



Standing 8 feet tall, the new poles welcome everyone to the school.

Below, QCSS student Jhett Collinson takes part in the pole raising ceremony. Photos & story by Alex Rinfret.

A large crowd assembled outside Queen Charlotte Secondary this spring for an emotional ceremony that saw the school raise an eagle and a raven pole, the first poles erected in Queen Charlotte for a couple of decades.

The eight-foot tall poles, carved by Jimmy Jones and assistant Jason Goetzing, and by Garner Moody, were carried out by teams of students and staff and fitted into place at the school's entrance. For many of the witnesses attending the ceremony, the pole raising represented another step forward on the path of reconciliation. The school now has a Haida name, Gidgalang Kuuyas Naay, and has embraced many initiatives to recognize the cultural heritage of its Haida students, who make up more than half the student body.

the poles are a powerful gesture on their own, Deavlan said incorporating more Haida culture into the curriculum improves outcomes for students. "Research tells us students are going to do better academically if their culture is recognized and honoured," he explained.



The pole raising ceremony was the culmination of two years of work and planning, and it involved pretty much every student and staff member in the school. Principal Deavlan Bradley said the Raven pole was completed with the help of an ArtStarts grant, but it was a challenge to find funding for the Eagle pole. A community effort raised some money, and Northern Savings Credit Union also contributed, as did the village of Queen Charlotte and the Skidegate Band Council. A \$10,000 Gwaii Trust Community Innovation grant provided the final amount. With its goals of promoting culture and education, the project was a natural fit for the Gwaii Trust. And while

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