



University  
of Victoria

# ANTHROPOLOGY COLLOQUIUM SERIES



## Bioarchaeology in the time of climate change (and everything else going on)

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Monday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023

11:30 am – 12:45 pm

COR A125

Global climate change is increasingly becoming a major factor in archaeological research, with sites in many parts of the world affected by erosion, rising shorelines, and extreme weather events. Within community-engaged archaeological projects, threatened sites are often priorities for new excavations, especially when human remains are exposed. However, our cultural climate is also changing. As archaeological science breakthroughs provide more and more opportunities to learn from ancient bones, teeth, and molecules, attitudes toward studying them are shifting within anthropology and the broader public. Current trends in destructive research force us to contend with long-standing issues regarding how skeletal collections are obtained, what research is permissible and who grants permission, where research occurs, and who is involved. Bioarchaeologists are often positioned at the crossroads, asked to both facilitate research on ancient human remains and protect them from harm. Despite progress toward establishing best practices, there is no one-size-fits-all approach and many contexts lack a clear roadmap for ethical research. Some archaeologists have chosen to distance themselves from work involving ancient human remains, but this strategy is not always compatible with other professional values. Drawing on my work around Lake Turkana in northern Kenya, I discuss how prolonged drought, community-engaged archaeology, and bioarchaeological salvage are coming together to create new opportunities to connect the past and present in a region deeply impacted by climate change. In doing so, I reflect on how bioarchaeological research is adapting to changing global and cultural climates, and our evolving responsibility to ancient human remains and the communities with whom they are connected.

**EVERYONE WELCOME**

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