

# Students speak positively about NIC culture program

By Debora Steel  
Ha-Shilth-Sa Reporter

**Tsaxana**—A program at North Island College offered in the small community of Tsaxana near Gold River is challenging students while helping to move them closer to realizing their dreams.

Tim Johnson is one such student. He is taking Cultural Heritage Resource Management 120 and 130, while upgrading his English proficiency and getting credits for English 11 and 12.

The cultural heritage courses teach about Aboriginal people around the world, and help to develop an understanding about cultural tourism products and creating businesses around those products.

Johnson has worked in the past with some of Mowachaht/Muchalaht's tourism-related business, and he hopes to contribute his newly-acquired skills to one day grow those and other business owned by the nation.

Geraldine Mark came out of the Kuutis program offered by the Nuuchah-nulth Employment and Training Program, which she credits with building her self-esteem and providing inspiration to continue her studies.

"Kuutis helped me become a better person and want me to strive," she shared.

Mack said she joined the cultural heritage program as a way to upgrade her English skills. She describes the program as intensive, but a great benefit of the program's small class size is that the students have learned a lot about each other and have bonded to work as a supportive and cohesive team on their many projects.

Dorothy George is from Ahousaht and has learned about land and marine life and the history of the resources in the



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**An intense learning experience awaited participants in the Cultural Heritage and Resource Management program offered through North Island College**

territory, she said.

Another enjoyable component of the courses for her has been learning the First Nations' mythology around animals. She has also shared what she knows about her community while learning things she didn't know, like how the modern-day Ahousaht came to be by the amalgamation of six tribes.

John Amos also described the courses in the semester as intense," but in a good way."

He said it was great experience for his work in Friendly Cove, where he hopes to one day establish a restaurant.

It gave him a lot of insights, he said, and it was exciting to learn about the history of not only his nation, but the nations of others.

Having been out of school for about 18 years, Amos said it was good to recon-

nect and relearn what he had forgotten in the English program.

Francine Savey graduated more recently in 2007 and the cultural heritage course caught her eye because she'd always been interested in First Nations studies.

She admits that the courses presented a lot of work, but she is having fun in class and learned a lot. For example, she's learned that First Nations have come a long way since the days of the ancestors, in good ways and bad.

Imelda Maquinna said the course was

fun and she liked being in it with everyone.

Michelle James said she's an entrepreneur at heart and wants to one day open a chumus store with a little extra product, like selling First Nations' art work.

Yvonne Murphy and Candace Savey round out the small group. Candace recommends the course to others, if it is to be offered again. It is still in the pilot stage and being adapted and modified so the goals of the group can be reached.

The students credited their instructors with understanding their unique needs and the pressures of adult family life. Many of the student have children that require their attention.

Roz Latvala worked on the grant to set up the program offered through the college. She teaches the English courses and acknowledges the students' goals to improve their English skills. She has enriched the essay writing and research paper components of the courses.

Ros Bradford teaches both the culture courses.

On the day that Ha-Shilth-Sa attended the class, North Island College's director of Aboriginal Education was also in attendance. Vivan Hermansen said the cultural heritage program was developed six years ago, prompted by the leadership of the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nations around the time that Yuquot was recognized as a national heritage site.

She said that the courses will conclude with a two-week placement in a tourism business or cultural interpretation or cultural heritage operation.

Funding for the program came from the Ministry of Advance Education.