



Our Award Winning Community Farm in 'Yalis

Our food security program goes beyond providing meals. By growing nutritious food and using traditional harvesting methods, we're ensuring our community is nourished both physically and spiritually. Our community farm has become a gathering place, where we can get our hands dirty and keep our hearts and minds happy by growing delicious, nutritious food and getting to see it from start to finish.

grow with love



Ku'ustola awil'golakw,
a'ek'a'kila'ena'yi,
a'ek'a'kila'akw dlu'wi
alumasagila

*A wellspring of
inclusive healing,
learning, and
renewal*

HEALING CENTRE
CULTURE CAMP
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
GATHERING PLACE
ECOTOURISM
DESTINATION
SOCIAL VENTURE



2024 Land Awards

WINNER Food Sovereignty

Nawalakw Community Farm
Nawalakw



We are humbled and honoured to be amongst the amazing programs, people and projects that received recognition at the 2024 Land Awards, hosted by the Real Estate Foundation of BC (REFBC). The inspirational event hosted in Vancouver was attended by approximately 250 people and included dignitaries from all walks of life. Our 2.5 acre community garden was recognized in the category of food sovereignty for exceptional leadership in sustainable, equitable, and socially just land use.

Established in 2010, the biennial Land Awards recognize outstanding projects and leaders in BC that protect the lands and waters we love and create sustainable, inclusive, and resilient communities. Congratulations Verna, Eddie, our seasonal youth workers, support staff, and everyone who pours so much love into our garden program.

Our Values

Maya'xalápa
respect one another

Łaxwálapa
love one another

Galgapóla
hold one another

Ga'walápa
help one another

ni'noxsola / ni'nogad — our wise ones

We are honoured to meet with our mi'maya'ant to support and guide our work at Nawalakw. We look forward to continuously taking guidance and gaining strength from our Chiefs and Matriarchs as we move through our work and our team continues to grow.



Strategic Planning — with our mi'maya'ant

In June, our team gathered in-person with our mi'maya'ant (respected ones), Kwankwaxwálige'dzi Wakas, Gwiki'lakw, Okwilagame' dlu' Tłapálasugwi'lakw — Chief Robert Joseph, Margaret Wilson, Alex Nelson, and Nella Nelson. We are grateful to have their knowledge, leadership, and presence during such important work.

Our team was blessed to share a beautiful week together to focus on strategic planning and priorities for the next few years. Guided by our mi'maya'ant we envisioned our future at Nawalakw and the work we are committed to doing to bring healing, hope and wellness to our communities through language and culture.

Centering Kwakwaka'wakw ways in all we do, we have a particular sense of urgency around learning and teaching Bakwamkala that guides our work and our plans for the future.



Capacity Building, Training + Employment

Our training and employment program strengthens our capacity through training, workshops, and our summer and year-round employment program.

Though our summer employment program was jeopardized due to last-minute funding cuts, we are grateful for our generous supporters who donated funds so we can continue to hire and build the capacity of Kwakwaka'wakw youth.

The Nawalakw summer employment program is well underway which includes 17 young people ages 17-30 years. We hired 9 youth in the first cohort and 6 youth in the second cohort, many of whom are on summer break from college, university, high

school or who have recently graduated.

The two cohorts are busy at placements in our garden, at camp in Hada, with our admin team, and supporting our communications and fundraising teams. We have a language tech, deck-hand, and training and employment assistants.

Our summer employees work closely with our staff, supporting many areas that will advance the beautiful work we are fortunate to do together.

We look forward to continuously creating opportunities for our young people to step into their roles and build their skills and confidence.



Intermediate Tandem Lake Canoe Training!

The group had an exciting week mastering strokes, practicing rescue drills, and paddling around the entire island of Alert Bay to put their new skills to the ultimate test! Congratulations to Emily Lyall, Denzel Wilson, William Whonnock, Jasmine Hanuse, Sarah Martha Bruce and Nicolas Conway on their certifications!

Gilakas'la Shawn Kangro & Shaylin Warren from Paddle Canada & Outward Bound for travelling to our community to provide this training!



celebrate our trainees

Language

Land

Connection

Learning

Healing

Growth

Confidence

Language + Culture Camps — Hi'mānis Kākūtłā'atsi

Our camps at Hi'mānis Kākūtłā'atsi (a place of forever learning) nurture tradition, culture and holistic wellness. We include language learning, on-the-land traditional activities, physical activity, songs and dances, traditional foods and time for reflection.

Each camp includes members of our language team, camp operations staff and at least three elders.

We greet our guests when they arrive at the dock in Hada with our welcome song, where there is always excitement in the air for what the week is to bring.

Participants are immersed in our rich traditions while learning from our fluent speakers.

Our goal is to provide land-based activities, interactions between elders and youth, opportunities to hear and speak and we are encouraged to learn and speak Bakwamkala and culture in a joyful, peaceful, nurturing and supernatural environment.

Knowing who we are and where we come from gives us a sense of belonging, pride, and a deep connection to our identity.



The impact from our camps are seen in the transformation of our youth — their increased confidence, strength in their spirits, positive and uplifting behaviours when visiting Hada. Our young people consider the impact of resource consumption and talk about and plan for their future. Parents and communities notice this and we know so many of our participants want to stay when the week is complete.

We are normalizing language learning and being brave in utilizing our language to understand it and the knowledge it contains. Unlocking the language is key to restoring our traditional ways of being and rooting deeply into our ancestral knowledge. We will continue to reach the goal of fluency for our children and future generations.



Bákwámkala — immersive language program

In partnership with the Kwíkwasuútinuúw Haxwa'mis First Nation and the Indigenous Education department of the University of Victoria, we have been supporting each other to increase our Bákwámkala proficiency. Our first cohort of students, instructors and elder mentors, located in seven different communities, started their online learning journey together in September. On average, they sit together for four hours per day, four days per week.

Through ten university courses, we have been learning to learn (how we each learn best), basic linguistics, learning Bákwámkala, creating resources, and learning how to share Bákwámkala (teach others) simultaneously. Knowledge is shared with youth and elders at Hada and at various events in our respective communities. It has been incredible to witness the students' learning journeys and to see them lead lengthy, interactive immersion sessions.

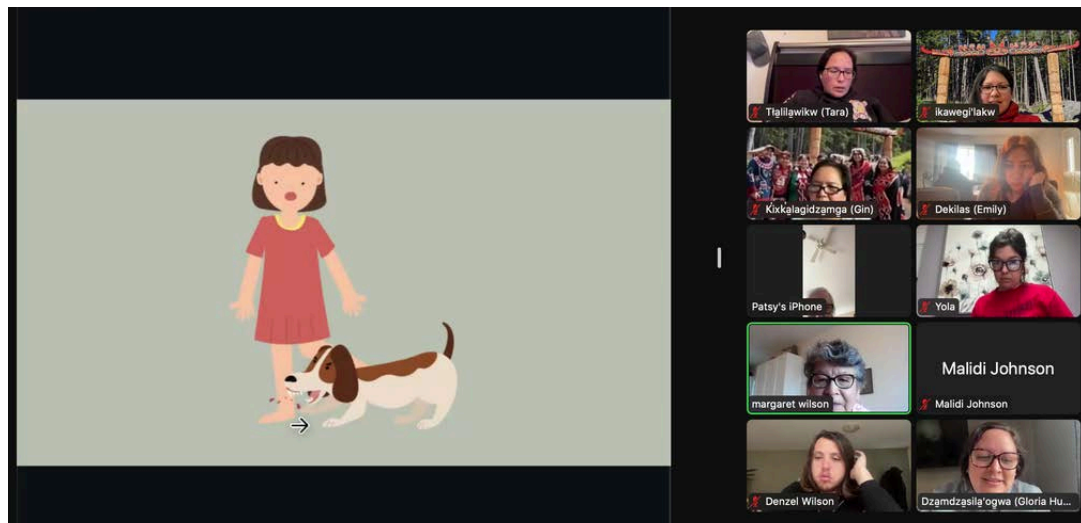
Gwiki'lakw - Margaret Wilson

My personal connection with re-learning and teaching Kwákwala appears that all the learning and teaching sessions are interwoven with my lived experiences with Grandparents and community members. There are connections with stories, recorded Elders speeches at Bighouses and prayers of gratitude that bring back vivid memories of how our Kwákwaká'wakw people lived one with our lands and oceans. My professional connection to the students restoring our language is the importance of language as a health determinant.



It is with this in mind that I proudly reflect on the current Bákwámkala teachings and learning. Each student keeps our Bákwámkala alive, as they proudly speak and demonstrate their projects and assignments.

Since the beginning of program, I have witnessed huge progress in the students' abilities to communicate effectively, exchange and understand simple information. I feel confident that the students learning together with continued commitment, and support for one another will lead the way in keeping our Bákwámkala alive.





Students on Ice Expedition

Exciting news from our community! Țłakwasgām, Claire Willie and William Whonnock, along with other students, are embarking on the SOI Foundation's Nunatsiavut to Nunavut Expedition. This transformative journey aboard the Polar Prince icebreaker connects 22 international youth (ages 14-24) with scientists, Indigenous Elders, artists, educators, and experts. The trip, which started on July 22nd, spans from Nain, Nunatsiavut, to Iqaluit, Nunavut, providing hands-on learning experiences in history, culture, and ecology.

Claire, who is Dzawadaǵ'enuǵw and studies at Vancouver Island University, is eager to expand her education and experience. William, a 'Nāmgis youth, sees this expedition as a dream come true, aligning with his aspirations to travel and explore the world.

Both Claire and William were inspired by past Kwakwāka'wakw participants and underwent a rigorous application process to join this trip. They are excited to meet other youth, gain new perspectives, and be involved with cultural learning.

This journey promises to provide them with opportunities and lifelong connections. Their biggest challenge will be the demanding hike in the Torngat Mountains. We eagerly await their return to hear more about their incredible experiences and the knowledge they've gained!



Facilities Update

Following completion of construction in March, our four tiny homes at Hada are now fully furnished and being enjoyed by our guests and staff. The addition of these four structures gives us more capacity and flexibility to accommodate a variety of different types of gatherings like camps focused on adult wellness or corporate groups, in addition to our regular youth and community programming.



Bákwamk'ala — our students are welcomed home!

Our Certificate in Indigenous Language Proficiency in Bákwamk'ala/Kwakwala students were fortunate to return home in July! Our group spent a few glorious days learning together, in-person, on our beautiful territories. This on-the-land learning was part of our tenth course focused on Musgamakw Dzawada'enuxw awi'nagwis lead by Gwi'molas - Ryan Nicolson. Gilakas'la Gwa'yasdám's!



pictured left to right: ikawegi'lakw (Deanna), Gwi'molas (Ryan), Dzamdzasila'ogwa (Gloria), Gwiki'lakw (Margaret), Tłqilqwik (Tara), Pudłidi-kana'ł (Patsy), Tłatłalo'nqm (Steven), Badidu (Shelley), Dekilas (Emily), Tłakwakqan (James), Kíxkqlagidzqmq (Gin), Kaminawadzi (Pewi), Watsinagwis (Thompson)

Wildfire Training lax Hada

In May, trainees gathered at Hada to embark on a week-long training program to learn about wildfires and how to protect our sacred places should an emergency occur.

We are grateful for the participants who took the time to learn in classroom style sessions and to get out on the land to learn critical firefighting techniques.



Youth in Tofino

Twelve youth from 'Yalis and surrounding northern Vancouver Island nations embarked on a memorable journey across the island, making several meaningful stops on their way to Tofino. This trip was a fantastic way to kick off their summer break, providing a blend of adventure, learning, and connection to the land with Tofino Adventure Camp, where they learned to surf and spent their time camping.



Gilakas'la I thank you

We have been blessed by the loving people and generous companies that have come alongside us to support our vision and work. We are deeply grateful for the local and global partners we have met on this journey so far.

Through language and culture programs, Nawalakw is committed to being a place of hope and healing, strengthening the identity of our people through a connection to our ancestors, culture, and this sacred place. We know the land, air, and sea heals and sustains us. The Nawalakw mission will continue for our children and youth, and our children yet unborn. Gilakas'la for the many gifts that support this vitally important work. We are abundantly blessed, and our hearts are filled with love and gratitude.



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