

**University of Toronto**  
**University Arts Women's Club/University of Toronto Women's Association**

**NEWS – EVENTS**  
<https://uawc.artsci.utoronto.ca/>

**Volume 3 No 2**

**December 2020**

2020: first year of the Covid-19 pandemic continues!

On November 19, 2020, easily keeping the required physical distance from each other, we held our second virtual General Meeting. Becky Sigmon, Emerita Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto, was invited to be our guest speaker. The title of her talk: *Human Evolution Over the Past 4 Million Years*.

Christine McClymont, our Programme Coordinator introduced Becky Sigmon.

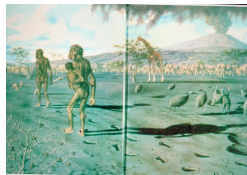
"Becky kindly agreed to share her fascinating insights about the evolution of human beings. The focus of her research is 'How are humans unique in the animal kingdom?' She investigates this question by comparing anatomical studies of monkeys and apes with humans, starting with story-telling fossils from pre-human times. No doubt you've heard of Homo erectus and Homo sapiens. They're old friends of Becky's. So, let's travel back in time and meet them as part of her illustrated talk!"

Becky brought beautiful illustrations to show on screen during her Zoom presentation. She began by talking about women in Africa who discovered fossils in the Great Rift Valley, which runs 7000 km through Kenya and Ethiopia, and also in the Sadiman Volcano area, and in the Olduvai Gorge (which recently became a popular tourist attraction) in Tanzania. She talked about Mary Leakey, a well-known English-born archaeologist and paleoanthropologist who with her husband found several fossils of great importance in the understanding of human evolution in Laetoli. One of Becky's slides illustrates two early human beings walking through wet volcanic ash. Later on, when the nearby volcano erupted, layers of ash covered and preserved the footprints of early human beings. The volcanic ash helps geologists to date fossils found in their digs. Becky also reminded us of the famous "Lucy", the oldest, most complete fossil skeleton which includes the pelvic bones and lower limbs of a human ancestor 3.2 million years old!

After a brief Q & A period, Claudia Colas, our Lunch Coordinator, thanked Becky for her fascinating work, patience and perseverance on findings of evolutionary biology.



Becky Sigmon, Emerita Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto



Two Very Early Humans Walking through Wet Volcanic Ash \*



“Lucy”, the Oldest, Most Complete Fossil Skeleton \*



Becky Sigmon and D. Johanson excavating 3-million-year-old fossil in Africa - Earliest evidence of upright bipedal \*

\* *National Geographic* December 1976, *Ethiopia Yields “First Family” of Early Man*, authored by D. Johanson, and D. Brill (who took the photos)



“First Family” sediments that are being excavated



Becky Sigmon and Maurice Taieb at Site Where “Lucy” was Found

In late November, President Kirsteen McLean wrote: “In a normal non-pandemic year, on November 27, 2020, UTWA would have attended an opera performance at the Faculty of Music. This year is very different, but there is still the opportunity to watch U of T Opera presenting “A Little Night Music” (online). This is an operatic concert with repertoire ranging from Mozart to Sondheim, broadcast on November 27 & 28 at 7:30 p.m., at the MacMillan Theatre. This year’s UTWA scholarship recipient mezzosoprano Lindsay Connelly, is one of the featured singers.”

In December, on Thursday, December 10, 2020, from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m., even though we missed our usual Christmas Party held at the President’s House, we had a Holiday Zoom celebration. The celebration began by a welcome from Kirsteen and video greetings from Joanna Gertler, our Honorary President. As part of this event all members were asked to participate and present something special about the season with a unique decoration, a special gift that had been received, a cherished family custom, or had a story to tell, or an object to show. Our Past President and Special Events Coordinator Gay Thomson introduced our nine participants: Claudia Colas, Marlene Cummins, Joan Hewitt, Miriam Marks\*\*, Sharon McCarthy\*\*\*, Kirsteen McLean, Sue Russell, Maggy Stepanian, and Gay

Thomson who shared their Christmas remembrances with the group. Linda Andrews, Membership Coordinator, displayed slides on the screen to further illustrate fine details of each story. Q&A period was allowed between each presenter, and to finish off, we sang Christmas Carols together.

After the Christmas Party/Holiday Zoom celebration, Kirsteen shared her thoughts: "Very many thanks to all of you for sharing your stories. They were all completely different and fascinating. A huge thank you to Linda for once again being the Zoom Master, and to Gay for coming up with the idea for the event, and following it through. It was lovely to see so many members virtually."

As for Linda, she said: "I really did have fun trying to prepare for this afternoon. Thanks for all the prep the nine presenters did at their end - what a team. We had 33 attendees - which is great - and some faces we hadn't seen so far this year."



\*\* First Night of Hanukkah



\*\*\* Father Christmas

Those interested in joining UAWC/UTWA are invited to contact Linda Andrews, Membership Coordinator, at 416-485-4903 or [lindajanea@sympatico.ca](mailto:lindajanea@sympatico.ca)

Maggy Stepanian

December 17, 2020