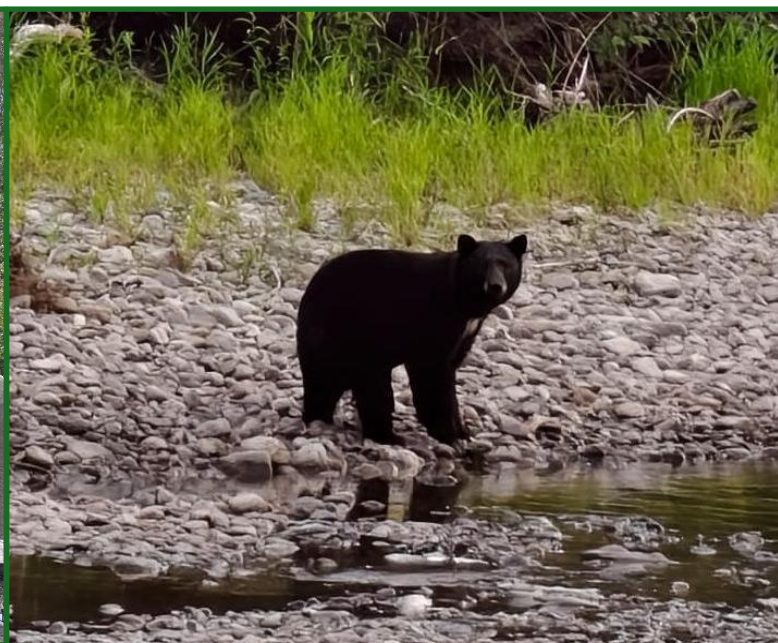




**Bella Coola Sept. 18-21, 2026
SD73 International Student
Program Trip Report**



A group of students and several chaperones left Kamloops at 7:00AM on September 18, 2026 and drove west to Bella Coola on the coast of British Columbia. After a washroom and grocery stop in William's Lake, we turned west on Highway 20 and completed the drive to Bella Coola. By 5:00pm we were down the hill into the Bella Coola Valley and drove directly to the Grizzly Bear viewing platform in Tweedsmuir Provincial Park. We spent just under 2 hours there and saw 5 Grizzly Bears and a Black Bear. The Grizzlies were difficult to see due to some trees growing up in the last year and blocking some of the view. We then travelled the remaining hour west to the town of Bella Coola, checked into our accommodations by 8:00pm, and enjoyed some rest after a long day of travel.



The next day we had breakfast and left our accommodations at 8:45 and drove the short distance to our petroglyphs tour. We were guided into this sacred area by two local Nuxalk guides. The petroglyphs are thought to be thousands of years old.





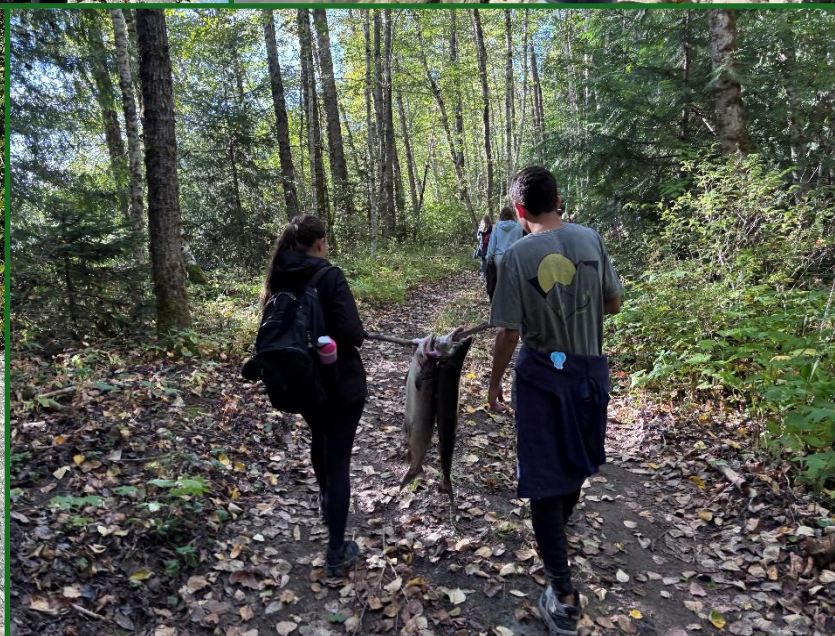
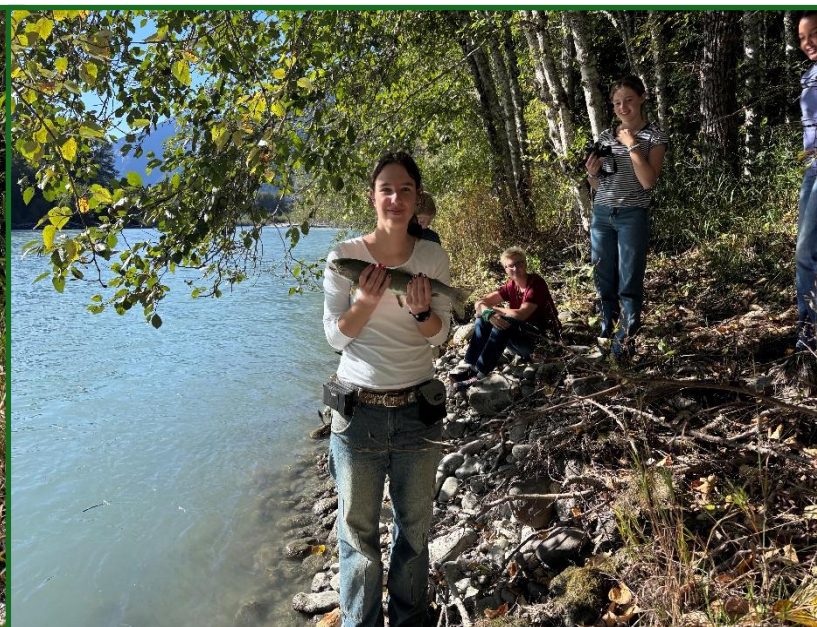
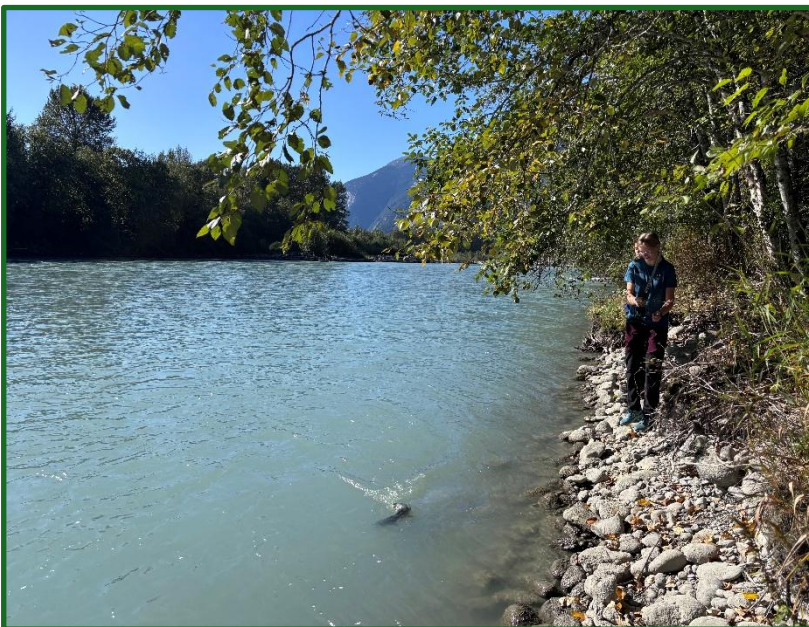
After the petroglyphs, we stopped at a place to try our hands at fish cutting, preparing, and eating. There was also a smokehouse there to check out.



We then had a break for lunch before meeting at 12:45pm for our guided tour of the giant cedar trees at Walker Island. Our local Nuxalk guide Ezra Mecham was fantastic and was able to add local knowledge to our walk, making it much more meaningful. Many of the giant Cedars in this area are more than 500 years old.

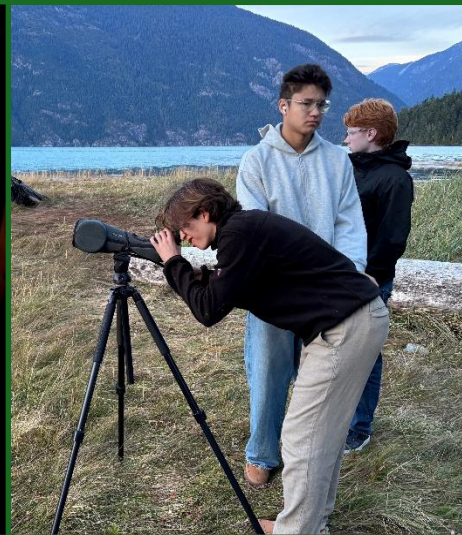


After a lunch break, we drove out to our fishing place and tried salmon fishing for a lot of the afternoon. We were happy to catch a couple Coho for dinner and a few more that we released. We enjoyed very nice weather for this activity.



Back at our accommodations, we had a short time to prepare for our dinner of salmon tacos over a campfire by the ocean. The salmon was cooked in dutch ovens over a bed of rice with onions, lemon, and a maple glaze. Salsa and sour cream were also put in the tacos. Absolutely delicious and the scenery wasn't bad either as the sun set.





The next morning, we left at 8:45am for giant cedar tree walk. This trail took us through giant cedars that are more than 600 years old. On at least one of them, it is clear to see how wood was removed from the tree long ago without killing it.





After this, we drove to Clayton Falls where we enjoyed some ocean views and saw more salmon, an American Mink, some cool birds including a Dipper interacting with a Pink Salmon, and enjoyed the waterfall.



After this we had some free time for lunch by our cabins and met up again at 1:00PM for cedar weaving. Cedar bark weaving is a traditional Nuxhalk activity that stretches back thousands of years. Cedar was used for everything from clothes to baskets to fishing nets. Master weaver Bard showed us how it is done and we all made a bracelet we could take home.



After this we tried to do more bear watching by driving the 1 hour back up to the eastern end of the valley but were not successful. It was still a beautiful evening out and the scenery was enjoyed by all. We did see 3 Black Bears along the road on the way out the following morning, however. The next day we left at 7:00 and arrived back in Kamloops at 5:30PM after many washroom breaks and a long stop for lunch in William's Lake.

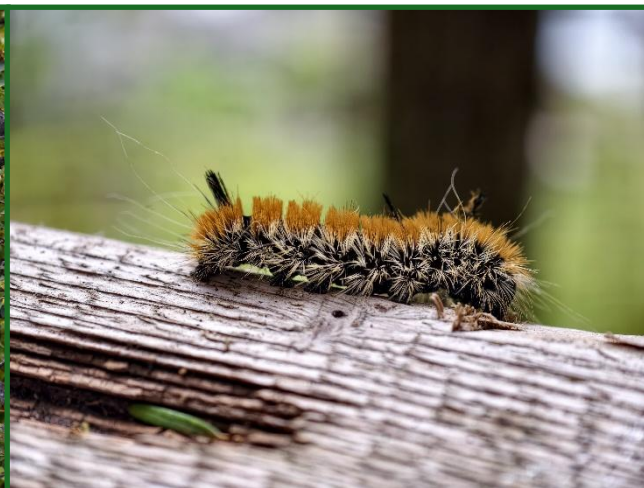


Andrew Andy, a Nuxalk resident of Bella Coola, was instrumental in setting up many aspects of this trip including the cultural components and accommodations, etc... He can be reached at cedarbowconsulting@gmail.com or 250-378-7823

Students on this trip were from: Germany, Brazil, Czechia, Japan, Belgium, and Spain.

Trip Mammal List:

**Grizzly Bear – 5 Black Bear – 5 Snowshoe Hare – 1
Red Fox – 1 Bighorn Sheep – 12 Yellow-pine Chipmunk – 1
Mule Deer – 10 Red Squirrel – 5 Harbour Seal – 25 American Mink – 1**



My Favourite Moment:

1. Alexa – When I caught the fish because I've never done that before. I was happy it didn't come off the hook.
2. Peninah – The evening when we ate the fish because we ate something that we saw someone catch a few hours before.
3. Louise – Catching the salmon because it was my first fish I've ever caught.
4. Emma – When we saw the four grizzly Bears because it was my first time to see Grizzlies.
5. Ronja – The walk through the forest by the giant Cedar Trees because they were very big trees that I've never seen before.
6. Himari – the second night because I love campfires and then we had a wonderful dinner of salmon.
7. Lara – Sitting at the campfire because it was my first time eating fish that actually tasted good and talking with friends and playing games.
8. Ida – When I stood up on the dead tree by the campfire because the landscape was so wide and beautiful that it was almost unfair. I felt like I could hug the whole world.
9. Vitalina – When we went to the beach because I liked the view and it was fun.
10. Miguel – The campfire because we had a great time with friends around the fire.
11. Jaime – When we were fishing because I had a lot of fun. I've never fished in my life and I caught one.
12. Javier – Fishing in the river because I love fishing.
13. Jonas S – Fishing because I learned how to cast a fishing rod. Sadly I didn't catch anything but it was still fun.
14. Jonas A – Eating the salmon jerky because it was very tasty and hand made. We saw the process to make it which was pretty cool.
15. Zeno – Fishing because I've never done it before.
16. Rodrigue – The Saturday night campfire because the atmosphere was really cool and it was a very nice view by the ocean.
17. Momme – The campfire because it was fun to hang out with my friends there.
18. Johann – Eating the fresh caught salmon on Saturday evening because it wasn't that cold and we did a lot of pictures.
19. Svea – The campfire because I could connect with people there, the food was really good, and the view was amazing.
20. Polly – the campfire when Ian and his daughter came and told us about his family mountain.
21. Luiz – When we had the campfire dinner because it was a moment with a lot of interaction with the whole group. I've never had a campfire in the forest before.
22. Isabella – The campfire because the vibe was nice and the food was good.
23. Thiago – The campfire because of the vibe, eating dinner together, and the place was beautiful.
24. Maria – The campfire because everyone was together, it was warm, and I love smores.

One Thing I Learned:

1. You can harvest wood from a tree without killing it.
2. Peninah – how the indigenous people smoke their fish.
3. Louise – you can take wood out of a tree without killing it.
4. Emma – You can cut off the skin from a tree and make medicine from it.
5. Ronja – That you can take wood from a tree and the tree can still be alive after this.
6. Himari – I appreciate nature and how important it is to take care of it.
7. Lara – How to weave bracelets using cedar bark.
8. Ida – How to fish including casting.
9. Vitalina – Don't surprise a bear because they might attack you.
10. Miguel – how to weave a bracelet using cedar bark.
11. Jaime – That Canada has a lot more culture than I thought it would have. It opened my eyes to indigenous culture.
12. Javier – I learned how the Nuxalk people have their own territory and how the government tried to take their culture out of them.
13. Jonas S – how to braid a wrist band in the traditional Nuxalk way using cedar bark.
14. Jonas A – People in history carved their beliefs in stone (petroglyphs).
15. Zeno – That there is still a lot of indigenous people in the country if you know where they live.
16. Rodrigue – How the first people respect their ancestors.
17. Momme – How to cut salmon like the traditional Nuxalk way.
18. Johann – The way that the Nuxalk prepare their fish and the cedar weaving. Also how to harvest wood without killing the tree.
19. Svea – How the rock carvings can be used to bring you a message.
20. Polly – How the people there carved their faces into the rocks. It was impactful for me when Luke thanked us for coming and learning their culture.
21. Luiz – To keep calm around bears.
22. Isabella – We can make accessories with cedar for example bracelets, hats, clothes, etc...
23. Thiago – How to live with bears. You need to be careful not to surprise them. You also need to keep your distance. It depends on them if they show themselves or not.
24. Maria – Cedar can be used for ropes, bracelets, hats, and even hammocks. I also learned how the rock carvings changed pre and post contact.