

In Memoriam: Professor Nelson H. H. Graburn (1936-2025)



The Department of Anthropology mourns the loss of Professor Emeritus Nelson H. H. Graburn, a distinguished scholar, mentor, and colleague in Sociocultural Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley.

Professor Graburn began his academic journey at King's School, Canterbury from 1950 to 1955. He earned his B.A. in Natural Sciences and Social Anthropology at Clare College in 1958 and his M.A. in Anthropology at McGill University, Montreal in 1960. He completed his Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Chicago in 1963.

His groundbreaking doctoral research was conducted in 1959 in the Inuit hamlet of Salluit (then known as Sugluk) in Quebec, Canada, with subsequent fieldwork in Kimmirut (then Lake Harbour) on Baffin Island. This research was supported by fellowships from the McGill-Carnegie Arctic Institute and Canada Council and resulted in his dissertation "*Taqagmiut Eskimo Kinship Terminology*," which was republished by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Canada in 1964. His early fieldwork reports have been cited in the "Qikiqtani Truth Commission Community Histories 1950–1975."

Professor Graburn joined the Berkeley faculty in 1964 and dedicated almost five decades to the university community. Throughout his distinguished career, he held visiting appointments at numerous prestigious institutions, including the National Museum of Civilization in Ottawa, Le Centre des Hautes Etudes Touristiques in Aix-en-Provence, the National Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku) in Osaka, and lectured at twenty-four Chinese universities. He joined the UCB Canadian Studies Program shortly after its founding and became a co-director in 1986. In 2005, he was appointed the inaugural holder of the Thomas Garden Barnes Chair in Canadian Studies and served as program director until his retirement in 2007.

He was a pioneer in the anthropology of tourism, with his concept of "tourism as a sacred journey" making significant contributions to this emerging field in the 1970s. His scholarly impact is reflected in his prolific publishing record, which includes 19 monographs and edited volumes. Among his most influential works are *"Tourism: the Sacred Journey"* (1977) and *"Ethnic Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World"* (1976). His 2007 co-edited publication *"Multiculturalism in the New Japan: Crossing the Boundaries Within"* was recognized as a "valuable addition to the increasing literature on Japanese multiculturalism" by *Japan Studies*.

At Berkeley, Professor Graburn regularly taught his seminar on Tourism, Art and Modernity (since 1977) and co-chaired the Tourism Studies Working Group. His recent research focused on contemporary Inuit arts, including "urban Inuit arts," and collaborations with Canadian Inuit cultural organizations on aspects of cultural preservation and autonomy. Professor Graburn established a global academic legacy through his research, collaboration, and publications with scholars across four continents. His dedication to teaching, professional development, and co-authorship with both graduate and undergraduate students at Berkeley and numerous other institutions earned him international recognition. Though he stopped accepting new graduate advisees after 2005, Professor Graburn remained actively engaged in masters and doctoral committees spanning diverse disciplines including Anthropology, Architecture, Planning, Sociology, Spanish, Music, Geography, Public Health, Art History, Education, and Italian. His academic influence extended internationally, where he taught and served on PhD examination and dissertation committees for students in Australia, Brazil, France, Sweden, Germany, China, and England.

Even after retirement, he remained an active presence in department life. Professor Graburn continued to be committed to create scholarly spaces for students through departmental working groups and colloquia, and regularly hosting visiting scholars and students, particularly from China. He continued teaching undergraduate courses for freshmen and sophomores until last year. In 2022 he was named the Constantine Panunzio Distinguished Emeritus of the Year by the UC Berkeley Emeriti Association, that recognizes exceptional accomplishment by an emeritus faculty member since retirement. Earlier this year in 2025 Professor Graburn received a Lifetime Contribution Award for Critical Tourism Studies in the Asia Pacific.

Colleagues remember him as generous, supportive, present, and cheerful at department and campus events, arriving in characteristic style behind the wheel of his beloved 1964 Shelby Cobra. Professor Graburn's legacy lives on through the dozens of Ph.D. students he mentored and the global network of scholars he inspired in the field of tourism studies.