

**NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC MEETING  
INFORMATION SHEET**

DATE: February 11, 2026  
TO: Strategic Directions Committee  
FROM: Brett Hancock, Director of Instruction, Priority Populations  
SUBJECT: Learning Alternatives Update

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## **Background**

Learning Alternatives provides a range of programs designed to support students and families, with most programs located at Woodlands Secondary School. Students are referred to Learning Alternatives to ensure program placement is appropriate, considering emotional, academic, and cultural considerations. The school serves approximately 300 students in Grades 8–12 and is projected to have 95 graduates this year. Approximately 50% of students identify as Indigenous, representing more than 30 Nations.

Learning Alternatives is staffed by 13 teachers, 1.4 counsellors, three full-time Child and Youth and Family Support Workers (CYFSWs), two additional part-time CYFSWs, five Educational Assistants plus one temporary EA, and a Snuneymuxw Elder who supports culture and wellness each Wednesday. Using an integrated, team-based approach to support diverse learners, the school also partners with a range of community agencies that provide services on site.

## **Discussion**

### **Indigenous Land & Learning**

Learning Alternatives has a Coordinator who works with the Indigenous learning team to support First Nations students. Indigenous ways of learning are integrated throughout this cohort-based program that puts cultural knowledge at the center of learning. Students participate in a variety of culturally based activities both at school and on the land. The team includes a teacher coordinator, Indigenous support teacher, EA and a language teacher. (Cohort size is usually 25-30).

### **Introduction to Trades (ITT)**

Intro To Trades is a hands-on program for students in grades 10–12 that blends classroom learning with practical skills. Students work with a Red Seal classroom teacher and various other trades people, engage in project-based activities, and complete meaningful builds—like constructing “Learning Studios” used by other schools in the district. (Cohort size is usually 16-18)

### **ABOUT (Alternative Based Opportunities United by Teamwork)**

**ABOUT** is a flexible, student-centered pathway to graduation with a focus on unique learning opportunities. It incorporates Indigenous cultural education and supports individual pacing and strengths.

It's rooted in teamwork and offers adaptability for learners who flourish with non-traditional schooling structures. (Two cohorts with approximately 25-30 per group). ABOUT is in the gym/cafeteria area which allows for easy access to self-regulation space and activities.

### **Senior Learning Alternatives**

Senior Learning Alternatives serves students (traditionally grades 10–12, expanded to include grades 8–12) and emphasizes academic flexibility, diversity, elective choice, and real-world experience.

Students can engage in volunteer and employment readiness opportunities while completing academic requirements in a supportive environment. (3 cohorts with 25-30 students per group).

### **Take a Hike**

Take a Hike is an alternative high-school program combining outdoor experiential learning, structured academics, and on-site clinical counselling. It engages youth through nature, adventure, and well-being practices to support graduation and mental-health outcomes.

Take a Hike is run in partnership with the Take a Hike Foundation and integrates community involvement and nature-based activities with academic course work. (Two cohort teachers with 12-14 per group and a clinical counsellor that is provided by TAH Foundation).

### **CROW (Mental Wellness & Supports)**

CROW (Creating Resiliency and Opportunities for Wellness) specifically focus on social-emotional and mental health support, indicating that wellness learning and resources are stitched into students' learning experiences (teacher with 12-14 students per cohort with a Child Youth Family Support worker supporting the class).

### **Adult Learning — Brannen Lake Correctional Center**

Learning Alternatives provides a teacher to support adult learners, four days a week, at Brannen Lake Correctional Center (this program has been in place since 2005).

### **Next Steps**

Learning Alternatives develops responsive programs that support youth not only in attending school, but in actively engaging as participants in their learning, their school, and their broader community. The programs evolve each year to reflect the changing needs of learners and will continue to adapt in response to the needs of the community.