

# FIELD SCHOOLS of 2006

## Reporting on the Latest Contributions in Northwest Coast Archaeology from UVic. Field Schools

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and  
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The summer of 2006 saw the University of Victoria's (UVic) archaeological research investigations range across nearly the entire coast of British Columbia.

On the south coast, in Nuu-chah-nulth territory, the University of Victoria was invited to participate in the Huu-ay-aht Archaeological Project at the site of Huu7ii near Bamfield, British Columbia. The project was funded by the Huu-ay-aht First Nation, and was directed by Denis St. Claire (Coast Heritage Consulting) and Alan McMillan (Simon Fraser University). Fourteen UVic undergraduate students spent six weeks at the village of Huu7ii, where they worked with members of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation, professional archaeologists, and volunteers (Fig. 1) to excavate 18 two-by-two meter units within the largest site. Students earned credit for two courses; one of which focused on field methods in archaeology, and the other which examined the history of archaeological research in Nuu-chah-nulth territory. Both courses were instructed by Nicole Smith.

The Huu7ii archaeological site possesses clearly defined house platforms and is the village from which the Huu7ii7ath

(Huu-ay-aht) derive their name. Preliminary excavations in 2004 indicated that people had been living within the immediate vicinity from approximately 5,000 years ago until AD 1600. The main village component was occupied during the most recent 1500 years of occupation. Today, ten flattened rectangular platforms along the rainforest floor indicate where the most recent houses stood. Excavation units were placed within the largest house (measuring 35 m long by 17.5 m wide), which is believed to have been occupied by high status individuals, including the chief. Numerous features and artifacts were found over the summer which will allow for spatial reconstructions of household activities. In addition, artifacts previously unseen on western Vancouver Island were recovered within the house floor deposits. Such finds will allow for interesting comparisons between household and traditional midden excavations on the west coast. In addition to the household excavations, one two by two meter excavation unit was placed on a raised

beach terrace behind the recent village site. Previous excavations indicated that this area was occupied at times of higher sea-level between 3,000 and 5,000 years ago. Significant finds in this location included the presence of a lithic technology not found in the more recent village deposits, and numerous whale skeletal elements.

In addition to the daily excavations and course work, the UVic students heard lectures from St. Claire and McMillan, as well as other prominent researchers working on western Vancouver Island including: Dr. Gay Fredrick (Pacific Identifications Inc. and Malaspina University College); Alexander Mackie (Archaeology Branch); Russel Markel and Spencer Wood (Ph.D. candidates, Department of Zoology, UBC); Iain McKechnie (M.A., SFU, 2005); Dr. Marlow Pellatt (Parks Canada); and Dr. Audrey Dallimore and Dr. Randy Enkin (Geological Survey of Canada). St. Claire also led an ethnographic and archaeological tour through the Broken Group Islands in Barkley Sound, and a separate trip to the nearby

Figure 1. The Huu7ii site crew at its largest point. Photo includes UVic. fieldschool students, hired archaeologists, Huu-ay-aht band members, volunteers, and guest

village of Kiix7in (prominent Huu-ay-aht village site with standing house posts and beams; designated National Historic Site). Students and crew members were also honoured by a formal visit from Chief Councilor Robert Dennis and other members of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation who spoke of the importance of the Huu7ii project and shared a selection of traditional songs and dances.

Situated off the northern coast of British Columbia, as part of ongoing research in the Haida Gwaii archipelago, this year's team of researchers included project directors Dr. Quentin Mackie (UVic), and Daryl Fedje (Parks Canada), crew members Tom Greene (Haida Nation), Ian Sumpter (Parks Canada), Al Mackie (B.C. Archaeology Branch), MA graduate Martina Steffen (UVic), Adrienne Marr (consulting archaeologist) and MA students Cynthia Lake and Adrian Sanders (UVic) - at different intervals. More specifically, this team's research was focused in the Gwaii Haanas Park territories, located in the southern portion of the Haida Gwaii archipelago.

Objectives for this summer's research were threefold. Firstly, two weeks were spent surveying 'high potential' karst limestone geological formations with the intention of increasing known cave sites with potentially productive sedimentary deposits of archaeological interest (Fig. 2). As part of our surveying methodology the team was hoping for the assistance of LiDAR mapping of large tracts of landscape. As complications had it that this year's survey methods constituted tromping deep into the well forested Gwaii Haanas park territories, looking at elevation-specific terrain - fuelled by human power.

Secondly, a week's visit to Collison Bay on the east coast of Moresby Island was made in order to excavate an inter-tidal site first discovered by the Haida Gwaii research team in 2004. An assemblage exceeding two hundred lithic artifacts, consisting of flakes that tended to be large with complex dorsal surfaces and simple platforms, and cores made of what appears to be a dacite material were recovered from inter-tidal deposits. No micro-debitage was present in the archaeological record.

The time period estimated for site use is between 9,450 - 9,400 BP, based on paleo-shoreline reconstructions (Fedje et al 2005). Making for unique research conditions at this site was the low tide cycle dur-

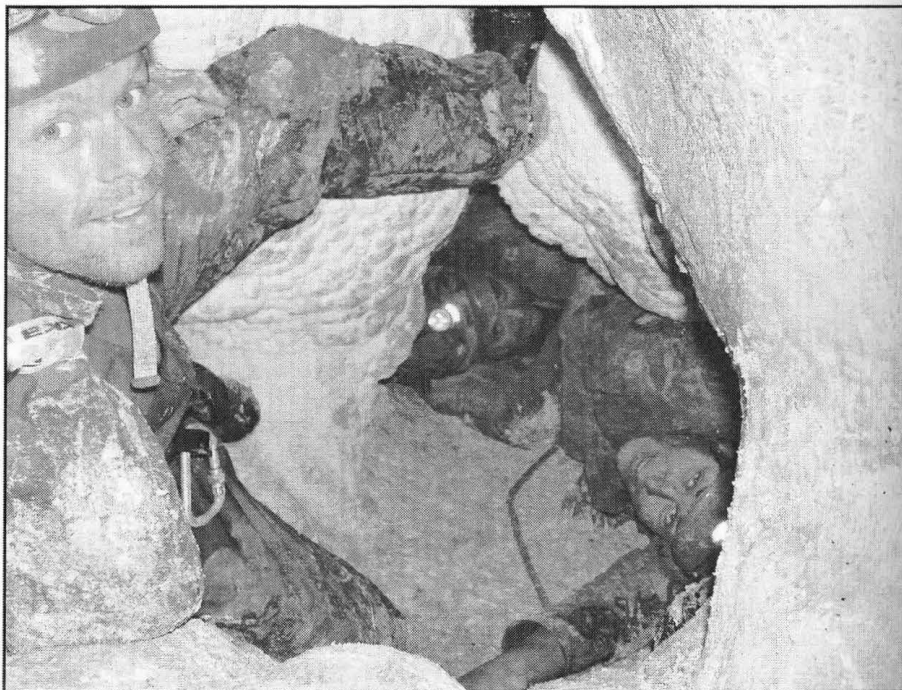


Figure 2. From far to near: Quentin Mackie, Martina Steffen and Adrian Sanders slither through a phreatic tube carved by the melting glaciers from a previous ice age, in search of sediment-containing caverns with archaeological potential on Huxley Island, Haida Gwaii (Photo by Daryl Fedje).



Figure 3. Early morning inter-tidal excavation at Collison Bay, Moresby Island has Daryl Fedje and Quentin Mackie 'lighting the way', while Cynthia Lake and Adrian Sanders excavate (Photo by Al Mackie).



ing research, forcing excavations to take place daily between 3 am and 10 am (Fig. 3).

Thirdly, our final two weeks were spent excavating the Gaadu Din Site on Huxley Island. Excavation set-up and take down was rigorous, requiring hauling generators, fuel, hose, screens, and other excavation gear deep into the forest and up two steep benches. Cave excavation requires unique ways for dealing with logistical issues relating to methodology of archaeological excavation. In order to preserve the unique cave environment so suited to preservation itself, all screening took place outside the cave. This required that all excavated sediments be removed using a bucket-into seal bag-onto a climbing beanie and rope system before being manually hauled up out of the cave. From here, the soil was screened using spray hoses that were fed with water from a waterfall located higher up the mountain, filling an open seal bag connected to several hundred meters of garden hose using gravity alone as force. Cave excavations offer physically challenging working conditions in a damp and cold (5-8 degrees Celsius) climate, where movement on a hard and sharp rocky surface often took the form of crawling on hands and knees.

Still, the work was incredibly rewarding. These efforts yielded several interesting specimens, adding to the paleo-species list extirpated from Haida Gwaii sometime between the Late Pleistocene/Early Holocene transition and the historic period (see Fedje and Mackie 2006). Notable mentions for this region and time period discovered in cave contexts are the large amount of brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) and salmon (sp?) specimens, several canid (sp?) teeth, and two deer (*Odocoileus* sp) cranium specimens from separate caverns. Once proper analysis is complete, the assemblage of zooarchaeological remains recovered this summer will combine with the existing data set to provide a better spatial and temporal resolution to the relationship between a variety of fish, bird, and large and small mammal species in respect to humans living in the area. This latter point is made clear through the recovery of two bifaces; one leaf shaped point made of bone and the base of another point made of stone along with a flake from 2004 work, and a retouched blade tool (Fig. 4) discovered in situ from cave deposits in

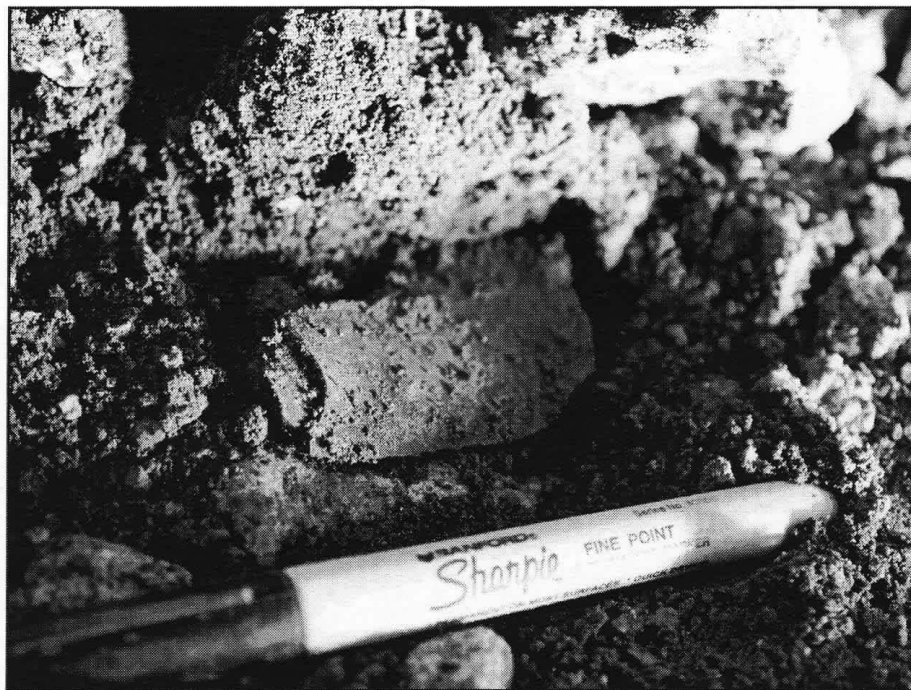


Figure 5. Retouched blade-like flake showing worked edges. Artifact excavated by Al Mackie in cave deposits at the Gaadu Din site (Daryl Fedje).

context of large faunal remains in 2006.

Across the Hecate Strait on the Dundas Island Group, as far north as coastal B.C. extends, was Duncan McLaren, a UVic MA graduate now working on his interdisciplinary Ph.D. Duncan McLaren has been undertaking research in association with the Dundas Island Group archaeological project. His research focuses on the creation of a sea level curve for the Dundas Islands, identifying relict shorelines, and undertaking archaeological prospection on those shorelines.

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A recent graduate in anthropology from UBC in 2006, Adrian Sanders has begun to adapt back to academic life pursuing an MA degree at the University of Victoria after spending the summer conducting archaeological research on Haida Gwaii and cycling through Central America raising awareness of climate change issues with friends and fellow explorers Jonathan and Timothy Harvey ([www.vancouvertovancouver.com](http://www.vancouvertovancouver.com)).

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Nicole Smith recieved her Master's degree from the University of Victoria in 2004.

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