

Indigenous Perspectives on Eco-cultural Revitalization - Course Summary

This course was offered between February 9 and 14, 2020. The initial challenge for this course was to recruit sufficient participants to make the course financially viable. The short time frame to advertise and secure registrations over the holiday period following the December 6, 2019 project grant approval was very challenging. The \$1,995 tuition fee to cover accommodation, meals and sponsored seats was an additional hurdle to overcome. We were able to secure \$3,595 through independent donations to provide partial tuition bursaries for four participants. We also offered a "commuting" option to reduce accommodation costs. Given these challenges, we were able to run the course with 13 participants, three from WSÁNEĆ FN and ten Islanders, six of whom commuted to the course.

The course was facilitated by instructors Tye Swallow, MA, SENĆOŦEN Language Revitalization Coordinator with the Saanich Adult Education Centre (WSÁNEĆ School Board) and Tsawout Elder SELILIYE (Belinda Claxton). Course participants were welcomed with a ceremonial cedar brushing cleanse by Elders ŦOSINIYE (Linda Elliott) and SELILIYE accompanied by traditional drumming and singing by J,SINTEN (John Elliott) and PENÁĆ (David Underwood) prior to the welcoming dinner. The course began the following morning with a ceremonial water cleanse at dawn in the ocean again accompanied by drumming and songs in SENĆOŦEN followed by a yoga session led by Emily Olsen.

The morning class session included creation stories and cultural practices by the Elders to provide the foundation for WSÁNEĆ Traditional Knowledge and concluded with a ceremonial smudge. The afternoon session included the Kairos blanket exercise with Lillian Underwood who provided participants with an experiential engagement with the history and impact of colonization and the resulting suppression of WSÁNEĆ culture.



J,SINTEN and PENÁĆ

Day 2 of the course was spent on Hay Point reserve land and included: a hands on removal of invasive and toxic daphne with Judith Lyn Arney; a traditional salmon pit cook led by XETXÁTTEN (Elder Earl Claxton, Jr.); the story of QENEN,IW, the ancient WSÁNEĆ village site before being displaced by colonization, as told by MĆKINEM (Hereditary Chief Eric Pelkey); and the role of the reef net fishery in WSÁNEĆ culture presented by XEMFOLTW (Tsawout Band Chief Dr. Nick Claxton). The importance of ancestors in Indigenous culture was explored with the film *Blood & Bones* with cultural worker Harold Joe completing a very engaging day.



Elder Eric Pelkey at QENEN,IW

Day 3 involved a field trip to Medicine Beach at the North end of the Bedwell Harbour to explore the history and importance of E,H,O, the 4,000-year-old Coast Salish village site and burial ground led by Elder SELILIYE. Unfortunately, archaeologist Dr. Darcy Mathews who was involved in the repatriation of ancestral remains was unable to join us for this session because of illness. The afternoon session included two engaging and informative presentations by Dr. David Boyd on the Rights of Nature and YELKÁTŦE (Robert Clifford) on ᵱSÁNEĆ Natural Law and the value of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas.

The morning of Day 4 included a presentation on the current climate crisis and the imperative for effective global climate action by climate scientist Dr. Peter Carter and climate activist Julie Johnstone with Royal Roads University. This session also focused on participant climate action initiatives. The afternoon session included presentations by Tye Swallow on the revitalization of the SENĆOŦEN language and by Elder SELILIYE on the cultural importance of the ᵱSÁNEĆ 13 moon calendar.

The course participants presented their climate action plans in the half day session on the Friday morning and completed course evaluations.

The [Course 1 Curriculum](#) outlines in detail the richness of the course content. The [Course 1 Evaluation](#) illustrates the positive impact of this course for the participants. Using the evaluation feedback, the course facilitators and evaluator identified the [Course 1 Lessons Learned](#) from this pilot program to provide guidance for future courses. The [Course 1 Video](#) is a reflection of the moving experience the course had for participants.



Elder SELILIYE and 13 Moons