

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life

Gitxaała Nation

ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT · 2026

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life

Territory Acknowledgement

This report is prepared for the citizens of Gitxaała Nation and honours Gitxaała Territory, the lands and waters our people have lived with, governed and cared for since time immemorial, and which we have never ceded or surrendered.

Our connection to this Territory is carried in our Adaawx, our laws, our names, and our responsibilities to one another and to the land and sea that sustain us. That connection holds wherever Gitxaała citizens live, whether at home or in towns and cities far from our Territory.

As we come together for the 2026 Annual General Meeting, we honour our Ancestors, our Elders, and the generations still to come. We move forward guided by our theme, *Aama Didüüls – A Good Life*.

T’oya̲xsut ‘nüün.

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Rooted in Our Laws, United in Our Purpose: Building the Future of Gitxaała Nation

Protecting Our Rights, Honouring Our People and Creating Opportunities for Generations to Come

Linda Innes | Chief Councillor, Gitxaała Nation





Our Strength Comes From Who We Are

When I think about the future of Gitxaała Nation, I think first about the generations who came before us.

I think about our ancestors who maintained our laws, defended our territories, protected our language and carried our knowledge through times of extraordinary change. I think about our Elders, hereditary leaders and matriarchs who continue to remind us of our responsibilities. And I think about our children and grandchildren, who will inherit the Nation we are building today.

These connections are at the heart of my responsibilities as Chief Councillor.

Leadership is not simply about holding an elected position. It is about understanding that the decisions we make today will have consequences long after our time in office has ended.

Our people have lived with and cared for our lands and waters since time immemorial. Our Ayaawx, Adaawx and inherited responsibilities continue to guide who we are, how we govern and how we understand our place in the world.

The responsibility of elected leadership is to respect those foundations while navigating the complex political, legal, economic and administrative systems that influence the lives of our citizens.

During the 2025–2026 reporting year, Gitxaała Nation continued advancing work across every part of our government: protecting our rights and title, strengthening governance, supporting children and families, improving infrastructure, expanding educational opportunities, caring for our lands and waters, and preparing for greater economic independence.

This progress belongs to our Nation. It reflects the contributions of our hereditary leadership, Council, administration, employees, community members and the many people who work on behalf of Gitxaała.

Our Annual General Meeting theme, Aama Didüüls – A Good Life, asks us to consider what all this work is ultimately intended to achieve.

For me, a good life means that our people can live safely and with dignity, that our children know who they are, that our Elders are respected and cared for, and that Gitxaała citizens have opportunities to build meaningful lives while remaining connected to their Nation.

That is the future I believe we must continue working toward.

A New Council, A Continuing Responsibility

The April 2025 election marked the beginning of another term of elected leadership and a renewed responsibility to serve Gitxaała citizens.

I am grateful for the trust placed in me to continue as Chief Councillor. I also recognize the responsibility carried by Deputy Chief Councillor Brenna Johnson-Innes and our Council members, each of whom brings perspectives and commitments to the work before us.

An election is not the end of a conversation with our citizens. It is the beginning of another period in which leadership must demonstrate that it is listening, responding and following through.

Throughout the reporting year, Council and administration continued working to strengthen governance practices, improve reporting and establish clearer expectations for departments and Council portfolios. This work included efforts to improve work planning, follow-up on Council decisions, coordination with administration and accountability for the services delivered to our citizens. These may appear to be administrative matters, but they affect how our government functions.

When responsibilities are clearly assigned, when financial information is available and when decisions are followed through, our Nation is better positioned to respond to community needs.

Strong governance also requires us to recognize where improvements are still necessary. We must continue strengthening communication, reviewing policies, addressing service gaps and ensuring that citizens have meaningful opportunities to understand and participate in decisions affecting their lives.

I believe accountability should be measured not only by what is discussed at a Council table, but by what changes for our people as a result.

Standing Firm for Our Rights, Title and Jurisdiction

Among the most significant developments of the reporting year was the continued advancement of Gitxaała Nation's legal and political efforts to protect our rights, title and jurisdiction. Our lands and waters are not simply places where economic activities occur. They are part of our identity, our history, our laws and our responsibilities.

Gitxaała Nation has never surrendered its inherent authority over its territory.

For too long, governments have made decisions affecting Indigenous territories through processes that did not adequately recognize the authority of the Nations whose lands and waters were involved. Our work has been about challenging those systems and insisting that Gitxaała's rights and laws be respected.

In May 2025, our Nation's joint hereditary and elected leadership publicly opposed British Columbia's Bills 14 and 15, raising serious concerns about legislation intended to accelerate major projects without adequate recognition of Indigenous rights, consultation and consent. We recognize the importance of economic development. However, development cannot be separated from the rights and responsibilities of the people whose territories may be affected.

Gitxaała must have the information, time and authority necessary to make informed decisions about proposed activities in our territory.

DRIPA: Turning Recognition of Rights into Meaningful Action

One of the most significant developments of the reporting year was the December 2025 decision of the British Columbia Court of Appeal in Gitxaała Nation's challenge to the province's mineral tenure system.

For our Nation, this case has never been simply about mining. It is about the recognition of our inherent rights, our laws and our authority to participate in decisions affecting our territory. It is also about whether governments can continue making commitments to reconciliation while maintaining systems that exclude Indigenous Nations from decisions concerning their own lands.

British Columbia adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) in 2019, committing to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and bring provincial laws into alignment with the Declaration. Those commitments are important. But for Gitxaała Nation, they must have practical meaning.

Our legal challenge concerned the province's longstanding mineral tenure system, under which mineral claims could be registered electronically without prior consultation with affected First Nations.

The consequences of this system are significant. A person could register a mineral claim affecting Gitxaała territory while our Nation received no prior opportunity to provide information, express concerns or participate in the decision. As I explained publicly when discussing the province's online mineral staking system, "There is absolutely no consultation with the nation, no notification. Anybody with a few dollars can stake a claim online." This was the fundamental problem Gitxaała Nation sought to challenge.

Our rights, laws and responsibilities cannot be treated as secondary considerations after decisions affecting our territory have already been made. We have consistently maintained that the Province must recognize its obligations to Indigenous Peoples, including the requirement for meaningful consultation and the importance of free, prior and informed consent.

The case was also about something broader – whether DRIPA creates legal obligations that Indigenous Nations can rely upon when provincial laws and government practices fail to meet the standards recognized in UNDRIP.

On December 5, 2025, the British Columbia Court of Appeal delivered a significant ruling in the legal challenge brought by Gitxaała Nation and Ehattesaht First Nation. The Court determined that DRIPA incorporates UNDRIP into the law of British Columbia with immediate legal effect and that the province's mineral claims registration regime was inconsistent with the standards of the Declaration. The ruling also confirmed that courts can consider questions about whether provincial laws and government actions are consistent with UNDRIP. This was a significant development for Indigenous rights and the legal effect of DRIPA in British Columbia.

Following the ruling, I stated that the province's mineral tenure system was inconsistent with Canadian law, the UN Declaration and Gitxaała laws, and that B.C.'s highest court had now agreed with the position our Nation had maintained. The decision demonstrated that the commitments made through DRIPA must be taken seriously.

It also showed why Indigenous Nations must be able to seek accountability when governments fail to meet their legal obligations. We did not undertake this legal challenge simply to secure a declaration from a court. Our goal has been to help create a system in which Gitxaała's rights are recognized before decisions affecting our territory are made.

The December ruling was not the end of the legal process. Following the reporting year, on May 21, 2026, the Supreme Court of Canada granted British Columbia permission to appeal the decision. Our Nation must therefore continue defending its position and working toward meaningful changes to the way mineral rights are administered.

I have also expressed our willingness to work directly with the provincial government and other parties to implement the principles recognized in the Court of Appeal decision. Meaningful reconciliation requires governments to work with Indigenous Nations to develop laws and decision-making processes that respect our rights. This is not simply a matter of changing administrative procedures. It is about changing the relationship between Indigenous governments and the Crown.

For Gitxaała Nation, the recognition of our inherent authority must be reflected in how decisions are made, how our knowledge is respected and how our interests are protected.

The implications of this work reach beyond mineral tenure. They concern the broader implementation of DRIPA, the interpretation of Indigenous rights and the responsibilities of governments when their laws and policies affect Indigenous territories.

> ***"B.C.'s out-of-date, colonial mineral tenure regime violates Canada's own laws, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and our Gitxaała laws."***
>
> — Linda Innes, Chief Councillor
> *Excerpt from published remarks following the December 5, 2025 Court of Appeal decision*

Our ancestors defended our territory under circumstances far more difficult than those we face today. We carry a responsibility to continue that work through every means available to us.

I want to recognize our hereditary leadership, legal and technical teams, our partners and the Gitxaała citizens who have supported this important effort. The progress we have made is the result of collective determination. Our rights and jurisdiction are not gifts from another government. They arise from who we are as Gitxaała people and from the responsibilities passed down through generations.



The decisions we make today must honour those responsibilities and protect the opportunities of those who will follow us.

Protecting the Waters That Sustain Us

One of the year's most meaningful achievements was the establishment of the Banks Marine Refuge, announced on October 17, 2025, through a partnership between Gitxaała Nation and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

The refuge protects approximately 436 square kilometres of marine habitat west of Banks Island, including sensitive areas containing coral, sponges, kelp forests and eelgrass beds. These waters support important marine ecosystems and species that have sustained our people across generations.

For Gitxaała, protecting the ocean is not a new responsibility. Our ancestors understood the importance of maintaining the balance between harvesting what we need and caring for the environments that make life possible. The establishment of the Banks Marine Refuge demonstrates how Gitxaała knowledge, leadership and stewardship responsibilities can guide contemporary conservation decisions. I was honoured to participate in the announcement alongside the federal Minister of Fisheries.

However, this achievement represents much more than a single agreement or announcement. It reflects years of planning, scientific research, advocacy and cooperation involving our hereditary leadership, the Gitxaała Territorial Management Agency, technical advisors and government partners.

Our Territorial Management Agency continues playing a vital role through marine planning, fisheries management, environmental assessment, research, monitoring and the work of our Guardians. These activities provide information that helps leadership make informed decisions and supports our continued presence throughout our territory.

Protecting our lands and waters also means ensuring that future generations can continue harvesting traditional foods, practising our culture and maintaining the relationships that define us as Gitxaała people.

The Banks Marine Refuge is an important step forward, but our responsibilities extend across our entire territory. We must continue strengthening Gitxaała's leadership in decisions affecting our marine environment and ensuring that environmental stewardship remains central to our future.

Bringing Our Cultural Treasures Home

Another deeply meaningful event occurred in July 2025, when ancestral Gitxaała cultural treasures were returned from the Royal BC Museum and welcomed home in Lax Klan. The return was marked by ceremony, cultural teachings, drumming, dancing and a community feast.

Among the returned belongings was a historic copper shield connected to Chief Paul Ts'ibasaa and a difficult period in our history when colonial laws were used against our hereditary leadership and cultural practices.

These belongings carry more than historical significance. They are part of the knowledge, identity and relationships that connect us to our ancestors. Their return represents the determination of our people to recover and care for cultural belongings that were separated from our Nation.

I want to recognize the work of our Language and Culture Department, hereditary leaders, Elders, knowledge holders, researchers and everyone involved in the years of effort required to bring these treasures home.

This work also reminds us that cultural revitalization is not separate from governance. Our language carries our histories and laws. Our cultural practices teach us how to fulfill our responsibilities. Our ancestral belongings help preserve knowledge that must continue to be shared.

Throughout the reporting year, our Language and Culture Department continued supporting Sm'algyax learning, archival preservation, research and the return of cultural belongings. We must continue investing in the people who carry this knowledge and creating opportunities for younger generations to learn from them. A strong future requires a strong understanding of who we are.

Education: Investing in Every Generation

Education remains one of the most important ways we can strengthen the future of Gitxaała Nation. I believe every child deserves an opportunity to succeed while knowing that their identity, language and culture are sources of strength.

Our Education, Language and Culture Division works across the different stages of learning, from Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve and Lach Klan School to the Continuous Learning Centre, post-secondary education and employment training. Each of these programs contributes to a larger goal: ensuring that citizens can develop their abilities and pursue meaningful opportunities throughout their lives.

During the reporting year, Aboriginal Head Start supported young children and families through early learning, cultural activities, nutrition and family participation.

At Lach Klan School, employees continued strengthening literacy, numeracy, social-emotional learning and opportunities for students to connect education with Gitxaała language and culture.

The Continuous Learning Centre supported adults pursuing training, employment preparation and educational qualifications through programming connected to Lax Klan and Prince Rupert.

I am particularly encouraged by the achievements of our post-secondary students. During the reporting year, nine students graduated from post-secondary programs, while others completed courses, certificates and training. Every one of these achievements represents personal dedication, family support and an investment in the future capacity of our Nation.

Education is also an important part of preparing Gitxaała citizens for positions within our own government, businesses and community organizations. Our future will require teachers, healthcare professionals, tradespeople, administrators, environmental specialists, entrepreneurs and leaders with the skills to help our Nation grow. We must continue building educational pathways that are accessible to citizens at home and away from home.

I also recognize that education does not begin or end in a classroom. Parents and caregivers, grandparents, Elders, hereditary leaders and cultural knowledge holders have always played essential roles in teaching our children. As we develop our long-term education plans, these relationships must remain central.

Our goal should be an education system that prepares our people to succeed in the wider world without asking them to leave their Gitxaała identity behind.

Healthy Families Are the Foundation of a Strong Nation

The well-being of our people must remain at the centre of our work. A Nation cannot measure its progress only through construction projects, economic agreements or administrative achievements. We must also ask whether our people are healthier, whether families are receiving the support they need and whether children and Elders feel safe and connected.

Throughout the reporting year, our Health Department continued coordinating access to healthcare professionals, maternal and child health supports, home and community care, patient travel and services for citizens requiring specialized care.

Providing these services in a remote coastal community requires considerable planning. Travel limitations, weather conditions, staffing pressures and the need to access specialists outside Lax Klan create challenges for citizens and the employees assisting them. We must continue advocating for more reliable access to care and greater coordination between healthcare providers and community programs.

Social Development also plays a central role in strengthening family well-being. Its work includes Income Assistance, family advocacy, youth programming and child and family services.

The official opening of the Light House on May 21, 2025, was an important step in strengthening the facilities available for Social Development services and youth activities.

The department also continued supporting the Nation's long-term work toward greater jurisdiction over child and family services. This initiative is about ensuring that decisions affecting Gitxaała children are increasingly guided by our own laws, values, cultural responsibilities and understanding of family relationships.

For generations, our people have understood that raising children is a responsibility shared among families and communities. Our future approaches to child and family well-being must respect those relationships.

I also want to recognize the work of employees and community partners supporting citizens affected by substance use, mental health challenges and other difficult circumstances. Healing is not something that can be accomplished through one program or one intervention. It requires sustained relationships, culturally appropriate services and the understanding that every person deserves dignity and an opportunity to move forward.

A good life begins with knowing that you belong and that your community has not forgotten you.

Housing, Family Reunification and Essential Services

Housing and infrastructure continue to be among the most important concerns raised by Gitxaała citizens. A safe and stable home provides more than shelter. It offers security for children, dignity for Elders and a foundation from which families can plan their futures.

During the reporting year, Housing and Capital Projects employees worked on repairs, renovations, mould remediation, drainage and other improvements. The department reported 15 projects, with 12 completed and three remaining in progress during the period covered by its report. These accomplishments matter, but I also recognize that many citizens continue facing housing challenges. The condition of existing homes, the need for repairs, limited housing availability and the costs of construction and maintenance require sustained attention.

An important opportunity to address the housing needs of children and families has emerged through the First Nation Children's Housing Fund. Gitxaała Nation has received $1.2 million from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) through this funding initiative.

The funding arises from the federal response to Canadian Human Rights Tribunal rulings concerning First Nations child and family services. It is intended to address housing barriers that can contribute to children being taken into care or prevent children from being reunited with their families.

For Gitxaała, this is about more than constructing or repairing houses. It is about supporting children and families to remain together, or to be reunited, in their own community. Housing conditions should not stand in the way of children growing up with their families, maintaining their cultural connections and knowing where they belong. We anticipate receiving further funding through this initiative over the next two years.

However, I must also acknowledge that we have not yet delivered housing through this funding. While securing the resources is important, the real measure of success will be whether those resources result in homes and improved circumstances for the families who need them. This requires coordinated planning and clear responsibilities.

Housing and Capital Projects, working with Social Development, must develop a concrete implementation plan that identifies eligible housing needs, priorities, timelines and the steps necessary to move the funding toward delivery. My expectation is that Stan Knight and the Social Development team will have a concrete plan to present by our November 2026 Annual General Meeting. It is important that citizens understand both the opportunity this funding represents and the work that remains outstanding.

This funding must also be distinguished from the separate Safe Home funding program. Gitxaała Nation has not yet applied for Safe Home funding, as that program operates under different requirements and regulations. We must ensure that each funding opportunity is properly understood, that applications and expenditures meet the applicable conditions, and that resources are directed toward their intended purposes.

Looking ahead, the First Nation Children's Housing Fund provides an opportunity to connect our housing responsibilities directly with our commitment to the well-being of children and families. It is an opportunity we must now turn into meaningful results.

Maintaining the Services Our Community Depends On

Public Works is another essential part of community well-being. Its employees maintain services that many people depend upon every day, including water and wastewater systems, roads, facilities, equipment and other community infrastructure.

Much of their work is most noticeable when something goes wrong. Yet the daily maintenance, inspections and technical work required to keep essential systems functioning are fundamental to a healthy community. I want to recognize those employees and contractors who respond to problems, maintain equipment and work to protect the safety of our people.

Our Food Security Division also contributes to community health and resilience by supporting local food production, traditional harvesting and the distribution of nutritious foods. These initiatives connect practical community needs with longstanding Gitxaała practices of harvesting, preparing and sharing food.

As we plan for future growth, housing, infrastructure, transportation, food security and essential services must be considered together. Our citizens deserve communities where basic needs are met reliably and where the systems supporting daily life are maintained for the long term.

Gitxaała Strong: Our Community in Times of Need

In January 2026, a significant power outage reminded us how quickly daily life can be disrupted in a remote community. It also reminded us of the strength of our people.

During difficult winter conditions, employees, First Responders, volunteers and community members came together to check on Elders, support families with young children and provide practical assistance. Departments coordinated access to heaters, generators, fuel, firewood, food and warming facilities. The Light House became a place where citizens could seek warmth and support.

I want to extend my appreciation to the people who responded during that emergency. Their actions demonstrated that community resilience is not simply a matter of having equipment or written emergency plans.

It also depends on relationships, local knowledge, preparation and the willingness to look after one another. We must continue strengthening emergency preparedness and improving the systems needed to respond to future events. But we should also recognize the compassion and sense of responsibility that people demonstrated. That is what it means to be Gitxaała Strong.

Building an Economy That Serves Our People

Economic development is an important part of our vision for the future. Gitxaała Nation needs opportunities that can create employment, support businesses, strengthen our financial independence and provide lasting benefits for citizens. Through my work with Gitxaała Enterprises Corporation and its Board, I have continued supporting discussions and initiatives intended to advance responsible economic development.

During the reporting year, GECO continued its community economic development work, including activities involving commercial fisheries, business development and emerging opportunities. The Nation also continued participating in discussions involving energy, infrastructure and regional economic partnerships. These opportunities must be approached carefully.

Economic development should never be measured solely by the size of a proposed investment. We must consider whether it creates meaningful employment, provides training, strengthens Gitxaała ownership and decision-making, and respects our laws and responsibilities to the territory. We must also consider how revenues and opportunities can support essential services, education, housing and future generations.

I believe Gitxaała should continue working toward a future in which our citizens are not only employees in economic activities affecting our territory, but also business owners, professionals, decision-makers and beneficiaries of long-term investments. That requires careful planning, financial discipline and the ability to negotiate agreements that reflect the Nation's interests.

Economic growth and environmental stewardship should not be treated as opposing responsibilities. Our challenge is to pursue opportunities that strengthen our people while honouring the lands and waters that sustain us.

Strong Administration Makes Stronger Government Possible

The work of our departments depends on the systems that support them. During the reporting year, our Administration Division continued efforts to strengthen communication, coordinate Council decisions, improve organizational practices and support employees.

Our Human Resources team advanced important improvements to employee benefits participation, professional development and personnel policy work.

The Finance Department continued strengthening annual budgeting, quarterly financial reporting, financial records and administrative controls.

Information Technology employees worked to improve connectivity, cybersecurity, records and the reliability of the systems used across the organization.

These responsibilities may not always receive the same attention as major public announcements, but they are essential to effective government. When employees have the support they need, departments can operate more consistently. When budgets and financial records are reliable, leadership can make better-informed decisions. When communication is clear, citizens are better able to understand the work being undertaken on their behalf. We must continue strengthening the relationship between elected leadership, the Chief Administrative Officer, directors, managers and employees.

I recognize the contributions of Chief Administrative Officer Marcia Robinson and the many staff members who carry out the day-to-day work of our government. Our responsibilities are different, but our purpose must remain shared: to serve Gitxaała citizens effectively and responsibly.

Representing Gitxaała Beyond Our Territory

Much of the work of Chief Councillor involves representing our Nation in places where citizens may not always see the discussions taking place.

In addition to my responsibilities at home, I serve as Vice-President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, participate in the National Children's Chiefs Commission, serve as an Alternate Director with Coastal First Nations, and carry responsibilities associated with GECO. These roles provide opportunities to work with other Indigenous leaders, contribute to broader policy discussions and advocate for issues affecting Gitxaała Nation.

At provincial and national tables, I continue raising matters involving Indigenous rights and jurisdiction, children and families, economic opportunities, environmental protection and community well-being. I recognize that regional and national work must remain connected to the needs of our own people. The value of these relationships is measured by whether they strengthen Gitxaała's ability to protect its interests and pursue its priorities.

Our Nation has an important voice. We must continue ensuring that voice is heard, respected and informed by the people we represent.

Listening, Respecting Differences and Working Together

One of the most important responsibilities of leadership is listening.

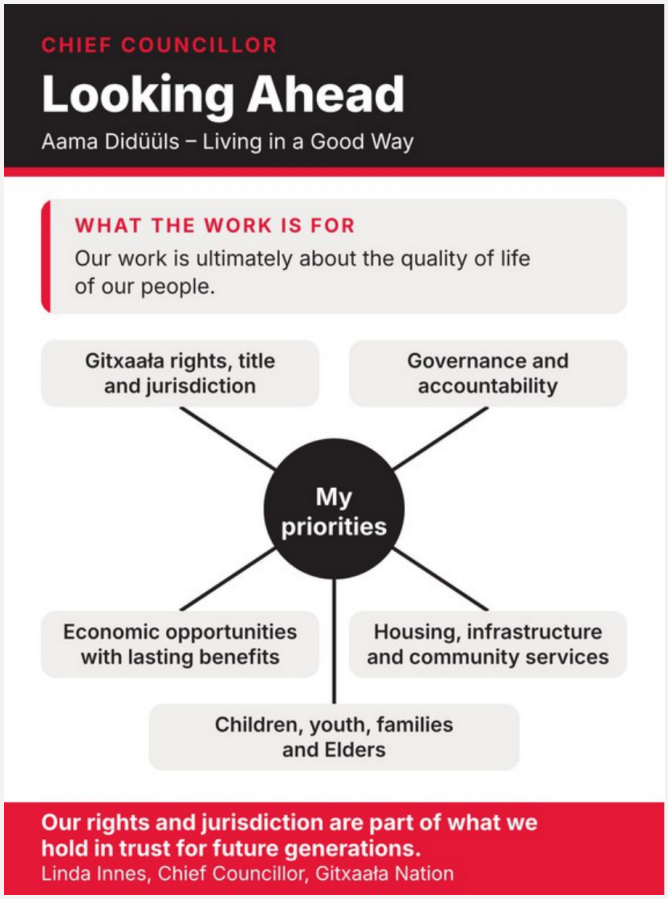
Our citizens do not all share the same experiences or perspectives. Some live in Lax Klan, while others live in Prince Rupert or communities across Canada. Some are raising young families, some are pursuing education or employment, and others are caring for Elders or navigating difficult personal circumstances. Their needs and priorities may differ, but each deserves respect.

I believe our governance must create room for different opinions without losing sight of our shared responsibilities. Unity does not require everyone to agree on every issue. It requires a commitment to work through differences respectfully, to remain accountable for our decisions and to remember that our responsibilities to Gitxaała Nation are greater than any one individual or elected term.

Citizens deserve timely information, meaningful opportunities to participate and confidence that their concerns are taken seriously. We still have work to do in improving communication and rebuilding trust where relationships have been strained. I believe we can make progress by being more consistent in how we share information, following through on commitments and keeping the well-being of our Nation at the centre of our discussions.

Our strength has always come from the relationships connecting our people. We should continue building upon those relationships, not allowing our differences to weaken them.

The Future We Are Building



As I look toward the years ahead, I see both significant challenges and extraordinary opportunities.

I want Gitxaała Nation to continue strengthening its authority over decisions affecting our lands, waters and resources.

I want our governance systems to reflect our own laws and responsibilities while meeting the standards of accountability our citizens deserve.

I want our children to grow up hearing Sm'algyax, learning their histories and knowing that being Gitxaała is something to carry with pride.

I want our young people to have access to strong schools, recreation, mentorship, post-secondary education and career opportunities.

I want our Elders to be able to remain connected to their families and community while receiving the support and care they need.

I want our families to have safe homes and reliable essential services.

And I want our citizens, whether they live at home or away from home, to feel that their Nation recognizes their contributions and is working toward a future in which they can thrive.

Achieving these goals will require sustained effort across our government.

Governance and accountability must continue improving through clear policies, reporting, responsible financial management and meaningful citizen engagement.

Rights, title, DRIPA and jurisdiction will remain priorities as we continue working with hereditary leadership and defending Gitxaała interests in legal, political and regulatory processes. The legal recognition of our rights must lead to practical changes in how decisions are made.

Education and workforce development must be connected to the opportunities we hope to create. We need long-term plans that help our citizens gain the qualifications and experience required for future employment and leadership.

Housing and family reunification must become a stronger focus of coordinated planning. We have an important responsibility to ensure that the First Nation Children's Housing Fund delivers meaningful benefits to children and families.

Health, social development and child and family well-being must remain central to our vision, with an emphasis on prevention, culturally appropriate services and keeping families connected.

Language and culture must continue receiving meaningful support so that the knowledge carried by our Elders and cultural leaders remains part of everyday community life.

Territorial stewardship and economic development must be pursued together, ensuring that opportunities for growth do not come at the expense of our responsibilities to the land and sea.

We will also need stronger communication between our government and citizens, including ways to reach people across different communities and generations.

These priorities cannot be accomplished by one department or one Council. They will require cooperation among elected and hereditary leadership, administration, employees, partner organizations and citizens. They will require difficult decisions, careful financial planning and a willingness to evaluate what is working and what needs to change.
Most importantly, they will require a shared commitment to the future we want for our people.

A Good Life Is a Future Worth Building Together

As Chief Councillor, I am proud of the determination Gitxaała Nation has demonstrated throughout this reporting year.

We have continued defending our rights and jurisdiction, including through our important work concerning DRIPA and the recognition of Indigenous rights in provincial law.

We have taken important steps in protecting our marine environment.

We have welcomed ancestral cultural treasures home.

We have supported children, students, families and Elders through the work of our departments.

We have made progress in housing, infrastructure, financial administration, workforce development and economic planning.

We have secured important resources to support children and family reunification, while recognizing that those resources must now be translated into results.

And when our community faced difficult circumstances, our people once again demonstrated their willingness to care for one another.

These achievements belong to the many individuals who contributed their time, knowledge and dedication. I want to thank our hereditary leaders, matriarchs and Elders for the guidance they continue providing. I thank Deputy Chief Councillor Brenna Johnson-Innes and our Council colleagues for their service and commitment. I recognize our Chief Administrative Officer, directors, managers, employees, contractors and community partners whose work supports the Nation every day.

I also thank the citizens who continue asking questions, bringing forward concerns, sharing ideas and encouraging us to do better. Your participation matters.

Our ancestors protected what was entrusted to them so that we could be here today. We now carry that same responsibility for those who will follow us.

The future of Gitxaała Nation will not be determined by one decision, one agreement or one generation of leadership. It will be shaped by the choices we make together, the values we uphold and the opportunities we create for our children and grandchildren.

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life is not simply a theme for this Annual General Meeting. It is a responsibility to one another. It is the commitment to build a Nation where our people are safe, our culture is strong, our laws are respected, our voices are heard and our future remains in our own hands.

That is the work before us.

It is a future worthy of our continued determination, our unity and our hope.

Linda Innes

Chief Councillor

Gitxaała Nation

Healing Journeys, Stronger Futures

Leadership, Accountability and Showing Up for Gitxaała Citizens

Brenna Johnson-Innes | Deputy Chief Councillor, Gitxaała Nation





Serving as Deputy Chief Councillor means carrying responsibilities that reach far beyond Council meetings. It means listening to citizens, following up when people need help, raising difficult questions and working with others to turn decisions into meaningful action.

Over the past year, my work has centred on health and social well-being, community services, administration and governance, with a particular focus on healing, housing, accountability and opportunities for our young people.

I have also continued representing Gitxaała through regional organizations and community initiatives. Whether I am advocating for better access to treatment, discussing the Nation's Trust with citizens, working to improve housing or coaching young people on a basketball court, the purpose is the same: to support our people and strengthen the future they deserve.

Strengthening Governance Through Independent Accountability

Strong governance depends on clear expectations, good information and a willingness to follow through.

During the reporting year, I continued advocating for stronger Council and administration reporting, work plans, action tracking, audit oversight and financial controls. These are practical measures that help us understand whether decisions are being implemented and where more work is needed.

One important clarification is how Council members are evaluated. Under Gitxaała's Election Code, Council members do not evaluate their own performance. An independent third party conducts those evaluations. I supported the continued work of that external evaluation process because meaningful accountability requires a fair and credible assessment of our responsibilities as elected leaders.

Council also completed a 360-degree performance evaluation of the Chief Administrative Officer. The process provided an evidence-based assessment and identified strengths as well as areas for improvement. My focus has been on ensuring that evaluation, reporting and performance expectations lead to better communication, responsiveness and results for citizens.

Accountability is not about creating paperwork for its own sake. It is about knowing who is responsible for a decision, what is supposed to happen next, and whether the work has actually been done. Citizens deserve to see that their concerns lead to follow-up.

Our Journey to Jurisdiction: Children and Families

Another important part of my governance work has been recognizing the opportunities and responsibilities arising from Bill C-92 and Gitxaała's Journey to Jurisdiction in relation to child and family services.

Our commitment is to develop our own culturally grounded approach to supporting Gitxaała children and families. This work calls for careful planning, meaningful engagement and an understanding of the supports families need to stay connected to their communities, language, culture and identity.

Through my involvement in child and family service issues, including my role as an Alternate with Northwest Inter-Nation Family and Community Services Society, I have continued emphasizing approaches that respect the voices of our people and the importance of keeping children and families at the centre of decisions.

Journey to Jurisdiction is ongoing work. It represents an opportunity to strengthen Gitxaała authority and develop services guided by our own values, responsibilities and knowledge.

Strengthening Transparency Through the Gitxaała Trust

I was appointed as a Trustee of the Gitxaała Trust in June 2025. It is a responsibility I take seriously because decisions about the Trust have long-term implications for our Nation and future generations.

During the reporting year, I helped hold community engagement sessions to introduce and explain the proposed Trust Spending Bylaw and Distribution Guidelines. These sessions gave citizens an opportunity to learn about the proposals, ask questions and provide feedback on how decisions concerning Trust resources should be guided.

I believe it is important that people have the opportunity to understand the rules and principles being proposed before decisions are finalized. Trust governance must be transparent and accountable, and citizens should be able to ask how these processes relate to the Nation's priorities.

"Accountability isn't just about the decisions we make at the Council table. It's about following through, being present for our people, and making sure our work leads to meaningful change for Gitxaała citizens."

— Brenna Johnson-Innes, Deputy Chief Councillor

Following the engagement sessions, I brought the proposed Trust Spending Bylaw and Distribution Guidelines forward to Council for approval and implementation. This work was an important step toward establishing clearer expectations and strengthening community involvement in decisions affecting the Trust.

Advocating for Health, Patient Travel and Recovery Services

Health and social well-being remain central to my Council work. Citizens have shared concerns about getting timely care, navigating patient travel and accessing services that may not be available in our community. For people living in Lax Klan, geography and transportation can create significant barriers to receiving health services.

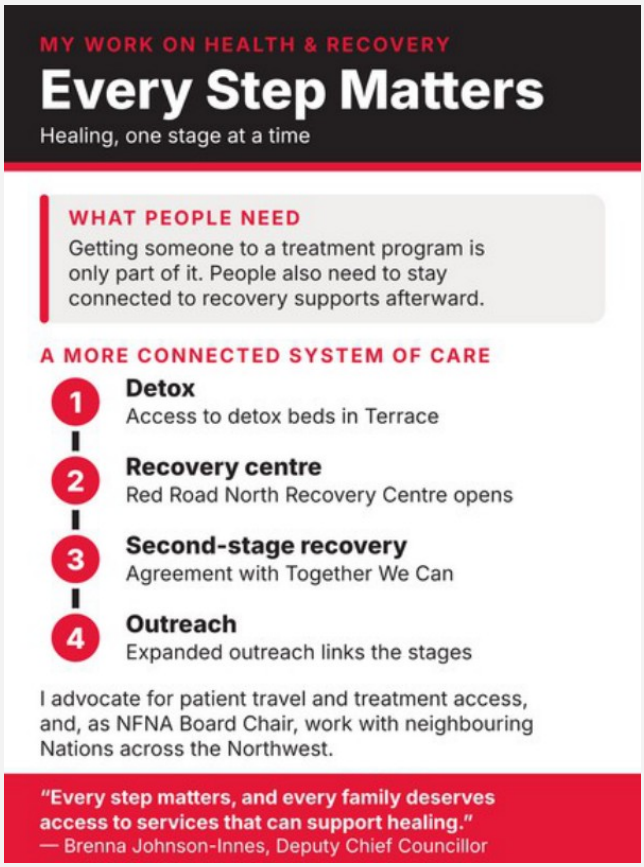
I have advocated for improvements to patient travel and access to health services, with particular attention to drug and alcohol treatment. Getting someone to an appointment or a treatment program is only part of the challenge. People also need help understanding available services, making arrangements and staying connected to recovery supports after treatment.

As Board Chair of the Northern First Nations Alliance (NFNA), I have worked with neighbouring Nations to strengthen access to Indigenous-led health, wellness, addictions treatment and recovery services across the Northwest.

The reporting year included progress toward a more connected system of care. The opening of Red Road North Recovery Centre, access to detox beds in Terrace, an agreement with Together We Can for second-stage recovery and expanded outreach have helped create pathways between the different stages of treatment and recovery.

These services are important because people need more than one opportunity to seek help. They need access to detox, treatment, continuing recovery supports, aftercare and outreach, with care that respects their dignity and experiences.

Some of the most meaningful moments for me are hearing that a Gitxaała citizen has made it to treatment, is receiving support or is making progress in recovery. Every step matters, and every family deserves access to services that can support healing.



Supporting Housing and Community Stability

Safe, stable and affordable housing is fundamental to family and community well-being. I have continued this work as President of the Prince Rupert Indigenous Housing Society (PRIHS), supporting housing opportunities for Indigenous families, including Gitxaała citizens living in Prince Rupert.

A major priority has been Harbour View, a 20-unit townhouse development in Prince Rupert. The project faced difficulties involving its original contractor. I want to recognize the work undertaken by PRIHS to address those challenges, protect the Society's interests and keep the redevelopment moving forward.

Housing development is complex, and challenges do not disappear simply because a project has been announced. They require sustained oversight, difficult conversations and a commitment to ensuring that the intended benefits reach the people waiting for homes.

For me, housing is about far more than buildings. A safe home provides stability, dignity and a stronger foundation for children, parents, Elders and families. I will continue supporting responsible housing development and advocating for the needs of Indigenous families.

Showing Up for Our Youth – On and Off the Basketball Court

Some of my most rewarding work happens outside formal Council responsibilities. Throughout the year, I have been directly involved in coaching basketball, fundraising, helping organize and attend tournaments, and mentoring Gitxaała young people.

These are not occasional activities for me. They are a year-round commitment to being present for our youth, helping them build confidence, develop skills and learn to work together.

Basketball creates opportunities for young people to represent their community, make friendships and discover what they can accomplish through dedication and teamwork. It also provides a place where adults can encourage, guide and support them.

Seeing our U13 girls place sixth at JANT was a proud moment. Their achievement mattered, but so did the effort that brought them there, the support of their families and the confidence they gained along the way.

I value these opportunities because relationships with our youth cannot be built through meetings alone. Young people need to know that we believe in them and that we are willing to contribute our time, not just our words.

Community Safety, Emergency Readiness and Being Accessible

My Community Services responsibilities have included issues affecting everyday life in Lax Klan, including community safety, recreation and emergency preparedness. I have continued bringing concerns raised by citizens to Council, administration and the appropriate departments for follow-up.

The July 2025 tsunami advisory was an important reminder that emergency situations require quick communication, coordination and readiness. It reinforced the need to continue building the Nation's capacity to respond when our community is at risk.

I have also made a point of staying accessible through meetings, phone calls, messages, social media and everyday conversations. Citizens raise concerns about housing, health, family services, recreation and governance in many different ways. Leadership means listening respectfully and continuing to follow up after the initial conversation.

Representing Gitxaała Through Regional and Nation Roles



In addition to my Deputy Chief Councillor portfolios, I serve in several roles that connect Gitxaała to broader work affecting our citizens.

My appointments and responsibilities include Board Chair of the Northern First Nations Alliance (NFNA), President of the Prince Rupert Indigenous Housing Society (PRIHS), Alternate Representative with Northwest Inter-Nation Family and Community Services Society (NIFCS), Trustee of the Gitxaała Trust, and Alternate Representative for Lu Sah Hax Hoyax.

These roles are different, but they are connected by the need to represent Gitxaała interests, strengthen relationships and bring information and opportunities back to our Nation. Regional collaboration is most valuable when it contributes to practical improvements for our people.

The Work Ahead

Looking ahead, my priorities remain focused on strengthening accountable governance, supporting children and families through our Journey to Jurisdiction, improving patient travel and access to treatment and recovery services, advancing safe housing, and continuing to create opportunities for our youth.

I also want to keep working toward transparent Trust governance and meaningful citizen engagement. When people have opportunities to understand proposals, raise questions and contribute their perspectives, decisions are stronger.

There will always be challenging issues and different views about how to move forward. I believe we can address those differences respectfully while keeping the needs of Gitxaała citizens at the centre of our work.

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life is reflected in how we care for one another and how seriously we take our responsibilities. For me, leadership means being present, doing the work and following through.

I am grateful to the citizens, families, colleagues and community members who continue to share their concerns, their ideas and their hopes for our Nation.

Building a Stronger Foundation: Leadership, Accountability and Our Responsibility to Future Generations

Joscelin V. Lewis | Councillor, Gitxaała Nation





Serving as an elected Councillor for Gitxaała Nation is both an honour and a responsibility that I take seriously. Leadership is not simply about holding a position. It is about listening to our people, understanding their concerns, making informed decisions, and ensuring that the work we undertake today creates a stronger foundation for future generations.

Throughout this reporting year, my focus has been on strengthening governance, advancing critical infrastructure projects, supporting children and families, and ensuring that Council remains accountable to the citizens we represent.

This year's Annual General Meeting theme, Aama Didüüls – A Good Life, reminds us that good leadership must be reflected in the decisions we make and the way those decisions improve the lives of our people.

For me, this means working collaboratively, maintaining open communication, and ensuring that the Nation's priorities continue moving forward.

Strengthening the Infrastructure Our Community Depends On

My primary Council portfolio is Public Works, where I serve as the lead.

This responsibility involves working closely with the department's leadership and staff to understand the needs of the community, support planning, and help advance infrastructure projects that are essential to daily life in Lax Klan.

Two significant priorities have been the Kitkatla wharf and water treatment plant upgrades. These projects represent long-overdue improvements to infrastructure that our community depends upon.

Reliable access to safe drinking water is fundamental to the health and well-being of our citizens. Similarly, the wharf is essential to transportation, accessibility, and the movement of people and supplies in and out of the community.

Both projects require considerable planning, technical expertise, government coordination, and sustainable funding. I am encouraged that we have an internal team working on these priorities and that progress is being made toward establishing clearer timelines and advancing the work.

Although significant steps remain before these improvements are completed, I believe we are moving in the right direction.

As Public Works lead, my responsibility is to help maintain continuity, support the department's priorities, and advocate for the resources necessary to move these projects forward.

Infrastructure development requires patience and persistence. These are not short-term investments, and the decisions we make must consider the needs of the community today and the generations who will depend upon these systems in the future.

Strengthening Governance Through Accountability and Cooperation

An important part of my work on Council involves helping strengthen the Nation's governance processes.

Good governance requires clear policies, responsible financial management, transparency, and a shared understanding of our roles and responsibilities.

Throughout the reporting year, Council has continued reviewing and approving financial policies to support alignment with Gitxaała Nation's Financial Administration Law. This work is important because strong financial policies help establish clear expectations for how public resources are managed and how decisions are documented.

We have also been strengthening the connection between Council's priorities and the work undertaken by administration. Council members participate in quarterly evaluations, and we are expected to demonstrate progress within our assigned portfolios.

I see value in this approach because accountability requires more than attending meetings. It means understanding what needs to be accomplished, identifying challenges, and following through on commitments.

Working with Directors, Managers, and the Chief Administrative Officer, we have been developing processes, identifying gaps, and strengthening the systems that support our work.

I am encouraged by the progress we are making.

When Council and administration work together with clear responsibilities and common priorities, we are better positioned to advance the goals identified through the Nation's community planning processes.

For me, governance is about creating a stable foundation that allows good decisions to become meaningful action.

Protecting Children and Strengthening Families

I also serve as an alternate for the Health and Social portfolio, where much of my attention has been directed toward Gitxaała Nation's work concerning Bill C-92 and child and family services jurisdiction. I believe strongly that our children are our future leaders and that we have a responsibility to ensure they grow up connected to their families, communities, language, and culture.

The Nation's journey toward greater jurisdiction over child and family services is an important opportunity to strengthen our ability to determine how Gitxaała children and families are supported. This work involves difficult decisions and significant responsibilities. It is important that we approach the process carefully, provide citizens with clear information, and ensure that their voices help guide the direction we take.

Our families need to understand what jurisdiction could mean, how services may change, and what responsibilities the Nation would assume. I believe community engagement must remain central to this work.

The decisions we make should reflect Gitxaała values and recognize the importance of keeping children connected to their identity, culture, and families. My commitment is to continue supporting this initiaitive while advocating for transparency, informed participation and approached that place the well-being of our children at the centre of our decisions.

Representing Gitxaała Through Regional Partnerships

In addition to my Council responsibilities, I serve as Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Northwest Inter-Nation Family and Community Services Society (NIFCS), representing Gitxaała Nation.

This work provides an opportunity to participate in governance discussions concerning services that affect Indigenous children, families, and communities throughout the region.

NIFCS focuses on supporting families, strengthening connections between children and their communities, and recognizing the responsibilities of First Nations in matters affecting child and family well-being.

As a Board member, I believe it is important to ensure that decisions remain focused on the safety, rights, voices, and best interests of children.

I also recognize the importance of strong governance and accountability within organizations that provide services to First Nations families. My participation on the Board allows me to bring Gitxaała's perspectives into regional discussions while remaining informed about developments that may affect our Nation.

I also serve as a Board member for the Gitxaała–CityWest joint partnership.

MY WORK ON COUNCIL

Portfolios & Boards

Councillor, Gitxaała Nation

WHAT THE WORK IS FOR

Our responsibility is to ensure that the partnerships we participate in remain aligned with the priorities and future direction of our Nation.

COUNCIL PORTFOLIOS		
LEAD	Public Works	Chairing portfolio meetings
ALTERNATE	Health & Social	Bill C-92, child and family services
ALTERNATE	Finance & Audit Committee	Strengthening financial oversight
BOARDS & EXTERNAL APPOINTMENTS		
VICE PRESIDENT	NIFCS Board of Directors	Northwest Inter-Nation Family and Community Services Society
BOARD MEMBER	Gitxaała–CityWest Joint Partnership	Thoughtful oversight

"Our responsibility to the people of Gitxaała must always come first."
— Joscelin V. Lewis, Councillor

These external responsibilities are opportunities to represent the Nation's interests, participate in important discussions, and contribute to decisions that may have long-term implications for Gitxaała citizens.

I approach these appointments with the same commitment to accountability and responsible representation that guides my work on Council.

Listening to Citizens and Maintaining Accountability

I firmly believe that communication is one of the most important responsibilities we have as elected representatives. Citizens should have opportunities to understand what Council is working on, how decisions are being made, and what progress is occurring on matters that affect their lives.

Throughout the year, I have continued making myself available to listen to concerns, answer questions, and bring forward suggestions from community members.

Community engagement sessions are particularly important to me. They provide opportunities for citizens to share their experiences, raise concerns, and contribute ideas that can inform the Nation's priorities.

I am also pleased that we have begun strengthening communication through newsletters and other ways of sharing information. These efforts are important steps toward ensuring that citizens remain informed and connected to the work of their government.

I believe leadership requires us to be approachable and willing to listen, including when people have difficult questions or disagree with decisions.

Listening is an important part of accountability, but so is following through. When citizens share concerns or ideas, we have a responsibility to consider them carefully and identify how they can be addressed.

Not every issue can be resolved immediately. However, maintaining communication and explaining the work being undertaken helps build trust between leadership and the people we serve.

"This position is temporary. The people are forever."

— Joscelin V. Lewis, Councillor

Within Public Works, my priorities remain the advancement of the water treatment plant and Kitkatla wharf projects.



Both are essential to the community's future, and I will continue working with the department, administration, and Council to help ensure that planning and funding discussions remain active.

I also want to continue supporting the Nation's journey toward child and family services jurisdiction under Bill C-92.

This is work that requires careful consideration, meaningful community engagement, and a commitment to ensuring that Gitxaała children and families remain central to the decisions being made.

Within governance, I believe we must continue reviewing and strengthening our policies, including the Council Travel Policy and Council Policy.

Looking Ahead: Building on a Strong Foundation

As we move into 2026–2027, I want to continue building upon the progress made during this reporting year.

Clear, consistent policies are essential to accountability and responsible decision-making. They help establish expectations for Council members and provide continuity as leadership changes over time.

I believe that when we strengthen these foundations, we create a more effective government that is better equipped to respond to the needs of our citizens.

I also want to see continued progress in aligning Council priorities with the Nation's community planning goals.

This requires maintaining regular portfolio meetings, working closely with departmental leadership, identifying gaps, and ensuring that commitments are supported by practical plans and follow-through.

Our work must remain focused on results that citizens can see and experience in their everyday lives.

Leadership Is a Responsibility to Our People

Being an elected Councillor is an opportunity to serve Gitxaała Nation with integrity, respect, and compassion.

It requires listening to the voices of our citizens, protecting our culture and traditions, supporting our Elders, creating opportunities for youth, and working toward stronger families and communities.

I believe leadership is not about having power. It is about serving others, being accountable, making informed decisions, and having the courage to speak up when it matters.

Throughout my term, I want to continue contributing to a Council that works collaboratively, respects its responsibilities, and remains focused on the long-term well-being of the Nation.

The progress we have made in infrastructure planning, financial governance, child and family services, and organizational accountability is encouraging.

There is still much to accomplish, but I believe we are establishing a stronger foundation.

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life, is a reminder that the decisions we make today should contribute to a healthier, more united, and more sustainable future for Gitxaała Nation.

It is a privilege to represent our people, and I remain committed to carrying out that responsibility with care, honesty, and respect.

Ultimately, the responsibility of leadership is to leave our Nation stronger for those who will follow us.

Our Territory, Our Voice, Our Responsibility

Protecting Gitxaała Lands and Waters for Future Generations
Elliot Moody | Councillor, Gitxaała Nation





The Territory That Raised Me

Serving on Gitxaała Council is one of the greatest honours I have been given. Our people elected us to be their voices, and I do not take that responsibility lightly. For me, it is especially meaningful when the decisions before us concern the territory that has shaped my entire life.

I grew up in a fishing family. From the time I was an infant, I travelled throughout our territory with my parents, fishing, harvesting and learning the places that sustain our people. I have been fortunate to experience much of our territory firsthand, not simply through maps or reports, but by being out on the water and spending time in the places our families have known for generations.

I have also seen the fishing industry through its good years and its difficult ones. Those experiences stay with me. They remind me why we have to protect what we have and why we cannot assume that the resources our families depend upon will always be there.

That personal connection is what I bring to Council. When we talk about marine conservation, resource development or the future of our fisheries, I am thinking about the territory I grew up in and the people who will depend on it long after we are gone.

The Work of Territorial Stewardship

My primary Council portfolio is the Gitxaała Territorial Management Agency. I am proud to work alongside the GTMA team and to support the work they do on behalf of the Nation.

Citizens often see the Guardians out on the water, and rightly recognize how important they are. But GTMA's responsibilities extend well beyond the Guardian program. A great deal of territorial protection takes place in meetings, technical discussions, planning processes and negotiations with other governments and organizations.

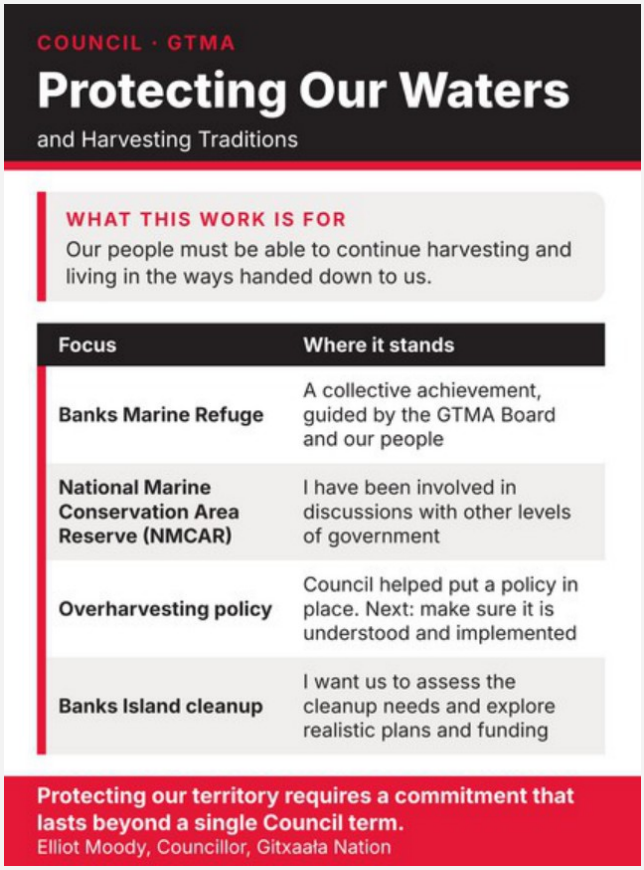
Those conversations matter because Gitxaała needs to be present whenever decisions are being made that may affect our lands and waters. Part of my responsibility is to make sure our interests are heard and not pushed aside.

The GTMA team sometimes reaches out to me for my knowledge of particular areas, the kinds of activities traditionally undertaken there, or the fishing industry. I value those conversations because they bring together technical work and the experience of people who know the territory through lived practice.

There are also important projects and discussions underway that cannot yet be reported publicly. I respect the need to share information only when it has been properly cleared, while continuing to advocate for our Nation's interests within those processes.

One of the greatest challenges is explaining Gitxaała ways of life and traditional systems to governments whose laws and institutions were not built around them. We should not have to set aside who we are in order to be understood. Our knowledge and our responsibilities need to be respected as an essential part of decision-making.

Protecting Our Waters and Harvesting Traditions



During the reporting year, marine conservation continued to be an important part of my GTMA responsibilities.

The Banks Marine Refuge was a significant development for our Nation. I participated in discussions as the work moved through the GTMA Board and hereditary leadership, but I want to be clear about where the credit belongs. This was a collective achievement, guided by the GTMA Board and by the voices and determination of our people.

For me, the value of marine protection is straightforward. Our people must be able to continue harvesting and living in the ways handed down to us. Protection should help ensure that others cannot simply enter our territory and take what sustains our families.

I have also been involved in discussions concerning a National Marine Conservation Area Reserve, or NMCAR, and in explaining to other levels of government why this work matters. Protecting marine ecosystems benefits Gitxaała, but the importance of healthy waters extends far beyond our Nation.

We are moving in a promising direction with Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas and marine conservation initiatives. What matters is that Gitxaała laws, knowledge and harvesting responsibilities remain at the centre of that work.

"It is up to all of us to ensure our lands and waters are protected; I am but the voice. Together we can keep our lands strong and beautiful."

— Elliot Moody, Councillor, Gitxaała Nation

Our community has also raised concerns about overharvesting. It has been one of the issues I have heard about most often. Council helped develop and put a policy in place to address those concerns, and the next responsibility is to make sure the policy is understood, implemented and able to achieve its purpose.

Education and community participation are essential. I would like to see more engagement about the threat posed by invasive green crab and what citizens can do to help address it. I also want us to assess the cleanup needs on Banks Island and explore realistic plans and funding options. That will likely be long-term work, but it is important that we begin looking seriously at what can be done.

These may be different projects, but they come back to the same principle: protecting our territory requires attention today and a commitment that lasts beyond a single Council term.

Defending Gitxaała Interests in Decisions About Development

Another important responsibility has been advocating for the continued protection of our coast, including the importance of maintaining the oil tanker moratorium.

I recognize the leadership of Chief Councillor Linda Innes, our hereditary leaders and the organizations and partners working with us on these matters. Protecting our territory is not the accomplishment of one person. It requires a strong and united effort.

I am concerned about the prospect of increased marine shipping and industrial activity, and about the damage that could occur if projects are not carefully planned and monitored. Even when Gitxaała has relationships with project proponents that allow us to raise concerns and influence mitigation measures, there are risks that cannot be predicted or planned away.

That uncertainty is something we cannot ignore.

Gitxaała already has a strong voice in discussions with provincial and federal governments. My responsibility is to help keep that voice present, particularly when the decisions being made could affect our fisheries, marine environment and traditional ways of life.

We are not opposed to having conversations about development. We are insisting that the people who know and depend upon this territory have a meaningful say in what happens here.

Recognizing Our Guardians and Fisheries Teams

Our territory is vast, and I have tremendous respect for the people who work to monitor and care for it.

I have been invited to accompany Guardian and Fisheries crews on the water, but I have generally chosen to let them carry out their work without a Councillor's presence influencing their day-to-day activities. My role is to support them and make sure they have the attention and resources they need.

One of the greatest challenges is capacity. There are simply not enough Guardians to be everywhere across such a large territory at once. That is not a reflection of their commitment. It is a reminder of the scale of the work they are being asked to do.

I want more young Gitxaała people to understand these opportunities. We should create youth-focused events where they can learn about fisheries, Guardians, environmental science, territorial

management and the many issues that affect our lands and waters.

I would also like to see more young people at community engagement sessions and meetings. The decisions we are making today will shape their future. They deserve to be involved in those conversations.

Working with Hereditary Leadership and Our Partners



Our stewardship work must remain connected to hereditary leadership. The GTMA Board includes hereditary-appointed members, and that relationship is central to how the Nation approaches its responsibilities.

I also work to ensure that issues affecting the North receive attention in regional discussions, including through Coastal First Nations. Too often, conversations about the coast can overlook the particular concerns of northern communities.

Relationships with other Nations and organizations can help us bring those concerns forward. Gitxaała is strong in its own right, but allies can help amplify our voice and support us when our interests are at stake.

The important thing is that those partnerships serve the needs of our Nation and remain grounded in the responsibilities we carry to our people and territory.

Supporting Public Works and Community Infrastructure

Alongside GTMA, I support the Public Works portfolio by working with the lead Councillor and participating in meetings where community infrastructure and services are discussed.

One issue I have supported is the need to repair the community wharf and dock. I have brought my experience and voice to those discussions because dependable marine infrastructure is essential for a coastal community like ours. This has been a team effort, and there is more work to do.

I am also concerned about the need to recruit and retain workers. In the years ahead, staffing may become one of the most significant challenges facing our services and infrastructure.

I want to see more Gitxaała citizens working in these areas. Building our workforce is not only about filling positions. It is about creating opportunities for our people to gain skills, support their families and contribute directly to the well-being of their community.

Listening to the People Who Elected Us

One thing I have learned through my Council responsibilities is how important it is to remain accessible.

I participate in GTMA community engagement sessions because I believe citizens need to hear about what is happening in the territory and have opportunities to raise their concerns. The overharvesting issue is one example of why those conversations matter.

I also believe Council itself should hold more community engagement sessions. We were elected to represent our people, and we need to make room to listen directly to them, not only when a particular department is hosting a meeting.

My own priority for the coming year is simple: to be present and spend more time in the village. I want to keep citizens informed about what we are working on and continue strengthening that relationship between Council and the people we serve.

I believe GTMA is moving in the right direction with its engagement work. My role is to support that progress, keep the Nation's interests at the forefront and continue encouraging more participation, especially from youth.

Aama Didüüls: The Future I Want for Our Children

When I think about Aama Didüüls – A Good Life, I think about a future in which Gitxaała people no longer have to keep fighting to protect our territory and the way of life we have always known.

I want our children and grandchildren to grow up free to practise our traditions, without other governments placing unnecessary constraints on who we are or how we live. We are moving in the right direction, but I know there are still challenges ahead.

Most of all, I want the work we do today to have meaning for future generations.

Fifty years from now, I hope one of our grandchildren can look into a river or stream and see a salmon swimming there. I do not want them to have to learn what salmon once looked like from a book.

That is what protecting our territory means to me.

I want to acknowledge Matthew Hill for his kind words and encouragement when I have needed them. I want to thank Chief Councillor Linda Innes for continuing to challenge me to use my voice, not only in outside meetings but wherever our people need to be represented.

And I want to acknowledge my son, Quinn. Everything I do is for him and for the generations who will follow.

To Gitxaała citizens, I want to say this: you are, and always will be, the driving force behind this work. Council members may speak on your behalf, but it is your future we are responsible for protecting.

Education Is Our Future: Strengthening Learning, Language and Cultural Identity

Supporting Student Success, Revitalizing Language and Building Opportunities for Future Generations
Gail Watkinson | Councillor, Gitxaała Nation





Education is one of the most important investments we can make in the future of Gitxaała Nation. It provides our people with the knowledge, skills, confidence and opportunities to pursue their goals while remaining connected to who they are and where they come from.

But education is about much more than classrooms, textbooks and qualifications. It is also about our language, our culture, our history and the knowledge passed down through generations.

As the lead Councillor for the Education portfolio, working alongside Councillor Jamie Angus as my alternate and co-partner, I believe that education must remain central to the development of our Nation. Our responsibility is to support students at every stage of learning, from early childhood through elementary and secondary school, post-secondary education and lifelong learning.

Our aayawx and adaawx are fundamental to understanding who we are as Gitxaała people. They connect us to our history, our responsibilities, our territory and the generations who came before us.

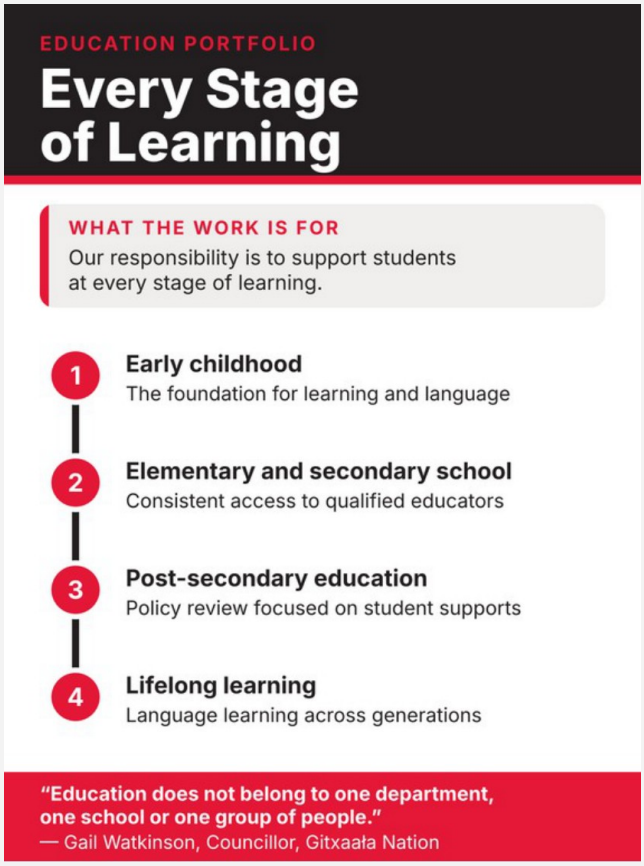
During the 2025–2026 reporting year, my work focused on advancing priorities established in the Gitxaała Strategic Plan, including strengthening educational opportunities, improving student supports, reviewing education policies, addressing staffing challenges and advancing early childhood education.

I have also continued supporting the important work of the Language and Culture Department, recognizing that language revitalization and cultural knowledge are essential to the future of our Nation.

Because this AGM takes place in November 2026, I also want to recognize three significant developments that took place between May and September 2026, after the fiscal year-end: the recruitment of three teachers, progress on the Early Childhood Education Facility feasibility study and a gathering of fluent Sm'algyax speakers. These more recent achievements are identified clearly throughout my report.

This year's AGM theme, Aama Didüüls – A Good Life, reflects the importance of this work. A good life means creating opportunities for our people to succeed while ensuring our language, culture and identity remain strong.

Strengthening Educational Opportunities for Gitxaała Students



One of my priorities has been supporting the continued review and improvement of Gitxaała Nation's education policies.

Policies are important because they establish how educational services and resources are provided to our citizens. They must be clear, fair and responsive to the changing needs of students and families.

During the reporting period, work continued on reviewing and updating education policies, with particular attention to the supports available to students pursuing post-secondary education.

The costs associated with attending college, university and other training institutions continue to rise. Tuition, accommodation, transportation, books and everyday living expenses can create significant financial pressure for students and their families.

For Gitxaała students who must leave their community to pursue educational opportunities, these challenges can be especially difficult.

It is important that our education policies recognize these realities and that the Nation continues examining how available resources can best support student success.

Our responsibility is not simply to help students begin their education. We also need to consider the challenges they may face as they work toward completing their studies.

Education can open doors to professional careers, skilled trades, leadership opportunities and employment within our Nation. When our citizens succeed, their knowledge and experience can benefit the wider community.

The policy review process has also required ongoing collaboration with Education Department staff, whose experience working directly with students and families provides valuable insight into where improvements are needed.

2026 Update: Recruiting Teachers and Strengthening Lach Klan School

Between May and September 2026, following the March 31 fiscal year-end, we successfully recruited three teachers for Lach Klan School. This is one of the most important accomplishments I want to highlight. This achievement deserves recognition because recruiting qualified teachers has become increasingly difficult across Canada, particularly for smaller and remote communities.

Gitxaała has experienced these challenges firsthand. Staffing shortages have meant that some classes have had to rely on online learning rather than consistent in-person classroom instruction.

While online learning can help maintain educational continuity, we also recognize the importance of having qualified teachers working directly with students in the classroom.

Teachers provide more than academic instruction. They develop relationships with students, support their confidence, identify learning needs and contribute to a positive school environment. Consistency is particularly important for children and young people whose educational experiences may already be affected by the challenges of living in a remote community.

The recruitment of three teachers represents an important achievement for the school and the Nation.

It reflects the hard work of the Education Department, including staff recruitment efforts, policy reviews and the discussions undertaken through our Council portfolio meetings.

These accomplishments do not happen through Council direction alone. They require dedicated employees who carry out the work, respond to challenges, coordinate recruitment and help put decisions into practice.

I want to acknowledge the Education Department staff and everyone involved in helping bring these teachers to our school.

While recruiting teachers is an important step, retaining them and building a stable learning environment must remain ongoing priorities.

Our children deserve consistent access to qualified educators and the resources necessary to help them succeed.

2026 Update: Investing in Early Childhood Education



Another major accomplishment between May and September 2026 was the approval to proceed with Phase Two of the Early Childhood Education Facility feasibility study.

Early childhood education provides the foundation for learning, language development, confidence and relationships. The experiences children have during their earliest years influence how they learn, grow and connect with the people around them.

For Gitxaała children, early learning should also provide opportunities to develop strong connections to family, community, language and culture.

The approval to proceed with Phase Two of the feasibility study represents an important step toward understanding what the Nation needs to support future early childhood education services and facilities.

This work moves the Nation beyond identifying a need and into more detailed planning about how that need may be addressed.

A feasibility study allows us to examine possible facility requirements, program delivery, operational considerations, funding opportunities and the resources necessary to move a project forward.

It also helps ensure that future decisions are informed by the needs of our children, families and community

While proceeding with the second phase of a feasibility study does not mean that construction has been approved, it is an important part of developing a realistic plan for the future.

I believe this work is a significant accomplishment for the Education Department and Gitxaała Nation.

It reflects the commitment of employees and leadership who recognize that investing in our youngest children is an investment in the generations who will follow.

Supporting Stronger Schools and Student Success

Alongside recruitment and facility planning, another focus has been participating in school assessments and educational reviews.
These processes provide opportunities to examine educational outcomes, identify strengths, understand challenges and consider where improvements may be needed.

I believe it is important for Council to remain informed about the educational experiences of our children and young people.

We need to understand whether students are receiving appropriate support, whether educational programs are meeting their needs and what additional resources may help them succeed.

School reviews and assessments also create opportunities for conversations involving educators, families, students, administrators and leadership.

These discussions are important because improving education requires cooperation.

Our teachers and educational staff have valuable firsthand knowledge of the challenges students encounter. Their experiences should help guide decisions about resources, staffing, learning supports and future educational planning.

We want our students to feel encouraged, supported and confident in their abilities. We also want them to have access to opportunities that prepare them for whatever paths they choose.

2026 Update: Revitalizing Sm'algyax and Bringing Fluent Speakers Together

Language is at the heart of our identity as Gitxaała people.
Sm'algyax carries knowledge, relationships, teachings and ways of understanding the world that cannot always be fully expressed through another language.

When we strengthen our language, we also strengthen our connections to our ancestors, our territory and one another.

Between May and September 2026, the Language and Culture Department organized a two-day gathering of fluent Sm'algyax speakers. This was a significant accomplishment that I want to recognize.

This gathering brought speakers together to share their knowledge, strengthen relationships and encourage continued interest in revitalizing our language.

Those who attended enjoyed the gathering, and it was an important step toward bringing people together around the shared responsibility of keeping Sm'algyax strong.

Creating these opportunities is especially important because fluent speakers carry knowledge that cannot be replaced simply through written materials or recordings.

Their understanding of pronunciation, meaning, cultural context and traditional ways of communicating is essential to language revitalization.

A gathering of this kind is about more than discussing language. It is also about bringing people together, strengthening relationships, encouraging participation and creating renewed interest in learning.

Community language classes have also provided opportunities for citizens to engage with Sm'algyax and participate in its revitalization.

I believe language learning should be encouraged across generations. Children and young people need opportunities to hear and use our language, while adults and families should also feel welcome to participate in learning.

Our Elders and fluent speakers hold invaluable knowledge, and it is important that we create meaningful opportunities for them to share it.

I want to acknowledge the Language and Culture Department, its leadership, employees, fluent speakers and everyone involved in organizing these important activities.

Their efforts are helping strengthen the foundation for future generations of Sm'algyax learners.

Preserving Our Aayawx, Adaawx and Cultural Knowledge

Our culture provides the foundation for understanding our responsibilities as Gitxaała people.
Our aayawx and adaawx connect us to our history, laws, traditions and relationships with our territory.

These teachings are not simply records of the past. They continue to inform our identity, governance, relationships and responsibilities to future generations.

Throughout the reporting period, I continued supporting the work being undertaken to strengthen awareness and understanding of Gitxaała culture and traditional knowledge.

The Language and Culture Department's work in revitalization, documentation, research and cultural preservation contributes directly to these priorities.

Preserving our culture requires more than recording information. It means creating opportunities for people to learn from those who hold knowledge and encouraging younger generations to understand its importance.

Our Elders, Hereditary Leaders, cultural knowledge holders, families and community members all have roles in maintaining these connections.

I believe education and culture must work together.

Our children and young people should have opportunities to pursue academic and professional success while remaining proud of their identity and connected to their Nation.

These goals are not separate from one another. They are complementary parts of building a strong future.

Recognizing the Employees Behind Our Accomplishments

I want to take this opportunity to recognize the employees whose dedication makes these accomplishments possible.

Whether we are discussing the recruitment of teachers, the advancement of early childhood education planning, the review of education policies or the revitalization of our language, much of the work is carried out by staff who remain committed to improving services for our people.

Council has a responsibility to provide direction, establish priorities and oversee progress. But it is our employees who carry out much of the day-to-day work required to turn those priorities into results.

Recruiting three teachers requires considerable coordination and persistence. Advancing a feasibility study involves planning, research, communication and attention to detail.

Organizing a gathering of fluent speakers requires relationships, cultural understanding, preparation and the support of people who are willing to share their knowledge.

These accomplishments reflect the collective efforts of the Education and Language and Culture departments.

I want our citizens to recognize that behind every successful program, educational improvement and community gathering are dedicated people working on behalf of the Nation.

Their contributions deserve our appreciation and recognition.

Listening to Community Voices

Another important part of my work has been listening to community members about their experiences with education services and programs.

Citizens have valuable perspectives on what is working, where challenges exist and what improvements they would like to see.

Students and families may experience barriers that are not always apparent through administrative reports or policy discussions.

Their experiences can help identify service gaps and inform future planning.

Throughout the reporting period, engagement with community members provided opportunities to hear concerns, gather ideas and better understand educational priorities.

I believe effective education planning requires listening to the people who use these services.

Their voices should help guide decisions about policies, student supports, program development and future opportunities.

Our goal must be to develop services that are responsive to community needs while supporting the broader educational priorities of Gitxaała Nation.

Looking Ahead: Education, Language and Culture as Shared Priorities

As we look toward 2026–2027, there is important work still to be done.

Completing outstanding education policy reviews will remain a priority, particularly where changes may improve access to student supports and respond to rising educational costs.

We must continue working with Lach Klan School and educational partners to strengthen student outcomes and support the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers.

Building on the successful recruitment of three teachers, we want to ensure that our students benefit from stability, consistent instruction and a supportive learning environment.

Advancing the Early Childhood Education Facility feasibility study will also remain important as the Nation considers the programs, facilities and investments needed to support our youngest learners.

Language revitalization must continue to be a shared priority.

We want to build on opportunities for Sm'algyax learning, support our fluent speakers and encourage greater participation in the programs and gatherings that strengthen our cultural identity.

Supporting the transmission of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next is equally important.

These priorities are connected by a common responsibility: creating opportunities for Gitxaała citizens to succeed while maintaining the knowledge, values and identity that make our Nation strong.

Education Is a Shared Responsibility

> ***"Education is lifelong. It begins at birth and continues throughout our lives."***
>
> — Gail Watkinson, Councillor, Gitxaała Nation

I want to acknowledge the students who continue working toward their educational goals, often while overcoming significant challenges. Their dedication deserves recognition.

I also want to thank our teachers, Education Department employees, Language and Culture staff, language instructors, Elders, cultural knowledge holders, parents, families and community members who contribute to learning in so many different ways.

Education does not belong to one department, one school or one group of people.

It is a collective responsibility.

Parents and families provide children's first learning experiences. Teachers and support staff help students develop their abilities. Elders and knowledge holders share the teachings that connect us to our history and culture.

Council has a responsibility to support these efforts through thoughtful planning, appropriate policies and continued investment.

I am grateful to work alongside Councillor Jamie Angus and the dedicated employees who continue moving these priorities forward.

The work undertaken during the fiscal year, together with the important achievements from May to September 2026 in teacher recruitment, early childhood education planning and language revitalization, demonstrates what can be accomplished when leadership, departments and community members work together.

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life reminds us that education should support not only individual achievement but also the well-being and future of our Nation.

Education begins at birth and continues throughout our lives.

By remaining committed to student success, language revitalization, cultural preservation and lifelong learning, we are helping build a future where Gitxaała citizens can pursue their goals while remaining connected to who we are as a people.

Finding Our Voices: Building the Next Generation of Gitxaała Leaders

Jamie Angus | Youth Councillor, Gitxaała Nation





Our young people are the future of Gitxaała Nation, but they also have an important role to play in shaping our community today. They bring different perspectives, new ideas, and experiences that can help us better understand the challenges and opportunities facing our Nation.

As Youth Councillor, one of my most important responsibilities is to create opportunities for young people to be heard, to participate in decisions that affect them, and to develop the confidence and skills to become leaders in their own right.

This year's AGM theme, Aama Didüüls – A Good Life, reminds us that building a strong Nation begins with how we support one another. For our youth, that means creating a community where they feel respected, included, and encouraged to take pride in who they are as Gitxaała people.

Throughout this reporting period, my focus has been on youth leadership development and ensuring that young people have a meaningful voice in the future of our Nation.

Creating a Voice for Gitxaała Youth

One of the most important developments highlighted in my report has been the establishment of our Gitxaała Youth Council.

Young people experience our community, schools, culture, programs, and services in ways that adults and leadership may not always fully understand. Their perspectives are valuable because they help us recognize what is working, what needs improvement, and what opportunities our youth would like to see.

Creating a Youth Council gives young people a place to express their ideas, discuss community issues, and learn how leadership and decision-making work.

The nomination and election process was an important achievement. We had 27 youth nominated, with 13 choosing to let their names stand for Youth Council.

At the school in Lax Klan, youth participated in a mini-candidate forum where they had an opportunity to introduce themselves and explain why they wanted to serve. For many, this was an opportunity to practise speaking in front of others, share their ideas, and build confidence in using their voices.

The election was held at the Light House, where 50 young people participated in voting for their Youth Council representatives.

These numbers represent more than participation in an election. They show that our young people are interested in having a voice and being involved in the future of their community.

Introducing Our Youth Council

Following the election, the following young leaders were selected to represent their peers:



- Youth Chief: Maurice Ridley-Moody

- Deputy Youth Chief: Vanessa Johnson-Innes

- Youth Secretary: Natalia McKay

- Youth Councillors: Mikayla Brown, Tristian Robinson, Caleb Clifton, and Elmer Dennis

The Youth Council was sworn in during the end-of-year Learning Feast, marking an important moment for these young leaders and for our community.

Leadership is not simply about having a title. It is about learning to listen, respecting different perspectives, working together, accepting responsibility, and understanding what it means to serve others.

These are values that our young people can carry throughout their lives, whether they eventually become elected leaders, work in our community, pursue further education, or follow other paths.

Learning to Lead Together

Building a Youth Council is only the beginning. The next step is ensuring these young leaders have opportunities to learn, participate, and contribute in meaningful ways.
At the Youth Council orientation meeting on September 9, 2026, members began establishing how they would work together. They agreed to hold regular meetings at the Light House on the third Wednesday of each month at 3:45 p.m.

Having regular meetings will provide a consistent space where youth can raise concerns, discuss ideas, and learn about issues affecting Gitxaała Nation.

I would also like to see greater involvement from our hereditary leaders, Governing Council members, Elders, and community leaders.

There is so much knowledge within our Nation that can be shared with our youth. Bringing different generations together creates opportunities for mentorship, cultural learning, and a better understanding of the responsibilities that come with leadership.

These connections are important because strong leadership is built through relationships, experience, and a willingness to learn from others.

Connecting Youth to the Decisions That Shape Our Nation

Looking ahead, I want our Youth Council to become an active part of community conversations and planning.

One of our priorities is to organize youth engagement sessions where young people can share their thoughts about the programs, services, activities, and opportunities they would like to see in Gitxaała.

These discussions could include developing youth wish lists and recommendations that can help inform future community planning and Council priorities.

I also want to create opportunities for Youth Council members to accompany Governing Council members and other community leaders to local, regional, and provincial meetings.

Through these experiences, young people can observe leadership in action, learn about the issues affecting our Nation, and bring what they learn back to their fellow Youth Council members.

Giving our youth these opportunities helps them understand that their voices matter beyond their immediate circle of friends or classmates. They can contribute to conversations about the future of our Nation.

Looking Ahead: Growing Our Future Leaders



As we move into 2026–2027, my priority is to continue supporting the development of the Youth Council and making sure it becomes a welcoming, respectful, and meaningful space for our young people.

We want youth to feel comfortable sharing their opinions, asking questions, and participating in discussions, even when they have different perspectives.

I also recognize that I am continuing to develop my own leadership skills. Serving as Youth Councillor is an opportunity for me to learn alongside our young people while helping them find their confidence and understand their responsibilities as future leaders.

Our Nation will always need people who are willing to listen, work together, and contribute to the well-being of our communities. The earlier we encourage these values, the stronger our future leadership will be.

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life is about ensuring that everyone has a place in our Nation's future, including our youngest citizens.

I want to thank all the youth who put their names forward, participated in the election, and were willing to share their thoughts and ideas. It takes courage to stand up and speak, and I am proud of those who took that step.

I also want to acknowledge the Youth Empowerment Workers, Lach Klan School staff, and my fellow Council members who helped make the Youth Council possible.

This work is just beginning, and I look forward to continuing to learn and work alongside our young people.

By listening to their voices, encouraging their ideas, and giving them opportunities to lead, we are helping build the future leaders of tomorrow.

Building a Safe and Sustainable Future for Gitxaała

Strengthening Community Safety, Housing, Infrastructure and Accountability

Rowena Ridley | Councillor, Gitxaała Nation
Portfolios: Community Services and Public Works





Leadership Begins with Listening

When I think about leadership, I think about listening. Our strength as Gitxaała people has always come from our ability to come together, share openly and care for one another. These values guide my work as a Councillor and remind me that the decisions we make today will shape the community we leave for future generations.

During the 2025–2026 reporting year, my responsibilities focused on Community Services and Public Works, with particular attention to community safety, housing, infrastructure development and strengthening governance processes.

Before becoming a Councillor, I spent many years supporting Chief and Council as an Executive Assistant. That experience gave me an understanding of how our governance systems operate, the responsibilities that accompany Council decisions and the importance of respecting our ayaawx and hereditary leadership.

It also taught me that good governance requires more than making decisions. It requires communication, accountability and follow-through. Citizens deserve to know what work is being undertaken, what challenges remain and how Council is working to address their concerns.

Our AGM theme, Aama Didüüls – A Good Life, reflects what I believe we should be working toward: a safe community, healthy homes, dependable infrastructure and opportunities for Gitxaała citizens who wish to live in their home territory.

Strengthening Governance and Community Safety

Community safety has remained one of my most important priorities.

As Chair of the Community Services Portfolio, I have worked through regular monthly portfolio meetings to help keep important issues before Council and strengthen communication between governance and administration.

These meetings provide opportunities to review departmental priorities, discuss concerns and identify matters requiring Council direction or additional attention.

One important governance development has been the recent passage of the High-Risk Sex Offender Policy.

This policy was developed with input from community members and addresses a concern that I believe has needed attention for a long time.

For me, community safety is not simply an operational matter. It is a fundamental responsibility of governance. Citizens should be able to feel safe in their homes and community, and leadership must be prepared to address difficult issues when they arise.

The development and passage of this policy demonstrate the importance of listening to citizens and responding through formal governance processes.

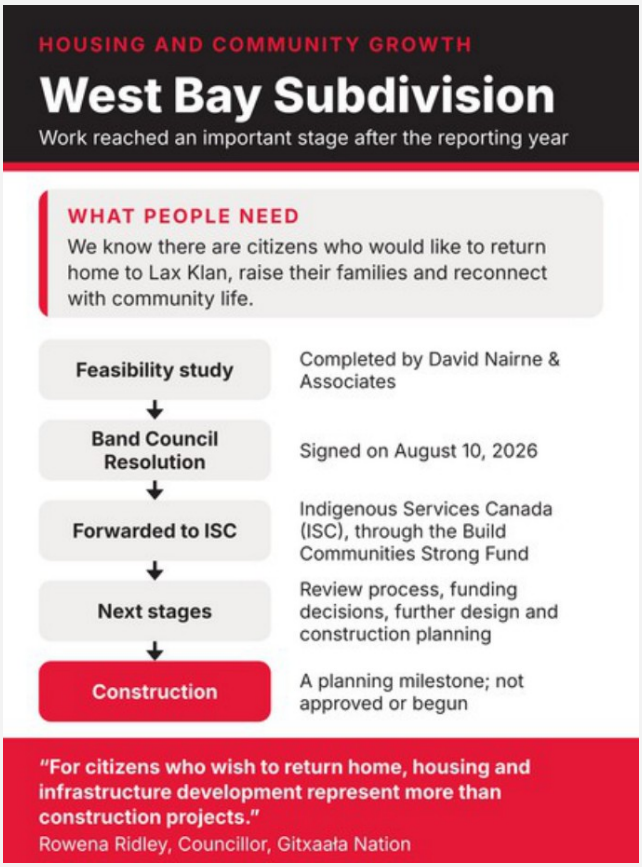
> ***"When I think about leadership, I think about listening. Our strength as Gitxaała people has always come from our ability to come together, to share openly, and to take care of one another."***
>
> — Rowena Ridley, Councillor

Policies alone do not resolve every concern. They must also be understood, implemented and supported through clear responsibilities and consistent communication. However, establishing a policy framework is an important step in strengthening accountability and protecting community well-being.

Planning for Housing and Community Growth

Housing is central to the long-term well-being of Gitxaała Nation.
We know there are citizens who would like to return home to Lax Klan, raise their families and reconnect with community life. Creating opportunities for them requires careful planning, appropriate infrastructure and a realistic understanding of the resources needed to support future residential development.

One significant initiative is the West Bay Subdivision, which represents an opportunity to advance longer-term housing development.



Following the formal reporting year, work on this initiative reached an important stage. David Nairne & Associates completed the feasibility study, and a Band Council Resolution was signed on August 10, 2026. The submission was forwarded to Indigenous Services Canada through the Build Communities Strong Fund.

This was an important planning milestone, but it does not mean construction has been approved or begun.

The next stages will depend on the review process, funding decisions and the further design and construction planning needed to move the project forward.

I also believe we must look at housing as part of a larger community development strategy. New residential areas require reliable roads, water services, wastewater infrastructure and other essential facilities.

For that reason, I support the development of an integrated housing and capital plan that connects future housing opportunities with the infrastructure required to support them.

A review of the Nation's Housing Policy, with updates where needed, is another priority. Clear policies are important for ensuring that housing decisions are transparent, consistent and responsive to the needs of our citizens.

Maintaining and Improving Essential Infrastructure

Public Works has a direct impact on the daily lives of everyone living in our community.
Safe drinking water, reliable wastewater treatment, functioning public buildings and secure marine infrastructure are services that citizens depend upon every day.

PUBLIC WORKS PORTFOLIO

Essential Infrastructure

WHAT THE WORK IS FOR

Reliable water and wastewater systems are among the most important investments any community can make.

Project	Where it stands
Raw Water Intake Replacement Design ICMS 123750	Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) review and approval needed
Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements Design · ICMS 131265	Design completed August 2026; ISC review and approval needed
Wharf repairs	Identified as a high priority
Retaining walls, reservoirs and water treatment	Associated Engineering feasibility work reviewed by Chief and Council

"Completing feasibility and design work is different from receiving construction approval or completing the physical improvements."
Rowena Ridley, Councillor, Gitxaała Nation

Much of this work takes place behind the scenes, but its importance becomes immediately apparent when systems require repair or replacement.

Throughout my portfolio work, I have supported attention to the condition of existing infrastructure and the planning required for necessary improvements.

One area of focus has been the Asset Condition Reporting System (ACRS) used by Indigenous Services Canada. This reporting system helps assess the condition and expected life cycle of community buildings and infrastructure.

Understanding the condition of our assets is essential to making informed decisions about maintenance, repairs and eventual replacement. It helps the Nation identify priorities and plan for future capital investment rather than responding only when problems become urgent.

Wharf repairs have also been identified as a high priority. As a coastal community, we depend on safe and reliable marine access for transportation, supplies and everyday community activities.

Chief and Council have also reviewed feasibility work completed by Associated Engineering concerning proposed improvements to retaining walls, reservoirs and water treatment infrastructure.

These projects require technical expertise, coordination and long-term funding commitments. They also require Council to understand the recommendations being presented and the implications for community safety and future development.

Advancing Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Planning

Reliable water and wastewater systems are among the most important investments any community can make.
For Gitxaała Nation, the challenge is ensuring that existing systems remain safe and functional while planning for upgrades that will meet community needs over time.

Two important capital-planning initiatives were identified in the departmental reporting.

Kitkatla Water Treatment Plant Raw Water Intake Replacement Design — ICMS 123750

This project concerns the proposed replacement of raw-water intake infrastructure. The design must be reviewed and approved by Indigenous Services Canada before the proposed construction funding can advance.

Kitkatla Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements Design — ICMS 131265

Associated Engineering completed the design work for proposed wastewater treatment improvements in August 2026, after the formal reporting period.
The project remains subject to Indigenous Services Canada review and approval before construction funding can proceed.

Both projects represent important steps in preparing for future infrastructure improvements. However, completing feasibility and design work is different from receiving construction approval or completing the physical improvements.

I believe it is important that citizens understand those distinctions.

Planning, engineering, funding applications and technical reviews may not be as visible as construction, but they are necessary steps toward securing reliable infrastructure for our community.

Addressing Challenges in Capital Funding and Accountability

One of the challenges we continue to encounter is securing funding for new capital projects when previous reporting requirements remain outstanding with Indigenous Services Canada.
Funding agreements often require financial, technical or project-completion reports. When these obligations are not fully addressed, they can create complications for subsequent funding requests.

This reinforces the importance of strong administrative systems, communication between departments and careful management of the Nation's capital projects.

We must be able to demonstrate how funding has been used, what work has been completed and what remains outstanding.

As a Councillor, I recognize that accountability is a shared responsibility. Council provides governance direction and oversight, while administration and technical staff carry out the detailed work necessary to meet reporting requirements and advance projects.

Strengthening these processes will help the Nation make more effective use of available resources and support future funding applications.

We also have to be realistic about the timelines involved in major infrastructure projects. Engineering assessments, funding approvals, permitting and construction can take considerable time.

Keeping citizens informed throughout those stages is an important part of maintaining public trust.

Looking Ahead: Priorities for 2026–2027

As we move forward, I remain committed to advancing work that strengthens community safety, housing opportunities and essential infrastructure.
My priorities include moving the West Bay Subdivision through the Indigenous Services Canada review process and, subject to the necessary approvals and funding, toward detailed design and construction.

I also support advancing an integrated housing and capital plan that provides a coordinated approach to community development.

Reviewing the Housing Policy and considering updates where needed will be important to ensuring our housing systems remain fair, accountable and responsive.

Other priorities include continuing to advance essential water and wastewater infrastructure projects, addressing high-priority wharf repairs, and improving the reporting and planning processes needed to secure capital funding.

These are significant responsibilities, and not every project can be completed at once. Progress requires careful decisions, sound financial management and continued cooperation between Council, administration, technical advisors and funding partners.

Serving Our Nation with Accountability and Respect

I believe leadership must always remain connected to the people we serve.
Our citizens should know that their concerns matter, that their voices are heard and that the decisions made by Council are guided by the long-term interests of Gitxaała Nation.

My experience working with Chief and Council before becoming an elected representative continues to influence how I approach this responsibility. I understand the importance of governance processes, but I also understand that behind every policy, capital project and funding decision are families and community members whose lives are affected.

For citizens who wish to return home, housing and infrastructure development represent more than construction projects. They represent the possibility of raising children in their own community, remaining connected to family and participating more fully in the life of our Nation.

For citizens already living in Lax Klan, improvements to infrastructure and community safety are investments in their everyday well-being.

I want to acknowledge and thank our Smgigyet, Sigidmhanaa, Elders, youth, citizens, fellow Council members, employees, nurses, advisors and consultants who contribute to making our community safe, vibrant and welcoming.

Their knowledge, commitment and willingness to work together are essential to the progress we make.

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life is about ensuring that our people have the opportunity to live safely, with dignity, connection and hope for the future.

It is an honour to serve Gitxaała Nation. I remain committed to listening, working collaboratively and helping build a stronger future for our citizens and the generations yet to come.

Rowena Ridley

Councillor, Gitxaała Nation

Building a Stronger Foundation: People, Governance and Service to Our Nation

A Year of Strengthening Administration and Recognizing the People Who Keep Gitxaała Moving Forward

Marcia Robinson | Chief Administrative Officer, Gitxaała Nation





A Nation's administration is often measured by the services people receive, but much of the work that makes those services possible happens behind the scenes. It is found in the systems that keep our departments connected, the policies that support fair decisions, the employees who answer questions and solve problems, and the planning that helps leadership respond to the needs of Gitxaała citizens.

As Chief Administrative Officer, my responsibility is to help create the conditions for our employees, directors and managers to do their work effectively and with accountability. I want Administration to be professional, responsive and grounded in respect for the people we serve and the Nation we represent.

During the April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026 reporting year, our Administration Division focused on strengthening governance, improving organizational systems, supporting employees, modernizing technology and coordinating work across the Nation. These efforts involved our Administrative Services, Human Resources, Information Technology, Membership Registry, Communications and Loaf of Bread Café functions, in close collaboration with Chief and Council and other departments.

Our AGM theme, Aama Didüüls – A Good Life, reflects the kind of organization we are working to build. It reminds us that good governance is not simply about policies and processes. It is about creating a workplace where people are treated respectfully and ensuring that the Nation can provide dependable services to citizens today and into the future.

Strengthening Governance and Organizational Accountability

Good administration requires clear processes, reliable information and strong working relationships between governance and operations.

Throughout the year, our division supported Chief and Council through a standardized Council reporting template, coordination of Directors and Managers meetings, and ongoing administrative support for major Nation initiatives. These included work relating to housing, food security, infrastructure and strategic planning.

We also helped coordinate Community Visioning and Community Development Plan engagement sessions. Hearing from citizens is essential to developing priorities that reflect what our communities need and what we hope to achieve together.

Administration continued supporting work on the Gitxaała Custom Election Code and preparing for the Nation's AGM reporting process. These responsibilities require careful coordination because the decisions made through governance processes affect the work of many departments.

Our goal is to strengthen the consistency of information reaching leadership while helping managers understand their responsibilities and the authority under which they work. This work is not always visible, but it supports transparency, accountability and better-informed decisions.

Investing in Our Employees and Building a Respectful Workplace

Our people are the foundation of the Nation's operations. Across the organization, approximately 140 employees are supported through Human Resources services, although staffing levels fluctuate with seasonal work and program needs.

One of our major areas of progress was improving participation in the Nation's employee benefits program. In August 2025, our Human Resources team worked with our benefits provider to conduct a mass enrolment initiative. Participation increased to more than 70 percent, helping more employees access supports available through their employment.

We also undertook a comprehensive update of the Personnel Policy in partnership with the First Nations Financial Management Board. The revised policy was forwarded to Council in February 2026 and approved in May 2026, following the end of this reporting period.

An important part of that work was formally recognizing Cultural Leave of up to five days. Documenting provisions such as this helps employees and managers understand how workplace policies apply, while acknowledging the cultural responsibilities that are part of life for Gitxaała people.

Strengthening employee support also means investing in professional development. During the reporting year, organizational training included Accounts Payable procedures in May 2025 and trauma-informed practice in September 2025.

These learning opportunities helped strengthen understanding of financial processes, workplace responsibilities and respectful approaches to working with colleagues and citizens.

Our division will continue improving recruitment, onboarding, employee records, performance discussions, succession planning and consistent policy implementation. A stable and capable workforce depends on clear expectations, opportunities to learn and support from managers and leadership.

Recognizing Years of Service Across Gitxaała Nation

This AGM gives us an important opportunity to recognize the employees who have devoted years of work to Gitxaała Nation.

Thirty employees have been identified for Years of Service recognition. These individuals serve in different departments and roles, but they share something important: their time, knowledge and commitment contribute to the Nation's ability to deliver services and carry out its responsibilities.

I want each person receiving recognition to know that their contribution is valued. Much of the work of running a government, a school, a community program or an essential service happens quietly, through the everyday efforts of people who continue to show up for our citizens.

For this year's acknowledgements, we used a consistent approach to milestone recognition. Employees who were within six months of reaching their next five-year milestone were acknowledged at that milestone. For example, an employee with four years and six months of service could be recognized in the five-year category. The categories are therefore recognition milestones, not necessarily a statement of each person's exact completed length of service.

The approach also applies to the advancement of recognition categories between AGM cycles, including employees identified as moving from a previous 20-year acknowledgement to a 25-year recognition. The names and categories for the current recognition have been reviewed and confirmed.

I extend my appreciation to every employee being recognized, and to all staff who contribute to our Nation every day. Your work helps keep the organization functioning and makes a difference in the lives of Gitxaała citizens.

Modernizing the Technology That Connects Our Departments

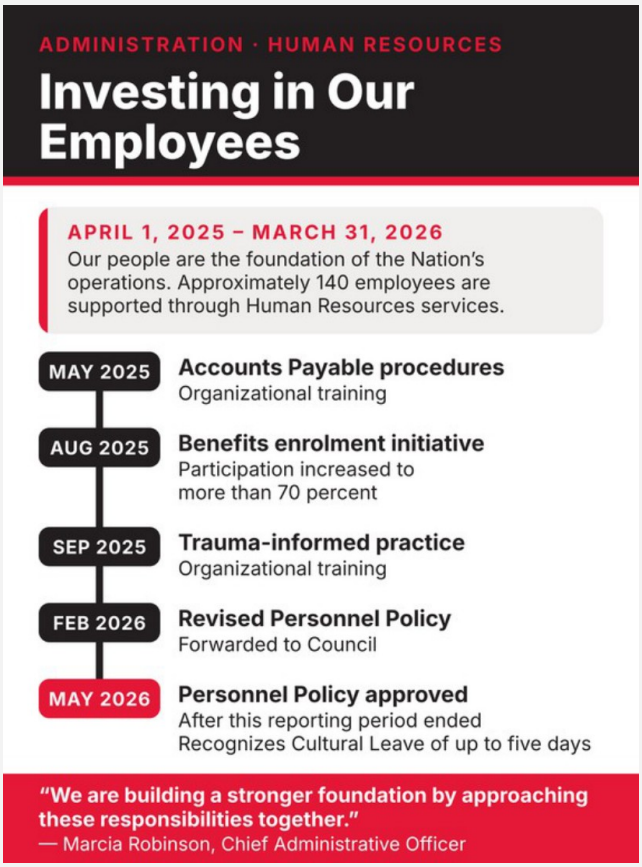
Reliable information technology is now essential to nearly every aspect of the Nation's administration. Employees depend on connectivity, secure records, working devices and dependable communication tools to serve citizens and coordinate across locations.

During the reporting year, our Information Technology team supported more than 130 employees and over 150 devices. IT also responded to approximately 300 service requests over the reported service period and supported meetings, community events and online communication.

The team strengthened network services and connectivity, expanded Microsoft 365 licensing, implemented cybersecurity improvements and worked to improve backup systems and external technical support arrangements.

These changes are important because technology failures can interrupt essential work. Improving systems, managing access and maintaining backup arrangements helps protect continuity and reduce risks across the organization.

Our work is not finished. We still need to plan for equipment replacement, cybersecurity threats, reliable connections, records management and disaster recovery. These are not simply technical concerns; they are part of ensuring that staff have the tools they need and that the Nation can maintain services when problems occur.



Supporting Membership Services and Everyday Administration

The Membership Registry is one of the places where citizens connect directly with the Nation's administration.

During the reporting year, registry services continued updating membership information, assisting with distributions, preparing communications and supporting planning for orientation initiatives. Keeping records current and helping citizens access accurate information are important parts of responsive service.

Administrative staff also supported meetings, correspondence, scheduling and coordination between departments. These tasks often happen without much attention, yet they enable the work of Council, management and frontline employees.

As we move forward, we want to improve records management, communication and the processes through which citizens receive information and support.

Creating Opportunity Through the Loaf of Bread Café

The Loaf of Bread Café contributes to the Nation through food services, employment and training opportunities.

During the reporting period, staff participated in learning and certification initiatives, including culinary training through Tea Creek Farms, food safety and ATV certification. Eleven employees were reported as having completed ATV certifications, and work continued to create pathways toward professional cook qualifications and Red Seal opportunities.

Additional grant support for employee training and development helps strengthen these opportunities. The value of this work extends beyond a single workplace: practical skills, confidence and credentials can support longer-term employment and career development.

The café also shows the importance of creating opportunities within our own operations. When the Nation invests in people and their professional growth, that experience can benefit employees, their families and the wider community.

"It's about more than policies and procedures — it's about creating a workplace where our staff feel valued, our citizens feel heard, and our Nation thrives."

— Marcia Robinson, Chief Administrative Officer

Working As One Organization

The Administration Division's responsibilities cross nearly every part of Gitxaała Nation.

During the year, our team worked with Finance during staffing transitions, supported departments managing housing, infrastructure, food security and community services, and collaborated with Health, Language and Culture and other programs on technology, communications and information management.

This cooperation is essential because our departments do not work in isolation. A program may need financial guidance, human resource support, communications assistance and technology services to deliver one initiative successfully.

ADMINISTRATION · IT

Modernizing the Technology

APRIL 1, 2025 – MARCH 31, 2026

Employees depend on connectivity, secure records, working devices and dependable communication tools to serve citizens.

AREA	REPORTING YEAR
IT support	More than 130 employees and over 150 devices
Service requests	Approximately 300 requests over the reported service period
Network	Strengthened network services and connectivity
Microsoft 365	Licensing expanded
Cybersecurity	Improvements implemented

"Improving systems and maintaining backup arrangements helps protect continuity."
— Marcia Robinson, Chief Administrative Officer

Clear roles and timely communication help us avoid unnecessary duplication, respond to challenges and make better use of the resources available.

I am grateful to the directors, managers, staff and external partners who continue to work together to strengthen these connections. A collaborative approach gives us more opportunities to identify concerns, share expertise and improve services.

Our Priorities for 2026-2027

The coming year will require us to build on the progress made while addressing areas where greater consistency and capacity are needed.
We plan to continue improving Human Resources systems, including work toward a Human Resources Information System that can strengthen employee information, leave tracking and administrative processes.

Policy modernization remains a priority. This includes implementing updated procedures consistently across departments, improving onboarding and employee orientation, and continuing work on organizational accountability.

Administration will also support the Gitxaała Custom Election Code initiative and the Community Development Plan as these processes move forward.

Our technology priorities include stronger cybersecurity, dependable backups, disaster recovery planning, improved connectivity and more effective records management. Maintaining essential systems requires ongoing investment and careful planning.

We will continue to support employee development and workplace training, including opportunities through the Loaf of Bread Café and other Nation programs.

Working with Language and Culture on an orientation experience for new staff is another way to help employees understand the community and responsibilities of the organization they serve.

Above all, we want to maintain an Administration Division that is organized, responsive and able to support the work of the Nation as its needs continue to evolve.

A Stronger Foundation for the Future

When I reflect on this reporting year, I see progress in the systems and relationships that hold our organization together. We have supported important governance processes, strengthened employee services, made improvements to technology and continued investing in staff learning and development.

We have also recognized the value of the people who make this work possible. The employees acknowledged for their Years of Service represent a great deal of experience, knowledge and dedication to Gitxaała Nation.

There are always challenges to address. Recruitment and retention, consistent policy implementation, technology infrastructure and organizational communication all require continued attention. But we are building a stronger foundation by approaching these responsibilities together.

I thank Chief and Council for their leadership, our directors and managers for their cooperation, and our employees for the commitment they bring to serving citizens.

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life is reflected in how we treat one another and how we carry out our responsibilities. My commitment is to keep strengthening an administration that supports our people, respects our values and helps Gitxaała Nation build a secure and healthy future.

Investing in Our People: Growing and Supporting Our Gitxaała Workforce

Strengthening Employee Benefits, Workplace Policies and Opportunities for Professional Growth

Victoria (Vicki) Vickers | Human Resources Manager, Gitxaała Nation



Our employees are the foundation of the services Gitxaała Nation provides to its citizens. Across our departments, staff carry out responsibilities that support the health, safety, education, infrastructure, administration, and overall well-being of our community.

As Human Resources Manager, I believe our responsibility is to ensure that employees are supported through fair and consistent policies, access to benefits, opportunities for professional development, and a workplace environment built on respect and accountability.

Human Resources is about more than recruitment, personnel files, and administrative processes. It is supporting managers and directors, and helping the Nation develop a stable and capable workforce.

During the 2025-2026 reporting year, our department focused on strengthening employee benefits participation, updating the Nation's Personnel Policy, improving Human Resources administration, and identifying opportunities to strengthen employee support. These initiatives are part of our ongoing commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and respectful workplace.

This year's AGM theme, Aama Didüüls – A Good Life reflects the importance of supporting the people who provide services to our Nation. When employees are treated fairly, have access to appropriate resources, and understand the policies that guide their work, the entire organization benefits.

Strengthening Employee Benefits Participation

One of our most significant accomplishments during the reporting year was improving participation in the Nation's employee benefits plan. Employee benefits are an important part of supporting the health and well-being of our workforce. They also contribute to employee retention and help the Nation remain competitive as an employer.

Before August 2025, approximately 53 percent of eligible employees were enrolled in the benefits plan. Although benefits were available, a significant number of employees were not participating. Recognizing this gap, Human Resources worked closely with our benefits agent of record, Eagle Bay Financial, to organize a mass enrollment initiative in August 2025.

This initiative provided an opportunity to improve communication about available benefits, assist employees with enrollment, and encourage greater participation.The results were encouraging.

Employee benefits participation increased from approximately 53 percent to just over 70 percent.



This represented meaningful progress in ensuring that more employees were accessing benefits available through their employment with Gitxaała Nation.

I want to acknowledge the assistance of Leanne, Danielle, and Tiziana from Eagle Bay Financial, whose support helped make the enrolment initiative possible. Their cooperation with Human Resources contributed to the success of this work.

Increasing participation is an important accomplishment, but our responsibility does not end with enrolment. We must continue helping employees understand their benefits and ensuring that the Nation's programs remain appropriate, sustainable, and responsive to workforce needs.

Updating the Nation’s Personnel Policy

Another major priority during the reporting year was the review and revision of Gitxaała Nation's Personnel Policy.

Clear and consistent workplace policies are essential to effective administration. They help employees understand their rights and responsibilities, establish expectations for workplace conduct, and provide managers and directors with guidance when making employment-related decisions.

During the reporting period, Human Resources worked with the First Nations Financial Management Board (FMB) to undertake a comprehensive review of the Nation's Personnel Policy.

The objective was to strengthen the policy framework and ensure that employment practices were clearly documented, consistently applied, and aligned with the Nation's administrative responsibilities.

I want to acknowledge Brad from the First Nations Financial Management Board for his assistance with this work. The revised Personnel Policy was forwarded to Council for review and approval in February 2026.

This was an important milestone in the policy development process.

One of the proposed changes involved formally recognizing Cultural Leave of up to five days.

Cultural responsibilities are an important part of life for many Gitxaała employees, and the proposed provision was intended to provide greater clarity and consistency in how this leave would be administered.

Although cultural leave had previously been granted, documenting it within the Personnel Policy would help establish clearer expectations for employees and management.

The policy was still before Council at the end of the March 31, 2026 reporting period.

Our work on the policy reflects the importance of treating workplace policies as living documents that require regular review and updating.

As the Nation's programs, workforce, and responsibilities evolve, our policies must continue to evolve as well.

Building Human Resources Capacity

Gitxaała Nation employs approximately 140 people, although staffing numbers fluctuate depending on seasonal work and operational requirements. Supporting a workforce of this size involves a wide range of responsibilities.
Human Resources assists with recruitment, employee records, onboarding, benefits administration, workplace policies, and communication with employees and department managers.

As these responsibilities continue to grow, it is important that the department has sufficient capacity to provide timely and consistent services.

In February 2026, Jane Tolmie joined Human Resources as our HR Administrative Clerk. Her addition strengthened the department's administrative capacity and provided support for the day-to-day responsibilities involved in serving our workforce.

Our Human Resources team consists of an HR Manager and an HR Administrative Clerk. Developing the skills and knowledge of our HR staff remains an important priority. This includes training in employee benefits administration, maintaining accurate employment records, and supporting the consistent application of workplace procedures. Building internal capacity helps ensure that Human Resources services remain dependable as the Nation continues to develop its programs and operations.

Supporting Recruitment and Employee Retention

Recruiting and retaining qualified employees continues to be an important challenge for Gitxaała Nation. Like many First Nations governments, we must compete for individuals with specialized training, professional qualifications, and experience.
Some positions require skills that can be difficult to recruit, particularly when resources are limited or when employment involves working in a remote community.

Attracting qualified employees is only one part of the challenge. We must also create a workplace where employees feel supported, understand their responsibilities, and have opportunities to develop professionally.

Human Resources continues to examine ways to strengthen recruitment practices, compensation, onboarding, employee training, and succession planning.

One area identified for improvement is the format of job postings. We want to make postings more concise and accessible by providing clear information about the position, highlighting important qualifications, and directing applicants to complete job descriptions when they need additional details.

Clearer recruitment materials can help applicants understand employment opportunities and make the application process more straightforward.

We also recognize the importance of maintaining competitive and financially sustainable compensation practices.

Reviewing salary structures, benefits, and workplace supports will remain important as the Nation considers its long-term workforce needs.

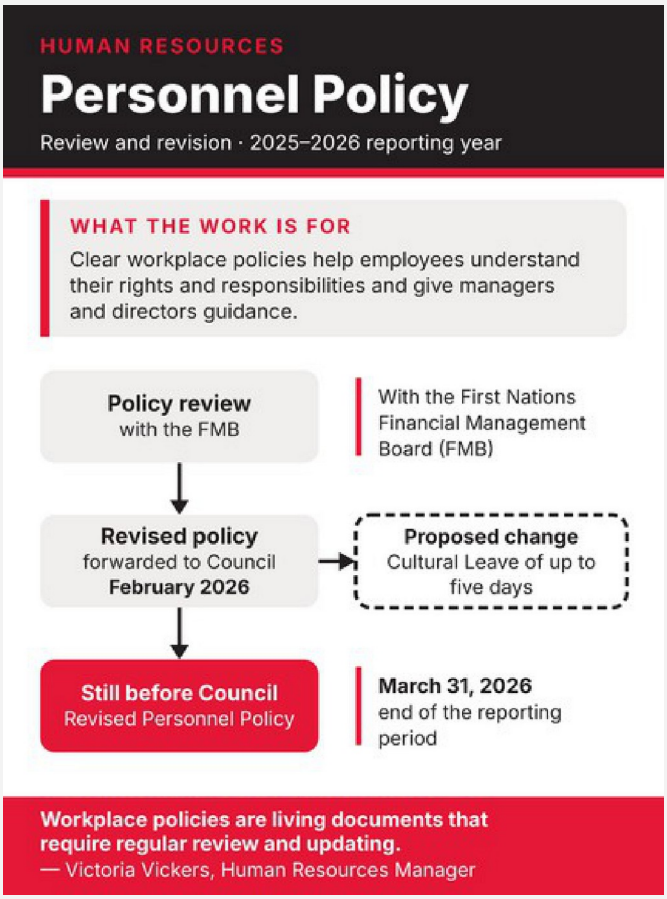
"Our employees are the foundation of the services Gitxaała Nation provides."

— Victoria Vickers, Human Resources Manager

Maintaining Fair and Consistent Workplace Practices

As an organization with many departments and different types of employment, Gitxaała Nation requires Human Resources policies that can be applied consistently.
Employees should have a clear understanding of the policies that affect their employment. Managers and directors also need guidance so that employment decisions are made fairly and appropriately.

One of the challenges identified during the reporting year was the importance of ensuring that policies and procedures remain current and are communicated effectively. Revising a policy is only one step. Employees and management must also understand what has changed, how the policy applies to their responsibilities, and what procedures must be followed.



Our department's work therefore includes supporting communication, maintaining documentation, and helping establish consistent administrative practices.

These efforts contribute to accountability and help strengthen the relationship between employees and the Nation.

We believe that a respectful workplace begins with clear expectations, open communication, and a shared commitment to treating people fairly.

Preparing for More Efficient Human Resources Systems

As the Nation's workforce and administrative responsibilities continue to grow, there is an increasing need for efficient and reliable Human Resources systems. One of our priorities for 2026–2027 is to explore the implementation of a Human Resources Information System (HRIS).

An HRIS could improve the way employee information is managed and make certain employment records more accessible. For example, employees could have opportunities to view information about their vacation and sick leave balances, helping them better understand the leave available to them.

A more integrated system could also strengthen recordkeeping, improve consistency, and support coordination between Human Resources, Payroll, and departmental management.

Introducing an HRIS would require careful planning, appropriate training, and consideration of the Nation's operational and administrative requirements.

Our goal is to develop systems that make Human Resources processes more efficient while improving the services available to employees and managers.

Welcoming Employees into Gitxaała's Culture and Community

Employment with Gitxaała Nation involves more than understanding the duties of a particular position. It also involves recognizing the history, culture, values, and responsibilities of the Nation.

This is especially important for employees who may be new to the community or unfamiliar with Gitxaała cultural practices.

Human Resources plans to work with the Language and Culture Department to develop an onboarding video for new and prospective employees.

The proposed video would introduce employees to Gitxaała's rich Indigenous culture and help them understand what to expect when joining the Nation's workforce.

It could provide information about our community, cultural values, and the importance of respectful relationships.

We believe this type of resource could help employees feel more prepared and welcomed while encouraging a better understanding of the Nation they serve. It would also support a more consistent onboarding experience across departments.

Strong employee relationships begin with understanding, and we want to create opportunities for employees to become familiar with the cultural context of their work.

Working Together Across the Nation

Human Resources works closely with Administration, Finance, directors, managers, and other departments to support the Nation's employees.

Many of our responsibilities require cooperation because employment matters often involve several areas of administration.

For example, employee benefits administration requires coordination with external providers and accurate employment information.

Policy development requires consultation and careful consideration of how proposed changes will affect employees and departmental operations.

Recruitment and onboarding also depend on communication between Human Resources and the departments seeking to fill positions.

Our collaboration with Eagle Bay Financial and the First Nations Financial Management Board during the reporting year demonstrated the value of accessing external expertise while strengthening internal administrative practices.

These relationships contributed to the progress made in employee benefits participation and Personnel Policy development.

We will continue working with our colleagues across the Nation to support consistent and effective Human Resources services.

Looking Ahead: Building A Stronger Workforce

As we move into 2026–2027, our department will continue focusing on the needs of Gitxaała employees and the systems that support them. Our priorities include strengthening recruitment and retention practices, supporting employee training and professional development, and continuing the implementation of updated workplace policies.

We also want to advance planning for an HR Information System that can improve employee access to information and strengthen administrative processes.

Reviewing the Nation's salary grid and maintaining sustainable employee benefits will remain important areas of work.

We recognize the need to continue developing Human Resources capacity so that employees, managers, and directors receive timely and consistent support.

Another priority is working with Language and Culture on the proposed onboarding video, helping introduce new and prospective employees to the Nation's culture and community.

These initiatives are connected by a common goal: building a workplace where employees feel supported, understand their responsibilities, and have opportunities to succeed.

Recognizing the People Behind Our Services

I want to acknowledge the many employees who contribute to the operation of Gitxaała Nation.

Across our departments, people carry out essential responsibilities every day, often under demanding circumstances.

Their dedication, experience, and willingness to serve our citizens are important to the Nation's success.

I also want to recognize Jane Tolmie for her contribution to the Human Resources team and the support she provides in carrying out our administrative responsibilities.

Thank you to our colleagues in Administration and Finance, our directors and managers, and the external partners who assisted us during the reporting year.

The progress made in employee benefits enrolment and Personnel Policy development reflects cooperation and a shared commitment to strengthening the Nation's administration.

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life reminds us that supporting our employees is also an important part of supporting our community.

When we invest in fair policies, effective systems, professional development, and positive workplace relationships, we strengthen the foundation of the services provided to Gitxaała citizens.

Our commitment is to continue building a Human Resources department that supports our workforce and contributes to a respectful, capable, and sustainable organization.

Strengthening Our Financial Foundations: Stewardship, Accountability and Long-Term Stability

Building the Systems, Policies and Financial Capacity That Support Gitxaała Nation

Tamer Gras | Director of Finance, Gitxaała Nation







Strong financial management is essential to the work of every department within Gitxaała Nation. From education and health services to housing, community programs and infrastructure, our ability to deliver services depends on responsible planning, reliable financial information and clear accountability for the resources entrusted to us.

As Director of Finance, I see our department's role as much more than processing transactions, preparing reports or balancing accounts. Finance helps leadership and program departments understand what resources are available, how funding may be used, what commitments the Nation can responsibly make and where financial risks require attention.

For the fiscal year ended March 31, 2026, our report also reflects a broader program of improvements advanced since 2024. That distinction is important: the progress described here includes institutional reforms developed over more than one reporting year. Together, these changes are strengthening how the Nation plans, manages and accounts for its financial responsibilities.

Our AGM theme, Aama Didüüls – A Good Life, reminds us that sound financial governance is ultimately about people. When our systems are dependable and decisions are informed by clear financial information, the Nation is better positioned to support its citizens, meet its obligations and pursue long-term priorities.

Bringing Greater Accountability to Financial Records

A significant part of our work has involved improving the completeness, accuracy and accessibility of the Nation's financial records.

Since 2024, I have led a historical review of LNG-related financial matters involving approximately $4.1 million. This work focused on understanding historical transactions, strengthening the completeness of revenue records and improving follow-up on outstanding amounts.

It is important to explain what that figure means. The approximately $4.1 million represents the scope of financial matters reviewed; it is not a claim that this amount was recovered or saved. The value of the work is in providing a more reliable record, identifying matters requiring follow-up and strengthening the financial information available to support decision-making.

We have also reinforced reviews of general-ledger balances, bank reconciliations, subsidiary records and the documents supporting transactions. These may appear to be routine accounting responsibilities, but their importance cannot be overstated. Reliable records help us answer questions, identify discrepancies earlier and prepare more confidently for financial reporting and year-end review.

This work is not always visible to citizens, yet it provides the foundation for accountable government. Financial records must be complete enough to explain not only what was spent, but why a decision was made, what authority supported it and which funding source was used.

Making Budgeting and Reporting Part of Regular Decision-Making

One of our most important institutional improvements has been establishing annual budgeting and quarterly financial reporting as recurring management processes.

An annual budget gives the Nation a documented framework for assessing planned expenditures against available resources. It helps departments identify their needs, supports discussions about priorities and provides a basis for evaluating financial commitments before they are made.

Our Finance team coordinates budget information across departments and examines spending proposals in relation to funding availability and applicable restrictions. This work supports more informed decisions and encourages financial planning to become part of everyday management, rather than an exercise undertaken only at year-end.

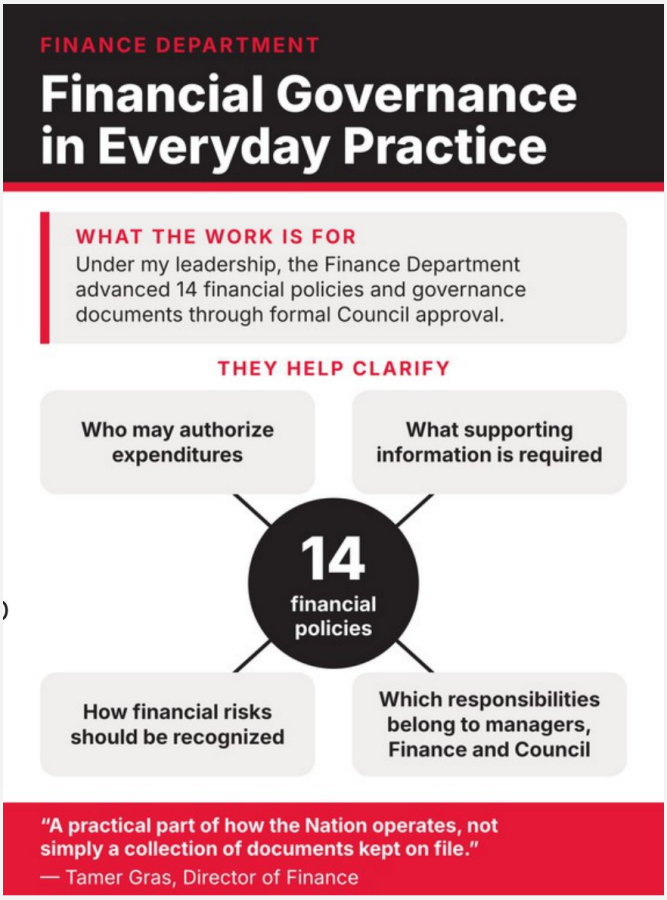
Quarterly financial reporting adds another level of accountability. By comparing actual results against approved budgets, we can investigate significant differences, identify pressures and raise matters that need management or Council attention. These reports are intended to be practical decision-making tools, helping leadership understand the implications of emerging commitments while there is still time to respond.

For citizens, the benefit is straightforward. Stronger budgeting and reporting processes help create a more disciplined approach to how public resources are managed, even when the work itself takes place behind the scenes.

Turning Financial Governance into Everyday Practice

Policies are essential because they establish clear expectations about spending authority, documentation, ethical conduct, risk management and financial oversight.

Under my leadership, the Finance Department advanced 14 financial policies and governance documents through formal Council approval. These include the Capital Assets Policy, Expenditure Policy, Budget Procedures, Financial and Operational Reporting Procedures, Insurance Policy and Procedures, Purchasing Policy and Procedures, Risk Management Policy, Credit Card Policy and Delegation of Authority.



The approved framework also includes the Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form, Code of Conduct Declaration, FAC Eligibility Declaration, Private Interest Declaration and Risk Register and Management Plan.

Together, these documents provide a more consistent foundation for financial governance. They help clarify who may authorize expenditures, what supporting information is required, how financial risks should be recognized and which responsibilities belong to managers, Finance and Council.

"Strong financial governance is essential to protecting the Nation's resources and supporting the priorities of Gitxaała Nation and its citizens."

— Tamer Gras, Director of Finance

Approval, however, is only one stage of the work. A policy must be understood and applied to have value. Our continuing responsibility is to embed these requirements into daily practices through documented authorizations, clear procedures, financial review and appropriate escalation when material issues arise.

I want financial governance to be a practical part of how the Nation operates, not simply a collection of documents kept on file.

Modernizing Payroll and Accounting Systems

Our department has also placed considerable emphasis on improving the efficiency and reliability of core financial operations.
Under my direction, Finance led a modernization of payroll administration and internal processing. These changes strengthened oversight, supported greater internal capability and were associated with reported recurring annual savings exceeding $50,000. Those savings matter because improvements to routine processes can create continuing benefits.

Just as importantly, bringing greater knowledge and oversight into the Finance team helps the Nation maintain continuity and reduces its dependence on procedures that may not have been fully documented in the past.

We have also improved our use of Sage 300, particularly in how supporting information is stored and retrieved. Electronic vendor-invoice attachments in Accounts Payable and improved storage of funding-agreement records in Accounts Receivable make documents easier to locate and transactions easier to trace. These changes strengthen internal controls and support audit readiness. When staff can find accurate supporting documents without unnecessary delays, it becomes easier to review transactions, answer questions and maintain consistent records.

Modernization is not only about adopting technology. It is about creating systems that staff understand, can maintain and can use confidently in their daily work.

Investing in Our Finance Team and Supporting Other Departments

A stronger Finance Department depends on the people doing the work. I have made staff development clearly defined responsibilities and consistent procedures

ongoing priorities. These investments help preserve institutional knowledge and ensure that financial controls do not depend on any one person

One important achievement has been the development and delivery of organizational training on payroll and Accounts Payable processes. Finance staff prepared and delivered practical guidance covering payroll procedures, invoice processing, supporting documentation, approval requirements and internal controls. The purpose was to help employees across departments understand how financial processes work and what information Finance needs to carry out its responsibilities.

When departments understand these requirements, communication improves, unnecessary delays can be reduced and financial records become more complete. Good financial management is a shared responsibility that depends on cooperation across the organization.

I want to acknowledge the dedication and professionalism of our Finance staff. Their work in preparing and delivering training, maintaining records, improving systems and supporting colleagues has been central to the progress we have made.

Managing Funding Responsibilities and Capital Commitments

The Nation manages resources through funding arrangements with different purposes, conditions and reporting obligations. These commitments require careful monitoring.



Our department has strengthened how funding agreements are recorded and reviewed, including their intended purposes, restrictions, reporting timelines and financial requirements. We monitor funding receipts, outstanding receivables and deferred revenue where applicable, while reviewing expenditure coding and the authority under which funds are used.

These controls help ensure that financial records reflect funding conditions and that departments have the information needed to meet their responsibilities.

The same discipline applies to capital projects. Before financial commitments or new project codes are established, Finance works to confirm documented funding sources, approved budgets and appropriate authorization.

As projects progress, our role is to monitor expenditures against budgets and funding requirements, review significant variances and ensure costs are recorded and classified appropriately. We also help identify funding or budget risks that should be brought to leadership's attention.

It is important to maintain clear boundaries between responsibilities. Finance provides financial oversight, accounting controls and advice; the departments responsible for programs and capital projects remain accountable for operational delivery and project-specific documentation. Working within those roles helps support both accountability and cooperation.

Supporting Reliable Reporting and Advice to Leadership

The Finance Department's work also contributes to the preparation of annual financial statements and external audit processes.

That includes maintaining reconciliations, preparing supporting schedules, organizing transaction records and helping ensure that information is accessible when questions arise.

I believe that financial information should do more than meet a technical reporting requirement. It should help Chief and Council understand the resources available to the Nation, the obligations attached to those resources and the financial implications of decisions.

Our advice considers approved budgets, funding restrictions, expenditure authority and financial risk. The goal is to support leadership in making decisions that are informed, documented and sustainable.

Achieving this requires cooperation from across the Nation. Complete agreements, expenditure documentation, budget information and project records must reach Finance in a timely manner.

As our practices become more consistent, we can provide clearer reporting and stronger support to the departments serving our citizens.

Our Priorities for 2026-2027

Looking ahead, our focus is on making these improvements sustainable and strengthening how they are applied throughout the organization.

We will continue improving funding-agreement tracking, financial monitoring and the management of reporting deadlines. We also intend to deepen quarterly budget-to-actual reporting so departments can better understand significant variances and respond to emerging pressures.

Maintaining reliable reconciliations, improving financial-record quality and supporting year-end readiness remain essential responsibilities.

We will also continue strengthening the financial controls that support capital planning, project expenditures and funding commitments, while helping departments implement Council-approved policies in practical ways.

Finally, we will keep investing in the capacity of our Finance team. Strong systems depend on skilled employees, documented procedures and a shared understanding of financial responsibilities.

A Stronger Foundation for the Nation

The progress we have made since 2024 has been about building stronger financial institutions for Gitxaała Nation. It includes improvements that citizens may never see directly: clearer policies, more complete records, better budgeting, more consistent reporting, modernized payroll processes and stronger financial controls.

But these changes have a direct purpose. They help protect the Nation's resources, support its departments and give leadership better information when making decisions that affect our people.

I am grateful to the Finance staff whose professionalism and commitment have advanced this work, and to the departments and leadership who continue working with us to strengthen accountability.

Our responsibility is ongoing. As Director of Finance, I remain committed to building reliable systems, supporting informed decisions and ensuring that financial stewardship continues to serve the long-term interests of Gitxaała Nation and its citizens.

Learning, Culture and Opportunity: Building a Stronger Future for Gitxaała

A Lifelong Commitment to Education, Language and Culture

Deb Stava | Director of Education, Language and Culture



Learning Throughout Our Lives

Education is one of the most important investments we can make in the future of Gitxaała Nation. It creates opportunities for our children, strengthens our families, develops the skills of our people and helps ensure that our language, culture and traditional knowledge continue to thrive.

But education is much more than what happens in a classroom.

Learning begins long before a child enters school. It begins at home, through our families, our Elders, our language and the cultural teachings that shape who we are. It continues through early childhood education, elementary and secondary school, post-secondary studies, employment training and the experiences we gain throughout aduthood. Even in our later years, we continue to learn, share knowledge and contribute to the education of others.

As Director of Education, Language and Culture, I believe our responsibility is to support education from cradle to grave, ensuring that Gitxaała citizens have meaningful opportunities to learn throughout their lives.

Our division brings together Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve, Lach Klan School, the Continuous Learning Centre, post-secondary education and employment training, and Language and Culture. Each department has its own responsibilities, but together they form an important part of the Nation's commitment to its people.

My role is to look beyond individual programs and consider how they connect, how we can strengthen them and how our work today will support future generations.

The 2025–2026 reporting year reflected both the strengths of our education system and the challenges we must continue addressing. Our departments made progress in early childhood development, student learning, post-secondary education, employment training, language revitalization and cultural preservation. Those accomplishments are described in the individual departmental reports.

At the divisional level, our responsibility is to connect those achievements to a broader vision: an education system that is culturally grounded, accessible, accountable and responsive to the needs of Gitxaała citizens, whether they live in Lax Klan, Prince Rupert or away from home.

This vision is closely connected to our AGM theme, Aama Didüüls – A Good Life. A good life includes opportunities to develop our abilities, support our families, pursue meaningful work, maintain our cultural identity and contribute to the well-being of our Nation.

Building a Comprehensive Education Strategic Plan

An important direction for our division is the development and implementation of a new, comprehensive Education Strategic Plan. This plan has been approved and is now being advanced. Its purpose is to help guide educational priorities across all stages of life, rather than treating early childhood, school, post-secondary education, employment training and cultural learning as separate responsibilities.

Our vision is to create a coordinated approach to education that recognizes the needs of citizens from infancy through their Elder years. It must also recognize that education means different things to different people.

For a young child, it may mean developing language, confidence and social skills in a safe and caring environment.

For a student, it means receiving an education that supports academic achievement while strengthening cultural identity.

For adults, education may involve university, college, apprenticeships, skilled trades, professional development or returning to learning after time away.

For our Elders and knowledge holders, education includes opportunities to share the teachings, experiences and knowledge that sustain our Nation.

These pathways are connected, and our strategic planning must reflect that.

The Education Strategic Plan provides an opportunity to identify shared goals, strengthen coordination among departments, establish priorities and develop a clearer understanding of the resources required to meet the needs of our people. It will also help us examine how educational investments contribute to the Nation's broader development.

As Gitxaała continues strengthening its governance, administration and economic opportunities, we need to understand what skills and qualifications our citizens may require. One important initiative will be working with other Nation departments to develop a skills matrix that identifies existing workforce strengths, future employment needs and areas where additional education or training would be beneficial. This information can help guide educational planning and support Gitxaała citizens in preparing for employment and leadership opportunities within the Nation.

Ultimately, the Education Strategic Plan must be more than a document. It must provide a practical foundation for decision-making, program development and the long-term success of our people.

Strengthening Governance Through Member Voices

Strong educational programs require strong governance. As our division develops its long-term direction, we must also continue strengthening the governance structures, policies and administrative processes that support education. This includes examining how decisions are made, how responsibilities are assigned, how resources are allocated and how we measure the success of our programs.

But good governance must begin with listening.

The voices of Gitxaała members will continue to guide the development of our governance structures and education policies. Parents and caregivers, students, Elders, educators, families and community members bring important perspectives on what is working and where improvements are needed. Citizens living away from home also have experiences that should inform our planning, particularly when accessing post-secondary education, employment training and other educational supports.

We must ensure that our policies reflect the needs of the people they are intended to serve. This means building opportunities for meaningful engagement and using what we hear to strengthen our programs and decision-making. Policies should provide clarity and fairness, but they must also be responsive to changing circumstances.

During the reporting period, our departments continued reviewing educational priorities and identifying areas where policies and procedures could be strengthened. Following the reporting year, revised Employment and Training and Tutorial Support policies came into effect on July 1, 2026. These changes are part of our ongoing efforts to provide clearer processes and more consistent support for learners.

As we move forward, policy development and governance planning will remain closely connected to the implementation of our Education Strategic Plan.

Connecting Learning Across Generations

One of the strengths of our division is the range of educational opportunities we can support. From early childhood through adulthood, our departments contribute to different stages of a person's learning journey. The challenge is ensuring that these opportunities are connected and that citizens can move between them with appropriate support.

A child who begins learning Sm'algyax through early childhood programming should have opportunities to continue developing that knowledge at Lach Klan School and beyond.

A student completing secondary school should understand the pathways available through post-secondary education, vocational training and employment development.

A community member interested in becoming an educator should have opportunities to pursue qualifications and, where possible, return to work within the Nation.

These connections are important because education is not simply about completing individual programs. It is about creating pathways that support personal growth, employment, cultural continuity and community development.

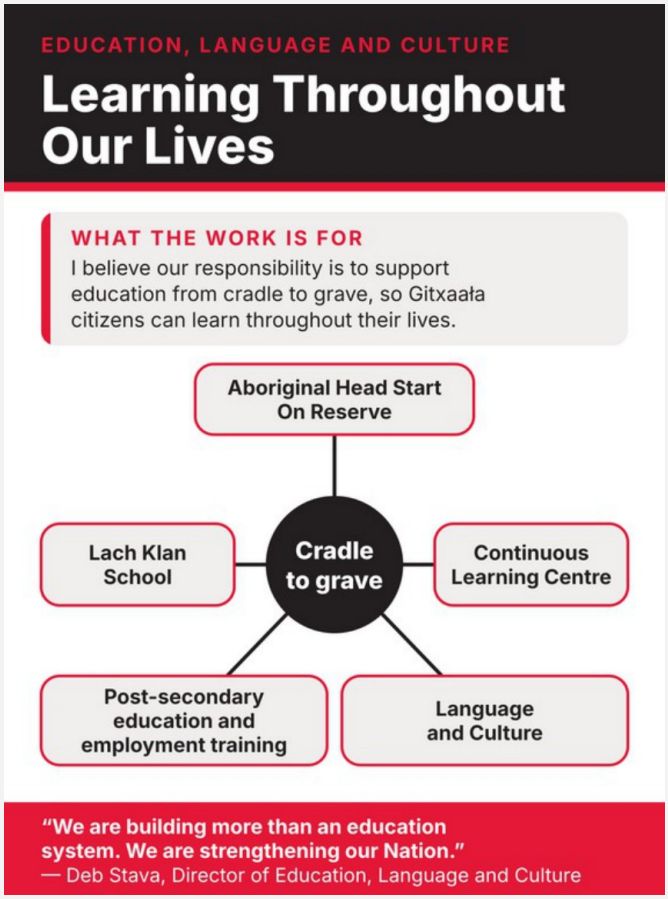
Our Continuous Learning Centre plays an important role in supporting those pathways through its Lax Klan and Prince Rupert campuses. The division continues to support citizens pursuing post-secondary education, skilled trades and employment training, including those living away from home.

During the reporting year, nine post-secondary students graduated, while many other learners completed courses, certificates and training programs supported through the division. These accomplishments represent important achievements for the individuals involved and for the Nation.

Every graduate and every person who develops a new skill contributes to our collective capacity. We must continue building opportunities that allow citizens to pursue their educational goals while recognizing the financial, geographic and personal challenges that can make learning difficult. This includes strengthening partnerships with educational institutions and exploring ways to deliver more training within our communities.

Keeping Language and Culture at the Heart of Education

Our education system must remain grounded in Gitxaała identity, language and culture. Sm'algyax is more than a subject to be taught. It carries our histories, relationships, teachings and understanding of the world.



Cultural knowledge is equally important. Our traditional practices, the knowledge of our territories, our laws and our relationships with one another are all part of the education that has sustained our people for generations.

As a division, we must continue supporting the integration of language and culture into educational programming while respecting the knowledge and authority of our Elders, fluent speakers, hereditary leadership and cultural knowledge holders.

> ***"Education does not begin on the first day of school or end at graduation. It is a lifelong responsibility to our people, our language and the generations still to come."***
>
> — Deb Stava, Director of Education, Language and Culture

This work extends beyond formal language classes. It includes opportunities for children to hear Sm'algyax in early childhood programs, for students to connect classroom learning with cultural knowledge, and for adults, parents, caregivers and families to participate in language and cultural activities.

The return of Gitxaała cultural treasures during the reporting year was an important reminder of our responsibility to preserve and share our cultural heritage. Repatriation, archival preservation, language documentation and the development of educational resources are connected responsibilities. They help ensure that future generations have opportunities to learn from the knowledge and belongings that carry our history.

Our goal is not simply to preserve information. It is to support the continued practice and transmission of Gitxaała knowledge. Language and culture must remain living parts of our community, supported through relationships, participation and everyday learning.

Planning for Our Facilities and Future Needs

A strong education system depends upon appropriate facilities, qualified employees and sustainable resources. Across our division, staffing and infrastructure remain significant considerations.

Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, early childhood educators, instructors and specialized personnel can be challenging in a remote community. Housing availability, access to professional development and suitable workspaces all affect our ability to deliver consistent services. These challenges require long-term solutions that connect educational planning with the Nation's broader capital and infrastructure priorities.

For early childhood education, planning continues for facilities and outdoor learning spaces that can support the needs of children, families and staff. Funding opportunities have been identified, and the necessary planning and approval work continues toward future development.

At Lach Klan School, facility improvements, including parks and playground spaces, remain important capital priorities. Additional funding will be required to advance this work.

Teacher housing is another significant priority. Engineering design work has been completed, representing progress toward addressing an issue that directly affects teacher recruitment and retention. Further work is required before the housing project can be completed.

These are not isolated capital projects. They are connected investments in the quality and stability of our education system. Our Education Strategic Plan must therefore be supported by a long-term capital strategy that identifies priorities, funding requirements and realistic implementation timelines.

We also recognize that new facilities create ongoing operational responsibilities. Maintenance, staffing and future replacement costs must be considered alongside construction. Careful planning will help ensure that the investments we make are sustainable and provide lasting benefits for Gitxaała citizens.

Building Partnerships and Developing Our Workforce

The work of our division is strengthened through relationships with educational institutions, training organizations, funding partners and other departments within Gitxaała Nation. These partnerships help expand the opportunities available to citizens and provide access to expertise, programs and resources that may not otherwise be available locally.

We value our relationships with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), First Nations Schools Association (FNSA), Coast Mountain College, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), BCIT, the Piping College, provincial education and skilled-trades partners, and Tri-Corp. Our work with these organizations contributes to teacher development, post-secondary education, vocational training, skills development and other educational opportunities.

We also recognize the importance of supporting Gitxaała citizens who wish to pursue careers within our own education system. Developing local teachers, early childhood educators, language instructors and other qualified professionals is an investment in long-term community capacity. When citizens can pursue education and training while maintaining connections to family and community, we help reduce barriers and strengthen the potential for those skills to benefit the Nation.

Our focus must include recruitment, retention, professional development and succession planning. We want our employees to have opportunities to advance their knowledge and qualifications, and we want future generations to see education and training as pathways toward meaningful careers.

Continuing Progress Beyond the Reporting Year

While this report focuses on April 1, 2025, through March 31, 2026, important developments occurred between May and September 2026 that demonstrate continued progress across the division.

EDUCATION, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Progress Beyond the Reporting Year

AFTER THE REPORTING YEAR

Between May and September 2026, important developments showed continued progress across our division.

Development	Where it stands
Teachers	Four teachers recruited for Lach Klan School
Early Childhood Education Facility	Phase Two of the feasibility study approved to advance. Feasibility work, not completed construction.
Fluent speakers	Two-day gathering of fluent Sm'algyax speakers
Revised policies	Employment and Training and Tutorial Support policies, effective July 1, 2026

"Education is not something a department accomplishes alone."
— Deb Stava, Director of Education, Language and Culture

Four teachers were recruited for Lach Klan School, helping address staffing needs and strengthening the school's ability to provide consistent, in-person instruction.

Among the school's educational staff is Albert Wu, Learning Services Teacher, who also assumes the role of Vice Principal. His responsibilities contribute to both student learning supports and the school's leadership capacity.

Recruiting qualified educators is particularly challenging in a remote community, and these appointments represent meaningful progress toward building a stable educational environment for Gitxaała students.

Approval was given to advance Phase Two of the Early Childhood Education Facility feasibility study, representing another step in planning for future early learning facilities. This approval concerns the next stage of feasibility work rather than completed construction.

The Language and Culture Department also organized a two-day gathering of fluent Sm'algyax speakers, creating opportunities for knowledge sharing and strengthening the relationships that support language revitalization.

In addition, revised Employment and Training and Tutorial Support policies became effective July 1, 2026.

These developments reflect the continued work of our managers, employees, Council and community partners. They also illustrate how educational planning, workforce development, capital priorities and cultural revitalization are closely connected.

Looking Ahead: Creating Opportunities for Every Generation

As we move into 2026–2027, our priority is to build upon the foundations already established and continue advancing a comprehensive, culturally grounded education system. Implementation of the Education Strategic Plan will provide an important framework for this work.

We will continue strengthening governance and policy development through member voices, improving coordination between departments and establishing clearer educational pathways.

Long-term capital planning will remain essential, particularly for early childhood facilities, Lach Klan School, outdoor learning spaces and teacher housing.

We will also continue supporting community-based professional education, skilled trades training and workforce development opportunities that respond to the Nation's needs.

The development of a Nation-wide skills matrix will help identify areas where training and education can support employment, succession planning and future community capacity.

Language revitalization, cultural preservation and repatriation will remain central responsibilities.

We must ensure that opportunities to learn Sm'algyax and Gitxaała cultural knowledge continue to grow and that the people carrying this knowledge receive meaningful support.

These priorities are ambitious, but they reflect the importance of taking a long-term view of education. The decisions we make today will influence the opportunities available to our children, grandchildren and generations yet to come.

A Shared Responsibility to Our People

I want to acknowledge the commitment of the managers and educational leaders across our division.

Patricia Hill, Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve Manager; Erin Reilly, Principal of Lach Klan School; Albert Wu, Learning Services Teacher and Vice Principal; Teresa Stewart, School Manager; Lawrence Sankey, Continuous Learning Centre Manager; and Dustin Johnson, Language and Culture Manager, each contribute important leadership and expertise to our educational and cultural programs. Their contributions, together with the dedication of their employees, help ensure that educational and cultural services continue to be delivered throughout our Nation.

I also want to recognize our teachers, education assistants, instructors, language staff, administrative employees, Elders, fluent speakers, knowledge holders, hereditary leaders, parents and caregivers, and extended families.

We recognize that many children in our community are raised and supported by grandparents, relatives and caregivers who play essential roles in their learning, development and well-being. Their contributions deserve acknowledgement alongside those of parents.

Education is not something a department accomplishes alone. It is a shared responsibility that involves families, community, leadership and the relationships between generations.

As Director, I recognize that there is still much work ahead. We must continue strengthening educational opportunities, addressing staffing and capital needs, improving governance and accountability, and ensuring that the development of our programs is informed by the voices of Gitxaała citizens. Most importantly, we must remain focused on the kind of future we want to build.

I believe that when our children are supported, our students have opportunities to succeed, our people can develop meaningful skills and our language and culture remain strong, we are building more than an education system. We are strengthening our Nation.

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life means creating opportunities for our people to thrive while remaining connected to our identity, knowledge, values and responsibilities. Through education, language and culture, we are helping build that future together.

Deb Stava

Director of Education, Language and Culture

Gitxaała Nation

Learning in Both Worlds: Building Strong Foundations for Gitxaała Students

Education, Culture and Community at Lach Klan School
Erin Reilly | Principal, Lach Klan Elementary Secondary School, Gitxaała Nation





Education is one of the most important investments we can make in the future of Gitxaała Nation. As Principal of Lach Klan Elementary Secondary School, I see that responsibility every day. Each child who enters our classrooms brings their own strengths, experiences, family connections and hopes for the future. Working alongside our teachers, staff and families, I want to help every student build the knowledge, confidence and sense of belonging they need to succeed.

At Lach Klan Elementary Secondary School, I want students to build a strong foundation in reading, writing and mathematics while knowing that their language, culture and identity belong at the heart of their education. I want children to see the connection between what they learn in the classroom and what they learn from their families, Elders and community.

During the 2025-2026 reporting year, our school served 77 students. It was a year of important progress in classroom learning, professional development, inclusive student supports and the long-term planning needed to strengthen education in Lax Klan.

Our AGM theme, Aama Didüüls – A Good Life, speaks directly to this work. Education is about more than academic achievement. It is also about raising healthy, capable and confident young people who know where they come from and can imagine the opportunities ahead of them.

Strong Foundations in Literacy, Numeracy and Well-Being

Throughout the year, our teachers placed particular emphasis on literacy, numeracy and social-emotional learning. These foundations help students participate fully in school, develop confidence and build the skills that support learning throughout their lives.

We used Acadence to support our understanding of student literacy development and to help identify areas where additional instruction or support may be needed.

Alongside academic learning, our classrooms continued incorporating Gîtxaala language and culture, reinforcing the importance of connecting education to the community our students call home.

Learning also involves feeling safe, supported and included. Our focus on social-emotional development recognizes that children learn best when they have positive relationships, clear expectations and opportunities to develop the skills needed to navigate challenges.

This work depends on the commitment of teachers, education assistants, school staff and families.

Progress is built through everyday effort: planning lessons, observing student needs, adjusting instruction and celebrating each step forward.

Our students also benefited from opportunities to connect learning with leadership, identity and experiences outside their regular classroom activities.

For the first time, some Lach Klan students attended the Black Diamond Sports and Leadership Summit. This gave participating students an opportunity to broaden their experiences, strengthen their sense of identity and consider new possibilities for themselves.

We also established a Parent Club to welcome families into school life and strengthen the connection between home and classroom. We know that students benefit when parents and caregivers feel included, informed and able to participate in their children's education.

Teresa Stewart's words, "Education starts at home," remind us that the school is only one part of a much larger learning community. Our students are supported by parents, grandparents, Elders, relatives and many others who help pass on knowledge and values.

As Principal, I want our school to continue creating opportunities that recognize those relationships and encourage families to be active partners in learning.

Language, Culture and a Sense of Belonging

Sm'algyax language learning remained an important part of the school experience during the reporting period. Language classes were delivered across Lach Klan School, and Gitxaała cultural knowledge continued to be woven into learning.

For our students, the opportunity to hear their language and see their culture reflected in education is meaningful. It reinforces that the knowledge of our people has a place in classrooms and that their identity is a strength.

Some of the most memorable school activities brought generations together. Bread making with Elders, planned by Colin Angus, created an opportunity for learning through shared activity and relationships. The Remembrance Day and Veterans Day ceremony, organized by Karen Sankey and Remy Hagedorn, gave students a way to participate in remembrance and community recognition.

Creating Opportunities Beyond the Classroom

Earth Day seed planting with Sherry Pringle connected students with hands-on learning about growing and caring for the natural world.

These experiences are part of what makes a community school important. They create opportunities for children to learn not only from books and lessons, but from people, places and shared experiences.

LACH KLAN SCHOOL · EDUCATION

Growing Our Own Educators

WHAT THIS WORK IS FOR

One of the most encouraging developments for me this year was seeing community-connected educators progress toward their teaching qualifications.

NITEP	**Four school staff** Completed their first year of UBC's Indigenous Teacher Education Program.
ZELDA TOLMIE	**Staying connected** Bringing Elders, language, traditional knowledge and land-based learning into classrooms.
PAM TOLMIE	**Taking the step** Her goal: bring Gitxaała history and traditional laws into her classroom and serve as a role model.

"These stories reflect the value of creating pathways for local people to become teachers."
Erin Reilly, Principal

Growing Our Own Educators

One of the most encouraging developments for me during the reporting year was seeing community-connected educators progress toward their teaching qualifications.

Four school staff members completed their first year of the University of British Columbia's Indigenous Teacher Education Program, known as NITEP. This is an important step toward building local teaching capacity and creating opportunities for Gitxaała people to pursue careers in education while remaining connected to community.

LACH KLAN SCHOOL · EDUCATION

Our Priorities for 2026–2027

LOOKING AHEAD

We have identified three major educational priorities for the next school year. These are future goals, not results we claim to have already achieved.

PRIORITY	OUR GOAL
English Language Arts	Clear literacy goals, reviewed at least twice a year. Working toward 80 percent of students at or above grade level over the five-year plan.
Professional development	We plan to establish a staff professional development committee in the first year of the school growth plan.
Inclusive and special education	A current plan for every student requiring an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or targeted support, reviewed twice yearly.

"Gitxaała children deserve an education that recognizes both their potential and their identity."
Erin Reilly, Principal

The voices of educators participating in this journey speak powerfully to what this means.

Zelda Tolmie reflected on how NITEP allows her to continue becoming a teacher while staying connected to her identity and community. She spoke about bringing Elders, language, traditional knowledge and land-based learning into classrooms where Gitxaała children can see themselves and their knowledge valued.

Pam Tolmie shared that she had once been encouraged to pursue a Bachelor of Education but was unable to leave while raising five children. When an online opportunity became available, she decided to take that step. Her goal is to bring Gitxaała history and traditional laws into her classroom, serve as a role model and help children recognize their own abilities.

These stories reflect the value of creating pathways for local people to become teachers. They also demonstrate why access to education and professional learning matters for families and the long-term well-being of our Nation.

Supporting Staff and Strengthening Classroom Practice

A strong school depends on knowledgeable, confident and well-supported staff.

During the year, our team participated in professional development through the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), the First Nations Schools Association (FNSA) and external consultants, including Dr. Daniel To. These learning opportunities helped staff continue developing their practice and responding to the varied needs of students.

Professional development is an ongoing responsibility, not a one-time activity. We want all teachers and support staff to have opportunities to strengthen their skills and contribute to decisions about the learning they need.

We also continued working with partners such as Coast Mountain College and UBC NITEP to support education and training pathways. Our long-term vision is to strengthen the school's ability to recruit and retain skilled educators while investing in the development of people who already have strong ties to Gitxaała.

Improving Access to Specialized Student Supports

Every learner is different, and some students require specialized assessments or services to support their learning and development.

Through partnerships with Connected North and Northern Therapy, we expanded access to speech and language services, psychoeducational assessments and occupational therapy. These supports help the school better understand individual needs and provide more appropriate learning opportunities.

Inclusive education requires coordination between families, teachers, specialized professionals and school leadership. It also requires the time and resources to develop plans, monitor progress and make adjustments as students grow. We want students who require additional support to receive that support consistently, with their learning needs understood and their cultural identity respected.

During the reporting period, an external assessment team also completed the school's assessment review. Lach Klan School received a passing result, with a plaque and digital certificate expected to follow. This was a meaningful milestone for the school and a reflection of the work being undertaken to strengthen our educational practices.

Planning for Safe, Supportive Learning Spaces

Good learning environments require appropriate facilities, equipment and spaces for students to play, learn and grow.

During the reporting year, we worked with PlayQuest and obtained two quotes for a proposed replacement playground and outdoor basketball court at Lach Klan School. These were planning and pricing steps; the proposed installations were not reported as completed during this period.

Building maintenance and safety upgrades were also areas of significant departmental effort. Contractors were brought in to address maintenance and safety matters at the school.

We recognize that maintenance cannot rely only on responding to immediate issues. The school needs a consistent annual maintenance schedule, clear responsibilities and reliable resources to keep learning spaces safe and functional.

Looking ahead, information technology, textbooks, learning resources and facility improvements will remain important considerations.

Recruitment, Housing and School Governance

Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers remains a significant challenge, particularly because of limited staff housing and the remote location of Lax Klan.

During the reporting period, we advanced teacher-housing feasibility planning and recruitment strategies while continuing to invest in professional development and mentorship. These are important steps toward creating a more stable educational workforce.

Our recommendation is to move forward with capital planning for appropriate teacher housing and establish a multi-year recruitment and retention strategy that fits within the Nation's broader capital asset management planning.

We also began work on school-specific policies and procedures. A clear governance framework helps employees understand their responsibilities and provides guidance about decisions that belong to school administration and those requiring governance oversight.

Further work is needed to complete a comprehensive school policy manual and clarify roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority. Orientation for staff and leadership will be important when these policies are adopted.

Our Priorities for 2026-2027

As we look toward the next school year, we have identified three major educational priorities.
The first is English Language Arts. Our goal is for every student to receive consistent, high-quality instruction aligned with the BC curriculum and FNESC guidance, with attention to reading, writing, oral language and culturally responsive learning. Students will have clear literacy goals, reviewed at least twice a year through common assessments. Over the five-year plan, we are working toward 80 percent of students being at or above grade level.

Our second priority is professional development. We plan to establish a staff professional development committee in the first year of the school growth plan so that teachers and support staff can help identify useful training. We want everyone to have access to professional learning that supports effective teaching, social-emotional learning and student well-being.

Our third priority is inclusive and special education. Our goal is for every student requiring an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or targeted support to have a current plan reviewed twice yearly. That will require better access to assessments, continued staff training, and reliable, culturally grounded resources for students with diverse learning needs.

These are future goals, not results we claim to have already achieved. Achieving them will take coordination, sustained resources and the continued involvement of families, teachers and community.

A Commitment to Every Gitxaała Learner

The progress made at Lach Klan School during this reporting period reflects the work of many people. As Principal, I am grateful to our teachers, education assistants, Language and Culture staff, families, Elders and the partner organizations that contribute to student learning.
Most of all, I want to recognize our students. Every day they bring energy, questions, talents and ideas into our classrooms. They are the reason we continue looking for ways to strengthen education, improve access to specialized support and create more opportunities for local educators.

I know our work is not finished. We still need better housing for teachers, clearer policies, consistent maintenance planning and sustained support for learning resources. But we are building on a foundation of committed staff, strong community relationships and the belief that Gitxaała children deserve an education that recognizes both their potential and their identity.

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life is about creating the conditions for our people to thrive. In education, that begins with helping our children feel that they belong, that their language and culture matter, and that their futures are filled with possibility.

Growing Strong Roots: Nurturing Our Children Through Culture, Care and Community

Supporting Gitxaała Children and Families Through Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve
Patricia Hill | AHSOR Manager, Gitxaała Nation





Every child deserves a strong beginning: a place where they feel safe, are encouraged to explore, and know that they belong. For Gitxaała children, those early experiences should also connect them to their language, culture, family and community.

As Manager of our Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve (AHSOR) program, I see how important those connections are. Our work is about more than providing activities and care. It is about supporting the development of the whole child while building relationships with parents, caregivers, Elders and the people who share their knowledge with the next generation.

Head Start has been part of our community since 2018. During the April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026 reporting year, we had 21 children from 20 families registered with the program. Every family brings its own experiences and strengths, and our responsibility is to create opportunities for children to learn, play and grow while feeling supported.

This year, our priorities included strengthening partnerships, creating more opportunities for staff training, supporting cultural learning and improving the spaces in which our programs take place. We also continued planning for the facilities and workforce we will need in the years ahead.

The 2026 AGM theme, Aama Didüüls – A Good Life, speaks to what we want for our youngest citizens: healthy beginnings, caring relationships and a strong sense of who they are.

Learning Through Play, Care and Connection

Young children learn through play, observation, movement, conversation and relationships. At Head Start, our goal is to provide quality care while helping each child build confidence, curiosity and the skills they need for everyday life.

We encourage children to develop positive relationships, practice self-regulation and learn to manage new experiences in a supportive setting. We also work with families to help them understand and support their children's growth and development.

These early years matter. When children have opportunities to explore, make choices, build friendships and receive patient guidance, they develop foundations that will serve them as they move into school and beyond.

Our program is also about family participation. Parents and caregivers are important partners in a child's learning, and we want them to feel welcome in the activities and experiences we offer.

Keeping Language and Culture at the Heart of Head Start

Language and culture are essential parts of our vision for Head Start. We want children to hear Sm'algyax, recognize their own identity and develop relationships with the knowledge and traditions of Gitxaała people.

Throughout the reporting year, our cultural learning included regular drum and dance activities, regalia-making with families and the use of seasonal calendar words to introduce language in meaningful ways. These activities bring learning into the everyday experiences of children rather than treating culture as something separate from education.

Warren Nelson worked with children through drum and dance, while Melodie Hoy contributed to regalia-making activities. Mary Hill worked with the children incorporating Sm'algyax words and song daily. Brenda Joanne Hill developed teachings through the development of words based on the year-round cultural calendar. The team worked together on fish preservation and supported each other and the children to offer a strong Gitxaała-based early learning program.

We were also fortunate to have opportunities for Elders to share their skills and knowledge. Norman Ridley supported cedar-bark weaving, including berry-basket making with Elders. These gatherings are valuable because children and families can see cultural knowledge being practised and shared across generations.

Margaret Hill also offered ideas for bringing babies and Elders together at the Program House through singing, conversation and shared time. This is an opportunity we will develop further.

For us, cultural programming is about belonging. Children should have opportunities to know their language, learn about their families and understand that Gitxaała knowledge is part of their everyday lives.

Traditional Foods, Wellness and Family Participation

Food is another important way children and families connect with culture, health and community.

Our partnership with the Food Security Department helped us bring traditional foods into the program. Fish provided through Food Security was shared with families and used to prepare nutritious traditional meals at the Program House.

Preserving food also creates opportunities for learning. Mary Hill, Melodie Hoy and Brenda Joanne Hill contributed to fish-jarring activities, helping connect practical food preparation with the knowledge and skills that families can continue using at home.

These experiences reinforce the value of working with other Nation departments. When food, cultural knowledge and family learning come together, children experience more than a meal. They learn that care for one another, harvesting and sharing are important parts of community life.

We want to build on this work by involving families and harvesters in future seasonal activities. Opportunities for boat-based harvesting, fishing, food preservation and learning how to prepare traditional foods are part of our vision for stronger family participation.

Supporting Staff Training and Community-Based Education

A quality early-childhood program depends on dedicated people who have the training, resources and support they need to do their work well.

During the reporting year, we focused on developing our team's capacity while responding to staffing changes, retirements, recruitment pressures and certification requirements.

Our partnership with the Berry Patch supported Responsible Adult training, shared resources and Early Childhood Education Assistant training for six members. We also accessed training and learning opportunities through the Continuous Learning Centre.

These partnerships matter because they create more accessible pathways for people in our community to build qualifications and confidence in early childhood work.

We began discussions with Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) about the possibility of community-based early childhood education training. An application and delivery plan were developed, but this work was still at the planning stage during the reporting period. Our hope is to make relevant education more accessible without requiring community members to leave home for every opportunity.

We also recognize that staffing challenges are not solved through training alone. Recruitment, succession planning, certification and restructuring must be considered together. The shortage of qualified or certified drivers, for example, can affect our ability to deliver certain program services.

Strengthening the workforce will require coordinated planning and support from senior administration, alongside the training partnerships we have begun building.

Working Together to Support Children and Families



Head Start benefits from relationships with many people and organizations.

Along with the Berry Patch, NVIT and the Continuous Learning Centre, we worked with North Coast Community Services, which provides services for families including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech and language support.

Our funding relationships with the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, the First Nations Health Authority and government ministry partners are important to meeting program needs and planning for the future.

Closer to home, we worked with the Food Security Department and with colleagues involved in language, culture and education.

These relationships show how much can be accomplished when departments work together. Our youngest children do not experience their needs as separate programs or departments. They need care, learning, cultural connection, healthy food, appropriate supports and a safe place to grow.

We are strongest when we coordinate those efforts.

Creating the Spaces Our Children Need

Safe, appropriate and welcoming program spaces are essential to the quality of early childhood services. During 2025–2026, renovations at St. Peter's Church continued to progress. Facility improvements, along with staffing and health and wellness, were among the areas of spending identified as having a significant impact on program operations.

At the same time, our longer-term need for an AHSOR and daycare centre remains a major planning priority. We need a clear approach to assessing space requirements, project design, funding and construction.

A needs-assessment application was approved through the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, providing an important planning step. Further decisions about the scope of the project and Phase II capital funding still require confirmation. The work on our existing program space should therefore not be confused with completion of the proposed new centre.

We have also considered what a future outdoor play area could look like. An example playground visited at Cluculz Lake provided ideas for equipment appropriate for young children, with nearby picnic space for families and Elders. It remains a concept for future planning.

Our goal is to create spaces that are safe, accessible and welcoming to children, families and Elders, and that support learning both indoors and outside.

Recognizing the People Behind the Program

The work of Head Start depends on staff and community members who contribute in different ways.
I want to recognize Brenda Joanne Hill for her role as an Elder, Karen Young for her work as an ECE Assistant and Neil Vickers for his work maintaining the program environment. I would also like to recognize the work of Mary Hill and Melodie Hoy, who retired this past year.

I also appreciate the contributions of contractors and community members, including Melodie Hoy, Mary Hill and Warren Nelson, who have supported cultural activities and helped maintain services when additional staffing was needed.

Each contribution matters. Whether someone is caring for children, helping a family, sharing cultural knowledge, preparing food or keeping a space safe and welcoming, that work helps the program function.

We will continue to focus on supporting staff, strengthening training opportunities and building the capacity needed for consistent services.

Our Priorities for 2026–2027



Looking ahead, we want to build on the progress made this year while addressing the challenges that remain.

Our first priority is to advance planning for improved program space, including a feasibility study, project design and a clear path toward construction when the necessary approvals and funding are in place, while continuing the repairs to St. Peter's Church, which will offer a transitional space to house the program.

Our second priority is strengthening staffing and professional development. We need to plan for recruitment, training, certification and succession so our programs can continue meeting the needs of children and families.

Our third priority is expanding cultural, language and family programming. We want children to hear and use Sm'algyax through greetings, nursery rhymes, seasonal-round teachings, colours and other everyday learning activities. We also want children to become more familiar with their crests, houses and cultural responsibilities through age-appropriate teaching with families and Elders.

We hope to deepen opportunities for drum and dance, singing, regalia-making, harvesting, food preservation and shared learning between generations. These plans will benefit from collaboration with Maternal Child Health, Social Development, Food Security, Language and Culture, and education.

We also want to support family wellness through nutritious foods, health and nutrition learning, physical activity, and opportunities for children to strengthen their confidence and daily living skills.

These are goals for the coming year, and they will require continued planning, partnerships and resources to achieve.

A Good Beginning for Every Child

When I think about the importance of Head Start, I think first about the children and families who come through our doors.
We want children to feel valued, to know they are cared for and to have opportunities to develop confidence in themselves. We want parents and caregivers to feel supported, and we want Elders and cultural knowledge holders to have a meaningful place in the lives of our youngest citizens.

The year has brought progress in staff development, community partnerships, cultural activities and facility planning. It has also made clear where we need continued support, particularly in staffing and appropriate program space.

I am grateful to our staff, Elders, families, community partners and Nation departments for the care and effort they bring to this work.

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life begins with how we care for one another. By creating strong foundations for our children and supporting the families raising them, we are helping build a healthier and more connected future for Gitxaała Nation.

Our Words, Our Treasures: Keeping Gitxaała Language and Culture Alive

Language Revitalization, Repatriation and the Knowledge We Carry Forward
Dustin Johnson | Manager, Language and Culture Department, Gitxaała Nation



Our language and our cultural treasures carry knowledge that belongs to the Gitxaała people. They connect us to our ancestors, our families, our territories and the responsibilities we have to future generations. When we speak our Gitxaała Sm'algyax, when we document traditional Gitxaała knowledge, and when we return home our ancestral cultural treasures, this all strengthens and reaffirms who we are as Gitxaała.

As Manager of the Language and Culture Department, I see our work as both an opportunity and a responsibility. We are working to support the continued use of Gitxaała Sm'algyax, care for our Ha'amwaal tagygyedm Gitxaała, and make cultural knowledge more accessible to our people while respecting those who carry and share it.

During the April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026 reporting year, our department focused on language revitalization, repatriation, archival preservation, research and collaboration. These responsibilities are closely connected. Our sacred language of La Sm'algyaxm Gitxaała helps us understand our histories and identity; cultural treasures and archival recordings, in turn, help us learn more about our ancestors and the territories from which our language comes.

The AGM theme Aama Didüüls – A Good Life speaks to that continuity. Living well includes knowing who we are, caring for what has been entrusted to us and making sure our children and grandchildren have opportunities to learn from the generations before them.



Welcoming Home 24 Gitxaała Cultural Treasures

One of the most significant moments of the reporting year took place on July 8, 2025, when 24 Gitxaała cultural treasures were returned from the Royal BC Museum and welcomed home in Lax Klan.

The return was marked by ceremony, singing, drumming, dancing and a community feast. Hereditary leaders provided a ceremonial blessing, and the Ha'amwaal tagygyedm Gitxaała were cleansed with traditional medicines. It was an occasion to recognize the meaning of these belongings to our people and the importance of their return to the community.

Among the highlights was a hayetsk, or copper shield, belonging to Paul Ts'ibassa. These belongings are more than objects in a collection. They are connected to Gitxaała history, identity, relationships and cultural responsibilities.

The gathering also reflected the importance of building respectful relationships during the repatriation process. Gifts were exchanged, and Gitxaała artist William Cooper presented an original drawing to Royal BC Museum staff.

Repatriation requires sustained work long before a return ceremony takes place. It involves research, communication with institutions, identifying belongings, understanding their histories and working with the people who hold the cultural knowledge necessary to guide decisions.

The return of these 24 cultural treasures was an important achievement, but the work is not finished. Gitxaała belongings remain in collections elsewhere, and our department continues seeking information and building relationships that may support their eventual return.

Keeping Sm'algyax Present in Community Life

Language revitalization remained one of our central responsibilities throughout the year.

Under our Ła Sm'algyagm Gitxaała language work, the department organized 16 community Sm'algyax classes: 14 in Lax Klan and two in Lax Kxeen. These classes were developed collaboratively with Gitxaała fluent speakers around themes and topics that mattered to participants.

An important principle guided every session: a Gitxaała Sm'algyax Fluent Speaker was present at each class. We did not hold classes without one.

This reflects the respect we have for the speakers who carry the language and for the knowledge they share. A class is not simply a lesson in vocabulary. It is an opportunity to hear pronunciation, understand context, ask questions and listen to stories that may not have been recorded anywhere else.

Fluent speakers and regular participants often bring memories, humour and personal experiences into these gatherings. Those contributions make language learning a community experience, grounded in relationships rather than limited to written materials.

Sixteen classes represent opportunities for people to come together and practise. They also remind us how important it is to create consistent opportunities for learning and to support fluent speakers in this work.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Welcoming Home 24 Cultural Treasures

WHAT THESE BELONGINGS ARE

These belongings are more than objects in a collection. They are connected to Gitxaała history and identity.

RETURN	**Welcomed home in Lax Klan** 24 returned from the Royal BC Museum on July 8, 2025
CEREMONY	**Singing, drumming, dancing** A community feast and a ceremonial blessing by hereditary leaders
HIGHLIGHT	**A hayetsk, or copper shield** Belonging to Paul Ts'ibassa
GIFTS	**Gifts were exchanged** William Cooper presented an original drawing to Royal BC Museum staff

Repatriation requires sustained work long before a return ceremony takes place.
— Dustin Johnson, Manager, Language and Culture

Making Language Resources Available to Families

Language learning can continue beyond the classroom when people have materials they can use in their homes and everyday routines.

Our department developed Gitxaała calendars featuring a Sm'algyax word or phrase of the day. The content drew from words and phrases discussed in the Ła Sm'algyagm Gitxaała classes, connecting the printed resources directly to community learning.

The calendars also included photographs of Elders, ancestors and community members at events and feasts, as well as familiar landmarks in Lax Klan. In this way, they brought together language, people and places that hold meaning for Gitxaała families.

Our Gitxaała Sm'algyax Language Deck of Cards was also shared with regular class participants, providing another way for learners to practice and reinforce their knowledge.

We also continued maintaining language resources on the FirstVoices and Gitxaała Community Knowledge Keeper platforms. These digital resources help organize and preserve information that can support learning, research and future language work.

Our goal is not simply to accumulate words and recordings. We want language resources to remain connected to the speakers, families and communities from which that knowledge comes, and to be useful to people who want to continue learning.

Caring for Our Archives and Cultural Knowledge

Another important part of our department's responsibilities is the careful organization and preservation of records relating to Gitxaała language and culture. These include tribal binders for Gitxaała Hereditary Leaders documenting Adaawx, house territories, crests, genealogy charts and lists of hereditary names in each house.

During the reporting period, our work included archival inventory, accessioning, digitization, transcription and research. These activities help us understand what materials are available, where they are held and what additional information may be needed.

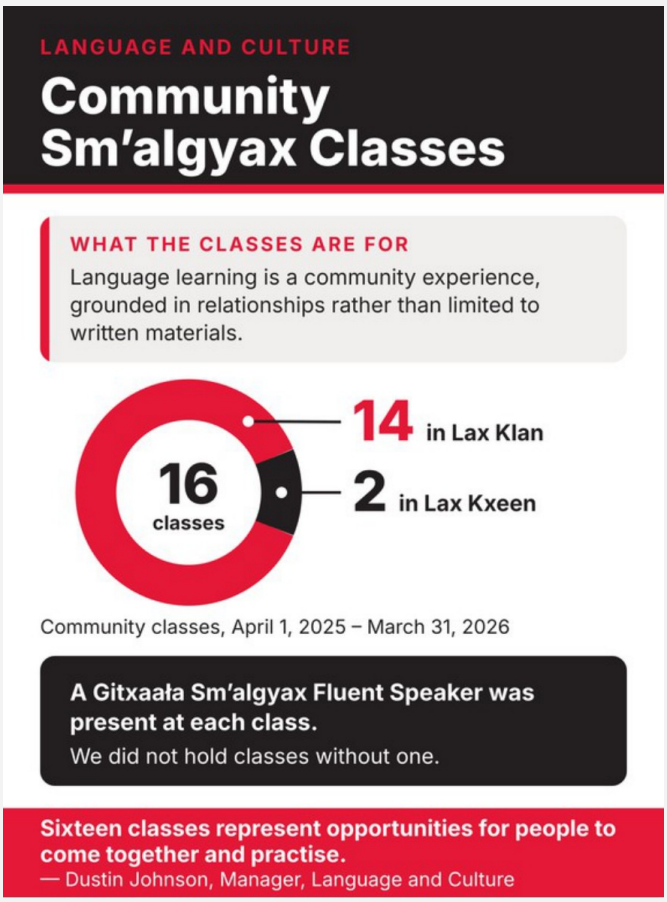
Audio and video recordings are especially important because they preserve voices, knowledge and ways of speaking that written records alone cannot capture. Maintaining and organizing these materials supports both current learning and future generations.

Archival work also contributes directly to repatriation. A record, photograph or description held by an institution may help identify a belonging, connect it to a Gitxaała family or place, or establish a path toward further research.

Our department continues to support shared knowledge documentation, place-name research, translation requests and work connected to the Hereditary Table. These responsibilities show how language and culture contribute to other areas of the Nation's work. Much of this work is ongoing, with new knowledge continually added to the foundation and existing records refined to reflect accurate Gitxaała knowledge.

Researching Belongings Held Beyond Our Territory

We know that Gitxaała cultural treasures are held in collections beyond our community, including museums and other institutions around the world.



Our part-time archivist, Jennie Glennie, has undertaken research through university and archival connections in the Lower Mainland and Victoria while continuing her studies at Simon Fraser University. Her work has helped locate Gitxaała belongings of interest and establish contacts with institutions that may hold further information.

Working together, Jennie and I have continued identifying Gitxaała cultural treasures, seeking provenance information and developing relationships that can support future repatriation discussions.

Provenance research helps answer important questions: where a belonging came from, how it entered a collection, what information was recorded about it and what further work may be required. This is often painstaking work, and not every discovery leads immediately to a return. But it matters because each record and each relationship can bring us closer to understanding where Gitxaała belongings are and how they may one day come home.

The People and Partnerships Behind the Work

Language and cultural revitalization cannot be carried out by one department alone. It depends on the knowledge, guidance and participation of fluent speakers, Elders, hereditary leaders, families, the Repatriation Committee, the Gitxaała Sm'algyax Language Authority and many others.

During the April 2025 to March 2026 reporting year, our team included Colin Angus, Language Coordinator based in Lax Klan; Carter McKay, Language Coordinator based in Lax Kxeen; Warren Nelson, Cultural Coordinator; Jennie Glennie, Archivist; and myself, Dustin Johnson, Manager.

As of November 2026, our department team includes Language Coordinator Evelyn Innes and Archivist Jennie Glennie, alongside my responsibilities as Manager. The Language Assistant position remains vacant.

Evelyn coordinates classes in Lax Klan and Lax Kxeen and helps maintain the FirstVoices and Community Knowledge Keeper resources. My work includes oversight of language and repatriation initiatives, accuracy of Gitxaała Sm'algyax, research, funding applications and reports, and collaboration with other Nation departments.

We also rely on interdepartmental relationships for translation, place-name work, cultural documentation and other projects. These connections help ensure that language and culture are part of the Nation's wider work, not separated from it.

Behind each event, class, archive or research project are people offering time, skill and knowledge. I want to acknowledge that contribution, particularly from fluent speakers and Knowledge Keepers whose generosity makes this work possible.

Planning for the Fuure of Language and Culture

We have made meaningful progress, but our department also recognizes the need for additional capacity and appropriate space to carry out its responsibilities.

One future priority is renovating and expanding the Language and Culture office, with the goal of developing it into a heritage and cultural resource centre. Such a space could support further research, broader access to cultural resources and the continued care of Ha'amwaal Łagyigyedm Gitxaała. This remains a planned development, not a completed facility.

With additional funding, the department has also identified potential staffing needs, including a Language Technologist, Repatriation Coordinator, Artistic Facilitator, Elder Advisor and Administrative Assistant. These proposed positions would help address the growing demands of language revitalization, research, repatriation, cultural programming and administration.

We will continue working with the Language Authority and Knowledge Keepers, supporting community classes, maintaining archives and language resources, researching belongings held in outside collections and pursuing the funding and partnerships needed to sustain these efforts.

The long-term challenge is to build the capacity to keep doing this work consistently. Language learning and the care of cultural knowledge are continuing responsibilities that extend well beyond any one reporting year. More skilled and experienced Gitxaała people are needed to return home to Lax Klan to help move this work forward into the future.

Honouring Those Who Carry Our Traditional Kowledge

Our work is possible because of the people who have carried Gitxaała knowledge, shared our language and helped younger generations understand the responsibilities that come with it.

I want to recognize the members of the Gitxaała Sm'algyax Language Authority named in this year's report: Matthew Hill, Jeannette Moody, Beatrice Robinson and Margaret Hill.

We also acknowledge Gitxaała Sm'algyax speakers Ben Spencer, Ernie Bolton, Allan Brown, Clarence Innis, Fred Spencer, Doug Brown, Tim Innes and Annabelle Woods.

Our gratitude extends to our late Knowledge Keepers, whose contributions remain part of what we continue to learn: Johnson Gordon, David Moody, Wilfred Jackson, Dorothy Gordon-Brown, Kathleen Vickers, Rita Robinson, Larry Bolton, Cecil Hill, Priscilla Bolton, Marjorie Brown, Bertha Maudie Tolmie, Violet Skog, Chester Bolton, Richard Spencer, Jeffrey Spencer, Sam William Lewis, Sam Johnson Dwyer Lewis, Ken Innes, Edward Gladstone, Thelma Hill, Sampson Collinson and Nathan Shaw.

Their words, teachings and examples remind us that knowledge is carried through relationships. When we preserve a recording, practice a phrase or care for a cultural belonging, we are also recognizing the people who made that knowledge available to us.

Carrying Our Language and Culture Forward

The return of 24 cultural treasures was a significant milestone for our Nation. The 16 Sm'algyax classes, the calendars and digital language resources, and the archival and research work are equally important parts of our responsibility to future generations.

There is still much to do. Cultural belongings remain away from home. Fluent speakers need meaningful support, and learners need consistent opportunities to hear and use Sm'algyax. We need more Gitxaała people to participate in Sm'algyax learning and regular practice. Our archives require ongoing care, and the department needs additional capacity to meet growing expectations.

As Manager, I am grateful to our staff, Elders, Fluent Speakers, Hereditary Leaders, Knowledge Keepers, Language Authority, families and partners for continuing this work with us.

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life includes caring for what our ancestors have passed down and ensuring our children know that their language and culture belong to them. That is the responsibility we carry forward together.

T'oyaxs da txa'nii wil amuksism — Thank you all for listening.

Opening Doors Through Education and Training

Supporting Student Success, Building Skills and Creating Opportunities for Gitxaała Citizens

Lawrence Sankey | Continuous Learning Centre
Education and Culture Division | Gitxaała Nation





Education has the power to change lives. It can open doors to employment, help people discover new interests, strengthen their confidence and create opportunities they may not have thought possible.

For Gitxaała Nation, education and training are investments in our collective future. When our citizens gain new qualifications, develop practical skills or pursue postsecondary studies, they bring valuable knowledge and experience to their families, workplaces and communities.

At the Continuous Learning Centre (CLC), our responsibility is to help make those opportunities accessible, whether citizens live in Lax Klan, Prince Rupert or elsewhere.

The Continuous Learning Centre is one department operating from two campuses, one in Lax Klan and one in Prince Rupert. Each campus has geographic responsibilities, but both are intended to work together as one team to support Gitxaała members wherever they live.

This approach recognizes that our citizens pursue education, training and employment in many different locations. Access to support should not be limited by where someone resides.

I began working at the Centre on September 22, 2025. My first several months involved becoming familiar with operations, reviewing existing programs, listening to community training needs and helping coordinate courses that could benefit citizens and employees.

This report also recognizes the broader work undertaken throughout the 2025–2026 fiscal year, including postsecondary student funding, employment and training policy development, individual course purchases, learning supports, summer employment opportunities and programs offered through both campuses.

Our work reflects this year's AGM theme, Aama Didüüls – A Good Life. Education contributes to a good life by creating opportunities for personal growth, meaningful employment, financial stability and the confidence to pursue new goals.

One Continuous Learning Centre, Two Campuses

An important goal of the Continuous Learning Centre is ensuring that educational and training opportunities are available to Gitxaała citizens regardless of where they live. With campuses in Lax Klan and Prince Rupert, the Centre can respond to the needs of citizens living both at home and away from home.

Although each campus has responsibilities within its geographic area, they operate as part of the same department. Their work is meant to complement one another through shared planning, communication, program coordination and support for members.

This means that a citizen living in Prince Rupert should be able to access information and support through the same departmental structure as someone living in Lax Klan.

It also means that training opportunities can be considered across both locations rather than being developed in isolation. Some programs may be more practical to deliver in Lax Klan, while others may benefit from the training providers, facilities and partnerships available in Prince Rupert. By working collaboratively, the two campuses can help identify opportunities, reduce duplication and make better use of available resources.

Our goal is to strengthen this coordinated approach so that citizens experience the Continuous Learning Centre as one accessible department, regardless of which campus they contact.

Strengthening Employment and Training Policies

One of the important developments within the Continuous Learning Centre has been the redevelopment of the CLC Employment and Training Policy.
Clear policies are necessary to ensure that citizens understand what supports are available, how they may access them and what responsibilities accompany participation in education and training programs. The revised policy strengthens the framework for employment and training assistance while recognizing that participants may need more than the cost of a course or certification.

Among other improvements, the redeveloped policy includes access to counselling and tutorial supports consistent with those available through the Nation's post-secondary education program.

This is an important recognition that people pursuing employment-related training may encounter many of the same challenges faced by students attending colleges or universities. Some participants may need additional academic assistance to complete a course. Others may benefit from counselling support as they navigate educational, personal or employment-related challenges.

Providing a more consistent framework for these supports helps create a more equitable approach to education and training across the department.

It also recognizes that a person's ability to succeed may depend on having the appropriate assistance throughout their learning experience.

The revised policy was approved following the 2025–2026 reporting period. Its development represents an important step toward strengthening future services and improving consistency in the support available to learners.

Our objective is to ensure that policies are understandable, responsive and designed to help citizens complete their training and move toward their employment goals.

New Tutorial Support for Elementary and Secondary Students

The Education and Culture Division has also developed a new tutorial support policy for elementary and secondary school-aged children. Under the new policy, tutorial support is available to a maximum of $500 per child per school year. Applicants must be Gitxaała Nation members enrolled in elementary or secondary school, or in an equivalent school-age learning program. This policy was approved and became effective July 1, 2026.
This initiative recognizes the importance of identifying learning needs early and providing additional educational support when children require assistance.

Students may encounter challenges in different subjects or need help strengthening foundational academic skills. Access to tutoring can provide additional opportunities to practise, build confidence and develop a stronger understanding of classroom material.

For families, the cost of private tutoring may otherwise create a barrier to accessing this support.

The new policy establishes a framework through which the Nation can assist families in meeting these educational needs.

It also reflects a broader understanding of student success. Providing support throughout the educational journey is important, rather than waiting until students reach post-secondary education or employment training.

Supporting children in elementary and secondary school helps establish the foundation for future learning, graduation and career development.

Together, the redeveloped CLC Employment and Training Policy and the new tutorial support policy demonstrate the Nation's commitment to strengthening educational assistance at different stages of life.

Supporting Individual Training and Employment Readiness

While group training programs are an important part of the Continuous Learning Centre's work, we also recognize that citizens may have individual education and employment goals that require different types of assistance.
During the 2025–2026 reporting period, the Centre provided approximately $150,000 in individual course purchases and accompanying learning supports.

These investments helped members access training opportunities suited to their circumstances, interests and career aspirations.

Not every citizen will find the training they need through a scheduled group program. Some may require a specific course, qualification or certification to pursue employment or advance within an existing career. Individual course assistance allows the Centre to respond to those needs and support pathways that may not otherwise be available through regular programming.

The Centre's assistance also extends to the transition into employment. The CLC offices support the purchase of work gear for members during their first two weeks of starting employment.

Starting a new job can involve additional expenses, particularly when specific clothing or equipment is required. Assistance with work gear can help reduce some of those initial costs.

This is another example of how the Continuous Learning Centre supports citizens beyond the classroom.

Our goal is not simply to help people complete training. We also want to support their ability to use that training, enter the workforce and take the next steps toward employment.

By combining training opportunities, individual learning supports and practical employment assistance, the Centre helps address some of the barriers that citizens may encounter along the way.

Listening to Community Training Needs

When I began my position at the Continuous Learning Centre, one of my first priorities was understanding what education and training opportunities our community wanted and needed.
I reviewed information from earlier programs, including course offerings and participation numbers, to better understand the training that had previously been delivered. I also began surveying community members and the school to gather information about potential future programs. Understanding community interests is an important part of effective planning.

For some citizens, training may provide the certification needed to enter a particular occupation. For others, it may offer an opportunity to change careers, strengthen existing skills or explore employment possibilities.

We also recognize that Nation departments have specific training requirements associated with workplace safety, equipment operation and service delivery.

By listening to both citizens and departments, the Centre can identify programs that respond to community priorities while also supporting the Nation's operational needs.

Our goal is to provide relevant training that people can use in practical ways.

Supporting Post-Secondary Education: Investing in Our Citizens



One of the most significant areas of Gitxaała Nation's educational investment is its continued support for citizens pursuing post-secondary studies. During the 2025–2026 reporting year, 46 students received financial assistance totalling more than $900,000.

These students attended colleges, universities and other educational institutions throughout British Columbia and across Canada. Their studies represent a wide range of interests, talents and career ambitions.

For many students, post-secondary education involves significant financial challenges, particularly when they must relocate to attend school. Tuition is only one part of the cost. Students must also manage housing, food, transportation, books, educational materials and everyday living expenses. Through the work of the Post-Secondary Coordinator and CLC staff, the Nation provides assistance that helps students pursue their educational goals.

The post-secondary funding policy has also been strengthened to respond to changing student needs.

Important improvements include increased living allowances and rent subsidies, additional funding for educational materials and supplies, and a new bursary to assist students with purchasing a laptop.

The program has also introduced monetary awards recognizing successful completion of educational credentials and outstanding academic achievement.

These improvements recognize the commitment required to pursue post-secondary education and the importance of helping students remain in their programs through to graduation.

At the time this report was prepared, the Nation was continuing to support more than 35 post-secondary students.

Every student represents an investment in our future.

Whether citizens pursue careers in healthcare, education, business, trades, technology, the arts or other fields, the knowledge they acquire can benefit both their personal development and the wider Nation.

Student Voices: The Difference Educational Support Makes

The impact of educational funding is best understood through the experiences of the students themselves. Three Gitxaała students shared their reflections on the difference the Nation's support has made in their lives.

Isabelle Vickers - Film and Screenwriting

Isabelle began her studies in 2024 and is pursuing her ambition of becoming a screenwriter and filmmaker. She explained that attending film school in Vancouver once seemed financially out of reach. With Gitxaała Nation's support, she has been able to pursue opportunities she previously thought might not be possible.

“Gitxaała's post-secondary program has had an overwhelmingly positive impact on me and has opened so many doors in terms of education, living conditions, and over all stability as I continue my studies in my dream program.”

For Isabelle, that assistance has provided more than financial support. It has helped her pursue her creative ambitions and work toward bringing a Gitxaała voice into the film industry.

Hannah Brown - Hair Art Design

Hannah is pursuing her education in Hair Art Design at JCI. She described how financial assistance has helped reduce the pressure of managing tuition and living expenses while concentrating on developing her professional skills.

“The financial support has helped ease the stress of not only school-related expenses but living expenses as well, and has allowed me to focus more on my education, developing my skills and working towards my future career goals.

Hannah also encouraged young people and others who may still be exploring their career interests to remain open to new opportunities. Her message is an important reminder that education can be a process of discovering interests, developing confidence and finding a path that feels meaningful.

Jon E. D. Robinson - Creative Writing

Jon is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. He expressed his appreciation for the Nation's support, particularly given the considerable cost of living in the Lower Mainland.

“I have been so grateful to have Gitxaała Nation helping me pursue a BA at KPU. They have been extremely compassionate and outgoing, and I wouldn't have done this without their help.”

Jon has also been developing his writing career, including publication in pulpMag. His experience illustrates how access to post-secondary education can help students develop their creative abilities, strengthen their confidence and pursue professional opportunities.

These personal accounts remind us that financial support can make a meaningful difference in a student's educational journey.

When our citizens are given opportunities to pursue their ambitions, their successes become part of the Nation's broader story.

Summer Employment: Learning Through Experience

Education does not take place only in classrooms. Practical work experience can also help young people discover their interests, develop workplace skills and become more confident in their abilities.

During the 2025–2026 reporting year, Gitxaała Nation supported nine students through the Student Summer Work Program. Students gained experience with several Nation departments and organizations, including the Gitxaała Treaty and Management Authority (GTMA), Language and Culture, Housing and the Loaf of Bread Café.

These placements introduced students to different areas of the Nation's operations and provided opportunities to work alongside experienced employees.

Through these experiences, students could develop communication, teamwork, problem-solving and other workplace skills.

They also gained insight into the variety of careers and responsibilities involved in supporting their Nation.

Summer employment can be especially valuable for young people who have not yet decided what educational or professional pathway they wish to pursue. An opportunity to experience a workplace firsthand may help a student discover a new interest or recognize a future career possibility.

It also allows the Nation to invest in its future workforce while providing students with meaningful employment experience.

Bridge Watch Program: Six Successful Graduates

One of the significant training accomplishments during the reporting period was the successful completion of the Bridge Watch Program.
The Bridge Watch Program introduces participants to knowledge and skills relevant to marine employment, providing a foundation for further training and career development.

All participants - five community members and one participant from Prince Rupert - successfully completed the program, demonstrating commitment to their education and future goals.

I would like to recognize and congratulate all six graduates:

Shirley Innes, Gary Spencer, Stanly Hill, Isaiah McKay, Stephan Robinson and Shaune Temple.

Further, I acknowledge the instructors and staff who helped make the program possible.

For a coastal Nation such as Gitxaała, opportunities connected to the marine sector are particularly important.

Marine transportation, vessel operations and related industries play significant roles in our region. Providing training that introduces citizens to these career pathways can help expand employment possibilities.

Building Safer Workplaces Through WHMIS Training

Workplace safety is an essential part of employee eevelopment.

From October 14 to 17, 2025, the Continuous Learning Centre supported Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System training, commonly known as WHMIS. Seven participants took part.

WHMIS training helps workers understand how hazardous materials are identified, labelled, handled and stored safely.

This knowledge is applicable in a variety of workplaces, including maintenance, construction, public works, food services and other environments where employees may encounter hazardous substances.

By providing this training, the Nation helps employees develop greater awareness of workplace hazards and their responsibilities for maintaining safe working conditions.

Continuing to provide appropriate safety training is an important part of supporting our workforce.

ATV Training: Developing Practical Workpace Skills

On February 6 and 7, 2026, the Continuous Learning Centre coordinated ATV training involving employees from the Loaf of Bread Café and Public Works. The training brought together 16 participants. This was an important example of departments working collaboratively to meet practical training needs.
Employees in different roles may be required to operate equipment or work in environments where understanding vehicle safety is important. ATV training helps participants become familiar with equipment operation, safety practices and the responsibilities associated with using off-road vehicles.

Offering this type of training locally also reduces some of the challenges associated with travelling away from the community.

I appreciate the cooperation of Public Works and the Loaf of Bread Café in helping coordinate this opportunity.

By sharing resources and training opportunities across departments, we can better support the Nation's workforce.

Strengthening Emergency Preparedness

In March 2026, the Continuous Learning Centre reported a Certified Emergency Response Training Course involving eight participants.
mergency preparedness is particularly important in a remote coastal community.

Severe weather, transportation interruptions, power outages and other unexpected events can create situations where preparation and appropriate response skills are essential. Emergency response training helps participants become familiar with principles and practices that may be useful during unexpected situations.

It also contributes to the broader goal of developing community capacity.

Building local knowledge and confidence is an important part of preparing for emergencies, and continued training opportunities can help strengthen that foundation.

Training Opportunities Through The Prince Rupert Campus

The Prince Rupert campus plays an important role in making education and training opportunities available to Gitxaała citizens living away from Lax Klan.

As one of the Continuous Learning Centre's two campuses, Prince Rupert responds to the needs of members in its geographic area while collaborating with the Lax Klan campus.

During the reporting year, the campus supported or coordinated training opportunities through partnerships with external organizations, including TriCorp.

These included BladeRunners training from April 22 to May 30, 2025, and Executive Assistant training offered during several periods between August 2025 and February 2026.

Programming associated with an Aboriginal Early Childhood Education Diploma pathway was also reported during 2025.

Railway training opportunities were offered from January 26 to 30 and February 16 to 20, 2026.

The campus also identified Advanced First Aid training through Irwin's Safety among its partnership offerings.

These programs provide examples of how partnerships can help create employment and training opportunities for citizens.

Working with external training organizations allows the Continuous Learning Centre to connect participants with specialized instruction and potential career pathways.

The programs offered through Prince Rupert

complement the opportunities available in Lax Klan and contribute to the department's shared responsibility for supporting members wherever they live.

Training That Strengthens Community Capacity

The programs delivered during the reporting year covered different areas of learning, but they shared a common purpose.
They provided participants with opportunities to gain practical knowledge, explore career possibilities and strengthen their abilities.

Marine training can introduce citizens to employment opportunities. WHMIS supports workplace safety. ATV training develops equipment-operation knowledge. Emergency response courses contribute to preparedness.



Post-secondary funding helps students work toward qualifications, while summer employment provides opportunities to gain practical experience.

The approximately $150,000 provided for individual course purchases and accompanying learning supports also reflects the importance of responding to the specific educational and employment goals of citizens.

The redeveloped Employment and Training Policy and new tutorial support policy provide additional frameworks for assisting people who may need support to succeed.

Together, these initiatives contribute to the Nation's broader capacity.

When citizens develop skills, those skills may eventually support Nation departments, community organizations, businesses and future projects.

Education also benefits individuals and families by creating opportunities for confidence, personal growth and greater economic stability. For someone returning to school, entering the workforce or exploring a new career, access to the right support can make a considerable difference.

Working Together to Support Lifelong Learning

The work of the Continuous Learning Centre depends on cooperation. Training programs require planning, qualified instructors, facilities, resources, scheduling and communication with participants.

Post-secondary students rely on coordinators and employees who help them understand funding policies, complete applications and navigate the challenges associated with their education.

Summer employment programs depend on Nation departments being willing to welcome students and provide meaningful workplace experience.

Specialized courses often require partnerships with external training organizations.

Although Lax Klan and Prince Rupert have different geographic responsibilities, we share a common commitment to serving Gitxaała citizens.

Our work should be guided by the needs of members rather than by the boundaries between offices or communities.

I want to acknowledge the contributions of the Post-Secondary Coordinator, CLC employees, instructors, department staff and training partners whose efforts help make these opportunities possible. Much of their work takes place behind the scenes, but it is essential to the delivery of successful programs.

Their commitment helps create opportunities for citizens at many different stages of their educational and professional lives.

Looking Ahead: Building Stronger Edcuational Pathways

Looking toward the future, one priority will be continuing to identify community training needs and developing programs that respond to those interests.

We want to build on the success of the courses delivered during the reporting period while exploring additional opportunities across sectors, including marine industries, trades, administration, employment readiness, workplace safety and other areas of interest.

The redevelopment of the Employment and Training Policy provides an important framework for supporting participants more consistently.

Access to counselling and tutorial assistance recognizes that some learners may require additional support to complete their training and achieve their goals.

The new tutorial support policy for elementary and secondary students also provides an opportunity to strengthen educational assistance earlier in life.

Continued support for post-secondary students remains an important responsibility. We want citizens to know that their Nation values their ambitions and recognizes the commitment required to complete their education.

Strengthening summer employment and practical learning opportunities can help young people connect their educational experiences with future career possibilities.

Our goal is to provide clear information, accessible services and meaningful learning opportunities for Gitxaała citizens wherever they live.

Celebrating the People Behind the Achievements

I want to close by congratulating everyone who participated in education and training programs during the reporting year.

To our Bridge Watch graduates, your successful completion of the program is an achievement worth celebrating.

To those who participated in workplace safety, ATV and emergency response training, thank you for investing the time required to develop skills that can benefit your workplaces and community.

To our post-secondary students, your dedication to pursuing education while managing the responsibilities of daily life deserves recognition.

To the students who participated in summer employment, I hope these experiences have helped you develop confidence and explore new possibilities.

I also want to acknowledge the staff, instructors, coordinators and training partners whose work supports these accomplishments.

Education is not limited to one classroom, one campus or one stage of life.

We learn through formal education, employment, practical experience, the guidance of others and opportunities to develop new skills.

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life reminds us that learning and personal growth are part of building strong families, meaningful livelihoods and healthy communities.

When we create opportunities for our people to learn, develop their abilities and pursue their ambitions, we are investing in the future of Gitxaała Nation.

That is the work we are committed to continuing.

Safe Homes, Stronger Futures: Building a Housing Plan for Gitxaała

Repairs, Homeownership, Skilled Trades and the People Behind the Work
Stan Knight | Housing & Capital Projects Advisor
Housing and Capital Projects (Community Services) | Gitxaała Nation





A safe, healthy home is fundamental to the well-being of every family. It is where children grow, Elders are cared for, and people find stability at the end of the day. For Gitxaała Nation, housing means looking after the homes we already have while creating better opportunities for citizens in the future.

I am pleased to present this report on behalf of the Housing and Capital Projects team. As Housing and Capital Projects Advisor, I have seen the commitment required to respond to repairs, coordinate contractors and plan improvements. Much of that work happens quietly, but it makes a difference in the everyday lives of our people.

During the April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026 reporting year, Housing focused on three connected priorities: safer homes, better tenancy and repair services, and a more reliable foundation for longer-term housing planning. There have also been important developments after the reporting year, which I have identified separately.

This year's theme, Aama Didüüls – A Good Life, speaks directly to this importance of safe homes, healthy families and a community where people can plan for their future.

Caring for the Homes We Already Have

During the reporting year, our Housing crew completed repairs and renovations to Nation-owned Band Rental homes, continued mould remediation in affected properties, and responded to emergency repairs and work orders.

Mould, electrical concerns, roofing issues and other maintenance problems can affect residents' health and safety. We do not have the resources to address every problem at once, so our team prioritizes the most urgent concerns, particularly those affecting Elders and vulnerable residents.

Behind every repair are employees, supervisors, contractors and community members working through the practical challenges of carrying out construction and maintenance in Lax Klan. Their dedication is central to the services we provide.

Moving from Emergency Repairs to a Five-Year Plan

A key priority is to understand the condition of our housing stock and plan repairs more systematically.

Our current inspection base includes 138 occupied homes: 67 Nation-owned Band Rental and Social Housing households and 71 private homeowner households. This figure excludes four condemned homes and eight vacant or non member units.

The department now has the capacity to undertake full home inspections and detailed repair scopes. These inspections will help identify safety needs, establish repair priorities and inform a proposed five-year renovation and maintenance program. That does not mean every home has already been fully inspected or repaired.

Better information will help us plan for roofing, electrical, mould and energy-efficiency work before problems become even more serious. It will also support funding applications and help explain why certain repairs need to come first.

Residents have an important role in caring for their homes. During the reporting period, Housing supported a Basic Home Maintenance workshop and a Financial Wellness workshop. We plan to offer further practical learning opportunities so homeowners and tenants can recognize problems early and better understand their responsibilities.

Supporting Elders and Accessibility

Looking after our Elders has been a priority in our repair and renovation work. In partnership with Health and Social Development, Housing has supported home assessments and accessibility repairs aimed at improving safety and day-to-day comfort.

Our next goal is to advance an Elders Home Repair & Energy Program with repairs and upgrades proposed for 40 Elders' homes in the first round. The current plan includes energy-saving improvements through BC Hydro's PIEER program in winter 2026–2027, with heat pumps anticipated beginning in spring 2027.

These are planned future improvements, not work we are claiming was completed in the 2025–2026 reporting year. Delivering them will require appropriate funding, coordination and skilled workers.

Creating a Path to Homeownership

Beyond providing rental and social housing, we want to create additional pathways for Gitxaała citizens who hope to build, purchase or renovate homes of their own.

An important milestone came immediately after the reporting year. On April 1, 2026, the First Nations Market Housing Fund approved up to $3.7 million in credit enhancement for Gitxaała Nation.

This is not a $3.7 million cash grant to individual homeowners. It is a financing mechanism intended to support access to mortgages under a Nation homeownership framework. Legal review and lands-related work still need to be completed before the program can begin operating.

We are working toward a Homeownership Program that could provide eligible members with another way to secure housing in community. Nation-owned and social housing will remain vital, but offering different housing options can help address the needs of more families.

Strengthening Partnerships and Financial Accountability

Housing cannot deliver all this work alone. We rely on cooperation across departments and with organizations that provide funding, technical expertise and training.

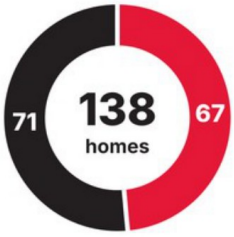
Our work with Health and Social Development has included Elders' assessments, accessibility needs, potential family-housing opportunities and off-reserve housing options. Public Works and the Volunteer Fire Department have shared crews, equipment and knowledge, including through the Basic Home Maintenance workshop.

HOUSING AND CAPITAL PROJECTS

Emergency Repairs to a Five-Year Plan

WHAT THE WORK IS FOR

A key priority is to understand the condition of our housing stock and plan repairs more systematically.



67
Nation-owned Band Rental and Social Housing households

71
private homeowner households

138 occupied homes in our current inspection base
Excludes four condemned homes and eight vacant or non-member units.

Full home inspections will help identify safety needs, establish repair priorities and inform a proposed five-year renovation and maintenance program.

"A planned approach to maintenance will allow us to make better decisions..."
— Stan Knight, Housing & Capital Projects Advisor

We have worked with Education and the Continuous Learning Centre on the development of a trades training pathway, and with David Nairne + Associates on community development, land-use planning and the 10-year capital plan.

Our external partners include Indigenous Services Canada, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the First Nations Market Housing Fund, BC Hydro and Vancouver Island University. These relationships help us pursue repair and capital funding, energy upgrades, homeownership readiness and professional development.

We are also working with Finance to improve project cost tracking. Housing crews have sometimes completed work for other departments without separate project codes, putting pressure on the Housing budget. Better coding will help make sure that the costs of work are recorded against the correct budgets and that spending can be understood more clearly.

Investing in Our Crew and Local Trades

The housing work our community needs requires skilled people. The department's staffing figures include seven full-time employees, four part-time employees and four contractors, including crew members, supervisors, administrative support and outside trades.

One of our biggest challenges is the shortage of qualified tradespeople in community. Depending on outside contractors can increase costs, complicate scheduling and slow down repairs. We are therefore developing a multi-year apprenticeship approach with the Education Department. The aim is to use Gitxaała renovation and new-home projects as hands-on training opportunities, allowing members to gain work experience and trade hours toward Red Seal certification.

This program remains in development, but it offers a longer-term opportunity to create local jobs, retain skills in our community and reduce our dependence on outside contractors.

I want to recognize Housing Clerk Tyrell Bennett, our crew supervisors and the employees who keep daily operations moving. Their work deserves to be seen alongside the completed projects.

Meeting Challenges and Planning for Stability

The repair backlog remains larger than the funding available each year. Homes may need mould, roof, electrical and energy improvements at the same time, requiring careful decisions about what can be addressed first.

The department's submitted figures conservatively estimate that approximately half of its goals were met, compared with 25 percent reported previously. This is progress, but it also shows the amount of work still ahead.

The department has experienced leadership changes since the end of the reporting year. With the Housing Manager on leave and the Director of Community Services position vacant, I have supported oversight as Advisor since August 2026. The Housing Clerk and crew supervisors have continued managing day-to-day operations.

For long-term stability, Housing needs a permanent manager, training to support that role and the filling of the director position. Safe work vehicles, reliable equipment and a yearly maintenance reserve for Nation-owned housing are also important priorities.

A planned approach to maintenance will allow us to make better decisions, reduce avoidable emergency costs and show citizens how repair priorities are being established.

Looking Ahead: Priorities for 2026–2027

Our immediate priorities are to continue health-and-safety repairs, carry out full inspections and repair scopes, and use that information to develop the five-year renovation plan.

HOUSING AND CAPITAL PROJECTS

Looking Ahead

Priorities for 2026–2027

WHAT THE WORK IS FOR

A safe, healthy home is fundamental to the well-being of every family.

PROGRAM	WHERE IT STANDS
Elders Home Repair & Energy Program	**Proposed** for 40 Elders' homes in the first round. Energy improvements planned winter 2026–2027; heat pumps anticipated beginning spring 2027.
Homeownership Program	**Working toward it.** Up to $3.7 million in credit enhancement approved April 1, 2026, not a cash grant. Legal and lands work outstanding.
Apprenticeship pathway	**In development** with Education: work experience and trade hours toward Red Seal certification.
New family homes	**We intend to pursue funding,** including potential modular construction through the First Nations Children's Housing Fund.

"...careful budgeting, practical partnerships and the sustained effort of our Housing team."
— Stan Knight, Housing & Capital Projects Advisor

We will also continue seeking funding for mould remediation and broader housing improvements. In spring 2026, Housing applied to Indigenous Services Canada for another round of mould renovations.

The planned Elders Home Repair & Energy Program, the proposed first round of 40 homes and the later energy-efficiency and heat-pump work will remain important projects.

We intend to pursue funding for new family homes, including potential modular construction through the First Nations Children's Housing Fund, while continuing to investigate other suitable housing options.

At the same time, we will work toward a Homeownership Program supported by the First Nations Market Housing Fund credit enhancement, strengthen staff training and management practices, and advance the proposed apprenticeship pathway with Education.

These plans will require consistent leadership, careful budgeting, practical partnerships and the sustained effort of our Housing team.

The People Behind Every Repair

I want to end by acknowledging the employees, contractors, supervisors and community partners who have carried this work forward. Housing requires perseverance. Problems arise unexpectedly, available funding is limited, and the work often takes place under challenging conditions.
Our Housing Manager, Sierra Tolmie, shared a reflection that captures that experience:

"For over three years as Housing Manager, I have had the privilege of learning from our dedicated crew, contractors and community members. This year has brought many unexpected turns, but each challenge has strengthened our team, expanded our knowledge, and reminded us of what we can accomplish together."

— Sierra Tolmie, Housing Manager

That sense of teamwork will continue to matter as we work toward safer homes, better maintenance planning, stronger local skills and more housing opportunities.

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life means ensuring our citizens can live in homes that support their health, safety and dignity. It also means being practical about the challenges we face and continuing to build a stronger housing program for the generations to come.

Keeping Our Community Running: The People Behind Public Works

Maintaining Essential Services, Protecting Community Infrastructure and Recognizing the Employees Who Make It Possible

Vince Davis | Director of Public Works, Gitxaała Nation



Public Works is one of those departments that people depend on every day, often without thinking about the amount of work required to keep essential services operating.

When residents turn on their taps, travel along community roads, dispose of household waste, or depend on infrastructure during difficult weather, there are employees working behind the scenes to maintain those services.

As Director of Public Works, I oversee a department with responsibilities that extend across much of the community's essential infrastructure.

Our work includes drinking water, wastewater systems, roads, equipment, community buildings, generators, fuel and propane coordination, waste management, marine infrastructure, and emergency maintenance.

In a remote coastal community like Lax Klan, these responsibilities require careful planning, practical knowledge, and a willingness to respond whenever problems arise.

We do not have the same immediate access to contractors, replacement equipment, or specialized supplies that larger communities have. Much of our work requires coordinating transportation, arranging technical support, and making sure essential services continue while repairs are undertaken.

During the April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026 reporting year, our department continued maintaining these important services while responding to the changing needs of Gitxaała Nation.

This year's AGM theme, Aama Didüüls - A Good Life reflects the purpose of our work. Reliable water, safe roads, functioning infrastructure, and a clean community are all important to the well-being of our people.

Recognizing the People Who Keep Our Community Running

The Public Works crew carries out a wide range of duties that require different skills and a willingness to help wherever needed.

Our regular crew during the reporting period included:

Roger Vickers – Water Treatment Plant Operator

Trent Hill – Backup Water Treatment Plant Operator and Public Works Crew

Dakota Bennett – Public Works Crew

Terrence Robinson – Public Works Crew

Simon Temple – Public Works Crew

Jeremy Brown – Excavator Operator and Public Works Crew

We also had two employees participating through the Work Opportunity Program:

Donovan Bennett – Crew support and workplace training

Aurora Ridsdale – Administrative support

All eight held these roles during the 2025–2026 reporting year.

I want to recognize each of these employees because Public Works is not a department where people are limited to one responsibility.

Depending on the day, an employee may be helping with water services, preparing equipment, responding to a maintenance request, assisting with waste collection, or helping another department.

The work is physically demanding, and the responsibilities can change quickly. Our employees are frequently required to work outdoors in difficult weather, respond to equipment problems, and assist with tasks that are essential to the functioning of the community. Their practical experience and willingness to work as a team are among the department's most important strengths.

Protecting Our Drinking Water Supply

Providing safe and reliable drinking water is one of our most important responsibilities.
The community's Water Treatment Plant requires regular monitoring, equipment maintenance, and attention to the infrastructure that supports the treatment and distribution of water.

Roger Vickers serves as our Water Treatment Plant Operator, with Trent Hill providing backup support.

Having trained employees who understand the treatment system is essential to maintaining operations and responding when equipment requires attention.

Water treatment involves more than operating machinery. The system requires monitoring, inspection, maintenance, and an understanding of how different components work together. A problem with one component can affect the wider system, making preventive maintenance especially important.

Our department continued maintaining the Water Treatment Plant and monitoring the condition of equipment during the reporting year.

An important part of this responsibility involves the plant's sand-filtration system.

Maintaining the Sand Filters

The Water Treatment Plant has two sand filters, each containing sand and pea gravel that form part of the filtration system.

PUBLIC WORKS · DRINKING WATER

Maintaining the Sand Filters

WHAT THE WORK IS FOR

Safe and reliable drinking water is one of our most important responsibilities. Our two sand filters are serviced one at a time.

1. **Prepare and drain**
   Draining can take approximately two days
2. **Remove sand and pea gravel**
   Vacuum truck assists; can take several days
3. **Inspect the piping**
   Check for cracks, damage and water flow
4. **Refill the filter**
   Appropriate sand and pea gravel
5. **Repeat for the second filter**
   When required

"Maintaining essential infrastructure involves far more than the repairs people can see."
Vince Davis, Director of Public Works

These filters require periodic maintenance and eventual replacement of their filtering materials. The timing depends on the condition of the filters and the level of material within them.

A red reference mark inside the filter helps the crew identify when the filter media has reached the point where replacement is required. This is a substantial maintenance operation rather than a routine task.

The two filters are serviced separately so that the work can be managed one filter at a time.

The process involves preparing and draining the filter, removing the existing sand and pea gravel, and inspecting the piping beneath the filter media. Draining can take approximately two days, while the work required to remove the old filtering materials can extend over several days.

A vacuum truck is used to assist with removing the sand and pea gravel. Once the media is removed and the piping at the bottom is accessible, the crew inspects the water pipes for cracks or other signs of damage. The pipes must also be checked to ensure that water flows properly through their openings.

This inspection is important because replacing the filtering materials without addressing a damaged or blocked pipe could affect the operation of the system.

Once the necessary inspections and maintenance are completed, the filter is refilled with the appropriate sand and pea gravel. The process is then repeated for the second filter when required.

Major sand-filter media replacement is generally planned on a multi-year cycle, approximately every six years, although actual timing depends on the condition of the system. This work requires equipment, coordination, and experienced employees who understand the treatment process. It is one example of how maintaining essential infrastructure involves far more than the repairs people can see from outside the facility.

Wastewater Management and Environmental Monitoring

Public Works is also responsible for maintaining the wastewater infrastructure serving the community. This includes wastewater collection systems, lift stations, and monitoring associated with the lagoon.

The community has four wastewater lift stations, which require attention to maintain the movement of wastewater through the system. Our department responds to operational concerns and coordinates maintenance when equipment or infrastructure requires attention.

Another important responsibility is wastewater sampling. During the reporting year, the Public Works crew carried out monthly sampling involving Cell 1 and Cell 2 of the community's wastewater lagoon system. Samples are provided to WSP's environmental technical staff as part of the monitoring process.

Regular sampling contributes to the information needed to assess the system and identify concerns that may require attention. This work is important because wastewater management has direct implications for community health and environmental protection.

Although wastewater systems are largely out of sight, they require consistent oversight and maintenance.

Our crew's responsibilities include the practical work of collecting samples, maintaining access to facilities, and supporting technical personnel involved in system monitoring.

Maintaining Roads and Community Infrastructure

Public Works is responsible for maintaining roads and responding to conditions that affect safe travel within the community.
Road maintenance is especially important in a coastal environment where heavy rain, snow, drainage issues, and regular vehicle traffic can affect road conditions.

Our crew responds to road maintenance needs and works to keep routes accessible. During winter conditions, this can involve snow removal and other work needed to support safe travel.

Road maintenance also depends on having functioning equipment and employees who can operate it safely. The department's excavator and other machinery support roadwork, material handling, and a variety of maintenance responsibilities.

Jeremy Brown's work operating the excavator is an example of the specialized skills available within the crew.

Public Works also assists with maintenance concerns involving community infrastructure and facilities.

These responsibilities require coordination with Administration, contractors, and other departments when repairs or larger projects are necessary.

Our goal is to identify problems early and complete maintenance before smaller issues become more serious or expensive.

Supporting Community Generators and Emergency Preparedness

Reliable backup power is an important consideration for Lax Klan. Power interruptions can affect community buildings, essential services, communication systems, and the ability of departments to carry out their responsibilities.
Public Works helps coordinate maintenance and service calls involving approximately 14 community generators.

This includes arranging technical support and working with service providers, including Cummins and Simpson Maxwell, when inspection, maintenance, or repairs are needed.

Generator maintenance is an ongoing responsibility.

These systems must be ready to operate when required, particularly during periods when the community may experience disruptions to regular electricity service.

The work also requires coordinating equipment, replacement parts, technical service visits, and transportation.

Generators are one part of the Nation's broader emergency preparedness infrastructure, and their reliability depends on regular attention.

The Public Works crew also assists with practical preparations and maintenance tasks connected to community service continuity.

Coordinating Fuel and Propane Supplies

Fuel and propane are essential to many community operations. Public Works assists with coordinating the delivery and movement of these supplies.

In a remote community, fuel delivery requires planning around marine transportation, supplier schedules, storage capacity, and operational requirements. Our responsibilities include helping ensure that supplies are available to support community facilities, equipment, and essential operations.

This work may not always be visible to residents, but it is important to the reliable operation of community services. Delays in deliveries or problems with transportation can affect several departments, so coordination and advance planning are necessary.

Managing Garbage, Recycling and Waste Removal

Waste management is another essential responsibility of the Public Works Department.

Our crew helps coordinate garbage collection, recycling, and the removal of materials that must be transported out of the community. This includes managing the movement of garbage and recycling containers, coordinating barge transportation, and arranging the disposal or shipment of materials.

In addition to regular garbage, the department has responsibilities involving items such as cardboard and Styrofoam.

Removing waste from a remote coastal community presents particular challenges. Materials must be collected, handled appropriately, stored or prepared for shipment, and transported by marine services.

This involves equipment, labour, scheduling, and coordination with transportation providers.

Our employees also support the movement of containers and materials associated with waste management operations.

Maintaining a clean community requires more than collecting garbage. It involves planning how waste can be managed safely and efficiently within the limits of our location and available infrastructure.

Looking ahead, continued improvements to waste-handling facilities and equipment will be important to strengthening these services.

Maintaining the Wharf, Docks and Marine Infrastructure

Marine infrastructure is essential to Lax Klan.

The community depends on the movement of people, freight, fuel, supplies, equipment, and other materials by water.

Public Works assists with maintenance and repairs involving the wharf, docks, and related infrastructure.

This includes responding to maintenance concerns and coordinating repairs that may involve electrical systems, equipment, or specialized contractors.

The department also assists with shipping equipment and arranging the arrival or removal of materials needed for maintenance and construction work.

Because marine infrastructure supports so many aspects of daily life, maintaining its condition is an important responsibility. Repairs often require careful coordination because materials and specialists may need to travel to the community.

We recognize the need for ongoing infrastructure planning to ensure that marine facilities remain safe and dependable.

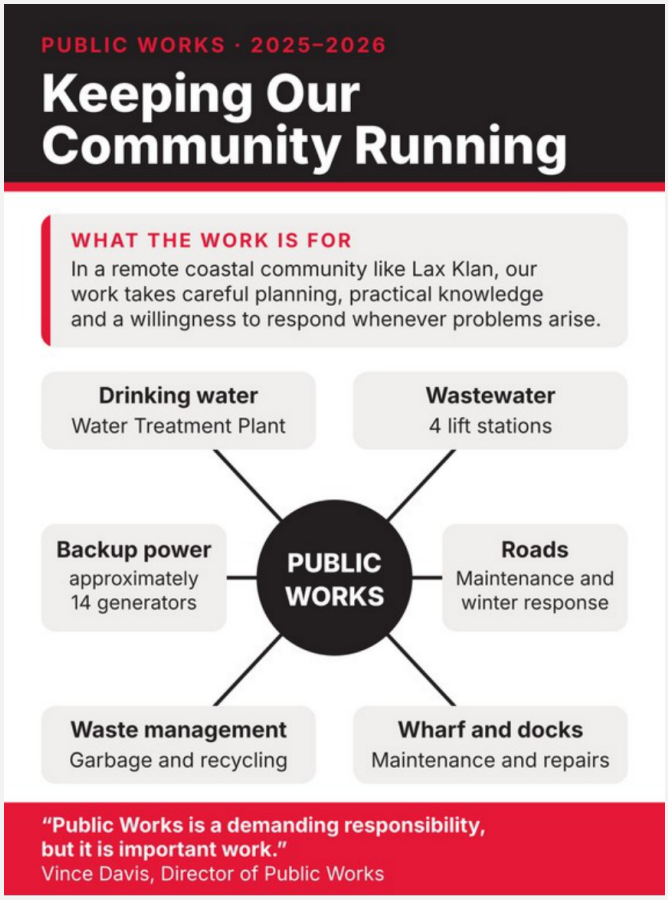
Streetlights and Community Safety

Public Works also assists with identifying and reporting streetlight problems. Reliable streetlighting contributes to community safety, particularly during the darker months of the year.

The department uses a reporting process involving SLIM and the identification tags on streetlight poles.

Recording the appropriate pole identification helps ensure that maintenance issues are reported accurately and can be directed to the appropriate service provider.

Although replacing or repairing some electrical components requires specialized personnel, our crew plays an important role in identifying problems and coordinating follow-up. These smaller infrastructure responsibilities contribute to the overall safety and functioning of the community.



Working With Contractors and Technical Specialists

Many Public Works responsibilities involve specialized equipment or technical expertise. While our crew completes a wide range of maintenance activities, some work requires assistance from outside contractors, technicians, and engineering professionals.

Our department coordinates with service providers for generator maintenance, water and wastewater infrastructure, electrical repairs, equipment servicing, and marine transportation. We also participate in planning discussions with technical partners when infrastructure improvements are being considered.

Our department coordinates with service providers for generator maintenance, water and wastewater infrastructure, electrical repairs, equipment servicing, and marine transportation. We also participate in planning discussions with technical partners when infrastructure improvements are being considered.

These relationships are important because the Nation must balance immediate operational needs with longer-term maintenance and capital planning.

Having employees who understand the community's systems and can work effectively with outside specialists helps ensure that technical work responds to actual community needs.

Planning for Infrastructure Improvements

Beyond routine operations, Public Works must consider what will be needed to maintain infrastructure over the coming years.

This includes identifying equipment that is aging, components requiring replacement, and facilities that may need upgrading.

During the reporting year, our department continued participating in discussions involving infrastructure planning and potential funding opportunities. This included coordination and meetings involving Indigenous Services Canada and Associated Engineering.

Among the areas identified for future attention are improvements to components of the Water Treatment Plant, including piping, butterfly valves, the reservoir tank, and work associated with the lake's retaining wall.

These are important considerations for maintaining the long-term reliability of the community's water infrastructure.

The department has also identified the need for improvements to solid-waste facilities, including consideration of an appropriate building for waste-management operations.

Infrastructure planning requires more than identifying a project. It involves technical assessments, cost estimates, funding applications, coordination with leadership, and consideration of how work can be completed while essential services continue.

Our responsibility is to bring practical operational knowledge into these discussions. The employees who work with these systems every day often have valuable information about their condition, maintenance requirements, and potential improvements.

Training and Supporting Workforce Development

Public Works also has a role in helping employees develop practical workplace skills.

During the reporting year, we supported two Work Opportunity Program participants, Donovan Bennett and Aurora Ridsdale. Donovan participated in crew-related work and training opportunities, while Aurora provided administrative support. These roles contributed to departmental operations while offering opportunities to gain experience.

Workforce development is important because maintaining infrastructure requires skilled employees who understand community systems. We want to strengthen local capacity so that Gitxaała citizens have opportunities to develop skills and participate in the work needed to maintain their community. This includes learning from experienced employees, gaining confidence with equipment and workplace responsibilities, and understanding the standards required for safe and reliable operations.

The Challenges of Maintaining a Remote Community

Providing Public Works services in Lax Klan comes with challenges that are different from those experienced in larger communities. Access to specialized contractors and replacement parts can be limited. Equipment or materials may need to be shipped by barge, and the timing of repairs can depend on transportation schedules. Weather can affect the delivery of supplies and the ability of contractors to travel.

The department must also maintain a broad range of infrastructure with a relatively small crew. Our employees often work across several areas rather than performing only one specialized function.

This flexibility is important, but it also means we must continue investing in training, equipment, and maintenance planning.

Reliable services require adequate funding not only for major capital projects, but also for the routine maintenance that prevents equipment and infrastructure from deteriorating.

We must continue balancing immediate repairs with longer-term improvements.

Looking Ahead: Strengthening Essential Infrastructure

As we look toward the 2026–2027 reporting year, our priorities will continue to focus on reliable water and wastewater systems, community infrastructure, waste management, equipment maintenance, and emergency preparedness.
We will continue monitoring the Water Treatment Plant and identifying maintenance needs, including the condition of the sand filters, piping, valves, and other equipment.

Wastewater monitoring and maintenance of the four lift stations will remain important responsibilities.

We also recognize the need to continue planning for improvements to the reservoir, water infrastructure, and waste-management facilities.

Generator maintenance, fuel coordination, streetlight reporting, road upkeep, and marine infrastructure will remain part of the department's ongoing responsibilities.

Equally important is supporting the employees who carry out this work. Our ability to provide dependable services depends on maintaining a knowledgeable, trained, and properly equipped Public Works team.

Acknowledging the Public Works Crew

"Public Works crew does everything. They do not just do one thing."

— Vince Davis, Director of Public Works

I want to thank every member of the Public Works crew for their work throughout the reporting year.

Roger Vickers, Trent Hill, Dakota Bennett, Terrence Robinson, Simon Temple, and Jeremy Brown each contribute to keeping our community operating.

I also acknowledge Donovan Bennett and Aurora Ridsdale for their participation and support through the Work Opportunity Program.

I appreciate the willingness of our employees to take on different responsibilities, respond when services require attention, and work together to solve problems.

I also want to thank the contractors, technicians, transportation providers, and other departments who assist us.

Public Works is a demanding responsibility, but it is important work. It supports the health, safety, and daily lives of Gitxaała citizens.

Our crew may be maintaining the water system one day, helping coordinate a barge shipment the next, and responding to an equipment problem or emergency maintenance concern after that.

Much of this work takes place without public attention, but every task contributes to the functioning of the community.

Aama Didüüls – The Good Life reminds us that maintaining a healthy and safe community requires dedication, teamwork, and responsibility. Our goal is to continue providing the essential services that Gitxaała citizens depend on while protecting the infrastructure that will serve future generations.

From the Land and Sea: Strengthening Food Security for Gitxaała Citizens

Growing, Harvesting and Sharing Food for a Healthier Community

Jammi Kumar | Manager, Food Security Division, Public Works Department | Gitxaała Nation





Food security is about more than ensuring that food is available. It is about creating reliable access to nutritious food, strengthening local food production, supporting traditional harvesting practices, and helping build a healthier and more resilient community.

For Gitxaała Nation, access to food is closely connected to the lands and waters, traditional knowledge, and the longstanding practice of sharing what is harvested with others.

As Manager of the Food Security Division, my responsibility is to work with our team, community members, and other departments to strengthen these connections while developing programs that improve access to healthy foods.

Our Division operates under the Public Works Department, and our work brings together gardening, marine harvesting, food distribution, community partnerships, and the planning needed to establish sustainable food systems.

This year's Annual General Meeting theme, Aama Didüüls – The Good Life, reflects the importance of ensuring that citizens, particularly Elders and those who may face barriers to accessing nutritious food, can benefit from locally produced and traditionally harvested foods.

Throughout the 2025-2026 reporting year, our focus remained on supporting food harvesting and distribution, strengthening community participation, and developing the capacity needed to improve food security over the long term.

Bringing Food From the Land and Sea to the Community

One of our Division's most important responsibilities is helping make fresh and traditional foods available to Gitxaała citizens. Marine harvesting plays an important role in this work, providing access to foods that are valued by community members and connected to the Nation's cultural traditions.

During March 2026, our team reported harvesting approximately 175 pounds of halbut, 200 pounds of prawns, and 100 pounds of herring eggs.

These harvests represent more than quantities of food. They reflect the planning, transportation, teamwork, and physical effort required to bring traditional foods into the community.

Once food is harvested, our responsibilities continue through cleaning, preparation, packaging, and distribution.

Our team works to ensure that available food reaches citizens, with Elders receiving priority.

We recognize that many households face challenges associated with the cost and availability of nutritious food. These challenges can be particularly significant in a remote coastal community where transportation affects the price and reliability of food supplies.

Supporting local harvesting and distribution is one way we can help address these concerns while maintaining the important connection between food, culture, and community well-being.

Strengthening Local Food Production

In addition to marine harvesting, our division supports the development of local gardening and food production.
Growing food within the community provides opportunities to increase access to fresh vegetables, build practical skills, and encourage greater participation in food production.

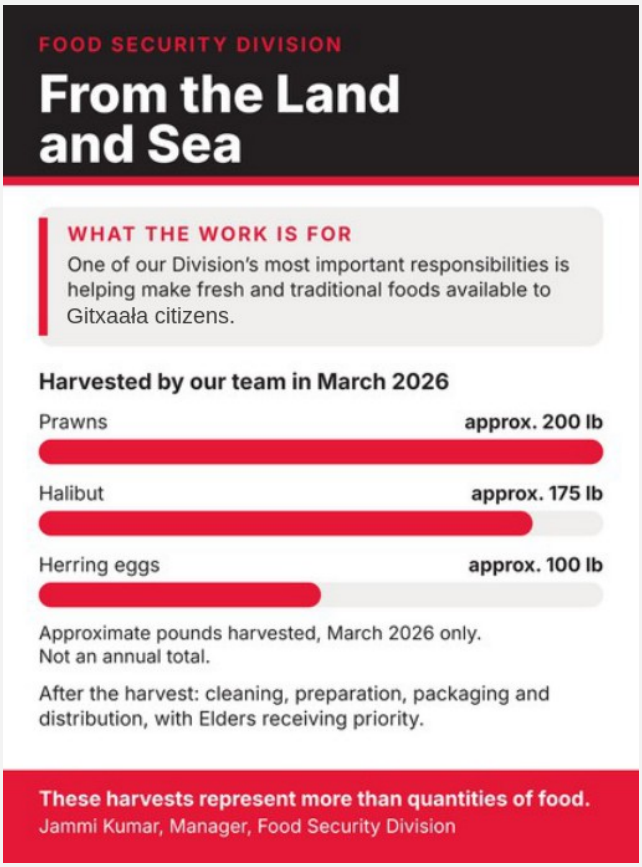
Garden work requires careful planning and consistent attention throughout the growing season. Our staff are responsible for preparing growing areas, supporting planting and maintenance, monitoring crops, and organizing harvesting and distribution activities.

These activities also provide opportunities for community members to participate and learn more about growing food.

We believe local production is an important part of developing a more sustainable food system. The more capacity a community has to grow and prepare food locally, the better positioned it can be to respond to changing conditions and challenges affecting outside food supplies.

Our approach is to strengthen these activities gradually, ensuring that the people, equipment, and facilities needed to support them are considered as part of our planning.

Recognizing the Work Behind Every Harvest



Food security is a team effort, and much of the work takes place before food ever reaches the people receiving it. Behind each harvest are employees preparing equipment, organizing transportation, maintaining gardens, cleaning fish, packaging produce, and coordinating distribution.

These responsibilities require physical effort, attention to food handling, and the ability to adapt to weather, seasonal conditions, and operational challenges.

I want to recognize the dedication of our Food Security staff and the many community members who contribute their time and effort.

Their willingness to participate helps us extend our reach and strengthens the relationship between the Division and the people we serve.

Community participation is particularly meaningful because food security cannot be achieved through government programs alone.

> ***"Thanks for all that you do for the elders and members of this community"***
>
> — Matthew Hill, Gitxaała community member

It depends on cooperation, the sharing of knowledge, and the willingness of people to contribute toward a common goal.

For our team, this is one of the most rewarding aspects of the work.

Working Together Across Gitxaała Nation

Our Division benefits from partnerships with several departments and organizations.
Working under Public Works allows us to coordinate on matters involving equipment, infrastructure, maintenance, and operational planning.

We have also collaborated with the Health Department, Language and Culture, and the Gitxaała Territorial Management Agency's Guardian Program.

The Guardians have contributed to food fishing activities, while other departments have supported coordination, community events, and the planning of food-related initiatives.

We have also worked with the Continuous Learning Centre on training and program development opportunities. These relationships are important because food security involves many different responsibilities.

Marine harvesting requires vessels, equipment, and experienced workers. Gardening requires land preparation, tools, and maintenance. Food distribution requires organization, transportation, and appropriate handling.

Developing the necessary facilities and skills also requires coordination between departments and support from leadership. By working together, we are better positioned to address these responsibilities and make effective use of available resources.



Developing a Stronger Foundation for Food Security

An important part of our work involves identifying the infrastructure and resources needed to support food harvesting, growing, preparation, storage, and distribution.
Building a sustainable food security program requires appropriate facilities, reliable equipment, adequate staffing, and consistent operational support.

Our division has been involved in planning for community food infrastructure, including facilities intended to support food preparation, preservation, gardening, and distribution. These efforts are part of a broader approach to strengthening local capacity rather than depending entirely on outside food supplies.

We also recognize that developing infrastructure is only one part of the challenge. Facilities require ongoing maintenance, appropriate operating procedures, qualified employees, and sufficient resources to remain useful over time. For that reason, our planning must consider the long-term responsibilities associated with operating and maintaining food security programs.

Managing Resources and Improving Accountability

The Food Security Division carries out a broad range of activities, many of which require significant coordination and operational support.
Gardening, marine harvesting, transportation, food handling, and distribution all involve costs that must be managed carefully.

Maintaining appropriate staffing and access to equipment is essential to ensuring that these activities can be undertaken safely and effectively.

Our division has also identified the importance of stronger work planning, activity reporting, and financial coordination.

Maintaining clear records of harvesting, production, distribution, and expenditures helps us understand what has been accomplished and where additional resources may be required.

It also supports accountability by allowing us to explain how programs are operating and how they benefit citizens.

As we assess the needs of the Division, sustainable operating resources remain an important consideration. Food security requires ongoing work and cannot depend solely on one-time projects or short-term funding. Strengthening the systems that support our staff and operations is therefore an important part of developing reliable services.

Community Encouragement Makes a Difference

One of the things I appreciate most is the support our team receives from Gitxaała community members.

When people take the time to acknowledge the food being harvested and distributed or express appreciation for the work being undertaken, it means a great deal to our employees. Those expressions of support remind us that our efforts have a direct impact on people's lives. They also encourage us to continue improving our programs and finding ways to respond to community needs.

We understand that food security is a shared responsibility, and we are grateful for the cooperation of citizens, other departments, harvesters, and community volunteers. Their participation contributes to the success of the work and helps strengthen the connections between food production, traditional harvesting, and community well-being.

A Shared Commitment to Community Well-Being

The accomplishments of the Food Security Division reflect the dedication of our staff and the contributions of people across Gitxaała Nation.
From the work undertaken in the gardens to harvesting foods from the ocean and organizing distribution, our efforts are directed toward improving access to nutritious food and strengthening community food security.

We recognize that challenges remain, particularly in developing reliable operational resources and maintaining the infrastructure needed for long-term sustainability. However, the work undertaken during this reporting year has reinforced the importance of cooperation, careful planning, and community participation.

Aama Didüüls – The Good Life reminds us that access to healthy food is an important part of community well-being and that the sharing of food is also an expression of care and responsibility. I want to thank our employees, partner departments, community members, and everyone who has supported the Food Security Division. My staff and I are extremely grateful for the words of encouragement and appreciation we receive from citizens. Those words inspire us to continue doing the work we do.

Our commitment remains focused on supporting food security initiatives that respect Gitxaała's relationship with the land and sea while contributing to a healthier and more sustainable future for the Nation.

Caring for Our People: Strengthening Families and Building Community

Supporting Gitxaała Citizens Through Family Services, Youth Programs and Community Care

Gitxaała Nation | Social Development Department
Sekwun Ahenakew | Director of Health & Social Development
Keith Innes | Manager of Social Development and Band Representative/Social Worker





Supporting Our People and Families

The strength of Gitxaała Nation is reflected in how we care for one another, support our families and maintain the relationships that connect us as a community. Social Development plays an important role in that responsibility. Our work reaches across generations, from supporting children and youth to assisting families navigating difficult circumstances and helping citizens access essential services.

Throughout the 2025–2026 reporting year, our department continued delivering income assistance, child and family services, family advocacy, youth programming and community support. Much of this work takes place through everyday conversations, administrative assistance, advocacy and the relationships our employees develop with the people they serve.

For citizens living in Lax Klan, the challenges of a remote coastal community can make accessing services more complicated. Transportation, limited local resources and the need to work with provincial and federal agencies can create barriers for individuals and families. Our responsibility is to help citizens navigate those challenges while ensuring they are treated with dignity, respect and compassion.

The AGM theme, Aama Didüüls - A Good Life, reflects the purpose of our work. A good life includes feeling safe, having access to support, maintaining strong family connections and knowing that our community cares for one another.

A New Home for Community Services: The Light House

One of the year's significant accomplishments was the official opening of the Light House on May 21, 2025. The opening brought community members together for a blessing, refreshments and the participation of the Gitxaała Drummers and Dancers. The celebration continued with a feast at the William Shaw Memorial Gym. It was a meaningful occasion that marked an important investment in services for our people.

The Light House provides office space for Social Development employees and a welcoming location where citizens can access assistance. It also offers dedicated space for Youth Workers to deliver scheduled activities, giving children and young people opportunities to participate in recreation, mentorship and community programming.

Having an appropriate facility makes a difference in how services are delivered. It provides employees with a more suitable working environment while creating a place where community members can seek support, ask questions and connect with available resources.

The Light House became especially important during the January 2026 power outage, when it was made available as a warming centre for community members requiring assistance. Its value extends beyond the building itself. It represents a commitment to strengthening the services and relationships that support Gitxaała families.

Recognizing Leadership and Continuity

The reporting year also included changes in departmental leadership.
During this period, Emma Moody, in addition to her responsibilities as Income Assistance Clerk, was tasked with serving as Acting Social Development Manager. Emma took on these additional responsibilities while continuing her work supporting citizens through the Income Assistance Program. Her contribution helped maintain departmental operations and services during a period of transition. We recognize her willingness to take on this responsibility and her commitment to the people who rely on these services.

Keith Innes, Manager of Social Development and Band Representative/Social Worker, provides leadership and advocacy in child and family service matters, helping ensure that Gitxaała perspectives and family relationships are represented when important decisions are being made.

On February 17, 2026, Sekwun Ahenakew assumed the role of Director of Health & Social Development, providing oversight of both departments. This transition created opportunities to review administrative processes, improve communication and strengthen coordination between programs.

The dedication of employees who maintained services throughout the year reflects the importance of continuity, teamwork and shared responsibility.

Gitxaała Strong: Caring for One Another in Times of Need

In January 2026, a significant power outage during severe winter conditions created difficult circumstances for households throughout Lax Klan.
With electricity disrupted, the safety of Elders, families with young children and citizens requiring additional assistance became a priority. Social Development worked alongside Health, Public Works, Emergency Management, Housing, Security and community volunteers to coordinate support. Through these collective efforts, generators, fuel, heaters and firewood were made available to households requiring assistance.

The Light House served as a warming centre, while Income Assistance staff worked with the Loaf of Bread Café to help arrange essential food supplies. Community volunteers stepped forward to check on Elders and families with babies. Others helped harvest and distribute firewood.

These actions demonstrated something important about Gitxaała Nation: When difficult circumstances arise, our people come together.

We extend our appreciation to the employees, volunteers and community members who gave their time, resources and energy to support their neighbours.

The outage also reinforced the need for continued improvements in emergency preparedness, communication and access to essential supplies. The experience will help inform future planning and strengthen cooperation between departments.

Gitxaała Strong is more than a phrase. It is reflected in the compassion, generosity and responsibility our people show when our community needs them.

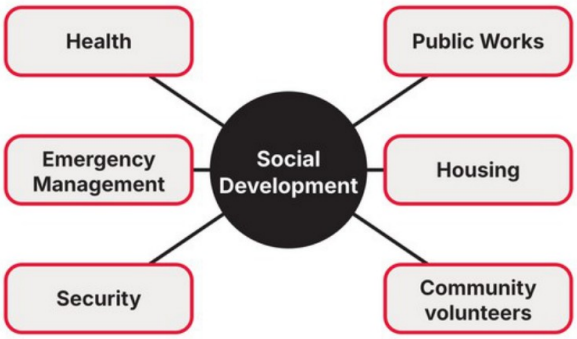
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Gitxaała Strong

Caring for One Another in Times of Need

JANUARY 2026

A significant power outage during severe winter conditions. The safety of Elders and families with young children became a priority.



Generators, fuel, heaters and firewood were made available to households requiring assistance.

When difficult circumstances arise, our people come together.
Social Development Department, Gitxaała Nation

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Caring for Our People

APRIL 1, 2025 – MARCH 31, 2026

Our department continued delivering Income Assistance, child and family services, family advocacy, youth programming and community support.

May 21, 2025 — **Light House officially opens**
Blessing, Gitxaała Drummers and Dancers, and a feast

January 2026 — **A warming centre**
Made available during the power outage for community members requiring assistance

February 17, 2026 — **New Director**
Sekwun Ahenakew assumed the role of Director of Health & Social Development

It is about strengthening relationships, supporting families and ensuring our people know they belong.
Social Development Department, Gitxaała Nation

Providing Essential Financial Assistance

Income Assistance remains one of our department's core responsibilities. For individuals and families experiencing financial hardship, reliable assistance can provide stability and help meet essential living expenses. Our employees help citizens navigate eligibility requirements, complete applications, understand available benefits and connect with additional resources.

This work requires confidentiality, patience and an understanding of the circumstances facing each individual. Emma Moody contributed to the delivery of these services throughout the reporting year while also undertaking her Acting Social Development Manager responsibilities.

Financial hardship is often connected to broader challenges. Limited employment opportunities, transportation difficulties, family responsibilities and the availability of specialized services can all affect a household's well-being. Our department therefore works to connect citizens with supports that extend beyond financial assistance.

Through relationships with organizations such as the Northern First Nations Alliance and Red Road Recovery, employees have helped individuals explore treatment and recovery opportunities.

We also recognize the importance of education, skills development and employment in supporting longer-term financial stability. Training opportunities developed through partners such as Tri-Corp have helped citizens build skills and explore employment pathways.

Moving forward, strengthening the connections between Income Assistance, education, employment training and community services will remain an important priority.

Standing Alongside Gitxaała Children and Families

Supporting children and families is among our most significant responsibilities. Families involved in child welfare matters often face complex processes, difficult decisions and circumstances that can have lasting consequences. Our role includes providing advocacy, guidance and support while helping ensure that Gitxaała cultural identity, family relationships and community connections are considered.

Keith Innes, as Manager of Social Development and Band Representative/Social Worker, plays an important role in representing Gitxaała interests and advocating for families. The department works with the Ministry of Children and Family Development throughout British Columbia and the Northwest Inter-Nation Family and Community Services Society. These relationships help ensure that Gitxaała families have opportunities to be heard and that decisions affecting children take account of their circumstances and cultural connections.

Wendy Nelson, Family Support Worker, contributes through outreach, family advocacy and assistance to households requiring additional support. This work is often sensitive and demanding. It requires discretion, clear communication and a strong understanding of the relationships connecting children to their families, extended relatives and Nation.

We recognize that maintaining these connections is especially important when children are receiving services or living outside their home community. Our commitment is to support families, strengthen advocacy and ensure that the well-being of Gitxaała children remains central to our work.

Advancing Our Responsibility for Child and Family Services

Gitxaała Nation continues working toward greater jurisdiction over child and family services under federal legislation commonly known as Bill C-92. This initiative represents an important opportunity to strengthen our ability to make decisions concerning our children and families in ways that reflect Gitxaała values, laws, culture and traditional responsibilities.

"Our strength as a Nation is found in how we care for one another. Every child deserves to feel connected, every family deserves to be heard, and every person deserves to know they belong. Through compassion, cultural responsibility and working together, we continue building a stronger future for Gitxaała."

— Gitxaała Social Development Department

For generations, our families and communities have carried responsibilities for raising, protecting and caring for children. Our work toward jurisdiction is about strengthening the Nation's authority to determine how those responsibilities are reflected in contemporary child and family services. Kathleen Bennett, Project Lead, is coordinating work associated with the Nation's jurisdictional planning process.

Community participation is an important part of this initiative. Hereditary leaders, matriarchs and community representatives identified in the departmental material include Merle Bolton, Matthew Hill, Emma Moody, Clifford White, Margaret Hill and Ritchie Tolmie. Their knowledge and perspectives are valuable in shaping an approach grounded in Gitxaała identity, relationships and responsibilities.

Advancing jurisdiction involves significant planning, including governance structures, legislation, policies, service delivery and the administrative resources required for implementation. It is a long-term undertaking that must be informed by community engagement and the direction of Gitxaała leadership.

As this work continues, Social Development will contribute its experience supporting children and families to help identify service needs and inform future planning. The well-being of Gitxaała children remains at the heart of this important initiative.

Creating Opportunities for Our Youth

Our children and youth need opportunities to develop confidence, build friendships, learn new skills and feel connected to their community. The Youth Empowerment Program contributes to these goals through recreation, mentorship and community activities. Lillian Aster and Alistair Aster, Youth Workers, have supported programming that creates welcoming spaces for young people to participate and develop positive relationships.

Activities described in the departmental report include Youth Gym Night, community sports, soccer and seasonal gatherings. These activities provide more than recreation. They offer opportunities for teamwork, communication, personal development and relationships with supportive adults. Through regular interaction with young people, our Youth Workers help encourage participation, recognize individual strengths and create a sense of belonging.

We also believe that youth should have opportunities to express their ideas and contribute to community life. Encouraging young people's involvement helps develop confidence and provides a foundation for future leadership.

Investing in our children and youth is an investment in the future of Gitxaała Nation.

Bringing Community and Culture Together

Social Development contributes to community gatherings and cultural activities that bring citizens together across generations. Throughout the reporting year, employees worked alongside other departments, Elders, cultural knowledge holders and community volunteers to support opportunities for families and youth to participate in community life.

These efforts included contributions to Every Child Matters activities and hands-on cultural learning opportunities such as rattle-making. Such experiences help children and youth connect with the knowledge and teachings carried by their community.

In February 2026, Social Development also collaborated with Health on Pink Shirt Day activities, encouraging kindness, respect and positive relationships.

Our employees supported gatherings through organization, food preparation and coordination with other departments. These contributions may not always be reflected in program statistics, but they help strengthen the relationships that connect our people.

Culture, community participation and social well-being are closely related. When people come together to share knowledge, support one another and celebrate their identity, they help create the conditions for a stronger community.

Strengthening Our Department for the Future

Delivering effective services requires clear policies, reliable communication, appropriate staffing and responsible financial management. During the reporting year, the department experienced challenges involving staffing capacity, communication and access to timely financial information. These issues can affect program planning, service coordination and employees' ability to respond to emerging needs.

The department continued using meetings, working discussions and regular communication to coordinate services and address operational matters. There is more work to do. Improved administrative procedures, clearer staff responsibilities and consistent reporting practices will help strengthen accountability and service delivery. Employees involved in child and family matters also face demands outside regular working hours. These responsibilities require appropriate support and realistic workload planning.

As we move forward, strengthening communication with Finance and Administration, improving documentation and supporting employees will remain important priorities. Our responsibility is not only to provide services, but to ensure that the systems supporting those services are sustainable and accountable to Gitxaała citizens.

Looking Ahead: Stronger Families, Stronger Services

As we move into 2026–2027, we remain committed to strengthening the services that support Gitxaała children, families and community members.

Advancing child and family jurisdiction will continue to be an important long-term priority. We will also maintain our focus on family advocacy, Income Assistance, youth programming and community support.

Working with Housing, Health and other departments, Social Development will continue exploring opportunities associated with the First Nations Child and Family Housing Initiative to help address significant housing needs affecting families.

We also want to strengthen youth recreation, cultural learning and mentorship while improving the administrative systems that support our employees.

Clear communication, appropriate resources and coordinated planning will help us provide more consistent services.

Recognizing the People Behind Our Work

The accomplishments described in this report reflect the dedication of the people who serve Gitxaała children, families and citizens.

We recognize Keith Innes for his advocacy and leadership in child and family services and Emma Moody for her work in Income Assistance and her additional responsibilities as Acting Social Development Manager.

We acknowledge Wendy Nelson for her commitment to family outreach and support, and Lillian Aster and Alistair Aster for their work creating meaningful opportunities for children and youth.

We also recognize Kathleen Bennett and the community representatives contributing to child and family jurisdiction planning.

Our sincere appreciation extends to employees across the Nation, Elders, hereditary leaders, cultural knowledge holders and community volunteers.

The commitment demonstrated during the January power outage reminded us of the strength of our community and the importance of caring for one another. Aama Didüüls – A Good Life is about more than delivering programs. It is about strengthening relationships, supporting families and ensuring our people know they belong.

Through compassion, cultural responsibility and working together, we continue building a stronger future for Gitxaała.

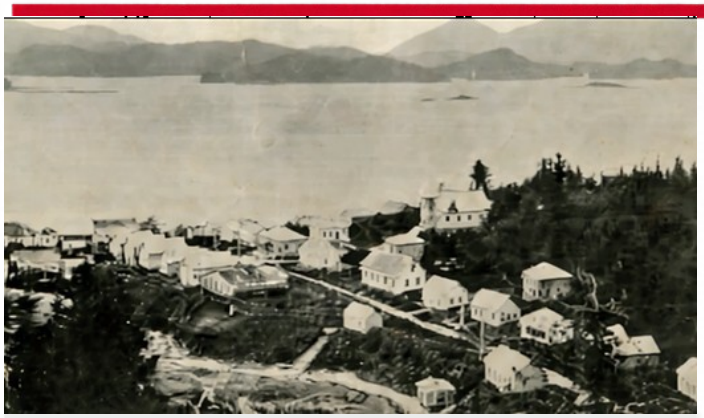
Social Development Department

Gitxaała Nation

Caring for Our Community: Strengthening Health Services and Supporting Families

Access to Care, Community Wellness and a Healthier Future

Gitxaała Nation | Health Department
Roxanne Aster | Acting Health Director, February 17, 2025 - February 17, 2026
Sekwun Ahenakew | Director of Health & Social Development, appointed February 17, 2026





Supporting the Health and Well-Being of Our People

Access to healthcare is an essential part of community well-being. For Gitxaała citizens living in Lax Klan, it requires dedicated employees, strong partnerships and careful coordination of services both within and outside the community.

Healthcare delivery in a remote coastal community presents challenges that are not always experienced in larger centres. Appointments with specialists may require travel, visiting professionals may only be available for limited periods, and weather or transportation disruptions can affect access to treatment. Throughout the 2025–2026 reporting year, our Health Department continued providing essential services to citizens and families while navigating these realities.

Our programs supported maternal and child health, home and community care, medical travel, community wellness and access to visiting healthcare professionals.

Behind every service is a team of employees who help arrange appointments, coordinate referrals, communicate with families and ensure that available resources reach the people who need them.

This year's AGM theme, Aama Didüüls – A Good Life, reflects the importance of health in our daily lives.

Good health is connected to independence, family relationships, emotional well-being and access to appropriate care. Our responsibility is to strengthen the services that help Gitxaała citizens maintain their health and well-being throughout their lives.

Leadership and Continuity of Health Services

The reporting year included an important transition in departmental leadership.

Roxanne Aster served as Acting Health Director from February 17, 2025, to February 17, 2026, overseeing the administrative and operational responsibilities. Necessary to maintain Health Department services. Her work included staff scheduling, payroll approvals, staffing matters, contracts, invoices, financial administration and coordination with external service providers.

Roxanne also worked closely with Human Resources, Finance, Administration and funding partners to ensure that essential departmental functions continued. Much of this work happens behind the scenes, but it is fundamental to reliable healthcare delivery.

On February 17, 2026, Sekwun Ahenakew assumed the role of Director of Health & Social Development. This leadership transition provided an opportunity to review existing administrative systems and identify ways to strengthen communication, documentation, cross-training and continuity.

We recognize Roxanne's contribution in maintaining services throughout most of the reporting year and the commitment of Health Department employees who continued serving citizens during this period.

Connecting Citizens With Health Services

The Community Health Representative Program plays an important role in connecting Gitxaała citizens with healthcare professionals, referrals and community wellness resources.

Corinna Innes, Community Health Representative, provided frontline assistance to citizens and families throughout the reporting year. Her work included helping coordinate appointments and visits involving occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, physiotherapists, dental screening providers, home care personnel and foot care professionals. Arranging these services requires considerable coordination.

Staff must communicate with families, schedule appointments, organize referrals, help arrange travel and accommodations where required, and follow up with service providers. For citizens navigating multiple appointments or complex health concerns, having a familiar community contact can make a meaningful difference.

The Community Health Representative Program also supported Elders and families seeking information, therapy services and wellness resources. Working alongside the school, Social Development and other Health programs, Corinna contributed to activities that support student wellness, family advocacy and community health. These relationships help connect citizens with services while recognizing their individual needs and circumstances.

Supporting Mothers, Infants and Young Families

The Maternal Child Health Program provides important support to expectant parents, infants, young children and families. Its work focuses on nutrition, practical family resources, health education and connections to appropriate care.

In November 2025, Jessica Bolton joined the Gitxaała Health Station as Maternal Child Health Worker, bringing six years of experience from Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve. Her background in early childhood programming, family engagement, culturally grounded learning and nutrition has contributed to the development of Maternal Child Health services.

During the reporting year, the program supported monthly nutrition boxes intended to improve access to nutritious food for participating families.

Jessica also worked toward strengthening the availability of essential infant and family supplies. This included planning storage for items such as diapers, wipes, infant formula and other necessities that may be required when families face unexpected circumstances.

The program began developing additional professional connections through maternal health and pregnancy outreach organizations, including the BC Association of Pregnancy Outreach Programs. These relationships provide opportunities for training, educational resources and future program development.

As Maternal Child Health continues growing, our priority is to provide practical support that responds to the needs of Gitxaała parents and children while encouraging healthy beginnings for future generations.

Caring for Our Elders and Supporting Independence

Supporting Elders and other citizens who require assistance at home is an important responsibility of our Health Department. Our Home and Community Care program brings together nursing assistance, practical in-home support, referrals and collaboration with visiting healthcare professionals.

During the reporting year, Katherine Lake, Contract Home Care Nurse, contributed to nursing services, while Ruby Nelson, Homemaker, provided support through the Homemaker component of the program. Their work helped support citizens requiring assistance to remain safe, comfortable and connected to their community. Home and Community Care staff coordinated home visits, appointments, referrals and follow-up care.

The department also worked with Northern Therapy Services to address occupational therapy and mobility needs. This included helping arrange equipment assessments and access to mobility aids such as walkers, along with repairs, replacements and communication with suppliers. These services can have a significant impact on an individual's ability to manage everyday activities and maintain independence.

"It was that experience that inspired me to want to work here. I saw what it truly means to be Gitxaała Strong."

— Sekwun Ahenakew, Director of Health & Social Development

The program also supported opportunities for Elders to gather. Regular Elder Breakfasts provided nutritious meals, conversation and social connection. These gatherings help strengthen relationships and reduce isolation, reminding us that health is not only about clinical care.

Professional development in home care, diabetes, emergency preparedness and community wellness remained an important part of strengthening staff capacity.

Staff also explored opportunities involving regional Elder gatherings and an Elder Portrait Project intended to honour Gitxaała Elders.

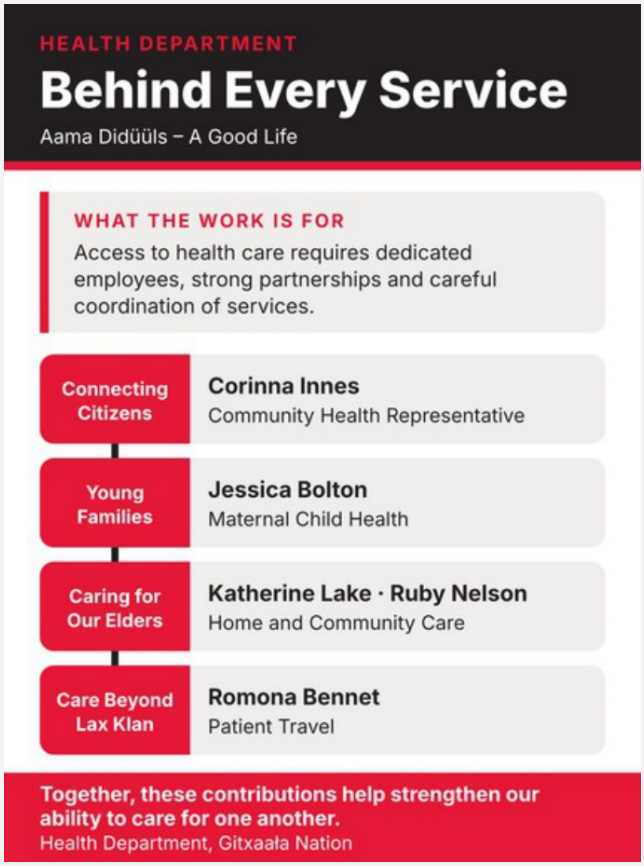
We recognize the contributions of Katherine, Ruby and the broader Home and Community Care team in supporting the well-being of our Elders and other citizens requiring assistance.

Helping Citizens Access Care Beyond Lax Klan

Medical travel remains essential for citizens requiring appointments, diagnostic services, specialist consultations and treatments that are not available locally. Travel from Lax Klan may involve several connections, requiring careful planning around appointment times, transportation, accommodation and eligibility requirements. Romona Bennet contributed to the Patient Travel program during the reporting year.

The program assisted citizens with travel arrangements, accommodations, meal-related supports, reimbursement requests and the documentation required to access medically necessary travel benefits. Depending on the journey, these arrangements may involve ferries, taxis, hotels and communication with multiple healthcare providers.

For individuals attending repeated appointments or receiving ongoing treatment, medical travel can become particularly demanding. Patient Travel staff work alongside the Community Health Representative Program and other Health personnel to coordinate appointments and related information.



We recognize that cancellations, weather disruptions and transportation challenges can create additional stress for people already managing health concerns. Improving communication and the reliability of travel arrangements will remain important priorities.

We will also continue identifying opportunities to bring appropriate services into the community, where practical, to reduce the need for citizens to travel.

Gitxaała Strong: Recognizing Our First Responders and ASIST Team

Community safety depends not only on formal services, but also on the willingness of people to step forward when others need help. The Health Department extends its appreciation to the men and women serving on the First Responders and ASIST teams, whose dedication contributes to community safety and well-being.

On January 7, 2026, Roxanne Aster and the Health Department hosted an appreciation luncheon honouring the First Responders. The gathering provided an opportunity to recognize their service and thank them for the important role they play in caring for Gitxaała citizens.

Later that month, a major power outage tested the community's ability to respond to difficult circumstances. As severe winter conditions disrupted electrical service, volunteers stepped forward to help protect the well-being of their neighbours. They checked on Elders, visited families with babies and offered assistance to people requiring additional support. Their actions reflected the compassion, responsibility and strong community relationships that help sustain Gitxaała Nation.

In a remote community, local knowledge and the willingness of people to respond can make a significant difference during emergencies. The Health Department values its relationships with the First Responders, ASIST Team and community volunteers. We recognize the time, energy and dedication these individuals contribute to the safety and well-being of others.

Gitxaała Strong! Their actions remind us that caring for one another is one of our greatest strengths.



Partnerships That Strengthen Access to Care

Providing healthcare services in Lax Klan requires collaboration with organizations and professionals both within and outside the Nation. Throughout the reporting year, the Health Department worked with Northern Health, the First Nations Health Authority, Northern Therapy Services, BC Children's Hospital and the Brighter Smiles Dental Program. These relationships helped support assessments, referrals, specialist appointments, care planning, medical equipment and health education. Visiting physicians, pharmacists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech-language pathologists, dental providers and foot care professionals also contributed important services.

Within Gitxaała Nation, Health worked alongside Social Development, Family Support, Income Assistance, Emergency Response, Human Resources, Finance and Administration. These partnerships are important because a citizen's health needs may involve several departments or providers at once. A family may require medical travel, specialized appointments and assistance accessing community resources. An Elder may need home care, mobility equipment and support coordinating visiting services. Clear communication and cooperation help us respond more effectively to these needs.

Strengthening these relationships will remain a priority as we continue improving access to care.

Addressing Challenges and Strengthening Accountability

Delivering healthcare in a remote coastal community requires careful planning and responsible management of limited resources. Demand for specialist services can exceed the availability of appointments, particularly when visiting professionals are only in the community for short periods. Occupational therapy, foot care, chronic disease services, mobility supports and home visits remain important areas requiring continued attention.

Transportation also presents challenges for citizens travelling outside the community and for healthcare professionals travelling into Lax Klan. Weather disruptions, cancellations and limited transportation options can affect appointments and continuity of care.

Alongside these service challenges, our department continues strengthening its administrative and reporting systems. Consistent documentation, clear responsibilities and staff cross-training can improve continuity during changes in staffing or leadership.

The Health Department also administers several funding streams supporting Health Administration, community health services, Patient Travel, Maternal Child Health, Home and Community Care and other health initiatives. Each program carries responsibilities for eligible expenditures, financial management and reporting.

Throughout the year, Health Administration worked with Finance, funders and service providers to manage contracts, invoices and other financial responsibilities. There are opportunities to improve how program activity and expenditures are documented and reported. More consistent records of appointments, referrals, home visits and program participation will help identify service gaps and demonstrate how resources benefit citizens. Strengthening financial monitoring and program reporting is an important part of maintaining accountability to Gitxaała leadership and citizens.

Looking Ahead: A Stronger Health Department

As we move into 2026–2027, our priorities will remain focused on improving access to care, strengthening services for Elders and families, and supporting the employees who deliver those services.

We want to make effective use of visiting healthcare professionals, improve appointment coordination and continue identifying opportunities to provide appropriate services closer to home.

Patient Travel will remain an important part of healthcare access for citizens requiring treatment outside the community.

We will also continue strengthening Home and Community Care through occupational therapy, mobility supports, foot care and services for Elders.

Maternal Child Health will build upon its nutrition initiatives, infant and family resources and relationships with professional support networks.

Within Health Administration, clearer documentation, consistent reporting, financial monitoring, cross-training and operational planning will help strengthen continuity and accountability. Our goal is to ensure that the department has the people, partnerships and systems required to respond to the changing needs of our community.

Recognizing the People Behind Our Health Services

The work described in this report reflects the commitment of those who provide, organize and support healthcare services for Gitxaała citizens.

We recognize Roxanne Aster for her leadership during most of the reporting year and Corinna Innes for her work connecting citizens with healthcare professionals and services.

We acknowledge Jessica Bolton for her contribution to Maternal Child Health, Katherine Lake for Home Care Nursing, Ruby Nelson for Homemaker services and Romona Bennet for Patient Travel.

Our appreciation also extends to other Health employees, administrative staff, visiting healthcare professionals and partner organizations. We offer particular thanks to the First Responders, ASIST Team members and community volunteers who contribute to the safety and well-being of our people. Much of their work takes place quietly, through appointments, referrals, home visits, travel arrangements and acts of compassion. Together, these contributions help strengthen our ability to care for one another.

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life reminds us that community wellness involves physical, emotional and social well-being, strong family relationships and the ability to live with dignity and support. Guided by these values, the Health Department will continue working to strengthen services and meet the needs of Gitxaała citizens.

A Personal Reflection: Gitxaała Strong

When I first visited Gitxaała, coming from the Prairies, I experienced firsthand the strength of this community during a major power outage.

I watched people come together to check on Elders, support families with young children and care for one another. The compassion, generosity and sense of responsibility I witnessed left a lasting impression on me.

It was that experience that inspired me to want to work here.

I saw what it truly means to be Gitxaała Strong.

Sekwun Ahenakew

Director of Health & Social Development

Gitxaała Nation

Protecting Our Territory, Strengthening Our Future

Stewardship, Sovereignty and Responsibility to Future Generations
Gitxaała Territorial Management Agency (GTMA)
James Herbert | Acting Director during the Reporting Period
Clarence Nelson | Director





The lands and waters of Gitxaała Nation have sustained its people for countless generations. They are fundamental to the Nation's identity, culture, economy, and future. Protecting these territories requires constant attention, careful stewardship, and a commitment to ensuring that Gitxaała's rights, knowledge, and responsibilities remain central to decisions affecting its natural environment.

The Gitxaała Territorial Management Agency (GTMA) plays an important role in carrying out this responsibility. Through territorial planning, marine protection, environmental assessments, fisheries monitoring, regulatory processes, and community engagement, the agency works to protect Gitxaała's lands and waters while supporting the Nation's long-term vision for self-determination and sustainability.

This year's Annual General Meeting theme, Aama Didüüls – The Good Life, reflects the close relationship between environmental stewardship and community well-being. Healthy lands and waters support traditional harvesting, cultural practices, economic opportunities, and the ability of future generations to maintain their connection to the territory.

The 2025-2026 reporting year was also a period of leadership transition for GTMA. James Herbert served as Acting Director for a substantial portion of the year, providing leadership and continuity while the agency advanced its ongoing responsibilities and major initiatives. More recently, Clarence Nelson assumed the position of Director, bringing experience in Indigenous governance and government relations to support the agency's continued development.

The accomplishments presented in this report reflect the collective efforts of GTMA's staff, the leadership provided throughout this transition, and the direction of Gitxaała's elected and hereditary leadership.

With a team of 16 staff members, GTMA continued advancing important work in marine conservation, territorial monitoring, environmental assessments, regulatory oversight, and community engagement. The agency also strengthened its organizational capacity while responding to increasing development pressures throughout Gitxaała territory.

Advancing Marine Conservation and Indigenous Stewardship

One of the most significant milestones highlighted in this year's report was the establishment of a 6,700-square-kilometre National Marine Conservation Area Reserve in the Great Bear Sea.

Developed through a partnership involving Gitxaała, five other Nations, and the federal and provincial governments, this initiative represents an important advancement in marine conservation and Indigenous stewardship.

Guided by Gitxaała's elected and hereditary leadership, the Nation also declared the area within its territory an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area.

This declaration reflects Gitxaała's longstanding responsibilities to its territory and its commitment to ensuring that marine environments are protected for future generations.

The work involved in establishing protected areas requires years of planning, research, consultation, technical assessment, and government-to-government engagement. It also requires cooperation among participating Nations while respecting their individual rights, interests, and responsibilities.

For GTMA, the establishment of the conservation area represents an important milestone in a much longer process.

Conservation does not end with a designation. Effective protection requires ongoing monitoring, management, appropriate resources, and the continued involvement of Indigenous governments in decisions affecting their territories.

Moving forward, GTMA's responsibilities will include supporting the implementation of conservation measures and ensuring that the Nation has the technical information and capacity needed to participate meaningfully in the management of its marine environment.

Protecting Gitxaała's Interests in Marine Development

Marine transportation and industrial development continue to present important considerations for Gitxaała Nation.
Throughout the reporting period, GTMA's regulatory team advanced work examining the potential impacts of marine shipping activities in and around Prince Rupert Harbour.

A pilot assessment of marine shipping was completed, providing information intended to support future mitigation and management measures.

Marine shipping activities can affect sensitive marine environments, fisheries, wildlife, and areas of cultural and economic importance to coastal communities.

Understanding these potential impacts is essential to ensuring that Gitxaała's interests are considered in regulatory decisions and that appropriate measures are developed to address environmental concerns.

The findings from the pilot assessment were shared with citizens during community meetings in Prince Rupert and Lax Klan. The report was also made available through GTMA's Prince Rupert office and the Band Office, providing opportunities for citizens to review the information.

Sharing research and assessment findings with the community is an important part of GTMA's responsibility. The information gathered through technical studies must remain accessible and useful to the Nation and its citizens. As development activity continues throughout the region, GTMA will maintain its focus on reviewing proposals, identifying potential impacts, and supporting Gitxaała's participation in decisions affecting its territory.

Maintaining a Presence Throughout the Territory

A significant part of GTMA's work takes place on the lands and waters through the activities of its Fisheries and Guardian teams.

These teams conduct regular monitoring, research, and territorial patrols to observe environmental conditions, document changes, and support the protection of important marine resources.

During the reporting period, GTMA reported conducting more than 250 patrols throughout Gitxaała's marine territory. These activities included marine mammal observations involving seals and sea lions, creek walks, herring monitoring, and continued assessment of green crab populations along the coast.

Monitoring invasive green crabs is particularly important as their increasing presence raises concerns about potential effects on coastal ecosystems. Regular monitoring provides information about their distribution and supports future management decisions.

GTMA also introduced a newly purchased drone to strengthen data collection and assist with emergency-response planning. The addition of this technology provides another tool for observing environmental conditions, documenting changes, and supporting field operations.

Scientific research, technical monitoring, and traditional knowledge all contribute to a more complete understanding of the territory and the challenges it faces.

The information gathered through these activities helps GTMA respond to emerging concerns and provides evidence to support the Nation's stewardship and regulatory priorities.

Maintaining a regular presence throughout a large marine territory requires trained personnel, vessels, fuel, equipment, maintenance, and substantial logistical coordination.

The work of GTMA's field teams is essential to ensuring that environmental monitoring continues and that Gitxaała remains informed about activities affecting its lands and waters.

Strengthening Gitxaała's Role in Environmental Decision-Making

GTMA's work also extends to regulatory processes, environmental assessments, research initiatives, and government-to-government discussions.

As industrial development and government initiatives continue across the region, the agency must review proposals, examine potential impacts, and provide technical information to support Gitxaała's interests.

The scale of this work is reflected in GTMA's reported activities. During the reporting period, the agency processed more than 150 permits and licences through its Referral Portal, with four assessments underway involving complex projects.

GTMA staff also reported participating in more than 1,000 meetings at regional, provincial, and federal tables. These meetings reflect the extensive engagement required to address regulatory matters, environmental initiatives, and government processes affecting the Nation.

The agency supported 18 research and monitoring programs examining subjects that included fish and other species, water, traditional knowledge, and climate change.

Eight research papers were also presented at international conferences, contributing to broader discussions and knowledge-sharing concerning environmental management.

These activities require technical expertise, consistent coordination, and careful assessment of information.

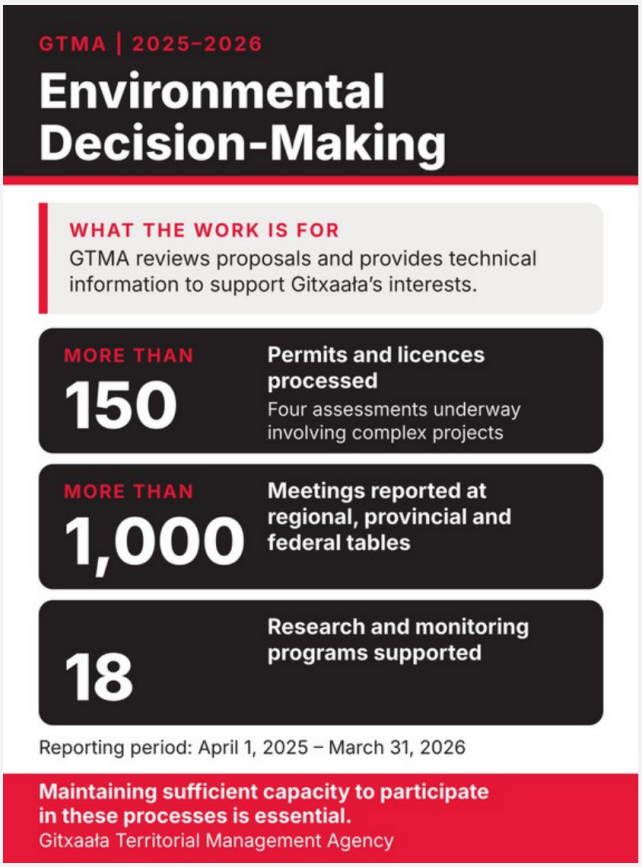
They also demonstrate the growing demands placed upon the agency as governments and industry pursue initiatives that may affect Gitxaała territory. Maintaining sufficient capacity to participate in these processes is essential.

GTMA must continue strengthening its ability to provide timely assessments, review proposals, support informed decision-making, and ensure that Gitxaała's rights and interests are appropriately represented.

Creating Opportunities for the Next Generation

Developing future environmental leaders is an important part of building long-term stewardship capacity.

During the summer, GTMA welcomed Ari Wilson as a student employee before she began her first year studying natural resources at the University of British Columbia. With aspirations of becoming a biologist, Ari gained practical experience across several areas of the agency, including planning, regulatory work, field activities, and administration.



Her work included crab surveys, kelp mapping, emergency-response planning, salmon surveys, and herring roe-on-kelp distribution. These opportunities allowed her to participate directly in environmental work while developing practical skills and gaining a better understanding of the different responsibilities involved in territorial management.

Ari also reflected on how the experience helped her become more confident communicating and working with others.

Her experience highlights the value of providing meaningful opportunities for young people to participate in environmental stewardship.

Technical knowledge is important, but so are teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and the ability to build relationships. By providing opportunities for young people to work alongside experienced staff, GTMA can contribute to developing future professionals who may pursue careers in environmental science, fisheries, research, conservation, and resource management.

The agency remains committed to supporting youth development and strengthening opportunities for Gitxaała citizens to gain experience in work connected to the Nation's lands and waters.

Working Together to Support the Nation's Priorities

Effective territorial management requires collaboration across Gitxaała Nation's departments, agencies, and community programs. Throughout the reporting period, GTMA continued participating in initiatives that connected environmental stewardship with community development, health, culture, education, and economic opportunities.

GTMA staff supported the Nation's Bill C-92 initiative by designing a program that brought Gitxaała youth onto the lands and waters. The program encouraged respect, stewardship, and belonging while helping young people strengthen their relationship with the territory.

This work was presented during the community visioning conference and demonstrated how environmental programs can contribute to broader discussions concerning children, families, and community well-being.

GTMA also continued participating in the development of the Nation's Community Development Plan.

Through its Climate Action program, the agency partnered with Gitxaała Enterprises Corporation to organize a province-wide First Nations Leadership Conference focused on transformative change and clean energy.

The conference brought together First Nations representatives, governments, environmental organizations, and industry participants at the Crest Convention Centre.

Through presentations, panel discussions, and shared experiences, participants explored approaches to sustainable development and economic opportunities.

The event provided opportunities for collaboration, relationship-building, and discussions about balancing economic development with environmental responsibilities.

GTMA's Guardian team also continued supporting Gitxaała Nation's Food Security program through funding partnerships and logistical assistance. This collaboration recognizes the close connection between environmental stewardship, traditional harvesting, and community access to food.

Additional work with the Coast Guard Auxiliary supported safety and training initiatives.

"I feel like this was such an amazing experience, it was a great way for me to start talking to people more instead of just keeping to myself all the time."

— Ari Wilson, GTMA Summer Student

The activities of GTMA and related marine operations were also highlighted through the television programs Ocean Warriors: Mission Ready on APTN and West Harbour Heroes on Crave. These programs provided opportunities for broader audiences to learn about marine operations, environmental stewardship, and the responsibilities involved in working along the coast.

Together, these partnerships demonstrate that territorial management is closely connected to many aspects of the Nation's work.

Strengthening Organizational Capacity and Accountability

As GTMA's responsibilities continue to expand, the agency must also ensure that its internal systems and resources can support the demands being placed upon staff.

One of the significant challenges identified during the reporting period was the increasing volume and complexity of development proposals and government processes. These demands have placed considerable pressure on experienced staff members, who are often required to manage several complex responsibilities simultaneously.

GTMA began addressing these concerns by examining operational procedures, identifying gaps, and determining where additional staff capacity and support were needed. The agency's leadership transition also provided an opportunity to evaluate these requirements.

James Herbert's service as Acting Director contributed to maintaining continuity during a demanding period, while Clarence Nelson's appointment provides an opportunity to build upon the work already undertaken and strengthen the agency's systems for the future.

A second challenge has emerged as the organization has grown.

Communication processes that may have functioned effectively within a smaller team are no longer sufficient for an agency operating across multiple programs and increasingly complex responsibilities.

GTMA has identified a need for clearer internal policies concerning communication, asset use, travel, and project management. Developing these policies will require input from staff and managers, practical testing, and opportunities for review before procedures are finalized.

Strengthening internal communication and accountability will help improve coordination between teams, establish clearer expectations, and ensure that staff have the support needed to carry out their responsibilities.

These organizational improvements may not always be visible to citizens, but they are important to building an agency capable of responding effectively to the Nation's long-term stewardship needs.

Managing Resources and Planning for Sustainability

Field operations and marine patrols represent the largest ongoing operating costs for GTMA.

These activities require vessels, fuel, equipment, maintenance, transportation, and trained staff to carry out monitoring and stewardship work throughout the territory. The agency reports that annual field operating costs are approximately $400,000.

While project funding supports many activities, maintaining sufficient funding for ongoing operations remains a challenge. During the reporting period, increased vessel use, equipment maintenance, and repair costs placed pressure on the agency's budget.

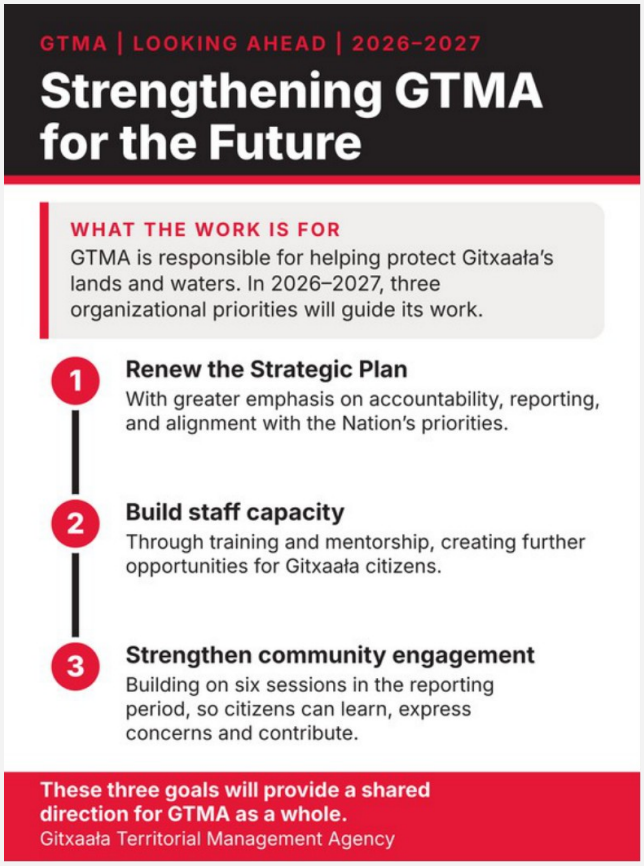
The absence of regular commercial transportation and additional requests for assistance also contributed to increased operational demands.

At the same time, some planned regulatory expenditures were below budget because resource development projects were delayed. These underspends were associated with capacity funding agreements connected to specific projects and may remain unused until those projects proceed or are cancelled.

The agency also identified prior-year funding and anticipated Reconciliation Framework funding as considerations in addressing certain maintenance expenditures.

These circumstances demonstrate the importance of maintaining accurate financial reporting, understanding restrictions attached to different funding sources, and planning for ongoing operational requirements.

Looking ahead, GTMA has identified a need to explore additional sources of sustainable funding, including opportunities associated with benefits agreements.



Protecting a large marine territory requires dependable resources. Long-term sustainability depends not only on securing funding for individual projects, but also on maintaining the staff, equipment, vessels, and systems necessary to carry out ongoing stewardship responsibilities.

Looking Ahead: Strengthening GTMA for the Future

As the agency moves into 2026–2027, three organizational priorities will guide its work.
The first is renewing GTMA's Strategic Plan, with greater emphasis on accountability, reporting, and alignment with the Nation's priorities.

An updated plan will help establish clearer goals, strengthen performance measurement, and improve coordination across the agency's programs.

The second priority is building staff capacity through training and mentorship.

As the demands of territorial management continue to grow, the agency must invest in the knowledge, skills, and professional development of its employees.

Mentorship and capacity-building initiatives will help strengthen institutional knowledge, support existing staff, and create further opportunities for Gitxaała citizens interested in careers connected to environmental stewardship.

The third priority is strengthening regular community engagement.

During the reporting period, GTMA conducted six community engagement sessions. Building upon these activities will help ensure that citizens have opportunities to learn about the agency's work, express concerns, and contribute their knowledge and perspectives.

Community engagement is essential to understanding the priorities of the people whose lands and waters GTMA is responsible for helping protect.

While each team within the agency will continue to pursue its own operational and technical priorities, these three goals will provide a shared direction for GTMA as a whole.

A Shared Commitment to the Future

The accomplishments outlined in this report reflect a year of significant activity and important progress for GTMA.
From the establishment of the Great Bear Sea conservation area reserve to marine monitoring, regulatory assessments, research, community engagement, and youth development, the agency has continued supporting Gitxaała Nation's responsibilities to its territory.

These achievements are the result of sustained work by dedicated staff, collaboration across the Nation, and the guidance of Gitxaała's leadership.

They also reflect the continuity of leadership throughout the reporting period.

We acknowledge James Herbert's contributions as Acting Director during a substantial portion of the year, providing leadership and supporting the agency's work through an important period of growth and change.

With Clarence Nelson now serving as Director, GTMA is building upon that foundation while strengthening the organizational systems, partnerships, and resources needed to meet future responsibilities.

The challenges ahead are significant. Increasing development pressures, growing regulatory demands, operational funding requirements, and the need for continued environmental protection will require careful planning and cooperation.

Aama Didüüls – The Good Life reminds us that the protection of lands and waters is inseparable from the health, identity, and future of Gitxaała Nation. For GTMA, supporting that vision means maintaining a strong presence throughout the territory, providing reliable technical information, strengthening community involvement, and ensuring that the agency has the capacity to carry out its responsibilities.

We recognize the dedication of GTMA's staff, particularly those who work throughout the territory conducting patrols, gathering information, supporting research, and responding to emerging environmental concerns. Their efforts, together with the guidance of Gitxaała's elected and hereditary leadership and the knowledge of community members, provide the foundation for continued progress.

Through collaboration, responsible stewardship, and a commitment to continuous improvement, GTMA will continue supporting Gitxaała Nation in protecting its lands and waters and sustaining them for generations to come.

Acknowledgments

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life

Gitxaała Nation 2026 Annual General Meeting

A good life is not measured only by what we accomplish, but by how we care for one another, honour our responsibilities and create opportunities for generations to come.

As we gather for the 2026 Annual General Meeting, Gitxaała Nation extends its sincere appreciation to the many individuals, families and organizations whose dedication, knowledge and contributions continue to strengthen our Nation.

Honouring Our Elders and Hereditary Leadership

We begin by acknowledging our Elders, hereditary leaders, matriarchs, fluent Sm'algyax speakers and cultural knowledge holders.

Your wisdom, teachings and guidance connect us to our ancestors, our Ayaawx, our Adaawx and the responsibilities we carry as Gitxaała people. Through your continued commitment to sharing knowledge, our language, traditions and cultural identity remain living parts of our community.

We are grateful for all that you have carried forward and for the knowledge you continue to share with future generations.

Recognizing Leadership and Service

We extend our appreciation to Chief Councillor Linda Innes, Deputy Chief Councillor Brenna Johnson-Innes and all members of Gitxaała Council for their dedication and service to our people.

We also recognize Chief Administrative Officer Marcia Robinson, our directors, managers and the employees throughout Gitxaała Nation whose work contributes to the delivery of essential services and the continued development of our community.

Acknowledgments

From education, health and housing to public works, language revitalization, cultural preservation, financial administration and stewardship of our lands and waters, your efforts help strengthen the foundations of our Nation.

Much of this work happens quietly, behind the scenes, and often during challenging circumstances. Your dedication does not go unnoticed.

Our Citizens, Families and Community Partners

To our citizens living in Lax Klan, Prince Rupert and communities away from home, thank you for your continued engagement, contributions and commitment to Gitxaała Nation.

We acknowledge the parents, families, youth, volunteers and community members who participate in programs, share their experiences, contribute their knowledge and lend a helping hand when others need support.

We also extend our appreciation to the organizations, educational institutions, service providers and other partners who work alongside Gitxaała Nation to create opportunities and strengthen services for our people.

Our progress is made possible through cooperation, mutual respect and a shared commitment to a stronger future.

Bringing Our Stories Together

We offer special thanks to the Council members, departmental directors, managers and staff who contributed their reports, photographs and reflections to this year's Annual General Meeting booklet.

Your contributions help ensure that Gitxaała citizens have a meaningful account of the work undertaken on their behalf, the progress achieved and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Acknowledgments

We also recognize Vision Quest Communications Inc. for its editorial coordination and development of this year's report, together with the individuals who contributed to its photography, design, technical preparation, printing and production.

This publication represents a collective effort to share the work of our Nation in a manner that is accessible, informative and reflective of our people.

Aama Didüüls – A Good Life

The theme of this year's Annual General Meeting reminds us that a good life is something we build together.

It is found in the teachings of our Elders, the dedication of our employees, the contributions of our leadership, the determination of our youth and the care we show for one another.

It is reflected in our commitment to protecting our lands and waters, strengthening our language and culture, supporting our families and ensuring that future generations inherit a strong and thriving Nation.

To everyone who has contributed to the work of Gitxaała Nation over the past year, we extend our heartfelt thanks.

Together, we honour where we have come from, recognize the work being done today and continue building a good life for generations yet to come.

Gitxaała Nation

Annual General Meeting | November 16–20, 2026

Photo Credits

Gitxaała Nation 2026 Annual General Meeting – Aama Didüüls – A Good Life

Council

- Chief Councillor Linda Innes: photographs courtesy of Linda Innes. Community engagement photograph by Stephanie.
- Councillor Joscelin Lewis: photographs of Joscelin speaking by Teresa Stewart. Group photographs courtesy of Joscelin Lewis.
- Youth Councillor Jamie Angus: photographs courtesy of Jamie Angus.
- Jennie Glennie

Administration

- Administration: photographs courtesy of Gitxaała Nation Administration.
- Human Resources: photograph of Vicki Vickers at the 2025 CPHR Conference, Vancouver, courtesy of Vicki Vickers.
- Information Technology: aerial image of the fuel station and dock from Google Maps.
- Community Services and Operations
- Health and Social Development: photographs courtesy of Gitxaała Health, including images from the Photographing the Elders 2026 series.
- Housing and Capital Projects: photographs of the Housing crew courtesy of the Gitxaała Housing and Capital Projects Department.
- Public Works: photographs courtesy of the Gitxaała Public Works Department.

Education, Language and Culture

- Language and Culture: photographs courtesy of the Gitxaała Language and Culture Department.
- Territorial Management
- Gitxaała Territorial Management Agency (GTMA): photographs courtesy of the Gitxaała Territorial Management Agency.

- Jennie Glennie: Gitxaała Nation

About Vision Quest Communications Inc.

Vision Quest Communications Inc. is an independent, 100% Indigenous women-owned company founded by Gitxaała and Haisla women. Specializing in Indigenous governance, strategic communications, community engagement and storytelling, we work alongside First Nations to strengthen their voices, communicate their achievements and preserve their stories for future generations.

Editorial development, writing and production of the 2026 Gitxaała Nation Annual General Meeting Report by Vision Quest Communications Inc. on behalf of Gitxaała Nation.

Voices That Lead. Visions That Last.

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Aama Didüüls – The Good Life

