

## Students study aspects of life in Kitkatla in field school



Shaun Thomas photo

Caroline Butler (left) and Charles Menzies (right) lead up this group of students who spent three weeks living and studying on the coast. (L-R) Lainie Schultz, Marina LaSalle, Rodrigo Nunes, Solen Roth, Natalie Baloy and Jennifer Wolowic are all graduate students at the University of British Columbia.

By Brooke Ward  
The Northern View

Sep 05 2007

Led by Prince Rupert raised University of British Columbia associate professor of anthropology, Charles Menzies, and UNBC's Caroline Butler, six graduate students from the UBC anthropology department recently completed five weeks in the area as part of a field school program.

Five of the students were primarily based in Kitkatla for their research projects which covered the spectrum from food and sport to gardening and consultation. Recounting their personal experience with the hospitality and understanding of the people of Gitxaatla, the students strung together a portrait of the honourable traditions and ways of life of the people of Kitkatla during a presentation in Prince Rupert on August 27.

Menzies has been involved in field school projects in the area for years, saying that this is a very unique area. And while the participating students take away many valuable lessons from their immersion in the Kitkatla way of life, it is the information gathered that proves to be valuable to the community itself, according to Menzies.

“It’s really about keeping information alive within communities,” he said, explaining that much of the information is intended to provide resources and materials to allow teachers to offer a more localized education base through the development of curriculum.

The sixth project, conducted by student Jennifer Wolowic, revolved around the youth that frequent the Planet Youth facilities at the Friendship House in Prince Rupert. Giving the youth cameras and free reign to photograph as they would, Wolowic was given an all-access path to the youth in the community “often seen in public places but rarely looked at.”

Of hundreds of photos snapped by the youth, twenty-two exceptional pictures were selected and named by the students, and are on display in a storefront on Third Avenue. Exploring photography’s power to create community reflection, Wolowic encouraged the youth involved to think about what they could say visually.

What Wolowic discovered was a group of youth facing the adversity of isolation and negative stereotyping, who remained loving and trusting nonetheless.

“They’re some of the most accepting, strong people I’ve ever met. If you give them the time of day, they will open their hearts to you,” she said.

“As they saw people’s responses to the photos it really got them thinking about what they wanted to say. These kids are not used to being asked their opinions and an amazing connection came out of it.”

Wolowic will be back later this month to begin working on a youth driven collaborative documentary with the youth from Planet Youth, providing a means for them to share their ideas and opinions.