

**Meagan Gough**

**THEN/HiER UFV Exchange**

**April 9<sup>th</sup>-April 30<sup>th</sup> 2010**

For my THEN/HiER Exchange, I travelled to British Columbia to learn about how First Nations oral history sources are being used in courses across disciplines at the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV). Drawing upon my own multi-disciplinary research and background which incorporates approaches from Indigenous history, oral history, and applied anthropology, I was eager to learn about how First Nations oral histories and traditions are integrated into curriculum at UFV across the disciplines of history, anthropology and Indigenous studies, all of which have strong departments at the University. There are multiple UFV campuses in the Fraser Valley, located within traditional Stó:lô First Nation territory, so I was also eager to learn about the integration of Stó:lô cultural history into course curriculum, Stó:lô community-based research



initiatives, and public history programs undertaken by UFV which would benefit the Stó:lô people and other First Nations groups in the region. These topics are of particular interest to me as my PhD dissertation is in Comparative Indigenous History/Anthropology and is based on

working with Stó:lô Elder and Grand Chief Archie Charles of nearby Seabird Island to record and write his life history.



I was welcomed by History Department Head Robin Anderson, who made me feel very at home. I attended an excellent fourth year seminar in Canadian Native Military History run by Dr. Scott Sheffield. Dr. Sheffield's course was exemplary – he engaged students in the little known historiography of the experiences and treatment of Canadian Native Veterans so as to challenge existing perceptions and stereotypes of the Native warrior as soldier. His work clearly provided the students with a critical awareness of the issues by allowing them to understand how macro level policy decisions shaped local and personal histories. Sheffield's class is one of the only such courses offered in Canada, and it was an honour and a joy to sit in. As one of his mature Stó:lô students remarked in the class "this is the best history class I have ever taken."

I was able to meet with Anthropology Professor Doug Hudson to learn about the uses of oral history in his courses as well as new developments in community based research initiatives with First Nations peoples in the Fraser Valley. Professor Hudson has conducted anthropological field work around the world, as well as worked collaboratively with multiple First Nations communities in Canada. His work contributes to the development of community based programs and courses to encourage the enrolment and continued education of the extensive First Nations populations in the Valley.

Of particular interest for me was the cutting edge multi-disciplinary Certificate in Indigenous Studies: Maps, Films, Rights, and Land Claims offered by the UFV Geography department for the second time this year. The course is uniquely structured in three interrelated sections taught individually by experts in the fields of geography, history and anthropology. Maps, Films and Histories of the Stó:lô, section one of the course, is co-taught by Dave Schaepe, Senior Archaeologist and Co-Director of the Stó:lô Research and Resource Management Centre, and Sonny McHalsie, cultural research director for the Stó:lô Nation. With the goal of the session to immerse students in Stó:lô issues and the Stó:lô cultural landscape, concepts of Stó:lô *Sxwôxwiyám* (“oral history” or “traditional story”), *Shxweli* (“Life” or “Spirit Force”) and *S’ólh Téméxw* (“our world”) are explored in a classroom setting as well as in an applied setting during Sonny McHalsie’s Halq’eméylem place names tour throughout *S’ólh Téméxw*. The second part of the course, Films, Histories and Land Claims, is taught by Canada Research Chair in Aboriginal studies at UFV, Hugh Brody. The third part of the course, Maps, Territories and Land, is taught by Ken Brealey, Head of the Geography Department at UFV. Professor Brealey also incorporates a field component to his section of the course, including an exercise in ground truthing Indigenous landmarks or sites and hands on experience in analog land use and occupancy mapping.

The annual UFV Heritage Fair was underway during my stay and I was happy to learn about this wonderful event held by the University in which 120 students in Grades 4–9 present their Canadian history projects at UFV, which are then adjudicated by members of the History Faculty. The Heritage Fair is part of a national initiative to encourage youth to celebrate Canada’s history and heritage and is an extremely popular event which draws local politicians, children, faculty, and elementary teachers alike.

UFV was recently voted in a *Globe and Mail* survey as delivering the best public University teaching in BC, and based on my exchange experience working with faculty and learning about the development of curriculum intended to meet the needs of local First Nations communities, I would strongly agree. With a much anticipated Indigenous studies BA Honours degree forthcoming, the UFV dream of further Indigenizing the academy is coming true. My time spent at UFV gives me insight into a hopeful future for research and teaching which incorporates oral history as key component of First Nation’s cultural knowledge and practices into academia. I look forward to the opportunity to work with faculty and scholars at UFV more in the future.

Thank you to all those who made this exchange experience possible.

Sincerely,

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