, Indigenous education advisor.

Advising appointments are now held fully online, with staff connecting via phone or video, to meet with students and discuss their goals.

“The move to digital is a shift in how we're interacting with students,” said Lawrence. “Instead of inviting them to our spaces on campus, we're now asking students to invite us into their home space.”

This has opened up a more community-based sense of learning,” she added. “We're seeing children, partners and grandparents in

the 'virtual room' watching the one they care for embark on their path of education. It's really lovely to be a part of it.”

Along with offering virtual one-on-one advising, the Indigenous Education team has also expanded services with virtual drop-in sessions and late night advising appointment availability to help accommodate those who can't make appointments during typical business hours.

Advisors have also held drop-in virtual advising with Indigenous communities and in high schools, virtual events aimed at connecting students with program information and information about post-secondary.

Drop-in Indigenous student lounges were also scheduled throughout the fall term to give students the opportunity to connect with NIC's Elders in Residence.

Advisors also launched a new Indigenous Student Newsletter. The monthly email communication features upcoming events, key dates students should be aware of, FAQ's,

information about funding opportunities, tips for self-care and reminders of how to connect.

“It's a great way to share resources and information that students can access when they have time,” said Rylee LaTrace, Indigenous education advisor who launched the newsletter. “It's also a reminder of the services and supports that are available, so if a student is feeling that they need some support, they know we're here for them and have an easy way to reach out to us.”

The Indigenous Education team is also asking students what is working for them to adjust how things are delivered and ensure they are meeting the needs of the students. The Indigenous Student Survey launched November 25 to gather feedback.

“The move to digital has shown us that education does not have to be as prescriptive as it once was,” said Lawrence. “We want to encourage students to come as they are and when they get here we can help hold the space for their learning to take place.”

Homalco First Nation invests in forestry courses for Indigenous students

A new partnership between Homalco First Nation and NIC will provide Indigenous students a first step into a wide range of entry level forestry careers.

“This training program is a vital step for Homalco Nation in building capacity to participate in the local forest economy,” said Chief Darren Blaney, in a media release from the Homalco First Nation. “Our territory is home to diverse forest and plant species and balancing stewardship and economic values requires skilled people. I encourage our members to take advantage of this opportunity.”

The Coastal Forest Worker Certificate

program is being offered tuition-free to eligible students and is made possible through a \$196,308 grant offered by WorkBC's Community Workforce Response Grant program.

This isn't the first time Homalco Nation and North Island College have successfully worked together. Last year, the partners collaborated on a Hatchery Operations Certificate program which graduated 12 Indigenous students.

Five of the Hatchery Operations graduates are now working at Homalco Nations' Orford Hatchery in salmon enhancement and guardianship roles. Other graduates have found jobs in the private sector, like class valedictorian Robert Harry.

“I was a Registered Forestry Technician until

an injury took me out of the field,” said Harry. “Concerned about my future I signed up for the hatchery technician course. Now I'm working in the private sector with the goal of applying this additional knowledge to our own Salmon enhancement efforts at the Orford Hatchery. I want to thank John Blaney, Dr. Ronquillo and Cpt. Chris Bunn for encouraging me on this learning journey.”

Cheryl O'Connell, Dean, Faculty of Trades and Technical Programs for North Island College says that the school is thankful for another opportunity to work together. “North Island College is honoured to be again collaborating with Homalco to serve the Nation's education and economic development priorities.”

The new program will start December 14.

WELCOME KITS

NIC's Elders in Residence came together to build welcome kits for our Indigenous students this fall.

Along with the kits, which included items focusing on connection, self-care and culture, the Elders prepared a video message to students. We wanted to share some of their inspiring messages with you.

Daryle Mills, Elder in Residence, Campbell River

Kit items: immune-boosting tea, essential oil rollers, cough drops



"These are the things I use for myself this time of year to stay healthy. I hope you're doing well in your studies. I look forward to seeing you on Zoom or in person and ask you all to please take care."

Jane Jones, Elder in Residence, Port Alberni

Kit items: craft kit with felt, buttons and sequins, cedar

"In our Nuu-chah-nulth territory, the cedar tree was very, very important in our lives. It was used for our transportation - our canoes, our houses, and also for baskets and steamed to make boxes to store things. Be safe and be happy!"



Dr. Evelyn Voyageur, Elder in Residence, Comox Valley

Kit item: woven cedar bookmark.



"When I was thinking about what to give to the students, this came into my mind. It can be used as bookmarks or decorations. The mighty cedar of the west coast people was known as the long-life giver and the healing woman. In these challenging times, hope we can see the cedar to keep us healed"

June Johnson, Elder in Residence, Campbell River

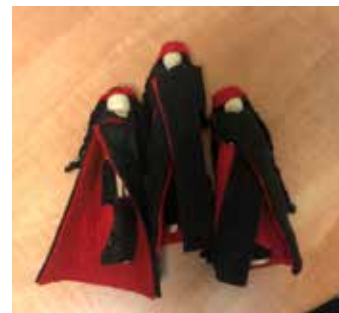
Kit items: tea, parsnip, devil's club salve, bracelet

"The kwak'wak'wa used to use devil's club bark for salves, tinctures and teas. The wood was used to hang over your doorway, which was said to give magical and protective powers against negativity. The bracelet is given to you for positivity on your journey in school and with North island College. I wish you all the best on your journey and your education."



Maggie Sedgemore, Elder in Residence, Mixelakwila

Kit items: clothespeg doll



"This gift is a doll that was based of a prototype from my friend Diane Bell, who has passed away. I wanted to make these to honour her. The apron has a heart on it because we send you our hearts and really hope that you do well with your studies. The button blanket has the tree of life on it.

I wish the students good luck with your learning and to remember that learning is a life-long."

Fernanda Paré, Elder in Residence, Comox Valley

Kit item: kleenex, hand sanitizer, face mask, gloves

"Be sure to do lots of self-care during this time. Spend time in nature, at the beach, at the river or in the mountains. I miss our students a lot. I miss being on campus and doing our gatherings. I look forward to when we can all gather safely again."

