



A Virtual Chat with Jackie Prime



BA Anthropology & English
MA Biological Anthropology
PhD Biological Anthropology



McMaster University
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale



Specialty/Research Focus:
Non-human Primates

My MA and PhD research focused on manual dexterity as a reflection of cognitive prowess in gibbons and macaques. (I watched their hands, and thought about how they think.)

I started studying gibbons in captivity during my MA work and for my PhD I expanded on that research in the field, living and working at the world's longest running fieldsite for wild gibbons in Khao Yai National Park, Thailand.

All my life I wanted my PhD, and early on in my university career I sort of "fell into" anthropology – which was an amazingly lucky twist of fate.

Throughout school, I was certain I would one day become a professor at a prestigious university and live the "anthropology dream". My life would be filled with long sabbaticals and summers doing fieldwork in Thailand, teaching thrilling seminars on primate social dynamics, human-animal relationship, and, of course, constantly publishing fascinating articles and books about the secret lives of gibbons.

By the end of my PhD that idea was dead.

Like all other primatologists, my study subjects are rapidly approaching extinction at the hands of humans. I had become increasingly frustrated by how little the world outside of academia knew of anthropology and how destructive humans continue to be on our planet.

Few people understand how and where humans fit within the bigger picture of nature, biology, and ecosystems. But as a biological anthropologist, that's exactly what I know, what I love to talk about, what I love to teach about, and what I love to study and learn more about myself. Thus, Prime Earth was born.

The road to creating your own position in the workforce, whether it be in the for-profit or not-for-profit world is fraught with challenges and struggles, but there are numerous parallels between leading your own research and starting your own business.

My anthropological training perfectly prepared me for the road ahead. And though I was starting from scratch having to learn an entirely new industry before I could begin to share my anthropological knowledge with the world, my dedication to my graduate studies made me capable of dedicating myself to this new path and learning the ropes quickly to help me stay afloat.

My entire career now focuses on who I am as a biological anthropologist, taking what I know about people and non-human primates and translating that into easy-to-understand information to help people understand themselves, understand others, and live in a manner that is more compassionate and respectful of our planet and all of life on earth.

The mission of Prime Earth is the same as my own life's mission and it comes directly from an essay answer I wrote on one of my first grad school exams: 'primatologists (and by extension all biological anthropologists) hold a unique position in this world by studying and understanding the complex interface between animal and human, nature and culture, similarity and difference, and it's important we offer our perspective to the world both in academia and beyond.'

By sharing our knowledge with others, we can make this world a more inclusive and accepting place – finding the similarities that connect us, celebrating the diversity that makes our world so interesting, and respecting all of life on earth. I use both my anthropological training and knowledge in everything I do now at Prime Earth. I designed it that way. And I'm happy to share my experiences to help others forge ahead on this road less traveled by and help others find meaningful work outside of academia too.

Online
Office Hrs



See our list of
events to register
for Jackie's
upcoming office
hours.