Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

KYRA ANN FORTIER (BORLAND-WALKER)

BA (University of British Columbia, 2016)

“An Acoustic Investigation of Vowel Variation in Gitksan”

Department of Linguistics

Wednesday, January 9, 2019
1:00 P.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B021

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Sonya Bird, Department of Linguistics, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Alexandra D’Arcy, Department of Linguistics, UVic (Member)
Dr. Henry Davis, Department of Linguistics, UBC (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Richard Wright, Department of Linguistics, University of Washington

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Eric Higgins, School of Environmental Studies, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

The research question for this thesis is: How does vowel quality vary across Gitksan speakers, and what sociolinguistic factors may be influencing this variation? Answering this question requires both that I show what the variation is, and why it may be that way; I have approached these questions by conducting a study in two parts. First, I conducted a demographic survey and ethnographically-informed qualitative interview with nine Gitksan speakers. Second, I performed an acoustic analysis of vowel variation across these same speakers. The acoustic results lead me to conclude that the low and front vowels show the most variation between speakers. My findings allowed me to add to our understanding of individual variation across speakers and communities. Although further investigation is needed to come to a conclusion about the generalizability of these results, the overarching contribution of my work is to add phonetic detail to previous descriptions of variation between speakers within the Interior Tsimshianic dialect continuum.