

Gerald Merner ASBC Fieldschool Scholarship Winner 2015

Elisa Moes

I would like to preface the story of my field school experience by thanking the University of Victoria Department of Anthropology for the nomination, and the Archaeological Society of BC for awarding the Gerald Merner Archaeological Society of BC scholarship.

On April 20th, four UVic students, including myself, ventured to our field school taught by Dr.

teams of four or five set out each day with their task at hand. I spent my first week in the inter-tidal zone, alternating between (loving and hating) chasing and being chased by the tide. It was here that I found my first piece of shiny obsidian- tiny but heavy with inference. The next week I found myself deep in the dense, steep forest on some of the islands across Fitzhugh sound, taking notes, belaying buckets of soil to the



Figure 1 - Dr. Darcy Mathews giving a tutorial on CMT recording. (photo: E.Moes)

Duncan McLaren of University of Victoria, and located at the Hakai Institute's Calvert Island field station on BC's central coast. For the first two weeks, we had the amazing experience of being involved with Dr. McLaren's ongoing research into the deep history of human habitation on the central coast. Because of the specific scheduling of field work, we found ourselves in the field before having taken the lecture and lab portion of the field school. This resulted in a bit of learning on the fly, but with patience of our team leaders and a hard work ethic it was an easy to integrate. Four

crew down at the ocean side and screening auger samples. My third week telescoped us into the more recent history of habitation in the area and with guidance from UVic professor, Dr. Darcy Mathews, we recorded culturally modified trees, scouted for clam garden sites, and mapped shoreline gardens and rock rings.

I realize that the Hakai Institute experience does not represent the average field school event. My more seasoned team members assured me that having two chef inspired meals per day, room cleaning, and hot showers might not materialize on my next foray into the field. The place is inspiring- not only for its west coast style accommodations and beautiful environs but for the company it attracts.

You may have breakfast with a geologist studying the Kwakshua Channel coastal watersheds, have lunch with students from the Bella Bella high school and dinner with a group of biologists studying otters and their relationship to kelp. In the evenings we gathered for presentations by the visiting researchers. UVic graduate student, Aurora Skala, discussed her work with Heiltsuk and Wuikinuxv rock art using D-stretch technology, a group from Japan introduced their comparative studies between Jomon and prehistoric Pacific Northwest cultures. Dr. McLaren presented a summary

of his research and the results of the field work we were currently working on. The highlight was the 13,000+ year-old footprints located a half meter deep where the sand meets clay at the tideline of EjTa-4 on Calvert Island. I wasn't a part of the crew that worked on that excavation unit, but I did have an opportunity to visit the site. There was a moment that took my breath away when I registered the child's footprint in the dark sandy soil– it refocused my field experience back on to the People who lived on the central coast and not just to the objects they left behind. I knew what I expected from a field school- the opportunity to apply some of the theory we work so hard to memorize and recite while at university. The gift of this field school has been my heightened awareness of the anthropology behind the archaeology. Thank you!

Bio: Elisa is currently a fourth year Anthropology major with a focus on archaeology of British Columbia and South America. She will graduate August of 2016. The field school has affirmed her love of archaeology and her future will be spent integrating this passion with a new career.



Figure 2 - Excavation site tidal flats at- EjTa- 15 site Pruth Bay, Calvert Island (photo: E.Moes)