



FNEL 489H 2017:

Progress Report

We wish to thank the Heiltsuk community for welcoming and allowing us to work in partnership on their ancestral and unceded territories.

Wuálas ġiáxsiša!

*“The trip to Bella Bella taught me so much about the right way to go about this work,”
Annie Guerin*



The First Nations and Endangered Languages (FNEL) undergraduate students that visited Bella Bella from June 12-17, 2017 participated in this unique experience to both support Heiltsuk community members in their existing language and culture documentation projects, and put into practice some of the teachings and skills that they had learned at UBC through FNEL and other classes regarding protocol and technical documentary skills.

The group consisted of Bridget Chase, a Linguistics major and minor in Creative Writing who is also working on a Masters of Business Management via dual degree; Ben Chung, a double major in Linguistics and FNEL; and, Annie Guerin, a FNEL major. Dr. Mark Turin was our faculty member and mentor and provided both direction and expertise in working with community, augmenting our productivity and spirit. Our goals were to respectfully work with the Heiltsuk Cultural Education Centre and the Bella Bella Community School to assist with efforts to revitalize the Heiltsuk language and to aid in whatever ways we could in our short week up north.



(Taken off Instagram @ubc_arts; (clockwise) Annie, Ben & Bridget; Photo by Mark Turin at Bella Bella Community School; 6/12/17 at Bella Bella Community School)

Our work was largely technical, and while students from the School of Library, Archiving and Information Studies (SLAIS) documented and archived the existing materials, we sought to reopen older media to update and digitize these powerful pedagogical tools. Our focus turned quickly to the alphabet chart illustrated by Shirl Hall and compiled by linguist, Dr. John Rath.

During our stay, Bridget worked tirelessly to code a new digital alphabet chart through a modernized, user-friendly web page, while Annie and Ben edited existing audio, recorded new



audio for incorporation into the new site, and worked to digitize photos and illustrations, many of which would accompany the new chart. In addition, Annie worked alongside syr from SLAIS to record Shirley Windsor, Liz Brown, and then later in the week also Connie Tallio and Rory Housty reading language materials to add a new dimension to the Heiltsuk storybook series and calendar.

Ben installed the new Heiltsuk Unicode keyboard input system on numerous personal and school computers, as well as at the Heiltsuk Integrated Resource Management Development (HIRMD). This keyboard, developed last year by Aidan Pine and Dr. Turin with input from Heiltsuk community members in Bella Bella and the Lower Mainland, supports users to freely incorporate Heiltsuk into their digital outlets, thus enabling its users a new means to indigenize the Internet.



(Inter-generational teachings; Rory Housty & Liz Brown; Photo provided by Annie Guerin; 6/15/17 at Bella Bella Community School)

Additionally, Ben visited two language classes to learn and understand the methodologies used currently in the classroom. Later, he shared his written observations with the language teaching staff, and in particular with Fran Brown and Michelle Brown. This short report was subsequently provided to the former principal, Jan Gladish. In this endeavour, Ben was able to learn more about theory in practice, language pedagogy and provide some simple feedback to the program.

Overall, our FNEL group's time in Bella Bella was extremely productive and positive; although at the end of the week, there were still a number of tasks that had not been completed on account of the brevity of our stay. We have continued to work on these since returning to Vancouver.



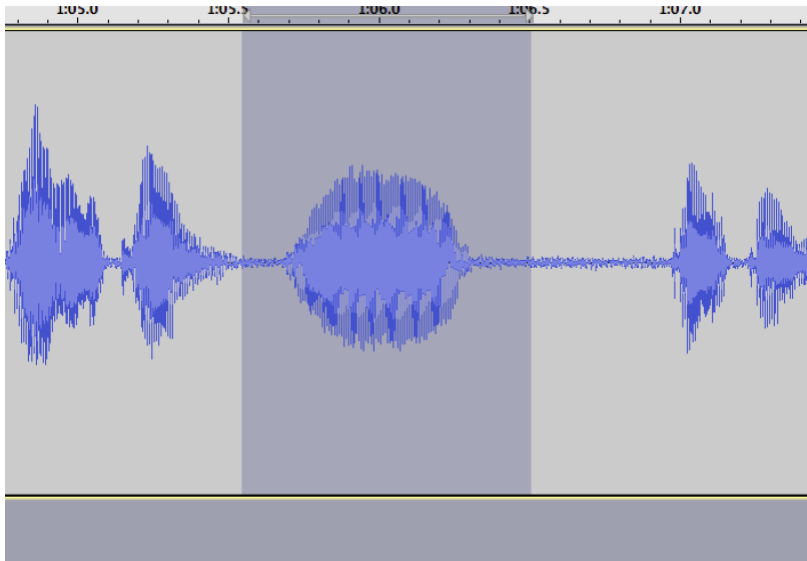
(Equipment used; Photo provided by Annie Guerin; 6/15/17 at Bella Bella Community School)

We have organized our outstanding tasks into three larger assignments: (1) complete the online alphabet chart with operational pages for all audio available; (2) upload and format the Heiltsuk storybooks for language users with all accompanying audio and images, and most importantly, (3) prepare a hard drive with all unprocessed and processed data to be returned to the community along with relevant metadata.

In addition, Bridget will continue to work with Jennifer Carpenter to update the Heiltsuk Cultural Education Centre website to her specifications. Currently, Annie is editing and segmenting recorded audio for Housty and Tallio. For the earlier recordings, Annie has compressed the audio, minimized white noise and amplified quality in either Audacity or Logic Pro software. After these steps, Annie will add the audio to WordPress and link it all to the chart itself. To expedite this process, Ben will also aid in audio editing. Bridget is troubleshooting and reformatting the WordPress site on which this audio will be hosted. Our estimate is that all alphabet charts will be operational by early August. This ongoing work is being supported by Dr. Turin's research grants, and we meet with him regularly to review the work and provide updates.

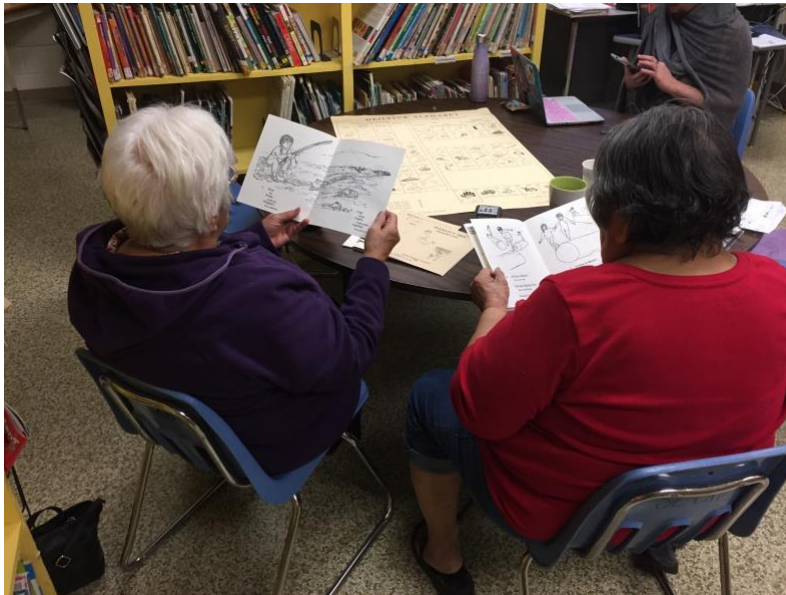
Ben has also digitized the Heiltsuk calendar provided by Jennifer Carpenter as well as 4 out of the 7 storybooks, and has been in touch with Robyn at the HCEC to kindly request that the remaining pdfs be sent via email for digitization. Annie will continue editing the audio that accompany the stories as well as the calendar dates. We have also asked for guidance on the most appropriate manner to present the storybooks and audio digitally.

We remain very aware and mindful of the importance of correct protocol; we wish to develop a tool and platform for the community where the creative license remains with the HCEC and the BBSC in terms of formatting, presentation, and security.



(Screenshot of Audacity featuring [m] from Dr. John Rath; Photo provided by Ben Chung; Taken 6/13/17 at Bella Bella Community School)

Currently, all stories are password protected on WordPress and will not be published prior to discussion and approval of format. We predict that these pages will be completed by the end of August or early September.



(Productivity; Shirley Windsor (left) & Liz Brown; Photo provided by Annie Guerin; taken 6/14/17 in Bella Bella Community School Library)



Finally, Ben has taken on the management of the data (both edited and unedited), and will collect what has been digitized and recorded in order to be prepared for return to the community. To facilitate this task, workflow includes providing Ben with whatever material needs to be edited or is in use (including images, video, and audio recorded by SLAIS students). These materials are then edited and then sent to Bridget to format for web delivery. Finally, the processed material is returned to Ben to label and store on a new hard drive we have had Dr. Turin purchased for us. We approximate that the hard drive will be ready to send back by the end of August.

We are grateful to the Heiltsuk community for our time in Bella Bella and were inspired and deeply motivated by the community members—and now friends—with whom we worked. We hope that we will be invited back and can continue the momentum which we reached when we left. A continuing relationship with the Heiltsuk community is paramount in our commitment to ongoing reconciliation with Indigenous communities, and we treasure your time, energy, and trust in us. Thank you.

List of all UBC faculty and students who participated in FNEL and SLAIS courses in Bella Bella in June 2017:

FNEL:

Annie Guerin
Ben Chung
Bridget Chase

SLAIS:

Claire Forsyth
Kristin Kozar
Michelle Kaczmarek
syr

Faculty:

Kim Lawson
Lisa Nathan
Mark Turin