



# Gwaii Trust Society

## GWAI TRUST CONTINUING EDUCATION GRANT

By David Archer

Wouldn't it be nice to know that a few more of next year's tuition expenses are covered? The Gwaii Trust Society's Continuing Education Grant program provides some financial relief for many Haida Gwaii students who face ever-rising fees for tuition and course materials. If you are planning the next steps in your education, whether your course is short (less than three months) or long (over three months), now is the time to apply for a grant.

### Emma Mitchell

One recent Continuing Education Grant recipient is Emma Mitchell, who has just completed her third year of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program at UBC's Okanagan campus. Emma is from Tla'al *Tlell*, and she received \$3750 to cover academic costs in 2020/2021.

Haida Gwaii is Emma's home, and one of the reasons



*Emma Mitchell, shown here in her nursing scrubs, received a \$3750 Continuing Education Grant from Gwaii Trust Society for the 2020/2021 academic year.*

she went into nursing is that she knows there will be opportunities to work on the islands or nearby.

She also sees the possibility of working as a travelling public health nurse in underserved communities across northern B.C. "What I like most about [the nursing] program is how you're really hands-on and in it from the start." Each year of her degree provides clinical experience, and this year she has been even more grateful for the in-person instruction. The nursing classes at UBC Okanagan were the only ones to gather for lab exercises during the pandemic.

The grant has made a huge difference in Emma's life. "When you're a student, and not having to stress about money, it makes it a lot easier to just do what you have to do," she says. Often, students entering post-secondary programs need to leave Haida Gwaii, which means housing and living expenses are an extra financial burden. Having funds to cover some tuition fees has been critical in allowing Emma to live on the mainland and stay in school. Since she knows people are supporting her, she also finds that the grant sparks a little extra motivation to keep her GPA up.

For the summer, Emma is working as a student nurse in Sechelt, B.C. Next year will be her fourth and final year, and she plans to graduate in Spring 2022. The Continuing Education Grant has supported Emma's schooling during all three years of her degree, and she has applied for the grant again this year as well.

### Lilsgidee Shawnae Robinson

Lilsgidee *Shawnae Robinson* from Masset is another grant recipient. She received a GTS Continuing Education Grant of \$1954.60 for the 2020/2021 school year. This grant has funded courses for Shawnae's Business Administration Diploma Program at Coast Mountain College. Shawnae and her family come from the Yahgulaanaas Raven clan of the Shark house. She has lived in Haida Gwaii most of her life and plans to raise her future children with the same Haida values she grew up with.

"This semester has been increasingly challenging for me financially," Shawnae says. In fall 2020, she decided to pursue the Business Administration Diploma Program.

She has faced more change since then. “In addition to this new transition, I discovered that I was pregnant in the middle of finals week [in December]. With this great news, I decided to continue to focus on my educational goals.” Shawnae then registered for five courses in the winter 2021 semester to ensure she could complete the program before her upcoming due date in August.

This has been an exciting but challenging year for Shawnae. It has been difficult to find the financial security that would allow her to focus on her education. But the Continuing Education Grant has provided relief, and Shawnae says she has “raised the bar” in her studies. The proof is in her grades. Last term, Shawnae earned a 3.998 GPA while managing numerous appointments “and trying to set [her] house up for this new bundle of joy.”

Shawnae expresses gratitude for the grant. “This grant represents to me an opportunity to build the capacity of our Indigenous communities, not to mention enhancing my prospects that will enable B.C. to meet its future economic and social development needs. Again, I would like to thank [Gwaii Trust Society for the] support and assistance, because of which I will be able to fulfill my educational goals.”

Shawnae’s message for students is simple: “If you qualify for this education grant, I would highly recommend you apply.”



Shawnae Robinson stands with her mother, Crystal Swanson Robinson, *kung-jaadaa, nan'aa sa laa xillawaa* (woman in the moon, one who brings good medicine). Photo credit: Council of the Haida Nation, Graham Richard

## Frequently Asked Questions about the Continuing Education Grant

### Who can apply?

Residents of Haida Gwaii, whether you’re a mature student, recent high-school graduate, or full- or part-time student.

For the purposes of these grants a resident is defined as someone who has lived on Haida Gwaii for the past 24 consecutive months. A student who has left Haida Gwaii to attend school but otherwise maintains their residency is considered a resident.

### How much money is available?

Up to \$3,750 a calendar year, or a maximum of five courses to a maximum of \$750 per course. Funding will be based on the actual cost of your course and materials.

### Application deadline

Applications are accepted throughout the year. For long-

term courses your application must be submitted no later than two weeks into the semester or course. For short-term courses it must be submitted no later than the day before the course starts.

### Who can I contact at Gwaii Trust?

Contact program coordinator Pam Hill at 250 559 8104 or email [ceg@gwaiitrust.com](mailto:ceg@gwaiitrust.com)

### Is it hard to apply?

Not at all. “I found it a very straightforward process,” says Emma Mitchell. “I’ve found everyone I’ve worked with to be very helpful, and they want you to get your funding [...] I’ve always been supported when I’ve needed it.”

To review the grant criteria and apply online visit us at [www.gwaiitrust.com/grants](http://www.gwaiitrust.com/grants)

## Join our Youth Board!

### Deadline to apply: August 15, 2021

The Gwaii Trust Youth Board promotes quality youth programming and a vibrant youth community across all communities of Haida Gwaii.

For more information visit [gwaiitrust.com/youthboard](http://gwaiitrust.com/youthboard) or contact: [joey.rudichuk@gwaiitrust.com](mailto:joey.rudichuk@gwaiitrust.com) / 250 626 5139

## Upcoming Deadlines

Food Sovereignty: Sep 1, 4pm

Arts Grant: Oct 1, 4pm

Youth Grant: Oct 1, 4pm

Due the 1st of each month at 4pm (no intake Aug or Dec):  
Community Innovation  
Arts Workshops  
Arts Mentorships

[gwaiitrust.com](http://gwaiitrust.com)