

University of Victoria 2011 Field School in the Gulf Islands

Emily Benson



The University of Victoria (UVic) held its second archaeology field school in the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve (GINPR) this past summer (May 30 to July 8, 2011). The project was directed by Duncan McLaren, and took place with the support and assistance of Parks Canada and the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group (HTG), and in discussion with Tsecyum First Nation. This year we had eleven students participate, one teaching assistant (Jenny Cohen), two research assistants (Emily Benson and Phoebe Ramsay), and two interns, Simon Smith, Jr. (Tsartlip First Nation) and Lisa Wilson (HTG). Fieldwork built upon the research conducted during the 2010 field season, and again had a cultural resource management focus.

Location

The field school primarily took place on Portland Island, located just south of Saltspring Island within the traditional territories of several First Nations, including HTG First Nations (Cowichan, Lake Cowichan, Layackson, Halalt, Penelakut,

Stz'uminus) and WSANEC First Nations (Malahat, Pauquachin, Tsartlip, Tsawout, Tsecyum). The name for the island in SENĆOŦEN is *SXEĆOŦEN*, meaning "you can see where your mouth is" (Elliott 1990). The entire island and several of its adjacent islets are managed by Parks Canada, within the GINPR.

There are numerous First Nations' heritage sites on Portland Island, including two former settlements, Shell Beach (1657T, DeRu 26) and Arbutus Point (1659T, DeRu 28). Several smaller shell midden sites have been documented, as well as sacred sites, cedar and Douglas fir culturally-modified trees (CMTs), intertidal lithics, small cultural depressions, and a clam garden. Several of the larger sites were recorded by Cassidy et al. (1974) as part of a provincial archaeological survey of the Gulf Islands in the 1970s. Parks Canada has surveyed and recorded many additional sites in the last five years under the GINPR Archaeological Resource Management Program (Parks Canada 2010). The 2010 and 2011 field schools

have helped to address site management concerns and research questions initially identified as part of this process.

Archaeological Research and Training

Student training in both 2010 and 2011 involved studying archaeological and ethnographic literature relating to the Gulf of Georgia region, and training in excavation methods, artifact and faunal identification, and field recording methods. A major focus of the field school has been on investigating intertidal zones for intact archaeological deposits. These areas hold great potential for increasing archaeological knowledge of the Gulf Islands. Much of the archaeological research that has taken place in the region in the past has focused on shore-line shell middens dating to within the last few thousand years. Less visible, intertidal deposits dating to before this period have generally not been studied.

Figure 1 (above). Emily Benson recording site 1665T with a total station. (Photo by Jeff Miller)

However, Fedje et al.'s (2009) sea-level curve for the Gulf Islands suggests that sea levels were lower prior to this time, with the result that many earlier sites are likely to be located in the intertidal zone. This research has great potential to expand our knowledge of the history of the area. It also may contribute to more effective cultural resource management in the Gulf Islands, as it suggests that the testing below beach deposits and in intertidal zones should become a routine part of cultural resource management (CRM) surveys and site analysis in the region.

Over the last few years, research conducted by Parks Canada and the UVic field schools have identified intact archaeological remains and features under beach deposits in intertidal zones. During the 2010 field school intact house floors were identified under thick sandy beach deposits on Sidney Island using a combination of ground-penetrating radar and excavation. These features are located in proximity to surface pit house depressions. This year, much of our fieldwork took place at Arbutus Point, where students excavated 1 x 1 m units beneath beach deposits in the intertidal zone. Cultural materials from these excavations were analyzed through an archaeology lab course at UVic this fall. Several radiocarbon samples were analysed, showing that cultural deposits in the intertidal zone date to between 5,000 and 900 radiocarbon years before present. Obsidian found at Arbutus Point was recently analyzed with x-ray fluorescence and was found to come from Oregon. Becky Wigen has also been helping with faunal analysis.

Cultural Resource Management

In addition to traditional excavation skills, students learned skills valuable for CRM, such as surveying, site identification and recording, mapping sites using a total station, and identifying management recommendations for archaeological sites. Several sites were mapped in detail during the 2011 field season. Students were trained on the total station and mapped sites in small groups and with a research assistant over the summer. Royal Cove (1658T), a shell midden site with intertidal features and artifacts, was mapped in detail to assist in management recommendations for Parks Canada. A site at the north end of the island, just west of Royal Cove



Figure 2. Phoebe Ramsay and Jenny Cohen screening at Arbutus Point. (Photo by Jeff Miller)

(1665T), was also mapped in detail to assess midden erosion, and to record the locations of features and CMTs. In addition, students mapped a shell midden site at Active Pass (Mayne Island), and more information was collected to build on the map data from Arbutus Point.

Respect for Heritage Sites

The importance of respecting local protocols for conducting research around heritage sites was emphasized throughout the field school. Participants were instructed in appropriate conduct around heritage sites by elders, August Sylvester, and Dave Bill, prior to going into the field. Readings for the field school included the HTG study, *A'thut tu tet Sul'hweentst [Respecting the Ancestors]: Understanding Hul'qumi'num Heritage Laws and Concerns for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage* (McLay et al. 2008) and readings on WSANEC history. Tseycum First Nation members and Parks Canada staff also visited Arbutus Point and met

with the field school while excavations were in progress.

Field school students also informally engaged in public education about respecting cultural heritage sites with park visitors. The high visibility of both our excavation site and camp at Princess Bay, and information posted at both sites, encouraged conversation with campers, hikers, boaters, kayakers, and summer camps about the project and the importance of protecting heritage sites.

Emily Benson was a student on the 2010 UVic field school, and a Research Assistant during the 2011 season. She is currently undertaking an MA at Simon Fraser University.

References Cited:

Cassidy, Stephen C., M. Cranny, and Phil Murton. 1974. Report of the Gulf Island Archaeological Survey. Permit Report 1974-1. Victoria: Report on file at the Archaeology and Registry Services Branch.

Student Lab Course Projects (Fall 2011)	
Amelia Rogers	<i>Analysis of lithics From Arbutus Point</i>
Jennifer Head	<i>Analysis of shell fish from column sample 1659T5E</i>
Seonaid Duffield	<i>Analysis of plant macrofossils from 1659T7, and fish remains from Arbutus Point</i>
John Pratt	<i>Analysis of mammal fauna from Arbutus Point</i>
Maia Ludwig-Ives	<i>Analysis of bird fauna from Arbutus Point</i>

Table 1. Student projects based on field school research, undertaken during Fall 2011.



Figure 3. Dinner-time at campsite, Princess Bay. (Photo by Stella Wenstob)

Student Field School Research Projects (Summer 2011)	
Seonaid Duffield	<i>Report on Edible Plants from Arbutus Point and Shell Beach; Unit Report for 1659T5C</i>
Justin Fritz	<i>Report on Ethnographic Land Use and Unit Report for 1659T7.</i>
Kristine Gretzinger	<i>Report on Sea Level Change in the Gulf of Georgia; Unit Report for 1659T5D</i>
Jennifer Head	<i>Report on Lithic Types from the Gulf Islands; Unit Report for 1659T6A</i>
Desiree Ingram	<i>Report on Subtidal and Intertidal Excavations in the Gulf of Georgia; Unit Report for 1659T5E</i>
Jeff Miller	<i>Report on Archaeological Land Use Patterns in the Southern Gulf Islands; Report on Site Mapping at Royal Cove (1665T)</i>
Amelia Rogers	<i>Summary of Radiocarbon Dates from Gulf Island Archaeological Sites; Unit Report for 1659T5A (Arbutus Pt.)</i>
James Rogers	<i>Report on Shellfish Use and Importance; Report on Mapping Project at Royal Cove (1658T)</i>
Brittany Walker	<i>Vegetation History of the Southern Gulf Islands; Report of ESP and Auger Testing at Arbutus Point and Shell Beach</i>
Stella Wenstob	<i>Report on Beach Berm formation; Unit Report for 1659T5B</i>
Adam Wharram	<i>Background Research on Locarno Beach; Unit Report for 1659T8A (Arbutus Pt.)</i>

Table 2. Student projects based on field school research, undertaken during Summer 2011.

Elliott Dave, Sr. 1990. *Saltwater People*. Saanich: School District 63.

Fedje, Daryl, Ian D. Sumpter and John R. Southon. 2009. Sea-levels and Archaeology in the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve. *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 33(2):234-253.

McLay, Eric, Kelly Bannister, Lea Joe, Brian Thom, George P. Nicholas. 2008. 'A'lhut tu tet Sul'hweentst [Respecting the Ancestors]: Understanding Hul'qumi'num Heritage Laws and Concerns for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage. In *First Nations Cultural Heritage and Law: Case Studies, Voices, and Perspectives*, edited by C. Bell and V. Napoleon, pp.150-202. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Parks Canada (Fedje, Daryl and Ian Sumpter). 2010. 2009-2010 Archaeological Resource Management Programme: Gulf Islands National Park Reserve of Canada. Report on file, Cultural Resource Services, Western and Northern Service Centre, Parks Canada Agency, Victoria.