

# HIMALAYA PROGRAM



## *Nepali and Tibetan Language in a Community Context*

Report on 2020 Summer Language Courses

June 2020

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### **Funding Sources:**

UBC Centre for Community Engaged Learning  
UBC Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund  
Department of Asian Studies  
UBC Go Global  
Institute of Asian Research  
School of Public Policy and Global Affairs



Students in the Tibetan class interact with thangka artist Kalsang Dawa.

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## Executive Summary

- **Report Objective:** This report documents how the Himalaya Program used grant funds received in the 2019-20 academic year from the Centre for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL), the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (TLEF), and UBC Go Global to develop summer 2020 community-engaged Nepali and Tibetan language course offerings within the Department of Asian Studies. We continue to work towards broader pedagogical models and further developing community partnerships.
- **Summer 2020 Course Offerings:** The course offerings included two-week, three-credit courses, “Nepali Language in a Community Context” (NEPAL 390) and “Tibetan Language in a Community Context” (TIBT 390). The courses utilized a blended course model for the third summer in a row, integrating classroom language instruction with community-engaged learning. However, for the first time these courses were offered entirely online rather than in-person classrooms and community sites, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The courses still ran successfully with large enrolment.
- **Course Publicity and Enrolment:** Student feedback and enrolment demographics illustrate that creative publicity strategies attracted a wide range of students. This year the courses achieved their highest enrolment yet, with 31 students from 4 faculties and 15 majors by undergraduate students, graduate students, as well as 2 members of UBC faculty and staff (see Appendix A for details).
- **Evaluation Criteria:** This report draws on student feedback from daily reflective journal entries, analysis from a survey administered to students during the second week of the courses, and ongoing dialogues with the courses’ community partners.
- **Positive Student Feedback:** Overall, students consistently voiced the positive impact of the two-week Nepali and Tibetan intensive language instruction, and were moved by the enthusiasm and assistance from community-engaged activities. Even in online classrooms, students described their learning activities as fun, immersive, and at times inspirational. At the start of the courses, some students were somewhat overwhelmed by the amount of information, yet in their final reflection journal entries they were ecstatic at their growth, and proud of their new accomplishments in the language. Students grasped the importance of both online classroom learning and community engagement to develop communication skills and intercultural awareness.
- **Student Recommendations:** Students provided feedback and recommendations for how these courses could be improved in the future. These recommendations addressed the timing of different activities in the course, the balance of direct and indirect feedback, and on the intensity and pace of the courses.
- **Community Feedback:** Community members were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences with the course. From preparing for their visits with the language team and

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instructors to communicating with students – community members were very pleased. They were excited to converse with students' newfound Nepali or Tibetan proficiency, and were ecstatic and honoured to share their culture with others. All community members noted their excitement to participate again next year – hopefully in person.



Members of Tsengdok Monastery and the UBC Himalaya Program join the Tibetan class.



Sabita Shrestha teaching students a simple Nepali song.

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## Student Insight Highlights

### Community Engaged Learning Feedback

*(Nepali) “We interacted with the members of the HFBC and I think I must've used all the Nepali I have learned in the two weeks while talking to [community partner]. She was amazing to talk to and extremely patient with me.”*

*(Tibetan) “Talking to the community partners is so personal and it's really cool to be able to sort of escape the classroom setting - and learn small things from! One of the things I've really wanted in the various language classes I've taken over the years is someone to just practice natural conversation with.”*

### Language Course Instruction Feedback

*(Nepali) “I would really like to thank Binod Ji for being an amazing professor and caring so much for his students and their learning. I feel it could have not been such a successful online course without him and I am very appreciative to all the work and hours he spent making learning tools such as quizlet for us.”*

*(Tibetan) “We went over about ~20 verbs as listed on quizlet and those are some of the more commonly used verbs in general which will be very useful for when I need to use my Tibetan.”*

### Constructive Feedback

*(Nepali) “I was once again frustrated that the breakout rooms that weren't that random as I ended up with [other student] a couple of times whose internet is really patchy so I had no partner to practice dialogue with. This has happened many times lately and has reduced the efficacy of the breakout room learning time.”*

*(Tibetan) “Learning the entirety of the grammatical parts of the script prior to attempting to read difficult passages would be much better.”*

### End of Course Reflections

*(Nepali) “It was really fun to take the course, I learned a lot and I would like to express my gratitude to our professor Binod who taught us with his whole heart and left no stone unturned to teach us the Nepali language.”*

*(Tibetan) “I really do feel like I connected with my peers this way, even if it's online. The course readings and the language mixed with the community engagement programs are really fulfilling and it feels like I travelled somewhere else during this crazy time. I really felt like I had the world in my hands and I was able to travel even during lockdown and it's such a fruitful experience. One I'll never forget.”*

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## Introduction

### **The UBC Himalaya Program**

The UBC Himalaya Program, founded in 2015, draws upon faculty expertise, student engagement and community partnerships to create a transdisciplinary hub for sharing knowledge about the Himalaya Region including Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, Pakistan and the Tibetan cultural zones that traverse all of these countries. The Himalaya Program has received support from the UBC Faculty of Arts, the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (TLEF), the Centre for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL), the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs / Institute of Asian Research, UBC Go Global, and the Department of Asian Studies.

Throughout the academic year, the Himalaya Program hosts a speaker and event series, which brings together individuals and organizations across the lower mainland. Beginning in 2016 the Himalaya Program began developing an annual summer intensive community-engaged language learning program for Nepali and Tibetan. This is the only credit-bearing program for learning Nepali anywhere in Canada, and one of only two in colloquial Tibetan. The courses have grown significantly over the years, and in 2020 the courses were offered directly through the Department of Asian Studies for the first time, with designated course codes (NEPL 390 and TIBT 390). This represents the culmination of a productive partnership between the Himalaya Program and Asian Studies, which together saw these new courses through the Faculty of Arts and Senate approval processes.

### **Summer Intensive Community-Engaged Language Courses**

Since its inaugural summer in 2016, the Nepali and Tibetan language program has utilised community and student feedback to inform an expansion from: a one-week one-credit course; to a two-week, two-credit course; to now a two-week, three-credit course with a teaching method that integrates classroom based and community integrated learning. Summer 2020 marked the third summer utilising this model, including new areas of growth by administering the course through the Department of Asian Studies, offering the courses as upper-level (“300-level”) undergraduate courses, and incorporating online learning. The model of blended classroom and community integrated learning has proven popular, effective, and sustainable, even amid the disruptions of COVID-19.

In past years, the program excelled in its ability to engage students in the language learning process through classroom experiences, visits to Himalayan community sites and the opportunity to participate in a variety of cultural experiences. Although this year students were not able to physically meet, Nepali and Tibetan course teams worked to transition learning online and continue integrating TLEF supported practices into the programming. Instructor-guided and student-guided pedagogies were used to promote student learning and engagement, with innovative assessment strategies designed to promote learning and wellbeing.

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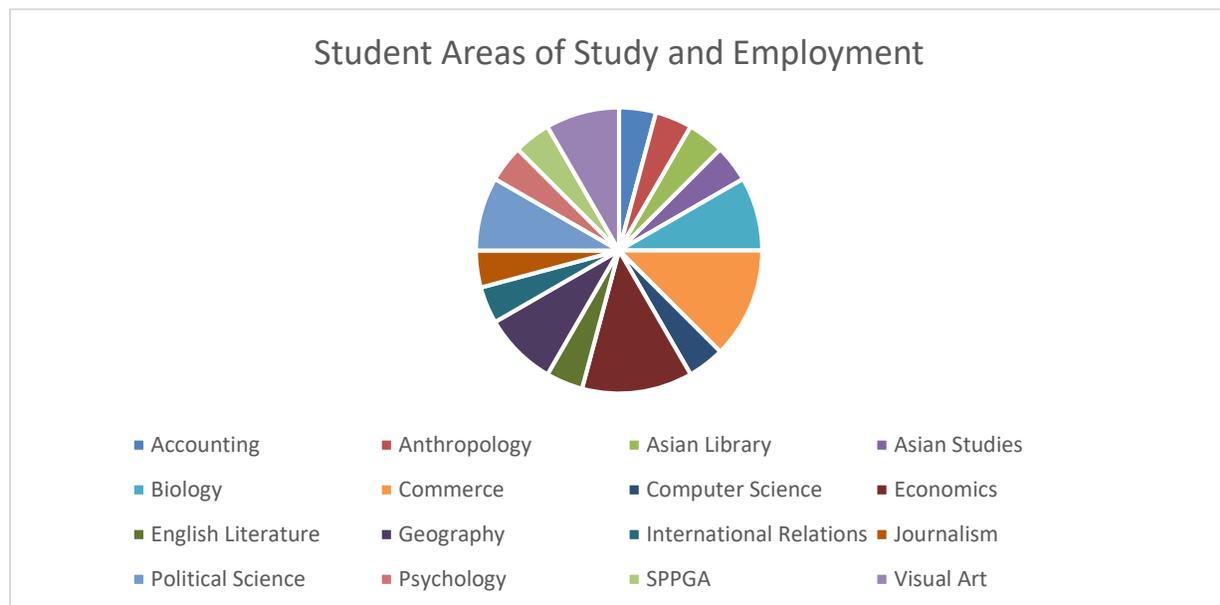
Community outreach resulted in visits from artists, singers, community leaders, and community members from various organizations including the Nepal-Canadian Women's Society of BC (NCWSBC), the Hindu-Buddhist Foundation of Canada (HBFC), Tsengdok Monastery, Thrangu Monastery, and more, that promoted student learning, social inclusion, and community engagement.

The positive feedback received from community members, faculty, staff and students has led to a deepened understanding of the efficacy and importance of community-engaged learning, and a belief that the community-engaged model developed by the UBC Himalaya Program could be adopted by other language communities served by the Department of Asian Studies, and/or other UBC units and community groups.

## Student Enrolment and Diversity

The language courses possess a broad appeal across the UBC, Vancouver, and Canadian communities. This is exemplified by the highly diverse student body that grew to a record 31 students this year. The Nepali course was fully-enrolled with 18 students and the Tibetan course was well-enrolled with 13 as well. The Tibetan course was expected to have lower enrolment than Nepali due to introductory Tibetan being now being offered year-round at UBC, yet both courses still achieved wonderfully high enrolment this year.

Enrolled students came from a wide variety of backgrounds including four faculties and fifteen majors, and several members of UBC Faculty and Staff. For example, sharing ideas and experiences in the classes were Biology undergraduates, a Masters student in Journalism, a PhD student in Anthropology, and a UBC Faculty member in the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs. Past years have seen students join from SFU, University of Toronto, and members of the Vancouver community without academic affiliation.



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Students joined the courses to learn a new language, as well as learn more about their respective cultures and to gain insight into Canadian diversity itself. This year, several students stated that they registered in order to learn additional, non-language skills to assist in their careers. One UBC Librarian noted that taking the Nepali course will greatly expand their ability to manage and expand the library's collections and community outreach. Another student-staff said their experience in the course will assist their work offering online language courses in the Extended Learning department as it "help[ed him] better understand the student experience and how technology can be used."

## **Summer Courses as a Model**

The two-week model of the UBC Nepali and Tibetan courses are seen as models for similar courses both at UBC and beyond. For the first time, the University of Washington will offer a not-for-credit course in Nepali this summer, following the two-week intensive model established at UBC. The course will be taught by Binod Shrestha, who has been teaching the Nepali course at UBC since its inception in 2016.

UBC Go Global has been exploring options to offer courses with global experiences in a local-context, as do the summer Nepali and Tibetan community-engaged learning courses. The not-for-credit program of the UW Nepali course may provide a model for future imagining of a non-credit stream at UBC supported by Go Global. In the current climate of health insecurity and closed borders, it seems more important than ever to develop courses with safe and local programs of meaningful learning interactions.

## **Links with the UBC Strategic Plan**

The further development of the intensive community-engaged Nepali and Tibetan language courses aligns well with the most recent UBC Strategic Plan from 2018, with a special emphasis on achieving Strategies 13 and 20. These lie under core areas number 3, "Transformative Learning" and number 4, "Local and Global Engagement."

Core area number 3, "Transformative Learning," describes strategies aimed at "enabling learning through evidence-based teaching, mentorship and enriched experiences." Core Area number 4 "Local and Global Engagement" outlines ways of "enabling learning through evidence-based teaching, mentorship and enriched experiences." Core Area 4 also recognizes that UBC holds the top Asian Studies Department in Canada.

Strategy 13, "Practical Learning" aims to expand experiential, work-integrated and extended learning opportunities for students, faculty, staff and alumni. The UBC Himalaya Program's intensive community-engaged language courses do just this; the course structure offers experiential and immersive learning for enrolled students, as well as to the undergraduate Himalaya Program Assistant, funded through UBC's Work Learn Program, who works and learns alongside the Himalaya Program Steering Committee; and the Graduate Program

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Coordinator, funded by TLEF and CCEL.

Strategy 20, “Coordinated Engagement” aims to co-create with communities the principles and effective practices of engagement, and establish supporting infrastructure. The Nepali and Tibetan community-engaged language courses support this strategy because they are influenced, informed and shaped by local Nepali and Tibetan community organizations and individuals and BC, who work together with UBC faculty to build knowledge sharing, cross-cultural learning and community engagement.

## **Use of Funding**

### **Use of CCEL funds**

CCEL generously awarded \$8,000 for further development of the community-engaged language program in Summer 2019. This grant provided co-funding for the Undergraduate Program Assistant through Summer 2019 to pursue a scoping study of a 4 -6 week residential course expansion (\$3,000), along with co-funding the Graduate Coordinator position (\$5,000) through Academic Year 2019-20. The original intention was to pursue full implementation of the scoping study by Summer 2020 in coordination with Go Global. Due to COVID-19, it became clear by March 2020 that it would not be feasible to develop residential options for the program at this time, and efforts shifted to supporting the pivot to online learning. During the 2019-20 Academic Year, the Graduate Coordinator was able to develop our relationship with Go Global further, and we look forward to future collaboration towards establishing enrolment pathways to allow non-UBC students to benefit from the community-engaged language courses and expand enrolments.

Towards this end, we were grateful to receive another \$10,000 instalment of CCEL funding in late Spring 2020. This funding will enable us to continue the Graduate Coordinator and Undergraduate Assistant positions through Academic Year 2020-2021, as we consolidate the program model with the Department of Asian Studies and consider possibilities for expansion given the new circumstances of the pandemic.

### **Use of TLEF funds**

The final year of a three-year TLEF grant (2017-2020) co-funded the Graduate Coordinator position in Academic Year 2019-20 (\$5,174), with a focus on curricular development. This included shepherding the new Asian Studies course numbers NEPL 390 and TIBT 390 through the approval process, and continuing to work with Professor Sara Shneiderman on developing the course proposal for a new 300-level Anthropology course, “Ethnography of Tibet and the Himalaya: Diversity and Development”. The course proposal should be submitted for approval in Fall 2020.

We also received a small grant of \$1000 for the development of Open Educational Resources from the Rapid Innovation Fund in Summer 2020. This will be used to support language instructor and community partner participation in this process.

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## **Use of Go Global Funds**

In Spring 2020, Go Global contributed to the program for the first time with a grant of \$2,000. This is earmarked to support development of the “Study Abroad at Home” model by creating new pathways for both UBC and non-UBC students to access NEPL and TIBT courses. Due to COVID-19 related disruptions, these funds will be reserved for use in the coming academic year when further expansion of the program may become possible.

## **Contributions from IAR/SPPGA**

The Himalaya Program continued to have its administrative home at the Institute of Asian Research within the School of Public Policy & Global Affairs. This unit contributed administrative support in kind to the operation of the language courses, including managing the undergraduate and graduate student appointments and other financial operations. IAR/SPPGA also continued to fund the Himalaya Program public event series with \$10,000 in 2019-20. See <https://himalaya.arts.ubc.ca/events/> for the list of events. Although operated separately from the language courses, these public events generated interest among students, faculty, staff and community members and provided a platform from which to advertise the language courses.

In Summer 2020, IAR awarded a Graduate Research Assistantship to Patrick Dowd, Graduate Coordinator, to develop the Open Educational Resources mentioned above.

## **Contributions from Asian Studies**

In 2019-2020, the Department of Asian Studies committed to supporting these courses with designated course codes and numbers. Asian Studies staff worked with the Himalaya Program Graduate Coordinator and Faculty members to successfully navigate the curriculum approval process. The Department also funded both Nepali and Tibetan language instructor salaries (with Tibetan supported by donor funding from the Khyentse Foundation), and took on the financial administration of community-engagement portion of the courses in Summer 2020. Student appointments will be shifted to Asian Studies as of Fall 2020 in recognition that the Department is the new administrative home for the language course component of the Himalaya Program. Future Work Learn applications will also be handled by the department, and all remaining funds for other student appointments and course-related expenses will be transferred.

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## Instructor Biographies

Both Mr. Binod Shrestha (Nepali language instructor), and Mr. Sonam Rinchen Chusang (Tibetan language instructor) have been teaching the Himalaya Program's summer courses since their inception in 2016. Their teaching biographies are provided below:

Nepali Instructor Biography	Tibetan Instructor Biography
<p>Mr. <b>Binod Shrestha</b> was born and raised in Nepal. He has been involved with Nepali Language instruction since 1990 as an instructor, interpreter and translator of various Nepali language initiatives in Nepal and Canada. He has taught English in several schools and colleges in Nepal, is a British Columbia-certified English Teacher and holds a Master's degree in English Literature, a Bachelor's degree in Education from the University of British Columbia. He is currently employed by the Surrey School District 36 as a Secondary Teacher at Frank Hurt Secondary School. After realizing the need to impart Nepali language pedagogically, Binod wrote the textbook <i>Communicating in Nepali Language</i>, to help support students as well as instructors in their learning and teaching of Nepali. He uses this textbook for his Nepali teaching. His other works include the translation of a short novel "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" by Richard Bach into Nepali.</p>	<p>Mr. <b>Sonam Rinchen Chusang</b> was born in Amdo, northeastern Tibet. As a child, he went to the Tibetan Children's Village School in Dharamsala, the capital of the exiled Tibetan community in India. Due to this unique upbringing, Sonam is fluent in both Amdo Tibetan and Central, or Standard, Tibetan varieties. After moving to Canada in 2001, Sonam began teaching Tibetan and gradually built the Tibetan language resource website LearnTibetanLanguage. (<a href="http://www.learntibetanlanguage.com">www.learntibetanlanguage.com</a>). Sonam was a lecturer at the University of Virginia's intensive Summer Language Program in 2007, and he has also taught Tibetan in many Buddhist communities in the United States and to many students and researchers. Sonam also instructs courses at UBC during the academic year: <i>Introduction to Tibetan 1</i> (TIBT 100) and <i>Introduction to Tibetan 2</i> (TIBT 101) courses.</p>

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## 2020 Course Format

Each year, the course format has changed slightly as we constantly seek to improve the student experience. Since 2018, community engagement opportunities have been integrated with classroom learning throughout the course of two weeks. Despite the online format in 2020, this model continued and digital classroom visits by community members continued. Below the details of each method of instruction and course component are discussed in detail.

### **Classroom Instruction**

Classes were held for two consecutive weeks from Monday to Friday, with classes from 9-12:30am every day except Friday, when class was extended till 2:30pm. Due to the online format of the courses enabling students to take the course from anywhere in the world, the Tibetan class sometimes adjusted these hours to better suit the time-zones of everyone in the class.

The classroom instruction incorporated lectures, activities, role plays, and practice. Students learned Nepali or Tibetan script writing, romanised text writing and oral language skills. 2020 was the second summer where Nepali Script writing (Devanagari) was taught in conjunction with romanised text. Textbooks were utilised in both the Nepali and Tibetan courses, along with additional practice activities, online quizzes and various homework.

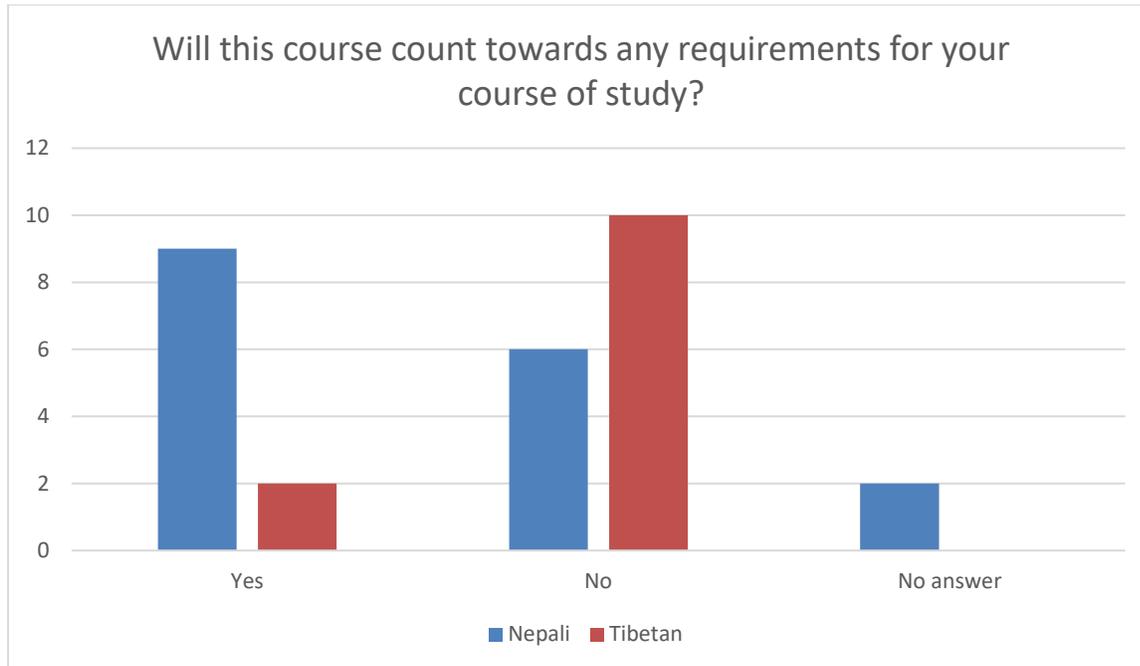
### **Senior-Level Course Codes and Academic Literature**

With the shift of the course home to Asian Studies, and the assignment of new senior-level course codes, new academic readings were assigned to students in the class. Two kinds of readings were assigned: topical readings about relevant Nepali and Tibetan diasporic populations in Vancouver and North America; and theoretical readings about methods and complexities of local community engagement and learning. The readings assisted students in understanding the complex dynamics of the communities who speak the languages they were learning, and gave them tools to use and think with when engaging with Nepali and Tibetan individuals and groups in the local community.

Several students were keen to mention that the academic readings provided integral contextual information to their language learning and interaction with community members. In particular, students enjoyed hearing from professors with expertise on topics from the readings, such as Professor Shneiderman and Professor Shrestha on Nepali diaspora in British Columbia, and Tsering Shakya on Tibetan history of migration.

An additional shift due to the senior-level course codes, is that more students found the courses fulfilling requirements for their degree. For Arts students, it filled senior-level elective credits, and for Science and Business students, it filled senior-level Arts requirement credits. A side effect of this shift is that there was a small increase in student questions about grades – particularly in the Nepali class – due to the potential for their mark in the class to influence their overall GPA.

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## Classroom Visits

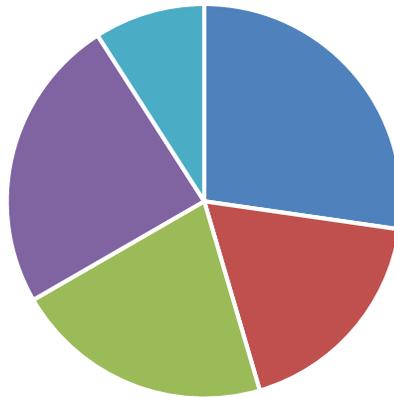
In previous years, community members and Himalaya Program faculty visited the classroom on some days, while on other days the students went on field trips to visit community sites across the Lower Mainland. Due to the online format, there was no such distinction in 2020.

This year, community members and Himalaya Program faculty joined online classrooms. These were opportunities for students to learn about Nepali and Tibetan culture, and hear stories from those who have lived and worked in the regions themselves, as well as practicing language skills. In addition to speaking, the visits sometimes incorporated digital tours and explanations of Himalayan cultural sites or objects such as monasteries and artwork. Despite the location of learning online, many students commented that community engagement activities still allowed a form of cultural immersion that they had never experienced in a class before, and which would not be possible in a traditional course setting.

These visits acted as interdisciplinary opportunities to blend classroom learning and community engagement, and provided community members with the unique experience of sharing knowledge in a higher education classroom setting. The visits demonstrated that even despite difficult circumstances, the Nepali and Tibetan communities and UBC campus are not exclusive, but can work together to build large communities and share resources with mutual benefits. The community members were able to engage with and be recognized by a university institution, and students gained excellent cultural and language contact points with the relevant community.

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Favourite Community-Engaged Activities (both classes)



- Music-based (Sabita Shrestha/Jamyang Yeshe)
- Art-based (Kalsang Dawa)
- Monastery visit (Thrangu/Tsengdok)
- Community Organization visits
- Academic Talks (UBC Profs)

Below are the details of the various visitors that participated in each class.

## **Nepali Course:**

May 12<sup>th</sup>: Professor Mark Turin joined the class to speak about Nepali linguistic and cultural diversity, the language's usefulness in different sectors, and fun grammatical and vocabulary facts.

May 14<sup>th</sup>: Ms. Sabita Shrestha visited the Nepali class to speak about Nepali music and teach a traditional folk song. Many later wrote that learning the Nepali song was one of their favourite experiences.

May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020: Mr. Tenzin Yonten and four other monks from Thrangu Monastery created a stunning video for the class to give a tour of the monastery. They also described tenets and practices of Buddhism, their past history in Nepal, and practiced Nepali with the students.

May 18<sup>th</sup>: Ms. Sabita Shrestha returned to continue teaching students about music in Nepal, as well as Nepali ritual and religious practices in Nepal as well as here in the Lower Mainland.

May 20<sup>th</sup>: Ms. Meenu Dahal, president of the Nepali-Canadian Women's Society of BC, and 9 other women from the Society joined the class to share their organization's goals as well as converse in small groups with students. The students loved having the chance to share more private conversations using their Nepali skills.

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Tenzin Yonten takes Nepali students on a digital tour of Thrangu Monastery (May 15).  
Watch the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTUpSqEoAog&feature=youtu.be>

May 21<sup>st</sup>: Professor Sara Shneiderman and Professor Ratna Shrestha shared a recently published article about the Nepali diaspora in BC, and fielded questions from the students about the diaspora's connections to Nepal.

May 22<sup>nd</sup>: Mr. Madhu Acharya, president of the Hindu-Buddhist Foundation of Canada, and 5 other members of the Foundation joined the class to speak about Nepali-Canadian religious activities. The students practiced their Nepali in small groups with community members.

## **Tibetan Course:**

May 12<sup>th</sup>: Three Tibetan speakers joined the class session for the first time to be language partners for the class. They practiced greetings and pronunciation of the letters of the Tibetan script. Students often noted that having a consistent language partner for the two weeks was a huge boost to their language experience.

May 14<sup>th</sup>: Singer Jamyang Yeshe taught students how to sing the song 'Aku Pema', and showed them his string instrument called a *Dramnyn*. Throughout the course, students continued to practice the song (and their pronunciation), on their own as well as with others.

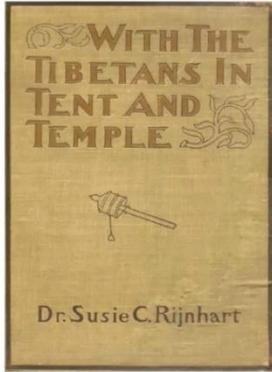
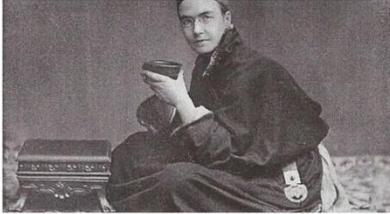
May 15<sup>th</sup>: Renowned Tibetan artist and thangka painter Mr. Kalsang Dawa introduced students to his traditional art and a virtual tour of his studio. He explored his creative drive and the artwork's connection to Tibetan religion, philosophy, and culture. Students were thrilled and inspired by Kalsang Dawa, and felt that this experience provided grounding for their language learning.

May 18<sup>th</sup>: Professor Tsering Shakya shared his article about Tibetans in North America, and gave an overview of Tibetan history and politics, especially in Canada. He answered student's questions, and in their reflections they noted how much they learned from this conversation with Professor Shakya.

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Canada and Tibet

ཁ་ན་ཏ་དང་ཐོད་དབར་གྱི་འབྲེལ་བ།



In 1895, Canadian missionary Dr. Susie Rijnhart became the first western woman to enter Tibet.

ཐོག་འཕགས་ལྷོ་མཁའ་མཁའ་ (Missionary)  
ཐོག་མ་ or དང་པོ་ (First)



Professor Shakya shares insight into Tibetan history and migration.

May 19<sup>th</sup>: The three language partners from the first week returned to continue practicing Tibetan with the students, especially with the subscript letters.

May 21<sup>st</sup>: Singer Jamyang Yeshe returned to continue teaching about Tibetan music and the song 'Aku Pema', as well as to speak about his film *Shining Spirit: The Musical Journey of Jamyang Yeshe* which students watched earlier in the course.

May 22<sup>nd</sup>: Tsengdok Rinpoche and monks from Tsengdok Monastery gave a virtual tour of their monastery and provided a talk about Buddhism in the modern world. Students asked questions to the Rinpoche and practiced their speaking and listening in Tibetan.

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## **Course Evaluation & Feedback**

In past years, the final day of classes culminated in celebratory lunch and meetings with both classes present. It was also a period for debriefing sessions where students provided feedback on their experiences in the course. Due to the online shift, this year a survey was administered during the second week of the courses, followed by digital debriefing sessions hosted by the Himalaya Program Steering Committee members. The survey was also designed to allow the course organizers to understand the disciplinary make-up of the classes. In addition to this avenue of gathering feedback, students completed reflection journals during each day of the course to write about what they are learning and comment on the highs and lows of their learning experience. A summary of the following evaluative information is listed in Appendix B.

### **Reflection Journal Themes**

Reflection journals gave students the opportunity to reflect on their learning on a day-to-day basis. Students were given a set of recommended reflection prompts, and asked to write 200-400 words each day that they attended class. Students were allowed to free write, giving personal anecdotes in relation to this year's course material. Overall, students wrote about enjoying the courses, and about interesting language facts they learned that day. Comments regarding the fast pace were less common than in previous years, and were typically justified by the acknowledgement that they were learning immense amounts of new and useful information. Students frequently commented on the effectiveness of community engagement activities in helping them learn the language and become connected to a relevant culture. Having a native language speaker to practice and learn from, both linguistically and culturally, provided a grounding that enriched the learning experience and inspired students to continue learning. This kind of reflective learning is one of the strengths of experiential learning in the unique format that these courses offer.

### **Survey Feedback Themes**

To reduce bias in responses and allow students to answer freely, the survey administered through Qualtrics was not tied to student name or number, and therefore anonymous. It was learned that while most students were undergraduates, there were several graduate students, staff, and faculty members taking the course as students. Adding to this diversity were the varying disciplinary backgrounds in which students study and work; from Journalism to Biology to Commerce to a Librarian, a vast swathe of UBC's faculties and schools were covered in the 31 students enrolled between the Tibetan and Nepali classes.

Feedback showed that the courses are taken for many reasons, from helping to speak with in-laws, for fieldwork skills, for learning about culture more generally and also specifically for travel interests. Additionally, there was a noted uptick from previous years in the number of students for whom the courses counted directly towards requirements for students' course of study due to the shift to Asian Studies. Although many students found the course fast, most deliberately noted that the speed was not only necessary in an intensive course, but also manageable and

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helpful in keeping them motivated and progressing towards their language goals. Along these lines, students noted how helpful digital learning tools like Quizlet were, and how so many of them were self-paced and accessible as homework.

In the first iterations of Nepali and Tibetan language courses, emphasis was not placed on learning the writing scripts, which was a point of feedback in earlier years. Since 2019, learning and using the scripts has been a part of the curriculum. When asked in the survey about the scripts, students unanimously found them interesting and helpful, but did provide feedback for improvement, such as having more in-class practice with direct feedback from the instructors.

Please read further information in Appendices B and D.

### **Community Member Evaluation**

In a community engaged course such as this, it is important to recognise the community voice equally to that of the students. To do so, a survey was administered by the Himalaya Program Assistant. This consisted of a list of questions that asked about: their satisfaction communicating with the Himalaya Program and language instructors prior to their visit(s); about their preparation time and strategy; about their various experience with the students during the class; about their constructive feedback for the visit; about their experiences with the online format of the interaction; and about whether they would like to join the class again in the future.

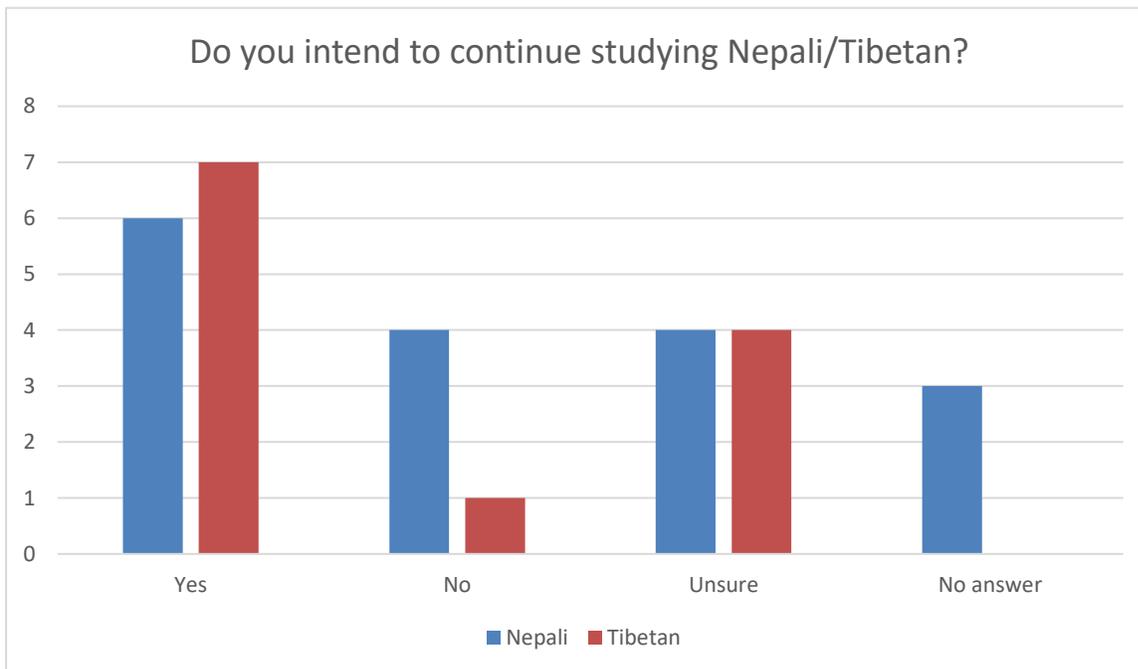
The feedback received from community members was generally positive. Community members felt that communication with the language teams was mostly clear and abundant, that their own preparation for their visits was not overly time-consuming, and the overall experience during student interactions with students was very rewarding. They were pleased with students' proficiency in Nepali or Tibetan, and were enthusiastic and honoured to share their culture with others. All community members noted their excitement to participate again next year – hopefully in person.

Please read further information in Appendices C and D.

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## Moving Forward and Open Educational Resources (OERs)

At the conclusion of the Nepali and Tibetan courses, students were keen to continue developing their language skills. However, some were unsure how to do so. In this way, the shift to online learning in summer 2020 was more than just an obstacle to be overcome. It has also become an opportunity. The language instructors and teams creating the language courses are working on using the resources developed for the online courses and adapting them into an OER (Open Educational Resource) that will be freely accessible to public to learn and study Nepali and Tibetan. This is one way UBC hopes to address student thirst for more materials from which to learn Nepali and Tibetan.



Learning from the models of courses already featured on Open UBC, our courses will provide a unique opportunity to share our years of teaching expertise with a global audience, providing foundational linguistic and culture knowledge about the Himalayan region. We have received consent from our community partners so that we can document their community-led learning activities and share this content with a global audience. These OERs will provide a timely and unique, community-engaged learning resource for anyone seeking to learn these important and under-resourced languages. This endeavor will be supported by a small grant from the TLEF-OER fund titled "Nepali and Tibetan language in a community context (OER)" and a summer research assistantship from the Institute of Asian Research.

Overall, we believe that the community-engaged course model as it stands is sustainable, and can be utilised for years to come.

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## **Acknowledgements**

The UBC Himalaya Program and Department of Asian Studies thank the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund, the Centre for Community Engaged Learning, UBC Go Global, and the Khyentse Foundation for their continued support in this project. We hope to continue hosting these courses and offer the unique opportunity for students to learn Nepali and Tibetan in an interdisciplinary and community-engaged manner.

The Himalaya Program Steering Committee has supported and steered the courses since their inception in 2016. The language courses would not be the same without their support, and indeed their visits to the classes this year enriched the student experience. These members include Sara Shneiderman, Tsering Shakya, Mark Turin, Ratna Shrestha, Katherine Hacker, and Dagmar Schwerk. Himalaya Program assists Patrick Dowd and James Binks provided crucial logistical support to move the courses online and assist in the day-to-day operations of the course.

The cornerstone of any successful language course are its instructors. Binod Shrestha's and Sonam Chusang's enthusiasm towards Nepali and Tibetan and their passion for teaching these languages and sharing their cultural context shines through in aspect of their interactions with students, course organizers, and community members. The Himalaya Program is excited to watch and support them to grow and continue developing resources for their students and the public at large to learn Nepali and Tibetan.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Range of students' educational standing/background

1. BA: Economics (Faculty of Arts)
2. BA: Geography (Faculty of Arts)
3. BA: Political Science (Faculty of Arts)
4. BA: English Literature (Faculty of Arts)
5. BA: Asian Studies (Faculty of Arts)
6. BA: International Relations (Faculty of Arts)
7. BA: Undeclared Major (Faculty of Arts)
8. BFA: Visual Art (Faculty of Arts)
9. PhD: Anthropology (Faculty of Arts)
10. BSc: Biology (Faculty of Science)
11. BSc: Computer Science (Faculty of Science)
12. BSc: Psychology (Faculty of Science)
13. BCom: Commerce (Sauder School of Business)
14. BCom: Undeclared Major (Sauder School of Business)
15. BKin: Kinesiology (Faculty of Education)
16. MJ: Journalism (School of Journalism, Writing, and Media)
17. Faculty: Asian Library
18. Faculty: School of Public Policy and Global Affairs

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## Appendix B: Summary of Student Feedback

<b>Summary of 2020 Student Feedback</b>	
<b>Positive Feedback</b>	
<p>Tibetan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The support of Sonam and the language partners in providing opportunities to have one-on-one conversations with native speakers elevated the course’s ability to provide truly effective learning experiences.</li> <li>● Learning the Tibetan script opened up doors to understanding the language, culture and sound system which broadly assisted in their comprehension of Tibetan.</li> <li>● Students found they couldn’t overstate the value and inspiration from the community-engaged visits and activities. Especially Kalsang Dawa’s art tour and Jamyang Yeshe’s song they learned.</li> </ul>	<p>Nepali:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The encouragement and patience of Binod to deliver language pedagogy as well as cultural grounding provided a holistic learning experience from which students took away more than just language skills.</li> <li>● Learning the Nepali script opened new understanding of South Asian cultural and linguistic connections</li> <li>● Students said that the opportunity to meet with Nepali community members and relevant faculty’s research and experiences moved them beyond a classroom and into an interdisciplinary learning experience.</li> </ul>
<b>Pace</b>	
<p>Tibetan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tibetan students mostly found the pace of the course to be appropriate. Several thought that the pace was very fast, but manageable.</li> <li>● Some students noted that sometimes segments of the class dragged on when people spoke one-by-one, which is largely a product of the online medium which isn’t as supportive of multiple conversations at once as in-person learning.</li> </ul>	<p>Nepali:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Many Nepali students mentioned how the pace of the course was fast, although most also commented that this was expected and overall manageable. The most important thing is that every student appreciated that the pace meant the amount of Nepali they had learned was significant and they were proud of their progress.</li> <li>● Given the pandemic, online learning, and some students learning remotely from Asia, expectations for the style and intensity of learning may have shifted.</li> </ul>

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<b>Feedback on Materials and Writing Scripts</b>	
<p>Tibetan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students were pleased to have access to a wide variety of online materials, in particular to Tibetan cultural media like music and TV segments which encouraged students to learn Tibetan in a natural setting.</li> <li>● Learning the Tibetan script was widely appreciated by students, although some felt overwhelmed especially in the first few days of the course. Reflection journals show a large preoccupation with particular characters and related grammatical functions and their pronunciations. Some felt they couldn't actually speak much during the earlier stages of the course, but by the end of the course most students were surprised at their high proficiency.</li> </ul>	<p>Nepali:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Unlike previous years where students asked for reliable online materials, this year the students had access to a trove of online materials discovered by Binod and also developed by him.</li> <li>● Many students had a background in South Asian languages (e.g. Hindi) which used the same or a similar writing script as Nepali. Those students were often positively surprised to learn and re-discover this script. Individuals with no background in the script did find it hard to grasp in the two-weeks and asked for more in-class direct feedback on their writing assignments.</li> </ul>
<b>Instructor Feedback</b>	
<p>Tibetan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students commented how Sonam is encouraging and understanding, and works hard to teach students both the Tibetan language and culture.</li> <li>● Sonam was accommodating of students' different backgrounds and tailored the learning for them, while maintaining standards that encouraged language learning.</li> </ul>	<p>Nepali:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students found Binod to be a kind, thorough, and patient teacher that is passionate about teaching and the Nepali language and culture. He encouraged questions and feedback to clarify the learning experience.</li> <li>● Students consistently mentioned the efficacy of the quizlet materials developed by Binod, and especially how they were used as review at the start of class. They also commended the fun variety of online activities and language learning games.</li> </ul>

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## Appendix C: Community Engagement Feedback

<b>Overall Reflections</b>	
<p>Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community members had overall very positive experiences in the course.</li> <li>• They were especially happy to share their language and culture with others, and to continue to interact with the students in the future.</li> <li>• They would prefer in-person interactions for future course iterations.</li> </ul>	<p>Quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I am so happy to have gotten this opportunity to be able to share my language and culture with other people. Not a whole lot of people know about Tibet and [...] it shows that they do want to truly learn about it because they themselves choose to sign up for this course. I'm really happy.”</li> <li>• “Thank you and all UBC Himalaya Program team for inviting us again this year to be part of this great interaction with Nepali language students. All community members including me felt an honour to be part of the program.”</li> </ul>
<b>Interaction with Students</b>	
<p>Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community members had mostly positive experiences speaking with the students, especially noting their enthusiasm and patience.</li> <li>• Some members of the NCWSBC felt a little uncomfortable being asked their age, and being called ‘[Name] didi’ [older sister] instead of ‘[Name] jee’.</li> <li>• The online format mostly went smoothly, but there were some hiccups (especially with singing/music-focused community members due to audio issues).</li> </ul>	<p>Quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I wanted to interact with the students in Nepali language so I used both English and Nepali language and it was really nice to have interaction with the students. I think the students were well prepared to speak to me in Nepali language.”</li> <li>• “Thanks to all the students for their patience though we had a challenging time as well because the technology was very new to us.”</li> <li>• “Due to unstable internet connections on my part, [sometimes] the screen would freeze.”</li> </ul>

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## Communication and Preparation

### Summary:

- Every community member stated that they had agreeable communication with the language team and language instructors.
- Some members that joined the class primarily to converse with students (instead of present) mentioned wanting to know the student questions beforehand.
- Community members did not feel overburdened spending time preparing for their class visits, which varied from “30 minutes” to “a few weeks”.

### Quotes:

- “The students were very well prepared. The language instructor provided us with the class material the day before so we had time to prepare for the class.”
- “We did not know the sets of questions the students were going to ask, so some of the [community members] were confused a bit.”

## Length of the Course

### Summary:

- Most community members would prefer to have more interactions with the students through additional sessions within the two weeks, or to expand the course length to allow for more interactions.

### Quotes:

- “It would be nice if I could spend a little more time with the students in the future if the students really wanted to learn more about the Nepali culture, music and songs.”
- “I think the current model is already great. However, I think two weeks is too short a time and would have liked it if it was longer, maybe about a month or so.”

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## Appendix D: Summary: Ways to Improve

<b>Summary: Ways to Improve</b>	
<b>Input from Students</b>	
<p>Tibetan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Spend more time teaching the Tibetan script in class, and providing direct feedback, since there was a lot of independent script learning.</li> <li>● Teach/learn more of the Tibetan script before diving in to long texts.</li> <li>● Allow more time for note taking during the class, and similarly have more repetition before moving on to a new topic.</li> <li>● Teach more common words and phrases in the first days of the course, even if it moderately slows learning the Tibetan script.</li> </ul>	<p>Nepali:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide more common and in-class reading time for students to receive direct feedback from the instructor, for their pronunciation and script learning</li> <li>● Teach more common words and phrases in the first days of the course so students are 'speaking' Nepali earlier, and have context for the script and sound system they learned on the first day</li> <li>● Practice more third-person speaking, instead of mainly asking and answering questions about one's self and interlocutor.</li> <li>● Make sure people have different, rotating class partners to have more variety in practice.</li> </ul>
<b>Input from Community Members</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure community members are prepared for the questions that will be asked, so they can prepare beforehand and provide feedback to instructors on potentially uncomfortable questions (e.g. "How old are you?").</li> <li>● Ensure students are taught to use the correct forms of honorifics. For example, to use 'jee' in Nepali instead of 'didi' for a newly met acquaintance.</li> <li>● Many community members would prefer more interactions within the two weeks and/or for the course to be lengthened so their relationship with each other grows and to explore more topics.</li> <li>● While community members' online experiences were mostly positive, those who joined in previous years noted there was more enthusiasm and connection during in-person interactions, and would prefer that model in the future if possible.</li> </ul>	