

**Bella Coola Trip Sept. 27-30, 2024  
SD73 International Student Program**



A large group of international students and chaperones left Kamloops at 7:00am on September 27, 2024. Our charter bus headed west with the final destination being Bella Coola. We had a 45 minute stop in Williams Lake for groceries and supplies and then turned onto Highway 20 and across the Chilcotin Plateau. We pulled into the Belarko Bear Viewing Platform at 4:15pm. After staying for 1.5 hours and not seeing a bear, we completed the last 50 minutes of our drive to our accommodations in Bella Coola. We saw 2 Black Bears on the drive in.



Fall colours on the drive



Checking out Beaver signs at a rest area

The next morning we left our accommodations at 8:30 and drove the short distance to meet with Hereditary Chief Noel Pootlass. Noel guided our walk up to a Nuxhalk sacred sight where ancient petroglyphs can be seen carved into rock. With his interpretation, the students were able to understand some of the significance of the carvings as well as other important Nuxhalk cultural areas and medicine. The group is pictured with Noel below.





The next activity was a walk through of an area of very large cedar trees. Many of the trees are thought to be around 800 years old. The temperate rainforest biome in this area is very scenic. We then had lunch followed by a visit with master carver Alvin Mack. Alvin spoke to the students about historic and current issues as well as showed the students his carving skills. Students were able to try an elbow adze on a piece of cedar.







Next, we drove to the Grizzly Bear viewing platform and were able to see a Grizzly Bear. It has been more difficult to see the Grizzlies this year in Bella Coola due to a huge salmon return. The bears have not had to move very far to find salmon so they are difficult to see.



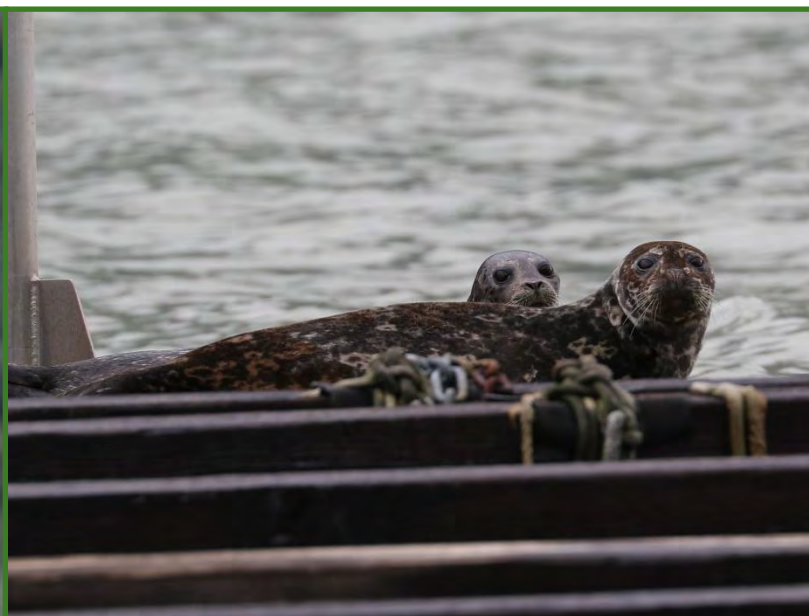


We then headed to the ocean and viewed some Harbour Seals before it got dark. After experiencing a nice sunset there, we made a campfire and cooked our hot dog dinner over it. Smores were also made and enjoyed there.





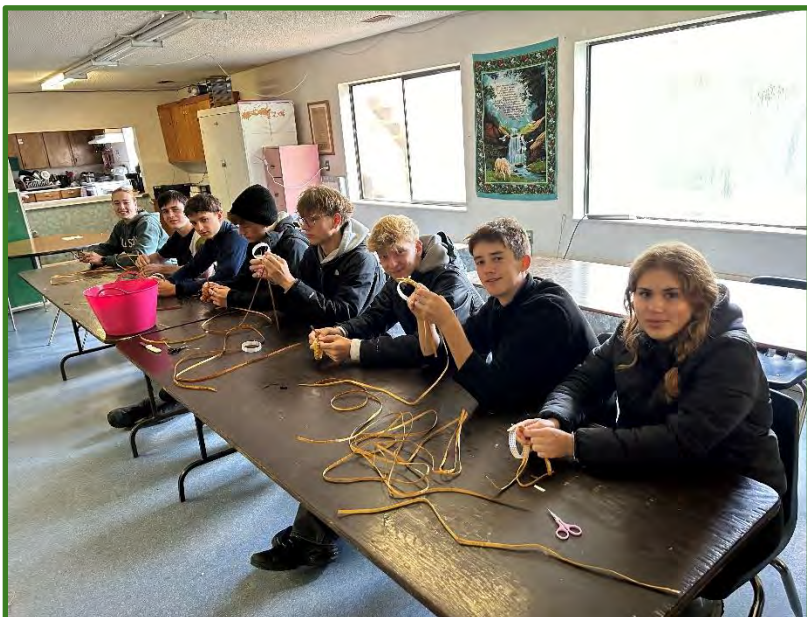
The next morning we had a couple of hours before our cedar weaving activity so we went to the marina and walked out on the public dock there. We saw several seals out of the water as well as some birds.



After this we drove the short distance to Clayton Falls and checked out this waterfall as well as many other Harbour Seals that were hauled out on the logs in the area.



We then had a short lunch before meeting for our cedar bark weaving activity at 12:00. Master weaver Barb led us in making two types of bracelets, rope, and flowers using cedar bark. This is a traditional method of making many different things in the local Nuxhalk culture. This activity is always a highlight for the students.





Our next activity was salmon fishing. We drove the short ways to some private land where we had river access. Some students fished and some hung out by a campfire. In the end, we caught and ate 1 Coho Salmon and lost a couple of others. We enjoyed a beautiful sunset from this property as well. The cooked salmon didn't last long!



We left Bella Coola the next morning at 7:00am and turned back towards Kamloops, arriving at 5:00pm with a couple of washroom stops and a long stop in Williams Lake for lunch. On the drive back we encountered plenty of wildlife seeing another Grizzly Bear, a Moose, a Red Fox, more Mule Deer, and a Coyote beside the road. We also had a slight dusting of snow at the top of the hill and enjoyed fall colours the rest of the way.



**\*Students on this trip were from: Germany, Japan, Austria, Belgium, and Brazil\***

**Andrew Andy, a Nuxhalk resident of Bella Coola, was instrumental in setting up many aspects of this trip including the cultural components and accommodations, etc... He can be reached at [cedarbowconsulting@gmail.com](mailto:cedarbowconsulting@gmail.com) or 250-378-7823**

#### **Trip Mammal List:**

<b>Grizzly Bear – 2</b>	<b>Black Bear – 5</b>	<b>Mule Deer – 5</b>	<b>Moose – 1</b>
<b>Black-tailed Mule Deer – 3</b>	<b>Yellow-pine Chipmunk – 2</b>	<b>Red Squirrel – 2</b>	
<b>Red Fox – 1</b>	<b>Coyote – 1</b>	<b>Harbour Seal – 50</b>	

## Favourite Moment

Ernst – Cedar weaving when we made the bracelets because it was fun to do.

Lean – Cedar weaving and the last evening at the river. As a European, when you think about Canda, Bella Coola is a place that depicts the nature of Canada you think of.

Lena – Fishing because it was my first time to fish as well as a lot of fun.

Mia – Fishing because it was my first time and was a lot of fun.

Paul – When we saw the Grizzly Bear because it was my first time and it was exciting.

Laura – The campfire and fishing by the river because I never did this before.

Ida – The sunset at the ocean campfire because it was very pretty and we got to know each other a bit better at the campfire.

Lucy – When we saw the Grizzly Bear because I've never seen one before in the wild.

Bosse – When we saw the Grizzly Bear because in Germany we cannot see those.

Karl – When we fished, ate salmon, and the hot dogs because I've never caught and eaten a fish before and it was very tasty.

Constantin – When we saw the Grizzly Bear because after the first day it was disappointing we didn't see one. When we finally saw one it was cool.

Moritz – When we went fishing because it was nice there and the salmon was really good.

Linus – When we caught the salmon because I've never caught a fish before and I was able to fight it and pull it to the land.

Max – The last evening at the fishing campfire. The scenery was very beautiful.

Nico – Seeing all the wildlife. I really liked seeing all the animals and scenery in the mountains.

Philip – When the hereditary chief of the area showed us the temperate forest and the carvings on the rock because it was very interesting that he explained how the indigenous people lived before.

Ryoka – When I saw a seal because it was my first time seeing a seal in the wild and I love seals.

Renoa – The campfire at the ocean because I liked the beautiful view, animals, and talking with many people.

Sophie – When we went fishing because it was the first time I've fished and the place was beautiful.

Luana – When we went fishing and I caught a salmon. Sadly it got away after fighting it for a while.

Jakob – At the petroglyphs because I'm very interested in ancient history and it showed me a whole new point of view.

Nina – The petroglyphs because the rain forest was beautiful. I also learned that people in New Zealand had similar carvings as Bella Coola which surprised me because of the distance and different culture.

Sven – Following the hereditary chief at the petroglyphs. I enjoyed everything he said along the way about nature and how they do things.

## One Thing I Learned

- Ernst – That you have to clap when you go in the forest to let the Grizzly Bears know you are coming.
- Lean – How to find bears and how they behave. For example, that they have different territories where they live and there can be conflicts if they enter another territory. Also how to prepare/clean a salmon to eat.
- Lena – That you have to clap your hands when you go into a forest because you don't know if there are Grizzly Bears there or not.
- Mia – How to cast a fishing pole.
- Paul – How to fish, it was my the first time I've ever done this.
- Laura – Something about the history of the Indigenous people. At the Petroglyphs we learned how Small Pox destroyed many people there.
- Ida – How to fish because I've never done this before. Also a bit about the history of the Indigenous people. I also learned how to weave cedar bark.
- Lucy – The people in Bella Coola always used the cedar tree for everything such as clothes and bracelets.
- Bosse – How to use a fishing rod.
- Karl – You have to wait a long time for a bear, I thought it would be shorter.
- Constantin – How to use a fishing rod correctly.
- Moritz – Disease killed a lot of the Indigenous People in Bella Coola in history.
- Linus – That the frog, eagle, whale, and other animals at the petroglyphs have special meanings.
- Max – You need a lot of patience to see wildlife.
- Nico – The Indigenous people used stone carvings to communicate between generations.
- Philip – The unfair treatment that the indigenous people have experienced in history.
- Ryoka – I learned that Bella Coola has lots of nature and wildlife and good culture.
- Renoa – The Indigenous people in Bella Coola have a distinct culture.
- Sophie – the Indigenous people believe in God too and the story of the creation is carved on rocks.
- Luana – I learned about the Residential Schools and how bad they were to the Indigenous people.
- Jakob – I learned how to make smores. It changed my life forever.
- Nina – That the hereditary chief in Bella Coola believes similar to what we do in terms of religion but their relationship with nature is integrated into their overall spiritual beliefs.
- Sven – That the Nuxhalk people save stories through dances and stone carvings.