

Unearthing History

Last fall, Wenatchee Valley College at Omak student Larry Scroggins, his father and girlfriend packed their lunches and set out for a day trip to Stonerose Interpretive Center and Eocene fossil site in Republic, Wash. The trip was for a class assignment. Anthropology and sociology instructor Dr. Julie Tate-Libby assigned her Introduction to Anthropology class to research a historical site with anthropological significance.

Using hammers, chisels and other tools, Larry's group broke apart layers of shale in the ancient lakebed to reveal the fossils within. After two hours of digging, Larry asked Dr. Bruce Archibald, paleoentomologist of Simon Fraser University and guest lecturer at Stonerose, about one of the fossils he unearthed.

"I've never seen anyone so excited over a rock, a fossil," Larry said. "His face (Dr. Archibald's) lit up and he asked to take the fossil into his own collection."

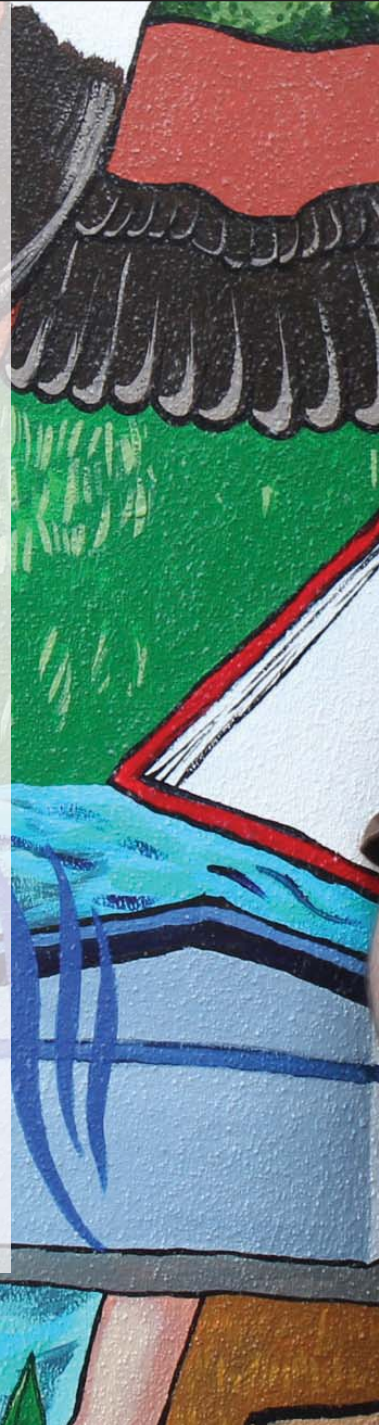
Named *Cicada Auchenorrhyncha*, it falls into the hoppers and spittle bugs classification. The fossil is rare, because not many insects or fish are found intact in Eocene fossil sites like Stonerose, Larry said. The one-inch fossil is approximately 55-60 million years old.

Larry is pictured here with a tree leaf fossil. The group also collected flower fossils, a partial fish fossil and several iron deposits during their visit.

An Okanogan High School graduate, Larry plans to pursue both an associate of arts and sciences degree and a nursing degree at WVC. He hopes to one day obtain a doctorate in forensic anthropology.

A fan of the TV drama "Bones," Larry was fond of anthropology before taking his first college anthropology class and discovering a rare fossil. He enjoyed the many opportunities he had to experience anthropology in action at WVC.

In addition to archaeological site visits, Dr. Tate-Libby offers a variety of hands-on activities to her students. A garbage analysis/archaeological dig aimed at trying to reconstruct household demographics; a field trip to the Central Washington University Chimposium, a chimpanzee observatory; and a taste-test of the first domesticated plant and animal foods are among the activities in her classes.





Anthropology in Action

“It’s a creative process and I learn just as much from them as they do about anthropology,” said Dr. Tate-Libby.

Anthropology instructor Alex A. G. Taub explains, “In anthropology, we not only study other cultures, it’s what we learn about other cultures and what it teaches us about ourselves.”

Taub, instructor on the Wenatchee campus, also offers his students a variety of applied work and projects to explore the field of anthropology. Each spring quarter, students excavate an archaeological site built by the previous year’s class and tell the story of cultural change through the artifacts they unearth. Additional projects include recreating artifacts through original methods and a kinship paper exploring how family history influences who we are today and understanding our place in the world.

“It’s fun watching students develop, mature and become stronger; knowing what they’re capable of and what they can do,” said Taub.