



University
of Victoria

ANTHROPOLOGY COLLOQUIUM



Social connections in Southern Africa during the past 40,000 years: Perspectives from Grassridge Rockshelter

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Cornett Building: A129

Humans are, and have always been, social beings. However, establishing the nature and range of social networks in prehistoric societies remains challenging. Archaeologists use ethnographic resources, archaeometry, and exchange items to gauge the extent of past social networks, often in combination and to varying success. This talk will incorporate these proxies to examine social networks in southern Africa over the past 40,000 years. Recent and ongoing research at Grassridge Rockshelter, located in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, provides a detailed record of past lifeways during this period from the chronically understudied interior grasslands region of southern Africa. Using a collaborative and multidisciplinary approach, it will be argued that the extent and intensity of social networks differed substantially between the Late Pleistocene and Holocene occupations at Grassridge, and that Holocene social networks were both larger and more complex than previously thought. The Holocene context will be further examined with respect to the individual implications of maintaining social networks through investment in the production and exchange of highly valued goods, as well as more broadly demonstrating how studies of social networks contribute to our understanding of hunter-gatherer lifeways in prehistory.

EVERYONE WELCOME.

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