

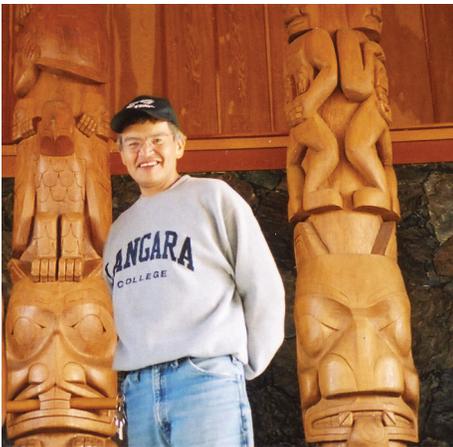
Langara College crosses generations

Originally from New Aiyansh, a small community near Terrace, BC, the Wright family has an incredible story to share about how their experiences at Langara College have enriched their lives.

Betty and Max Wright's hometown of New Aiyansh is the centre of the Nisga'a Nation community. Max spent many years there as a logger and owned a booming contract on the local river, but he eventually wanted to explore other career options. Betty also aspired for training beyond residential school and had a strong desire to prove to herself and to the Department of Indian Affairs that she was not "unteachable", something she felt after attending residential school.



Max, Betty, and Alvin Wright with members of the New Aiyansh community.



Alvin at the New Aiyansh Recreation Centre.

They decided to move to Vancouver in 1989 to pursue their educational goals and settled into a tiny one bedroom apartment. Betty enrolled in a hairdressing program at Vancouver Community College, while Max began the Recreation program at Langara College. The valuable experience they gained carved a path for their son Alvin to walk down the same road a decade later.

The signing of the Nisga'a treaty in 1998 provided that the nation self-govern. Recognizing that education was a key priority, the Nisga'a community provided the means for Alvin to travel to Vancouver and pursue his studies. Like his father

he enrolled at Langara College. He was 40 years of age and enrolled as a mature student. Having never before left his home of New Aiyansh, culture shock was one of his key challenges.

The stress of cultural and environmental differences on top of a full course load led to Alvin confessing to an instructor that he was close to quitting. Langara College instructors met and after consultation with Alvin and the Band Administration, it was decided that his program would be extended over a three year period instead of the standard two years. Alvin appreciates the fact that he had an opportunity to attend Langara College for an extra year as he gained more education.

Experiences Alvin eagerly shares include participating in a five day outdoor trip to Pemberton with his Recreation class, and completing an internship at Killarney Community Centre. He was so appreciative of the mentorship he received from his supervisor at Killarney that he left the Centre an extraordinary gift – a five foot, hand carved totem created with the help of his entire community.

At an awards banquet, Alvin and another student were presented the Athletica

Crystaplex Scholarship for exhibiting the most dedication and improvement in the Recreation Diploma Program. "It was very exciting and emotional for me because I never expected it," confides Alvin.

Knowing the perfect job was waiting for him, Alvin returned home after completing his Diploma and now serves as the Recreation Director at the New Aiyansh Recreation Centre. His role includes supervising youth workers, the youth room and weight room as well as designing programs for all age groups.

The Langara College experience touched two generations in the Wright family. Alvin encourages students to ask for help when needed and to always have an open mind. "Never give up on what you are striving for," he says.

Alvin says that without the encouragement and assistance of the Langara College instructors he would never have completed the program. "They always had their doors open for students – I left with a little part of them."