



HAIDA GWAI
HIGHER EDUCATION SOCIETY

This past Fall 2017, the Haida Gwaii Higher Education Society (HGHE), in partnership with many, piloted the Haida Gwaii Semester in Reconciliation Studies. This program was designed with the hope of creating dedicated time and space for post-secondary students to explore concepts of reconciliation. Together instructors, students and community members entertained a semester-long dialogue that included many different interpretations of the term reconciliation. This dialectic approach to learning was implemented to avoid a prescriptive 'how to reconcile' course delivery. Instead students were challenged to engage in critical analysis, thinking and dialogue centered on the concepts of reconciliation as a way to uncover some of the complexities presented within the semester.

The program was held in Gaaw *Old Massett*, in Sarah's Longhouse and welcomed 16 students from across the country, including two local students Howustii *Joel Richardson* and Marijke Vanderlinden. Haawa to the Gwaii Trust Society for generously supporting Howustii and Marijke to attend this program and to study at home for a whole semester. Their participation was really appreciated and enriching, adding grounded perspectives to the knowledge exchange that occurred among the students. We hope to have more local students participate in future Haida Gwaii Semesters and encourage interested people to reach out to us for more information about how to make this possible.

Many people have been involved in developing this program and its curriculum over the past several years, largely under the direction of our former team member K'iinuwaas *Carrie Anne Vanderhoop*. While K'iinuwaas *Carrie Anne* has moved on to other important work at UBC and was not directly involved in the pilot year, we owe many thanks to her hard work and leadership on this project.

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone that had a hand in supporting the first delivery of the program, from the many (nearly 50) local guest speakers that joined to share their teachings, to the people that opened their homes to students and provided them with safe and comfortable places to live, and to the wider community that made students feel welcomed and connected during their stay. A great deal of learning happens outside of class-time, from the interactions and relationships that students create with community members and from being on the land. Without the warmth and patience of community, our work wouldn't be possible.

One of our fondest moments of the semester was attending a dinner that the students hosted at Tluu Xaada Naay. This was planned entirely of their own volition and our staff attended as guests, along with about 60 other local people, to listen to the students express their gratitude and to share a meal that they prepared. It was a humbling



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experience to walk into Tluu Xaada Naay and see so many people in attendance, honoring their invitations and supporting the students. Haawa to Kilthguulans *Christian White* for allowing this event to happen at Tluu Xaada Naay.

We want to acknowledge the team of instructors that guided much of the learning process, particularly our local instructors: Jaskwaan *Bedard*, Jisgang *Nika Collison*, Gaagwiis *Jason Alsop*, as well as Jana McLeod and Jay Thompson. We are so grateful for the time and energy that they poured into this work and look forward to working with more local instructors as we continue to grow.

A very special thank you to SGaalanglaay Gaamdamaay *Vern Williams* who provided tremendous support to the students throughout some of the difficult points of their learning (and unlearning).

As with our other Haida Gwaii Semesters, we see our programs as community projects that depend on the input and contributions of many people to make our work possible and we strive to give back for this generosity to the best of our ability. Every term, alongside our students, we learn so much and hope to continue to learn much more. With these lessons in mind we are planning for the second offering of the Haida Gwaii Semester in Reconciliation Studies this upcoming fall.

In the coming weeks and months we will be posting a Program Assistant position, working with instructors to prepare their courses, looking for housing and office space, and hopefully connecting with local students that might be interested in attending the program this year. If you have any ideas, interest, or input related to these things, please feel very welcome to reach out to us.

All the best,
HGHE