



A Virtual Chat with Jennifer Sharman



MA Biological Anthropology
PhD Biological Anthropology



University of Western Ontario
Durham University



Specialty/Research Focus:
Bioarchaeology

My PhD research focused on the variability in human skeletal rates of aging and sexual dimorphism across different geographic locations and time periods. I was lucky to collect data from known age-at-death skeletal collections in Portugal, South Africa, England, and Toronto, and found that there are indeed differences in rates of skeletal aging in skeletal samples from different locations and times. My MA research looked at fertility in the Roman period Dakhleh Oasis, Egypt.

I am currently working as on the program development team for Prime Earth, and as the editor for a local news website. I also volunteer on a community project called PACE Burlington (Program for All-Inclusive Care for Elders) to enhance the wellness and independence of older adults through active participation in social and recreational activities alongside coordination with health services, where I am the co-chair of the Volunteer Model Working Group, and participate in the wider leadership group and another working group.

Anthropology informs basically every role that I have: more obviously at Prime Earth, where the whole mission is around teaching anthropology to youth, with the aim of empowering young people while helping them make connections with the wider world around them, including other species and the environment, but also as an editor and in my work with PACE. As an editor, I need to understand the audience for each piece of writing, so that I can contribute to their comprehension of the piece, while still staying true to the voice of the author. (A recent example is the addition of a definition of microaggressions to an article for Black History Month.) I also am in the position where I can solicit articles that I think would be educational for the community, and my anthropology background allows me to do so in a way that is sensitive to the needs of underrepresented groups of people. Similarly, in my community work, I am able to contribute my understanding of underrepresented or marginalized groups so that these groups will ultimately be better served in their communities – I try to use my anthropological expertise for equity in such people, in access to healthcare, social services, and community participation.

Due to various ups and downs in life, it took me awhile to get here, to reconcile my previous ambitions (work with bones! Research! Travel to cool archaeological sites and dig!) with the realities of the economy and university hiring practices, alongside life events delaying my ability to do other things that I wanted to. The upside of this, though, is my increased ability to see how tough things can be for others, so that I can use my experiences plus my anthropological knowledge to help others in whatever small way that I can.

Online
Office Hrs



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