

ARCHAEOLOGY NEWS

BC Field School Reports: How'd the 2008 season go?

Tla'amin-SFU Field School in Archaeology & Heritage Stewardship

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Craig Rust, and Michelle Washington**

During June and July 2008, Simon Fraser University and Tla'amin First Nation embarked on the first year of a collaborative heritage program focused on the Sunshine Coast and the Malaspina Complex, in the heart of Tla'amin First Nation Territory. The Tla'amin-SFU Field School in Archaeology and Heritage Stewardship is the central element of this collaborative program. The field school focused on Tla'amin sites and landscape use in two places, Kleh Kwa Num (Scuttle Bay) and Kahkaykay Reserve (IR 6, "Grace Harbour"). The field school was co-directed by Dr. Dana Lepofsky of the SFU Archaeology Department and Dr. John R. Welch of SFU Archaeology Department and the School of Resources and Environmental Management. While the Tla'amin people have extensive oral knowledge about their history and landscape, their territory is largely unexplored archaeologically. This collaboration creates a special opportunity to bring together oral traditions and information from archaeological and archival investigations.

The Kle Kwa Num excavation took place on a small rocky promontory in Scuttle Bay at the north end of the Tla'amin Reserve (Sliammon IR #1). The site was recorded in 1976 by Acheson and Riley and was designated DISd-6. We excavated six 2x2-m units to a depth of approximately 20 cm during our seven week field season. All deposits were screened through 1/8th-in mesh, and all bone and artifacts were collected. In addition, we collected 32 two-liter flotation samples from the units. In the lab these samples were processed to retrieve smaller remains, such as seeds, charcoal, and the small animal bones (smelts and herring head parts). Coring of the site revealed that sometime in the pre-contact past, people laid down shell over much of the bedrock and natural soils to build up a flat terraced area. Elsewhere, the shell deposit contains whole and broken shell, indicative of both food processing and ancient structures. We do not yet know precisely the age of the first use of the site. However, starting with the memories of community members and moving back in time we can say that as late as the 1940s, multiple "smoke houses," drying racks, or both were built on the northwestern part of the promontory and that these kinds



Field school student Crystal Sawyer (center) screening with Sosan Blaney (left) and Stephanie Williams (right) from Paha Kwagen-Yik Meh Thote (One Spirit—Helping Others), one of our partner programs in the Tla'amin community

of structures had been there since at least the late 19th century.

In addition to the seven weeks of excavation at Kle Kwa Num, our team spent 10 weeks surveying the Grace Harbour and Cochrane Bay areas in the southern end of Desolation Sound Marine Park. This part of the field school was run by Sarah Johnson and Craig Rust, with the field school students rotating from the excavation to the survey on a weekly basis. The Grace Harbour area was first surveyed in the late 1970s by Acheson and Riley (1976). Their survey covered an area several times larger than ours and focused primarily on shoreline areas. This project builds on their earlier work by focusing on a small part of the area and investigating the intertidal zone, shorelines, and uplands more intensely. We set up camp on the Kahkaykay Reserve (IR



The SFU Team. Front (left-right): Craig Rust, Michael Fox, Annette Simpson, Meaghan Hackinen, Stephanie Reczka, Dana Lepofsky, Panda, John Welch, Natasha Lyons; Back: Sarah Johnson, Katherine Young, Melissa Cutting, Mindy Hebron, Alisha Skelton (missing: Megan Brummitt, Crystal Sawyer)

6) and traveled by boat to the various survey areas. We used a combination of percussion coring, shovel testing, and 27 km of pedestrian survey to locate, map, and redefine the site boundaries of many of the thirteen recorded sites in our focus area. We also spent part of our time at Grace Harbour producing high precision maps of EaSe-11 and EaSe-5, the largest and most complex sites we encountered. The survey area has been heavily impacted by logging and other industrial uses, however we were still able to find many traces of Tla'amin people interacting with and using the landscape over the centuries.

Another exciting development this summer was the beginning of an interdisciplinary applied research project to investigate the boulder and cobble features found in the intertidal zone throughout the Tla'amin territory and beyond. Dana Lepofsky brought together a team of marine geologists, geochemists, and biologists to study what were initially described by non-Tla'amin as clam gardens and fish traps. Working with the field school and our Tla'amin partners, the group began their research with three days of boat-based exploration on the lowest tides of the summer. The features appear to be more variable in form and function, as well as more widespread in geographical and intertidal zone distribution than originally thought. There is significant potential for combining archaeological documentation of these features with experimental studies to understand how these intricate systems worked and whether their functions can be revitalized.

These exciting scientific advances aside, the most important result of the 2008 field season was the partnerships that were built between the SFU archaeology department and Tla'amin individuals as well as community organizations and branches of government, including the Cultural Com-

mittee, Treaty Society, and Tla'amin Community Health. Working together with our colleagues from Tla'amin we were able to increase awareness of, and knowledge about, Tla'amin history both within the Tla'amin community and in regional, academic, and resource management communities. We are happy to report that in July 2008, the Band Council voted unanimously to continue its support for the field school in 2009 and beyond. We look forward to continuing the collaborative planning and implementation of this project and to developing personnel, databases, and other tools appropriate for the long-term stewardship of Tla'amin cultural heritage.

Bibliography

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(All photos taken by 2008 field school crew)

Sarah E. Johnson is a MA candidate in the Archaeology Department at Simon Fraser University. In 2005 she received her BA in anthropology from Western Washington University, Bellingham WA, and is a member of the Samish Indian Nation of Anacortes WA. Dana Lepofsky and John R. Welch are both Professors in the department and co-directed the field school. Craig Rust, a PhD student at SFU, directed much of the research at Grace Harbour where his PhD research is based. Siemthlut (Michelle Washington), a graduate of University of Victoria, is the Land Use Planning Coordinator for the Sliammon Treaty Society and a tireless advocate for the protection of her communities cultural heritage.



Newly identified intertidal stone feature located between the Cochrane Islands