

# Himalayan Languages, Cultures and Communities: Integrating Language Learning, Community Engagement and Area Studies Knowledge

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## Program Objectives

The Himalaya Program TLEF promotes pedagogy that integrates language learning, community engagement and cultural understanding to create a hybrid local-global experiential education opportunity for UBC students. We seek to develop a broadly applicable model that emerges from our focus on the underserved, but culturally, linguistically, environmentally, and geopolitically important Himalayan region: Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and the Tibetan cultural zones that traverse all of these countries.

## Long-Term Objectives

Long-term objectives include consolidation of Nepali and Tibetan language courses in a summer intensive format, a new 200-level interdisciplinary course, instructional technology development, and creation of an Area of Focus.

## Area of Focus

Our summer intensive learning experience, 'Himalayan Languages, Cultures, and Communities' will form the centerpiece of a new interdisciplinary Area of Focus. Created in conjunction with BC-based Nepali and Tibetan community organizations, this pathway to knowledge will include a scaffolded set of courses across several departments, including Art History, Anthropology, and Asian Studies.



## Experimental Course Design

### 2016-17

In 2016 we offered one week 1-credit intensive and immersive summer language courses taught on-campus by local language instructors, Mr. Binod Shrestha (Nepali) and Mr. Sonam Chusang (Tibetan).

In 2017 we expanded our summer programming to include a second one week 1-credit community engaged language component, also taught by Mr. Shrestha and Mr. Chusang.

This second week took place off-campus at community and local sites whose diversity mirrored the interdisciplinary nature of each course.

(Left) Tibetan Transition House in Burnaby, British Columbia. Students in the Tibetan course, Week 2.

(Right) Thrangu Monastery in Richmond, British Columbia. Students in the Nepali course, Week 2. "We spoke with three monks and this was a very rewarding experience as we had to naturally use language, talking about our own interests, where we have been in Nepal, about our families and their families, about different languages. It really did feel like a 'travel abroad' experience." (Student in the Nepali Course)



## Community Engaged Learning

In reflection journals and course surveys, students articulated that by the end of the course they understood and valued how integral and interdependent both language education and community engagement are to fully engaging and communicating with other communities and cultures.

"Often, the failure of academe is its isolation. The community engagement week attempts to break down that isolation and I think that it was successful. I hope that you do it again next year." (Student in the Tibetan Course)



## Year 2 Plans

In 2018 the Himalaya Program will offer two week 3-credit Nepali and Tibetan language courses that blend intensive and immersive classroom language instruction with community engagement and experiential learning.

Students will engage with community members and native language speakers in the classroom and will travel off-campus to community sites each week.

After our 2017 language courses we held community consultations with the organizations and people our students visited. Their feedback has informed our language courses and has helped us maintain an atmosphere of collaboration and support, which will ultimately be an example to our students of the importance of community engagement and will enhance the experience students have in our courses.

In academic year 2018-19, we will work to develop our integrated 200-level course; broaden consultations with colleagues about developing Himalayan Studies in Canada; and continue consolidating our pedagogical model and funding base to ensure sustainability.

## Community Partners: NCSBC and TCSBC

Support from the following community partners has helped make our language courses possible: The Nepali Cultural Society of BC and the Tibetan Cultural Society of BC.



Additional support from the following departments at UBC have also helped make these courses possible: Art History, Anthropology, Asian Studies, and Economics, as well as the Faculty of Arts.

