

POWERED BY DIVERSITY: INTRODUCING THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Anthropology was first taught at the University of Alberta in the late 1950s in the Department of Philosophy and Psychology but it wasn't until 1961 that the first anthropologist was hired in the newly created Department of Sociology. The Department of Anthropology became independent from the Department of Sociology in August of 1966. At the time it was the only department between BC and Ontario to offer a PhD program permitting students to specialize in either archaeology or social anthropology.

The Department was created with an initial complement of seven faculty

members. Despite what appears to have been a tumultuous beginning (at least three of the original seven faculty members left the University of Alberta by 1970), the first MA degree in Anthropology was granted in 1968 and the first PhD was awarded in 1972.

Anthropology at the University of Alberta is characterized by a fierce commitment to the four-field approach that makes the Department stand out in the era of increased specialization. This integrated approach is treated at the Department not as a relic of the past but as an opportunity for cross-

fertilization among approaches that range from humanities and social sciences to natural and physical sciences. In that sense, the Anthropology Department acts as a microcosm of arts-sciences collaboration. While difficulties of such integration are recognized, the Department has carefully nurtured an environment conducive for four-field collaboration in a variety of ways, that include the careful choice of faculty hires and replacements in the past two decades, as well as undergraduate and graduate programs that take exposure to all subfields as seriously as the necessary subspecialization.



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