Speak Up – Kōrerotia

Heritage and Human Rights

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Female Coming up next conversations on human rights with “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM

Sally E ngā mana,

E ngā reo,

E ngā hau e whā

Tēnā koutou katoa

Nau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”.

Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions and may you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is rightKo Speak Up – Kōrerotia tēnei, ko Sally Carlton ahau. Today we’re talking about heritage and human rights, which is a topic I’m really, really interested to learn more about as we progress our conversation today. We’ve got a lot of high level kinds of topics to deal with but I’m hoping that all our guests will pull in their own expertise and their own kōrero and their own stories as we go through to provide some examples of some of these high level issues we’re going to be discussing.

We’ve got four highly knowledgeable guests with us today who come from a range of backgrounds and it would be really nice to hear from you a bit more about yourselves and why it is you’re taking part today. We’ll start with you Kerryn, you’re joining us from Wellington so you’re the only one who is not here in the studio today unfortunately.

Kerryn Yeah kia ora koutou, ko Kerryn Pollock ahau. I am a Heritage Advisor with Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga which is our country’s national historic heritage agency. So one of my jobs is to look after what’s called the New Zealand Heritage List, Rārangi Kōrero, which is all of our listed places. So basically I get to tell those stories, the stories of those places and why they are important. I guess for me, sort of human rights is not an obvious intersection with heritage at first glance. But it actually is and something that I also look after is our Rainbow List Project which has the aim of telling the stories and histories of queer communities, to start to fill some representation gaps in our list.

Sally And that’s one of the key ideas or themes, I suppose, you’re going to be bringing and I’m super excited to hear about your work with the Rainbow community. How about Hatesa, we go with you next?

Hatesa Kia ora, ko Hatesa Seumanutafa au. I’m a Curator, Māori Pacific and Indigenous Human Histories, at Canterbury Museum. I got into this career because it was a way to connect to a very rich heritage that was not celebrated in our society at the time and it was more dismissed and ignored. So it was a way for me to connect to my grandpapa’s time, the period of Samoa. It was a way to connect to a source of inspiration because there’s a lot of taonga in there and I essentially started as an artist, as a creative. So looking at Canterbury Museum, it was really a… it was seeing the potential in the place and thinking that I could possibly do something in there that was meaningful, not really for myself but for my peoples, the Pacific community here in Canterbury.

Sally And you say at the time, when was it that you got into this work?

Hatesa I was introduced to the museum when I was about 15, yeah and I had pretty much grown up… I was born and raised here and I would say… yeah it was a difficult time to be Pacific or be of colour, yeah it was a difficult time. I mean not everyone has that experience but for me, we went to a predominantly Pākehā school and then shifted from that to a predominantly Māori and Pacific high school. So there were a lot of kind of identity issues and just the putting down of Pacific peoples, ways of being, you know. The only things that were highlighted at the time were dancing, singing, just a really performative way of looking at our culture rather than our history and our heritage, yeah.

Sally It sounds like you’re going to be bringing a very lived experience of how we connect heritage and human rights then. Okay, and Victoria?

Victoria Kia ora, I’m Victoria Bliss, I am the Heritage Conservation Projects Planner at the Christchurch City Council. And I guess I represent the very traditional form of heritage that people think of when they think of heritage, that it’s something that is about buildings, that it’s about regulatory authority control of buildings. It’s about protection, it’s about conservation, that’s sort of the background that I came from. I originally started working in heritage at 18 at the Council for the Care of Churches back in the UK which was about as traditional as you could get because it was the conservation of historic church buildings and that was really how I got into heritage, it was the love of the old buildings. But it wasn’t just the buildings, I realised quite quickly even though I didn’t understand or couldn’t really express it at the time, that the buildings were the place that held this heritage and this meaning but they weren’t the be all and end all of the heritage in their own right. And it’s taken me from 18 to 53 to really find what that means in terms of heritage through my own career and career development.

I moved to New Zealand in 2006 and went into this role where my jobs were around resource consenting for the Anglican Cathedral, the Catholic Cathedral, New Regent Street. So the key iconic heritage buildings across the city. That obviously changed quite markedly with the earthquakes and the loss of heritage and then I was very lucky in 2015 to be able to be taking on the role of project lead for the Council’s Heritage Strategy and that’s really when I think I grew up in heritage and I started to mature and fully understand exactly what it means because that Strategy was one that was developed in partnership. So suddenly this white girl from England with all of her traditional ideas of heritage and conservation, was introduced to the values that sit behind heritage – the ideas of the pou that guide us and why heritage has actually got more than just a role of being kaitiaki. That it has meaning and that it’s a living, breathing thing that is so much a part of life and so much of our identity. And really since that time in 2015, I’ve moved over and I’m doing a lot more work now around the intangible heritage and engaging with communities and understanding what heritage is in a very, very different way from the way I was educated and the way that I trained.

Sally Fantastic, really cool. And our final guest, Rosie.

Rosie Kia ora koutou, ko Rosie Ibbotson tōku ingoa. Nō Iuropi au, nō Ingarihi au engari ko Ōtautahi tōku kāinga. Thank you so much for this kind invitation, Sally, and it’s good to work with all of you here. Yeah what do I do? So I teach and research at Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha, University of Canterbury. I’m in the art history department. My approach to the subject and indeed the approach of my colleagues is sort of an expanded version about history. We think about art history and material culture but of course even that doesn’t cover all of the things that we would consider heritage, especially when we think about intangible heritage as has just been mentioned. Yeah as part of my work I am the coordinator of a post graduate diploma in art curatorship.

Sally Okay really cool, I’m super excited about this, goodness you bring so much wealth of knowledge to this kōrero today. To start off with – what is heritage? We’ve already touched on this idea that it’s something that’s tangible – we’ve talked about buildings, for example – but also intangible, we’ve talked about dance, we’ve talked about traditions. But I’d be really keen to talk with you more about the different ways that heritage is viewed and how those views impact what it is that you do. Victoria, you’ve already kind of touched on it, that it restricts almost in some ways, how people relate to and view heritage. But any comment you’ve got around that would be really good, just as a starting point for our conversation today.

Kerryn In my job, we certainly come from the perspective of place-based history, that’s what our work hinges on. But again, as Victoria noted, it’s not just a building, that’s why we use the word ‘place’. So it can be a landscape, it can be a monument, it can be a road, you know there’s all sorts of different places that can hold the stories of our pasts and our communities and our sort of cultural identity. But it can be a challenge, I think, sometimes for people, especially when you’re thinking of heritage places, that buildings sort of dominate people’s understanding of what heritage can be. For the outsider, it can be difficult to expound the views of heritage beyond a building. And the other challenge that we have, of course, is that buildings come and go and often the buildings that endure represent a certain sector of society, a dominant culture, and so it sort of reinforces inequities in things like heritage lists and so we have to think you know, really laterally about what heritage can be in terms of a place and it’s not always something you can stand in front of and walk through the door of.

Victoria One of the key moments I think in my own personal experience and perspective on this question, came when I first went and met with the six Papatipu Rūnanga to talk about partnership in developing this strategy and I said to them well we’re writing a heritage strategy or we’ve been asked to write a heritage strategy but it’s not something that I feel I’ve got the capacity or the capability or the knowledge to do. And the hour that we had actually identified and put aside for looking at what maybe a relationship or whether there was interest or not, was all taken up with the question well what do you mean by heritage and round that table there was six different perspectives from the six different rūnanga and everybody had a different perspective as to what heritage was – and with that in mind, we went out to ask people. And I think it’s about having that open mind because heritage is as individual as any one of us here is.

There’s the sort of more traditional idea of it being about the grand buildings or the big public spaces because they’re enduring and they’re the landmarks and they’re what people see. But it can also be really humble, it could be the tree that was planted by a certain person, it could be the stone that was moved to a certain place, it could be a place where something happened and there’s no longer any physical remains there, it could be a knowledge that’s passed down. I mean, so much of the heritage we have has actually come through oral traditions, it was never written down. It could be a waiata that has meaning that a lot of us will never understand but the heritage of that sits with a certain group of people.

So I think the thing with it is, it’s incredibly big and incredibly grand, it’s incredibly small and it’s incredibly humble. It’s very personal, for some people it’s shared much more collectively and other people it’s really closely knit within their own particular whānau. One of the things that we came up with as our way to define it – because under that definition, it’s more a question of what isn’t heritage – is your heritage or what is of value to you, is something that you have inherited or created as part of your inheritance that you value enough to pass onto future generations and that was one that came through talking to people and I can’t really argue with that because it encompasses every single area of heritage.

Kerryn Our name, Pouhere Taonga, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, Pouhere Taonga is a place to tie or anchor our treasures. And so for me, that I guess does speak to what you’ve just been talking about, Victoria, that it’s very much what people and communities value and so it’s not up to an organisation like Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga to tell people what their important heritage places are although you know, we do do that. We must be humble and listen and hear what those treasures are and what we can do as an organisation, as a government agency, to help to anchor those treasures so that they respected and preserved for present day and for future generations.

Rosie What Victoria was saying about this question of defining heritage – if indeed it can be defined – does slightly remind me of conversations we have in class, the University of Canterbury, where we talk about the difficulty of defining art. Obviously art being a kind of key form of heritage, something that often those definitions tell you is not really about art itself but about the particular perspective of the person defining it. I think something that’s really important to overcome when thinking about heritage, especially in Aotearoa but more generally, is this kind of Eurocentric split between nature and culture that’s been perpetuated by certain structures of thought.

Sally Not least the World Heritage Convention, which defines cultural heritage and natural heritage.

Rosie Separately.

Sally Yes.

Rosie That’s very interesting, I didn’t know that but I think again that’s indicative of a framework that doesn’t fit a lot of perspectives and viewpoints. You mentioned a tree being a sort of great example.

Victoria We have the same thing even within our own organisation, that when we were writing the heritage strategy, all of our engagement with the mana whenua, with the Papatipu Rūnanga and the environmental heritage and I had to say well actually, I’m looking at the cultural heritage because environmental heritage sits with the natural environment team and they’re not really seen together.

Hatesa To add to that, like when I came into this career, heritage was perceived as architecture, sites, places. There’s still this separate between natural and human history where heritage… It’s been nearly ten years now that I’ve been at the museum and I was doing a lot of work before then through uni around like museum’s representation, a whole heap of stuff like that. But it seems to have changed where now there’s more of an understanding from – I’ll just say it – Pākehā colleagues or people in the sector or related sector, who now understand for us heritage is really… it’s anything that represents or teaches us or celebrates or just anything to do with our past. So included in that is things like our tattoo patterns, our tapa cloth patterns. So certain patterns that might be considered as art now is actually like our heritage arts, it’s our heritage material. This is the legacy of our people and you cannot separate because all these things are made of natural resources and so these things are part of a natural environment ecosystem and so for me there has never been a separate and I’ve always been really super keen to try and do something that shows that, try and work with our natural history team at the museum.

At Canterbury Museum we have natural history and human history but I can’t think of them separately. Like it’s always interesting that a lot of what I have to do, I actually go and speak to our Senior Natural History Curator about it. I think the idea of kaitiaki of our heritage material or sites isn’t extended enough to our environments and the resources in there. It’s not fully encompassed just yet, we’re nearly there but we’re not quite there yet where we can look at a swamp area and say this is a heritage site and care for it in that way.

Sally What I’m thinking as you’re talking is things like the tradition of harvesting harakeke for example. It’s taking that natural product but the actual action, the activity of harvesting, it is in itself heritage and something that’s been passed down the generations.

Hatesa It’s like practices.

Sally Yeah exactly.

Hatesa It’s way of being. That to me is heritage, it’s not only material, information, knowledge, resources, sites, places. It’s just a way of being that is passed down but not passed down. Like it’s just heritage is here now, like heritage is not a stagnant thing for me. It’s something that is continuously being made, critiqued and reinterpreted. It’s just a necessary obsession I think that we all kind of have because we all want to stabilise as humans, kind of know your place or know how things came to be.

Sally We might have our first song now and Kerryn you’ve chosen one for us.

Kerryn I have, I chose Anna Coddington’s rendition of the waiata Purea Nei. I just love its meaning and words and I find her particular incarnation of the song just really beautiful.

Sally Great addition, thanks Kerryn.

**MUSIC BY ANNA CODDINGTON – PUREA NEI**

Sally I’d like to start off section two thinking about why is heritage so important and if we’re thinking about this in the context of human rights in particular.

Victoria I think one of the things we need to remember is when we talk about heritage, we’re talking about cultural heritage and as soon as you start looking at culture and identity and what they mean, one of those incredibly fundamental human rights that is so at risk and so vulnerable because it’s so difficult to actually put tangible constraints around. We’ve just spent ages discussing what is heritage, well what is culture, what is identity? And while we might know it or feel or while people might look back and identify certain aspects of it as having had cultural value or heritage value, at the time we might not realise.

What we have seen throughout history is the idea of this sort of cultural assimilation and also the whole idea of cultural annihilation that I know just my own family history going back, my grandparents on my father’s side came from what was Russia and is now Ukraine. So we’ve got sort of a real empathy there with how the Russians and the Ukrainians have interacted over time and what that’s done to the culture and identity of that side of my family.

My husband’s family came over to Manchester from Ireland in the 1950s and he had his culture crushed out of him completely, you know he could not speak his native tongue. He went back to Ireland and saw the place names and the pub signs and everything that he had grown up with, changed into English. I’m speaking here as a Pākehā who has come to New Zealand but if you look across time, colonisation, one of the first things that seems to have happened is that either brutally deliberately destructive and violent removal of or else insidious but determined destruction of those things that make your culture. It’s not even about the places, but it’s about the language, the belief system, the folklore, the traditions, the ways to gather, the ways to meet.

So I think that’s why it’s really important to keep remembering that heritage is a human right in that way, that because our culture and our identity and our very being is something that over time, if we don’t protect it and preserve it, it gets eroded and it’s a massive loss.

Hatesa I agree, I think that heritage is important because it’s one of our tools and it’s one of Māori, Pacific and indigenous people’s tools. It used to be used against us but now it’s one of our strongest tools to align ourselves and even uprise when it comes to teaching our children the significance and the significant aspects of our heritage and empowering them in that way. Heritage is important to me because that’s our backbone now, it’s our like… it’s a tool of the Pākehā that we can now use in terms of how Pākehā have established what heritage is. Yeah. I can’t explain it quite well but I think it is important for that reason, it is one of our tools now and it’s important as not just a resource for us to draw on and a source for us to draw on in terms of empowering ourselves but it’s also something that we can now disestablish what has been said about us, what has been taught about us, all those types of things and uplift our heritage. It’s a tool against capitalism, let’s go that far. For me it is because it is something that should not be monetised or commercialised. This is our inheritance and we have a shared heritage, all of us here, you know. We have a shared heritage and then we have our individual heritage. Heritage is super important, it’s a way that we can stand on the same platform.

Rosie One thing that that makes me think about, Hatesa, is the way in which heritage can protect other forms of heritage. So I’m thinking about for instance bird extinctions in Aotearoa in the 19th century, obviously at the hands of white settler colonial violence and one of the factors that contributed to the loss of birds was the attempts to surprise indigenous knowledge systems which protected those species. I guess that relates to what you were talking about with heritage being a tool and the preservation of some forms of knowledge and practices can ensure the thriving and protect other forms of knowledge and practices. Capitalism as well, I’m wondering if that’s got anything to do with kind of chronic underfunding in the sector across lots of different countries.

Hatesa Yeah like it’s just really hard for the heritage sector, I think, to fight for what should be of more significance. Heritage is part of our wellbeing, I experience it at the museum when different groups come in and you just see the uplift in them and you see their like… even just the kids sitting up, it’s like they’re puffing their feathers now. They’re excited that I just said what my name was and it was Pacific and I’m showing them all this Pacific material or I’m talking about the museum or my role there. You see them puff up like they’re so proud because how important it is to our health.

You know, we have groups that deal with mental health that come in. It’s really important and I don’t think that it’s as significant as what it should be. Like history is taught in schools but not in the way that I think it could be. There’s so much potential for there to be more of heritage than just history events.

Victoria History and heritage are often conflated as the single term and I think that’s a whole other discussion and a whole other debate but the history is what has happened, the facts, the resources of what’s happened and interpretation of it through different lenses. But the heritage is what we live and what we feel and what we breathe and what we are and it’s sort of that living element that history doesn’t capture.

Kerryn The word that you used earlier, Hatesa – uplifting – that really rang a bell in my mind and it reminded me of a conversation I had recently with Dame Catherine Healy who is the national coordinator of the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective over a place that has sort of come to our attention and it’s a place that represents the sort of history of sex work and the struggle for civil rights and equality and law and decriminalisation and all of those sort of really important things. It was such a wonderful conversation because she used the word this is such an uplifting project and I found that with our Rainbow List project, our queer heritage project, that the mere fact of recognition of histories and places and communities that have you know, traditionally been ignored through things like heritage lists, it’s so meaningful. For me as a practitioner, being able to participate in uplifting different communities through heritage is really fulfilling. It really speaks to that sort of wellbeing and identity function of heritage that we were talking about earlier.

Victoria I’ll add an example, a personal example if I may, to that which is sort of moving from uplifting to joy and expressions of joy. I was at my daughter’s graduation from high school. Again, graduations where I came from when I had my graduation, they’re terribly formal and everybody is sitting down in seats and everybody has got their suits on and you’re in your gowns and everything. My daughter’s graduation, first of all it was in te reo first and then in English second but the thing that I took away from it was the sheer and utter joy of those young people and their families and how they expressed it.

When somebody went up and got an award, there was an impromptu haka for them to celebrate what they’d done. The Pasifika community got up, all the girls piled onto the stage and did this amazing dance, the Filipinos got up and started singing and all these different cultural groups, somebody from their community achieved an award, they got up and they celebrated it through their own heritage, through their own language, song, dance, whatever and it was completely unrehearsed and completely impromptu and spontaneous. They were carrying that graduation, not just for themselves but for all the families who had led up to them being there, that the joy of celebrating together through something that is part of their cultural identity was unbelievably moving. I actually felt like such an outsider myself because they had so much pride and identity and belonging that they could express so beautifully through traditional songs, through their traditional language that as a European here, I don’t have the ability to do that, I don’t have that heritage. I just lack this language to be able to express that kind of joy.

Kerryn When you come from a history background like I do, the academic training and background, you’re sort of taught to be objective and factual but I see that there’s a real sort of social advocacy in the work that we can do with heritage and all of its sort of dimensions and that we can be proud of that. I sort of see it as unashamed social advocacy. You know with my Rainbow project, I have the wellbeing of our country’s diverse queer communities, both past and present at its heart, and that that’s valid and okay that we don’t need to be always objective because otherwise I think we lose so much and we lose the impetus to I guess undertake these sorts of projects.

Just for me personally, that’s been a really sort of rewarding realisation that actually it’s okay for me as a heritage practitioner to be an advocate, a social advocate as well. That that’s valid and right.

Rosie Just to add to what Kerryn was saying. I was thinking about this use of the word ‘objective’ and I guess I wanted to highlight how even terms like that that are sort of presented as terribly rational and terribly scientific, actually have their own history. And so I think it’s really important to be aware of the heritage of the knowledge that we’re working from and within and often trying to dismantle and I think it kind of reminds me that sometimes aspects of heritage, you know say from colonial cultures, they’re harmful as well and that’s another reason they need examining.

So I often say this about art, art is not all lovely speaking truth to power. There are certain artforms from certain contexts that have been used to suppress other artforms and other contexts. So I think that kind of critical view is really important and that’s not to say those forms of heritage should be ignored but it’s another reason to examine them and to examine them critically.

Hatesa Something I was thinking of last night on why heritage is important is that heritage provides us the opportunities to re-examine on how we view the past, how we implement the past into now and how we take it forward. That’s what I mean, like it’s a platform now, it makes us accountable. Heritage allows us or should allow us to critique heritage. The importance of it, how it’s practiced, how it’s viewed, perceived, interpreted, all of it.

Victoria I think one of the things that I’m seeing during my lifetime is not even around that, the fundamental changes of overthrowing or overturning of these more traditional colonial ideas and ideologies which are fantastic, but more of an awareness of the fact that it’s actually okay for people to have differences of opinion, differences of interpretation and that they’re equally valid and respected and that there’s a place for all of them to weave together to make a whole. So that we’re not constantly trying to re-write other people’s narratives in our own words or make them fit with authoritative reaction to our own. That we’re allowing other people to have a voice and to give their narrative from their perspective. Obviously there are some hugely, hugely harmful narratives but actually we’re not trying to invent a common heritage or a common history or a common understanding, we’re saying what actually unites us is that we’ve all got our own histories or our own stories. There are themes that run through them that we have in common but we don’t all have to be the same. What makes us so special and unique are very often our differences and the things we learn most from are often the things that are different between us.

Sally Very nicely put. We’re going to have our second song now.

Hatesa The words aren’t on topic but it’s ‘Here Comes the Hotstepper’. It just feels like it has that vibe of our engagement, Māori, Pacific and indigenous engagement in museums now. It’s like here comes the hot stepper, it’s my hype song. Even though it’s not from my culture, it has got that vibe of I’ve got all my cousins all around just doing what you were saying about at the graduation, just hyping you along.

**MUSIC BY INI KAMOZE – HERE COMES THE HOTSTEPPER**

Sally This is Speak Up – Kōrerotia and we’re talking about heritage and human rights with Victoria Bliss from the Christchurch City Council, Rosie Ibbotson from the University of Canterbury, Kerryn Pollock from Heritage New Zealand and Hatesa Seumanutafa from the Canterbury Museum. In this final segment, I’d like to think about some of the threats that we’re seeing to heritage and what is being done or what are you all doing to try and protect and preserve heritage. We’ve already talked a lot about how important the preservation of it is. We’ve also talked a lot about heritage needs to move with the times, it’s not something that is static. So I’d just be interested to hear about anything you’ve got to say on those sorts of questions.

Kerryn One of the major issues for my organisation, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, is climate change and the absolutely devastating effect that it’s having on community’s heritage. We are always being told about coastal erosion that is exposing urupā and is literally washing away our community’s heritage. We also have marae threatened by coastal erosion and it’s pretty safe for us to say now that this is a consequence of climate change, that people are literally seeing their heritage and history running away into the sea. And so it’s a really, really pressing issue but also a very difficult one because it brings in all sorts of other… you know, it requires lots of money, that these events can happen without warning so it’s a really difficult issue but it’s something that we’re going to have to face and talk about because it’s happening right now.

Victoria I have two hats on for this because I’ve got one hat that is for the tangible physical heritage and one that is for the intangible heritage. At the moment here in Christchurch one of the biggest threats to heritage was obviously the earthquakes and that has pretty much devastated what was seen as representing the heritage of Christchurch pre-quake in terms of that beautiful city that visitors came to, colonial gothic revival Christchurch. Not necessarily all a bad thing because what’s coming up is actually telling a lot more stories of the heritage that was here before, so we’re getting the mana whenua streams coming through and the work in that area is fantastic but we’ve got the physical threats there.

We’ve got another big threat at the moment which sits around urban intensification and housing issues and the housing crisis. Its cultural heritage, it’s also environmental heritage as well with looking at building on land that really is the most fertile land perhaps in this country and putting houses on it rather than using it for farming or where it should be. We’ve also got the fact that land value now, land price now is seen as having more value than heritage value and that’s one that I think we’re always going to come in contact with.

Back in the UK if you had a scheduled listed heritage building, it was seen as being more valuable than having one that wasn’t. Here in New Zealand, from my experience, it’s very often the opposite. You either have a heritage building owner who loves it and will fight literally the bulldozers off to protect that building and you’ve got the other people who look at it as a dollar sign for the land, minus the dollar sign for the process of demolishing the building on it and what their profit will be when they rebuild. So we’ve got that price versus value which is feeding back to Hatesa and the capitalist idea of heritage.

The intangible heritage we’re finding is facing different threats. We’ve got obviously archives and documents that are starting to come through now that have survived the quakes or where people who gathered them are starting to age and are looking at succession planning. So old photographs. As technology evolves and changes there might be materials, archives, data that is protected on a medium that is no longer something that is readable. So you know, floppy discs, microfiche, all these things. So we’re having to look at digitising collections to make sure that yes, we’ve still got the physical original but we’ve also got a digital copy and something that can be saved and passed on for future generations.

The area, I think, is particularly at risk – and that’s bias because of where I’m working at the moment – but I think it’s the real risk of losing the heritage of those communities and groups who don’t see themselves as having heritage. I know Hatesa has spoken about this big revival and I’ve seen it coming through but I know a lot of people I work with when I first go to talk to them, they say but we don’t have any heritage and when you sit down to them and you start to talk to them, of course they do. It might be a younger heritage than a lot of the buildings they look at but I’ve been working with some of the Pasifika groups recently looking at things like the hip hop festival and they didn’t see that that was necessarily something of heritage but once we started to unpick it, you were looking at the first hip hop crew in New Zealand was formed here in Christchurch, I mean how amazing is that. The urban DJ movement that came out after the 2011 earthquakes when the clubs all moved out to the suburbs and it took over New Zealand and then it spread further across the globe, came out of Christchurch. This is heritage that goes back to maybe the 80s and comes through to nowadays but actually that is only one generation away from us and we really need to try and capture that and record it and appreciate it for where it is now. But it’s not recognised, traditional heritage fields don’t recognise it.

When I went to say to people I’m going to be working with and looking at putting funding towards gathering the stories and the heritage of early development of hip hop or early development graffiti art, people looked at me slightly askance and it’s until you start to actually explain where it’s come from, where it means and what it says about the culture, the identity of the people that developed it and for whom it is part of their culture, that you realise just how important it is. And I feel that’s really at threat, just through lack of recognition and that’s not just from us as heritage professionals looking in, it’s actually from the people who are part of it themselves, they probably don’t realise just how important what they’ve done is and what a legacy of heritage they’re leaving.

Hatesa That’s really cool.

Sally That is really cool.

Hatesa To add to that, for me some of the threats to heritage in the way that I understand heritage are funding and commercialisation of aspects of our heritage. You know the highlighting of Pacific dancing, singing and entertainment can become problematic because it is being viewed as entertainment and something that is great to see or the colour or the noise. But I just want to put like a thought in there that we need to be careful how much we highlight that as just our heritage because that has in my mind become the only forms of culture that are now being represented as our heritage when there’s so much more behind that.

So I think one of the threats to heritage is people themselves, even my own people, how we perform our heritage, how we perform our culture is starting to tip. There’s starting to be an imbalance where that is all that is concentrated on rather than our languages, how we looked after our environment, all of that. There’s starting to be a little bit of an imbalance there so when it comes to funding, funding will go to something that is going to have performances of course and be the idea of heritage or culture, that Pākehā view. You know, what is palatable to Pākehā is what they will fund, if they keep funding these aspects of our heritage and not the projects where a student wants to research and highlight another aspect of our heritage like the environmental issues of our heritage plants or our heritage birds, the funding won’t go there and commercialisation of those aspects.

So having events that are ticketed that have a lot of Māori or Pacific performers or speakers but then you look out in the crowd and I’ve gone to so many talks that I’ve been asked to give and I’m giving them but I’m not giving them to my people and so I’m not empowering my people. And for me, I will say this and I will stand quite strongly with this: it is my people first that I need to educate and uplift and empower before I start sharing out and empowering others because there’s so many other forms of empowerment that are out there already for other people. That’s one of the threats, I think, is how we work and do things and how we select people to do talks. It’s like also have a think that it might be difficult to share this part of our heritage when it’s not the right people to be sharing it to, you know.

Rosie Absolutely. I think the question of audiences is fundamental.

Kerryn The question of sort of cultural gatekeeping isn’t it, earlier you talked about using heritage as a tool but then if funding is going to certain groups or certain expressions of heritage then there’s still more work to be done. Just thinking about funding, why can’t communities be trusted to use any funding that’s given to express heritage in a way that’s meaningful for them and doesn’t sort of need to go through such a gatekeeping process? Trusting communities to tell their own stories in a way that they want to and in the forum they want to and to who they want to.

Victoria This was one of the really big issues and barriers that came up when we did the engagement for the Christchurch City Council Heritage Strategy because we went out not just to the traditional stakeholders but we specifically targeted more diverse and ethnic communities and asked what the barriers were and as a result, the council did create an intangible heritage grant fund. It’s still ratepayer’s money so there has to be accountability, there has to be a process that’s followed. But that grant scheme is specifically targeted at allowing communities and groups to identify what is of heritage significance to them, how they want to record it, how they want to share it and how they want to pass it on. And we’ve had some incredibly fascinating eye opening projects that have come through that grant scheme and it’s one that I really feel is ground-breaking. I’m actually really proud to be or be part of that scheme.

We had a big hui with the Pasifika community because we really felt we weren’t seeing, as you said Hatesa, much more the sort of token elements of Māori and Pasifika. So we went out, we got lots of the people involved in the Pasifika community, those who wanted to do projects, those who had struggled to get funding elsewhere and we had a hui and said well what are you trying to do, why is it important and we wrote our guidelines in such a way that it’s based around values and outcomes rather than outputs. If the community or the group who are applying, can show that for them it adds to their heritage, to their culture, to their identity, to their belonging, they can apply for the funding.

We’re only a year in, I think we’re about 45 grants so it’ll be really interesting to reflect in two or three years’ time and have a look and see how successful that’s been. Because it could be the perfect model for doing just this but it’s still early days.

Sally This show is part of this funding round, so thank you to the city council! Now we’re running out of time unfortunately but just as we wrap up, what would you like to see in terms of your big wish list in terms of heritage and human rights?

Hatesa My wish list always is changing but currently I really would just love to see this redevelopment through of the museum. With this new redeveloped museum, there’s a lot of potential to critique how we have been viewing heritage of Māori, Pacific and indigenous peoples. I’m really excited. What would I like to see? I want the community, local and national and international, to come to Canterbury Museum and experience a different kind of viewing of heritage from what we’ve originally had, so I’m really excited for people to see how we have worked with mana whenua. All these things that are happening in the museum that a lot of people don’t realise is going on. One of the things on my wish list is to see a space for Pasifika in the new redeveloped museum, I’ll just put that out there, I know my colleagues will be listening to this so put this out there. I really wish for a Pasifika space where we can exhibit and enjoy our heritage, share our heritage and also have a space for current reinterpretations of heritage, art, new artists, not just look at people’s things from the past. Let’s actually experience how our own people experience heritage, things like that. So really it’s just to see a space for Pasifika because I know working in there that we already are aligning quite well with mana whenua, with that being a solid foundation.

Kerryn Oh well one of my wishes is to see our Rainbow List project bearing really beautiful fruit which for me is having new places entered onto Rārangi Kōrero, the New Zealand Heritage List, that have a really significant queer history and that history and those stories are why we are seeing it as a heritage place because that starts to redress the silences. We’re seeing that happening right now, it’s a bit of a watch this space situation but that is really dear to me and it’s exciting to see it happening.

Sally One element that we didn’t get into too much today that I’d been hoping we’d talk about, was how heritage can uphold certain norms and how it can also be used to subvert or challenge those norms – and I think that the queer history of Aotearoa is one of those examples that’s really great to highlight and celebrate how things have changed in that space and the role that heritage has played in that.

Kerryn Yes absolutely right, I mean you’ve got a historically marginalised community and all its diversity where once it was illegal to be your true self in many cases or socially unacceptable, yet queer people were always there, we’ve always been here, that’s a really guiding force to me. Queer people are here today but they were here yesterday as well and they were here many, many hundreds of years ago. We’ve got such a rich takatāpui history that was silenced by missionaries and colonisation, now finally things have started to change and those stories are turning into one of celebration and recognition. But we’re really having to play a catch up game because at the moment we don’t tell those stories through heritage but things are changing which is really great.

Victoria I think my big passion is sitting around young people and the younger generation and what we pass onto them and what they inherit and I would love to feel that my grandchildren in Aotearoa New Zealand and in Ōtautahi Christchurch grow up where anywhere they go, they actually can see the heritage of everyone who has lived, is living or will live here reflected across the city. Whether it’s through art, through music, through architecture, through sculpture, through landscape, whatever, but anyone who comes here from anywhere or who lives here, can feel a sense of connection to this place and that somewhere their heritage is included in the narrative. Just a tiny aspirational dream there.

Rosie As for me, I guess I sort of wish I could hand these wishes to people who aren’t necessarily considered somebody who is kind of speaking from within this sector but I think things that would support people more generally are more funding, I think that’s probably something we could all agree on but I thought if I just said more funding it would sound like a little bit of a cop out. I just want for there to be more structures in place for Aotearoa towards conservation that can help care for our diverse collections and this is not to overlook all the existing forms of care, but hopefully to see growth in that area. I know a number of our students who are interested in lots of different kinds of art, have a desire to be conservators and certain forms of training are more available overseas.

Sally Well this has been a super fantastic kōrero today, I’ve really enjoyed it and I hope our listeners have as well. Tēnā koutou, thank you all so much for coming and sharing your thoughts and experience with us today.

Group Kia ora, thank you.