

## TEACHERS TALKING

Does the study of anthropology affect teachers--their values and beliefs, their teaching, their own personal and professional lives? Do teachers pass on that exposure to their students by integrating it into students' learning?

Teachers in Maryland, Virginia, Washington, D.C., and Wyoming provide one resource pool for answers to these questions. From 1978 to 1985 the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History carried out intensive anthropology teacher training programs in cooperation with anthropology departments at the George Washington University and the University of Wyoming. For five years, academic courses specifically designed for pre-college teachers involved over 350 teachers with anthropology. During each year's program, monthly and year-end evaluations were submitted by teachers. For the Wyoming program, a professional outside evaluator

conducted interviews and designed questionnaires, and the program director conducted interviews with participants one year after the program. In the fall of 1985, a follow-up questionnaire was sent to all graduates of the two programs that asked for further evaluation of anthropology's continuing impact on these teachers' lives and teaching.

From these sources, a composite picture has been gathered, although a highly impressionistic and subjective one. "Teachers Talking" offers an inside view of some teachers' assessments of the importance of anthropology to their personal and professional development and to their students.

### 1. How have you pursued anthropology outside your classroom?

"I worked one summer in the preservation lab of the Page Museum in Los Angeles where the finds of the La Brea tar pits are housed."

(continued)



"In 1983 I was awarded a Fulbright Summer Seminar to study the history and culture of India, during which I visited sites all around India. It was a very intense, exciting six weeks."

"I am a teaching supervisor for a summer school archeological seminar for secondary school students."

"I participated in Crossroads Africa the summer after my involvement with the SI/GWU Anthropology for Teachers Program."

"I spent a summer traveling to archeological sites in New Mexico."

"I participated in the George Washington University summer session in Mexico visiting and studying archeological sites. Also, on a trip to Ephesus, Turkey, it was exciting to see so many different stages in the unearthing of a city."

"I have been involved in digs in Greece, have served as a member of the Alexandria Archaeological Commission, and am anticipating a summer program with Earthwatch."

"I presented workshops on classroom anthropology and archeology for the National Council for the Social Studies annual meetings."

"In 1983 I won a Fulbright scholarship to Israel to study Israeli history and culture."

"Research I did on a Schnapps (liquor) bottle excavated from a city archeology site in Alexandria grew into a study of local history of the city of New York from 1830-1860 and national attitudes toward the use of alcohol in that period--all part of further graduate work."

2. In what ways has anthropology influenced you?

"Studying anthropology has broadened my horizons, given me new subject matter for my curriculum, and provided multiple new materials for use in my classroom."

"As my 8th grade student, David, said to me: Learning about anthropology has given me a whole new outlook on the meaning of life."

"My appreciation of other cultures has increased tremendously....I feel I understand much more about Native Americans now than I ever did before."

"I see anthropology all around me--in people, in magazines, T.V.--and I assimilate more of the information around me in a cultural context."

3. In what ways have you incorporated anthropology into your teaching?

"My American history classes use colonial inventories, wills, and stratigraphic and archeological drawings to lead them into a greater awareness of colonial social structure."

"Anthropology is now my opening unit for my Ancient and Medieval history class, a unit in which students learn about human evolution and the beginnings of various cultural regions throughout the world."

"Working with an 8th grade science teacher, I have designed a small population study for Rock Creek cemetery, looking at mortality rates by sex and age in the 18th and 19th centuries."

"My class studies primate behavior, communication, and group interaction at the Washington Zoo and on the Janney school playground."

"I teach a long primate unit in my Biology II class and also incorporate studies of the Nacirema."

"In my archeology/anthropology elective, my students do an anthropological 'fieldwork' project with the English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at the schools."

"I have taught 10th-12th graders a one-term anthropology elective for the last five years. For four years I taught a required Introduction to Society (cultures) class to 8th graders. Also, I teach anthropology in my 9th grade ancient history class and my 7th grade geography class."

4. Why does anthropology belong in the pre-college curriculum?

"My biology classes all have an evolutionary theme, and with anthropology my students can gain a clear picture of the biological and social evolution of man and the other primates."

"I believe anthropology is an important (and neglected) area of knowledge and understanding to pass on to young people. Its greatest importance is that it broadens people's objective understanding of their own culture and themselves--helping them, we hope, to become less ethnocentric."

"Learning should be inter-related. Anthropology can provide the unifying thread in the core areas of language, social sciences, math, and science."

"[A study of anthropology means] gaining the ability to look into the faces of our own ancestors in order to see our own reflections."

"Because of the diversity of cultures within our country, understanding and appreciation of the origin and development of social groups are essential. New immigrant groups (Haitians, Cubans, Southeast Asians)

are coming to the U.S. in unprecedented numbers. These newcomers with disparate backgrounds and mores require from us knowledge of an anthropological nature if we are to be truly accepting."

"Because [anthropology] gives kids a sense of the whole picture. It allows for an integrated, meaningful study of social science, history, and science in a contextual way so students are not learning facts piecemeal, but seeing how their learning all fits together."

Ruth O. Selig

