

Old Koksilah School

Location: 5213 Koksilah Frontage Road, Koksilah, BC

Formally Recognized: 2009/06/10

Other Names: Historic Koksilah School, Old Koksilah School Museum

Construction Dates: 1914



Front View of Schoolhouse



Side View of Schoolhouse

Statement of Significance for Old Koksilah School

Description of Historic Place

The Old Koksilah School is a two-storey gable-roofed school building, with a covered front porch and a prominent flight of steps. This school is located on a level fenced lot in Koksilah, just off the Trans-Canada Highway, outside of the town of Duncan, British Columbia. Situated at the corner of Charlotte Road and Chaster Road, this historic place is confined to the building footprint.

Heritage Value

The Old Koksilah School has significant heritage value as a symbol of ideas that were important to the community. The school also provides a representation of the Cowichan Valley's community social development, specifically as the shift from farming to education became a cultural norm. In such, this historic place also creates a link to the early public education movement of the community.

The Old Koksilah School was built in 1914 by Robert Mclay after a fire claimed the original schoolhouse. The one-room schoolhouse movement began to deteriorate during the mid-twentieth century as transportation improved and larger community public schools became the norm. As a result, the Old Koksilah School was closed in 1964. The school was restored and re-opened in 1995 as the Old Koksilah School Museum, in an effort to preserve the heritage of the original Koksilah community and help educate those on Canadian life in the early twentieth century.

The interior of the school has been expertly preserved, with all the original elements dating to the time of construction in excellent condition. The interior has been replenished with original and restored artifacts that display the historic evidence of use. These artifacts include, but are not limited to, original maps, pens, ink wells, desks, and books; all which are related to its original use as a schoolhouse.

The Old Koksilah School is reminiscent of the early public education movement, where small one-room schoolhouses were built within walking distance of many communities throughout North America. This movement was a key element in the urban development of the Cowichan Valley, as communities began to shift a focus from farming to education, eventually leading to growth in infrastructure, economic development and social programs. As relic of this process, the Old Koksilah School is linked to the earliest social development in the area.

Architecturally, this rural schoolhouse is unimpressive but it has a distinct similarity to the momentous amount of one-room schoolhouses built throughout North America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As an architectural style historically used throughout the Cowichan Valley, there is significant heritage value in the well-preserved condition of the building's character.

As one of few well-preserved schoolhouses left on Vancouver Island, the Old Koksilah School provides a rare link into the cultural development of the early island farming communities. One of the oldest buildings in the area, the school is a prominent symbol of one of the early residents' important ideas in the growth of their community.

The building's prominent location, at both an intersection and just off a major highway, makes it a significant historical landmark to the community.

Character-Defining Elements

Key elements that define the heritage character of the Old Koksilah School include:

- The building's visible location on a corner and off a highway
- The historical integrity of the interior including the original wainscoting, wood floors, blackboards, and windows
- The school's architectural exterior character, reminiscent of one-room schoolhouses
- The historic evidence of use
- The building's simple massing, traditional rectangular form, and elevated gabled entrance
- Its current use as an educational tool for the community



Restored Interior of the Old Koksilah School, facing the front of the school

Historical Information

Timeline

- 1914. The Koksilah School is built to replace original Koksilah School.
- 1914. (-1964) The Koksilah School is open for 50 years.
- 1971. (-1972) School reopened.
- 1987. Koksilah School Historical Society is formed and leases the Old Koksilah School from the school board.
- 1995. Opening of the Old Koksilah School Museum.

Important Facts

- The Old Koksilah School replaced the original Koksilah School (built in 1911) that was destroyed by fire in 1914
- The Old Koksilah School taught grades 1 to 8

Current Information

Function

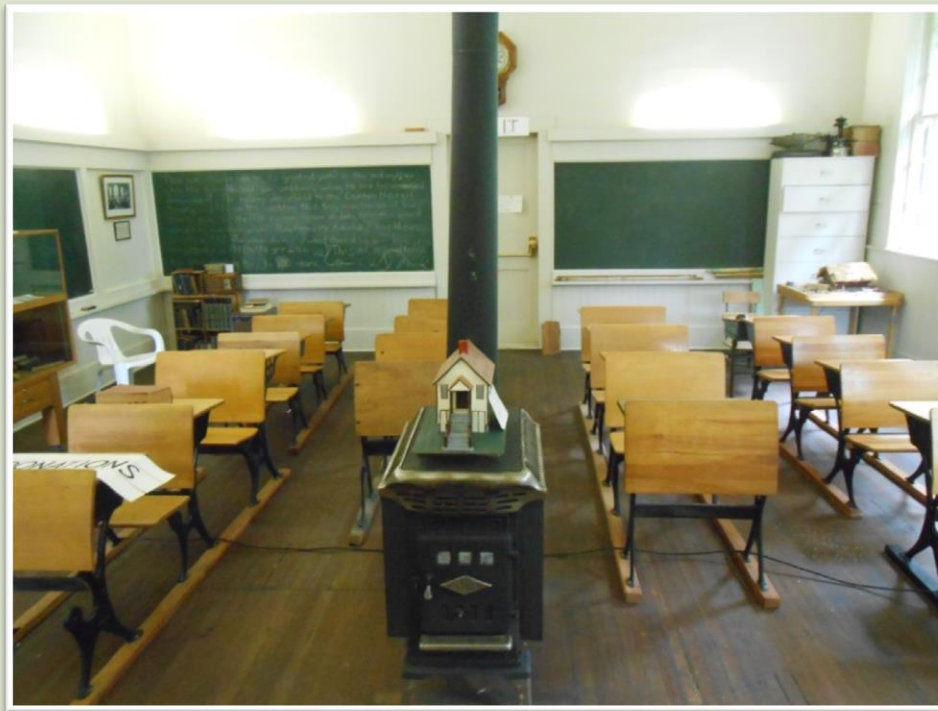
- The Old Koksilah School is currently being used as a museum; known as the Old Koksilah School Museum.
- This museum is run by the Koksilah School Historical Society.
- For more information visit: www.koksilah.iwarp.com/.

Construction

- In 1988-1989, the restoration began with new front steps and a fence
- In 1992, restoration continued with new shingles, exterior painting, and new back staircase
- In 1993, the basement was completed with kitchen and bathroom facilities and a large meeting area
- In 1994, a stage was built in the schoolroom on the original stage location
- In 1995, the interior renovations were completed

Heritage Status

- The Old Koksilah School is provincially recognized for its heritage value on the BC Register of Historic Places.



Restored Interior of the Old Koksilah School, facing the back of the school