



2025 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

HAIDA GWAII
INSTITUTE



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



This year we celebrate 15 years of Haida Gwaii higher education! The Haida Gwaii Semester in Natural Resource Studies, our first semester program, was launched back in 2010! Our own Emily Sky Collins, Programs and Operations Manager, was a student in that first cohort and we have been lucky to have her working with the Haida Gwaii Semester programs for the past 14 years!! Our team have been looking through our archives, going down memory lane, and reaching out to alumni from that inaugural semester, some of whom share their

stories in this edition of our newsletter! Since 2010, we have expanded programming, adding additional semester programs, online courses, and a micro-certificate professional development program!! Many of the community members who founded the Haida Gwaii Higher Education Society in 2008, and worked to develop the first semester program are still involved and supporting Haida Gwaii Institute today, as instructors, community educators, and serving on HGI's advisory council!

Over the years since our beginnings, there have been incredible advances made in Indigenous self-governance, and the protection and conservation of the marine and terrestrial ecosystems throughout Haida Territory. This work has been accomplished through partnerships, co-management agreements, and nation to nation relationships. The progress made here and most recently, the recognition of the Council of the Haida Nation's rights and title by the federal and provincial

governments, continue to make Haida Gwaii a truly extraordinary and impactful learning environment unlike any other.

This year so far, we are seeing record numbers of applicants and record numbers of local learners in our online courses! We have increased the number of seats in our online courses to meet the demand and this year we will be developing a new course to add to our roster, stay tuned! We're also very excited to offer the Haida Gwaii Semester in Marine Conservation starting in January 2026. Applications are now open!!

We are grateful to the Council of the Haida Nation, on whose territory we are fortunate to operate on; UBC Faculty of Forestry, our community partners, and the people of Haida Gwaii. Their support allows us to continue to provide transformative education inspired by Haida Gwaii, education for a better, more sustainable and just future.

— K'iinuwaas *Carrie Anne Vanderhoop*

— OUR TEAM —



DIRECTOR



PROGRAM & OPERATIONS
MANAGER



MANAGER OF FINANCE & ADMIN



ONLINE ADMISSIONS
COORDINATOR



PROGRAM COORDINATOR

2025/26 COURSE CALENDAR

Haida Gwaii Summer Session in Plants People & Place, May and June

- Social-Ecological Change: An Intro to Systems Thinking & Resilience
- Environmental Assessment in Cross-Cultural & Indigenous Contexts
- Plant Ecology & Diversity
- Indigenous Plant Knowledge: Ethnoecology & Ethnobotany

Haida Gwaii Semester in Natural Resource Science, September to December

- Indigenous Governance & Land Stewardship Seminar
- Applied Ecology of Coastal Terrestrial Ecosystems
- Marine-Terrestrial Interactions
- Ecology & Management of Island Wildlife
- Ecosystem Based Management

Haida Gwaii Semester in Marine Conservation, January to April

- Ocean People, Culture & Tradition
- Fisheries Co-Management of the North Pacific Coast
- Marine Protected Areas
- Applications in Marine Conservation
- Ocean Governance

Ongoing Online Courses

- Perspectives on Reconciliation
- Ecological Economics
- Community Planning & Development for Resilience
- Reconciliation & Resource Management
- Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship
- Marine Conservation in BC
- Law & Governance: Indigenous & European Traditions
- Diversifying Resource Dependent Communities
- Re-Storying History: Indigenous Perspectives

Seeking Wise Counsel

HGI is governed by an Advisory Council, along with UBC Forestry Office of the Dean. Our Advisory Council is an engaged and committed working group, made up of mostly local people, who share in a mission to deliver education inspired by Haida Gwaii. Together they offer their experience and community connection to inform our strategic direction within UBC and on Haida Gwaii. They help ensure we're operating in a good way and in alignment with our core values. Some of our Advisory Council were founding members of the Haida Gwaii Higher Education Society, the roots of our organization! Others teach in our undergraduate and professional-development programs, co-develop our curriculum as we expand our course offerings, join classes as community educators, and one of our newest members is even a former Semester Student! We are grateful for the ongoing support and guidance of our Advisory Council, both past and present.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS



The '24 summer class visiting Tluu Xaada Naay Ocean People's House



In 2024, we were lucky to share time and space with two incredible semester cohorts at Haida Gwaii Institute. Through shared learning, challenges, and reflection, students grew not only in their academic journeys but in relationship with Community and Place.

We also had the chance to collaborate with the NITEP Indigenous Teacher Education Program in the summer—an inspiring cross-program exchange that sparked some lasting connections!

To all of our students: thank-you for showing up with curiosity, care, and



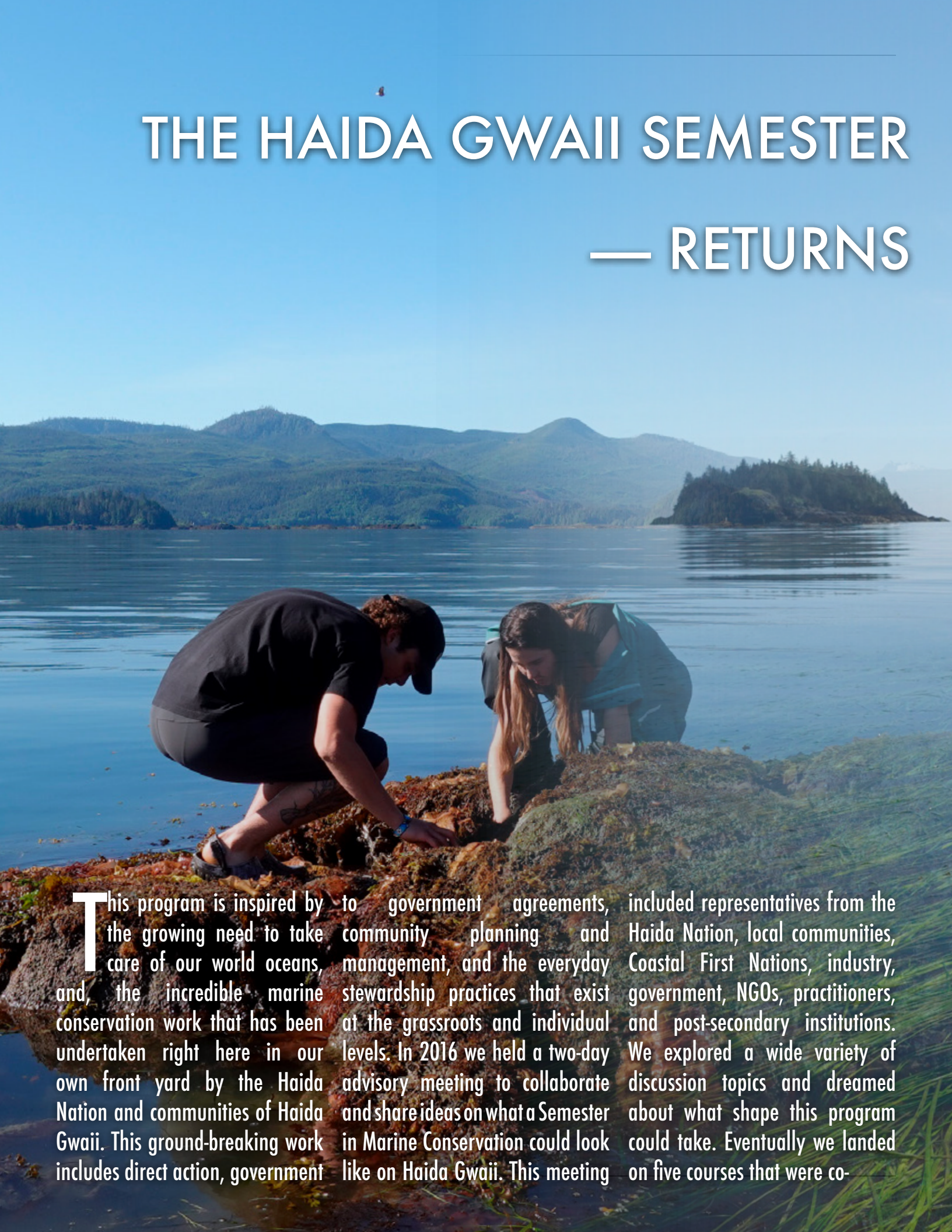
The '24 fall semester class at the Haida Heritage Centre

courage. You brought your full selves to this experience, and it showed. We're so grateful to have been part of your journey, and we can't wait to see where you go next.



THE HAIDA GWAI SEMESTER

— RETURNS

A photograph showing two individuals, a man and a woman, crouching on a rocky shore. They are looking down at something in the water, possibly a small animal or plant. The background features a large body of water, likely a bay or fjord, with forested mountains in the distance under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is serene and natural.

This program is inspired by the growing need to take care of our world oceans, and the incredible marine conservation work that has been undertaken right here in our own front yard by the Haida Nation and communities of Haida Gwaii. This ground-breaking work includes direct action, government to government agreements, community planning and management, and the everyday stewardship practices that exist at the grassroots and individual levels. In 2016 we held a two-day advisory meeting to collaborate and share ideas on what a Semester in Marine Conservation could look like on Haida Gwaii. This meeting included representatives from the Haida Nation, local communities, Coastal First Nations, industry, government, NGOs, practitioners, and post-secondary institutions. We explored a wide variety of discussion topics and dreamed about what shape this program could take. Eventually we landed on five courses that were co-

IN MARINE CONSERVATION

JANUARY, 2026! —

developed and reviewed by a diverse curriculum committee of 15 members, including Haida citizens and local youth - and ultimately, accredited by UBC's Faculty of Forestry.

A few years later, in 2020, we launched this program in K'il Kin *Sandspit* with a small cohort of students from across Canada and a team of excited HGI staff and instructors! We learned a ton, as we always do in a pilot year, and just as the program was nearing completion, the world shut down.

We really believe in this program and we look forward to its return in January 2026, this time offered here in HIGlaagilda *Skidegate*,

steps from the beautiful raised pebble beach and eel grass meadow at Kay 'Llnagaay Sea Lion Town.

Over the last several decades, there has been a shift in marine governance and conservation that has given way to a broader approach, recognizing the important participation of coastal Indigenous Peoples and other marine resource users in shared decision-making. This program is an exploration of these issues, and more.

We are still hiring some of the teaching team, but are thrilled to be rejoined by Gid Yahk'ii *Sean Young*, one of the original instructors and curriculum

developers for this program, who will teach Ocean People, Culture & Tradition. We also welcome back Natalie Benoit, a new HGI instructor and former student, who will teach Fisheries Co-Management of the North Pacific Coast. The other three courses are: Marine Conservation Seminar, Marine Protected Areas & Marine Spatial Planning, and Application in Marine Conservation. If you know anyone who might be interested in this program - students, instructors, community educators, and anyone in between - please encourage them to reach out for more information or to apply. Our team loves enquiries from curious students and lifelong learners, and would be happy to connect more.

CELEBRATING

This January marked 15 years since we launched our very first Haida Gwaii Semester! At the time, we were still known as the Haida Gwaii Higher Education Society and were driven by a dream to offer a community-based, transformative learning experience that was inspired by Haida Gwaii.

I was one of just nine students in this pilot year (along with two other local learners), representing eight different universities from across Canada. Flash forward to today – we have seen over 550 amazing graduates of our in-person programming and 525 through our various online courses, with 34 local students and counting.

15 years later and I am still happily working for this special organization, trying to ensure that every single student has a meaningful learning experience, just like I did. My hope is that as our alumni move forward in their lives and careers, they foster a lasting connection to Haida Gwaii and help us in our vision of working toward a better future for all.

*Emily Sky Collins,
Operations Manager*



The 2010 class with instructors Andy MacKinnon and Hilary Thorpe in Hlk'yah G̱awG̱a Windy Bay



Sam: 15 years seems to flow by. Currently I'm living in Kimberley working as a paramedic, ski patroller, tree planter, father? Last March I was actually back on Haida Gwaii in Sandspit working there as a paramedic for a week. I was able to take my wife and baby with me and show them the islands that meant so much to me. I actually ran into Kris Olsen on the ferry. Being back on the islands in the winter was an affirming experience. Everyone I passed on the road waved at me assuming that there was a chance they knew who I was.



Elisabeth: I'm in Saskatoon now, working towards my Doctor of Veterinary Medicine at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. I'm in my second year. Through my work as a salmon farm site manager, I collaborated with veterinarians on fish health and treatments. I thought to myself "I'd like to do that." So here I am. My interests are in Fisheries and Aquaculture. I'm hoping I'm selected to attend an upcoming Indigenous Fisheries course on Haida Gwaii – maybe I'll see you in the spring!

15 YEARS OF HGI!



Ansley: I was 19 when I completed the program and one of the most impactful things I learned was to zoom out. To appreciate interconnectedness and learn from others. Today I keep this at the forefront in my personal life as a member of a housing co-operative in East Vancouver, and in my professional life at the Agricultural Land Commission where I manage digital service development. Congratulations on 15 years and all the best in the years to come!



Julie: I had the pleasure and honour of being a part of the very first Haida Gwaii Semester in 2010. It was such a special experience and was the inspiration for me to embark on a career in community planning, particularly planning with Indigenous communities. I fell in love with Haida Gwaii and have made it a priority in my life to come back and visit every few years. I hold friendships on-island which are near and dear to me and those friends have become like family. In 2022, I was able to bring my partner and toddler to visit and show them the magic of the place. I've since had another daughter...I think it's time for another visit soon ;)



Heather: I absolutely loved my time studying on Haida Gwaii. Since then I finished my Civil Engineering degree at Queen's University and did a Masters in Resource and Environmental Management (Planning) at SFU with Ken Lertzman as my advisor who we met during the Haida Gwaii Semester. My thesis looked at the trade-offs between carbon offsets and forest management opportunities on the central coast of BC. I then moved to the UK for a job as a structural engineer specialising in sensitive repair of historic buildings. I am fortunate to work on buildings such as Hampton Court Palace and the Tower of London. Currently I am quite settled in the UK, having become a director at the company, gotten married and had two young boys (Hugh who has just turned 4 and Felix who is 1) which brings me a lot of joy. We enjoy being outdoors with our young active boys and both my husband and I are very keen Morris dancers which gets us out to various folk festivals and village fetes. I still come back to Canada regularly to visit family and look forward to showing my boys around more of BC.



First class photo at the Haida Heritage Centre

Community Collaboration and Education

Our programming includes a variety of Community Educators – people who join in the field or classroom, to share their direct experience on some of the complex issues examined in class. In this way we are able to engage with a diversity of perspectives, in an effort to represent a cross-section of our community and to help ground things in local contexts and case studies. Community Educators hugely enrich the learning experience and it's an aspect of programming

that students really treasure. We are so grateful to the people who join our programs year after year, to generously share their knowledge and support our shared vision for education inspired by Haida Gwaii. Some of our Community Educators have become curriculum developers, course instructors, and other types of partners. Hawaa | Haw'aa to our amazing Community Educators for sharing so much with us!



Visiting Higaagilda Xaayda Kil Naay Skidegate Haida Immersion Program to learn about their important language work and get whooped at Diigwey bingo



James Williams delivers an informative tour of the poles at Kay



Learning about cultural plants with Kuunaajaad Jenny Cross in her beautiful yard



Interpreting middens and looking for fire cracked rock with instructor Gid Yahk'ii Sean Young



Learning about harvesting spruce roots with Kujjuhl Evelyn Vanderhoop



Listening intently to Leo Gagnon as he shares his plant knowledge

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Hannah Tahami (they/them)

I am a first-generation Persian-Canadian settler from the lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples—which are referred to as Toronto, Ontario. I'm currently in my fourth and final year at the University of British Columbia, which is situated on the lands of the Musqueam Nation. I study Global Resource Systems in the Faculty of Land and Food Systems, where I focus on soil science, climate change, GIS, food security, and food sovereignty. As a decolonial scholar, my passion lies in understanding how colonialism and climate change shape

ecosystems, food access, and relationships to place. I also love exploring the small but vital organisms—like fire-adapted fungi—that play essential roles in sustaining our land and food systems. My time with the Haida Gwaii Institute (HGI) was transformative. I completed their Plants, People, and Place summer program, a deeply immersive, land-based education experience that challenged me to think critically about the intersections of ecology, culture, history, and governance. The program grounded my academic interests while deepening my personal connection to land and place. Learning in this environment encouraged me to reflect on my role as a guest and the responsibilities that come with that. Beyond the coursework, my time in Haida Gwaii shaped me in ways I never anticipated. The natural beauty of the land—the ocean, forests, and surrounding plants and animals—was breathtaking and instilled in me a deep sense of humility and gratitude. Being surrounded by such an incredible landscape reinforced my understanding of the importance of reciprocity and respect for the land. What made my experience even more meaningful was the kindness and

generosity of the community. I was welcomed with warmth and patience as I learned and I felt incredibly supported throughout my time there. Whether through shared conversations, meals, or day-to-day interactions, the hospitality I experienced made a lasting impact on me. Through my time at HGI, I was fortunate to meet Dr. Dan McCarthy and Gid Yahk'ii Sean Young, who offered me guidance and encouragement to pursue an undergraduate thesis that builds on my academic interests and my learning from Haida Gwaii. With their support, my thesis now explores the history of food security and food sovereignty in Haida Gwaii from pre-colonial times to the present, in the context of a changing climate. I'm back for a little while as I work on my undergraduate thesis, and I hope to be back again in the future. Haida Gwaii has left a lasting impact on me—not just in my studies, but in how I move through the world. I'm deeply grateful for the continued opportunity to learn from this place and its people. Haawa for welcoming me.

Hannah Tahami


2024 Summer Session

STUDENT HOUSING CALL OUT

Do you know of any short-term housing opportunities suitable for students? Reach out to us! We are always looking to help our visiting students in their housing search prior to their arrival. Please contact Emily Sky at emilysky.collins@ubc.ca for more details on how to list your space.







It has been a big year for Haida Title! HGI congratulates the Haida Nation on the many, many years of hard work and dedication that has led to the signing of these historic agreements and the recognition from Canada and BC, affirming that Haida Gwaii belongs to Haida People. This work, and the good people who come together to do it, are a source of inspiration for us.

We aim to respectfully share these lessons with our students, so that they can understand the importance of Gud ad T'alang HlGang.gulxa Tll Yahda/Tll Yá'adee *Gii gud ahl t'álang hlGángulaang People Working Together to Make it Right.*

Haida Gwaii Institute operates on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Haida people. We extend our deep gratitude to the Haida Nation for their hospitality and support.



HAIDA GWAI
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