



University
of Victoria

GRADUATE COLLOQUIUM

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY



Burning the Midnight Oil: Archaeological Experiments with Viking lamps

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11:30 am – 12:50 pm

Cornett Building, Room A229

The Viking Age falls at the tail end of what was once called the Dark Ages of Medieval Europe. The image that we have of Viking houses is of smoke-filled, damp spaces, crowded with people and shrouded in gloom. However, among the house assemblages from across the Viking world, we find evidence of lamps, usually made from stone, ceramic, or metal. Trace evidence of fuels and wick materials, combined with ethnographic and historical sources, give hints as to how the lamps functioned, but as yet, there has been limited research on Viking lamps in particular. Through the creation and analysis of an experimental Viking lamp, this talk provides a fresh look at illumination in Viking-Age houses. The research presented forms the beginning stages of a longer project; here the efficacy of various wick forms is analysed, taking into consideration the quantity and quality of both light and heat produced by single lamp. While initial tests were conducted in a modern setting, subsequent testing took place in a reconstructed Viking-Age pit house in southern Washington.

EVERYONE WELCOME.

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