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|  | Speak Up – Kōrerotia  Place-based storytelling  15 March 2023 |
| 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 right.  Ko: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, te hōtaka reo irirangi, with Sally Carlton your host, ko Sally Carlton ahau. Today we’re going to be talking about storytelling, particularly the importance of location- or place-based storytelling with a couple of guests: Kaspar Middendorf from the University of Canterbury Digital Lab and Kris Herbert from the Our Stories Project. They’ve recently collaborated on a project called Quake Walk which launched on the 22 February 2023, the 12th anniversary of the devasting February earthquake and this was a collaboration where Our Stories worked with the Digital Lab, particularly CEISMIC, and put together some of the many stories that had been collected after the earthquakes into a thirty-minute audio walk.   I’m super excited about today, I think you’re both going to bring really different but complimentary perspectives to this really awesome and interesting and also huge topic - but to kind of tie it down a bit and make it not quite so huge, we’re going to be specifically talking about the work that you’re both involved in. Kris, this all came about because of your mahi so maybe you could introduce yourself and tell us a wee bit about the Our Stories Project. |
| Kris | Kia ora, I’m Kris Herbert and I’m the director of Our Stories Project Trust. We’re a charitable trust with a mission to connect communities through storytelling and to make local history accessible. So it’s really the second part of that mission that the earthquake stories walk falls into. So earthquake stories walk is a thirty-minute walk of the central city where you hear voices from more than thirty people who have their stories held in the CEISMIC Archive which Kaspar looks after. So we sort of… it started with a conversation about maybe taking those stories and creating a digestible walk that would allow people to hear those stories in the places that they relate to, in the hope that it would be a powerful and interesting experience. So it launched on February 22nd this year which was in line with the 12th anniversary of the earthquakes, and it goes from Quake City Museum and finishes at the Earthquake Memorial. |
| Sally | And Kaspar, a wee bit about your involvement in the UC Digital Lab broadly but also the Quake Stories project more specifically? |
| Kaspar | Kia ora I’m Kaspar Middendorf, I’m the manager of the UC Arts Digital Lab here at the University of Canterbur. And we created the CEISMIC Canterbury Earthquakes Digital Archive in 2011. The archive is designed to collect all of the human stories of the earthquakes. We realised that our engineering department and our geology department were doing amazing work during the earthquakes to help people understand what was going on but we wanted to understand the human impact of the earthquakes. So creating the archive was a way of doing that. |
| Sally | And could you tell us a wee bit about when you collected those stories because I think that’s quite interesting. |
| Kaspar | So the stories that we used in the Our Stories Walk, we started collecting them in 2012 with the Quake Box Project which was a shipping container with a recording studio in it which we put at various locations around Christchurch and Lyttelton and just invited people to come in and tell us their story and they could tell us whatever aspects of their earthquake story they wanted. And we collected about 700 stories in 2012 which was amazing and then in 2019 we thought we want to know how people are doing now. So we went back to as many of those people as we could track down and asked them to tell us their stories again and to give us an update as to how they were doing seven years on. So the majority of the stories used in the audio trail are from Quake Box, we’ve also got a few from the Women’s Voices Project which was a project run in conjunction with the National Council of Women who specifically went out to women who had a significant impact in their communities during the earthquakes and just talked to them about their experiences. |
| Sally | And you mentioned Lyttelton in there amongst all the other very interesting things you said. Kris, because Our Stories has been involved a lot in Lyttelton, I’d be really keen to hear a wee bit about some of the other projects that Our Stories has been involved in, just to kind of set the scene a bit more. |
| Kris | Yeah so Our Stories Project started in Lyttelton in 2016, it was really just an experiment, an idea. I was being an involved parent; my son was, I think, Year 4 at Lyttelton Primary School at the time and I thought it’d be cool to get the kids to interview people who grew up in Lyttelton and take those stories and map them to places that anyone could discover. So we did that for quite a few years, the kids were really into it, I loved being in the interviews and seeing them really listening and hearing from a diverse range of people and just sort of watching their empathy sensors switch on and for people who came to tell their stories, the only requirement was that you grew up in Lyttelton.  So we had all ages, 92 was the oldest participant and I think late 20s was the youngest and it felt like a really powerful thing for that side of the interview equation as well. People would come in often a little bit nervous, the 92-year-old woman said I don’t think I’ve got much to say and then she went on to just unfold this incredible story of living through wars and strikes and polio, and the teenage boys that were interviewing her basically had their jaws on the ground! And it is those moments in those interviews that really kept me going. And it’s evolved since then to become a registered charitable trust. But that project is still really the core of what we do and in this case, we wanted to sort of look at what we could do with other oral history collections and if we could use the philosophy of location based storytelling to bring some of those collections alive. |
| Sally | Really cool, there was heaps in there again that you mentioned that I’m sure we’ll touch on more as we go through. You mentioned empathy sensors, you mentioned place-based storytelling and I think that’s really, really critical to the kind of conversations we’re going to be having today. But just as we kick off, it’s a big question to get you going: What do you think storytelling is? How do you define or describe storytelling? |
| Kris | Hmm that is a big question! Yeah I’ve spent my entire life trying to answer that question and I’ve had different answers at different times. You know, I can give you the marketing answer, I can give you the storytelling trust director answer but you know, essentially it’s science, it’s brain science, it’s the way that humans understand the world, it’s the way we take the information, read sentences, emotions that are around us and process them into narrative. And you just see people do it all day, every day. And it changes. I would be really interested to hear from Kaspar if people change their stories because I’ve read some research that memories and stories change and evolve over time and yeah, it’s a very large subject but it has been one that has kept me fascinated and occupied since I was about five years old. |
| Kaspar | That’s so much more an interesting answer than I was thinking! I was just like, storytelling is just to me sharing and it’s sharing in whatever way you want and we got that in the Quake Box stories when we asked people to tell their stories. Some people told us… they read us poems or they read out letters that they’d written to their children, there were so many different ways that people chose to tell their stories. In fact we even had one young man who came in and rapped at us which was wonderful. We didn’t get to use that in the audio trail though.  But yeah, the question of how people change their stories and that was part of the research we were doing in going back to people and asking them to re-tell their stories, was to find out did they use the same sort of narrative structures to tell their stories. And the research is still ongoing on that - we’re doing the analysis at the moment - but the answer seems to be yes in large parts, people do have these kinds of things that get frozen and because you tell the same story over and over again and that’s something that I think a lot of people, Christchurch people have experienced.   In those first couple of years everyone you met would want to know what’s your earthquake story and so we’d repeat the same stories over and over and people got quite polished in how they told their stories and so even now when you go back to people and say tell your stories, we notice that if you just looked at the story of February 22nd, people would repeat large parts of it and interestingly people took about the same amount of time to tell the story of February 22nd in 2019 as they did in 2012. There seemed to be quite a solidification of how you would tell your story, even though they might then expand on it quite a bit and talk about the insurance problems they’d had and everything that had happened since then. So yeah, there is that fixing of how you tell your story, it’s interesting. |
| Sally | Yes that’s so interesting, isn’t it? But I think you’re right, I can very distinctly remember the where were you at this time and what were you doing and how are things going and it was that very much… yes it was a good two or three years wasn’t it, the same kinds of questions, yes. Well we might have our first break. |
|  | **MUSIC BY DELANEY DAVIDSON & MARLON WILLIAMS – BLOODLETTER** |
| Sally | This is Speak Up – Kōrerotia, we’re talking about storytelling and particularly place-based storytelling. We’ve had a bit of a discussion about what is storytelling and we’re kind of reaching the conclusion that it’s a very broad, very huge topic and one that can be taken in so many different ways depending on when you might be talking about it, who you are talking about it too and what context, these sorts of things.  Another really big question for you: I’m looking at in this component here about the ‘who’. Who is telling stories and who are stories being told to and how does that change or does it change, how people tell their stories or what do they tell? And I think what you’ve been talking about, Kaspar, tends to suggest that if someone is in a similar sort of situation where they’re talking to a researcher in a presumably similar kind of environment, maybe their story tends to stay quite similar but I can envisage there would be other times when who you are telling the story to, where, when, these kinds of things, might make your story a bit different. So any comment you’ve got on that would be really good. |
| Kaspar | Yes we deliberately tried to keep the environment as similar as possible but even having done that, we noticed that… in 2012 all our interviewers who were all university students had been through the earthquakes themselves. In 2019 that wasn’t necessarily the case and so we had… a few of our participants would actually comment, “Oh you probably won’t remember the earthquakes” or, “You probably weren’t here for the earthquakes” and so they did in a way adjust what they were explaining for their audience but they were also very aware that they had a video camera pointed at them so they were speaking to a wider audience than just that one interviewer. But I think yes, people definitely speak differently depending on who they want to be talking to. |
| Kris | That’s something that we really noticed with Our Stories Project and it’s been brilliant actually and it’s something that we thought a lot about. So when people are speaking to children, telling stories to children, they do tell them in a different way which is often more coherent, slower, you know everything about it is different and when you’re trying to record audio it actually helps a lot. They explain details that they would assume adults would understand or you know, things about their era and the way that they do it.   But also in terms of who is listening and who is interviewing, that was actually a core idea behind Our Stories Project and it was inspired by Story Corps which is a project that started in New York City and is now a global app. And essentially Dave Isay, who started it, was a radio journalist and he started to understand the power of an interview for both sides of the equation. So he wanted to create a situation where people could interview each other. So he set up a shipping container in Grand Central Station and children interviewed parents and husband’s wives and friends and it was the process of actually sitting down and having those kind of more structured conversations with people you care about and then that became an app and now it’s available for anyone to do.   So it was the engineering of these different audiences that was really at the heart of Our Stories Project: bringing people together that wouldn’t normally come together to listen and share stories. And it started with school children and people who grew up in their town but I’m always thinking about other ways that we can engineer that connection and because that part is really fascinating to me as well. |
| Kaspar | I’m kind of jealous that you get to work that way, using children as interviewers. In a research capacity would be… our ethics people would have problems with that, I think. At least it would take a lot of work to get it through. |
| Kris | Yeah. |
| Kaspar | But it does, it would bring out so much richer stories and there wouldn’t be that assumption that you sometimes get where people would be talking and they just assume you know all the context and that you understand the history and everything else because children don’t necessarily know that stuff. |
| Kris | That’s true and the kids, they live in such a digital world especially over the last few years. So sitting down face-to-face with someone is a really different experience to watching a video or even having a Zoom call, so it has been amazing to see… to be in the room and to really feel the energy and the power of that interview process. |
| Sally | And as well as the richness of the story, I imagine there are untold probably benefits for both the story teller and the children who are collecting the stories in terms of… well, you mentioned empathy before but I’m sure there must be a lot more that come out of it. |
| Kris | Yeah I mean it’s only my observation of it, it’s not any science around it that I know of, but it does feel when people leave they often say that the people who have been the interview subjects, they often… it seems cathartic. They’re very grateful and the idea of StoryCorps which we modelled the first part of the project off, was about making people feel seen and heard as a powerful way to… as a gift to a human being. So that’s really what we wanted to do and we weren’t looking for historians and we weren’t looking for, you know famous people. We wanted to really just get ordinary people in and it’s been incredible how many extraordinary stories are held with ordinary people and not a lot of oral history projects are sort of in that area of grabbing everyday people. Quake Studies did that brilliantly and so that is in another way what Our Stories Project is doing in our other programmes as well. |
| Sally | So you mentioned the Lyttelton stories and the Quake Stories and I know Our Stories Project has been involved with the Springbok tour as well and collecting some of those stories but how do you… and you’ve talked about looking for other kind of avenues that you might explore. How do you decide on a topic, I guess, that’s going to bring together enough cohesion to make it into a project or to have enough essence, I guess? How do you kind of decide those initial steps? |
| Kris | Oh well I just have hundreds of ideas and I put them all out into the world and then some of them stick, that’s my strategic approach. We have got one which I’m hoping will be funded shortly which is called ‘We built this city’ and the idea is to get students at Te Ao Tawhiti again, who have done the Springbok tour interviews, to interview people who came to our city for the earthquake rebuild. So it’s looking at how the demographics of our city have changed as a result of that and also trying to understand from those people what their experience has been. And so I think that’s going to be amazing for the kids to see that different perspective, to really literally look at their city through someone else’s eyes and then of course that content will be edited into the story map and probably some form of story walk. So it will be a way for everyone to be able to put on those sort of empathy goggles and see their place in a different way. |
| Sally | Yeah that’s a really, really great idea because you’re right, the demographics have changed so much, haven’t they? |
| Kris | Yes and I’m not sure how well we’ve integrated and welcomed all of those migrants and all the richness that their cultures and experience bring. So in a little way this is my attempt to work on that. |
| Sally | It would be a very, very good way of making people feel seen, exactly what you were talking about before. When people have the chance, the opportunity, to tell their story it’s very validating. I find it on this radio show all the time: when people come on and they say how much they have valued the opportunity just to talk. |
| Kaspar | That was one of the motivating factors for doing the Quake Box Project is that just giving people that opportunity to tell their stories and the fact that we got so many people wanting to tell their stories, told us there was a need out there that people had this experience that was so unusual, where most people don’t get to experience a major natural disaster in their lifetime and we had a whole city experiencing this and then all the trauma that went with the… and even in you know, in 2019, all these years later. People still had that trauma and still wanted to talk about it and to rant about how bad the earthquake response was.  We had one person who actually wanted just to talk directly to Gerry Brownlee even though he wasn’t even in government in 2019, this person wanted to just tell his story directly to Gerry Brownlee so he addressed Mr Brownlee through his recording, telling his story of why his decisions had made this person’s life so terrible. It’s needing to yeah, get that information out and hear that someone official is listening to you, I think, is a really big thing. That you can tell your friends something but to feel that an organisation like the university is listening to you, it’s that next step up of being able to have your story recorded forever so that people will always be able to learn from it and that’s quite powerful to people I think. I’m not sure if that made sense. |
| Sally | No definitely, I think that’s very true. And Kris you mentioned oral historians but I notice on your website that you… the organisation is also around sort of, I guess, encouraging people to self-train, almost. How do you become an oral historian, for want of a better term, but I guess a ‘civilian oral historian’, and go out and collect people’s stories without the formal training and without knowing the formal protocols? - because oral history has quite a lot of protocols around it. I guess any comments on the collection side of it would be really interesting. |
| Kris | Yeah we have… we do work with an oral historian who advises us and helps to do the in-classroom training. So that’s been really useful to have that additional perspective and we’ve started using the term ‘oral history’ a bit more since we’ve been kind of more official about having that training in the background and it is… it does make sense because people know what oral history is whereas when you just say storytelling or a story, it’s a bit general. So I feel that that focus does make sense for Our Stories Project and is something we’ll continue.   In terms of people being able to gather stories, I would really recommend the Story Corp app because it has lists of questions that will say are you interviewing your grandmother or your best friends and they have sample questions for you. And the way it works is it just records onto your phone and then you can choose to submit it to the National Library of Congress which is where that archive is held in the States. I interviewed my father using that, he has a really interesting career, he was a US air force general, and I realised when I was doing it that there were so many really obvious questions that I had never ever asked him and I think you know, if everyone at their holidays made it a tradition to set up some interviews, just an iPhone, just use anything you’ve got and it’s as much about taking that time to sit and listen as it is about the record of collection. It just is an excuse to ask questions that you wouldn’t normally ask, listen in a way that you wouldn’t normally listen and that’s incredibly… once you’ve done it, it’s so stark how much we don’t… even these people that we love dearly and are going to be gone soon, parents and grandparents and so I think yeah, there’s a big part of that storytelling angle that is really easy to pick up, you don’t need training to interview your mum. |
| Sally | And how about once the stories have been told and they’ve been collected? We’ve talked about, Kaspar, the importance of having someone listen to it and potentially somebody official or in a kind of… I suppose it depends why people are telling their stories. Maybe it’s just collecting for the family or posterity or whatever but how about the importance of storing or preserving or having them publicly or not publicly available, available for the family or not? Any comment on that would be really good too, please. |
| Kaspar | Well certainly with earthquake stories it’s important to have them if we can, stored in a way that they can be used because there is so much research use that we can put to these stories. Just asking questions about how did people cope, what were… if you’re looking at, say, how the government responded, what were the good parts of the response and which were the bad parts? And by listening to people’s stories, we can learn those lessons and we can hopefully pass them on. And if you look at the response in the North Island at the moment, a lot of the lessons learnt from Canterbury have been applied in the North Island just in terms of getting the aid to the right people at the right time, setting up support around insurance and things like that and yeah, we learn best from human’s stories that government departments can go in and do their, you know, lessons learnt projects which most of the government departments did in Canterbury after the earthquakes.  But it’s the people stories that tell you the real impact of those policy decisions and so on and just point at how can we make things better. And also the other side of it is just for future generations. I mean, I’ve got a friend whose eldest child was a baby when the earthquakes happened, she’s now starting to ask questions about what were the earthquakes and it’s great to be able to point her at these stories and say hey this is people talking about what happened during the earthquakes and you can learn about your own city and learn about the experiences that everyone went through.  So two of the big things we talk about in CESIMIC is remembering and learning and that’s the things that stories let us do. |
| Sally | Cool answer, that was really lovely. |
| Kaspar | Thanks. |
| Sally | And have you got anything you’d like to add, Kris? |
| Kris | No, I think that is so nice. |
| Sally | One final question on this kind of ‘who’ comment: I’m wondering about the impact, I suppose, of a story that’s told by one individual versus a collection of stories about a single theme. So for example for the quake walk, it was a collection of stories all told in short single sentence, two- or three-sentence snippets, versus somebody talking for 45 minutes, say, about their quake experience and how that different style can impact how people respond to those stories. |
| Kris | Yeah that is something I didn’t understand going in but came to quickly understand about Our Stories Project and the way that we deliver the content with multiple voices on the same story. So we found that when we did a piece on the goat man in Lyttelton - which was sort of part myth, part legend you know, part history - and the same story had so many perspectives. And so you really quickly understand that history is not black and white, it’s not binary, it’s not got one way to be interpreted. And that’s valuable in itself. So with the quake walk, you can hear in people’s stories that we respond differently to events, that we all have different ways of coping, we have different priorities and I think that from that you can become more empathetic to people around you and you can understand… yeah, I think it’s just a way to just create more tolerant society if we can all understand how different we are. |
| Kaspar | And also how similar we are. I noticed in a lot of the stories that we were pulling out for you, they had those same themes of wanting to check the people around you were okay, then wanting to make sure your family were okay, wanting to get home. The same themes kept coming out over and over again in the stories. |
| Kris | Yeah that’s true. |
| Sally | Also aesthetically too, it’s nice to hear those different voices and different accents and different tonalities. It makes for a really pleasurable listening experience, I think. |
| Kris | Thank you. |
| Sally | Moving on from the ‘who’, I’d like to think about this idea of the ‘where’. We’ve already touched on the fact that we’re thinking about location here in Lyttelton and the quake walk and particularly the central city because that’s where the walk was focused - I think that there’s something really powerful about the where and particularly if you’re listening to a story in place, if you’re walking down those streets and hearing the stories about people in that location on the 22nd of February 2011. But any thoughts you have about why telling in place and listening in place is so powerful? |
| Kris | Yeah this is sort of the… this has become really my big passion over the last sort of six or seven years is this idea that you can transform someone’s experience of the place by giving them the right story in the right format at the right time, and I wouldn’t say that I’ve cracked that but I’ve worked on it from a lot of different angles, not just Our Stories Project. And my measure is usually goosebumps, so if you are in a place and you get kind of like a shiver of understanding that is powerful enough to bring on some goosebumps then we’ve hit it, that’s what we’re going for.  And I think in terms of other mediums, I have a journalism background, I’ve worked in lots of different forms of media but there’s not that many that can give goosebumps. So to me there’s something really exciting and interesting about location-based storytelling and I love that it’s in the world, it’s not on the couch, it’s not on a device, it’s not on a screen. So for me it feels a good place to put my energy into kind of trying to deliver experiences that have smells and touch and exercise usually and if that’s what the future of entertainment looks like in some part, I would be absolutely delighted. |
| Kaspar | The transformative, you know you’re talking about transforming places but it also transforms the stories. So I said to Kris the other day when I first listened to the audio trail while we were actually walking through the city and not just listening to the edit version, it was so different because these are stories that I have heard many, many times because I helped collect them, I helped transcribe them, I helped put them in the archive, I’ve listened to them over and over and it wasn’t until I was actually standing in the square listening to people talking about being in the square that they really, really hit me because being there transformed the story to something so much more real. |
| Sally | That’s super interesting, isn’t it, especially when you’re so familiar with them. And stretching this idea of location-based storytelling, I think it’s really cool, Kris, that your project also maps stories and I think that idea of that, I guess adding the visual component in as well so you can see on a map where all these different stories have taken place and where they’re told about, that’s a really cool addition as well. |
| Kris | Yeah the intention there was that people would go and experience them in the places but I suppose it does add context if you’re just on a screen as well, you have that map context to understand where this did happen. So it kind of works both ways. For a while I actually developed, got a developer to create geofenced content so that you couldn’t hear it unless you were in the place but yeah, maybe when we have thousands of daily hits then I’ll be able to put that in but for the meantime I thought I don’t want to actually exclude anyone who wants to listen from anywhere in the world. And with Quake Studies, actually one of the people who gave feedback was living somewhere else now and so you know, we have a lot of people who could benefit and would enjoy hearing these stories and it can be part of their healing process that aren’t in our city anymore. So it was nice that someone contacted me to say they appreciated it from outside the city. |
| Sally | Yes nice, maybe you just need an added incentive to do the walk like… you know, those Pokémon, is it Pokémon Go where you can find things as you go around? That would be very cool. Alright we might have our second song, waiata tuarua, and then we’ll come back and think about storytelling specifically in a context of human rights. |
|  | **SONG BY GRACE PETRIE – BLACK TIE** |
| Sally | Ko Speak Up – Kōrerotia tēnei. I’m talking with Kaspar Middendorf and Kris Herbert about storytelling. In this section we’re going to be thinking specifically around storytelling and human rights and why is storytelling - this is a question for you both and it’s a big one - so important for human rights? There’s lots of directions, I’m sure, you could take this in. |
| Kris | The stand off..!. |
| Kaspar | I’m really hoping Kris will answer this one. |
| Kris | Yeah this question is challenging for me because it hasn’t been the core motivator of Our Stories Project and so it’s not something I put a lot of thought into but I think the crux of it really is that you know, human rights I guess is about valuing the human experience and valuing individuals. And the way to understand those things is always going to be through storytelling, whether you have it in a personal project or whether you’re reading a government report. There’s story, there’s elements, there’s human experience, there’s individual experiences that we have to understand in order to make decisions and so it’s there, it doesn’t often get a lot of… it’s not often named as an important part of you know, government decision making or wherever human rights is playing out most in the world today, I’m not sure. But it is always there so I think recognising that and maybe valuing it a bit more in that context, yeah could help those causes. |
| Kaspar | Yeah I was going to say that you know, we hadn’t really thought about human rights but when you put it in those terms, yes of course. Everything we did was about humans and about yeah, letting people tell their story so that they could be heard and understood and that is important and that is a human right to be heard and to be listened to and to be cared about. Even though we were doing things through a very research framework that can be a bit standoff-ish and a bit clinical, we still were caring about the people that we were hearing their stories and I think that comes through. That you know, people got quite emotional telling their stories and that… going back to that catharsis you were talking about earlier Kris, yeah we didn’t directly ask people was it cathartic to tell their stories but I think for some people it was. Just to feel heard. |
| Kris | Sally, you have a lot of kōrero with people about human rights, what is your perspective on that? |
| Sally | I think my big comment would be that when somebody asks you or invites you to tell your story, that in itself is affirming because it’s saying that I value your story enough to want to talk to you about it and listen to it and so I think that’s… it’s super kind of basic, it’s the bottom line, but the fact that someone is wanting to learn about your story or journey, your perspective, that makes you feel good. And I think if people are feeling good about themselves, that’s really fantastic. And it also means that if those people’s stories are being collected and preserved in a way that other people can listen to them, access them, it means that other people are also learning about their story and that in itself is even more affirming. I think it’s got to do with human rights and dignity, at the base. |
| Kris | Yes. |
| Sally | I also think as well that, we’ve touched on it before but stories can personalise some of these very, very big issues and human rights is one of those really big issues that’s intangible and really difficult to understand but if we bring it down to the fact that here we are talking about a migrant who came to Christchurch after the earthquakes, for example, you know, people can relate to that story and understand their journey and how they’ve come here and how they may have experienced the city and yeah, it makes a platform for understanding. |
| Kris | Yeah I was just trying to think about human rights without storytelling, like it would just be impossible, wouldn’t it? You know, if you have a context of… you know of thinking of migrants in Europe or you know, any kind of human rights issue that you could try to picture, there’s always a core of it which is really comes down to an individual’s story or a story of a group of people and you know, a story and the way that I define is a character and a conflict. If you don’t have those two elements, you don’t really have a story. So there’s always going to be someone or some group of people, there’s always going to be some sort of problem or challenge and yeah, and that is just basically all the way through every human rights discussion or the work that’s done. |
| Sally | Definitely. And just as we wrap up, have you noticed any impacts from your work? Kaspar, you’ve talked about catharsis and also potentially - and this actually comes back again to human rights - the idea that maybe those stories have some kind of impact at the political level. But beyond that sort of… so I guess we’ve talked about the personal but also potentially the greater, have you noticed any other impacts that you can pinpoint? |
| Kaspar | It’s hard to tell yet, I mean when we formed the CEISMIC Archive we were thinking long term and we were saying to people this is a 100-year archive, this is not an archive for tomorrow, this is one we’re going to learn the greatest lessons from well down the track. And one thing that we kept repeating was we don’t know what we’re going to learn from this because it’ll be the things… the questions we haven’t even thought of asking yet, they’re going to be the things that we’re going to learn the most from. And so it feels almost too early yet to say what the impacts are but when there’s projects like Kris’s audio trail that come out of it, it’s like we didn’t form this archive thinking someone would want to create an audio trail of the city and this is so exciting that we’ve got something completely new that we never thought of coming out of the archive. I think that’s going to continue to happen, that there will be impacts that we haven’t even thought of now that will be happening next year, in five years, in ten years, in hundred years. |
| Kris | Yes the impacts for me have been quite personal, I think. You know I talked about the 92-year-old woman being interviewed by, well, it was three teenage boys in that instance. And when I walked out - as I always do, walking a foot higher from the energy of the interview - I thought, those boys are never going to look at an old lady the same way and that old lady is never going to look at teenage boys the same way. They’ve broken down a barrier.  And that was part of the motivation for starting the Lyttelton Project, actually, is the inherent sort of conflict in our community between old Lyttelton that was you know, port workers and the new sort of gentrified Lyttelton and I’ve been here for 25 years so I’m probably… I would say I’m definitely part of the gentrification wave but been here long enough to know a lot of the locals and so it was… one of the things we were trying to shift was that ‘us’ and ‘them’ kind of mentality and to understand that everyone actually has a favourite fish-and-chip shop and all those commonalities and all the things about the place that do connect us. And so I hope that that will continue through Our Stories Project.  That’s what we mean in our mission ‘connecting communities through storytelling’ and then the making local history accessible is kind of the digital aspects but the connection kind of comes in the room. You know it was great to be able to work with CEISMIC and the archive because you already did that connection part and so we were adding the second half there and it will be nice to look for other ways that we can collaborate with groups around the city, around the country and you know, kind of join up those mission statements in new different ways. |
| Kaspar | I’m certainly hoping that we can collaborate again on something because I think there’s a lot more stories to be told just about the earthquakes and about other areas of Christchurch and Lyttelton, there’s a lot more we could do together. |
| Kris | Totally. |
| Sally | Kris, do you have any sense of who listens to the Lyttelton stories? Are they locals or are they tourists who have come in and been put onto it by the Lyttelton… I don’t know, Co-op or whoever is promoting the stories locally? |
| Kris | Yeah it was interesting because we had an influx of visitors this year with cruise ships and so we do have a Lyttelton walk because what I sort of found was that the map was a little bit overwhelming. We have QR codes around town, we’ve even hidden stories in Lyttelton in geocaches now - I don’t know if you know what geocaching is but it’s little containers hidden all around the world that you hunt out with an app, so it’s like a treasure hunt really. So we are constantly looking for new ways to connect people to the stories but the Lyttelton walk, we thought oh maybe cruise ship passengers will get into that so we did some new brochures and kind of got it all geared up.  The numbers suggest that there’s not a huge number of cruise ship passengers who are engaging with it for whatever reason. So yeah, it’s probably, you know, the kids going back and listening to what they’ve done, the schools have used it in the classroom. So they’ve gone and asked kids to go through the map, choose their favourite story and then create something else from it – a video game or… to make their own stories. So that’s what I hope it is, that it can become kind of returned back into the community to find new life in the classroom or in other projects as well. |
| Sally | So cool. Have either of you got anything else you’d like to say as we wrap up? |
| Kris | I don’t think so, great questions. |
| Kaspar | Yeah, I’m sure there will be something I think off just after we turn off the recording. |
| Sally | No doubt, yes! And how about if people are wanting to get in touch or listen to the audios, how can they do that? |
| Kris | Yes ourstoriesproject.org is the landing page and from there you’ll find links to all of our work and to connect with us if you are a school wanting to bring Our Stories Project to your school or any other community group that would like to work with us, we would absolutely love to hear from you. And there’s also QR codes in the city on the footpath that you can scan for the quake walk and Quake City Museum will have a QR code in their window as well. So it’s pretty easy, you scan, you push play and off you go. |
| Kaspar | And if you want to see some of the other stories in the archive and everything else - because we have 150,000 plus items in the archive, not all of them are stories, there’s photographs, there’s newspaper pages, there’s reports, there’s academic stuff, there’s a lot of different things in there - so we’re at ceismic.org.nz |
| Sally | Yes it is a huge archive, isn’t it? |
| Kaspar | It is massive, yes. |
| Sally | It’s so great though, what a… someone had a lot of foresight, I think, to put that all in place. |
| Kaspar | Yes and I should point out too, it wasn’t just the University of Canterbury that contributed to CEISMIC. We had a consortium of culture and historical organisation from across the country were contributing. So we’ve got stuff from Christchurch City Libraries, from Canterbury Museum, from Te Papa, from Ngā Toanga Sound & Vision, the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. There’s a lot of different organisations have been contributing to the archive. |
| Sally | So good. Tēnā kōrua, thank you both so much for the kōrero today, I really enjoyed it, it was great. It’s something that I think is totally fundamental to us all doing well together, is telling a good story and listening to a good story so I’m really glad that we’ve had this opportunity to talk through some of those really interesting and fascinating insights that you both brought to it. |
| Kaspar | Thank you. |
| Kris | Thank you so much |