

Hoonah Schools Newsletter

May 2026

May--Kayaani Dísi: the month when grass starts to sprout



Congratulations, 2026 Hoonah Graduates!

Hoonah High School's Class of 2026 were awarded their diplomas May 8th. The crowd of families, School Board members, school staff, and others from the community were on hand to congratulate the graduates. Student speakers were Salutatorian Paige Woitte and Valedictorian Gerred Garrison. Former HSC teacher Renée Gray was the Commencement Speaker.

Gifts and scholarships were awarded to the graduates. They received gifts from the Hoonah Indian Association and The City of Hoonah; those entities went in together to give each graduate a MacBook. Alaska Seaplanes gave each of them a RT ticket to Juneau. Graduates also received gifts from Hoonah Trading Co. and the Abundant Life Church. In keeping with tradition, graduates were gifted with beautiful, one-of-a-kind handmade quilts created by Kris Skaflestad. Gunalchéesh to Kris for carrying on this very special tradition. Members of the Class of 2026, shown in the picture are, from left to right: Gerred Garrison, Chloe Lane, Kyah Martin, Paige Woitte, Cayenne Boe, Dietrich Lewis.



Gunalchéesh haat yee.aadí (thank you all for coming) to our 33rd Annual Heritage Celebration *Ku.éex'* on May 1st. See pages 5 & 6 for program details and a long Gunalchéesh List.

Ian Johnson photo

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Superintendent’s Message

As we reflect on another school year, I'm filled with gratitude for the remarkable achievements of our students, staff, families, and community partners. We also recognize the challenges.

This year, our students demonstrated resilience, curiosity, and kindness in and out of the classroom. Our teachers went above and beyond—differentiating instruction, supporting whole-child development, and creating inclusive learning environments. Our support staff, administrators, and families formed a true partnership in pursuit of educational excellence. Our students learned both in the classroom, all around Hoonah and out into Juneau, Anchorage and beyond. Our high school students earned credits for graduation and college as well as certifications in Emergency Trauma Technician and grew in their knowledge of forestry and commercial fishing skills that will serve them well into their future. Our middle school students explored work with our Glow Forge and learned to work as a team. In elementary, there were GOATS. Well, not live ones, but symbols of the reading achievements our students worked towards to move their goat along towards their goals. What a fantastic year!

One of our biggest challenges has been continuing to provide everything our students want and need while balancing a budget. There are 13 plus grants in progress and we are searching for more every day. If you see an opportunity to offset costs such as our breakfast/lunch program, our hope of opening the library to the public, or our major maintenance costs as well as academic program opportunities, please let us know.

As we close this chapter, we carry forward the lessons learned and the connections made. This summer, I encourage our students to rest, explore their interests, and prepare for the opportunities ahead. Our staff will return refreshed and ready to build on this year's momentum. We plan to continue working on Individual Learning Plans for every student and make sure that what Hoonah City Schools offers fits each child and family’s goals. We offer in-person school, hybrid choices and full correspondence for those who want that option.

We remain committed to:

- **Rigorous, equitable instruction for every learner**
- **Safe, welcoming schools where all belong**
- **Family and community engagement at every level**
- **Continuous improvement in all we do**

Thank you for trusting us with your most precious investment—your children.

Susan R. Nedza
Superintendent

Principal’s Message

Dear HCS Families,

We have finished another school year here at Hoonah City Schools. Thank you for trusting us with your children each and every day. It is a privilege we never take for granted. You may have heard about the Intensive Week we had in April. Secondary students chose to spend the week immersed in active, hands-on learning. Choices included emergency trauma training, commercial fishing, forestry, moccasin making, and fly fishing. You can read about them in this newsletter. Next year we will have four (4) intensive weeks – one each quarter. Plans are in the works to have a variety of offerings such as cosmetology, small engines, wood working, robotics, 3D printing, culinary arts, weaving, and other areas students are interested in. Stay tuned for more information in August.



May your summer be full of sunshine, adventure, laughter and memory making.

Lorrie Scoles
Principal



School Board members Geraldine Cheslock, Pearl Miller, Heidi Jewell, Bryce Tyler. Missing from photo is Sarah Schwan.

Goodbye and Gunalchéesh

At the end of the school year, we take time to thank the staff members who will be moving on. We wish them all well, and thank them for the time they have spent at our school.



Ollee Bug-Browning has been the PreK and Kindergarten teacher for the past three years. She started here at our school working as a substitute while attending UAS classes remotely as she completed her BA, then joined the regular staff the second semester of the 2022-2023 school year, working on the secondary side.

Nathan Fontes has taught Social Studies in the High School and Middle School for two years. His comments on leaving Hoonah:

“Having the chance to live and work here was truly wonderful, I've never felt such a wealth of information and love in a single place before and I foresee it lasting well into the distant future, far beyond me and far beyond any impact I may have had here. ...I wish to conclude by extending my love and gratitude to all who made my life so much easier and pleasant while I've been here. To the staff who I've come to know and who supported me, to the parents who allowed me to work, to the town at large for sponsoring this project of education, thank you all. Gunalchéesh”



Mark Browning has worked at Hoonah Schools since the fall of 2020. He has taught various grades in the elementary and middle school. During his time at HCS, Mr. Browning has been very much involved in the community, and has taken on numerous special projects, the



Herring Derby being just one of them. He was also involved with MOBY the Greenhouse, introducing his 4th graders to the ins and outs of growing vegetables. As the 6th Grade teacher, “Mr. B” traveled with his class for a mid-winter multi-day trip to the Xunaa



Shuká Hít Tribal House in Glacier Bay. Disc Golf, sometimes called Frisbee Golf, was another activity that he worked on bringing to Hoonah school as part of the P.E. program. He also volunteered in the community with Hoonah Recyclers.

Rayna Bowdre has worked as the District Business Manager for two years.

Dani Quinn worked as District Secretary and as a para-professional in the Spec. Ed. department.

Maintenance Department staff who have left the school are **Shawn Daniels, Jackson Reed and Jesse Van Dusen.**

From **Jenny Carlson**, a temporary teacher who came on board at the end of the school year:

In the late 1980's Todd and I began our teaching careers in Kake, where as a young, adventurous family, we enjoyed soaking in everything Southeast had to offer. Although our life's path took us to South Central Alaska, we always had a desire to return. In early March, we were thrilled to be invited to Hoonah and jumped at the chance. We knew that Hoonah was now a tourist destination and were interested to see the changes that took place because of it. The children at the school seemed excited with ideas of who would be working where and comparing thoughts as to the many opportunities they would be afforded. It was inspiring to hear all the ideas and potential for life long careers. During my first week at school, I was fortunate to experience the Clan Workshop and *Ku.éex'* the next week. The energy of the singing and dancing at both events was powerful and contagious. I was extremely impressed to see that every student wore beautifully crafted regalia and each one was able to proudly state their moiety.



Earth Day Clean Up took place during my first weekend in Hoonah. The dedication and pride of the community was obvious as volunteers worked together to keep Hoonah looking great. On Tuesday nights I was thrilled to be welcomed into the beading class. Beading has been a passion of mine ever since we were in Kake and it was an honor to learn new techniques and listen to stories and laughter from multi-generational bead workers. Todd and I enjoyed many evening walks where we were awed by the breathtaking beauty that surrounds this community. Wildlife sightings and views here are some of the most beautiful that I have ever seen. The welcoming smiles and waves we experienced from everyone we worked with and passed while out in the community were heartwarming and felt authentic and sincere. Gunalchéesh to the people of Hoonah. ~~Jenny Carlson~~

Graduating Seniors in the Spotlight:

Congratulations to the Class of 2026!

Cayenne Boe

Proudest Accomplishment: Making it through her senior year. It was challenging academically, but she pushed through and is proud of herself for that.

Favorite Memory: The friendships she made and her time working with Alaska Youth Stewards (AYS), where she helped maintain trails and counted fish. She also traveled to Excursion Inlet to beach seine for sockeye — and pulled in over 100!

Future Plans: Work this summer, take a gap year, then hopefully attend the University of Washington to pursue a degree in marine biology.

Most Impactful Person: Ms. Kruger, her 12th grade English teacher. Over the course of the school year, they built a strong connection, and Ms. Kruger has been a source of support during difficult times.

Activity She's Most Glad She Did: NYO (Native Youth Olympics). She was able to travel for the sport and make new friends through her participation.

Advice to Future Students: "Turn in your assignments on time and don't let them get lost in your locker."

What She'd Tell Her Freshman Self: "Stay out of drama and focus on friends and school."



Gerred Garrison

Proudest Accomplishment: Being named Class Valedictorian. Gerred earned the highest academic honor in his graduating class.

Future Plans: Gerred plans to take a gap year, possibly taking business courses through UAA, before attending AVTEC to become an electrician.

Most Impactful Thing: Playing sports;

staying involved in athletics kept his grades up throughout high school.

Activity He's Most Glad He Did: Basketball. He has a genuine passion for the game and says it gave him something to look forward to every school year.

Advice to Future Students: "Enjoy high school while it lasts and don't take it for granted."

Dietrich Lewis

Proudest Accomplishment: Being part of the winning alliance at State for robotics his sophomore year.

Favorite Memory: Traveling to Washington D.C. this year for Close Up and seeing the monuments and memorials in person.



Future Plans: Dietrich plans to major in mechanical engineering at UAA, then join the Air Force.

Most Impactful Person: Ben McLuckie; Robotics has been Dietrich's favorite part of his time at HCS. It taught him engineering and problem solving, and connected him with new friends across Southeast Alaska.

Advice to Future Students: "Get your work in on time."

Chloe Lane

Proudest Accomplishment: Graduating!

Favorite Memory: Traveling with her team, both out of state and in Alaska.

Future Plans: This summer Chloe is attending the Della Keats Medical Program in Anchorage, then moving to Juneau to attend UAS and major in health sciences.

Most Impactful People: Her family, who have supported her throughout her whole life.

Activity She's Most Glad She Did: Cross Country. Every year she thought she was going to quit, but she never did.

Advice to Future Students: "Be nice, don't fall asleep in class."



Kyah Martin

Proudest Accomplishment: Graduating early -- at 16 years old.

Favorite Memory: Four-wheeling with Payton on the mudflats.

Future Plans: Kyah plans to take a gap year in Gustavus before heading to Hawaii to earn a bachelor's degree in business.

Most Impactful People: Her best friend and her boyfriend, who were there for her when high school got hard.

Activity She's Most Glad She Did: Wrestling; It taught her discipline, commitment, and that her goals are achievable.

Advice to Future Students: "Grades aren't everything."

What She'd Tell Her Freshman Self: "Friends are the people who choose you, not the people you choose."



Paige Woitte

Proudest Accomplishment: Graduating!

Favorite Memory: Winning basketball regionals this year. It was the last game with her teammates and a great way to end senior year.

Future Plans: Paige is headed to Skagit Valley Community College to play basketball for two years, then plans to transfer to a four-year school to pursue a degree in criminal justice.

Activity She's Most Glad She Did: Basketball, without a doubt. The sport gave her some of her closest friendships, opportunities to travel, and taught her what it means to be a leader both on and off the court.

Advice to Future Students: "Be nice to everyone and don't gossip."



Heritage Celebration Ƙu.éex' Marks 33rd Year

Hoonah City Schools held our 33rd Annual Heritage Celebration Ƙu.éex' on May 1st; this time we were back in our Alumni Gym just like old times! We were joined by guests from our local Tlingit & Haida Headstart and 5th graders from Auke Bay Elementary school. This year Eagle students hosted. Our Raven guests were welcomed by senior Gerred Garrison, Kaagwaantan. A Raven response was presented by Jenna Jack, T'áƙdeintaan. Performances included songs from the Kindergarten and 1st Grade, who sang their favorite songs from the year: *Haagú Kanals'áak*, composed by George Holly; *Haagú S'é*, a Boys Lullaby composed by Charlie Joseph; *The Hook Song*; *Tléikw Sheeyí* (Berry Song); and *Tléikw Haa.een* (Berry Picking Song) composed by Ed Littlefield.



Ian Johnson photo

Students from 2nd and 3rd grade performed a new skit called *Yaa Has Ƙunatin* (They Are Traveling), which featured a



day in the Alaska Seaplanes lobby. Fourth grade students split into two groups to perform two skits, *Dáanaa Daakahídi* (The Bank) and *Wáa Sá Ƙukgwatee?* (How Will the Weather Be?). Three Fifth Grade students recited their Tlingit Introduction speeches, using both Tlingit and English. This is a long-held tradition at our school and is a vital first step in knowing protocol of speech-making in traditional ceremonies and events. We are so proud of our students for keeping our traditions alive. We wrapped up this part of the day with a guest performance by our Auke Bay relatives, who shared several songs they have been learning through the years.

Leading up to the Ƙu.éex', our middle school & high school students spent time making regalia with Darlene See and Lisa Andersson. They made gifts of devils

club salve with Amelia Wilson & Rebekah Sawers of Huna Heritage Foundation, as well as necklaces and keychains with Kellie Lynch and Brian Koenig from Sealaska Heritage Institute. These gifts were distributed while all students performed traditional songs and dances. The Auke Bay students brought gifts that were handed out during this time also. A special shout out to Avery Martin and crew who spent several weekends making over 50 pairs of *guk.át* (earrings) to distribute as gifts as well.

Gunalchéesh to all who helped make our Ƙu.éex' a success:

Donations: Huna Heritage Foundation, Hoonah Trading Company, Hoonah Cold Storage, Tesh & Andy Gray, Amy & Thomas Courtney, Daphne & Frank Wright, Arielle Cawston & Braxton Booze, Miguel Contreras, Brandon Guthrie, Laura & Jared Mansel, Ian Smith, Devlyn Smith, Sam St.Clair, Jordan Brown, Jocelyn Booze, Karen Mills, Sally Dybdahl, Ian Johnson, Steve Johnson and Crew, Sealaska Heritage Institute, Ollee & Mark Browning

Volunteers: Amelia Wilson, Rebekah Sawers, Sonya Johnson, Veronica Dalton, Ian Smith, Cassia Coutlee, Ollee Browning, Sally Dybdahl, Daphne Wright, Amy Courtney, Carriah Hansen, Todd & Jenny Carlson, Whitney Noble, Brian Koenig, Kellie Lynch, Richard Dalton III, Ian Johnson, Nicolle Egan, Ian Smith, Arielle Cawston, Tina Wolfe, Cece Thein and Neta Thein. *Continued on page 6*



Ian Johnson photo

Ku.éex' Continued from Page 5

- Aatlein Gunalchéesh to Huna Heritage Foundation who were a MAJOR help to making the day successful!
- Gunalchéesh for language support: Sealaska Heritage Institute, Goldbelt Heritage, Yéilt'ooch Tláa Collyne Bunn, Deiwjee Genevieve Cook, Kaanáḱ Ruth Demmert, Nakil.aan Hans Chester, K'ashgé Daphne Wright, Éedaa Heather Burge, X'unéi Lance Twitchell
- Photographers: Ian Johnson, K'ashgé Daphne Wright, Richard Dalton III, Sally Dybdahl
- Maintenance staff: Shawn Daniels & Gabe Morrison
- Gunalchéesh to: Hoonah City Schools Administration, teachers & staff, and a special gunalchéesh to our cook, Kaz Harris.



Sally Dybdahl photo



Hoonah students danced at the Clan Workshop with paddles that were gifted to the Gaawt'ak.aan Dancers. Thirty-six paddles were gifted by the Tlingit Language high school students who attended the Workshop under the direction of Xéetli Éesh Lyle James. They also presented a number of books to the elementary school; the books were from Goldbelt Heritage Foundation and Sealaska Heritage Institute.



Gunalchéesh to the members of the HCS SEALS team (Special Education, Adaptability, Leadership, Support): Front: Tesh Gray, Judy Bitz; Second Row: Jenny Carlson, Veronica Dalton, Nakima Budke; Back: Todd Carlson, Tara Reed, Zada Michel. Inset: Jenny Miller



The Class of 2030 had their promotion ceremony on May 7th. Congratulations to the Class of 2030: Front: Maile McGraw, Giana Quick; Middle: Davina Dalton, Alexzandra Mord, Chloe Brown; Back: Silas Sharclane, Devlyn Smith, Landon Lane

Notes from Music Teacher Mae Higgins

Dear families and friends, I've said it before and I'll say it again...Hoonah loves its children and Hoonah loves music. The combination of the children AND music is the best!

This year saw our high school band members playing with new maturity and skill. They shared many great moments, but I have to say my absolute favorite was their presentation earlier this year on Veterans Day. I was incredibly proud and moved by their performance of *Tribute*. The trumpets: Jenna Jack, Gerred Garrison and Paige Woitte did an amazing job.

We have pushed on through the rest of the year, ending with our Spring Concert. Our elementary students took a musical trip under the sea and delighted the audience with the incredible amount of words they were able to "spit out" during their performance of *Under the Sea*. Talking dolphins, a dancing octopus and an incredibly realistic submarine added to the event as did the narration by our very own Darcy Oram. Everyone did great!

Next, the middle school band performed, followed by the high school. Charlie Jack lit up the evening with a beautiful sax solo in *Byzantine Dances*. Our band was smaller second semester due to scheduling challenges, but we were SOLID. I am so proud of how far they have come. We ended the concert with both bands combined to play *A Gallant Fanfare* and a lovely arrangement of *America the Beautiful*. It was wonderful to hear the audience join in and sing along.

You may or may not have heard that unfortunately, the full-time music position is NOT (at this time) being

PROM THANKS

"Night on Mount Olympus" was the theme of this year's Prom, held May 2nd, at the ISP Adventure Center. Thank you for all that helped to make this special night happen for our students. Set Up Crew: Whitney Noble, Elyn Kruger, Karl Kruger, Todd Carlson, Jenny Carlson, 7th grader Liam Michel, 9th grader Justin Sheakley.

Thank you for support from Icy Strait Point, Colette's Cupboard, City of Hoonah, Kaylee Thein, Cory Hill, and Jessie Martin.



Icy Strait Point donated the venue which was the Adventure Center; they also kept the red gondola open so students could go to the top ("Mount Olympus" after all!) ISP also provided a huge platter of sushi for our students (75 servings!)

←see photo of Sushi Platter



Under the Sea, presented at the Spring Concert

funded for next year. The Arts Grant, which has provided incredible experiences for the students, ends in October. New grants have been applied for, but no word is available on their status. In order to keep our program alive, I will be working on a contractual basis of two hours a day, teaching band and general music. This is not sustainable for the future. It is my hope that a new grant be secured, or better yet, that the music position become part of the regular budget for future years. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to have a young, vibrant music teacher come in and pick up from what we have accomplished together. As I said at the beginning, Hoonah loves its kids and Hoonah loves music. We need to press on to continue to give the students of Hoonah the best opportunities to excel in music and the arts.

~Mae Higgins

Colette's Cupboard donated beverages. The City of Hoonah had Kaylee Thein from the Youth Center come to set up and help chaperone, Cory Hill took prom pictures for the students, and Jessie Martin was integral to making all of it happen.

Staff from the school included Elyn Kruger, Whitney Noble and Lorrie Scoles. Laura Mansel made a few dozen peanut butter Hershey kiss cookies that the kids claimed were some of the best they've ever had, and Anne Sharclane donated fruit, crackers and cheese. And a special thanks goes to Liam Michel, who at seventh grade wasn't even allowed to attend Prom, but came and set up and helped take down all the same.

Several School Board members also helped: Sarah Schwan brought firewood for the outdoor fire ring (so kids could go out and sit by the fire with friends, and many did!) and Bryce Tyler came to chaperone.



Fourth-Fifth Grade News by Jackson Brown

During Intensives Week, the 4th and 5th grade class got to work with the Dash Robot. The first day we got familiar with the robots and just practiced driving and getting used to the Wonder app we used with the robots. The second day we worked on building a code to drive the robots through mazes.

On the third day we coded our robots to drive through a massive Pac-Man type maze on the floor. On the fourth day, we got to use the launcher and the three balls. The goal was to code the robot to drive from the starting point and shoot the ball in the "basketball hoop." On the final day we got to play games like tag, have races and Salmon Salmon with our robots.



I was surprised at how fast the robots could drive. Another fun feature was coding our robots to say things we recorded with our voices. We could also change the colors of the lights on our robots. My favorite activity of the week was when we raced the robots and had to move one of our balls across the room. It was really fun working with the robots.



Jackson Brown 5th Grade student

Story Walk by Lily Dalton

We went down to the park for a Story Walk. In a Story Walk, the pages of a book are separated. You have to read a page and then walk a little bit to get to the next page. We read the book *Let's Go: A Harvest Story* in English and in Tlingit. We took a walk around the park on the walking trail. Students took turns reading the pages that were in English and we listened to someone read the pages in Tlingit. It was fun. I liked that we got to spend our library time at the park with friends. I hope that we can do it again because it was really fun!



Lily Dalton 4th grade student



This project was supported by the Art Grant. Gunalchéesh to School Librarian Laura Mansel for putting up the Story Walk for all to enjoy, and to Lily Dalton for writing the news article about it. The English version of the story used in the Story Walk was written by Hannah Lindoff and the Tlingit version was written by Kaakal.aat Florence Sheakley. The book was illustrated by Michaela Goade.



A Note from Art Grant Coordinator Dianne Zemanek: As the current federal art grant comes to a close, I want to thank everyone who has helped increase art at Hoonah City School and our community over the last 5 years. Each contribution has made our students experience more and has stretched their experiences beyond the classroom walls to appreciate art that surrounds this amazing community, and sets a precedent for other communities to emulate. Gunalchéesh.
Dianne Zemanek

Note: Visit the website hoonahkids.org to see many of the art activities that have taken place during the past five years.

Spring Offerings at HCSD

by Julian Narvaez, HIA Environmental Education Coordinator

Hunter's Education

As part of a Hunter's Education Course, middle and high school students learned about gun safety, the parts of a firearm, basic shooting/hunting skills, ethical harvesting, understanding wildlife, and basic survival skills. Students learned from online manuals in Ms. Kruger's class and then attended an in-person practical training. At the in-person training, they learned how to load different rifles and shotguns, used decoys to talk about ethical shot placement, and took a shooting test.

Firearms remain integral to life in Hoonah, from bear protection to subsistence hunting. This training cultivated respect, responsibility, and leadership among students, preparing them to serve as future role models. Thank you to Mike Kelly from Alaska Department of Fish & Game and Rebekah Sawers for putting on the practical course, and to the Hoonah City Police Department for providing assistance.



Seal Workshop

Through a partnership with HIA and the RASOR* program, middle school and high school students worked with local hunter Bob Hughes and visiting scientists Dr. Todd O'Hara, Dr. Ellen Chenoweth, and Rosie Cunningham to learn about the harvesting of seals as food. First, the students met with Dr. Ellen in the classroom. During this session, the students reviewed seal anatomy, discussed seals as knowledge bearers when it comes to ocean conditions, and reviewed the Tlingit names of seal body parts. They learned how, through examining the body and taking samples of certain organs, communities can learn about what is happening in the ocean environment.



samples that were taken from the seal were sent to Texas A&M to be tested for possible heavy metals, contaminants and other nutritional data. These results will be shared with HIA and passed on to the community of Hoonah.

The next day students walked down to the City Dock to look at the organs up close and help O'Hara and Chenoweth sample organs. At the same time, Bob Hughes taught the students how he hunts seal and how to harvest the fat, meat, and hide of the seal.

The event closed out at Kéidladee Park, where the community was invited to gather for a seal oil rendering workshop taught by HIA's Darlene See and Breylan Martin.

The meat and oil were distributed to elders and will be used in future HIA events. The organ



*RASOR: Rural Alaska Students in One-Health Research

Federal Subsistence Board

High school students earned college credit learning to navigate the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB) process as part of an UAS class (BIOL194). They traveled to Anchorage and heard proposals to change hunting and fishing regulations on federal lands like the Tongass National Forest.

Dietrich Lewis, James Erickson, and Jora Savland first met afterschool for classes at the Haa Toowú Latseen, HIA's Computer Lab. They learned how proposals get made, how regional advisory councils operate, and who votes on the board. Then, at the meetings in Anchorage, students' assignments included networking with federal/state employees, interviewing professionals, following the proposals, and providing their own testimony in front of the board about "subsistence" issues of concern to them.

Board members noticed how well the students represented their home communities and were impressed by their polished testimonies. It was a great opportunity to practice public speaking, networking, and to engage in the wider scientific, political, and professional community. Thank you to the professors and organizers Heather Bauscher, Ashley Bolwerk, and Kim Armendariz as well as HIA employees Catherine Bolton, Jackson Combs, and Julian Narvaez for helping make it happen.



Close Up 2026, by Mary Walker (Chaperone for the trip)

From April 12th to the 16th, Kyah Martin and Dietrich Lewis visited Washington D.C. through the Close Up Foundation's week-long program. For this year's trip, students had to write a pre-trip essay and complete volunteer/fundraising hours to be able to travel. Once in D.C., they had the opportunity to visit the nation's capital and historic monuments while learning more about civics and how to impact their communities through politics.

On Capitol Hill Day, students from across the country got the opportunity to meet with their senators and ask them questions about the pressing issues in their home states. Lisa Murkowski was the visiting senator, and answered questions concerning trawling, teacher retention, and PFD's.

Kyah and Dietrich were excited for the opportunity to visit the capital and to see multiple monuments up close. They were engaged in nightly discussions about the day and what they learned, and worked with other students in a mock congress the night before meeting their senators. Students were respectful and able to debate conflicting views without being overly antagonistic. It was an influential and highly informative week that we hope they carry into their adult lives.

Dietrich's comments: "The Close Up trip was a really cool experience. My favorite part was seeing all of the monuments and memorials in person because it's a lot different than just seeing them in pictures or learning about them in class. Another highlight was getting to meet Lisa Murkowski and hear her talk about issues that affect Alaska. I'd definitely recommend the trip to other students because it's a fun opportunity to learn more about government and history while also getting to experience Washington, D.C. for yourself."

Note: the Close Up trip was funded by the Hoonah Indian Association.



Intensive Week-- This year marked a return to "Intensive Week" at Hoonah City Schools, and it was a great success. Students had the opportunity to explore a variety of hands-on, skill-based options, including:



Forestry Practices in Southeast Alaska



Commercial Fishing Skills



Moccasin Making



Fly Fishing



Emergency Trauma Technician (ETT) Training

We are proud of the effort, curiosity, and engagement our students showed throughout the week. Thank you to everyone who helped make this first Intensive Week possible. Big shout out to: City of Hoonah, Alaska Sea Grant, Hoonah Indian Association, Yakutat School District, Jennie Wheeler Moccasins, Trout Unlimited, and Kenya Skaflestad.

We're excited to continue offering more opportunities for our students in the future. Stay tuned for more intensives next year!

Commercial Fishing Skills

During their "Intensive Week," students had the opportunity to take the AK On Board Commercial Fishing Skills and Marine Safety course. Students gained the knowledge, skills, safety training, and confidence to succeed in a commercial fishing career. They took part in "man over-board" drills, got hands on with boat maintenance, knot tying, splicing, marine radios, and charts. They also learned



about some of the soft skills required for the career such as seafood handling/quality, working as a team, cooking on a boat, and basic financial literacy. Participants over 16 earned an Alaska Marine Safety Education Association (AMSEA) Drill Conductor Certification. Thank you to Gabe Dunham from UAS and Alaska Sea Grant for bringing the course to Hoonah, Stan Savland for giving students a tour of his boat, and Jeromy Grant and Jackson Combs for their assistance!



Forestry Training

Forestry training was also offered during the "Intensive Week." Students that signed up gained training to carry out projects including deer monitoring, stream restoration, and forest management for wildlife. They collected important environmental data that affects our community and learned to use field maps, clinometers, and special measurement tools. They also explored the forest, worked on their tree identification skills, and practiced their nature sketching. The hope is that our youth grow to be the ones participating in data collection and management decisions that help shape the future of our forests.

Thank you to Ian Johnson and his Community Native Forest Partnership team for inviting the students to participate in their activities. It was great for our students to learn from and work alongside crews from Kake, Prince of Wales, Ketchikan, Angoon, Yakutat, Juneau, and Sitka.

ETT (Emergency Trauma Technician) Training Intensive

During Spring Intensive Week, our students completed a 40-hour certification course, gaining critical skills in emergency response and trauma care. ETTs are trained in hands-on, life-saving skills: CPR, wound care, bleeding control, and keeping someone stable until help arrives.

We are so proud to announce that 13 Hoonah City Schools students and their teacher (Elyn Kruger) are now certified Emergency Trauma Technicians (ETTs)!

Ninth grader Payton Smith, in writing about the class, said that she learned about what to do in scary situations, and what are appropriate actions to take to help someone, so that the patient doesn't get even more hurt while waiting for help to arrive. Payton wrote that, after taking the class, she knows that she definitely wants to work in the medical field in the future.

A huge thank you to Kenya Skaflestad for helping them earn this important certification and to HIA for providing the support to make our Spring Intensives happen.

Intensive Week in Yakutat

During Intensive Week, a group of Hoonah students traveled to Yakutat for week-long classes there. Middle School Teacher Whitney Noble was their chaperone. Classes offered in Yakutat were: Drama, Carpentry, Metalworks, Therapy, Moccasin Making and Fly Fishing. Maile McGraw, Dima Alexsieva, Charlie Jack and Ms. Noble created moccasins with Instructor Jennie Wheeler. Mitchel Michel, Tanner Howland, and Riley Neal represented Hoonah under the guidance of Trout Unlimited. They did fly fishing near 8 and 9 Mile in Yakutat. Ms. Noble said that it was wonderful to meet the members of Yakutat City Schools and they had a great week. She said many thanks to all the hard working teachers and instructors who participated in this set of Intensives.



Instructor Jennie Wheeler and Charlie Jack. Charlie's finished moccasins in front.

Charlie Jack's report on this experience: "I made a pair of moccasins while I was in Yakutat. While I was making them, one challenge I came across was sewing the moose hide. It was very tough. I had to figure out a technique which was pushing the needle on the table to get it through the leather. I learned how to bead and put together moccasins from Jennie Wheeler. I can take what I learned from this class and use it in the future so I can make moccasins for my kids and grandkids."

This Newsletter has been supported most recently with funds from the Art Grant. It goes back many years, having been started in 1986 as a component of the school's Native Education Program. The intent was to improve parent involvement by having a regular way to "get the word out" about what was happening at school. We hope it continues to serve that purpose. As the year ends, it's time to thank all those who have contributed to this project. Gunalchéesh to all who have submitted articles, photos, comments and suggestions throughout the year. A special gunalchéesh to the volunteer proofreaders, Sally Dybdahl, Karen Mills and Miryam Francis, who have faithfully checked each issue for errors. Gunalchéesh to Sally for being the volunteer Circulation Manager as well. Finally, gunalchéesh to all of our readers, near and far. We hope everyone has a safe summer.

Daphne Wright, Newsletter Editor



Activities Wrap-up Report from A.D. Jessie Martin

Another fun, exciting, and successful year has come and gone. The 2025-2026 school year brought our activities participants and athletes to new places, both literally and figuratively.

Our cross country team showed out with a multi-year State qualifier, Easton Ross. Our High School Volleyball Team placed 3rd overall out of 8 teams, in a division with some schools 5 times our size! They traveled to Dillingham, coming home with a 2nd place trophy---and a sportsmanship trophy to boot! We had three Region champs in Wrestling, with one podium qualifier at State; this program has had so much success in just a few years since bringing it back.

Our Middle School Basketball Teams represented well, in upper divisions with schools much larger than ours; the future truly is bright! Our Robotics Team qualified for State yet again, showing their competitive drive, despite losing multiple team members mid-season.

The High School Boys and Girls Basketball Teams traveled to Fairbanks, competing with some of the best 1A teams in the state. We hosted Shaktoolik at home, and our girls traveled to Newhalen (Illiamna.)

At Regionals, our Hoonah Braves Girls Team won the Championship trophy for the first time in 29 years---what a feat!

More recently, the Middle School Volleyball Team took 2nd overall in the co-ed division at the Juneau tournament.

I have seen a lot of growth and a ton of success with all of our participants, athletes and programs through the year. We are extremely thankful for all of the support received from the City of Hoonah, Hoonah City Schools, our community and beyond. Our student activity participants and student athletes are more driven in the classroom and benefit directly from that support! See you all in a couple of months for another great year to come.

Activities/Athletic Director Jessie Martin



Back: Arian Gonzalez, Leelind Campbell, Kamari Lafferty, Mia Smith, Addison Smith
Front: Marcie Williams, Keicee James, Carter Hinchman, Ravin Jewell, Jacklynn Williams

Middle School Volleyball Report

We had another fast & furious Middle School Volleyball season, fielding 10 student athletes for the 2025-2026 year. The Braves competed in a co-ed division against five other teams (Yakutat, Gustavus Red, Gustavus White, Thunder Mountain, and Haines). We went 3-2 in pool play, but managed to make it to the Championship against Haines - ultimately placing 2nd overall on the weekend. Carter Hinchman made the All Tournament team. We had no 8th graders this year, so I'm hopeful for a good return next season! Go Braves!

Coach Jessie Martin



The Hoonah Lady Braves Basketball Team is busy fundraising for summer camps, and they are about halfway toward meeting their fundraising goal for the year. Be on the lookout for upcoming fundraiser events happening in May and June. The girls will be busy hosting bake sales, car washes and working at local community events to round out their fundraising efforts before heading off to their first camp in June. Thanks to all who have supported the girls at their fundraisers. If you miss out on the fundraising events but would still like to support the team, reach out to Coach Marlene Duvall at 907-419-4625, to make a donation or find out other ways to support these girls!



Huna Heritage Foundation News

A Journey of Connection: Highlights from the 2026 Clan Workshop

The 2026 Clan Workshop was a resounding success, flowing smoothly with a spirit of connection and community that filled the Alumni Gym. The air was thick with the power of shared history as a catamaran arrived filled with people from Juneau to join our wonderful Hoonah community for this intergenerational gathering. We were all students at heart; the gym was packed with people eager to learn, testament that Indigenous knowledge is true cultural expertise we long for. By providing a modern setting to connect with the stories of our collective past, the workshop served as a vital piece of community building, reminding us all that we are one people with a rich shared history.

Central to the event was the practice of Tlingit oratory, described as the "lifblood of our culture." Local students and visitors, alongside Xéetli.éesh Lyle James and his high school Tlingit language students from Juneau, practiced this poetic art form that serves as the foundation for our ceremonies and social structures. This gathering was a living example of *Woosh ji.een* (working together), as the community grounded itself in the ancestral values that foster strength and *Wooch Yáx* (balance) within the school and beyond.

A truly unforgettable highlight of the workshop was the Spruce Root Weaving panel, which brought together a staggering 206 years of collective experience and wisdom. As the lights shone down on the intricate spruce root baskets and the faces of our Hoonah weavers, it created a special glow that will be remembered by everyone in attendance. This panel, featuring expert



weavers Sonya Johnson, Lisa Andersson, Marjorie Peterson, Chris Greenwald, Darlene See, and Ernestine Hanlon Abel, provided a rare and intimate look at an ancient art form that has recently been deemed endangered, underscoring the vital importance of passing this knowledge forward.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS – FOREST STEWARDS ACADEMY IS COMING!

The Huna Heritage Foundation is thrilled to invite young explorers, ages 6–10, to a fun, hands-on, camp experience in July 2026. Following the path of our previous Salmon Protector and Berry Camps, we are branching out to explore the incredible knowledge and science of Hoonah trees.

Get ready for two days of discovery, creativity, and outdoor adventure! Campers will dive into:

- **Tree Science:** Exploring tree lifecycles, habitats, and how they support the forest ecosystem.
- **Traditional Knowledge:** Learning the Tlingit names for local trees and hearing ancestral stories about our relationship with the land.
- **Hands-on Exploration:** Using scientific tools like magnifying glasses and field journals to document discoveries.
- **Cultural Arts:** Creating tree-themed crafts and experiencing Tlingit music and language.

We want to support our youth to grow as stewards of our land, combining Indigenous wisdom with Western science to understand why trees are vital to our community's health and future. Stay tuned for more details and specific dates as July 2026 approaches! For more information, please contact the Huna Heritage Foundation.

Earth Day Clean Up 2026 Report

We had another successful Earth Day City Clean Up on April 25th, with 75 Litter Busters signing in. Partners for the event were Hoonah Recyclers, Hoonah Indian Association, Icy Strait Point, City of Hoonah and the U.S. Forest Service. Other sponsors were ALPAR (Alaskans for Litter Prevention and Recycling), and Alaska Marine Lines. We had a large delegation of Icy Strait Point workers and a group of girls from the High School Basketball Team with their coach, Marlene Duvall.

Students at Hoonah City Schools went out on Wednesday the 22nd (the official Earth Day*) and cleaned up by the school and around town. They collected about 90 pounds of trash!

After Saturday’s Clean Up, we enjoyed a lunch of burgers and hotdogs grilled by the HIA crew (gunalchéesh to Ian Johnson, Mary Walker and Paris Donohoe), along with salads and chips. We drew names for prizes, provided by Hoonah Recyclers, Icy Strait Lodge and Lorrie Scales.

Gunalchéesh to the following for donating food for the event: Hoonah Indian Association, Debbie Picken, Paul & Sally Dybdahl, Glenda & Bob Hutton, and Frank & Daphne Wright.



High School Girls Basketball Team and Coach Marlene Duvall



ISP Crew of volunteers, ready to go. Their group was 35 strong!

Gunalchéesh to all who took part in the Clean-up, and to everyone who will continue to keep Hoonah looking bright and litter-free!

**Did you know: Earth Day was founded by U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson on April 22, 1970, as a national "teach-in" to protest environmental degradation following the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill. An estimated 20 million Americans participated in the first event, leading to the creation of a new federal agency to tackle environmental issues, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA.)*

Hoonah Recyclers News:

Thank you to the following for donating metals to our cause:

Natalie Vaz

Anonymous

Paul and Sally Dybdahl

Jessie and Jeremy Martin

Mark and Jenea Prpich

Arely Wright

Debbie Picken

Marj and Floyd Peterson

Karen Mills

Miryam Francis

Minnie Dalton

Daphne and Frank Wright

Howard Diamond

AYS Kids

Icy Strait Tournament

Chichagof Tournament

Thanks for Help: Brian Bitz & Paul Dybdahl

We will have **Incentive raffles** this summer for \$50 store cards from Hoonah Trading & Colette’s: every time you donate or sell metals, we will put your name in the jar. Watch for advertised openings for some Saturdays or Sundays this summer.

Thanks to **Alaska Marine Lines** for transporting our Recyclers’ Van to and from Seattle freight free. This allows us to turn a small profit, which we use to support community events and groups, such as the Girls Varsity Basketball team, who participated as a group in Earth Day Clean up again this year. We also made donations to support the Icy Strait Basketball Tournament and the Chichagof Classic Tournament this year. Both events had recycling containers at the concessions booth and collected cans for us.

K-3 Beach Day 2026

Ahhh, Beach Day! Possibly the best field trip a class can have! This year, the K/1 and 2/3 classes walked along the city beach, discovering all sorts of fun tide pool animals as we do each year!

Cockles, gumboots, and crabs - oh my!



Dates to Remember for the 2026-2027 School Year:

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| First Day of School | August 17 |
| Holiday (Labor Day) | Sept. 7 |
| Thanksgiving Break | Nov. 25-27 |
| Winter Break | Dec. 21-Jan. 1 |
| In-service | Jan. 4, 2027 |
| First Day Back to School | Jan. 5, 2027 |
| Spring Break | Mar. 22-26 |
| Last Day of School | May 14 |