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1 WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO PURSUE RESEARCH IN ARCHAEOLOGY?

I was taking archaeology classes as an undergraduate at CU and I always thought that archaeology was really cool, and exciting, and I went to field school, and it was awesome, but I had this existential struggle of, "Why actually do archaeology?" Does it actually help people, other than just being interesting? And then I started taking classes with a professor who really inspired me by showing me that you can actually use knowledge from the past to address problems in the present. He specifically was looking at environmental archaeology and questions of sustainability, so then I was like, "Oh I can do this really cool thing and it can also make a real impact on the present." So that solidified it for me, that archaeology was something I wanted to go into.

2 WHAT DOES YOUR RESEARCH PROCESS LOOK LIKE?

Community engagement is a really important part of my research process. I've been working with the same community in Belize for over 10 years now, and I really make sure to do research that people who are actually impacted by the research care about, and want done, and am very active in knowledge production. So it's very collaborative in that sense, also. My research is really field work based. I go to the field in Belize to conduct research, and I use a lot of different methods. I use pedestrian survey, which is basically just walking around and looking for something to landscape with archaeological material, excavation- a classic archaeological method- and I've used archaeobotanical analysis, which is looking at plant remains in archaeological context. Increasingly I've been using a lot more digital methodologies, so I use a lot of GIS- geographic information systems- to make maps and understand spatial relationships between things. I'm also getting into LIDAR, and drone imaging, and photogrammetry. I've been doing 3D scanning of artifacts and printing of artifacts, so that's been really fun. And a lot of that we're doing for community engagement, education, and outreach. We do most of our analysis of archaeological material in our lab in Belize, and we present our findings in Belize at an annual archaeology fair and a semi-annual archaeology conference.

3 COULD YOU TELL ME ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

I'd love to! I just started a new project. It's in Belize- the same area that I've been working for a long time- and it's on this small community that is located on a river, and the reason we're really interested in looking at this community is because people in the area are interested in learning more about it, and it comes from this time period called the post-classic of Maya history- I'm a Maya archaeologist- and a lot of Maya history really focuses on what's called the classic period- which is where you get the really big temples, and a lot of really fancy

looking art, and there's all the divine kings. But that's just a small part of Maya history, and there's been a lot of continuity from the classic all the way up through the present, so by looking at the post-classic period I'm kind of connecting that classic Maya history up through the present. Descending communities are really interested in that, in showing indigenous persistence in the landscape. It's kind of twofold, we're interested in it for intellectual reasons and also for advocacy-based reasons. We're just getting started on that. We did our first excavations last summer, which was really exciting, and I'm actually really hoping to start a field school class to hopefully bring some DU undergraduates down to participate in research in 2027, that's the goal. So hopefully that will happen.

4 WHERE WOULD YOU SEND STUDENTS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE KIND OF RESEARCH YOU ARE DOING?

Take archaeology classes at DU! We often have opportunities for students, such as field schools. Field schools are a great way to gain hands-on experience and training that can lead to research involvement. There is the Council of Colorado Professional Archaeologists, CCPA. It's a society of professional archaeologists who work in Colorado and they have an annual conference where people share their research, and there's always networking events. Also, we have some alums from the DU masters program in anthropology who- it's called Community Connections LLC, the name of the organization that they started- and they're very involved with public archaeology, and they organize archaeology meetups, and they're still very active in the DU community and DU network, so they're great people to get in touch with as well.

5 WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BE A PROFESSOR?

I love teaching, and I love doing research. I knew that being a professor was the best way for me to be able to continue my research project in Belize and still get to work with students. That's the great thing about DU- there's a real emphasis on the teacher-scholar model, so we get to focus on both things equally. As an academic, I honestly believe that the biggest audience I'll ever reach is my students. That means that the people I have in my classes will carry forward some of what they've learned about my research and the lessons we can learn from archaeology out into the world. I also love bringing my research into the classroom. Since archaeology is very hands-on, there are a lot of opportunities to have really engaging activities and experiential learning.

6 WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CLASS TO TEACH?

I'm going to cheat and talk about two classes. The first one is Fundamentals of Archaeology, our introduction to archaeology class. Students often take it for the same reason I took my first archaeology class: they think it sounds cool. A lot of people have specific ideas about what archaeology is, and in Fundamentals, I kind of dismantle the whole "Indiana Jones" thing while also acknowledging the colonial roots of archaeology. We spend a lot of time talking about the relevance of archaeological research to present day issues. That's what got me excited about archaeology when I was a student, so I hope to pass that on. The other class is a new one I just taught in the Winter Quarter called "Collapse, Resilience, Persistence." In that class, we cover various case studies that are really popular in the public imagination as examples of "collapsed" societies. We then look at the archaeological data to see if it does (or doesn't) support a collapse narrative. A big part of that class is writing for diverse audiences, and we talk about why certain stories we tell about the past become more popular than others, and importantly, what impact those stories have on the present.

7 IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?

I'm brand new to DU, I started in the fall, but I love being here. Everyone's amazing, the students are awesome, my colleagues are great, and it's been really fun developing new classes and seeing the students get excited about things.