**Tuesday, January 14, 16:30**

**in room 300 of the Institute of Archaeology**

The talks are by

Prof. April Nowell

University of Victoria, Canada

**on**

**Growing Up in the Ice Age: Were Children Drivers of Human Cultural Evolution?**

**Abstract:**

It is estimated that in prehistoric societies children comprised at least forty to sixty-five percent of the population, yet by default, our ancestral landscapes are peopled by adults who hunt, gather, fish, and make stone tools and art. But these adults were also parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles  who had to make space physically, emotionally, intellectually, and cognitively for the infants, children and adolescents around them. The economic, social, and political roles of Ice Age children are often understudied because they are assumed to be unknowable or negligible. Drawing on the most recent data from the cognitive sciences and from the ethnographic, fossil, archaeological, and primate records, this talk challenges these assumptions. By rendering the “invisible” children visible, a new understanding will be gained not only of the contributions that children have made to the biological and cultural entities we are today but also of the Ice Age as a whole

**Tuesday, January 21, 16:30**

**in room 300 of the Institute of Archaeology**

**The Stories We Tell: Children, oral storytelling and knowledge transmission in the European Upper Paleolithic**

**Abstract:**

Storytelling, whether around a campfire, in a café or a sold out theater, is ubiquitous in human culture.  Globally, storytelling through film, television, books, videogames and other media represents a $300 billion industry. The universality of storytelling suggests that this behavior has deep roots. It also begs the questions of why we as humans find stories so compelling and what the evolutionary context for this behavior might be.  The ways in which children learn in foraging societies differ from the classroom-based style of learning and teaching typical of industrialized societies in the West.  This difference, however, has often been mischaracterized by anthropologists as an absence or rarity of direct teaching in foraging societies. In this talk, following the work of Scalise Sugiyama, I argue that oral storytelling is a form of pedagogy in foraging societies that shares  many of the features of direct teaching. Building on ethnographic data, I explore the evolutionary context, adaptive features and cognitive underpinnings of storytelling.   I then present archaeological evidence for storytelling and narrative in the Upper Paleolithic. Finally, arguing that storytelling is a vehicle for cumulative culture, I consider the implications of this form of teaching for skill acquisition and knowledge transmission among Upper Paleolithic children and adolescents and for their role as drivers of human cultural evolution

**Prof. April Nowell--Short Bio**

Prof. April Nowell is a Paleolithic archaeologist and Professor of Anthropology at the University of Victoria, Canada. She received her BA from McGill University (Montreal) and her PhD from the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia).  She directs an international team of researchers in the excavation of Lower and Middle Paleolithic sites in Jordan and collaborates with colleagues on the study of cave art in Australia.  She and her colleagues working in Jordan published the world’s oldest identifiable blood on stone tools, demonstrating that 300,000 years ago early humans ate a range of animals from duck to rhinoceros. She is known for her publications on Paleolithic art, cognitive archaeology, the evolutionary basis for storytelling, Neanderthals, the archaeology of children and the relationship between science, pop culture, and the media. Her work has been covered by more than 100 outlets including Nature Briefings, The Washington Post, The Guardian, The New York Times, The Economist, and National Public Radio, and her team’s blood residue work was named one of Time Magazine’s top 100 discoveries. She often serves as a Smithsonian Journey’s expert on their trips to visit the prehistoric painted caves of France and Spain.  She is the co-editor of multiple volumes including Archaeology of Night: Life After Dark in the Ancient World and author of the book Growing Up in the Ice Age, winner of the 2023 European Association of Archaeologists Book Prize.  Watch her in episode 5 of the NOVA series Ancient Earth (2023) and in the CBC documentary Little Sapiens (2024) (soon to be distributed internationally)