

## Student Profile

### Forest S. Haven – Anthropology PhD Program



#### Your Time at UCI

What made you decide to pursue a graduate degree?

*I come from a working class family so, initially, a PhD was not something I ever imagined as a goal for myself. I didn't even begin pursuing my undergraduate degree until I was in my early thirties. But, as I excelled in my small undergraduate institution--and concomitantly fell in love with anthropology--I began to really see the value of higher education, especially in its capacity to make me a more informed and meaningfully productive*

*person. After completing my bachelor's degree, a PhD was the logical next step to developing the sort of expertise I desired. I know it sounds idealistic but I truly wanted to do research that had the potential to help people. So, that is what I've done at UCI. The anthropology department here is pretty incredible. They've pushed me to develop a research project that, when complete, will have both academic and applied value.*

Why did you choose to come to UCI?

*Initially I applied because the anthropology department here was well ranked and had a lot of amazing faculty. But it was actually the campus visit that made the decision for me. I had been accepted to a couple other UC schools and visited all of them over about a one-week period. Although all the campuses were lovely and had great anthropology programs, UCI really stood out to me. My visit with the grad students immediately demonstrated a very collegial and supportive atmosphere that I didn't experience at other schools. It was apparent my brief visit that the whole department worked to ensure comradery amongst the students. I also loved the fact that you're not locked into working with just one professor. Instead they encourage exploration and getting to know all the faculty before deciding who you'll work with. I really just walked away from my first visit with the sense that UCI would be a supportive environment to pursue my degree. And I was right.*

If you are conducting research, how would you explain your research and its significance to your grandparent?

*Currently I study the regulation and management of local wild food resources in Alaska. I look at how these state management regimes shape Alaska Native people's capacity to continue traditional food practices. Alaska has a very unique political history, and despite the degree to which many Native groups in Alaska are empowered, there are still numerous ways that we must fight to continue cultural practices that are important to us. Hunting, fishing, and gathering food is one of those practices. My research looks to better understand where these obstacles come from, and how Native people are affected by, navigate, and sometimes affect these*

colonial management systems. In doing so, I the results of my research should pinpoint ways that can be more empowered, and have a greater say in the way food resources are managed.

What are your hobbies/passions outside of research?

*I've been lucky enough to develop a research project that is connected to doing something I love. I love fishing, hunting, and gathering food. Growing up in rural Alaska, it's something I've done since I was a child. It can be incredibly exhausting and time-consuming work, especially when you're working on high volumes of food. But it's done that way so there's enough to share with family and friends, which makes it very rewarding. So, even though I don't get to do these things as much in California, I certainly can while I'm in the field.*

## **Reflections**

What advice do you have for a new graduate student in your program?

*From personal experience, I think I would say don't be afraid to make mistakes. I remember my first year was pretty difficult. Not so much because of the workload, which was supposed to be difficult, but because I had to constantly battle with the feeling that I wasn't smart enough to be here. I came from a pretty small undergraduate institution and sitting in class with so many brilliant students and professors was really intimidating. Because of that, I didn't talk very much in my classes. I was petrified of being wrong or sounding ignorant. In hindsight, we all brought different knowledge sets and experiences to the table. And while my perspective was sometimes different, it always ended up being a valuable part of the class discussion, as did everyone else's. So, don't be afraid to engage. Being different or having a different perspective doesn't necessarily make you wrong. In fact, it often opens up new ways of thinking and talking about things that can lead to truly fruitful insights.*

## **Career**

How do you hope to make a difference?

*The topic of my research is one that I hope to be impactful not just in Alaska but elsewhere. There are Indigenous people all over the world fighting to maintain access to resources that are important to them. Whether it be food, water, or any number of things, there is a pattern that emerges the moment something is recognized as commercially viable. That pattern often leads to resource extraction to the point of endangerment, or to the degradation of ecosystems that make culturally significant resources no longer safe to consume. Most often this happens under the guise of "sustainability," yet the reality is that increased scarcity makes it harder and harder for Indigenous peoples to live their lives in a way that is meaningful for them. I hope that my research can shine a light on some of these issues. We cannot change the historical facts of colonization, but we can work to assist Indigenous peoples to successfully navigate and influence these systems that were always meant to exclude them in the first place.*