

**Objects can speak:  
Indigenous languages and collections in  
Australia and Aotearoa  
New Zealand**

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April 2021

A thesis submitted for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**  
of The Australian National University

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work. This thesis contains no material previously published or written by myself or another person, except where reference is made in the thesis itself. This thesis has not previously been submitted towards a degree or diploma in any university or other higher education institution.

Karina Lee Theresa Lamb

April 2021

This research project has received clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian National University: Protocol: 2010/163

# Mihi

Tēnā koe  
Ko Karina Lamb au.  
He whaea au.  
He mātanga au ki te whare taonga me te whare toi.  
He tauira au.

E noho ana au ki Mornington Peninsula.  
Ko Yarra te awa i whāngaihia au.  
Ko Melbourne tōku wā kāinga.

Ko Marlee Lamb tōku whaea.  
Ko John Lamb tōku matua.  
Ko Kahurangi James Lamb-Hunkin tāku tama.  
Ko Paikea Mana Lamb-Hunkin tāku tamāhine.

Ko te whakapapa o āku tamariki.  
Ko Graeme Hunkin tō rāua koroua.  
Ko Elizabeth Mana Hunkin tō rāua kuia.  
Ko Tākitimu te waka.  
Ko Moumoukai te maunga.  
Ko Nūhaka te awa.  
Ko Ngāti Kahungunu te iwi.  
Ko Rakaipaaka te hapū.  
Ko Tāne-nui-a-rangi te marae.

He mihi whakawhetai ki a koe mō tōu ngākau manawanui mō tāku tuhituhi.

E tuku ana ahau i āku whakamānawa, me āku mihi ki ngā tīpuna mō te ārahi i ahau ki te tuhituhi me te ako i te reo Māori, me te Mātauranga Māori.

E tuhituhi ana ahau i runga anō i te ngākau māhaki mō ngā kaumātua me ngā hāpori Māori.

Kia ora.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Hello, my name is Karina Lamb. I am a mother. I am a museum and art gallery professional. I am a student. I live on the Mornington Peninsula. Yarra River is the river that nurtured me. Melbourne is my home. My mother is Marlee Lamb. My father is John Lamb. My son is Kahurangi James Lamb-Hunkin. My daughter is Paikea Mana Lamb-Hunkin. My children's genealogy includes their grandfather Graeme Hunkin and grandmother Elizabeth Mana Hunkin. Their canoe is Tākitimu. Their mountain is Moumoukai. Their river is Nūhaka. Their tribe is Kahungunu. Their subtribe is Rakaipaaka. Their meeting house is Tāne-nui-a-rangi. I thank you for your time and patience with my writing. I send my blessings and sincere thanks to the ancestors for guiding me to write and learn the Māori language and Māori knowledge. I write with the upmost respect for Elders and Māori communities.

## Karakia

E kui mā, e koro mā, he uri anō tēnei e tū nei.

Manaaki mai i ahau, e mahi nei i ngā mahi.

Āianeī, ā, ake nei, āmene.<sup>2</sup>

Respected elders, I am a descendant like yourselves.

Look for compassion on the work that I do as an

ongoing part of my employment.

I ask for your support, amen.

-----

Whakataka te hau ki te uru.

Whakataka te hau ki te tonga.

Kia mākinakina ki uta.

Kia mātaratara ki tai.

E hī ake ana te atakura.

He tio, he huka, he hauhū.

Tīhei mauri ora!<sup>3</sup>

Cease the winds from the west.

Cease the winds from the south.

Let the breeze blow over the land.

Let the breeze blow over the ocean.

Let the red-tipped dawn come with a sharpened air.

A touch of frost, a promise of a glorious day.

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<sup>2</sup> Author unknown, Karakia used by museum staff in Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa conservation collections stores located at Tory Street, Wellington in 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Author unknown, Māori karakia – opening prayer.



## Dedication

For my children Kahurangi and Paikea, this body of work is dedicated to you. Never lose sight of your dreams even when the biggest of obstacles are placed in your way. You hold the intelligence, love and spirit to be and do whatever you want in life. I hope this work gives you an example of what we need more of in the world; cultural understanding and love for all humanity. Thank you for your hugs when I needed them most and always believing in my abilities, especially as a mum. I love you.

To my family, Mum, Dad, Wayne and my extended family in Aotearoa, thank you. Your love and support even through periods of change is one of the greatest gifts in my life. Likewise, to my friends and colleagues that shared in the happiness and challenges of the thesis including Louise Tegart, Jilda Andrews, Bianca Puglisi, Steve Smith, Charles Davidson and Matt Sykes. Our conversations on indigenous culture, art and humanity inspired me to write. To my te reo Māori kaiako Kelly Keane-Tuala, ka tino whakawhetai atu ahau ki a koe mō te whakaako i ō mōhiotanga ki ahau. Thank you for sharing your knowledge with me.

I send sincere gratitude to Dr Conal McCarthy from Victoria University of Wellington who walked beside me with this research and thesis for over ten years. I thank you for holding faith in the research, in my abilities to finish and for sharing a greater depth of museum theory and practice. Ngā mihi nui ki a koe.

To Professor Paul Pickering and the Melbourne ANU thesis writing workshop participants; thank you immensely for your critique, wisdom and support. You challenged me to be a better writer and kept my focus when I thought it would never end. Dr Kate Bowan your ongoing support is genuinely appreciated. To my Supervisors including Dr Huhana Smith, Dr Louise Hamby, Jason Eades and Dr Kylie Message, thank you for your guidance. I appreciate your time and advice over the years.

And finally, to all of the research participants, indigenous community members and museum professionals that took the time to speak with me; thank you for allowing me to discuss cultural knowledge and work alongside you. The journey of this work has involved many people who have helped me to rise to complete the thesis. For our connection, I am eternally grateful.

## Acknowledgement

I acknowledge in the thesis that cultural knowledge is owned and held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia and Māori in Aotearoa. As a non-indigenous Australian, I am aware that the following thesis does not involve my own cultural heritage. I am connected by family to Aotearoa as my children are Ngāti Kahungunu. I have been honest to research participants about my position as an outsider in relation to Australian indigenous knowledge and culture. In line with Aotearoa New Zealand theories on cultural safety, I have ensured that I am aware of my own cultural grounding and have been open and honest to research participants. I have a strong respect for, and understand the differences in, individual and collective cultural values and heritage.

This thesis acknowledges that there is diversity throughout Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The word indigenous refers to the First Nations people of Australia and Māori in Aotearoa. Language groups, iwi (tribe) and hapū (subtribe) are identified when known. When referencing interviews with research participants, I include full names, titles and place of our discussions to pay my respects to individuals. At times I refer to Elders as Aunty and Uncle to show my utmost respect to individuals. I express my eternal appreciation to Elders and community members who have given me permission to discuss cultural knowledge and materials.

The following thesis does include the names, words and photographs of Elders and community members who have passed. I have included their voice with the intent to continue their legacy and do not mean to offend or distress readers connected to the departed. I pay honourable respect to their spirits.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines interconnections between indigenous languages, objects and professional practices within Australian and New Zealand museums. Early collecting practices did not include the documentation of descriptions, context or provenance in indigenous languages. Historically, collectors saw indigenous languages as a means for making contact with indigenous communities to produce displays that represented dying cultures to non-indigenous viewers. Indigenous cultural materials are therefore documented in contemporary collection management systems in English; the language of the coloniser.

Indigenous words hold knowledge on kinship, law, context, place, ancestors and methods that become diminished in meaning and understanding once simplified in English. Museum professionals have long considered indigenous language documentation too complex due to a history of displacement of indigenous communities in Australia and New Zealand following colonisation, which resulted in a decline in language use.

This thesis explores a critical snapshot in time between 2010–2011 that was a turning point for both museum practice and indigenous language revival in Australia and New Zealand, when Indigenous communities were becoming aware that their objects held in collections were disconnected from their languages. I reviewed literature in the interdisciplinary fields of museum studies, material culture studies and indigenous studies which addressed decolonisation, self-determination, new museology, new curatorial praxis and co-curation theories which argued that contemporary museums were cross-cultural and contested terrains required to invest in cultural strengthening, debate and social inclusion.

Although there is extensive writing on the importance of indigenous language renewal and the need for museums to address cultural diversity in collections, there is a significant gap in the literature on why and how indigenous languages may be included in collections management systems and other museum practices. Through a historical ethnographic analysis of museum practices during 2010–2011 within the Melbourne Museum, Koorie Heritage Trust, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and Tairāwhiti Museum, this thesis provides the first comprehensive analysis of the significance of indigenous language documentation in collections management. Employing action research, I completed a related project that benefitted collections management practices during fieldwork as a contribution to the museums. The museums selected for fieldwork held internationally significant indigenous collections and showed an interest in data enhancement and language documentation.

Through qualitative interviews, participant observation and an analysis of quantitative data, the thesis evaluates whether using indigenous terminology in collections management improves understandings of the historical life and contemporary role of indigenous objects held in museums today. It also explores how collaboration between museum collections and indigenous communities leads to improved collections management practices on the one hand, and language rejuvenation on the other.

The thesis contends that objects in museum collections can be mutually beneficial to communities, museum professionals and the general public if collections documentation and data (provenance, descriptions and contextual information) is recorded and preserved in collections management systems using the indigenous language of the object; allowing the objects to speak.

## Languages other than English

In this thesis I present indigenous languages in the same style as I do when presenting English. I do not use italics for languages other than English. Indigenous words are followed by the English translation in brackets when the word is used for the first time. For subsequent use, the indigenous word is used without translation. The reader is invited to consult the glossary of the thesis for translation. Macrons are used for te reo Māori when known. I do not distinguish between style of words in formatting and leave little translation as an example of the thesis argument itself; that languages other than English hold no less power and importance than English.

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## Glossary

**Aho** – weft or cross-threads of weaving or a mat

**Āhuru Mōwai** – main larger storeroom within Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

**Aotearoa** – New Zealand

**Aroha** – love

**Birrarung** – Yarra River (Boon Wurrung and Woi Wurrung)

**Hapū** – subtribe/pregnant

**He Ara Whāinga** – Mātauranga Māori Strategy at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

**Heke** – carvings placed inside of whare – meeting house

**Hīnaki** – eel pots

**Hine-nui-te-pō** – Māori goddess of death/night

**Iwi** – tribe

**Jumbunna** – story telling (Boon Wurrung and Woi Wurrung)

**Kai** – food

**Kaitiaki Aronui** – finely woven cloak

**Kaitiaki Māori** – Māori Trustee

**Kaitiakitanga** – protection

**Kākahu** – Māori cloaks

**Karakia** – prayer

**Karanga** – formal welcome to the marae by female elders

**Kaumātua** – elder

**Kaupapa Māori** – Māori approach – conceptual framework, a philosophical doctrine, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society.

**Kawanatanga** – participation

**Kalaya** – to ask or question (Wemba Wemba)

**Kōhanga Reo** – Māori language playgroup/kindergartens

**Koori** – Aboriginal people from Victoria and areas within New South Wales

**Kōrero** – narrative/story/speaker – to address or tell

**Koruru** – carved ancestral face at the top of ancestral house (marae)

**Koiwi** – ancestral remains

**Kōwhaiwahi** – Design

**Kupenga** – Staff intranet at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

**Kupu** – word, vocabulary, to speak

**Mahi** – work



**Mana** – a supernatural force in a person, place or object. Also seen as authority.

**Marae** – traditional meeting house

**Mātauranga Māori** – traditional concepts of knowledge and knowing for Māori

**Mihi** – introductions including connections to family, genealogy and place

**Milarri** – outside (Boon Wurrung and Woi Wurrung)

**Ngā Kaiwawao** – the Māori Advisory Group to the Board of Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

**Ngāti Kahungunu** - iwi main tribe located in North Island, New Zealand

**Ngāti Rakaipaaka** – hapū, subtribe, located near Nūhaka in North Island, New Zealand

**Noongar** (also spelt **Noongah**, **Nyungar**, **Nyoongar**, **Nyoongah**, **Nyungah**, **Nyugah**, **Yunga**) – Aboriginal Australians from south-west corner of Western Australia

**Paepae** – orators' bench

**Pākehā** – New Zealander of European descent

**Papatūānuku** – Earth mother

**Patu** – handheld club

**Poupou** – carved side wall post or slab of a house

**Pōwhiri** – ritual of encounter, welcome ceremony

**Rākau**- Cuisenaire rods

**Rangahau** – the research

**Rangatiratanga** – partnerships

**Tāngata Tiriti** – cultural identity of more recent settlers to New Zealand, Pākehā and other migrants.

**Tāngata whenua** – indigenous people – people who have authority in a particular place. The cultural identity of Māori including art, heritage, language, science, society, technology and relationship with the land.

**Taiaha** – long wooden weapon

**Tāniko** – style of weaving

**Tangihanga** - funeral

**Taonga** – cultural treasures/ancestors/objects of high cultural and social significance and knowledge associated with the object

**Taonga tuku iho** – treasures handed down.

**Tapu** – a supernatural condition. The violation of tapu would result in retribution, sometimes including the death of the violator and others involved directly or indirectly.

**Tatau Pounamu** – greenstone stores within Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

**Te Ataarangi** – Māori language schools for adults/community

**Te Papa Tongarewa / Te Papa** – Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

**Te reo Māori/ Te reo** – the Māori language

**Te Roopu Raranga Whatu o Aotearoa** – Weavers of New Zealand

**Te Whare Pora o Hineteiwaiwa** – weaving stores within Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

**Tīpuna** – ancestors/grandparents

**Tikanga Māori** – Māori customs, culture and protocols

**Tokotoko** – speaking stick

**Tukemata** – tāniko weaving pattern made up of notched zigzag lines

**Tūturu** – permanent or authentic/original

**Urupā** – cemeteries

**Waenga** – the middle

**Wānanga** – to meet/ to discuss/ important traditional cultural, religious, historical, genealogical and philosophical knowledge

**Wāhine** – women

**Waharua kōpito** – pattern of vertical pairs of diamond shapes

**Whaea** – Mother/Aunty

**Wāhi tapu** – restricted place of ancestral presence, including burial ground

**Waiata** – song

**Wairua** – spirit or soul

**Wai** – water

**Waka Huia** – carved treasure boxes

**Waka** – canoe, watercraft and vessel used for transportation

**Whaea** – mother

**Whānau** – family

**Whakairo** – carvings

**Whakapakari** – development

**Whakapapa** – genealogy

**Whakarua kōpito** – patterns that extend downwards in two or more complete repeats.

**Whakawhanaungatanga** – relationship, kinship, and sense of family connection - a relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging.

**Whare** – meeting house/home

**Whenu** – warp – lengthwise threads of a woven flax garment.

**Wilan Liwki** – camp of the Elders (Boon Wurrung and Woi Wurrung)

**Wominjeka** – welcome (Wurundjeri)

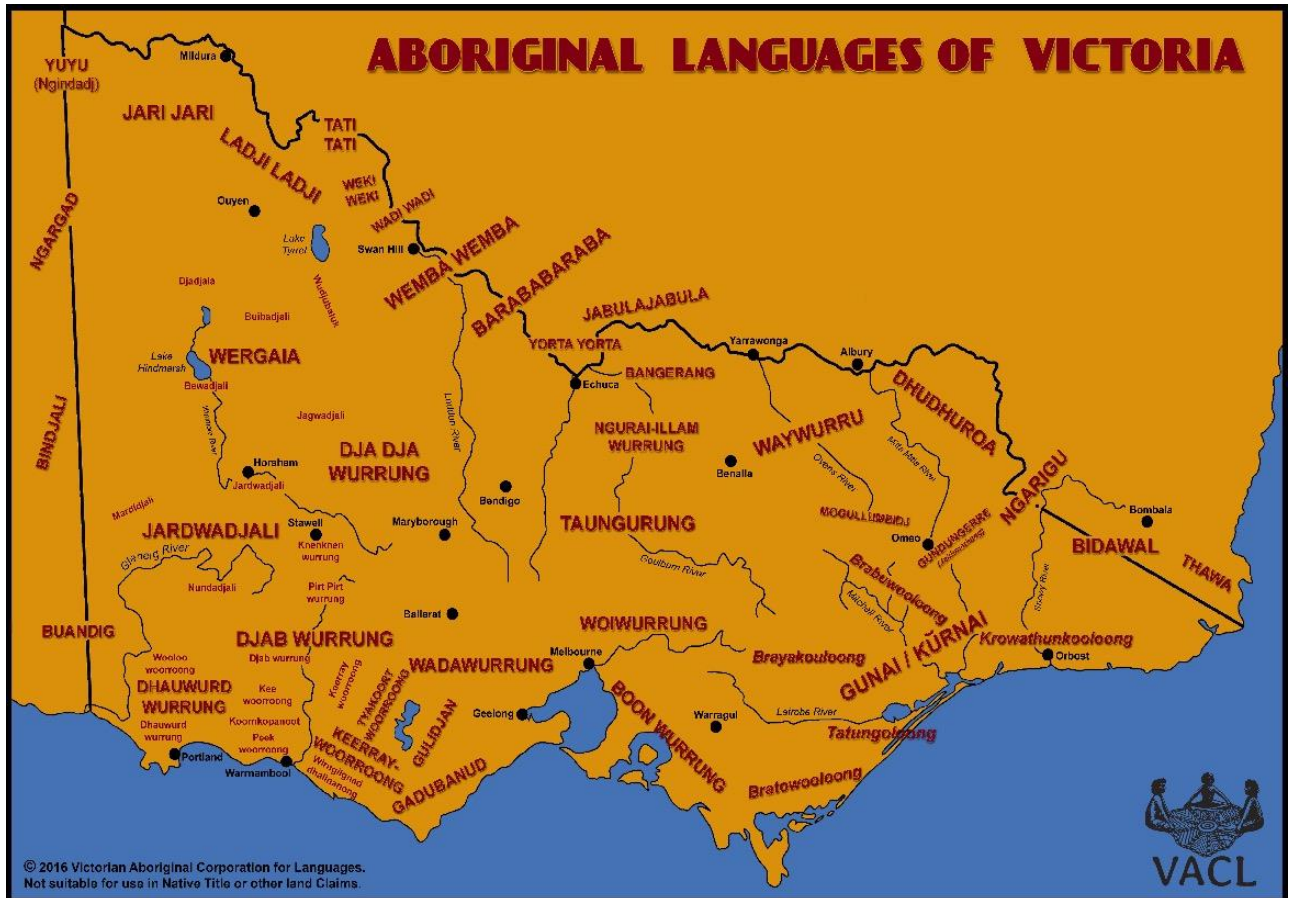
Further detailed information on translation please refer to Te Aka Online Māori Dictionary, <http://māoridictionary.co.nz/> or the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL), <https://www.vacl.org.au/>.

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**Figure 1** Map of Koori Language Groups, Victoria, Australia.  
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## Preamble

As I sat down to complete the thesis, 70,000 people marched in Melbourne streets against racism and the brutal killing of George Floyd in the United States that occurred on 25 May 2020. The Black Lives Matter campaign created international awareness on systemic racism.

A sign at the Melbourne protest on 6 June 2020 read '**White Australia has a black future**'. Respected Koori Elders, cultural knowledge holders and emerging leaders walked arm-in-arm demanding that this country finally address historical inaccuracies taught in schools and face the shame and pain that continues to be felt as a result of lands, language and culture being forcibly removed. Strong self-determined community members chanted in indigenous languages and English their rights to live, work and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture without fear.

In Australia, the Black Lives Matter protests in capital and regional cities echoed those seen throughout the world. The media attention exposed not only an alarming rate of deaths in custody for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, it also exposed the ingrained ignorance of many non-indigenous Australians who questioned First Nation peoples' cultural and human rights. With my children, descendants of Māori Chief Kahungunu, we spoke openly about brutality, neglect and racism that exists in our country.

This thesis is dedicated to the First Nations' people and leaders that continue to fight for truth-telling and injustices in our country.





**Figure 4 – Figure 5** Mandy Nicholson (Wurundjeri, Dja Dja Wurrung, Ngurai Illam Wurrung) artist, language specialist and leader of Djirri Djirri Dance Group marches with white ochre on her forehead as a sign of mourning. While a sign is held on the steps of parliament that reads 'White Australia has a black future', (photographs), 6 June 2020.

## Introduction

In the palm of my hand, with a white glove on, I held a small woven bag tied loosely at the top with string. The bag appeared to have some natural fibres or organic material inside. I never did open it to confirm the contents. The object was identified as 'Noongar' within the collection management system. No other title, provenance, context or details were included in the collection record.

In early 2002 I sat with Uncle Joe Walley, a Noongar Elder, in the back office at the Mandurah Community Museum in Western Australia. Uncle Joe was a member of the Museum's Advisory Board and I was the sole museum staff member with a team of over 40 volunteers.<sup>1</sup> We would meet regularly in the museum prior to the Board meetings and discuss history, exhibitions, education and public programs. I was in the middle of an extensive redevelopment that included relocating every collection item in storage, but not before checking the object's label, catalogue entry and condition report before packing in tissue paper and brown, acid-free boxes.

As we looked through the collection objects ready for storage, I asked Uncle Joe if he could describe the woven bag and Noongar object to me. He sat back in his chair and after quite some time said that he could not explain what it was. Having worked with indigenous communities for many years, I respected the response and did not ask for further information on that day. It could be that Uncle simply did not know. Or I did not hold the cultural permissions required to discuss the object further. I placed the object back into a box and identified it as restricted until I knew more.

A few months went past and Uncle Joe and I sat together again. And again, I asked about the object. Was I not allowed to know the information due to cultural permissions, law, for protection, or was it just an unknown item? His response this time was that the object simply could not be described in English. There were just no English words to explain. We spoke about language, the loss of information in translation, and the fact that the museum held little documentation on indigenous objects held within the collections.

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<sup>1</sup> I was the Museum Development Officer at Mandurah Community Museum in 2002—2003. The indigenous collections held on site were not extensive, but there were a few important collection items. Uncle Joe Walley sat on the Mandurah Community Museum Board when possible. I left the Mandurah Community Museum to accept a Curator position with the City of Melville and regrettably did not resolve what the Noongar object was within the collection.

The conversation remained with me for many years as I continued to work with indigenous collections in Western Australia, and then on return to Victoria. I spoke to other indigenous community members on the neglect of language in collections documentation. Many were surprised that museums held limited language, context and provenance connected to their cultural materials. It was eight years after that conversation with Uncle Joe in the back office of the museum that I began research on the interconnections between indigenous languages, objects, and professional practices within Australian and New Zealand museums.

This thesis explores a critical snapshot in time between 2010–2011 that was a turning point for both museum practice and indigenous language revival in Australia and New Zealand. Indigenous communities were becoming aware that their objects held in cultural collections were disconnected from their languages. Literature in the interdisciplinary fields of museum studies, material culture studies and indigenous studies addressed decolonisation, self-determination, new museology, new curatorial praxis and co-curation theories. Contemporary museums as contested terrains were being pressed to become cross-cultural institutions required to invest in cultural strengthening, debate and social inclusion.<sup>2</sup>

In Australia in 2010–2011, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were identifying the need for museums and collecting organisations to be active participants in language revival and were requesting greater access to their cultural materials to support language development. At the same period in time in New Zealand, there was a significant shift in te reo Māori (Māori language) developments as iwi (tribes) and hapū (subtribes) produced local strategies for language revitalisation. Communities were seeking support for museums to audit language in collections, and requesting exhibitions and programs be developed using the foundations of tikanga Māori (customs/protocols). As a means of self-determination, healing and the rewriting of history, indigenous communities were requesting that museums transform professional practices to reconnect objects back to source communities.<sup>3</sup>

Since the time of the fieldwork in 2010–2011, there have been efforts to right the historical wrongs of collecting practices and display in museums with museums becoming more inclusive of indigenous cultures in front of house exhibitions. Conversely, museums in both countries continue to neglect indigenous languages in back of house collections management practices. Further writing has described self-determination and the rights of indigenous communities to tell their stories in a way

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<sup>2</sup> An overview of literature and theory is provided with the 'Literature Review' on p.31.

<sup>3</sup> 'Source communities' is defined and used at length in Peers et al 2003, *Museums and source communities: a Routledge reader*, Routledge, London.

they choose. However academic theory has not led to changes in professional museum practices in Australia. This thesis documents a critical period in the recent history of the sector and shows how indigenous people used language documentation as a platform to implement change.

In Australia, 250 indigenous languages, including 800 dialects, were spoken at the time of European settlement in 1788. In the state of Victoria, 38 diverse Koori language groups were present.<sup>4</sup> Early collecting practices did not include the documentation of descriptions, context or provenance in indigenous languages. Historically, collectors saw indigenous languages as a means for making contact with indigenous communities to produce displays that represented dying cultures to non-indigenous viewers. Indigenous cultural materials are therefore documented in contemporary collection management systems in English; the language of the coloniser. A history of displacement and forced removal of language for indigenous communities in Australia following colonisation has resulted in disparities in language understanding and use across language groups.

In comparison to Australia's indigenous language diversity, New Zealand's official language as identified in the *Māori Language Act 1987* is te reo Māori.<sup>5</sup> Some differences exist across iwi and hapū located throughout Te Ika-a-Māui (North) and Te Waipounamu (South) Islands but te reo Māori is mutually intelligible to speakers throughout the country. Since the 1960s, there has been a concentrated effort to increase language understanding through the formation of language schools including Kōhanga Reo (Kindergarten), Te Ataarangi (adult language schools) and university courses, with strong government support to position te reo Māori as a national taonga (cultural treasure).<sup>6</sup> While fieldwork was completed for this thesis, te reo Māori use continued to decline. Te reo was being used in formal spaces such as marae (meeting houses), but not in informal locations such as homes and between families.<sup>7</sup>

This thesis does not examine indigenous languages or culture in both countries as a comparative study, but rather comparatively examines the professional practices for similar museum sectors that were

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<sup>4</sup> Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages 2020, *VACL - Home*, VACL, Melbourne, viewed 10 April 2020, <<https://www.vaclang.org.au/>>.

<sup>5</sup> New Zealand Government 2016, *New Zealand Legislation: Māori Language Act 1987*, Parliamentary Counsel Office: Te Tari Tohutohu Paremata, Wellington, viewed 13 June 2020, <<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1987/0176/latest/whole.html>>.

<sup>6</sup> New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2006, *Māori peoples of New Zealand: Ngā iwi o Aotearoa*, David Bateman and Ministry for Culture & Heritage, Wellington.

<sup>7</sup> Glennis Barbara (CEO - Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio recording, Wellington, 4 March, 2011.

directed by the same international code of practice.<sup>8</sup> I critically reflect on similarities and differences to consider how Australian museums can learn from, and improve, collections management practices.

## Thesis Objective

Although there is extensive literature exists on the importance of indigenous language renewal and the need for museums to address cultural diversity in collections, there was and continues to be a significant gap in the literature on why and how indigenous languages may be incorporated in collections management systems and museum practices. Using critical museological discourse analysis and a comparative ethnographic examination of museum practices during 2010–2011 within the Melbourne Museum, Koorie Heritage Trust, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and Tairāwhiti Museum, this thesis provides the first comprehensive analysis of the significance of indigenous language documentation in collections management to address the following research questions:

- Were museums in Australia and New Zealand responding to the argument by First Nations people that indigenous languages should be included in collections management and documentation, and if so, how was that occurring?
- Would a developed awareness of indigenous terminology in collections management improve understandings of the historical life and contemporary role of indigenous objects held in museums today?
- Does collaboration between museums and indigenous communities lead to improved collections management practices on the one hand, and language rejuvenation on the other?

The thesis considers whether language is as important to document and preserve, as is the documentation and preservation of the object itself. I examine the separation of languages from objects held in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand museum collections, and the implications resulting from the separation. I do not outline histories of collecting in both countries as this is done well elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> Although debates about the guardianship of objects often arise, repatriation is also not

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<sup>8</sup> International Council of Museums (ICOM) 2006, *ICOM Code of ethics for museums*, 21st General Assembly in Seoul (Republic of Korea), Paris, viewed 10 October 2010, <<http://archives.icom.museum/ethics.html#intro>>.

<sup>9</sup> The thesis does not intend to provide a complete history of historic collecting practices in both countries as this is documented elsewhere including; Museum Victoria 2004, *Treasures of the Museum*, Museum Victoria, Melbourne.; Charles, Beth 2006, *The Koorie Heritage Trust's Cultural Centre: unmasking the in between*, Thesis (PhD), La Trobe University, Melbourne.; McCarthy, Conal 2018, *Te Papa: Reinventing New Zealand's National Museum 1998-2018*, Te Papa Press, Wellington.; Baddeley, Claire 2013, *Managing the new museology: The changing role, purpose and management of Australian museums since 1980*, University of Canberra, Canberra.; Crayford, Michael et al 2005, *Connections: Indigenous*

discussed here as a specific topic, nor objects deemed as secret or sacred materials. It is not my cultural right to discuss repatriation or restricted materials in museum collections. However, projects that benefitted collections management practices, and employing action research, were completed during fieldwork as a contribution to the museums including a significance assessment, draft language policy, data enhancement and a collections review.<sup>10</sup>

The thesis reflects, analyses and extends my professional experience, personal life and previous studies in cultural heritage. My career includes over 20 years working in museums and galleries as both a Curator and Collections Manager. As a Collections Manager, I struggled to catalogue objects from indigenous communities without the voice of the community in language to describe significance, provenance and contextual information. I intuitively felt that indigenous words, phrases or oral recordings could be incorporated into the acquisition, registration and cataloguing practices of collection management. Indigenous languages carry descriptions, cultural information and tone that are not possible to present or translate in English.

An evaluation of collections management system technical design and development is not provided in this thesis as, in my view, technology cannot be the solution to indigenous language documentation without changes to professional practice. Existing systems that were building digital archives for language and indigenous cultural materials in 2010–2011 such as Ara Irititja, Murkurtu open source, AustKin or Atlas of Living Australia databases are not discussed in detail.<sup>11</sup> I focus rather on the use of professional systems and processes, and critically examine the approaches to museum practice that were leading the need for transformation. Likewise, post-colonial archives, indigenous keeping places and cultural centres are not central to this thesis as I focus on mainstream collecting institutions.<sup>12</sup> The

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*Cultures and the Australian National Maritime Museum*, Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney.; Griffin, D and Paroissien, L 2011, *Understanding Museums - Australian Museums and Museology*, National Museum of Australia, viewed 25 November 2019, <[https://nma.gov.au/research/understanding-museums/\\_lib/pdf/Understanding\\_Museums\\_whole\\_2011.pdf](https://nma.gov.au/research/understanding-museums/_lib/pdf/Understanding_Museums_whole_2011.pdf)>; McBryde 1984, op.cit. pp.132–153.; Peterson, Nicolas, et al 2008, *The Makers and Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collections*, Melbourne University Publishing, Carlton, Victoria.

<sup>10</sup> The collections-based projects completed while on fieldwork are discussed within the case studies in Chapters 2–6.

<sup>11</sup> Further information on language database development can be included in: Ara Irititja 2007, *Ara Irititja*, Marleston, SA, viewed 11 October 2010, <<https://www.irititja.com/>>; Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation and Services, Institute of Museum and Library 2019, *Mukurtu CMS: A safe keeping place*, Washington State University, State of Washington, viewed 25 November, 2019 <<https://mukurtu.org/>>; Anderson, Jane and University of New York 2018, *Atlas of Living Australia*, ala.org.au, viewed 25 November 2019, <<https://www.ala.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Seminar-27-March-2018-Indigenous-Knowledge-and-Digital-Infrastructure-Futures.pdf>>; Dousset, Laurent, Hendery, Rachel, Bower, Claire, Koch, Harold and McConvell, Patrick 2010, 'Developing a database for Australian Indigenous kinship terminology: The AustKin project', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, vol. 2010, no.1, pp.42–56.

<sup>12</sup> More information on the 'post-colonial archive' is included in Mussell, James 2014, 'The Postcolonial Archive', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, vol. 19, no.3, pp.383–384, Kurtz, Matthew 2006, 'A Postcolonial Archive? On the Paradox of Practice in a Northwest Alaska Project', *Archivaria: The Journal of the Association of Canadian Archivists*, vol. 61, September, Association of Canadian Archivists, Canada, pp. 63–90.

museums selected for fieldwork held internationally significant indigenous collections and an interest in data enhancement and language documentation. Although I focus on indigenous collections in museums, the information is applicable to all languages other than English. The thesis centres on engaging the original voice of the object to convey descriptions, provenance and significance, thus allowing the object to speak.

The title of the thesis, 'Objects can speak: Indigenous languages and collections in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand' is a reference to the engagement of language of source communities from where objects originate. It does not reference theory on the agency of objects and indigenous materials that have been discussed by writers such as Arjun Appadurai, Christopher Tilley and Amiria Henare.<sup>13</sup> I do not approach linguistics and the complexities of terminology and language structures in the thesis. Rather, I am led by the responses of research participants who were active leaders in the revitalisation of indigenous languages during 2010–2011.<sup>14</sup>

Throughout the period discussed in the thesis, literature in the disciplines of museum studies, material culture studies and indigenous studies argued that collecting institutions decentralise western models of collection ownership. Museum studies as a boundary discipline explores the relationships between academic disciplines.<sup>15</sup> I avoid connecting case studies to theoretical discussion in one academic specialisation but address concepts as boundary work, discussing diversity in concepts and discourse.<sup>16</sup> Literature is used to examine whether objects in museum collections can be mutually beneficial to communities, museum professionals and the general public if collections documentation and data (provenance, descriptions and contextual information) is recorded and preserved in collections management systems using the indigenous language/s of the object.

In museums, objects enter collections through the application of international standards for acquisition and registration in line with a collections policy. Historically, registration and collections management practices included categorising items by use, form or maker, and documenting that limited information in collection registers and systems. Henare points out that this classification process 'precedes collection' and references Elsner's and Cardinal's discussion of '...western

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<sup>13</sup> Appadurai, Arjun 1986, *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective*, Cambridge University Press, New York; Tilley, Christopher Y. 1999, *Metaphor and material culture*, Blackwell, Oxford; Henare, Amiria et al 2007, *Thinking through things: theorising artefacts ethnographically*, Routledge, New York.

<sup>14</sup> A full list of research participants is included on pp.273–274.

<sup>15</sup> Message, Kylie 2009, 'Review. Museum studies: borderwork, genealogy, revolution', *Museum and Society*, vol. 7, no.2, pp.125–132.

<sup>16</sup> Flyvbjerg, Bent 2006, 'Five misunderstandings about case-study research', *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 12, pp.219–245.

epistemological scheme of thought that regards classification as a technique of comprehension which operates by way of discerning order and pattern in the diversity of collections...'<sup>17</sup> Carl Davidson and Martin Tolich identify a 'Eurocentric framework' in which indigenous objects were historically observed, collected and analysed. They confirm that once an object enters a collection, the object shifts outside the realm where original intent, cultural knowledge and stories are connected to the object; '...knowledge which makes sense in one particular cultural context cannot always be understood through the tools which govern the understanding of other belief systems and worldviews...'<sup>18</sup> The process of sorting and documenting indigenous objects by patterns, order or rational schemes of management implies that objects can fit neatly into one locale, tribal group or object type. This is not the reality when working with indigenous objects. Indigenous objects often hold evidence of cultural knowledge and significance that is acknowledged when observed by experienced researchers and source community members. Unfortunately, historical documentation in collections often holds limited information on provenance, makers or cultural knowledge due to the Eurocentric framework in which collections were assessed and documented.

Language documentation in collection management systems is hampered by historical documentation produced by this Eurocentric framework. There may be little, or no information held on the object's origins. In this study, fieldwork conducted in the museums in 2010–2011 included an analysis of institutional policies and manuals, collection database records, collection files, and guidelines found within each museum. Documents were examined with consideration that historical collecting practices had created barriers for the museums wanting to undergo data enhancement for collection objects. Collections were once formed as representation of a type, form or location. But objects could cross language boundaries as they were traded across locales. Indigenous language was not a priority at the time of acquisition into the museum collections. Jason Eades (raised on Gunnai Country), the Chief Executive Officer for the Koorie Heritage Trust in 2010, confirmed that many of the objects within the Trust's collections were acquired and registered without a connection to a particular language group:

That information [provenance information] for whatever reason just wasn't seen as important to capture. Obviously with new material that's being made [provenance is documented] because people will always talk about what group they're associated with...I think in some respects in regards to responsible collections management if we don't know, if an object arrives without that kind of information, how much can we actually layer on that before we start to distort it...If we for example received a boomerang and it has no provenance

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<sup>17</sup> Henare, Amiria J. M. 2005, *Museums, anthropology and imperial exchange*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, pp.ix–323.

<sup>18</sup> Davidson, Carl and Tolich, Martin 2003, *Social science research in New Zealand: many paths to understanding*, Pearson Education New Zealand, Auckland, New Zealand.



information, which of the 38 groups do we choose to give it a name from? Even when you can narrow it down to a particular region, which you can do sometimes because of the style of it or the markings contained on it, it's still regional. It's not specific. Given that language groups also have dialects it's kind of working out which one do you work with.<sup>19</sup>

As Eades suggests, information that was neglected in historical documentation is in itself a story of the time and place and contributes to the social history of the object. Similar to Eades, David Sluki the Senior Curator at Melbourne Museum in 2010 confirmed that a neglect of origin and indigenous context within historical documentation is one of the greatest challenges for Curators and Collection Managers working within the Bunjilaka Aboriginal Centre (Bunjilaka) redevelopment:

If there are objects in the collections that relate to stories that we get told, that will be amazing. Because that's one of the problems we've got is that so many objects are unprovenanced or completely de-contextualised. And often tell the story more of the collector than the Aboriginal people that made or used the actual object. So, if we have objects that relate back to stories then we'll definitely incorporate those and cross-reference where we can.<sup>20</sup>

Although challenges exist when selecting language groups for data enhancement in collections, Koori research participants agree that an understanding of the object cannot exist without a connection to Country.<sup>21</sup> This thesis does not promote a rewriting of historical documentation, but rather data enhancement to reconnect source community languages with objects where possible. A rewriting would conflict with international standards for collections management and the management of historical records.<sup>22</sup>

A significant issue when exploring data enhancement for collections is the rapid loss of indigenous languages throughout the world due to poor documentation and the passing of fluent speakers. In early 2000s it was identified that the world was losing one indigenous language every two weeks.<sup>23</sup> It was also estimated that 80% of the world's electronically stored information was held in English.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Eades, Jason, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 23 November, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Sluki, David (Senior Curator, Bunjilaka Redevelopment, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 6 January, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Responses by both Koori and Māori research participants are documented throughout the thesis that express a need to have cultural materials well documented in museums including provenance.

<sup>22</sup> International Council of Museums (ICOM) 2006, op.cit.

<sup>23</sup> Dalby, Andrew 2003, *Language in danger: the loss of linguistic diversity and the threat to our future*, Columbia University Press, New York.

<sup>24</sup> Dalby in Janes, Robert R 2007, 'Museums, social responsibility and the future', *Museum revolutions: how museums change and are changed*, S. J. Knell et al (eds.), Routledge, New York, pp.134–146; Mydans, Seth 2007, 'Across cultures,

Language is at the heart of human practices and involves cultural categories, perspectives and concepts.<sup>25</sup> Colonial control of indigenous languages has resulted in a direct demise of indigenous languages spoken.<sup>26</sup> The displacement of Koori people in Victoria and the establishment of government-led missions away from homelands prevented community members from learning local languages. The loss of language resulted in a loss of cultural knowledge and identity for many Koori communities. In 2010–2011, Koori communities were raising awareness to the effects of displacement and language loss. In their didactic panel for the *Reclaim and Sustain* exhibition held in the Couihnan Gallery in Melbourne in 2011, contemporary Koori artists Vicki Couzens (Gunditjmara, Keerray-Woorroong) and Maree Clarke (Yorta Yorta, Wamba Wamba, Mutti Mutti, Boonwurrung) stated:

Aboriginal people have been denied; we have been denied the mourning of those slain in massacres; we have been denied the mourning of the loss of our land; we have been denied the mourning of the loss of our 'Mother Tongue'; we have been denied the mourning for the loss of our dance, song and ceremony.<sup>27</sup>

This thesis outlines indigenous responses to language loss and the effect the loss has had on understanding historical and contemporary role of indigenous objects in collections.

The displacement of people and objects throughout colonisation has prevented continuity in relationships between cultural materials and cultural practices. Edwards, Gosden and Phillip argue that '...the Western museum's ritual practices of sensory isolation and enforced status are antithetical to indigenous forms of ritual correctness that may require that objects be fed, held, worn, played, danced or exposed to air, water or incense...'<sup>28</sup> I would agree with this and would go further and claim that decolonisation and self-determination in museums means that it is indigenous people's fundamental right to have cultural materials documented and cared for using their practices and ways of working. Griffin ascertains that:

...even if ownership of cultural material is decided on the basis of who has the right to tell the stories about it, decisions made by museums are decisions which have to be negotiated between parties from a position of mutual respect including respect for freedom of speech and the dignity of the human being...Politics is not something that is outside the door of the

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English is the word', *The New York Times*, New York, viewed 2 April 2009, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/09/world/asia/09iht-englede.1.5198685.html>>.

<sup>25</sup> Sturge, Kate 2007, *Representing others: translation, ethnography and the museum*, St Jerome Publishing, Manchester.

<sup>26</sup> Woolard, Kathryn A. et al 1994, 'Language Ideology', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 23, pp.55–82.

<sup>27</sup> Couzens, Vicki & Clarke, Maree, didactic panels in exhibition, Moreland City Council and Couihnan Gallery 2011, *Reclaim and Sustain*, exhibition, Couihnan Gallery, Melbourne.

<sup>28</sup> Edwards, Elizabeth et al (eds.) 2006, *Sensible objects: colonialism, museums and material culture*, Wenner-Gren Foundation for for Anthropological Research, New York.

museum but a part of everyday life, a way of balancing conflicting but legitimate demands as much as a way of marginalising and eventually suppressing identity.<sup>29</sup>

Clearly, the literature on decolonisation and the new museology challenges contemporary museums to negotiate and partner with indigenous people to determine the representation of their cultural expression and materials. In the following section I review this literature including the work of indigenous and non-indigenous writers on ethnographic collection development, language significance, decolonisation, and new museological and museum practice.

## Literature Review

The thesis draws on literature in the disciplines of museum studies, material culture studies, and indigenous studies that address the 'new museum', 'new curatorial praxis' and identify museums as 'contested terrains' where cultural strengthening, debate, revival, celebration and inclusive practice exist.<sup>30</sup> This literature review outlines areas of focus in museum studies and cultural theory that provided a framework for the fieldwork completed in this study. I discuss theory that aligns with a '...new paradigm for museological thought, discourse and action...' and liberates collections from Eurocentric museology by placing indigenous rights as central to the management of ethnographic collections.<sup>31</sup>

Ethnographic collections were formed from a Eurocentric and homogenising view of cultural property exhibited to non-indigenous viewers.<sup>32</sup> Museum Curators were considered the experts on cultural documentation, representation and preservation.<sup>33</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith contends that historically Pākehā (non-indigenous) museum professionals in positions of power described and authorised indigenous culture through the formation of collections.<sup>34</sup> Writers such as James Clifford have

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<sup>29</sup> Griffin, Des 2020, 'First Nations, Museum Responsibilities: History, Truth and Symbols', *Australian Museums and Galleries Association Magazine*, vol. 28, no.1, pp.1–88.

<sup>30</sup> 'New museum' theory has been addressed by writers including Message, Kylie 2006, *New museums and the making of culture*, Berg Publishers, Oxford; Witcomb, Andrea 2003, *Re-imagining the museum: beyond the mausoleum*, Routledge, London; Anderson, Gail 2004, *Reinventing the museum: historical and contemporary perspectives on the paradigm shift*, AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek, California; Edwards 2006, op.cit.; Healy, Chris and Witcomb, Andrea (eds.) 2006, *South Pacific museums: experiments in culture*, Monash University ePress, Clayton, Victoria; S. J. Knell et al 2007, op.cit. pp.134–146; Kreps, Christine 2003, *Liberating culture: Cross-cultural perspectives on museums, curation and heritage preservation*, Routledge, New York; McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: heritage professionals, indigenous collections, current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, N.Z; Schrader, Reuben 2010, *Reconceptualising curation through material culture*, Victoria University of Wellington, Museum Studies, Wellington. The 'new curatorial praxis' is identified by Peers et al 2003 op.cit. 'Contested terrains' described by Kreps 2003, op.cit.

<sup>31</sup> Kreps 2003, op.cit.p.i.

<sup>32</sup> McCarthy, Conal 2007, *Exhibiting Māori: a history of colonial cultures of display*, Berg Publishers, Oxford, U.K.

<sup>33</sup> Ames, Michael M. 1992, *Cannibal tours and glass boxes: the anthropology of museums*, UBC Press, Vancouver.

<sup>34</sup> Knell, Simon J., et al (eds.) 2007, *Museum revolutions: how museums change and are changed*, Routledge, New York, p.121.

questioned ‘...those visions of global, transnational, or postmodern cultural which assume a singular and homogenising process in display and performance...’<sup>35</sup> Janet Marstine explained that Eurocentric museums and their historical timelines in exhibitions assumed that indigenous cultures had never changed.<sup>36</sup> Julie Cruikshank maintains that the selection of objects and the exclusion of others, forms a western fetishisation of ‘...things object-dominated aesthetics...’.<sup>37</sup> Smith reminds us that ‘...colonialism was not just about collection. It was also about re-arrangement, re-presentation and re-distribution...’<sup>38</sup> Western discourse presented indigenous cultural materials as the ‘other’ from a position of power.

Historical collecting practices have led to collections that are deeply problematic. Collections were developed through a bias on the significance of objects using non-indigenous ways of working, thinking and sorting in a dominant position. Phillip Schorch and Arapata Hakiwai agree that ‘...the language of definitions, the modus operandi and the management of taonga have largely been in the hands of the dominant cultural perspective...’<sup>39</sup> Pearce argues that ‘...all the material in our museum collections has been selected from the large range of possible choices by individuals who acted in the light of their own ideologies, conscious and unconscious, and is, accordingly flawed as an historical record...’<sup>40</sup> The neglect of indigenous languages in descriptions, context and significance for objects has resulted in collections lacking connections to Country, and a depth of understanding on the objects context and its maker, resulting in flawed historical records. Pearce also stated that:

Many collectors did not bother to bring home information on the objects they acquired that went beyond the minimum of ‘culture, function and constituent materials’...often it is not clear what is genuine information provided by the collector and what is information added later on...the less direct documentation is, the lower its degree of reliability.<sup>41</sup>

The historic representation of indigenous peoples in museums has been debated not only in literature, but also within the professional museum sector itself. At the 1994 ‘Curatorship: indigenous perspectives in post-colonial societies conference’ held in Canada, Alissandra Cummins noted:

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<sup>35</sup> Clifford, James 1997, *Routes: travel and translation in the late twentieth century*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

<sup>36</sup> Marstine, Janet 2006, *New museum theory and practice: an introduction*, Blackwell, Oxford.

<sup>37</sup> Cruikshank, Julie 1992, 'Oral tradition and material culture: multiplying meanings of 'words' and 'things'', *Anthropology Today*, vol. 8, no.3, pp.5–9.

<sup>38</sup> Smith, Linda Tuhiwai 1999, *Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples*, Zed Books Ltd, New York, p.62.

<sup>39</sup> Schorch, Phillip and Hakiwai, Arapata 2014, 'Mana Taonga and the Public Sphere: A dialogue between Indigenous practice and western theory', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 12, no.2, pp.191–205.

<sup>40</sup> Pearce, Susan M (ed.) 1989, *Museum studies in material culture*, Leicester University Press, London.

<sup>41</sup> Furst, Hans Jorg 1989, 'Material culture research and the curation process', *Museum studies in material culture*, S. M. Pearce (ed.) Leicester University Press, London, pp.97–110.

While we have started to address the legal, ethical and practical areas of this long-neglected problem of marginality, we have not yet come to grips with the moral perspective that remains the defining factor at the essence of the debate. We can no longer continue to pretend that we are properly presenting heritage of our indigenous people through conventional museum practices and programs exclusive of input and active participation of indigenous people, and we believe the time has come for our museums to do away with stereotypical models in presenting those peoples.<sup>42</sup>

The deficiency of documentation for ethnographic collections, particularly in the areas of social significance, is the result of historic and non-standardised collection practices. Hans Jorg Furst confirmed that '...documentation on museum objects is generally sparse, and information on cultural context of the object, for example its ideological and social significance, is often even more limited...'<sup>43</sup> Elsner and Cardinal identified that '...the history of collecting is the narrative of how human beings have striven to accommodate, to appropriate and to extend the taxonomies and systems of knowledge they have inherited...'<sup>44</sup> Andrew Moutu argues that the activity of collecting is problematised and that '...in juxtaposing (rather than merely classifying) objects, the activity of collecting has an ontological effect in that it alters the objects it gathers together, reconstituting them by placing them in a set of relations that are internal and peculiar to the collection itself...'<sup>45</sup>

A focus on objects and not on the documentation of intangible cultural heritage has been identified as a significant issue by Simpson. The neglect of the intangible aspects of heritage imposes limitations on source communities who do not see the intangible as less significant than the physical:

The Western museum's emphasis on objects does not readily accommodate the need for preserving 'living' culture, an important limitation for those in societies in which less emphasis is placed on preserving the materiality and more on maintaining the intangible aspects of heritage, including the relationships, knowledge and activities that give objects meaning. This is of particular concern in societies where languages, ceremonies, traditional knowledge and other cultural practices are under threat of continued loss or extinction.<sup>46</sup>

Poor documentation raises substantial issues for museums wanting to 'revisit' collection systems documentation and reconnect objects to source communities through language.

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<sup>42</sup> Cummins, Alissandra and Arinze, Emmanuel 1996, 'Welcome to the May 1994 Symposium', *Curatorship: indigenous perspectives in post-colonial societies: proceedings*, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Commonwealth Association of Museums and the University of Victoria, Ottawa, p.5.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Elsner, John and Cardinal, Roger 1994, *The cultures of collecting*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, p.2.

<sup>45</sup> Andrew Moutou as discussed in Henare et al 2005, op.cit. p.22.

<sup>46</sup> Simpson, Moira G. 2007, 'Charting the boundaries: indigenous models and parallel practices in the development of the post-museum' in S. J. Knell et al 2007, op.cit. pp.235–249.

Early collectors considered indigenous language solely as a tool in which to be able to communicate and extract information from source communities. As Johannes Fabian outlines, anthropologists acknowledged language as useful in the ‘...communicative praxis as a result of which metaphors such as tool, vehicle or receptacle might be difficult to maintain...’<sup>47</sup> Michael Baxandall identified that makers of objects were ‘...classic participants that can describe process, use and materials in relation to their internal and expert understanding of their culture...’<sup>48</sup> but that information was recorded in English. How indigenous people described or withheld information for collectors has affected collection documentation and historical records. As John E. Stanton asserts ‘...the strength of ethnographic collections lies, or should lie, within the depth of field documentation, and its use in understanding cultural formations in communities of origin...’<sup>49</sup> Collectors neglected to see importance in language documentation in the registration and collections management systems following acquisition.

In the last part of the twentieth century significant changes in understanding objects and relationships has been observed in literature. Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff described objects as holding ‘social biographies’.<sup>50</sup> More than just ‘anchors to the past’ Marstine contended that objects in museum collections have an ‘...afterlife which must be acknowledged if we are to be critical thinkers...’<sup>51</sup> Henare described objects as ‘enclaved’ in museums, which interrupts their journey across space and time but contends that if they can be given the opportunity to be accessed, visited and studied, they continue to generate social ties.<sup>52</sup> Gell’s analytical model linked objects to context, in which artworks or objects exerted agency via representation, and social relationships surrounding objects became as significant as the object itself.<sup>53</sup> However, this does not address details of theory on colonial discourse and the politics of indigenous recognition that have been critiqued extensively elsewhere.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Fabian, Johannes 1983, *Time and the other: how anthropology makes its object*, Columbia University Press, New York, p.106.

<sup>48</sup> Baxandall in Karp et al 1991, *Exhibiting cultures: the poetics and politics of museum display*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, p.36.

<sup>49</sup> Stanton, John E. 2011, 'Ethnographic museums and collections: from the past into the future', *Understanding Museums: Australian Museums and Museology*, D. Griffin and L. Paroissien (eds.), National Museum of Australia, Canberra, pp.1–6.

<sup>50</sup> Appadurai and Kopytoff as discussed in Edwards 2006, op.cit. p.13; Appadurai, Arjun 1986, op.cit.

<sup>51</sup> Marstine 2006, op.cit. p.2.

<sup>52</sup> Henare, Amiria J. M. 2005, *Museums, anthropology and imperial exchange*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

<sup>53</sup> Gell, Alfred 1998, *Arts and Agency: an Anthropological Theory*, Oxford University Press, London.

<sup>54</sup> Literature review on these topics are included in Butts, David 2003, *Māori and Museums: The politics of indigenous recognition*, Massey University, Museum Studies, Palmerston North, N.Z; Tapsell, Paul 1998, *Taonga: A tribal response to museums*, Oxford University, School of Museum Ethnography, UK; Smith 1999, op.cit.; Colmer, Moana 2010, *Evaluating the tangible, acknowledging the intangible: the application of auditing, kaitiakitanga and collection management during the Tairāwhiti museum taonga Māori audit*, Massey University, Museum Studies, Manawatu, New Zealand.

This thesis acknowledges the relationship between people and objects. Indigenous relationships to objects incorporates knowledge, communication, spirituality and what Elsner and Cardinal described as innate relationships.<sup>55</sup> Appadurai suggested that objects hold meanings in form, use and trajectories, and that ‘...it is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things...’<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Edwards described artefacts as ‘sites of intersecting histories’ that hold diverse interpretation to source communities and museums.<sup>57</sup> Michael Foucault stated that objects are at a risk of losing meaning if the viewer’s knowledge and understanding on cultural values is not advanced.<sup>58</sup> This highlights the importance of museums working collaboratively with indigenous communities who hold understanding on the cultural values of objects.

In New Zealand, Māori indigenous cultural materials held in collections are acknowledged and respected for having ‘...reach beyond material culture to incorporate immaterial...’<sup>59</sup> James Leach discussed the notion that objects hold more than the physical and stated ‘...culture can be read from objects through symbolic analysis, sense is made of their form and use by reference to prior cultural systems of meaning...’<sup>60</sup> As discussed by Srinivasan, collection catalogues and management systems have a significant gap in representing and documenting the objects’ narrative.<sup>61</sup> Edwards provides a ‘biographical model’ to understand objects in relation to meanings gathered through time.<sup>62</sup> Appadurai proposed that ‘...if we regard some commodities (objects) as having ‘life histories’ or ‘careers’ in a meaningful sense, then it becomes useful to look at the distribution of knowledge at various points in their careers...’<sup>63</sup> Documenting an objects’ careers and social history takes a significant commitment by all museum staff to collaborate and review past documentation practices. Miriam Clavir identifies historic documentation as addressing the significance of objects through a museum system of values (rarity, condition, attribution, and authenticity). The ‘...postmodern or ‘living’ museum attempts to give priority to the originating culture’s system of values so that culturally appropriate maintenance of an object may take precedence over standard museum procedures...’<sup>64</sup> Identifying cultural values of

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<sup>55</sup> Elsner 1994, op.cit.

<sup>56</sup> Appadurai, Arjun 1986, op.cit.

<sup>57</sup> Edwards, Elizabeth 2001, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums*, Berg Oxford.

<sup>58</sup> Michael Foucault discussed in Anderson 2004, op.cit. p.275.

<sup>59</sup> Salmond (formerly Henare) discussed in Schorch et al 2016, ‘Globalizing Māori Museology: Reconceptualizing Engagement, Knowledge, and Virtuality through Mana Taonga’, *Museum Anthropology*, vol. 39, no.1, pp.48–69.

<sup>60</sup> Leach, James 2007, ‘Differentiation and encompassment: A critique of Alfred Gell’s theory of the abduction of creativity’, *Thinking through things: Theorising artefacts ethnographically*, A. J. M. Henare, M. Holbraad and S. Wastell (eds.), Routledge, Oxon, UK, pp.167–188.

<sup>61</sup> Srinivasan, R et al 2009, ‘Diverse knowledge and contact zones within the digital museum’, *Science, Technology and Human Values*, vol. 35, no.5, pp.735–768.

<sup>62</sup> Edwards 2006, op.cit

<sup>63</sup> Appadurai, Arjun 1986, op.cit.

<sup>64</sup> Clavir quoted in Kreps 2003, op.cit. p.150.

objects requires museums to acknowledge the intangible and sociocultural phenomenon that surrounds objects held in collections. As Peterson, Allen and Hamby confirm:

Collections are more than artefacts; they are artefacts that represent categories made manifest...they connect with a broader sociocultural phenomenon; the selective grouping of things from a larger field of possibilities and the separation of this grouping, conceptually and physically, from other things. Many of the contemporary issues surrounding anthropological museum collections are ones of cross-cultural disparities in the creation, control, meaning and location of these objectified categories.<sup>65</sup>

In Australia and New Zealand in 2010–2011, the museum sectors were supportive of a review on objects' significance to align to cultural values, and for cultural diversity and the representation of 'many voices' to be present within cultural institutions. This was being driven by indigenous communities demands for access and inclusion in the way their materials were held and displayed that will be discussed further in chapters 1–4. As both Karp and Simpson suggested, the authoritative voice was being contested by source communities and museums were making changes in response.<sup>66</sup> The changes allowed for greater control by indigenous people over decisions on what, how and why indigenous objects were to be acquired and registered. The responsibility of museums to employ indigenous staff, consult with indigenous advisors and respect the rights of the communities from which the objects originate, is documented in policies, codes of ethics and best practice guidelines. The thesis seeks to address disparities in literature on current Australian and Aotearoa collections management practices and investigates opportunities for museums to take part in language revitalisation and strengthening programs. As Stanton described:

Australian museums hold ethnographic collections – or at least ethnographic components of their collections – that were collected in a different era, in rather different contexts to those that prevail in the twenty-first century. This, in itself, presents significant challenges to present day curators; most important among these is the question of what to do with those earlier collections. How can they be used to tell their own story? Whose story, which story? Some of the early collections are well documented. Often, they are the only materials extant from the period. But many of them are very poorly documented, and it lies with later researchers to induce meaning and attribution.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Peterson et al 2008, op.cit. p.54.

<sup>66</sup> Karp et al 1991, op.cit.; Clifford, James 1997, 'Museums as contact zones', *Routes; travel and translation in the late twentieth century*, J. Clifford (ed.) Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, pp.188–209; Simpson, Moira G. 1996, *Making representations: museums in the post-colonial era*, Routledge, New York.

<sup>67</sup> Stanton, John E in Griffin 2011, op.cit.p.2.



Museums have shifted from institutions of scholarship where Curators held the power to control knowledge and display, to 'new museums', places of innovation and inclusive social engagement benefitting community through cross-cultural education, communications and entertainment. Contemporary museums are driven by community needs for a deeper level of interpretation and sharing of culture.<sup>68</sup> A complete history of the changes within Australian and New Zealand museums is not included in this thesis. Those histories have been successfully completed by other writers including Des Griffin and Leon Paroissien's documentation on Australian museums and Conal McCarthy's on New Zealand museums.<sup>69</sup> Likewise, Howard Morphy's discussion of the 'anthropology of art' is not addressed.<sup>70</sup> I instead outline theory on indigenous representation by museums to provide a greater understanding of the contemporary needs of collection documentation and identify that documentation has been contested by communities from which the collections originate.

The 'new museum' attempted to adapt to changing technologies, cultural diversity and compete for the leisure time of visitors through the development of exciting and relevant programs, often through a more ethical mandate.<sup>71</sup> Kreps envisioned new museums as settings for social change.<sup>72</sup> Weil earlier suggested that new museums could be redirected as sites of improvement and enhancement for the quality of life and wellbeing of communities.<sup>73</sup> Brown argued that as public institutions, museums at their core were required to 'preserve, exhibit and interpret' collections for all in multicultural societies.<sup>74</sup> As Anderson stated '...museums are not islands in space, they have to be considered in the context of life outside of their walls...'<sup>75</sup> Ramesh Srinivasan, Robin Boast, Jonathan Furner and Katherine M. Becvar addressed that museums were being led by a combination of theory and community from 'public displays of ordered knowledge' to 'cultural repositories with an educational mission'.<sup>76</sup> This shift to become all-inclusive institutions has brought added pressure for museum staff as they adapt professional practices to include greater engagement and cross-cultural collaboration.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Impey, Oliver and Macgregor, Arthur 1985, *The origins of museums: The cabinet of curiosities in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe*, Clarendon Press, Oxford; Pmian, Krzysztof 1990, *Collectors and curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500-1800*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

<sup>69</sup> Griffin 2011, op.cit.; McCarthy, Conal 2007, *Exhibiting Māori: a history of colonial cultures of display*, Berg Publishers, Oxford, U.K.; McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: Indigenous professionals and current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington.

<sup>70</sup> Morphy, Howard and Perkins, Morgan 2006, *The Anthropology of Art*, Oxford, London.

<sup>71</sup> Healy 2006, op.cit.; Message, Kylie 2006, *New museums and the making of culture*, Berg Publishers, Oxford.

<sup>72</sup> Kreps 2003, op.cit.

<sup>73</sup> Weil, Stephen E. 2002, *Making museums matter*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C., p.19.

<sup>74</sup> Brown, Catherine K 2004, 'The Museum's Role in a Multicultural Society', *Reinventing the museum: historical and contemporary perspectives on the paradigm shift*, G. Anderson (ed.) AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek, California, pp.143–149.

<sup>75</sup> Anderson 2004, op.cit.p.45.

<sup>76</sup> Srinivasan et al 2009, op.cit.p.735.

<sup>77</sup> Kreps 2003, op.cit.; Healy 2006, op.cit.

Museum professionals agreed that there was a need for change as identified in theory, but instigating change in professional practice is difficult and takes time.

The 'new museum' prioritised relationships with living cultural communities and embedded understanding on the ownership of cultural heritage and preservation. As Kylie Message confirmed, the 'new museum' offered increased active engagement by combining collections with festivals, art, performance and the celebration of culture.<sup>78</sup> National museums in particular desired 'transformative articulations' and adopted methods to promote cross-cultural experiences inclusive of all. National museums were transforming '...engagements to include global art activations (international biennales), financial support of indigenous commissions, and all-inclusive programming as a means to reject traditional representations of museums and move further into interactionist discourse...'<sup>79</sup> Janet Marstine suggested that the 'post-museum' did not '...shy away from difficult issues but exposes conflict and contradiction. It asserts that the institution must show ambiguity and acknowledge multiple, ever-shifting identities. Most importantly, the post-museum is a site from which to redress social inequalities...'<sup>80</sup> As Anderson described, the museum's fundamental role becomes as a 'communicator' moving away from traditional practice where one-way communication directed the museum as truth. A 'reinvented' museum creates mutually respectful relationships in a space of the interchange of ideas.<sup>81</sup> Kreps described the new museology movement as:

Largely about giving people control over their cultural heritage and its preservation as part of how they maintain, reinforce, or construct their identity. The approach acknowledges the importance of preserving not only the resource that represent a community's past, but also vital elements of its living culture and its continuing development.<sup>82</sup>

The new museology movement, defined by Schorch as the 'reflexive museum' movement, shifted museums to spaces of dialogue and debate across contested histories, without silencing the diversity of public voices.<sup>83</sup> Kreps called for changes in contemporary museums and questioned the progress made in cultural institutions who were revisiting long-ingrained practices by stating that '...despite having moved into a postcolonial era, museums still struggle with how formerly colonised peoples are

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<sup>78</sup> Message, Kylie 2006, 'The new museum', *Theory, culture and society*, vol. 23, no. 603, The TCS Centre, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, viewed 8 October 2009, <<http://tcs.sagepub.com>>.

<sup>79</sup> Message, Kylie 2009, 'Museums in the Twenty-first century: still looking for signs of difference', *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift / Journal of Art History*, vol. 78, no.4, pp.204–221.

<sup>80</sup> Marstine 2006, op.cit. p.19

<sup>81</sup> Anderson 2004, op.cit. p.6.

<sup>82</sup> Kreps 2003, op.cit.p.180.

<sup>83</sup> Schorch 2014, op.cit. pp.191–205; Schorch, Phillip 2009, 'The reflexive museum - opening the doors to behind the scenes', *Te Ara - Journal of Museum of Aotearoa*, vol. 33, pp.28–31.

represented. This is because museums continue to employ exhibit strategies grounded in colonial legacies, specifically those associated with ethnology and ethnography...<sup>84</sup> Many museums prior to 2011, either due to a lack of governance or institutionalised practices, were not responding to the shift in museology theory to employ indigenous methodologies in research practices for exhibitions, collections and public programs. The museums would argue that this was simply due to a lack of time or funding required for consultation and engagement with indigenous communities. Robert Janes directed that it was a museum's social responsibility to begin relinquishing authority when representing indigenous collections, and that the new museums were required to acquire expertise from source communities.<sup>85</sup> Michael Crayford confirmed that the Australian National Maritime Museum had undergone the shift and that '...indigenous people will, where possible participate in making suggestions for the storage, research and display of their cultural and intellectual property (and that) the knowledge behind indigenous material in the collection is as important as the objects...'<sup>86</sup> The museum acknowledged source communities as co-curators and co-researchers. Paul Tapsell (Ngāti Whakaue, Ngāti Raukawa) confirmed that '...the key to museums successfully shifting contexts lies not simply in what they hold, but in the relationships such holdings represent to indigenous source communities, who have defied colonial expectations of dying out and continue to wrestle for kin survival...'<sup>87</sup> New museum theory and indigenous methodological approaches to research and representation led to the adoption of the 'new curatorial praxis' to be discussed in chapter 4.<sup>88</sup>

New museology acknowledged that past collecting practices excluded cultural understanding on indigenous objects, and continued a process of the colonisation of indigenous peoples. Colonisation brought with it, as Smith described, a '...complete disorder to colonised peoples, disconnecting them from their histories, their landscapes, their languages, their social relations and their own ways of thinking, feeling and interacting with the world...'<sup>89</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, museums were constructed to '...collect vanishing or endangered artefacts...'<sup>90</sup> Susan Sleeper-Smith wrote, the public museum was once a '...meeting ground for official and formal versions of the past. Because history was constructed through objects, curators created the interpretative context for each object...'<sup>91</sup> New museological

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<sup>84</sup> Silverman, Ray 2009, 'Ethnography and the cultural practices of museums: the legacy of ethnography', *Contesting knowledge: museums and indigenous perspectives*, S. Sleeper-Smith (ed.) University of Nebraska Press, Nebraska, pp.9–12.

<sup>85</sup> Janes 2007, op.cit. pp.134–146.

<sup>86</sup> Crayford, et al 2005, p.13.

<sup>87</sup> Tapsell, Paul 2003, 'Beyond the frame: an afterword.', *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader*, Routledge, London, pp.242–251.

<sup>88</sup> The new curatorial praxis, as identified by Peers et al 2003 op.cit. pp.519–537. The new curatorial praxis is discussed further in relation to Te Papa's *Whatu Kākahu: Māori cloaks* project in chapter 4.

<sup>89</sup> Smith 1999, op.cit p.28.

<sup>90</sup> Clifford, James 2010 (14 May), 'The Times of the Curator', The Task of the Curator Conferences, UC Santa Cruz, pp.1–19.

<sup>91</sup> Sleeper-Smith, Susan 2009, *Contesting knowledge: museums and indigenous perspectives*, University of Nebraska Press, Nebraska, p.2.

discourse shifts professional practice and the formation of collections to be inclusive, as well as shifting power from one entity in power to be more a co-collaboration.<sup>92</sup>

The first step in decolonisation, as described by Angela Wilson and Michael Yellow Bird, is to acknowledge the truth of the injustices in order to create transformation.<sup>93</sup> Smith asserted that history is about power, the story of how one group became powerful. Smith confirmed that ‘...coming to know the past has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonisation. To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges...’<sup>94</sup> Clifford identified the timing of decolonisation in the Pacific as beginning with change in political sovereignty in the 1970 and 1980s, but suggested that it is an unfinished process that requires further work in liberation and social justice.<sup>95</sup> Museums in 1990s–2000s were acknowledging injustices and taking action, beginning with the re-assessment of governance structures. The sector was reflecting on the legitimacy of colonialisation and collecting practices and investigating inclusive policies and procedures. Traditional museum ideology moved to ‘two-way communication’ to create a more responsive practice.<sup>96</sup> This change in practice formed a social contract between museums and communities and a shift in museological thinking from objects to what Edmund Barry Gaither called ‘...the socio-cultural practices, processes and interactions associated with [indigenous] cultural expressions...’<sup>97</sup> Schorch and Hakiwai supported that ‘...decolonisation has impacted museum professional practices as research practices have been challenged and transformed using indigenous methodologies...’<sup>98</sup>

In New Zealand, adopting Māori methodologies known as Kaupapa Māori (Māori approach/conceptual framework), is critical in the research and scholarship practices for museums. Kaupapa Māori includes epistemologies of collaboration and co-curation when representing culture.<sup>99</sup> Davidson and Tolich argue that ‘...Kaupapa Māori within research practice...dictates that Māori tikanga and processes are followed throughout the research, from inception to the dissemination of results to the ongoing

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<sup>92</sup> I engage the word ‘co-collaboration’ throughout the thesis as a means to describe equal partnership in the museum setting.

<sup>93</sup> Wilson, Angela Cavender and Yellow Bird, Michael 2005, *For indigenous eyes only: a decolonization handbook*, School of American Research, Santa Fe, p.3.

<sup>94</sup> Smith 1999, op.cit p.34.

<sup>95</sup> Clifford, James 2001, 'Indigenous Articulations', *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 13, no.2, pp.468–490.

<sup>96</sup> Anderson 2004, op.cit. p.6.

<sup>97</sup> Gaither, Edmund Barry 2004, "'Hey! That's mine": Thoughts on pluralism and American museums', *Reinventing the museum*, G. Anderson (ed.) Altamira Press, Lanham, UK, pp.110–117.

<sup>98</sup> Schorch 2014, op.cit. ; Smith 1999, op.cit.

<sup>99</sup> Kaupapa Māori principles extended from the education sector in Aotearoa New Zealand in the 1990s and began to impact the museum sector as research and a greater presence of Māori museum professionals were present in museums. As discussed in Kreps 2003, op.cit.; McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: Indigenous professionals and current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington.

relationship formed between the research and the research participants...<sup>100</sup> The engagement of Kaupapa Māori principles is a means of decolonisation. When engaged in a museum setting, the principles can be engaged as a method for directing, describing and protecting cultural knowledge and heritage. Roland Robertson described this as a 'glocalisation', a combining of global and local principles of cultural management to represent indigenous history.<sup>101</sup> The methodology followed for this thesis has aligned to Kaupapa Māori and is led by the responses from indigenous research participants.

Throughout the interviews with indigenous research participants it was clear that they wanted their histories and stories told using their own voice and in language where possible. Indigenous languages connect deeply to Country, ancestors and indigenous epistemology. As Smith identified:

Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to being back into existence a world fragmented and dying.<sup>102</sup>

Indigenous languages can reconnect fragments of the past and present to objects held in collections. Kate Sturge suggested that '...language is not simply a medium, the 'clothes' of the foreign which can be stripped off and replaced by a new code but is at the heart of human practices...'<sup>103</sup> For Māori, language is ingrained in Kaupapa Māori, tikanga (Māori customs, culture and protocols) and Māori epistemology. Smith confirmed that '...Māori language is tied to the connection between language, knowledge and culture...The language is like a cloak with clothes, envelopes, and adorns the myriad of one's thoughts...The revitalisation of Māori language has brought with it the revitalisation of Māori forms of knowledge and the debates which accompany those knowledge forms...'<sup>104</sup> Pearce identified that language and objects are both ingrained in our humanity and our human need to order the world — both language and artefacts are intertwined in our history:

As far as we can tell, language and artefact creation seem to begin at much the same moment in our history and both seem to mark the moment when creatures emerged that we are ready to recognise as man-like beings. The two faculties seem to be intimately intertwined...or even

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<sup>100</sup> Tolich, Martin 2001, *Research ethics in Aotearoa New Zealand: concepts, practice, critique*, Longman, Auckland, N.Z., p.41.

<sup>101</sup> Robertson, R, 'Globalization or Glocalization?', *Journal of International Communication*, quoted in Simpson, M, 'Charting the boundaries' in Knell et al 2007, op.cit.

<sup>102</sup> Smith 1999, op.cit. p.28.

<sup>103</sup> Sturge 2007, op.cit. p.15.

<sup>104</sup> Smith 1999, op.cit. p.188.

perhaps...dual expressions of the same characteristically human ability to order the world so that human groups can live successfully within it.<sup>105</sup>

In New Zealand, taonga Māori are objects held in collections that are considered to be ancestors who bring knowledge, culture and history to the present. Mead explained that taonga can be tapu (prohibited or sacred) and hold mana (well respected spirits). An object's kōrero (meanings explained through oral transmission), history of ownership and connection identifies the object as taonga.<sup>106</sup> The connection between kōrero and te reo Māori is strong. It is through language that people derive meaning. Kōrero is crucial for the continued understanding of the object's significance to communities. Tapsell identified that '...kōrero, can, therefore, be metaphorically compared to a cloak which shrouds the ancestral item in warmth of knowledge, which can include rituals, genealogical recitations and historical stories...'<sup>107</sup> Indigenous communities in 2010–2011 were becoming aware of the disconnection between objects and language. As a means of healing, empowerment, decolonisation and the rewriting of history, source communities were requesting that museums make a shift in professional practices to reconnect objects to Country. Henrietta Riegel identified that '...the politics of representation and voice have become a central issue for museums...'<sup>108</sup> Museums were required to find solutions to ensure inclusion of indigenous voices existed within their cultural institutions by revisiting documentation and reviewing professional museum practices.

New museology frameworks do attempt to impact positively the professional practices of museum professionals. Max Ross identified that '...there is a perceived shift in the identity of museum professionals from 'legislator' to 'interpreter' and towards a more visitor-orientated ethos...'<sup>109</sup> It is museum professionals making day-to-day decisions that transforms professional practice including policy and process. Theory and literature can however make little impact on professional practice unless museums themselves are open to make change in governance structures, re-envision professional positions, and adapt processes in response to theory. Museum professionals can respond through day-to-day decisions practices including deciding on a particular level of data enhancement to commit to, which thesauri to use for metadata or descriptions, and if indigenous methodologies for project research is to be engaged in the research design. McCarthy suggested that '...professional

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<sup>105</sup> Pearce (ed.) 1989, op.cit.

<sup>106</sup> Mead, Sidney M. 1997, *Landmarks, bridges and visions: aspects of Māori culture*, Victoria University Press, Wellington, N.Z.

<sup>107</sup> Tapsell, Paul 1997, 'The flight of Pareraututu: An investigation of *Taonga* from a tribal perspective', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. 106, no.4, pp.323–374.

<sup>108</sup> Riegel, Henrietta 1996, 'Into the heart of irony: ethnographic exhibitions and the politics of difference', *Theorizing museums: representing identity and diversity in a changing world*, S. MacDonald and G. Fyfe (eds.), Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge, Massachusetts, pp.83–104.

<sup>109</sup> Ross, Max 2004, 'Interpreting the 'New Museology'', *Museum and Society*, vol.2, no.2, pp.84–103.

practice is usually a set of working methods or ways of doing things in an industry that is officially sanctioned and formally described through codes or manuals...'<sup>110</sup> He confirmed that museum studies research and attention must be drawn to museum practice and away from display and collecting histories.<sup>111</sup> Marstine established that '...museum workers commonly naturalise their policies and procedures as professional practice, the decisions these workers make reflect underlying value systems that are encoded in institutional narratives...'<sup>112</sup> Srinivasan stated that '...despite these arguments in favour of a pluralistic approach to interpretation and presentation, the intellectual control over the informational core of the museum, its catalogue of objects, has largely remained in the hands of the museum and its staff of elite experts...'<sup>113</sup>

Ethnographies of professional practices in the museum sector have been explored previously in literature by others including Ambrose and Paine, Fopp, Macdonald, Baddley and McCarthy.<sup>114</sup> Sharon Macdonald examined museum governance and practice within *Behind the scenes at the science museum*.<sup>115</sup> Beth Charles in an exploration of the Koorie Heritage Trust stated that '...organisational structures of museums do hold the possibility of recreating social relationships through reflective and possible inclusions (and) can re-address the historical unevenness in the production of the 'other' ...'<sup>116</sup> Museum professionals through their practices hold the ability to change in line with museology and cultural theory.

To change professional practice, museum professionals must build relationships, look to co-collaboration opportunities, and advocate for greater representation of indigenous people in professional museum roles. Susan Sleeper-Smith confirms that '...although the authority of (the) museum has been contested as a result of this critique and shared practices, many tribes found that even if they had positive relationships with the non-native staff of museums, they still were in an unequal power relationship that contributed to the continued dispossession of their people...'<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: heritage professionals, indigenous collections, current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, N.Z.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Marstine 2006, op.cit. p.5.

<sup>113</sup> Srinivasan, et al 2009, 'Digital museums and diverse cultural knowledges: Moving past the traditional catalogue', *Information Society*, vol. 25, no.4, pp.265–278.

<sup>114</sup> Ambrose, Tim and Paine, Crispin 2006, *Museum basics*, Routledge, New York; Macdonald, Sharon 2002, *Behind the scenes at the Science Museum*, Berg, New York; Fopp, Michael A. 1997, *Managing Museums and Galleries*, Routledge, London; Baddeley, Claire 2013, op.cit.; McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: heritage professionals, indigenous collections, current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, N.Z.

<sup>115</sup> Macdonald 2002, op.cit.

<sup>116</sup> Charles 2006, op.cit.p.51.

<sup>117</sup> Sleeper-Smith 2009 op.cit. p.265.

Museums have assisted in the decolonisation of collections by building strong relationships with source communities to achieve what Moana Colmer described as 'holistic collection management practices'; '...approaching the care of taonga Māori holistically is not merely a nod to 'cultural sensitivity', but a practice that can serve to improve collection management practices, for the benefit of both Māori and museum...'<sup>118</sup> Improvements in collections management practice is in response to what Trudy Nicks confirmed as '...a growing appreciation of the necessity to understand objects in terms of the human interactions – the stories, songs and activities – that give them meaning...'<sup>119</sup> The examination of case studies in this thesis confirms whether museums in Australia and New Zealand were responding to the argument by First Nations people that indigenous languages and a greater level of understanding on cultural values should be included in collections management and documentation. As Deborah Eldridge stated:

Aboriginal people have their own laws. They have their own sources for determining the appropriateness of display of artefacts, and they have their own sources for determining the legitimacy of transfers... As museums reconsider their roles as custodians of cultural property, it is important for them to recognize that the aboriginal people have their own laws and traditions that determine the legitimacy of acquisition.<sup>120</sup>

For indigenous determination on the legitimacy of past acquisitions and current documentation held in collections, it requires co-collaboration on research development and data enhancement. Clifford described a project in Portland Art Museum where source communities accessed and engaged with collection items that involved revising definitions and documenting intangible cultural heritage. He stated that '...it was clear that from the elders' viewpoint the collected objects were not primarily 'art'. They were referred to as 'records', 'history', and 'law', inseparable from myths and stories expressing ongoing moral lessons with current political force...'<sup>121</sup> Edwards confirmed that '...when museum objects are treated as contact points, the sense becomes historical links between histories and representation, thereby opening onto unexpected discourses and domination, agency and material value that might otherwise be silenced or excluded by critiques of museums as markets...'<sup>122</sup> Clifford also acknowledged that;

...although one cannot separate a history of loss, displacement, and reconnection from the meanings these masks, drums, and garments hold for clan elders, it would be wrong to reduce

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<sup>118</sup> Colmer 2010, op.cit.

<sup>119</sup> Nicks, Trudy 2003, 'Museums and contact work: Introduction', Peers et al 2003 op.cit. pp.19–27.

<sup>120</sup> Eldridge, Deborah 1996, 'Aboriginal people need to control their own culture', *Curatorship: indigenous perspectives in post-colonial societies: proceedings*, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Commonwealth Association of Museums and the University of Victoria, Ottawa, p.31.

<sup>121</sup> Clifford 1997, op.cit. p.191.

<sup>122</sup> Edwards 2006, op.cit. p.255.



the objects' traditional meanings, the deep feelings they still evoke, to 'contact' responses. If a mask recalls a grandfather or an old story, this museum includes feelings of loss and struggles, but it must also include access to powerful continuity and connection.<sup>123</sup>

Collaboration and what Kreps terms 'co-curation' is beneficial for both museums and source communities.<sup>124</sup> A commitment by museum professionals to identify source communities as the experts on the handling, interpretation, care and management of objects deepens understanding of collections overall. Museums are required to commit to developing collaborative, and cross-cultural relationships with the community. Kreps agrees that a cross-cultural approach to cultural heritage management entails a continuing social process of relationship building, research and curatorial work:

Curation is no longer just about taking care of objects. It is also about cultivating harmonious relationships directed toward redressing historical wrongs and showing respect for diverse worldviews and belief systems as they pertain to people's perceptions of, and relations to, objects.<sup>125</sup>

Cross-cultural curation involves sharing authority, power and being open to discuss contested histories. Clifford stated that '...neither community 'experience' nor curatorial 'authority' has an automatic right to the contextualisation of collections or to the narration of contact histories. The solution is inevitably contingent and political; a matter of mobilised power, or negotiation, of representation constrained by specific audiences...'<sup>126</sup> Jenny Harper asked of the museum sector:

Are we prepared to lay open our collections, to genuinely see them as a resource, to use them and let others use them in a variety of ways, to experiment with one framework of assumptions or methodological perspectives and then another, at times combining elements of several approaches?<sup>127</sup>

As guardians of cultural materials, museums have a social responsibility to ensure that professional practice respects indigenous rights to re-interpret representation of culture. There are many issues that arise as staff responsible for the management of collections attempt to re-address the needs of source communities, including conflict resolution, contested stories, identification of community

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<sup>123</sup> Clifford 1997, op.cit. p.193.

<sup>124</sup> Kreps, Christine 2009, 'Indigenous curation, museums and intangible cultural heritage', *Intangible heritage*, L. Smith and N. Akagawa (eds.), Routledge, Oxon, UK, pp.193–208.

<sup>125</sup> Kreps, Christine 2007, 'Non-western models of museums and Curation in cross-cultural perspective', *A companion to museum studies*, S. MacDonald (ed.) Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, pp.457–472.

<sup>126</sup> Clifford, James 1997, 'Museums as contact zones', *Routes; travel and translation in the late twentieth century*, J. Clifford (ed.) Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, pp.188–209.

<sup>127</sup> Harper, Jenny 1989, 'Collection categories: necessities or foibles?', *AGMANZ News: Art Galleries and Museums Association of New Zealand*, vol. 20, no.3, pp.12–13.

representatives and the rights to represent, authenticity, provenance and further ‘...debates relating to culture, race, gender and society...’<sup>128</sup> To deepen relationships between museums and source communities, indigenous communities require greater access to materials and objects.

Parallel to literature on the need for transformation in new museums, technological advances were increasing the requirement for museums to undertake research to complete gaps in the information held on cultural collections. Advances in technology contributed to a need for increased engagement in research, public programs and exhibitions. As museums underwent the digital repatriation of objects, changes were occurring in the collective understanding of indigenous significance and the importance of the inclusion of documentation for both the tangible and intangible elements of an object’s social history.<sup>129</sup> Writers including Harwood, Cameron, Srinivasan, Boats and Philips have addressed issues with digital collection databases in museums that standardise information neglecting ‘...pluralities of meaning especially for indigenous collections...’<sup>130</sup> Trudy Nicks addressed the engagement of indigenous classifications in collections management systems and confirmed a need to:

...accommodate indigenous access and standards of care (that has) resulted in improved standards of documentation and record keeping for museum collections. With computer databases it is possible to integrate new information and terminology, and even to recognise collections records according to indigenous categories, with minimum expense and effort...ideally, collections records and organisation would be coherent in terms of indigenous terminology and categories, but this remains a future goal for many.<sup>131</sup>

I discuss the responsibility of museums to address record keeping and collections catalogue in consultation with indigenous advisors further in Chapter 5: Sharing Culture: Strategies for improved practice.

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<sup>128</sup> Kaplan, Flora S. (ed.) 1994, *Museums and the making of "ourselves": the role of objects in national identity*, Leicester University Press, London.

<sup>129</sup> Harwood, Michelle 2018, 'Going digital in the GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives and museums) sector: ICT innovations and collaborations for taonga Māori in Aotearoa', *Te Whare Hangarau Māori: Language, Culture and Technology*, H. Whaanga and T. T. Keegan (eds.), Waikato University, Hamilton, pp.149–164; Schorch 2014, op.cit.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid; Cameron, F. 2005, 'Museum collections, documentation and shifting knowledge paradigms', *Collections - A Journal for Museum and Archive Professionals*, vol. 3, no.3, pp.243–259; Srinivasan et al 2009, op.cit.; Srinivasan et al 2009, 'Digital museums and diverse cultural knowledges: Moving past the traditional catalogue', *Information Society*, vol. 25, no.4, pp.265–278.; Phillips, Ruth 2011, *Museum pieces: The Indigenization of Canadian museums*, McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal, Canada.

<sup>131</sup> Nicks 2003, op.cit.p.19.

This thesis employs comparative museology as defined by Kreps namely ‘...the systematic study of the similarities and differences amongst museological forms and behaviour cross-culturally...’<sup>132</sup> Comparative museology, an outcome of post-colonial critique of museums and practice, is intended to ‘liberate’ culture from Eurocentric museology, and represents a broad range of perspectives and bodies of knowledge that have been historically overlooked.<sup>133</sup> Laura Peers and Alison Brown argue that museum practice must instil new curatorial praxis to align to contemporary theory and literature and the rights of communities. Within the ‘new museum’ and ‘post museum’:

...actions taken within the museum storeroom need to happen within the context of relationships in the present with the community: the consultation, the human interaction, the willingness to learn, and the investment of time, effort, and money are far more important, and genuinely respectful, than gestures learned from books. These relationships are the most important manifestation of the new curatorial praxis, but the process of establishing them has not received much attention in the critical literature.<sup>134</sup>

Indigenous writers have demanded changes to the relationships between museums and indigenous communities. The ‘new curatorial praxis’, ‘new museum’, ‘reflexive museum’ and ‘post-museum’ critical theory has reformed contemporary museum practice.<sup>135</sup> It has encouraged two-way partnerships to be formed between museums and source communities and centres community service as a priority over service to the state.<sup>136</sup> This shift from past museum practice transforms relationships and empowers community members as the experts on cultural knowledge; promoting a more equitable system of cultural heritage management.

Although as this literature review shows there has been a gap in writing on the connection between indigenous language documentation in collection management systems, there is well documented literature on the agency of objects, anthropological collecting practices and indigenous representation. Indigenous museology as described by many authors (Charles Royal, Phillip Schorch, Arapata Hakiwai, Laura Peers, Alison Brown, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Conal McCarthy, Sidney Mead and other writers) called for bicultural and bilingual governance models; and for shifts in policy, and everyday professional practices in research development, co-curation and collections management.<sup>137</sup> As

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<sup>132</sup> Kreps 2007, op.cit.p.458.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Peers et al 2003 op.cit. pp.519–537.

<sup>135</sup> Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean 2000, *Museums and the interpretation of visual culture*, Routledge, New York.

<sup>136</sup> Halpin, Marjorie M 2007, 'Play it again, Sam': reflections on a new museology', *Museums and their communities*, pp.47–52.

<sup>137</sup> National Services Te Paerangi 2007, *Mātauranga Māori and museum practice: a discussion*, report prepared by Royal, Te Ahukaramū Charles, N. Services, Wellington, N.Z, pp.1–43; Schorch 2014, op.cit.; Peers et al 2003 op.cit.; Smith 1999,

museums have redefined their role as custodians of cultural property, as spaces where ongoing relations, exchanges and reciprocity exist, Mary Louise Pratt reminded us that ‘...contact zones are constituted through reciprocal movements of people, not just of objects, messages, commodities and money...’<sup>138</sup> Stanton suggested that museums had decisions to make on whose story should be told with the object, but this could only be done in consultation with source communities and by placing indigenous people as the experts in documentation.<sup>139</sup>

New museological discourse observed in the literature prior to 2010 challenged museums to embrace social inclusion and seek collaboration in governance, research and representation to accommodate all voices within museums. This literature review has confirmed that in museum studies and cultural theory, prior to my fieldwork completed on Australian and New Zealand museums, museums were being directed to establish indigenous rights as central to the management of ethnographic collections. The literature supported the need for a close examination of whether museums were implementing changes in practices to respond to the needs of indigenous communities, and how this was being done.

## **Methodological approach**

This study acknowledges diversity within indigenous communities. Throughout all aspects of the research development, I have been led by indigenous community voices and tried to be empathetic and neutral in my approach to concepts and findings.<sup>140</sup> The research aimed to follow a collaborative indigenous methodology paradigm where respect, honesty and face-to-face discussions built a rapport and trust between the researcher and the interviewee.<sup>141</sup> The thesis includes an acknowledgement of the interconnected relationships between people, culture, language and objects, and acknowledges difference between Koori and Māori language group laws, kinship and contemporary lives.

In 2010–2011, the Melbourne Museum’s Indigenous Cultures division existed within the large State institution and held an extensive ethnographic collection. The South-eastern Australian Ethnographic

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op.cit.; McCarthy, Conal 2007, *Exhibiting Māori: a history of colonial cultures of display*, Berg Publishers, Oxford, U.K; McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: heritage professionals, indigenous collections, current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, N.Z; Mead 1997, op.cit.

<sup>138</sup> Pratt as discussed in Clifford 1997, op.cit. p.195.

<sup>139</sup> Contested stories and solutions on how objects can be reconnected to communities when little provenance and language is documented is addressed further in chapter 5.

<sup>140</sup> Ritchie, Jane and Lewis, Jane 2003, *Qualitative research practice: a guide for social science students and researchers*, SAGE, London.

<sup>141</sup> Wilson, Shawn 2008, *Research is ceremony: indigenous research methods*, Fernwood Publishing, Black Point, Nova Scotia.

Collections comprised 3,796 cultural items and represented Victoria, the Murray River, New South Wales and Tasmania.<sup>142</sup> The museum also held within a separate department an extensive collection of manuscripts, audio visual and photographic collections related to Victorian indigenous communities.

The Koorie Heritage Trust (the Trust) renowned as a keeping place for Victorian language groups, held 2,700 Victorian Aboriginal cultural materials in the form of objects, photographs, oral histories and the library collections. The Trust illustrated an indigenous-led model for cultural collection management and professional museum practices.<sup>143</sup>

Tairāwhiti Museum, based in Gisborne, New Zealand incorporated a nationally significant collection of 1,700 taonga and cultural materials, representing iwi and hapū from the Tairāwhiti region.<sup>144</sup> The governance structure of the museum ensured that Kaumātua (Elders) were consulted in decisions regarding the taonga Māori collections. Similar to Te Papa, the Tairāwhiti Museum was renowned for its bicultural management practices.<sup>145</sup>

The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa) is an internationally renowned leader in bicultural management.<sup>146</sup> Mātauranga Māori – Māori knowledge systems were engaged as guiding principles in the management of the collections within the institution.<sup>147</sup> Over 30,000 taonga were registered in 2010 representing diverse iwi and hapū throughout Aotearoa.<sup>148</sup>

Four-week placements within each museum allowed ethnographic, qualitative research (semi-structured interviews, participant observation and participation) and quantitative research (analysis of museum governance reports and policies) to be completed. Qualitative interviews with Museum Directors, Heads of Collections, Collection Managers, Curators, and Education Officers explored the

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<sup>142</sup> Smith, Antoinette et al n.d., 'Indigenous Cultures Collection Development Plan: Southeastern Australian Ethnographic', unpublished, internal document, Melbourne, p.1–14.

<sup>143</sup> Koorie Heritage Trust 2010, 'Collections policies and procedures manual', unpublished, internal document, p.1–31.

<sup>144</sup> Wylie, Jody (Kaitiaki Māori, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, 21 April, 2011.

<sup>145</sup> Colmer 2010, op.cit.; McCarthy, Conal 1992, 'A theoretical tour of the museum', *Sites: A journal for South Pacific Cultural Studies*, no.25, pp.81–117. The term 'bicultural' has been critiqued by First Peoples scholars and museum management and this is addressed further in McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: heritage professionals, indigenous collections, current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, N.Z.

<sup>146</sup> Goldsmith, Michael 2003, 'Our place in New Zealand culture: How the Museum of New Zealand constructs biculturalism', *Ethnologies comparées*, no.6, pp.1–14.

<sup>147</sup> Mātauranga Māori is traditional Māori knowledge and ways of working brought to Aotearoa New Zealand by traditional ancestors.

<sup>148</sup> Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa 2010, *Taonga Māori Collection*, Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand, Wellington, viewed 11 June 2010, <<http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/theme.aspx?irn=1702>>.

commitment to indigenous languages, and historic and contemporary documentation. This provided understanding on collections management and consultation practices in place. Semi-structured interviews with indigenous community members and iwi representatives discussed the significance of indigenous languages, their responses to research questions, local protocols for language documentation and the benefits to communities. Linguists and community language program coordinators were approached to discuss current language education, revitalisation and strengthening projects in place in both countries. A total of 64 research participants were interviewed for the study. The participants were recommended by appropriate organisations and individuals including museum professionals, language commissions, iwi management corporations and academics.<sup>149</sup>

Observations of professional practices were completed within the museums. At each museum, quantitative research was conducted through a review and analysis of museum corporate plans, annual reports, collection policies, database and hardcopy records to identify current language documentation, professional practice and policy connections. Both quantitative and qualitative materials were coded and analysed using QSR NVivo and this generated analysis across text, audio, video and documents, leading to the thesis structure.<sup>150</sup> A practical contribution to each institution was achieved through projects while on site including the development of draft language policy, significance assessment, data enhancement in catalogues and a collection review.

This thesis aligns with the Māori methodological approach of Kaupapa Māori that determines the relationships between the universe and the place of people within it. Within Kaupapa Māori, there is information on language and culture that is restricted from myself as a Pākehā.<sup>151</sup> Māori philosophy and principles have directed that tikanga be followed throughout the research process to the best of my abilities from inception to the final production of the thesis. Tikanga includes an understanding of the collective need, consultation processes, accountability and a bicultural approach to the development of the project.<sup>152</sup> The forming of relationships, *kanohi kitea* (face-to-face communications), respect and an understanding of one's own culture was essential as I conducted research in indigenous communities. I successfully completed a Human Research Ethics Committee

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<sup>149</sup> A complete list of research participants is included in appendix 1.

<sup>150</sup> The complete body of interviews recorded on both film and audio for Victorian museums will be offered to the Koorie Heritage Trust's Oral History Collections, and interviews from Aotearoa New Zealand will be offered to Te Papa following the thesis submission. QSR International created NVivo, data analysis software that allows for the collation and analysis of text, audio, videos and documents. More information can be found at: <<https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-qualitative-data-analysis-software/home/>>, accessed 10 January 2020.

<sup>151</sup> Tolich 2001, op.cit.

<sup>152</sup> Jahnke, Huia and Taiapa, Julia 2007, 'Māori research', *Social science research in New Zealand*, C. Davidson and M. Tolich (eds.), Pearson Education, Wellington, pp.39–50.

application at the Australian National University to address methodology and structure for consultations. My children's grandparents are Kaumātua (respected Elders) within Ngāti Kahungunu. Their great strength and guidance on how to follow a Māori-led methodology early in the research was adhered to.<sup>153</sup>

Similarly, a respect and understanding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander methodological paradigms and ways of working was also employed within the research. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander paradigm includes honest and clear communication with participants on the project aims and objectives; an understanding on time required to discuss issues with community appointed representatives; the importance of face-to-face discussions; the need to form trust with participants, and an understanding that to develop research that benefits participants, Koori must be involved. I have respectfully followed indigenous methodological paradigms to the best of my ability as a non-indigenous Australian and Pākehā.

## Thesis Outline

The thesis begins with an introduction to indigenous languages revival and strengthening in Victoria, Australia and Aotearoa. Chapter 1: Revitalisation and strengthening of indigenous languages establishes understanding of the differences in indigenous languages in Victoria and Aotearoa and lays the foundations to observe and understand the connection for language to museum practice. I discuss the reasons why Koori and Māori languages were separated from museum collections management systems. Led by the voice of Koori and Māori, this chapter describes reactions to the displacement of language and addresses the significance of language revitalisation programs.

In 2010–2011, indigenous communities were requesting that language be re-connected to objects held in museums to ensure cultural knowledge, context and relationships were recorded correctly in historical records. The Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group (ESILWG) was formed by indigenous members and language specialists in Australia.<sup>154</sup> This was a critical time when language documentation in collecting institutions was escalating as a priority for source communities. This chapter identifies historical and contemporary language practices to answer how collaboration between museum collections and indigenous communities leads to improved collections management practices on the one hand, and language rejuvenation on the other.

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<sup>153</sup> Māori-led methodology means research by, with and for Māori.

<sup>154</sup> Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group 2011, *Indigenous languages collections - issues and actions paper. Framework for National Indigenous Languages Collections Policy*, report prepared by Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group, ESILWG, Sydney, pp.1–17.

In Chapter 2: Australia Museums and Cultural Collections, I focus on a snapshot in time during 2010–2011, a turning point for not only indigenous language awareness but a period when Victorian museums were being encouraged to look closer at professional practices, to upgrade to a national accreditation program, to adapt to new technologies and implement collection management practices that captured more efficient research data on collections. Using direct examples from Victoria’s most prominent indigenous collections held at the Koorie Heritage Trust and Melbourne Museum, I discuss a disconnect between front of house exhibition research and back of house documentation for cultural collections. I observed a misalignment between Curators’ research development for exhibitions, and collection records that directly affected the state and accuracy of information in collections management systems. A close examination of professional practices, consultation practices and collection management systems implemented through two significant projects, the Trust’s *Meerreeng-An: Here is my Country* publication and exhibition and Melbourne Museum’s Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre redevelopment of the *First Peoples Gallery*, are presented as examples of collaborative and best-practice approaches for Australian museums.<sup>155</sup>

In Chapter 3: Māori collections in Gisborne – Tairāwhiti Museum, I explore through an ethnography of museum practices within the Tairāwhiti Museum, a regional case study for bicultural practices. Tairāwhiti Museum held significant indigenous collections managed under the guidance of a Kaitiaki Māori in line with Kaupapa Māori. This chapter outlines the governance structures for Tairāwhiti Museum, highlighting the policies and practices used to manage the Taonga Māori collections. I identify examples of co-curation and Tairāwhiti Museum staff’s abilities in language development through the *Iwi Karioi Hakanation*, *Ngā Tamatoa* and *Watersheds* exhibitions. The development of a language policy for the institution is discussed as a tool to change professional practices within the institution.

Chapter 4: Mātauranga Māori within Te Papa addresses an ethnography of the museum practices at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. I explore whether the collections management practices of the Mātauranga Māori team, and te reo Māori in records led to improved understanding of the collections. I investigate a deeper understanding of the impact of te reo in new language-led collections management practices, including the development of thesauri. *Whatu Kākahu – Māori cloaks* project is discussed as a direct example of how professional practices have contributed to

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<sup>155</sup> Keeler, Chris and Couzens, Vicki (eds.) 2010, *Meerreeng-an Here is my country: the story of Aboriginal Victoria told through art*, Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne. Melbourne Museum’s *First Peoples Gallery* opened in Bunjilaka in 2013.



indigenous language revival and therefore a greater understanding of historic and contemporary indigenous life.

In Chapter 5: Sharing culture: Strategies for improved museum practice, I examine an indigenous-led collections documentation project that led to the successful co-curated exhibition, the Macleay Museum's *Makarr-Garma: Aboriginal collections from a Yolŋu perspective* exhibition presented in 2009–2010. I explore approaches for indigenous language documentation within collection management systems, local protocols and collaboration principles for the Australian museum sector that emerged throughout the research. I contribute new understanding on language documentation that completes the gap between indigenous language rejuvenation and the museum sector.

Finally, in Chapter 6 I provide action research outcomes and outline contributions provided to both the Tairāwhiti Museum and the Koorie Heritage Trust during fieldwork in 2010–2011. The contributions include examples of a language policy and a significance report format for debate and adaption by the museum sector. I conclude with recommendations for the Australian museum sector to support contemporary museum practice and industry.

In Chapters 1–5 of the thesis, I argue that museums can explore a deeper understanding of terminology, vocabulary and stories connected to indigenous collections once a commitment to language is instilled at all levels of the institution. The chapters dedicated to the case studies investigate whether and how indigenous languages were documented in collection management systems, and address community and professional sector responses to the thesis arguments. Message supports the investigation of critical responses to museums:

...to stay alert to questions about whether twenty-first-century museums are actively exploring new ways of addressing the needs of divergent postcolonial and multicultural societies. It is crucial to ask whether these museums are making a positive contribution to the formation and continuance of civil society by acting beyond the site of spectacle and enchantment, and perhaps even outside the white cube.<sup>156</sup>

Finally, I conclude the thesis with a summary of the arguments, implications and an overview of the changes to the sector since the critical time 2010–2011 as museums and indigenous communities were discussing the need for language documentation in collections. The Conclusion provides context on

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<sup>156</sup> Message, Kylie 2009, 'Museums in the Twenty-first century: still looking for signs of difference', *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift / Journal of Art History*, vol. 78, no.4, pp.204–221.

why indigenous languages within collections management systems is still relevant to implement in Australian museums.

To encourage understanding of indigenous language representation in collection management systems in Australia and New Zealand, it is important to begin with an overview on indigenous language placement, revitalisation and strengthening in 2010–2011. The following Chapter 1: Revitalisation and strengthening of indigenous languages, provides an overview of language loss, significance and developments for both Koori and Māori communities. The chapter explores why indigenous languages were separated from museum-held cultural materials in both countries and presents language documentation as a means of decolonisation and empowerment for indigenous communities.

## Chapter 1: Revitalisation and strengthening of indigenous languages

Language belongs to people –it’s them–it’s a part of them.<sup>1</sup>

John ‘Sandy’ Atkinson, a Bangerang Elder (1932–2019) believed that learning from the past through oral histories, documentation and co-collaboration would improve our human experience.<sup>2</sup> He cared deeply about sharing an understanding of Aboriginal culture. His passion for documenting personal histories from Aboriginal communities throughout the state of Victoria left a unique legacy in the Oral History collections located within the Koorie Heritage Trust, and the digital collections held at the Victorian Aboriginal Corporations of Languages (VACL). As a Board member for VACL he dedicated much of his life to language awareness and continuance.<sup>3</sup> We spoke in detail about Koori languages and collections documentation in 2010. I dedicate this chapter to Uncle Sandy and pay my respects to his legacy and spirit.



**Figure 6** Uncle John ‘Sandy’ Atkinson, Victorian Aboriginal Corporation of Languages (photograph) Karina Lamb, October 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> Atkinson, John Sandy (Bangerang Elder, Board Member VACL), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 15 October, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> A tribute to Uncle John ‘Sandy’ Atkinson (1932- 2015) is held on the VACL website at Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages 2016, Vale Uncle Sandy, VACL, viewed 2 May 2019, <<https://vaclang.org.au/home/vale-john-uncle-sandy-atkinson.html>>.

<sup>3</sup> Uncle Sandy was born on Cummergunja Mission Station reserve on the Murray River in New South Wales. More information on the history of Cummergunja is included at Patten, John 2016, *Cummergunja, Koori History – Aboriginal History of South Eastern Australia*, Melbourne, Victoria, viewed 25 June, 2017, <<http://koorihistory.com/cummergunja/>>.

In Australia and Aotearoa in 2010–2011, indigenous languages continued to decline with languages not spoken in informal settings, workplaces and in the broader community.<sup>4</sup> The historic displacement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people following colonisation resulted in 250 indigenous languages throughout Australia in different stages of revitalisation and strengthening. Language understanding within language groups across Victoria was diverse. In Aotearoa, although there were significant efforts to revitalise te reo Māori since the 1960s, language use in informal settings continued to decline.<sup>5</sup> The loss of language has resulted in pain for many indigenous community members who carry memories from society's rejection of their languages and enforced punishments for language use. As Uncle Sandy described:

Language was probably the first thing that caused the friction (on the missions)...if they had come from different areas there were a lot of words in each one's language that might have been offensive...that would throw a lot of caution into the group when they first come...The old Mission Manager wouldn't want to hear them talking in language either...it might only be their own family who they could talk to...everyone else on that mission, they wouldn't understand them.<sup>6</sup>

The removal of objects from source communities disconnected cultural knowledge, traditions and practice. Likewise, indigenous languages hold cultural knowledge as evident in grammar. The connection to cultural knowledge and epistemology is lost once translated or described in English. In the past, museum professionals assumed that language documentation was an impossibility due to diversity in language groups and levels of language use. In 2010–2011, language revitalisation programs in Victoria and across Aotearoa gave hope to a change in professional museum practices and indigenous communities were demanding increased access to collections to assist with language revitalisation programs.

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<sup>4</sup> New Zealand Government 2020, Te Wiki o te Reo Māori - Māori Language Week: History of the Māori language, viewed 25 May 2020, <<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/maori-language-week/history-of-the-maori-language>>; Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages 2020, VACL - Home, VACL, Melbourne, viewed 10 April 2020, <<https://www.vaclang.org.au/>>.

<sup>5</sup> Since the 1960s, there have been active government supported programs in place to encourage the learning of te reo Māori for both children and adults including Kōhanga Reo (Kindergarten in Māori), Te Ataarangi (adults language schools) and Māori Language commission initiatives such as websites and digital media. More information is included in New Zealand Government 2020, Te Wiki o te Reo Māori - Māori Language Week: History of the Māori language, viewed 25 May 2020, <<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/maori-language-week/history-of-the-maori-language>>; Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust 2020, Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust, viewed 25 May 2020, <<https://www.kohanga.ac.nz/>>; Te Ataarangi 2020, Welcome, Te Ataarangi, Wellington, viewed 25 May 2020, <<http://teataarangi.org.nz/>>.

<sup>6</sup>Atkinson, John Sandy (Bangerang Elder, Board Member VACL), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 15 October, 2010.

I do not describe in detail in this chapter Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or Māori social, political and language history since colonisation, that includes genocide, forced relocation and language attrition as that is well documented elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, I do not focus on linguistics or the structure of terminology and languages. Instead, I focus on responses from indigenous research participants who address language significance and strengthening and identify the connection between objects and indigenous languages. I acknowledge the diversity between languages and language groups and that there are constraints, sensitivities, pain and discomfort when speaking about language loss.

In this chapter, I address the state of indigenous language revival and strengthening between 2010–2011 as a turning point in both countries when indigenous communities were becoming increasingly aware of the need for collecting institutions to contribute to language revival, to ensure the survival of indigenous languages. In the Australian museums and indigenous language sectors, communities were confronting indigenous languages histories and demanding collecting institutions be active participants in language revival and strengthening. This period saw the formation of the Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group (ESILWG) by indigenous members and language specialists. The Working Group presented the 'Indigenous Languages Collections Issues and Actions Paper' to the Australian Government in 2011, identifying a need for collecting institutions to open access to collections, complete auditing in collections for language and develop a national framework for ongoing language management in collections as a means to assist with language revitalisation throughout the country.<sup>8</sup> In Aotearoa, iwi were developing language policies and guidelines and advising government and the wider community on indigenous-led methods for language revival and strengthening with a focus on the use of language within informal settings. The Māori Language Commission, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori addressed the continued decline of language use in community. Awareness was increasing on the need for collaborations with libraries, museums, collecting institutions and iwi organisations to gain access to greater language corpus and language

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<sup>7</sup> McBryde, Isabel 1984, 'Exchange in Southeastern Australia: an ethnographical perspective in Aboriginal History', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 8, pp.132–153; State Library of Victoria 2017, *Koori Victoria*, Creative Victoria, viewed 16 July 2017, <<https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/search-discover/explore-collections-theme/koori-victoria>>; Victoria, State Government of 2011, *Aboriginal Language Victoria*, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Melbourne, viewed 14 June 2011, <<http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/alcv/references.htm>>; Bruce Pascoe 2018, *Dark Emu: Aboriginal Australia and the Birth of Agriculture*, Magabala Books, Sydney; McCarthy, Conal 2007, *Exhibiting Māori: a history of colonial cultures of display*, Berg Publishers, Oxford, U.K; New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2006, *Māori peoples of New Zealand: Ngā iwi o Aotearoa*, David Bateman and Ministry for Culture & Heritage, Wellington; Veracini, Lorenzo and Muckle, Adrian 2002, 'Reflections of Indigenous history inside the National Museums of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand and outside of New Caledonia's Centre Culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou', *Electronic Journal of Australian and New Zealand History*, James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville, p.72.

<sup>8</sup> Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group 2011, *Indigenous languages collections - issues and actions paper. Framework for National Indigenous Languages Collections Policy*, report prepared by Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group, ESILWG, Sydney, pp.1–17.

attention. This chapter provides background and context on language revitalisation so as to explore how collaborations between museum professionals and indigenous communities can lead to improved collections management practices on the one hand, and language rejuvenation on the other.

In 'Language documentation and community needs' I identify through the voice of research participants the rise of awareness that was created by indigenous communities on the importance of museums and collecting institutions to be active participants in language revival. I identify that the historic displacement of Koori and Māori communities has led to feelings of loss and shame over language. Organisations such as VACL in Australia and the Māori Language Commission in Aotearoa were assisting in the strengthening of communities through State and Federal-led initiatives, training and funding. I outline the 'Issues and Actions Paper' prepared by the Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group for the Australian Government as the example of a turning point in the connection between indigenous languages and collections in Australia. This section frames the importance of indigenous control and management of languages, and indigenous representation in collections management to ensure indigenous voice is imbedded within collecting institutions.

The 'Victoria Language Sector' highlights language revival and the differences between Koori languages to other indigenous languages observed in 2010 due to the status of revitalisation and studies in revitalisation languages that led to the development of a new language typology. A loss of cultural heritage is evident as indigenous languages go silent around the world.<sup>9</sup> In Victoria, 38 Koori languages were in a varied state of repair. I address specifics connected to revival languages, which are different to languages that hold intergenerational speakers. I discuss methods engaged by language specialists that created change to languages and the challenges that arise when translating from Koori to English. Revival languages require trained language professionals making informed decisions on language word selection and development. To discover one word can begin a 'spiral' to a complete body of language knowledge for language groups. The revival of Koori languages was increasing respect and understanding of cultural knowledge and practices during 2010–2011.

Within the 'Aotearoa Language Sector' the importance of intergenerational use and the formation of the written language for te reo Māori is emphasised. I identify iwi-led language strategies as an example of the empowerment of Māori communities and their intent to increase the use of language in informal situations. I address the Māori Language Commission's aim to return language to social

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<sup>9</sup>Canadian Museum of Civilization 1994, 'Curatorship: indigenous perspectives in post-colonial societies', *Mercury series*, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Commonwealth Association of Museums and the University of Victoria, Ottawa; Sissons, Jeffrey 2005, *First peoples: indigenous cultures and their futures*, Reaktion Books, London.

intergenerational use and identify the differences between language management in Aotearoa and Australia. Finally, I deliberate the impacts of translation and language documentation in museums in response to indigenous community requests for a greater connection to cultural materials.

Indigenous communities have the right to document their cultural materials in a language of their choosing. The United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples supports ‘...the right of indigenous peoples to maintain their languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures ...’<sup>17</sup> The United Nations Declaration on Cultural Diversity states that ‘...each individual must acknowledge not only otherness in all its forms but also the plurality of his or her identity, within societies that are themselves plural. Only in this way can cultural diversity be preserved as an adaptive process and as a capacity for expression, creation and innovation...’<sup>10</sup> Stephen May confirmed that the continuance of language is in fact a human rights issue that cannot be separated from larger struggles of democracy, social justice and self-determination.<sup>11</sup> As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, the engagement of language use in collections management systems is a method of decolonisation and incorporates self-determination and the needs of indigenous people to tell their stories, and represent their cultural materials using their voice.

## **Language documentation and community needs**

Ingrained in indigenous language is cultural knowledge, protocols and history. Indigenous peoples have expressed deep satisfaction in speaking language as a means of honouring ancestors and culture. The connection between language to Country is clear. N’Arweet Carolyn Briggs, respected Boon Wurrung Elder recalled a moment during the Long Walk in Melbourne that language was used to connect to Country to calm both the weather and people.<sup>12</sup> For Aunty Carolyn, speaking language on Country was a direct link to ancestors, to nature and the environment; a powerful tool in which to call on when assistance was required.

Likewise, Writer Te Reo Māori within Te Papa, Paora Tibble (Ngāti Porou, Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Raukawa, Te Whānau-a-Apanui) expressed that language was a direct connection to ancestors ‘...te reo means communicating in a way that’s Māori. It’s a waka. It’s a vehicle. It’s a canoe – where I carry my thoughts

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<sup>10</sup> United Nations 2001, *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, Adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris, viewed 25 November 2019, <<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CulturalDiversity.aspx>>.

<sup>11</sup> May, Stephen 2013, *Language and minority rights: ethnicity, nationalism and the politics of language*, Routledge, London.

<sup>12</sup> Briggs, Caroline (Boon Wurrung Elder, Board Member VACL), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 28 October, 2010.

and my ideas. And in a way that's important to me because that's the way my tīpuna spoke...'<sup>13</sup> Eades stated that language '...is an innate part of culture. There are things tied up with language, how you express yourself, the way words have different meanings that aren't always translatable to English... It's not to say that if you can't speak your language you lose your culture. I don't believe that at all, but I do see it as an important part...'<sup>14</sup> Vicki Couzens (Gunditjmarra, Keeray-Woorroong) leading artist and Victoria language specialist described language as being at the core of identity; '...it's central to everything. It's the core, the centre, the essence, the spirit, all of that because it embodies your cultural knowledge and your family and your kinship and Country and everything. So, it's identity...'<sup>15</sup> Kimberly Moulton (Yorta Yorta) Project Officer for Bunjilaka Aboriginal Culture Centre, confirmed that hearing language connected her to cultural knowledge; '...it makes me think about my ancestors and how they used it, so it's important to me; connection and being proud...'<sup>16</sup> CEO of VACL Paul Paton (Gunnai, Monaro) shared that:

Language is who you are. It is who your family is. It's where you come from. It's what your stories are and the history of your culture. It can teach you about the land. It can teach you about the seasons – how to hunt and fish and eat. The law that you live your life by really. Aboriginal culture is wrapped up in language. They're inseparable. To me, in a nutshell, it tells me where I come from and who I am. And where home is basically, which is really important.<sup>17</sup>

Revitalisation and the strengthening of languages has led to the recovery of songs, stories and identity. Uncle Sandy reminded us that '...language is the first thing in our culture that can become lost. We should not let it happen.'<sup>18</sup>

The loss of indigenous languages can provoke intergenerational pain and grief in indigenous communities. As Brook Joy a Boandik descendant described '.... where traditional languages have been

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<sup>13</sup> Tibble, Paora (Writer te reo Māori, Te Papa Tongarewa National Museum of New Zealand), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audi-visual recording, Wellington, New Zealand, 17 February, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Eades, Jason, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 23 November, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Couzens, Vicki, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 16 November, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Moulton, Kimberely (Project Officer, Bunjilaka Redevelopment, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 7 January, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Paton, Paul (Program Manager, VACL), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 19 October, 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages 2016, *Vale Uncle Sandy*, VACL, viewed 2 May 2019, <<https://vaclang.org.au/home/vale-john-uncle-sandy-atkinson.html>>.



taken away from communities, a sense of loss, grief and inadequacy develops. To keep communities and generations strong, traditional language being passed from one generation to another is vital...'<sup>19</sup> Assistant Collections Manager at Melbourne Museum, John Duggan (Gamilaroi, Miloroy) expressed his opinions on language loss and continuance:

Language to me is something that I associate with traditional pastimes. We don't have people that speak Miloroy from our mob. We had the last one die in the late 70s —the last very fluent speaker. And because it was such a big no-no not to practice language, people didn't...You take somebody out of their natural environment, and you put them on missions and you tell them that they're not allowed to speak it, and you crack the whip or whatever, and it only takes a generation and language is gone.<sup>20</sup>

A level of shame can be felt by indigenous community members when discussing language. I was conscious of this while speaking with research participants. Moulton agreed that language can raise pain that '... comes from ancient days where you were beaten if you were using language and that kind of thing...'<sup>21</sup> Couzens confirmed that it is difficult to ask people to speak the language as '...it's painful to people sometimes because people were literally flogged...'<sup>22</sup> for using language.

The revitalisation and strengthening of indigenous language is a form of self-determination, empowerment, and a way to re-engage rights to culture. Wendy Brady suggested that '...access to knowledge is determined from the role each indigenous person has within that culture. Knowing is not an assumed right...Learning is a lifelong process not dictated by institutions but by the people and the community...'<sup>23</sup> Uncle Sandy believed that the work required in both language development and collections was essential. He stated that '...I suppose what excites me now about what we're doing is that in 300 years' time somebody would be able to come along and speak language...by using the methods that we've put together...'<sup>24</sup> Indigenous communities in 2010–2011 were requesting that

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<sup>19</sup> Brooke Joy, Boandik descendant, in AIATSIS 2014, *Community, identity, wellbeing: The report of the Second National Indigenous Languages Survey*, report prepared by Marmion, Dr Doug, Obata, Dr Kazuko and Troy, Dr Jakelin Canberra, ACT, pp.1–79.

<sup>20</sup> Duggan, John (Assistant Collections Manager – Australia Ethnographic Collection), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Moulton, Kimberely (Project Officer, Bunjilaka Redevelopment, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 7 January, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Couzens, Vicki, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 16 November, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Brady, Wendy 1992, 'Beam me up Scotty! - Communicating across world views on knowledge principles and procedures for the conduct of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research', *Towards 2000: Maintaining the Momentum*, Kumbari Ngurpai Lag Higher Education Centre, University of Southern Queensland, Hervey Bay, Queensland, pp.104–108.

<sup>24</sup> Atkinson, John Sandy (Bangerang Elder, Board Member VACL), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 15 October, 2010.

museums and collecting institutions assist with language by reviewing invaluable terminology and historical recordings pertinent to language hidden in collections.

### ***Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group***

The Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group (ESILWG) funded through the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts was established in 2008 to identify and address issues common to Eastern Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language communities. The Working Group incorporated indigenous language specialists and community members and were formed to advise on language renewal and revival, and to support the development of the National Indigenous Languages Policy. Within the action paper presented by the Working Group to the Australia Government in 2011 they acknowledged that:

Language provides an exceptional view and unlocks deeply embedded indigenous knowledge and ways of viewing the world that they, their ancestors and Dreaming inhabit and interact with. This very fact drives community interest in working to reclaim their near lost languages, as each word, phrase, narrative and story in the language of traditional owners brings deeply held knowledge back to those who have inherited their Country.<sup>25</sup>

In 2011, I attended two meetings of the Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group (ESILWG) at the State Library of NSW.<sup>26</sup> The meetings were coordinated to develop the draft 'Issues and Actions Paper for Indigenous Languages Collections'. Attending were Elders, language specialists, Government representatives and CEOs of language commissions and corporations. I was invited to contribute information on my research and knowledge on the connection between indigenous languages and collections given my professional experience in museums and galleries. The Working Group prepared recommendations for the identification, auditing and access to indigenous languages held in collections throughout Australia. This critical period in Australian history was a turning point for indigenous language renewal as the ESILWG advised the Australia Government on the indigenous-led requirements for collecting institutions, and requested that museums be active participants in the revitalisation of languages.

Towards the end of 2011, the 'Indigenous Languages Collections – Issues and Actions Paper: Framework for National Indigenous Languages Collections Policy' was submitted to the Australian

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<sup>25</sup> Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group 2011, *Indigenous languages collections - issues and actions paper. Framework for National Indigenous Languages Collections Policy*, report prepared by Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group, ESILWG, Sydney, pp.1–17.

<sup>26</sup> Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group 2011, Agenda ESILWG forum in Sydney, unpublished, p.1.

Government. The Paper addressed the need to identify and audit resources, acknowledged cultural protocols when working with languages, the contemporary state of documentation in collections, and the need for a centralised repository for languages. The Working Group recognised that ‘...the current collection policies and library practices have not supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to effectively access services and resources...’<sup>27</sup> One of the key recommendations was to ‘...develop a set of appropriate and sensitive cataloguing standards for cultural items held in collections...’<sup>28</sup> The Action Paper reinforced to the Australian Government that languages held in collecting institutions were not being managed in line with indigenous expectations, and that access, auditing and partnership for the management of this information was required. To date, the cataloguing standards for cultural items held in collections have not been produced in Australia.

## Victorian Language Sector

Every language is a living museum, a monument to every culture it has been a vehicle to. It is a loss to every one of us if a fraction of that diversity disappears when there is something that can have been done to prevent it.<sup>29</sup>

In the state of Victoria, 38 language groups remain following colonisation, with varying levels of contemporary speakers and language use. The overarching body with the responsibility of managing community language programs and ‘...retrieving, recording and researching Aboriginal languages and providing a central resource...’ in 2010–2011 was the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation of Languages (VACL).<sup>30</sup> As advocates for Koori languages to government and non-government bodies, VACL championed the continuance and revitalisation of languages through the development of curriculums, teacher training and maintenance of an extensive resource collection of language documentation. VACL, established in 1994, maintained that:

If a person knows a word in their language, he/she is maintaining a link that has lasted thousands of years, keeping words alive that have been used by their ancestors—language is an ancestral right and it distinguishes something special about Aboriginal people from non-

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<sup>27</sup> Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group 2011, *Indigenous languages collections - issues and actions paper. Framework for National Indigenous Languages Collections Policy*, report prepared by Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group, ESILWG, Sydney, pp.1–17.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. An extract showing key recommendations from the Paper is included in appendix 3.

<sup>29</sup> Nettle and Romaine quoted in McCarty, Teresa L. 2003, 'Revitalising Indigenous languages in homogenising times', *Comparative Education*, vol. 39, no.2, p.148.

<sup>30</sup> Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL) 2011, *About us*, VACL, Melbourne, viewed 4 July 2011, <<http://www.vaclang.org.au/>>.

Aboriginal people. Language is a part of culture, and knowledge about culture is a means of empowering people.<sup>31</sup>

In 2010–2011 in Victoria, complexities in contested histories and political differences left language groups with myriad challenges including the need to search for language terminology and corpus in historical records, while navigating cultural protocols and permissions to do so. Sourcing funding to establish language renewal and strengthening programs located on Country was also a significant issue. Native title applications in the High Courts requested evidence of a continued connection to Country by language groups. By undergoing the statutory requirements for native title determination many language groups understood ‘...value in knowing their language because that shows connection...’<sup>32</sup> Complexities in language were also hampered by non-indigenous understanding of history. As Eades remarked:

There are a lot of things that Australians are still coming to terms with, in terms of Aboriginal culture. And a lot of that is to do with, fundamentally, that Australians feel embarrassed about Aboriginal culture. And it’s because of the history of policies and all sorts of things in our past. And rather than embracing it as a strength and celebrating it, it’s always been about the negative. Those things are slowly changing, but it’s going to take a lot longer for that to happen.<sup>33</sup>

As challenges existed in achieving support for language development, VACL advocated to the State and Federal governments for language revitalisation programs across the state. Language specialist Thomas Kinchela who was working for VACL at the time stated that:

The thing is, the broader community or the wider community only see language as words...indigenous languages is a lot more important than just words. It's connection to Country, it's connection to land, and every one of these languages in Australia has a code to that Country. Every part, every inch, every object, every spear...that has a name from each Country. It belongs to that Country, it tells you that Country, where that's from. It shows a connection, it tells you where that tree comes from that word. Some languages, even in Australia, tell you exactly what tree in the naming of that spear in the language that it is. The name of the object is important. Identifying what language group and where it's from. It tells you more than that's a spear.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Couzens, Vicki, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 16 November, 2010.

<sup>33</sup> Eades, Jason, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 23 November, 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Kinchela, Thomas (Language Project worker, VACL), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 28 October, 2010.

The engagement of indigenous language to rename objects is a powerful aspect of decolonisation. As Smith identified, indigenous people now want to make sense of their world using their own discourse, and ‘...part of this exercise is about recovering our own stories of the past. This is inextricably bound to a recovery of our language and epistemological foundations. It is also about reconciling and reprioritising what is really important about the past with what is important about the present...’<sup>35</sup>

VACL implemented language strengthening programs and supported language revival through the production of dictionaries, digital materials, libraries, oral history programs and most importantly, the training of community members to deliver language education and programs on Country. Through a strong team of indigenous and non-indigenous language specialists, they raised understanding on the complexities, differences and similarities between revival languages and other indigenous languages.

### ***Revival Languages***

In Victoria, Koori languages are identified as revival languages that require ongoing research and development as a result of colonisation. Ingrained in indigenous revival languages is the re-discovery of stories, kinship, laws, customs, and cultural knowledge. As Couzens stated ‘...through language we gain an insight into the values and motives that shape a people. The relationship of people and land, song, dance, music, arts and stories are woven through language...’<sup>36</sup> American indigenous weaver Susan Billy explained that lost songs and knowledge can remain waiting for the right person to rediscover; ‘...our songs have been lost. But they’re only lost for now, they are not really gone...they may be in the rocks now, or somewhere down by the river, or someplace...they are just waiting for the right person to bring them out again...’<sup>37</sup>

The revival of language requires advanced knowledge on kinship, local protocols and cultural law. Smith confirmed that language recovery contributes a rediscovery of epistemological foundations and a re-prioritisation of what is important about the past and present for indigenous people; ‘...reviving forgotten knowledge reconciles important aspects of the past with importance in the present...’<sup>38</sup> Indigenous communities hold strong local laws and protocols on kinship that are represented in the structure of language and terminology. Sturge confirmed that in language revitalisation the need to

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<sup>35</sup> Smith 1999, op.cit. p.39.

<sup>36</sup> Vicki Couzens (Gunditjmara Keeray Woorroong) in Geia, Jacqui and Poon, Bill 2001, *Lost and found: a shared search for belonging: 17 May to 11 November 2001, Immigration Museum, 1 May to 30 June 2001, Koorie Heritage Trust, City of Melbourne, Melbourne.* p.11.

<sup>37</sup> Lonetree, Amy and Cobb, Amanda J. 2008, *The National Museum of the American Indian: critical conversations*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln. p.54.

<sup>38</sup> Smith 1999, op.cit.

select language based on kinship is a challenge when reviewing historical items displaced from source communities.<sup>39</sup> Kinship rules impact documentation and the process for translation in revival languages. Understanding kinship terms and relationships to ‘things’ dependant on maker, place and situation, is complex and requires detailed research and co-collaboration. Bronislaw Malinowski confirmed that ‘...since meaning arises out of specific situations, it can only be successfully represented through detailed contextualisation, through an interpretative reconstruction of the original words’ linguistic context, cultural context and immediate setting...’<sup>40</sup>

Unlike an English dictionary, indigenous language anthologies include verbs, nouns and names separated into use, form, shape, action and spiritual understanding. Finding sentences that are evident of grammar is essential to reconnecting cultural knowledge and the revival of language. Couzens described the significance of grammar for revival as a tool for understanding how language communities categorised the world, identifying that grammar ‘...can teach you about how your language and how people look at the world. It is a different worldview. So, there's that kind of knowledge that's embedded in the grammar. Which is why it can be interesting for some of us, to know and dig right down that deep...’<sup>41</sup> VACL Linguist Christina Eira (now Kris Eira) explained that one language word has a ‘spiral’ that ‘goes down’ into others of relevance and gives a greater meaning to the word. Using a word for a plant as an example, Eira clarified that:

You keep spiralling, you go – alright, this plant also invokes a particular kind of dreaming associated with that Country with that particular plant in it. Once you go there, you’re then going into relationships between people, ancient stories about travel, intonations of what archaeology or geology might be able to find, it just doesn’t end and that’s just one word...You’re not really able to explain in another language when you only refer to that word. But if you have grown up with and have been trained in the culture of that language, then you have knowledge of the spirals that that word indicates.<sup>42</sup>

The ‘spirals’ connected to words, songs and stories are understood by those in the community that have been initiated and trained, or have advanced research skills to piece together the connections of language, cultural knowledge and genealogy.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Sturge 2007, op.cit. p.21.

<sup>40</sup> Malinowski in Sturge 2007, op.cit. p.24

<sup>41</sup> Couzens, Vicki, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 16 November, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> Eira, Dr Christina (Community Linguist, VACL), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 October, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

Understanding and reviving Victorian Aboriginal language structures holds great complexity due to historical displacement and variance in tribal boundaries and kinship terms. There are subtle differences to words contingent on where they are placed in grammatical structures, who is saying them and why. When evaluating the options for language documentation within collections, there is a need to first understand the complexities of revival languages. Complexities that include the origins of words, translation difficulties, and words to explain contemporary contexts. The complexities of revival languages require a re-constructing of cultural practices, situations and understanding of the world through both historical and contemporary indigenous life. To utilise revival language to document cultural items is not an impossibility, but it is complex due to spirals of knowledge, translation and the differences that exist in revival languages. Collections Managers together with cultural knowledge holders will be required to lead the development of data enhancement for collections.

Revival or revitalisation languages are not only different to other indigenous languages, but the process for revival is also distinctly different within each language group in Victoria. Revival languages require daily decisions made by trained professionals to piece together the language which may require the loan or formation of words for contemporary contexts. In Koori revival languages, Paton confirms that fluency is unlikely:

You can't expect to become fluent, such as French or Italian. There aren't enough words for today's society to replace with the indigenous language. The languages haven't evolved with society, so there are huge gaps...items and objects that the language can't deal with, but there are ways that the community can adapt their language.<sup>44</sup>

For Koori language groups, revival is reliant on historic documentation of terminology found in library and museum collections, usually held within the journals of anthropologists. Duggan affirmed that '...it's now a strange twist of fate that we now have to turn to whitefellas to get our language back in them old records...'<sup>45</sup> Buried in collections are historic corpus documented by anthropologists who made decisions based on their epistemology and belief systems on what was significant to record. Eira and Couzens argue that revival languages are different to other indigenous languages throughout the world and due to the complexities in decisions to be made in revival, and the discoveries that occurs when one new word is found, that revival languages held a new language typology not previously found in linguistics. They confirmed that in revival languages:

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<sup>44</sup> Paton, Paul (Program Manager, VACL), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 19 October, 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Duggan, John (Assistant Collections Manager – Australia Ethnographic Collection), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January 2011.

...people are simultaneously researching, making decisions for, expanding and learning their language. So, there's many situations in which language learners are modifying the language...there is no other situation in which the people learning it are the authority also on where it's going to go. That's absolutely unique.<sup>46</sup>

Language workers direct the selection of words and make decisions on borrowed or revised terminology; a process that identifies revival languages as distinctly different from others. Eira confirmed that there are issues in academia regarding the validation of revival languages as 'real living languages' and that the differences in typology in 2011 were not yet understood or accepted by academia.<sup>47</sup> Revival languages hold unique complexities and characteristics.

Alongside indigenous communities' requests for collecting institution involvement in language revival in 2010–2011, both Eira and Couzens were developing a new language typology based on their learning from Koori revival languages. They were documenting the intersection between western knowledge and indigenous knowledge systems to present a new linguistic typology.<sup>48</sup> The new typology identified the researcher and language learner as also the creator of the language. This, Eira suggested, was very different to behaviour found in other language learners. Along with word selection, the grammar and sentence structure chosen by language researchers impacted the development of the language. Couzens confirmed '...cultural knowledge isn't just in the meaning of the words. It's actually integrated into the grammar of your language....'<sup>49</sup> and that '...Aboriginal words are categorised by form, shape, action, or purpose of what they're for and/or sounds. A lot of bird names are bird sounds...So instead of making up new words by sticking two words together in an English way, you're actually making new words culturally, properly...'<sup>50</sup> Implementing education programs to train Koori language workers to understand specialised revival methodologies and the significance of word selection was a priority for VACL. At the time of fieldwork, they were heavily involved in mentoring qualified language teachers to deliver language programs across the state. The prominent issue facing language revival at the time was low numbers of qualified language instructors available for language groups. Comparably, in

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<sup>46</sup> VACL 2010, *Meeting point: setting up a typology of revival languages in Australia*, report prepared by Eira, Christina and Couzens, Vicki, VACL and AIATSIS, Melbourne, pp.1–173.

<sup>47</sup> Eira, Dr Christina (Community Linguist, VACL), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 October, 2010.

<sup>48</sup> Eira and Couzens in 2017, together with Tonya N. Stebbins, published the typology that was in development during my research, and subsequently made an impact in linguistics and the understanding on the differences in revival languages - Stebbins, Tonya N., Eira, Kris and Couzens, Vicki L. 2017, *Living Languages and New Approaches to Language Revitalisation Research*, Routledge, New York.

<sup>49</sup> Couzens, Vicki, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 16 November, 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.



Aotearoa during the same period of time, a decrease in active language speakers in the home was a prominent issue facing language revitalisation throughout the country.

## Aotearoa Language Sector

Ko te reo te mauri o te tangata.

Language is the essence of human existence.

Ko te reo te mauri o te mana Māori.

The language is the life principle of Māori vitality.<sup>51</sup>

In New Zealand, te reo Māori was forcibly removed following the arrival of Pākehā. Writers have described a ‘...devaluing of the language and cultural practices of Māori...’ since the arrival of missionaries in the 1800s.<sup>52</sup> The Waitangi Tribunal was established in the 1980s to assess land and cultural rights of the Māori people. The Tribunal declared that the Māori language was a taonga that must be preserved with State support. May explains that:

While many of the claims before the Waitangi Tribunal have had to do with the expropriation of land under colonial rule, they have also, crucially, encompassed other non-material possessions such as the Māori language. In the Māori language case of 1985/1986, for example, the Waitangi Tribunal ruled that the Māori language could be regarded as a taonga (treasured possession) and therefore had a guaranteed right to protection under the terms of the treaty.<sup>53</sup>

As with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Māori hold intergenerational pain as a result of language removal and the threat of violence if caught speaking the language. Malcom Mulholland reminds us that many children were beaten if caught speaking te reo Māori:

For the best part of 80 years te reo Māori was to be suppressed in the schools and generations of Māori pupils severely punished if caught speaking te reo in school grounds. The aim was assimilation of Māori with the wider community and was fed by the belief that a person's

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<sup>51</sup> Fleras, Augie 1987, 'Redefining the politics over Aboriginal language renewal: Māori language preschool as agents of social change', University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, viewed 11 June 2010

<<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/REDEFINING-THE-POLITICS-OVER-ABORIGINAL-LANGUAGE-AS-Fleras/17f5fa5f8715bd570a523ddd0df4d2045a038d3#citing-papers>>.

<sup>52</sup> McKenzie, Tabitha and Toia, Rawiri 2014, 'The road to language proficiency is always under construction', *The value of the Māori Language, Te Hua o te Reo Māori*, Rawinia Higgins, Poia Rewi and V. Olsen-Reeder (eds.), HUIA, Wellington, vol.2, pp.201–215.

<sup>53</sup> May, Stephen 1998, 'Language and Education Rights for Indigenous Peoples', *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, vol. 11, no.3, pp.272–296.

fluency in Māori would be at the cost of their proficiency in English, and therefore ultimately the success of Māori children in the Pākehā world.<sup>54</sup>

Māori parents prior to the 1980s discouraged their children from learning or using language, believing that it would not progress careers. Many parents held memories of being punished for using te reo Māori.<sup>55</sup> Julie Noanoa (Te Aitanga a Hauiti) at the time Education Program Developer at Te Papa, described to me the rejection of te reo Māori she faced as a child:

When I was at school, I wanted to learn Māori...The rest of my family weren't interested. I wanted to learn from my grandmother, my Māori grandmother, how to speak because she was fluent and she just said, '...don't bother, we're going to learn the Pākehā ways.'<sup>56</sup>

Families chose to raise their children speaking English only. English was thought to increase opportunities for employment and success for children. Te reo Māori was not spoken in the community or within the home. Liz Kereru (Ngāi Tahu) language specialist explained her family's judgements on language:

My mother is a native speaker. There are five of us in our family and not one of us are native speakers of the Māori language. My mother decided that that wasn't the language that we should know, so I grew up with the English language. But I was a child who grew up on my marae. I was around a lot of people who spoke Māori. So, I was familiar. I understood the language, but I never responded in te reo Māori. I always responded in English. I feel that the language has always been within me, but I just needed somewhere and someone to bring it out.<sup>57</sup>

In 1987, the Māori Language Act was passed acknowledging te reo Māori as an official language of Aotearoa. There was an increased focus on language education including full immersion schools from Kōhanga Reo (kindergarten), Te Ataarangi (adult classes) and Kura Kaupapa Māori (primary and secondary schools). The New Zealand Government released a Māori language strategy in 1997 that '...aimed to raise the quality of mainstream education for Māori, support the growth of high-quality Kaupapa Māori education and support greater Māori involvement and authority in education...'<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Mulholland, Malcom 2006, *State of the Māori nation : 21st century issues in Aotearoa*, Reed Publishing, Auckland.

<sup>55</sup> Elizabeth Mana Hunkin (Kuiā, Ngāti Rakaipaaka/Te Ataarangi Tutor), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Nūhaka, New Zealand, 30 April, 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Noanoa, Julie (Education Program Developer, Te Papa Tongarewa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, New Zealand, 24 February, 2011.

<sup>57</sup> Kereru, Liz, Interview, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio recording, Nūhaka, 12 November, 2007.

<sup>58</sup> McKenzie, Tabitha and Toia, Rawiri 2014, 'The road to language proficiency is always under construction', *The value of the Māori Language, Te Hua o te Reo Māori*, Rawinia Higgins, Poia Rewi and V. Olsen-Reeder (eds.), HUIA, Wellington, vol.2, pp.201–215.

Despite the development of the language education movement, the intergenerational use of te reo Māori in homes continued to decline.

In 2011, the Chief Executive Officer for the peak body for the management of language in Aotearoa, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (The Māori Language Commission), Glennis Barbara met with me in Wellington to discuss language use throughout the country. Barbara confirmed that only 7% of people who spoke Māori were classed as native speakers, that is, speakers who think, work, write and communicate in te reo Māori. Learning Māori as a second language meant that te reo Māori was not necessarily automatic, natural or fluid for the current generation of speakers. Her children on the other hand could think and dream in Māori as they had been raised in Kōhanga Reo, a full immersion kindergarten.<sup>59</sup>

As we sat together speaking about language revitalisation, it was clear that the greatest threat to the language was that it was no longer spoken in the home. Māori language, Barbara stated, had become institutionalised, with students considering te reo Māori as language for school only. Students were not engaging in language practice at home with parents or grandparents. Barbara explained ‘...what we have is a population of Māori who might focus on language acquisition for a period of time. But if the language isn’t used, and if the primary language of that person is still English, we don’t have language use in the homes and we don’t have language use in communities...’<sup>60</sup> Language not spoken in informal environments results in gaps in intergenerational transmission. Most importantly Barbara stated that:

Linguistically you need three to five generations to stabilise the language. We are three to four generations in, and we are struggling. I think that’s because when we were doing something in the 70s and 80s, during the time when our language was being revived, we put all our eggs in one basket. We put it into schools.<sup>61</sup>

An independent report on the Māori language sector in 2006 identified that the level of speakers fell from 25.2% in 2001, to 23.7%.<sup>62</sup> Te reo Māori was identified as ‘severely endangered’ and a Māori

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<sup>59</sup> Kōhanga Reo is an early year’s full immersion te reo Māori program, pre-kindergarten, that started in 1982 and continues today. Rawinia Higgins, Poia Rewi and Olsen-Reeder, Vincent (eds.) 2014, *The value of the Māori Language, Te Hua o te Reo Māori*, HUIA, Wellington.

<sup>60</sup> Glennis Barbara (CEO - Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio recording, Wellington, 4 March, 2011.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Waitangi Tribunal, 2010 as quoted in *Māori Language Review Panel 2011, Te reo Mauriora: Te Arotakenga o te rāngai reo Māori me te rautaki reo Māori/ Review of the Māori language sector and the Māori language strategy*, report prepared by Reedy, Sir Tamati, Auckland, New Zealand, pp.1–96.

Language Review Panel directed that a focus on language use in homes, between families, was required to reverse the poor language statistics.<sup>63</sup> Stephens confirmed that ‘...for te reo Māori to survive, it must, of course, primarily be a language of intergenerational transmission, it must be a language of the information, or the vernacular...’<sup>64</sup>

### ***Intergenerational Use***

In the North Island of Aotearoa inland from the Tairāwhiti Region is Nūhaka, the land of Ngāti Rakaipaaka. My children’s grandparents, Mana Elizabeth Hunkin (Liz) and Graeme Hunkin were Kaumātua ingrained in te reo Māori education in 2011.<sup>65</sup> Whaea Liz spoke to me about her early years speaking te reo Māori:

They were quite steeped (her family) in their traditions and they knew who they were. All our people lived around Tāne-nui-a-rangi (the marae). I was just sad I wasn't older, because they knew the customs and the language. I actually spoke Māori before I went to school. I was brought up with te reo Māori...because my grandmother refused to speak English to me. When I went to school and realised, we had to speak English, we were the quietest children in the school. I never got strapped, but the older ones did for speaking te reo Māori.<sup>66</sup>

I have sat many times within the language school, Te Kura Motuhake o Te Ataarangi, managed by the Hunkins in Wairoa to see first-hand language being taught using rākau (Cuisenaire rods) and conversational practice methods with the community. I have been present on the marae, Tāne-nui-a-rangi in Nūhaka when visitors arrived and Whaea Liz would call out from the steps of the marae to deliver the pōwhiri in te reo Māori. Karanga is a powerful cry or song that invites and welcomes guests onto the marae, and a response is provided by the guest waiting outside the gate. The ceremony is delivered by women and always in te reo Māori. Whaea Liz confirmed that:

It is very important to us, that any visitors, it doesn't matter if it's only one, that they are that called on (to the marae). For many of us, we won't actually come through that gate until we get the karanga. If no one calls us then we don't come in...that's just the way that it is...When

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. outlines the 2009 UNESCO framework for the state of language and labels the use of te reo Māori as ‘severely endangered’ and ‘definitely endangered’.

<sup>64</sup> Māmari Stephens 2014, ‘A house with many rooms: Rediscovering Māori as a Civic Language in the Wake of the Māori Language Act (1987)’, *The value of the Māori Language, Te Hua o te Reo Māori*, Rawinia Higgins, Poia Rewi and V. Olsen-Reeder (eds.), HUIA, Wellington, vol.2, pp.51–64.

<sup>65</sup> Graeme Hunkin passed in 2018 and he is greatly missed by the Hunkin whānau. I pay my greatest respect to a man who, born in Melbourne, became fluent in te reo Māori, managed the Te Ataarangi school in Wairoa, and was the Nūhaka Presbyterian Minister, as well as a wonderful grandfather.

<sup>66</sup> Elizabeth Mana Hunkin (Kuia, Ngāti Rakaipaaka/Te Ataarangi Tutor), Oral history, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Nūhaka, 11 November, 2007.

we call, the two women, it's the call of the ancestors...bringing all those together who have gone before us.<sup>67</sup>

As well as pōwhiri, I have been fortunate to be on the marae to witness a group of men arriving to undertake training in whaikōrero (formal speech making). Te reo Māori language is required to uphold the cultural practice of speech making. Maea King, a language student within Te Ataarangi explained:

Whaikōrero or formal speech making is performed by male elders on the marae and in social gatherings. First there are the speeches of welcome by the hosts and then the speeches of reply by the visitors. In most cases formal speech making follows a particular pattern in which certain elements are addressed: A ritual chant, acknowledgment of those who have passed on, acknowledgment of the ancestral house, acknowledgement of Mother Earth, speeches to the living, discussions of the purpose for the gathering (and) conclusion with a song.<sup>68</sup>

Whaikōrero training was held on Tāne-nui-a-rangi marae on a yearly basis to ensure that younger people and those interested both inside and outside of the Ngāti Kahungunu community to continue this cultural practice that engages te reo Māori.

Tangihanga (funeral) is one of the most significant cultural practices within the Māori communities. It is a practice that ensures families are brought back to the marae and that their family member is remembered, celebrated and buried with the upmost respect. It is also a crucial cultural practice that allows for those closest to the deceased to grieve and heal their loss. I was present in Nūhaka when a well-known community member and Te Ataarangi student passed away. The Hunkins were required to be present on the marae for the duration of the tangihanga to uphold their community responsibilities. Whaea Liz performed the karanga for the hundreds of visitors who came to the marae throughout the tangihanga, while Graeme directed the religious ceremonies in his role as a Presbyterian Minister for the marae in te reo Māori. For formal ceremonies on the marae, te reo Māori is the dominant language shared.

In 2007, I was fortunate to spend an intensive three weeks discussing language and undertaking oral histories throughout the language community for a report as a part of my Masters of Cultural Heritage. Te Ataarangi as a private language school was established to teach te reo Māori throughout New Zealand. The Hunkins were integral to the development of the school's language model and

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> King, Maea, Oral history interview, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio recording, Te Ataarangi school, Wairoa, New Zealand 12 November, 2007.

established a successful kura in Wairoa. Each day at Te Kura Motuhake o Te Ataarangi classes began with a karakia (prayer), a song and a general discussion about a poem or proverb on the board, before formal activities were introduced. Meals were cooked and eaten together on site. Classes included students listening to Elders talk about cultural practices, role playing social situations, performing debates, and generally only te reo Māori used while on site. Movement, dance and cultural practices, including visual arts that lined the walls, were incorporated into the class plans each day. Children were welcome to sit in on classes. Graeme would manage the school accounts and administration, and would extend this service to support students in the management of their finances. Although language education was the central purpose, the school considered the 'whole person' and understood that for a reconnection to language and culture to take place, other elements of life must also be supported for the student.

The school held a great sense of a community within a community. Participants, often on employment assistance programs, went on to become teachers or find employment in fields of interest with their new language skills behind them. It was a school like no other and I often consider whether Koori language programs could be delivered in the same way – established as an independent entity, connecting students from job seeker and other networks and creating a sense of community with the central purpose of educating and learning the language. Te Ataarangi encouraged informal language use and promoted intergenerational understanding of the language.

I spoke to a Te Ataarangi language specialist in the Nūhaka area that was working with the community on a program dedicated solely to encouraging language use at home. The Kāinga Kōrerorero Program was implemented by Te Ataarangi to encourage language education in the home for whānau.<sup>69</sup> I interviewed Liz Kereru, Coordinator for Kāinga Kōrerorero just as the program was about to be launched in Wairoa district. Kereru described the program as:

...a revitalisation program...there are 10 families here in the Wairoa district, and my job is that I'm termed their mentor. In each whānau there has to be at least one member who is fluent in te reo so that they are able to speak to the rest of their whānau. I go in and visit with and give them resources or work with them on basic conversational reo, on just ordinary everyday language, by using resources such as games or Māori books or anything that encourages members to speak te reo.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Te Ataarangi, 2008, Kāinga Kōrerorero, Te Ataarangi, Wellington, viewed 12 November 2019, <<http://www.teataarangi.org.nz/?q=speak-maori/kainga-korerorero>>.

<sup>70</sup> Kereru, Liz, Interview, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio recording, Nūhaka, 12 November, 2007.

With a focus on conversational language use, whānau were encouraged to spend one night around the dinner table only speaking te reo. Families were encouraged to register children in language immersion schools including Kōhanga Reo or Kura Kaupapa. Kereru confirmed that the program had been successfully delivered for three years in other areas, and that results included that three out of every four families were encouraged to speak the language in the community after joining the program.<sup>71</sup> Although this work was happening in 2007, as I undertook the research in New Zealand in 2010–2011 the decline in language use in homes was still occurring.

In 2011, an objective of the Māori Language Commission was to continue to encourage a greater practice of social language in family homes. Language corpus had changed over 30 years of language education and Barbara confirmed, ‘...what we have, the bulk of corpus available to us now, is Māori language translated from English. And so, the cultural cues, the value systems underneath, are all being translated from western culture into Māori language...’<sup>72</sup>

There is an assumption by visitors to Aotearoa who see language visible on signs, hear language in Te Papa, and occasionally hear language in public places that Māori are advanced language users. Barbara confirmed that even though there was a dedicated approach to language revival, many issues and challenges still existed for the language sector, and that the spoken language continued to be in decline.<sup>73</sup>

In communities, Barbara acknowledged there was also a division between those that held language, and those that did not. Barbara discussed a higher level of public scrutiny and social pressure to get the language right, instead of using it freely. She described the need for serious conversations to occur in the language sector on how to enable use and for communities to adjust their attitude to language correctness. She explained that language learning ‘...is a long haul. For every person we put off using the language, we do ourselves and the work we’ve dedicated our lives to huge harm. There is a massive role to improve critical awareness in our communities...’<sup>74</sup>

In 2011, there was no clear data on the state of te reo Māori. Many government reports, in Barbara’s words were comparing ‘apples with oranges and pears.’<sup>75</sup> Barbara suggested the Benton report from

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Glennis Barbara (CEO - Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio recording, Wellington, 4 March, 2011.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Glennis Barbara 2011. op.cit.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

the 1970s was still a relevant and important document for the Aotearoa language sector. The report alerted Māori communities that te reo Māori was in jeopardy.<sup>76</sup> The Benton report identified that ‘...in the twentieth century at least, massive disparities in power and influence between the groups often led to the displacement of one of the languages by the other — a process often referred to as ‘language death’.<sup>77</sup> The forced break in one generation of language users led by the government had resulted in pain and fear surrounding the language, which in turn prevented intergenerational language use in Māori families.

The revitalisation and strengthening of the language in Aotearoa is distinctly different to the complexities of the Koori languages within Victoria. Māori continue to revive words and corpus that have been lost over time through records and discussions between iwi. For museums to engage and document te reo Māori with collections, museums need to provide support for language development, strengthening and use in professional practices.

### ***Written Language***

For many indigenous communities around the world, language was lost as no form of written language was developed. In Aotearoa, Māori produced a written form of the language that ensured that the words from different dialects, stories and events from iwi were preserved. An extensive body of written information in te reo Māori has supported the revitalisation of the language throughout the country. Cleve Barlow explained, ‘...early last century, the Pākehā began to settle amongst the Māori...Many Māori became skilled at writing their own language, having attended missionary schools. It is reported that at one stage there were more literate Māori than Pākehā...’<sup>78</sup> As a result of literate Māori documenting language, archives throughout Aotearoa hold manuscripts, letters, and historic newspapers that are an extensive resource for language revitalisation today. Mulholland confirmed, ‘...Māori were quick to see the benefits of the written word and levels of literacy soared within Māori communities during this early stage of contact. Māori soon found ways to take their language into new domains and the first Māori language newspaper was established in 1842...’<sup>79</sup> The written form of te reo Māori ensured that essential words were not lost, and that corpus indicating dialectal differences were available. The written form has contributed to the protection of cultural heritage for the Māori

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<sup>76</sup> Benton, Richard A. (N. Z. C. f. E. Research) 1997, *The Māori Language: Dying or reviving? A working paper prepared for the East-West Center Alumni-in-Residence Working Paper Series*, East West Center, Wellington.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p.14

<sup>78</sup> Barlow, Cleve 1990, *Tikanga Whakaaro: Key concepts in Māori culture*, Oxford University Press, UK.

<sup>79</sup> Mulholland 2006, op.cit.



people. Access to collections and archives where the corpus were held was critical for the ongoing revitalisation of the language.

In 2011, as well as the Māori Language Commission's dedication to language revival and strengthening, iwi were acknowledging that regional dialects were in decline and social interactions with the language were not taking place. Ngāti Porou based in the North Island released the draft 'Ngāti Porou Iwi Reo Strategy' as a means to re-establish natural language transmission in home and community settings. This strategy identified a need to concentrate on areas of natural transmission of Ngāti Porou differences in the language, complexities with dispersed populations, increasing support for existing initiatives, and maintaining oral proficiencies.<sup>80</sup> The strategy clearly identified that the distinctive Ngāti Porou variation of te reo Māori was '...a pivotal component of local identity and pride for those who affiliate...'<sup>81</sup> To re-establish Ngāti Porou as a 'living language' it would take a dedicated effort at all levels of the community and not solely be the responsibility of schools.<sup>82</sup> It was a critical time in Aotearoa when language revival and strengthening discussions were present, and many organisations were beginning to collaborate on the need for a new direction to ensure language survival.

For museums, this also meant a need to identify how exhibitions and public programs could assist in revival and strengthening programs. Rhonda Paku (Ngāti Kahungunu) the Head Curator of Mātauranga Māori at Te Papa described that language created a sense of pride in iwi when they saw it on the museum walls. The use of dialects was a way Curators could 'give back' to communities;

I think for a region when they realise that they have one special word for a taonga they embrace that whole-heartedly. It's a way of identifying tribally and it's a way of expressing your own diversity as a Māori - how unique you are. That's another way to give back, some of that information assists tribal identity for communities.<sup>83</sup>

The Kaihautū Māori at Te Papa, Michelle Hippolite (Rongowhakaata, Te Aitanga-a-Māhaki) described her vision for Te Papa to be considered as a beacon of language and cultural strengthening:

Te Papa has an opportunity to show others how to – right from the start – think of ideas through the lens of Māori culture...implicit in that is concept and ideas that are invoked by the use of phrases or particular kupu (words)...both the place that language and culture is

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<sup>80</sup> TRONP Consultation 2011, 'Ngāti Porou Iwi Reo Strategy (draft)', unpublished, Ngāti Porou Board of Trustees, p.1–18.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> TRONP Consultation 2011, op.cit.

<sup>83</sup> Paku, Rhonda, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 2 March, 2011.

presented and incorporated in the thoughts and ideas is critical...these are some of the dimensions that make us unique in the global museum family.<sup>84</sup>

Although te reo Māori and Koori languages were in varying stages of revitalisation and strengthening, in both countries there was a dedicated effort to increase language use by leading peak language organisations. Indigenous communities were requesting the support of collecting institutions to be a part of language strengthening by undertaking audits on language in collections, increasing access to cultural materials, and to increase understanding on the significance of language documentation in cultural collections.

## Translation

Indigenous community members understand that language holds power, strength and the ability to contextualise past and present indigenous life. This understanding cannot be translated, or represented clearly, using English. Translation removes context and changes layers of knowledge represented by word selection, time of use, and the placement of words. In contemporary language programs translation from Koori into English can be difficult and can lead to a 'hybridity' of the language. Moulton states that caution is required when working with language words, and that museums '...have to be careful with that (translation)...literal translation might not actually be close to the actual word...'<sup>85</sup> Sturge contested that '...in the postcolonial context, 'translation' often stands for the alternation of the colonising language through its mixing with the languages of the colonised and vice versa, notions of 'hybridity' in both language...'<sup>86</sup> The voice of indigenous people is therefore positioned as secondary, and becomes subordinated to the collector's voice.<sup>87</sup> Eira stated that beginning with English first and indigenous language second in records, documentation or exhibitions, is problematic and only results in English with 'foreign words'.<sup>88</sup> Speaking about the difficulties with translation, Eira remarked:

Talking about things that have significant cultural significance like a song or an artefact...I've noticed that people don't translate...If collections required a language/English equivalent, this might be hard to get because this is not always what people give you...They just go, oh yes,

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<sup>84</sup> Hippolite, Michelle (Kaihautū Māori), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, New Zealand, 4 March, 2011.

<sup>85</sup> Moulton, Kimberely (Project Officer, Bunjilaka Redevelopment, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 7 January, 2011.

<sup>86</sup> Sturge 2007, op.cit. p.12.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Eira, Dr Christina (Community Linguist, VACL), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 October, 2010.

that song, yeah...Well you see when my grandmother went on this walk from here to here, and she would see that tree, and she would sing that song.<sup>89</sup>

Incorrect translation in documentation was one issue facing collecting institutions. The historic decisions made by non-indigenous people on language placement and documentation required examination in conjunction with the source communities. Sturge stated that ‘...because translation always involves selection at some stage, perhaps all translation could be seen as an editing of other people’s realities into the terms of the receiving culture...’<sup>90</sup>

The Victorian language sector in 2010–2011 was actively developing language professionals to undertake complex research required for revitalisation of languages. New typologies for Koori languages were being developed, and although extensive work was required throughout the state to ensure communities could connect to the language, there remained positivity in the language sector. At the same time in Aotearoa, iwi organisations were developing their own language strategies that involved engagement with collecting institutions.

Through the formation of ESILWG, the Australian Government was made aware of indigenous requests for cultural institutions to be involved in language revitalisation through audits of language in collections, allocation of identified museum positions for indigenous people, and the introduction of a national policy and framework for language. Likewise, in Aotearoa, although te reo Māori language documentation was dissimilar to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, the focus on education in schools had affected the spoken language, and language use was on the decline. Many iwi were continuing to re-discover through written documentation and historic words in collections archives available for the revitalisation and strengthening of language. Indigenous language use in museums in both countries would ensure that indigenous paedology was placed at the forefront for collections. This chapter has provided an overview on the state of indigenous language use in Victoria and Aotearoa and provides examples on why 2010–2011 was a critical period of time for language revitalisation in both countries.

The next chapter explores and analyses the museum practices at Victorian cultural institutions, highlighting the Koorie Heritage Trust and Melbourne Museum to ascertain whether indigenous language documentation was incorporated in collections management practices. In a museum setting,

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Sturge 2007, op.cit. p.79.

revisiting documentation and engaging new methods for professional practices involves a willingness to open collections to collaborate with communities. For indigenous language professionals and community members involved in language research, the engagement of indigenous languages in museum practice reconnects objects to Country and ancestors. Language documentation ensures that objects are recorded in a way that aligns to indigenous cultural knowledge and endorses indigenous rights to control how their stories are told.

## Chapter 2: Australian Museums and Cultural Collections

Any museum can invite you to look. A great one changes the way you see.<sup>1</sup>

In Australia, many indigenous collections hold little or unclear provenance information, with objects collected as 'representative' of a culture or people. Indigenous communities have stressed the need for information held in collections and archives to be open and accessible to assist with language revitalisation programs. There are approximately 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages that are in various stages of repair, renewal and strengthening as a result of colonisation. Just one word found in collections can assist in the rediscovery of a whole body of language for communities. In the previous chapter, I explored indigenous language typologies and discussed the revitalisation of Koori languages. Indigenous community members were requesting active participation by collecting institutions to contribute to language revitalisation and the discovery of corpus in collections.

This chapter focuses on a snapshot in time during 2010–2011, a turning point for Victorian museums as they were encouraged to look closer at professional practices, upgrade to a national accreditation program, adapt to new technologies and implement collection management practices that captured more efficient research data on collections. Funding models for museums were shifting with a greater need for institutions to source private as well as public funding. This coincided at a time when indigenous communities were questioning how and why cultural materials were being held in collections, and communities were actively requesting a reconnection between objects and language. Indigenous communities identified a need to develop national protocols for language in collections as a way for collecting institutions to repair past relationships.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, indigenous communities were aware that the documentation for their cultural materials was not aligned with their expectations.

Although there was a rise in contemporary indigenous artists engaging language in titles and stories associated with artworks, there was, and still is, challenges in collections documentation due to the previous collecting histories in Australia. The lack of language in collections management systems is

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<sup>1</sup> Advertisement for the National Museum of the American Indian as quoted in Shannon, Jennifer 2009, 'The construction of native voice at the National Museum of the American Indian', *Contesting knowledge: Museums and indigenous perspectives*, S. Sleeper-Smith (ed.) University of Nebraska, Nebraska, pp.218–247.

<sup>2</sup> The demand by indigenous communities for this research was evident in the formation of the Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group as discussed in chapter 1. I attended early meetings held in Sydney in 2011 on the need for collections in libraries and cultural venues to be made accessible for indigenous communities undergoing language revival, and for a consistent approach to language documentation to assist with future research in the field. This was later identified in Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group 2011, *Indigenous languages collections - issues and actions paper. Framework for National Indigenous Languages Collections Policy*, report prepared by Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group, ESILWG, Sydney, pp.1–17.

evident of neglect in collecting practices. Museum professionals have in the past believed that Australia was not in a position to complete a reconnection of language and collections for two significant reasons: firstly, due to a decrease in funding for institutions equating to less time for staff to dedicate to research projects; and secondly the state of Koori languages in Victoria was not at the level required to complete the work. I propose that this lack of support to document objects in language can also be contributed to an internal disconnect between professional positions in cultural institutions that is discussed further in this chapter.

Using direct examples from Victoria's most prominent indigenous collections held at the Koorie Heritage Trust (the Trust) and the Melbourne Museum, I reveal, analyse and discuss a disconnection between front of house exhibition research and back of house documentation for cultural collections. This misalignment between the Curator's research development for exhibition and collection records, and the state and accuracy of information held in collections management systems, is a significant tension inhibiting the inclusion of indigenous languages in museums. To counterbalance the problem and successfully complete data enhancement required, I argue that extensive consultation and ongoing relationships with communities is essential.

Co-collaboration implemented through two significant projects: the Trust's *Meerreeng-An: Here is my Country* publication and exhibition, and Melbourne Museum's Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre redevelopment of *First Peoples Gallery* are explored as examples of consultation and best-practice approaches in 'Collaborative Research Practice'. It is clear that the success of consultation is reliant on relationships that are built between museum professionals and indigenous community members. A priority for museum leaders is to continue to build and support museum professional development and support time to build on relationships outside of dedicated projects. The following chapter suggests that collaboration between staff managing museum collections and indigenous communities lead to improved collections management practices on the one hand, and language rejuvenation on the other.



**Figure 7** Koorie Heritage Trust located in King Street, Melbourne (photograph) Karina Lamb, October 2010.



**Figure 8** Entrance to Melbourne Museum (photograph) Karina Lamb, November 2010.

## Australian Museum Accreditation

For Australian cultural institutions the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA), formerly Museums Australia, supports policy development, professional practice, and Australian standards for museums and galleries including the Museums Accreditation Program (MAP). The MAP, established in 1993, aligns museums, galleries and local history venues to a national framework and standards for professional practice including collections management. MAP is a lengthy process for museum professionals with at least three years required on refining and producing policies and procedures that emphasise ‘...museum practice, museum management, collection care and community engagement...’<sup>3</sup>

In 2009, a significant change for museums in the state of Victoria included the launch of a partnership program between Museums Australia (Victoria), Museums Victoria and Victorian Cultural Network to provide a state-wide web-based collections management and publishing system titled ‘Victorian Collections’. The pioneer project implemented a collections management system in more than 500 cultural and community organisations.<sup>4</sup> The delivery of the Victorian Collections involved state-wide training for museum professionals and community organisations on policies and procedures connected to best-practice collections management, and a framework for cataloguing and registration based on *The Small Museums Cataloguing Manual* published in 2009.<sup>5</sup> This is a manual that holds no mention of cataloguing, registration or management practices for languages other than English. The collections management system and associated website provided access for the public to diverse collections from State and community collections. AMaGA raised awareness in collecting institutions on the need to align to a national framework to assist in providing not only consistency in documentation when publishing collections online, but also to ensure accurate and efficient documentation was in place and easily accessible for researchers and source communities. The publishing of collections online contributed to greater requests for access to collections throughout this period.

Victorian Collections was realised as a means to ease pressure on collecting institutions to keep abreast of rapidly advancing technologies in databases, image management and website design. Both MAP

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<sup>3</sup> Australia Museum and Galleries Association (AMaGA) 2014, *Museum Accreditation Program*, AMaGA, viewed 20 May 2020, <[https://amagavic.org.au/museum\\_accreditation\\_program](https://amagavic.org.au/museum_accreditation_program)>.

<sup>4</sup> Museums Victoria, Museums Australia (Victoria) 2009, *Victorian Collections*, Museums Victoria, viewed 6 May 2020, <<https://victoriancollections.net.au/>>.

<sup>5</sup> Ericksen, Hilary, Unger, Ingrid and Museums Australia (Victoria) (eds.) 2009, *The small museums cataloguing manual: a guide to cataloguing object and image collections*, 4th edn, Museums Australia (Victoria), Carlton South, Victoria.



and Victorian Collections encouraged Collection Managers to advance their skill sets to begin new and more efficient ways of creating, archiving and managing collections documentation in collaboration with community.

## Advancing Technologies

In Australia, whilst an increased awareness on the need for collecting institutions to align to a national standard for collections management was taking place led by AMaGA, database technologies were also advancing at a rapid pace. Larger museums in Australia established Information Technology departments to keep up with regulatory requirements and compliance, including the back-up and storage of digital materials.<sup>6</sup> With the introduction of scanning and new image formats such as jpeg, collection management systems began to include new data on ‘...loans, object movements, conservation activities and rights’ and eventually Radio Frequency Identification (RFID).<sup>7</sup> New technologies allowed for private companies working in conjunction with collecting institutions to develop collections management systems. In partnership with a focus to develop a responsive and easy to use digital catalogue, the University of Melbourne, Museum Victoria and the Australia Museum developed the KE EMu collections management system now known as EMu.<sup>8</sup> I discuss direct examples from the Melbourne Museum EMu collections management system within this chapter.

The management of new digital records was transformational for museum staff as they worked to digitise collections documentation held in hardcopy registration books, anthropological diaries and files. Throughout the change to digital ‘...content management systems and digital asset management systems jockeyed with traditional collection management systems as core resource-management tools, particularly to address the imperative for international and national interoperability standards and protocols...’<sup>9</sup> Many Australian museums are still experiencing the challenge of using both digital asset management and traditional collections management systems as they work through extensive backlogs. In 2011, the Melbourne Museum held 6.7 million objects and less than 40% of those were electronically registered.<sup>10</sup> Collection Managers continued to enter documentation onto EMu amidst competing priorities including the preparation of objects and materials for inclusion in exhibitions and managing increased requests for access to the collections by communities. As a contribution to the

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<sup>6</sup> Hart, Tim and Hallet, Martin 2011, 'Australian museums and the technology revolution', *Understanding Museums: Australian Museums and Museology*, D. Griffin and L. Paroissien (eds.), National Museum of Australia, pp.1–4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Hart, op.cit.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ladas, Nancy (Manager, Collections Information Systems), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 20 January, 2011.

Melbourne Museum during fieldwork, I completed documentation of objects on the EMu collections catalogues from hardcopy files and materials. The additional research required for data enhancement and indigenous language inclusion in collections catalogues was acknowledged by museum professionals as being too time-consuming for Collection Managers with other competing demands. The responsibility for data enhancement and research was frequently undertaken by Curators as they delivered on project outcomes such as exhibitions or publications for museums.<sup>11</sup>

An additional and significant issue for museum professionals in assessing whether collections catalogue projects could be completed was a need to source funding to achieve projects involving collaboration with indigenous communities. Australian museums have experienced changes to funding models since the 1980s. In 2010–2011, there was a greater need and expectation to raise capital for projects from private as well as public funding sources. Museums had been transformed from public spaces of scholarly research with collections based in ethnography, to sites that at times have been called ‘edutainment’; venues where movie theatres, performance stages, shops, restaurants and exhibitions now collided as a means to attract broader audiences and become more cost-efficient venues.<sup>12</sup> Due to an increasing demand for museum capital to be raised outside of government, museums now ‘public-private partnership institutions’ demanded more from museum professionals. Museums were required to adjust internal structures and create greater responsibilities for staff outside of their specialised knowledge fields.<sup>13</sup>

In 2010, as I gained access to state and smaller institutions I observed changes in the hierarchical structures of museums due to funding that had led to confusion for staff. Staff were unsure of the current leadership direction and their position within a new vision for the museum.<sup>14</sup> Collection Managers shared concern on the increased levels of responsibility and were at times overwhelmed by discussions on language documentation in collection management systems given the already increased responsibilities felt. Collections Managers also expressed an inability within the structure to

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<sup>11</sup> Frustrations in workloads, and the increased level of demands in Collections Management were discussed by research participants including staff at both the Melbourne Museum and the Koorie Heritage Trust.

<sup>12</sup> Gillespie, R. 2001, 'Making an exhibition: one gallery, one thousand objects, one million critics: Giving an insider's view of the Melbourne Museum, its challenge, constraints and joys', *Meanjin*, vol. 60, no.4, pp.111–121.

<sup>13</sup> Griffin and Paroissien in Baddeley, Claire 2013, *Managing the new museology: The changing role, purpose and management of Australian museums since 1980*, University of Canberra, Canberra.

<sup>14</sup> An ingrained ‘institutionalised’ dissatisfaction was observed, and issues relating to change within the organisation raised in a number of interviews within Melbourne Museum including Raberts, Melanie (Manager – Indigenous Cultures, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January, 2011; Suda, Elizabeth "Liz" (Public Programs Coordinator, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 7 January, 2011; Smith, Sandra (Family History Coordinator, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 20 January, 2011.

make recommendations for new projects to complete data enhancement in collections catalogues. The Manager of the Indigenous Cultures Program at Melbourne Museum, Melanie Raberts, remarked that the museum was now a '...more corporatised organisation and far more business-like, with an element of bureaucracy...It's very difficult to influence policy when you're talking about a particular issue...'<sup>15</sup> It was sensed amongst staff that only major projects with a clear commitment by the leadership team would open opportunities for data enhancement. As Raberts confirmed '...it's not something that Collection Managers would drive, in the current areas of roles and responsibilities. It would be something that the Curators would drive. We'd probably get to look at the document and contribute to it, but we wouldn't be the drivers...'<sup>16</sup> Collection Managers were feeling the pressure of new technologies and the requirement for backlogs of data to be digitised, dealing with competing demands for exhibition development as well as an increase in requests by researchers and communities to access collections.

## **Requests for Access**

At the time of my fieldwork in Victorian collecting institutions, museum professionals were noticing an increase in requests by researchers and communities, including indigenous communities, to view and access collections. The expectations of communities had changed, and they required museums to be adaptable and accessible to all. This coincided with growing awareness by indigenous communities that museums, galleries and libraries held valuable information on indigenous languages required for revival and strengthening programs.

In 2011, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group (ESILWG) prepared a briefing to government in the form of an Issues and Actions paper that confirmed the need for collecting institutions to be more accessible. They identified that documentation processes were needed to be clearer and more in-depth, so that source communities were able to search and discover indigenous language words held in collections documentation. The Working Group recommended the implementation of a National Indigenous Language Materials Collection Policy. They raised concerns for auditing collection records and the need to have a clear process for the identification of resources. The Issues and Actions paper stated that '...it was widely acknowledged by conference participants that current collection policies and library practices have not supported

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<sup>15</sup> Raberts, Melanie (Manager – Indigenous Cultures, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to effectively access services and resources.<sup>17</sup> Key recommendations were ‘...to develop strategic plans of action for work to commence on providing high quality access to language and materials...’ and ‘...develop a set of appropriate and sensitive cataloguing standards for cultural items held in collections...’<sup>18</sup> The Working Group would continue to advise the Australian Government on the formation of a national curriculum for indigenous language learning.

Both indigenous communities and the museums themselves agreed that it was time to review the relationships between indigenous peoples and museums. A Melbourne Museum publication acknowledged that ‘...for many, many decades it was assumed that the views of Indigenous Australians did not count for much, because they belonged to a culture that was inferior and would inevitably die out. Indigenous perspectives were thus effectively silenced...’<sup>19</sup> Boon Wurrung Elder N’Arweet Carolyn Briggs stated as we sat together in 2011, ‘...fair enough that the museum goes into community and collects all of this stuff. But what does the community get from that...the community gets nothing...’<sup>20</sup>

The growing needs for language documentation in collections was acknowledged during a turning point in Australian cultural institutions. From ESILWG to responses received by indigenous community members, it was evident that documentation held with cultural materials was not aligned with the expectations of communities. Although Collection Managers acknowledged the increases in requests for language auditing and documentation as a means to understand more on the historic and contemporary life of Victorian Aboriginal communities, they felt limited by their capacity to ask questions about and document indigenous languages. Museum professionals confirmed that indigenous languages would be documented if language words were included in contemporary acquisitions, as artists and makers were increasing the use of language in titles and descriptors. But within historic collections they saw a greater challenge. The following section takes a detailed look at how indigenous languages were represented in the collection management systems of the most prominent indigenous collections in Victoria during 2010–2011.

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<sup>17</sup> Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group 2011, *Indigenous languages collections - issues and actions paper. Framework for National Indigenous Languages Collections Policy*, report prepared by Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group, ESILWG, Sydney, pp.1–17.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Museum of Victoria 2000, *Bunjilaka: the Aboriginal Centre at Melbourne Museum*, Museum Victoria, Melbourne, p.45.

<sup>20</sup> Briggs, Caroline (Boon Wurrung Elder, Board Member VACL), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 28 October, 2010.

The Koorie Heritage Trust was established to represent the culture of all Victorian Aboriginal people. The Trust's motto, Gnokan Danna Murra Kor-ki, is a combination of two Koori languages meaning 'give me your hand my friend' and let's 'bridge the cultural gap'.<sup>21</sup> The indigenous-led institution is custodian of a nationally significant collection formed by the respected Elder Jim Berg (Gunditjmara).<sup>22</sup> Uncle Jim believed that the collection '...is the most unique in the world. It may not be the biggest, but it's the best...'<sup>23</sup>

Formerly known as Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Trust, the collections were first located within Melbourne Museum then at a temporary home in Flinders Lane before moving into a purpose-built facility in King Street, Melbourne.<sup>24</sup> In 2005, I worked within the Trust as the Travelling Exhibitions Coordinator at the King Street location. I hold wonderful memories of a collaborative, family-like environment where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff worked together to deliver nationally significant projects. On many occasions I held babies while their mums were in meetings. I had long conversations with Koori Elders on language, culture, and life. It was a working environment like no other. In 2010, I returned to the Trust this time as a researcher to explore and examine collections management systems and the connection to indigenous languages within the cultural institution.

Throughout fieldwork in 2010, I completed an extensive project as a contribution back to the Trust and collections management department. The Collections Managers were in need of a Significance assessment of the Oral History collections that followed the *Significance 2.0* methodology acclaimed within the Australian museum sector. I presented an extensive significance report to museum leaders that assisted the Oral History Collection Manager to source funding for urgent work required for digitisation of the collections.<sup>25</sup>

The Trust collections, representative of the 38 language groups in Victoria, included 2700 artefacts, 900 paintings, 48,000 photographs, 6000 library items and more than 2000 oral histories.<sup>26</sup> Due to the history of displacement of Koori people, historic items were acquired for the collections through

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<sup>21</sup> Koorie Heritage Trust 2017, Koorie Heritage Trust Wominjeka Welcome, Koorie Heritage Trust Incorporated, Melbourne, viewed 16 July 2017, <<http://korieheritagetrust.com.au/>>.

<sup>22</sup> A complete history of the Koorie Heritage Trust is not provided as this is included elsewhere including: Charles, Beth 2006, op.cit.; Culture Victoria 2016, *The Koorie Heritage Trust Collections and History*, Melbourne, viewed 13 April 2020, <<https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/the-korie-heritage-trust-collections-and-history/>>; Koorie Heritage Trust 2020, *Koorie Heritage Trust: History*, viewed 13 April 2020, <<https://korieheritagetrust.com.au/about-us/history/>>.

<sup>23</sup> Berg, Jim (Koorie Elder, Founder of Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio recording, Melbourne, 18 October, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Koorie Heritage Trust 2010, 'Business plan 2010–2012', unpublished, internal document, p.1–26.

<sup>25</sup> The Koorie Heritage Trust Oral History Collections Significance Assessment I completed during fieldwork is included in Chapter 6: Policy Recommendations.

<sup>26</sup> Koorie Heritage Trust 2010, 'Collections policies and procedures manual', unpublished, internal document, p.1–31.

auction houses, art dealers and community members, and there were significant gaps in the collection's records on origins, makers and place. Exhibitions Manager, Maree Clarke (Yorta Yorta, Wamba Wamba, Mutti Mutti, Boonwurrung) now an internationally renowned artist, confirmed that '...in the past, when the museum acquired Aboriginal artefacts, they didn't record all of the details. This meant that there was a break in knowledge. We have our collection of artefacts at the Koorie Heritage Trust, but we don't have that layer of information about what the designs were about...'<sup>27</sup> Details on designs, style, technique and evidence of the maker were not recorded, or if they were minimal details were documented in English only. It was common practice to include only general information on the object's origin at the time of acquisition. Without documentation and a connection to a particular language group or maker, it made contemporary interpretation of materials difficult for the cultural institution. Christine Keeler, Assistant Collections Manager confirmed that for '...most contemporary works we'd have some idea on where the artist or the maker comes from, but not for everybody. Some people identify to three or four different cultural groups, so where do you put their work?'<sup>28</sup> As we discussed the prospect of reconnecting Koori languages to collections, Nerissa Broben, Senior Collections Manager identified that the prominent challenge with the collection was a lack of accurate documentation:

We know from our own collections management experience how easy it is to get locations and information wrong. There is a danger there...Then there are also items that are going to cross over those language borders. We have items that say 'Western Districts' so I'm not sure which of those items you would place into what language groups...There's always going to be problems with whatever boundaries you choose to work with.<sup>29</sup>

Inaccurate definitions and provenance for collections objects is a significant issue throughout Australian museums due to a neglect at the time of acquisition, and the inability for museum staff to dedicate time to build relationships with contemporary communities. Jason Gibson identified the challenges faced by museums attempting to keep track of the custodians of objects, and generational changes that occur in communities in central Australia:

...the fluid ways in which custodianship over objects are conferred via unfolding processes of generational change, different levels of knowledge acquisition, changes in ritual status etc., will present significant challenges for museums who, for good reasons, have tended to maintain a distance from such intensely local/personal concerns. The work of noting and

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<sup>27</sup> Clarke, Maree 2009, *Maree Clarke: Reflections on Creative Practice, Place & Identity*, RMIT University School of Education Melbourne, p.8.

<sup>28</sup> Keeler, Chris (Assistant Collections Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 4 November, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Broben, Nerissa (Senior Collections Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 20 October, 2010.

monitoring claims to ownership would in itself present significant challenges. This would require staff to not only possess a familiarity with the various families and individuals involved, but have a firm understanding of how different rights are bestowed and withdrawn in accordance with Anmatyerr/Arrernte law.<sup>30</sup>

Gibson highlighted the need for museum staff to build and continue relationships with source communities to be able to update records on cultural permissions and cultural rights to discuss objects in collections. This documentation, Gibson advised, is complex and challenging for museum staff to continue to record.<sup>31</sup> It is acknowledged that museum professionals need ongoing relationships with communities to document changes relating to law, knowledge and generational perspectives within source communities. Throughout fieldwork in both Australia and New Zealand museums, museum professionals identified a lack of time available to dedicate to relationship building, collaboration and consistency in relationships with source communities. High staff turnover rates and changes to the sector in response to funding also prevented continuity in museum professionals working closely with communities.

Similar to observations at the Koorie Heritage Trust, inaccurate documentation, generalised provenance due to historic collecting practices, and a lack of time for collaboration was present within the Melbourne Museum's Indigenous Cultures department. In 2010, I gained access to the collections at Melbourne Museum to explore professional practices and language documentation in collections management systems. The state museum collections, established in Melbourne in 1854 at the University of Melbourne, were formed as a collection of representative cultural materials from Aboriginal communities throughout south-eastern Australia. The collections were first held at the Industrial and Technological Museum that opened in 1870 with the intent to collect 'primitive' technology and ethnography. The first entries in the register for the anthropological collections were documented in 1888 and did not include the origins of objects.<sup>32</sup> Antoinette Smith, Senior Curator Southeastern Australia Collection confirmed in the 'Indigenous Cultures Southeastern Australian Ethnographic Collection Development Plan' that:

The collection is not well documented, with extensive work needed to be undertaken to research the archives and collate information to enhance the paucity of documentation

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<sup>30</sup> Gibson, Jason 2019, 'You're my kwertenger!': transforming models of care for central Australian aboriginal museum collections', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, vol. 34, no.3, p.250.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p.252.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, Antoinette et al n.d.op.cit.

currently available...There is a small portion of items that have information pertaining to the maker or artist, the majority of both historical and contemporary objects do not.<sup>33</sup>

In 1993, the Victorian State Government announced plans for a new museum. The institution's purpose '...was no longer merely the preservation of heritage for future generations. We must promote and present public debate on the natural environment, the changing role of technology and other issues central to our society...'<sup>34</sup> The institution was re-envisioned as Museum Victoria with separate sites including Scienceworks (1992), Immigration Museum (1998) and Melbourne Museum (2000). The unveiling of Melbourne Museum coincided as other State institutions were launching new complexes including the National Gallery of Victoria's Federation Square galleries, the State Library of Victoria, and the Australian Centre of the Moving Image at Federation Square.<sup>35</sup> This was a period in time when large-scale investment was being committed to the arts and cultural sectors through Federal and State funding.

In 2010, Melbourne Museum was focused on the redevelopment of Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre (Bunjilaka) to be discussed further in this chapter. The Indigenous Cultures department, as custodians of the Southeastern Australian Ethnographic collections, managed an extensive collection of 3796 cultural items from organic artefacts and fibre craft (baskets, shields, woodcarvings, etchings, possum skin cloaks, eel traps) to internationally significant works by William Barack and Tommy McRae. The collections represented Aboriginal communities from the Murray River, New South Wales, broader south-eastern Australia, and Tasmania.<sup>36</sup> Other collections under care by the department included the Northern Australian Ethnographic collection, Donald Thomson collection, Ethnohistory collection, Family History program and Ancestral Remains collection. At the time of my fieldwork, the only indigenous professional working within the collections management area for the Indigenous Cultures department was the Assistant Curator, John Duggan (Gamilaroi, Miloroy). Having only one Aboriginal museum professional working with the collection was a significant issue for the department, as only Duggan was able to access and handle certain areas of the collections due to cultural protocols and permissions. In 2011, the Melbourne Museum completed a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and Aboriginal Employment strategy for all areas of museum that identified the need to increase

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Museum of Victoria 1995 in Baddeley, Claire 2013, op.cit. p.87.

<sup>35</sup> I do not detail a complete history of Melbourne Museum as that is written about elsewhere including Museum Victoria 2004, op.cit.; Gillespie, R. 2001, 'Making an exhibition: one gallery, one thousand objects, one million critics: Giving an insider's view of the Melbourne Museum, its challenge, constraints and joys', *Meanjin*, vol. 60, no.4, pp.111–121; Horn, B. 2006, 'Barriers and drivers: building audience at the Immigration Museum, Melbourne, Australia', *Museum International*, vol. 58, no.3, pp.78–84; Russell, L. 2001, 'Bunjilaka brooding: inspecting the Aboriginal center at the Melbourne Museum', *Meanjin*, vol. 60, no.4, pp.99–103.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, Antoinette et al n.d. op.cit.



indigenous representation at all levels within the institution.<sup>37</sup> This was a critical time for indigenous cultural rights and indigenous cultural materials held within the museum.

Within the Southeastern Australian Ethnographic collections management records, documentation was incomplete, unspecific or untrusted by Collection Managers. The Manager of Indigenous Cultures, Melanie Raberts, confirmed that historic collecting practices in Australia had resulted in collections with varying degrees of complete and useful documentation. Anthropological diaries and records created at the time of collection were managed in a separate area of the museum, with most of the documentation remaining undigitised and therefore time-consuming to explore. Raberts remarked ‘...we carry the legacy of past collectors, and amateur collectors, and past regards for practice and museum practice, which was not language oriented...until wonderful people like Thompson came along...language was not captured at all...’<sup>38</sup> The Senior Curator for Bunjilaka Redevelopment, David Sluki confirmed that due to historic collecting practices, the collections appeared to tell more a story of the collector rather than indigenous communities:

If there are objects in the collections that relate to stories that we get told, that would be amazing. Because that's one of the problems we've got is that so many objects are unprovenanced or completely decontextualised. And often tell the story more of the collector than the Aboriginal people that made or used the actual object.<sup>39</sup>

Historic collecting practices presents a significant challenge for museum professionals when considering language reconnection to collections. Many Australian museums hold little information in collections management systems due to a backlog of digitisation required from historic registers and files. Throughout fieldwork on both the Koorie Heritage Trust and the Melbourne Museum, I observed a disconnect between internal documentation practices for both the small indigenous-led museum and the large State-led institutions.

## **Collections Management Systems**

In this section I explore direct examples from both the Koorie Heritage Trust and Melbourne Museum collections to highlight the neglect of indigenous languages in collections management systems. I

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<sup>37</sup> Schultz, Laine 2014, 'Maintaining Aboriginal engagement in Australian museums: two models of inclusion, *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 29, vol.5, pp.412–428.

<sup>38</sup> Raberts, Melanie (Manager – Indigenous Cultures, Melbourne Museum), Tour of Melbourne Museum with Melanie Raberts, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 19 November, 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Sluki, David (Senior Curator, Bunjilaka Redevelopment, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 6 January, 2011.

address reasons why collections management systems are often sparse with content and are therefore inaccurate and flawed records for collections.

In 2011, the Koorie Heritage Trust was transferring collections records from a purpose-built Filemaker database to the eHive collections management system. The eHive system is a well-known collections database developed in Aotearoa and appropriate for smaller collections. The outdated Filemaker database was limited in its search facilities as keywords could not be used to search across all fields, restricting the search for indigenous language across the catalogue. Collections Manager Miriam Troon confirmed that staff had become accustomed on the process to search using this structure and advised that descriptors in indigenous language in the Filemaker database would have been considered 'additional information' and entered within the story or history fields. The filemaker catalogue did hold a field titled 'Koorie name', as seen in Figure 10, but this held no content in the database. The Collections Managers confirmed this was in due to a lack of information within historical records and data for the collections.

KOORIE NAME	Aboriginal name of object (from the relevant are or in the artist's language) <i>ie. Boomerang= Wangin (Gunnai language)</i>
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**Figure 9** Filemaker Pro field 'Koorie Name', Koorie Heritage Trust (screenshot) October 2010.

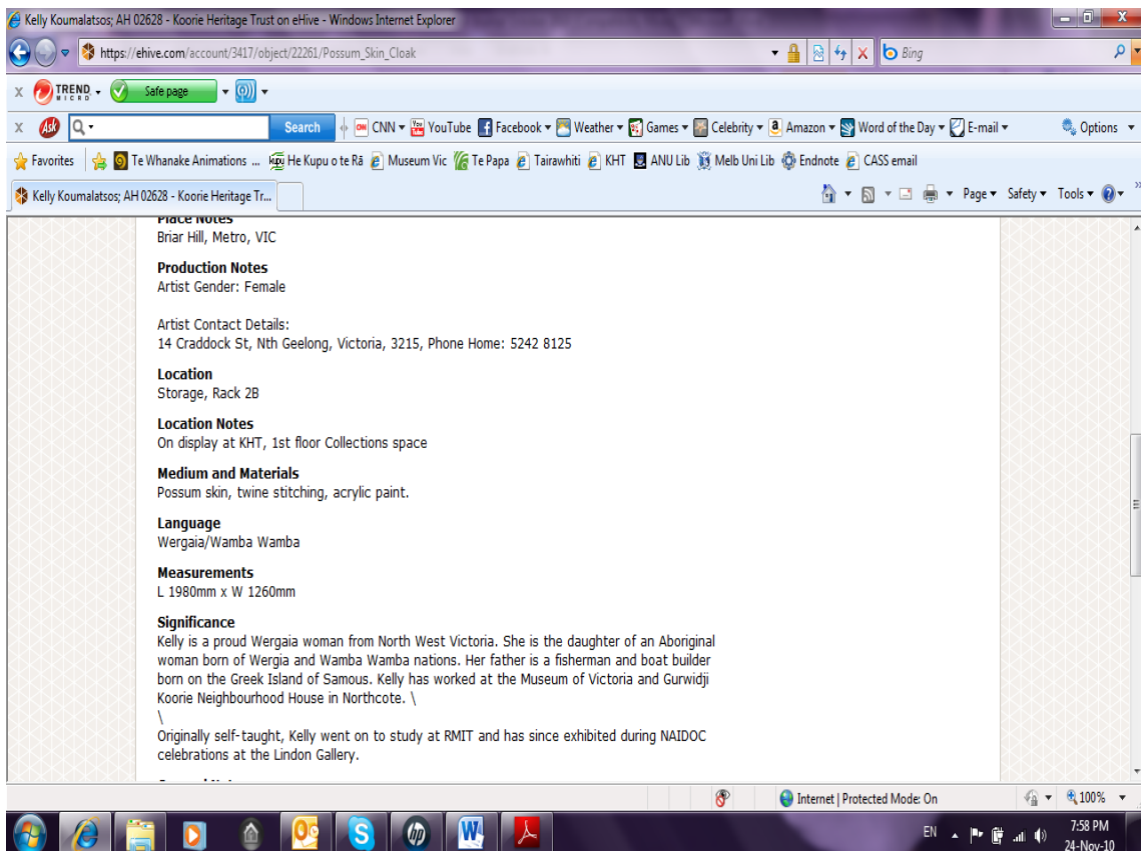
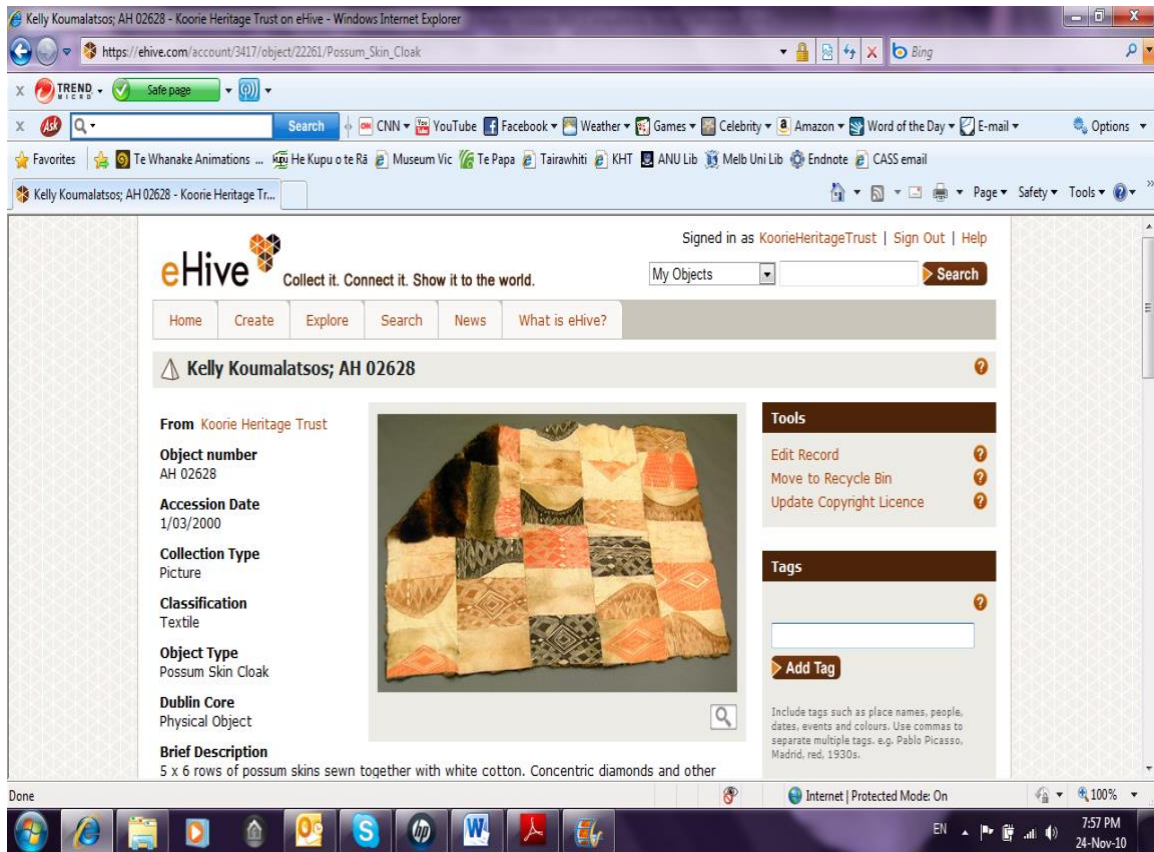


Figure 10 – Figure 11 Examples of eHive database, Koorie Heritage Trust (screenshots) October 2010.

In Figures 10–11, I present screenshots of the eHive database that was being finalised at the time of fieldwork within the Trust. Although Collection Managers were dedicating time to preparing information to import into eHive, there was no time or funding allocated to the project to complete data enhancement and further research for the records. To explain inconsistencies observed in the collection management systems, I identify two direct examples of contemporary artworks held in the collections that included indigenous language, and outline that descriptions, provenance and contextual information was documented in the records in English only.

**Vicki Couzens (Gunditjmara, Keerray-Woorroong, Western District), *Kaarratpeeteen ween* 2006, etching, 129 x 60cm (AH 3560)**

The public description for *Kaarratpeeteen ween* 2006 identifies that the contemporary work was commissioned for the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games *Respecting Indigenous Communities strategy*.<sup>40</sup> The title of the work, *Kaarratpeeteen ween*, translates to ‘message stick’. In one of our many discussions on Koori languages, the artist Couzens explained the use of Gunditjmara language within the title. Couzens clarified that ‘...I made a deliberate choice to do that. I think there's only a couple of works of art before I did that in English and everything else is in language because you use it or you lose it. You've got to use your language to bring it back...’<sup>41</sup> Eades established that at the time they were ‘...seeing a lot more artists introduce language titles for their work or (they) will actually give language words for the artefacts that they've made...’<sup>42</sup>

The entry for the artwork in the collections management system, as seen in Figures 12–13 identifies the title with no English translation in the ‘Name/Title’ field. A translation is however included in the ‘Inscriptions and Marks’ field. The ‘Language’ field indicates the language of the artist and not the language engaged for the work. As a contemporary acquisition to the Trust’s collection this example not only shows a contemporary indigenous artists’ interest in incorporating Koori language with the artwork, but it also shows a lack of Koori language engagement for descriptions, context and additional information. English is still the prominent language engaged to document the contemporary work.

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<sup>40</sup> Victorian Government 2006, *Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games* (Kit), Commonwealth Games Committee, Melbourne.

<sup>41</sup> Couzens, Vicki, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 16 November, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> Eades, Jason, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 23 November, 2010.

**Kaaratpeeteen ween; Vicki Couzens; AH  
03560**



From [Koorie Heritage Trust](#)

Object number  
AH 03560  
Accession Date  
25/08/2006  
Name/Title  
Kaaratpeeteen ween  
Collection Type  
Artefact

Classification

Picture  
Object Type  
Etching  
Dublin Core  
Still Image  
Brief Description

Message stick in the middle of art work; to its left are six brown rocks with five stylised spirit people dancing around the rocks. Behind the message stick is a large grey feather, both on top and at the bottom of the piece is a number of brown horizontal lines top the bottom right of the message stick are two shields, one club and one spear.

Public Description (About this object)

'Kaaratpeeteen ween' (message stick) was commissioned for the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games Respecting Indigenous Communities strategy. The message stick is a means of communication and information dissemination. It carried information in the form of notches, symbols, colours and other markings. The symbolism on the stick begins with the notches on the left hand side which denote the 36 language groups of Victoria; these are the people sending out the message of invitation. The notches on the right indicate the 71 countries of the Commonwealth who are being invited to gather to celebrate the Commonwealth Games. My work is inspired by my culture. It is a representation of my perspective, how I see the world through an Aboriginal woman's eyes. It is drawn from the teachings of my ancestors and spirits who guide and teach me.'

Vicki Couzens

Maker

Vicki Couzens

Place Notes

VIC

Production Notes

Artist Gender: Female

Location

Storage, 23

Medium and Materials

ink on paper

Technique

etching

Inscription and Marks

3/5 'kaaratpeeteen ween' V.Couzens', 'kaaratpeeteen ween' (message stick) was commissioned for the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games Respecting Indigenous Communities Strategy'

Language

Kirrae Wurrung/Gunditjmarra

Measurements

L. 129cm x W. 60cm

Provenance Person

commonwealth games committee

Acquisition Valuation

7500

Legal or Ownership Status

Donated

**Figure 12 – Figure 13** Vicki Couzen, *Kaaratpeeteen ween* 2006, eHIVE catalogue entries, Koorie Heritage Trust (screenshots) October 2010.

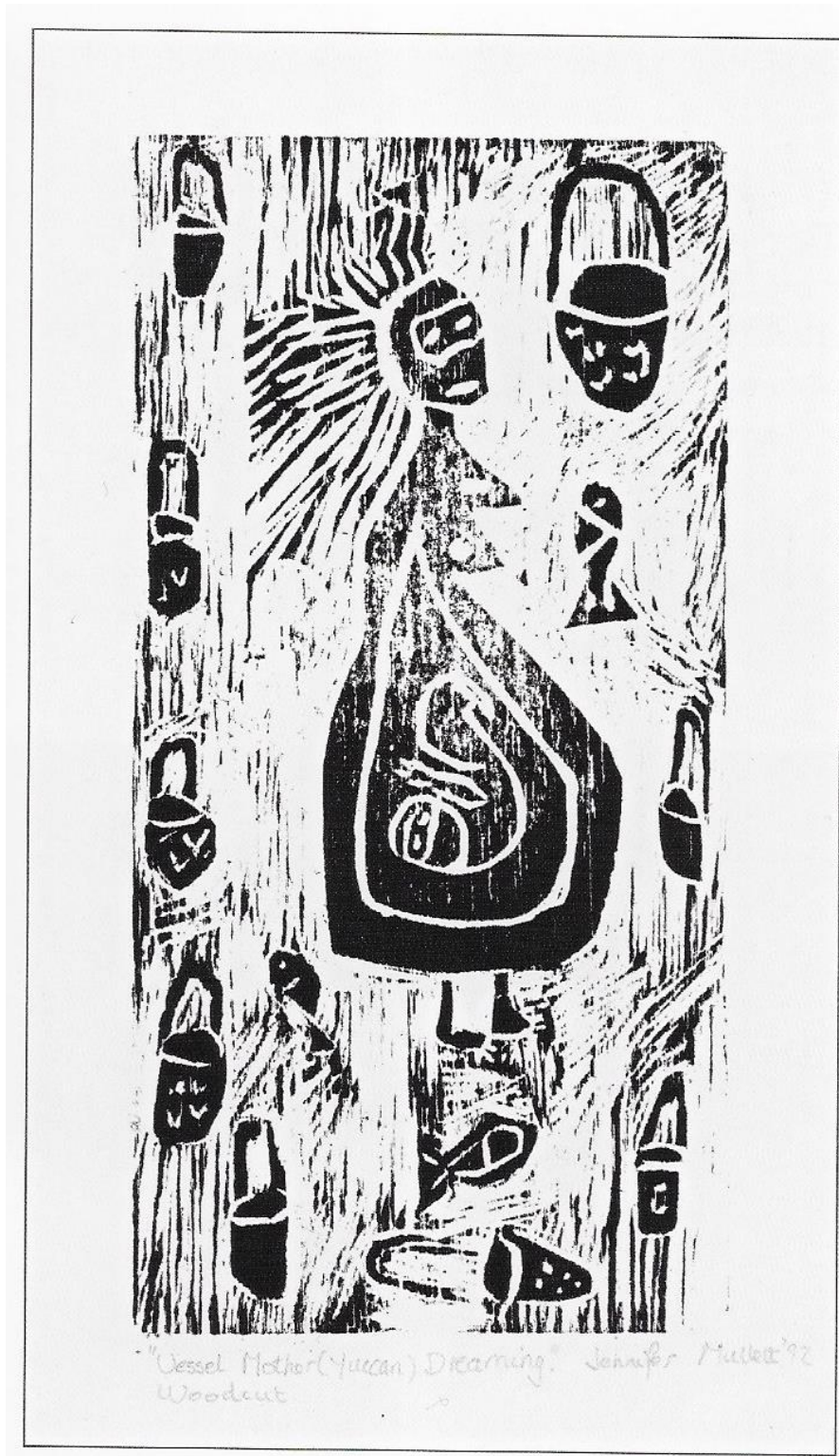
**Jennifer Mullet (Monero, Gunnai Kurnai), *Vessel Mother (Yuccan) Dreaming* c.1995, woodcut on paper, 31 x 17.5cm (AH 2681).**

The Koorie Heritage Trust collections had a deficiency of indigenous languages documented in the collection management systems, even for contemporary acquisitions. In the Trust's collection, *Vessel Mother (Yuccan) Dreaming* c.1995 depicts a pregnant female figure surrounded by vessels. Interestingly, in the title for this work the Koori word for Mother 'Yuccan' is placed in brackets and as such is read as secondary to the English title.

In the catalogue entries in both eHive and the Filemaker database as seen in Figures 15–16, there is no translation entered for the word 'Yuccan'. It can be assumed that the use of language in the title selected by the artist is to continue a connection to Country but the catalogue and the collections management records hold no further information on the story, cultural knowledge or reasoning for language use in this work. This restricts interpretation for use in exhibitions or public programs in anything more than being indicative of a Koori work from a period in time or included in display due to the form shown in the work.

The stories connected to contemporary cultural materials are documented in English only for this contemporary acquisition. To complete an update of the data in Koori language would take significant research, collaboration and a change to professional practice within the Trust.





**Figure 14** Jennifer Mullet, *Vessel Mother (Yuccan) Dreaming* c.1995. woodcut on paper, 31 x 17.5cm Koorie Heritage Trust (collection image AH 2681).

<span style="font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">KOORIE</span> HERITAGE TRUST Inc.		User: Nerissa
Home   Artists   Client   Curatorial Items   Item Movement   Loans   Reporting   System User   Logout		
<b>Curatorial Items</b> <span style="float: right;">Please remember to save your work.</span>		
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>Curatorial Items</b></p> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><input type="button" value="ADD NEW ITEM"/></p> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">Found 68 Items &lt;&lt; Page 5 of 7 &gt;&gt;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="margin-bottom: 5px;">                     AH 02666 : <b>Painting</b> <span style="float: right;"><input type="button" value="EDIT"/></span>                      Title: "Federation"                 </li> <li style="margin-bottom: 5px;">                     AH 02463 : <b>Painting</b> <span style="float: right;"><input type="button" value="EDIT"/></span>                      Title: "Emu (Miowera)"                 </li> <li style="margin-bottom: 5px;">                     AH 02682 : <b>Painting</b> <span style="float: right;"><input type="button" value="EDIT"/></span>                      Title: "Tarragut the porcupine"                 </li> <li style="margin-bottom: 5px;">                     AH 00560 : <b>Pokerwork</b> <span style="float: right;"><input type="button" value="EDIT"/></span>                      Title: "Untitled"                 </li> <li style="margin-bottom: 5px;">                     AH 02273 : <b>Print</b> <span style="float: right;"><input type="button" value="EDIT"/></span>                      Title: "Untitled"                 </li> <li style="margin-bottom: 5px;">                     AH 02683 : <b>Print</b> <span style="float: right;"><input type="button" value="EDIT"/></span>                      Title: "Women making feather flowers"                 </li> <li style="margin-bottom: 5px;">                     AH 02681 : <b>Print</b> <span style="float: right;"><input type="button" value="EDIT"/></span>                      Title: "Vessel Mother (Yuccan) Dreaming"                 </li> <li style="margin-bottom: 5px;">                     AH 02774 : <b>Print</b> <span style="float: right;"><input type="button" value="EDIT"/></span>                      Title: "Babbogong Moths"                 </li> <li style="margin-bottom: 5px;">                     AH 02839 : <b>Print</b> <span style="float: right;"><input type="button" value="EDIT"/></span>                      Title: "Paying Homage to my son &amp; Symbols of Gunai women"                 </li> <li style="margin-bottom: 5px;">                     AH 02684 : <b>Print</b> <span style="float: right;"><input type="button" value="EDIT"/></span> </li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><input type="button" value="SEARCH"/></p> <p>Accession: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Acquired from: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Acquisition Method: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Artist: <input type="text" value="mullett"/></p> <p>Group: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Locality: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Material: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Object Name: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Region: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Subject: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Title: <input type="text"/></p> <p style="text-align: right; margin: 0;"><input type="button" value="GO"/></p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>Batch label print job</b></p> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">0 items selected</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>Edit Curatorial Item</b></p> <p>Accession No. <input type="text" value="AH 02681"/> * <span style="float: right;">Restricted <input type="checkbox"/></span></p> <p>Subject: <input type="text" value="Picture"/> * <span style="float: right;">Object: <input type="text" value="Print"/> *</span></p> <p>Koorie Name: <input type="text"/> <span style="float: right;">Title: <input type="text" value="Vessel Mother (Yuccan)"/></span></p> <hr/> <p>Artist: <input type="text" value="Mullett, Jennifer"/> <span style="float: right;">Image </span></p> <p>Gender: Female</p> <p>Group: Gunai/Monaro</p> <p>Place Of Production: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Period Of Production: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Date Of Productions: <input type="text" value="0"/> - <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/></p> <p style="text-align: right; margin: 0;"><a href="#">[view full]</a> <a href="#">[remove]</a></p> <hr/> <p>How Acquired: <input type="text" value="Purchased"/> * <span style="float: right;">Client: <input type="text" value="- none -"/></span></p> <p>Accession Date: <input type="text" value="19"/> <input type="text" value="June"/> <input type="text" value="1995"/></p> <p>Acquired From: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Price: <input type="text" value="\$55"/></p> <p>Value: <input type="text"/> Date: <input type="text" value="0"/> - <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/></p> <hr/> <p>Country: <input type="text"/></p> <p>State: <input type="text" value="- none -"/></p> <p>Region: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Specific Locality: <input type="text"/></p> <hr/> <p>Status: <input type="text" value="Storage"/> <span style="float: right;">Current Location: <input type="text" value="Painting room"/></span></p> <p style="float: right;">Permanent Location: <input type="text" value="35B"/> *</p> <p style="float: right;">Owner of Current Location: <input type="text"/></p> <hr/> <p>Measurements L: <input type="text" value="388"/> H: <input type="text" value="30"/> W: <input type="text" value="530"/></p> <p>Material: <input type="text" value="ink on paper"/></p> <p>Technique: <input type="text"/></p> </div>	

**Figure 15** Jennifer Mullett, *Vessel Mother (Yuccan) Dreaming* c.1995, Filemaker catalogue entry, Koorie Heritage Trust (AH 2681) (screenshot) October 2010.





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## Vessel Mother (Yuccan) Dreaming; Jennifer Mullett; AH 02681



From [Koorie Heritage Trust](#)

Object number  
AH 02681

Accession Date  
19/06/1995

Name/Title  
Vessel Mother (Yuccan) Dreaming

Collection Type  
Picture

Classification  
Picture

Object Type  
Print

Dublin Core  
Still Image

Brief Description  
Female figure with baby in stomach, surrounded by vessels.

Maker  
Jennifer Mullett

Production Notes  
Artist Gender: Female

Location  
Storage, 35B

Medium and Materials  
ink on paper

Language  
Gunai/Monaro

Measurements  
L 388 x H 30 x W 530

Acquisition Price Local  
55

**Figure 16** Jennifer Mullett, *Vessel Mother (Yuccan) Dreaming* c.1995, eHive catalogue entry, Koorie Heritage Trust (AH 2681) (screenshot) October 2010.

In the Trust's collections management systems, indigenous languages were not identified in the one field. Indigenous language, when found, is always combined with English. Although the significance of indigenous language documentation was acknowledged by the Trust's museum professionals, I observed no language present on object labels, limited language in catalogue listings, and minimal language within the permanent exhibition didactic panels. Museum professionals suggested that this was due to complexities in consultation required to undertake language documentation, politics over the selection of language including contested histories, and that the work for data enhancement was

beyond their day-to-day working capabilities. Keeler confirmed that ‘...some artists or artefact makers have given us statements that might incorporate a little bit of language in them, but that’s the exception rather than the norm...’<sup>43</sup> Miriam Troon, Senior Collections Manager agreed that ‘...it’s not until more recently we’ve seen artists embracing language in their work...putting language names to the artworks they’re creating or incorporating language words in the stories that they supply with the artworks...’<sup>44</sup> Speaking about the need for indigenous language documentation in collections catalogues, Eades stated ‘...it makes sense that we’re not only talking about the physical object itself, but that story, everything about the object, including language. For me it becomes more of a complete way of passing on something, as opposed to just the physical item...’<sup>45</sup>

The adoption of indigenous language in titles and artwork descriptions for contemporary artists is a change in documentation practices that reconnects the work to Country. Museum professionals within the Trust expressed the need for artists to supply this information. Broben confirmed that her vision for language documentation would be led by the artists themselves; ‘...the use of language needs to come from the artist or the individual. It’s not something that we can impose on them...where that information is presented, we can ensure that it has priority in the way it is interpreted...’<sup>46</sup> Koori language use observed in both the Filemaker and eHive collections management systems was present only when the language group name of the artist was documented, or occasionally when the title of the work for contemporary art was supplied by the artist.

Similarly, within Melbourne Museum’s Indigenous Cultures Southeastern collections the use of language in the collections management system KE EMu was rarely documented. Raberts established that language that did exist in the records could not be trusted and that further research was required to confirm the accuracy of the information:

In its current state (language in collections) I'm fairly ambivalent about it. Sometimes it's relevant. Sometimes it isn't. Because invariably it's not the local name necessarily from where that object comes from. It's a more generic term that non-indigenous people apply to an

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<sup>43</sup> Keeler, Chris (Assistant Collections Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 4 November, 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Troon, Miriam (Senior Collections Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 28 October, 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Eades, Jason, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 23 November, 2010.

<sup>46</sup> Broben, Nerissa (Senior Collections Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 20 October, 2010.

object. For example, not all spear throwers are woomeras. Woomera is a central Australian name.<sup>47</sup>

The use of a generic term, and not the local name from the language group from where the object extends is a common issue in ethnographic collections. The museum's 'Collection Development Plan' identifies that data enhancement and research on existing provenance data is required to ensure records are more accurate; stating that a future aim is for '...data enhancement – complication of data gathered on the State Collection in association with updating of KE EMu records and also related to the Provenancing Project...'<sup>48</sup> The museum confirmed that '...as the twentieth century progressed...the collections grew and grew. Some were well documented, others were not. Many of the histories attached to particular objects were lost...'<sup>49</sup> Museum professionals acknowledged the difficulties in data enhancement due to historic displacement and collecting practices, but the concept of language documentation was welcomed by Duggan as he remarked:

Where the languages are still strong you could do that...I'd like to be able to think that we could do it and be accurate...Just because so much language is lost. And we would be really referring to transcripts from the time and accounts of what somebody said...and who knows if they had it right in the first place. You know white fellas going out and trying to understand the complexities of Aboriginal language - you'd want to get it right.<sup>50</sup>

I now discuss direct examples from the KE EMu database observed in 2010 at the Melbourne Museum to address gaps identified in language documentation.

While on placement within the Indigenous Cultures department, I investigated indigenous languages documentation in the EMu database and rarely found language in the title for collection objects. Where indigenous language was present, it was documented in the primary or secondary comment fields only. In Figure 18 the title for the object is 'Throwing Stick'. Held within the Primary fields is the local name from Woi Wurrung language group 'Barn-git'. Noted in this catalogue record is a Curator's comment on the updating of the name of the language group from Woewurng to Woi Wurrung in 1997. Likewise, in Figure 18 the title 'Club' is used with a definition of three different local names for the object documented in the Primary language field including Lil-lil (language group is not identified), Bunyjul (Mitta-Mitta) and Bol-lain (from the Lower Murray. The language group is not identified). The

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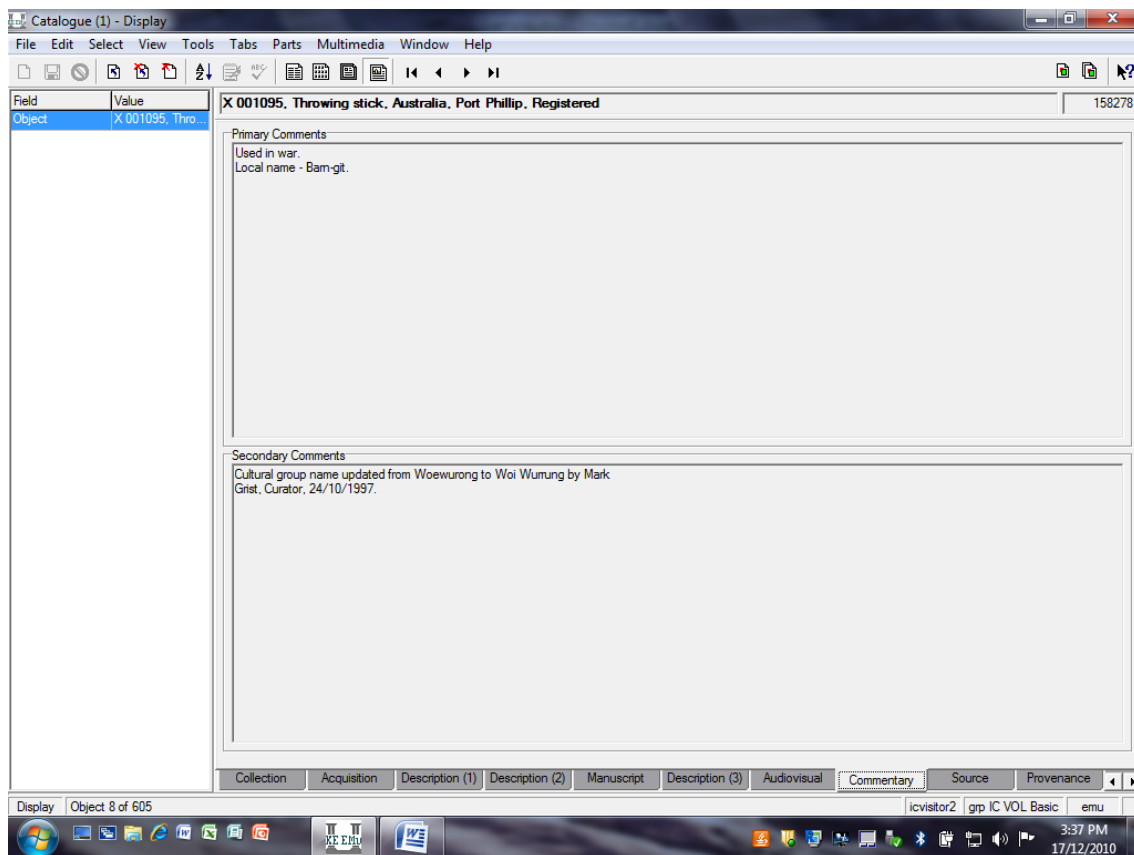
<sup>47</sup> Raberts, Melanie (Manager – Indigenous Cultures, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January, 2011.

<sup>48</sup> Smith, Antoinette et al n.d. op.cit.

<sup>49</sup> Museum of Victoria 2000, op.cit. p.48.

<sup>50</sup> Duggan, John (Assistant Collections Manager – Australia Ethnographic Collection), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January 2011.

two examples described identify local names for the objects but this information is included as secondary to the English title. Both examples do not include the local name in the title field for the objects. Researchers and community members would be required to search across all fields in the database when attempting to discover indigenous language words. The collection management system does hold a large range of fields that could be used to document extensively the stories, provenance and context for objects, as seen in Figure 19. But as Antoinette Smith confirmed, little information is recorded in the hardcopy records and therefore the majority of the fields remain unused.<sup>51</sup>



**Figure 17** Throwing Stick (X001095), KE EMU collections database entry listing, local name in Primary Comments field, “Barn-git from Woi Wurrung language group”, Melbourne Museum (screenshot) Karina Lamb, December 2010.

<sup>51</sup> Smith, Antoinette (Senior Curator - Southeast Australia Collection), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Melbourne Museum, 13 January, 2011.

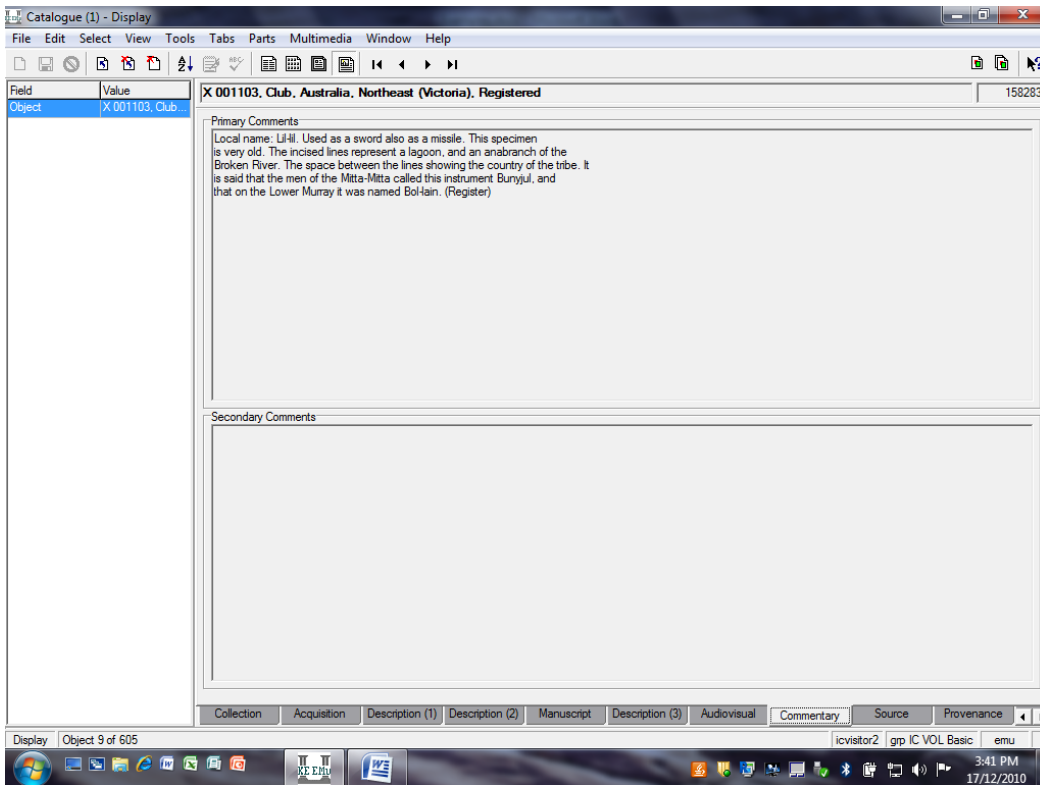


Figure 18 Club (X001103), KE EMU collections database entry listing, local names in Primary Comments field Melbourne Museum (screenshot) Karina Lamb, December 2010.

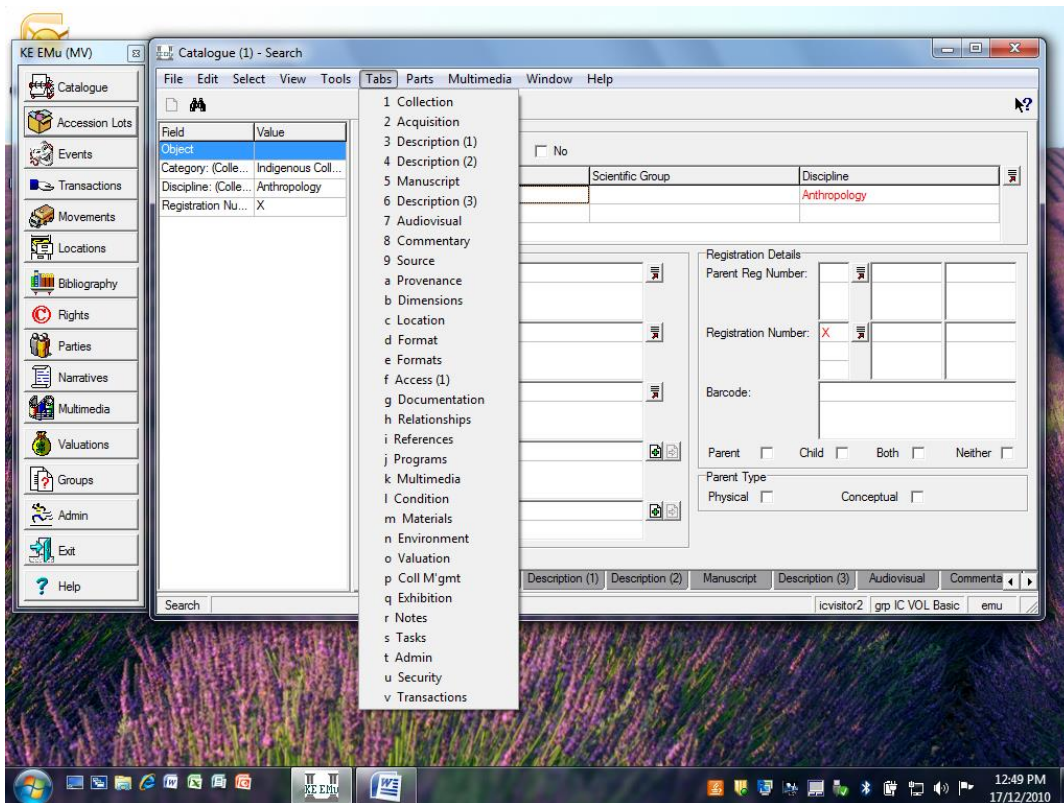


Figure 19 KE EMU collections management system tabs, Melbourne Museum (screenshot) Karina Lamb, December 2010.

Information documented in collection management records for the cultural collections held little information on connections to people, context or indigenous languages. This is due to a neglect in documentation at the time the collection was acquired, and the inability of staff due to time and funding restrictions. The collection management system had the ability to hold language in written and audio-visual form but as Raberts contends; ‘...we certainly have the capability. It's a matter of the capacity to capture all that information and actually put it into the database...’<sup>52</sup>

The Manager of Collections Information Systems, Nancy Ladas at Melbourne Museum indicated a reluctance by Indigenous Cultures department to place collections information online or change the way things have been done in the past even though the technology can accommodate a change in practice. Ladas advised this was due to the staff’s capacity to undertake consultations for online access or to make decisions on what items can be identified as read only or accessible on the website.<sup>53</sup> Raberts confirmed there was a disconnect between the team developing systems and those responsible for content development, ‘...we believe that the content should drive the systems. But a lot of the systems development occurs by people who are system people, not content people. So, there is, in all honesty, an ongoing tension between the system developers and the content managers, or content developers, as to the complexities of some of the systems that are being developed...’<sup>54</sup> Collections Managers were confident that the disconnect between museum departments did affect the management of documentation.

While accessing museum collections in Victorian museums, I observed a disconnect between Curators’ research documentation and practices, and research held in collections management systems. The disconnect directly affected the state and currency of collections records. The development of front of house programs, whether that be exhibitions, educational or public programs, often involve periods of research involving collaboration and consultation – connecting source communities to concepts or objects to source further information to incorporate into programs. On completion of the projects this information often remained with Curators and can take a large period of time before the information is passed to Collections Managers to enter and update data in the collection management systems.

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<sup>52</sup> Raberts, Melanie (Manager – Indigenous Cultures, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January, 2011.

<sup>53</sup> Ladas, Nancy (Manager, Collections Information Systems), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Melbourne, 20 January, 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Raberts, Melanie (Manager – Indigenous Cultures, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January, 2011.

The time to enter data due to backlogs of information and other priorities for Collection Management departments could take many years. The research does not make it 'back of house' for inclusion in collections records. As Raberts confirmed '...we're continually giving access to researchers and the community to the collection but not always with the most up to date information. And it might be years before the Curator is ready to pass on that information to the Collection Manager to put it into the database.'<sup>55</sup> Duggan suggested it is only when items are prioritised due to exhibitions that a focus is given to the records; '...it depends what someone is working on, what needs to be done and that's when the work usually will get done. Other things, something outside makes it happen. Like an exhibition or somebody doing research on a particular topic it usually speeds up processes...'<sup>56</sup> The disconnection in practices between departments results in records that are outdated, inaccurate and impossible for researchers and indigenous communities to access.

To successfully deliver exhibition development and public programs that capture language, relationships with source community need to be prioritised by museum professionals. Source communities hold the cultural rights to be engaged at all levels of research and documentation when cultural materials are employed for public use and display. The following examples describe two successful collaborative research projects within the Koorie Heritage Trust and Melbourne Museum that fulfilled best practice co-curation, co-collaboration and community expectations for language documentation and were implemented during the critical period of time discussed in the thesis.

## **Collaborative Research Practice**

### ***Meerreeng-An: Here is my Country***

In the development of the publication and associated exhibition for *Meerreeng-An: Here is my Country – The Story of Aboriginal Victoria told through art*, Koori languages were used throughout the design for both. Indigenous language from multiple language groups was used to describe concepts and themes.<sup>57</sup> Koori language words were sourced through consultation and co-collaboration with artists, cultural knowledge holders, language organisations and community members, as well as investigations into existing collections documentation held in collecting institutions throughout the State. This project illustrates collaborative and community-based research '...determined by community

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Duggan, John (Assistant Collections Manager – Australia Ethnographic Collection), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January 2011.

<sup>57</sup> Keeler, Chris and Couzens, Vicki (eds.) 2010, op.cit.; Koorie Heritage Trust, Maree Clarke (Artist, Exhibitions Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), and Vicki Couzens (Artist, Language Project Manager, VACL) 2010, *Meerreeng An: Here is my country*, exhibition, Koorie Heritage Trust, June - October.

members themselves and facilitated by a team of museum staff and community in a negotiated process...'<sup>58</sup>

Over a period of 18 months, Couzens and Keeler undertook extensive research with language groups to document information on objects held within the Trust collections, as well as objects within 15 other Australian and European cultural institutions. The intent was to produce an extensive publication that shared the art, history and culture of Aboriginal Victoria. Launched on 18 June 2010, *Meerreeng-An* incorporated the work of more than 120 Victorian Aboriginal artists and presents 340 artworks, with 100 highlighted from the Trust collections. The *Meerreeng-An* exhibition was presented at the Trust to coincide with the book launch and displayed across three floors of galleries between June to October 2010.<sup>59</sup> Speaking about the project's aims and the consultation process followed, Couzens stated that:

We have to bring language back at every opportunity...So it had to go there and be a soul to the book. We sourced (language) from records we've got here (at VACL) and from community people, and then did a bit of research. Sent stuff to people...rang them, emailed them, phoned them, sent them hard copies, rang, emailed. I was like, 'Hello, it's me again. I'm back.'<sup>60</sup>

The authors found themselves in a negotiation on language and descriptors to be used for the publication. Keeler confirmed that the project, both publication and the exhibition, '...really was a push from community...they made us go down the track of putting in as much language as we could. There is more language in that book than we had originally anticipated...With Vicki working on it, it opened eyes up to what language was available...'<sup>61</sup> Indigenous language words, as seen in Figure 20 were incorporated within the design of the publication.

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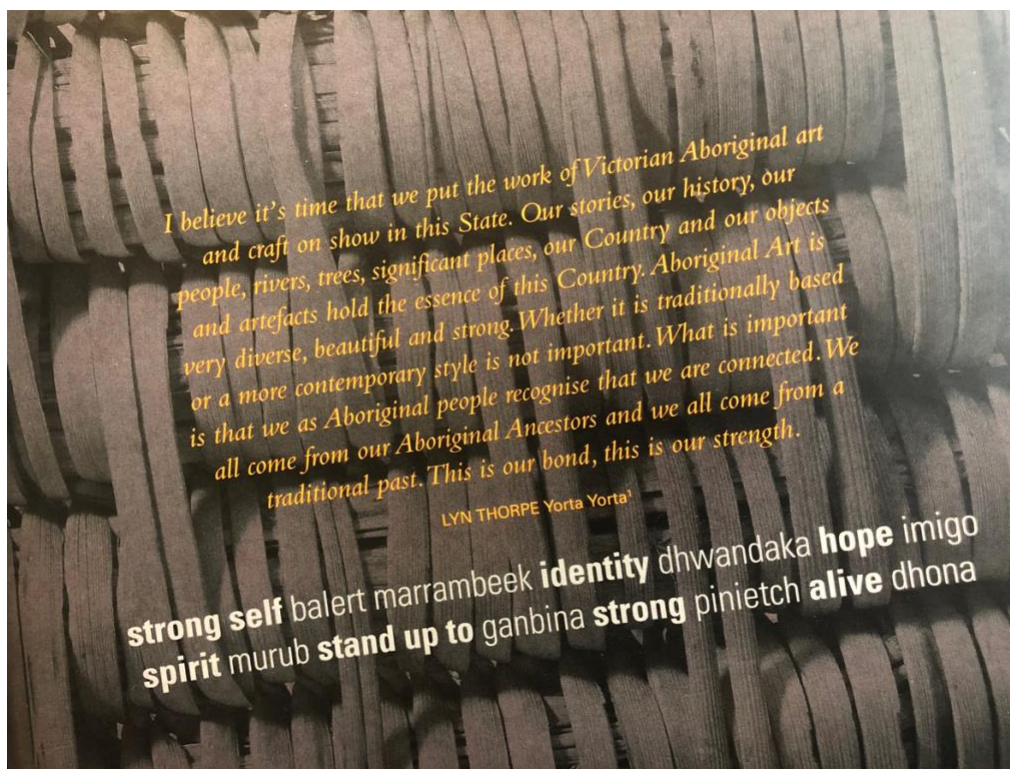
<sup>58</sup> Peers et al 2003 op.cit. p.2.

<sup>59</sup> Keeler, Chris and Couzens, Vicki (eds.) 2010, op.cit.

<sup>60</sup> Couzens, Vicki, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 16 November, 2010.

<sup>61</sup> Keeler, Chris (Assistant Collections Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 4 November, 2010.





**Figure 20** Page from *Meerreeng-An: Here is my country* identifies Koori language for contemporary concepts.<sup>62</sup>

The collaborative research practice engaged in the development of the publication raised awareness in the Trust's collections management and exhibitions teams, and prompted discussions on language use within the institution.

For contemporary concepts where no Koori language words existed such as power, strength and identity, the authors worked with indigenous community members and language specialists to create and source words within similar structure. This required selecting words from neighbouring language groups when no similarities could be found. Couzens confirmed that '...you can borrow words. You can look at how words are made now and in the old language. There might even be examples of words from the 19<sup>th</sup> century that have been used...you can look at how the old people made new words...'<sup>63</sup>

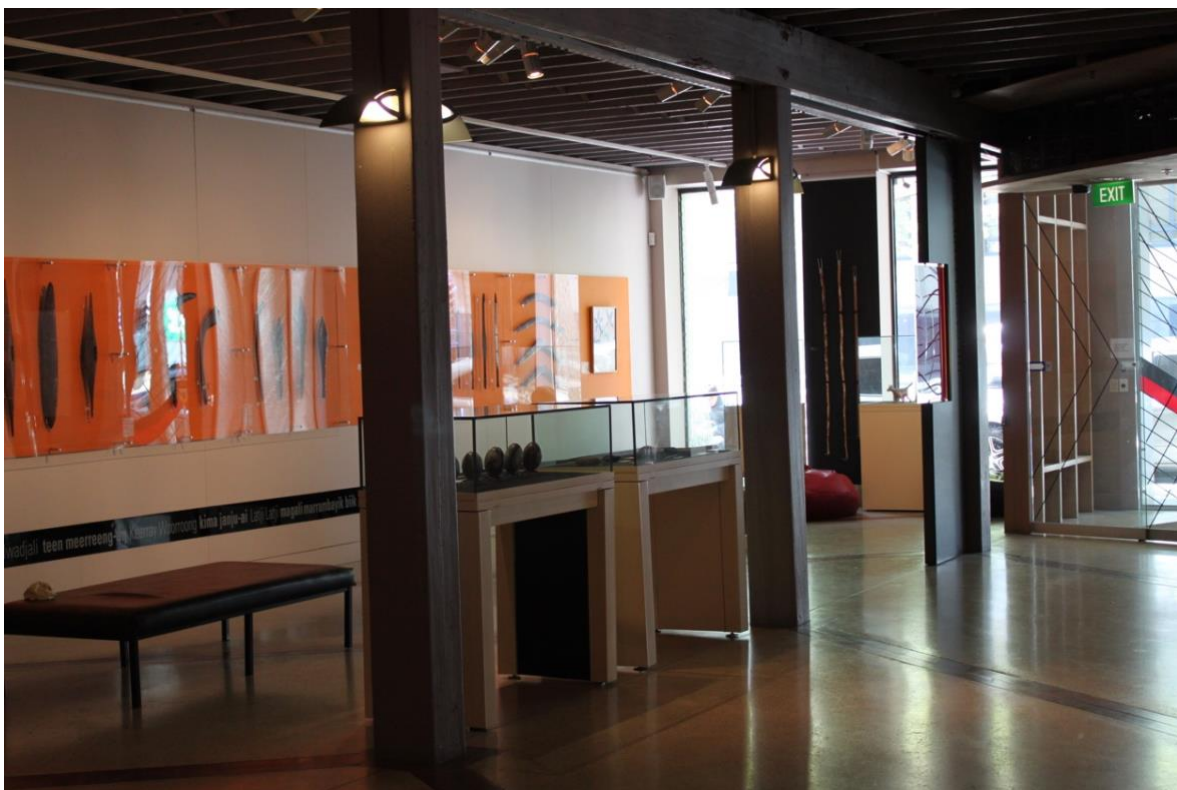
The authors faced challenges due to contested language words by community members, and multiple words available for the same object or concept. As Couzens explained '...a lot of them (source communities/language groups) have their own spellings and we sent out lists and asked "...have you

<sup>62</sup> Keeler, Chris and Couzens, Vicki (eds.) 2010, op.cit. p. 205.

<sup>63</sup> Couzens, Vicki, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 16 November, 2010.

got words for these words?" They would then send words back. There might have been half a dozen same-sounding words...'<sup>64</sup> Keeler confirmed that '*...Meerreeng-An* did open our eyes a lot more to language. More than we've ever done in collections before. For the exhibition staff it created an awareness on how much language was possible to incorporate into an exhibition...'<sup>65</sup>

During my fieldwork, the associated *Meerreeng-An* exhibition was on display within the Trust galleries and highlighted works from the Trust collection. Koori languages were incorporated in a black vinyl strip running below collection items on display as seen in Figures 21–22. Indigenous languages were becoming more commonly displayed on didactic panels in temporary exhibitions during this period in time as contemporary artists engaged language in titles for their works. The publication and the exhibition was a successful example of a collaborative and language-led project that resulted in greater awareness and connection between indigenous languages and the public.



**Figure 21** *Meerreeng-An: Here is my Country* exhibition, Temporary Exhibitions Gallery, Koorie Heritage Trust (installation view) Karina Lamb, October 2010.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Keeler, Chris (Assistant Collections Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 4 November, 2010.



**Figure 22** *Meerreeng-An: Here is my Country* exhibition, Temporary Exhibitions Gallery, Koorie Heritage Trust (installation view) Koori language words can be seen on the black vinyl strip running below collection items, Karina Lamb October 2010.

In 2010, the Trust delivered up to 30 self-initiated and touring exhibitions per year across three galleries. The exhibitions department, led by Maree Clarke, was a fast-paced team completing a high turnover of exhibitions, and a team that was required to hold close relationships and connections to source communities. Speaking about *Meerreeng-An* exhibition, Clarke remarked that ‘...I think it was beautiful. That the first thing that you really saw, apart from the artefacts, was that there was language still associated with exhibitions and country. You know for people to be able to walk in and see Yorta Yorta or Wemba Wemba or ‘here is my country’ in those languages it was fantastic...’<sup>66</sup> What I observed during fieldwork was that the high-quality research and language words associated with objects in the publication were present in the exhibitions’ design and titles, but the collection management records in eHive or Filemaker did not hold the data from the *Meerreeng-An* project. There was a disconnect between what the public saw and what was held within the records for future researchers, Collection Managers, Curators or community members to view.

<sup>66</sup> Clarke, Maree (Artist, Exhibitions Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio recording, Melbourne, 4 November, 2010.

Consultation with source communities for the *Meerreeng-An* project was led by the authors as they held existing relationships with language groups and communities from which the objects originated. The usual process followed with a museum would be for a Curator to consult across communities to seek approvals for the display of works, and at times, to source additional information on cultural knowledge, stories and the makers of objects. *Meerreeng-An* is an example of extensive collaborative research project that resulted in new Koori language words being discovered and formed by language groups in conjunction with museum professionals.

At the same time *Meerreeng-An* exhibition was on display, Melbourne Museum in 2010 was completing an extensive project that included wide consultation across Victoria for the redevelopment of Bunjilaka Aboriginal Culture Centre (Bunjilaka) and the formation on the *First Nations Gallery*. The redevelopment project was implemented ten years after Bunjilaka had first been opened to the public.<sup>67</sup>

### ***Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre***

Bunjilaka is said to be the first gallery in Australia that involved extensive consultation with indigenous communities, not only the design of the building, but also on the exhibition development.<sup>68</sup> The redevelopment included producing a digital archive of Victorian Aboriginal oral histories and film recordings, photographs and the documentation of cultural stories. Consultations and recordings were completed on Country throughout Victoria with museum staff based away from the institutions for many weeks at a time. Within the Bunjilaka redevelopment Sluki explained that ‘...Aboriginal knowledge is hopefully going to form a big part on how we're going to tell stories. Expanding on our knowledge of objects in the collection. So, we definitely do want to draw on communities’ knowledge on their own cultural heritage rather than rely on their accounts of ethnographers...’<sup>69</sup>

When the Culture Centre within the museum first opened to the public in 2000, Bunjilaka was designed to store the South-Eastern Aboriginal collections in a keeping place with a viewing room adjoining the exhibitions for source communities to easily access cultural materials.<sup>70</sup> The centre was positioned on

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<sup>67</sup> Bunjilaka, meaning the land of Bunjil in Woiwurrung language from Victoria, underwent redevelopment at Melbourne Museum between 2009-2011 and incorporated a team of indigenous museum professionals undertaking extensive consultation with the 38 Victorian language groups on Country across Victoria. The redevelopment aimed to share and celebrate the historic and contemporary life of all Koori communities through a reconnection of museum collections to cultural knowledge and stories.

<sup>68</sup> Delory, Anne 2001, 'Bujilalka: The Aboriginal Centre at Museum Victoria', *Australian Historian Studies*, vol. 116, no.1, pp.147–150.

<sup>69</sup> Sluki, David (Senior Curator, Bunjilaka Redevelopment, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 6 January, 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Healy 2006, op.cit. p.15.2.



the ground floor to include access to the outdoors and an indigenous garden, as requested by Aboriginal Elders of Victoria.<sup>71</sup>



**Figure 23** Bunjilaka Cultural Centre. Melbourne Museum, Koori language word, ‘Wominjeka’, meaning welcome, identifies a subsection of the exhibition (photograph) 2020.

Indigenous languages were used in large graphics separating the exhibitions into sections as seen in a contemporary example of Bunjilaka at Figure 23. The exhibition was divided into the sections – Wominjeka meaning ‘welcome’ in Wurundjeri for the entrance; Jumbunna meaning ‘story telling’ in Boon Wurrung and Woi Wurrung language for the main exhibition areas; Kalaya meaning to ‘ask or question’ in the Wemba Wemba language for the indoor meeting and performance space; Wilan Liwki meaning ‘camp of the Elders’ in Boon Wurrung; Woi Wurrung in the Elder’s meeting room; Milarri, meaning ‘outside’ in Boon Wurrung and Woi Wurrung language incorporates an indigenous garden; and Birrarung, a Boon Wurrung and Woi Wurrung word for the ‘Yarra River’ for the public programs and learning area.<sup>72</sup> Diversity in the selection of language groups for the exhibitions was important not

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<sup>71</sup> Gillespie, R. 2001, 'Making an exhibition: one gallery, one thousand objects, one million critics: Giving an insider's view of the Melbourne Museum, its challenge, constraints and joys', *Meanjin*, vol. 60, no.4, pp.111–121.

<sup>72</sup> Culture Network 2008, Bunjilaka, *Melbourne Museum*, Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, viewed 17 May 2020, <<https://culturenetwork.wordpress.com/bunjilaka/>>; Russell, L. 2001, 'Bunjilaka brooding: inspecting the Aboriginal center at the Melbourne Museum', *Meanjin*, vol. 60, no.4, pp.99–103.

only for education programs and public awareness of language diversity, but also out of respect for the many communities represented in the collections on display.

Bunjilaka's first iteration involved three main exhibitions; *Koori Voices, Belonging to Country*, and *Two Laws: Indigenous Knowledge*. For the first time in Melbourne, Koori voices were represented in a significant exhibition that raised awareness of the indigenous collections held within the Melbourne Museum. And for the first time, recordings were presented on small screens amongst a wall of photographs that had Aboriginal community members telling their stories, some choosing language words to describe histories.

The extensive Bunjilaka redevelopment project was in the final stages of completion in early 2011 as I completed my fieldwork.<sup>73</sup> The Public Programs Coordinator, Elizabeth Suda was a member of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee (ACHAC) overseeing the redevelopment. ACHAC was formed in 1984 and incorporated members of the Board and the Victorian Aboriginal community to advise on content and cultural protocols within the museum including sensitivities in display and story-telling.<sup>74</sup> The committee, Suda explained, held existing connections with source communities that made the extensive consultations within each language group possible within the project's timeline.<sup>75</sup> The digital archive as a part of the redevelopment would allow visitors to '...be able to search a database of all the objects and images in the exhibition...'<sup>76</sup> In Bunjilaka, Aboriginal community members were a large percentage of the proposed audience for the new exhibitions, and the focus on providing a culturally safe space, meeting areas and exhibitions aligned with the Melbourne Museum's recently adopted Reconciliation Action Plan.<sup>77</sup>

Throughout the redevelopment period, Project Officer Kimberly Moulton suggested that within Bunjilaka '...we like to think of ourselves as a living cultural centre...showcasing and celebrating a living culture not something that's stuck in the past, which is very new for a museum to have...'<sup>78</sup> Moulton

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<sup>73</sup> Victoria, Museum 2009, 'Community Engagement Framework', unpublished, Museum Victoria, p.1–11.

<sup>74</sup> Schultz, Laine 2014, 'Maintaining Aboriginal engagement in Australian museums: two models of inclusion, *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 29, vol.5, pp.412–428.

<sup>75</sup> Suda, Elizabeth "Liz" (Public Programs Coordinator, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Melbourne, 7 January, 2011.

<sup>76</sup> Gillespie, R. 2001, 'Making an exhibition: one gallery, one thousand objects, one million critics: Giving an insider's view of the Melbourne Museum, its challenge, constraints and joys', *Meanjin*, vol. 60, no.4, pp.111–121.

<sup>77</sup> Melbourne Museum's Reconciliation Action Plan was developed in 2011 as discussed in Schultz, Laine 2014, 'Maintaining Aboriginal engagement in Australian museums: two models of inclusion, *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 29, vol.5, pp.412–428.

<sup>78</sup> Moulton, Kimberly (Project Officer, Bunjilaka Redevelopment, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Melbourne, 7 January, 2011. Kimberly Moulton is now the Senior Curator for the South Eastern Australia Aboriginal Collections at Melbourne Museum.

was involved in the early consultation period for the Bunjilaka redevelopment in November 2009 throughout the research phase described by Moulton as 'test consultations', '...we would approach the community and ask permission to come in and let them know what we're doing...' <sup>79</sup> This period of test consultations ensured that cultural protocols were fulfilled, allowing Elders the time to debate and provide approvals before final consultations were conducted. Sluki confirmed that:

They did a round (of test consultations) in late 2009 where that was a learning curve and they were away a few weeks. This time around (in 2010–11) we did, off the top of my head, around 20 consultations. We had about 180 people come from around the State. Some meetings were more successful than others. Some we had 20 people, some we had two or three...We got some really good feedback and we have a strong sense of where we wanted to go, based on community feedback and what communities want. <sup>80</sup>

As with the development of the Melbourne social history exhibitions the year prior, Bunjilaka's consultations for the redevelopment included audience research as well as focus groups on Country. Speaking about the use of language within the Bunjilaka redevelopment Sluki stated:

We definitely are talking about and grappling with the question of how we incorporate language into the exhibition. For example: we want to put language names for every object that we include. We're working with various people to try to identify...we know that in the Southeastern collection there are about 240 objects that have language names attached in the database...I think about 70 of those are provenanced and then there'll be a group on top of that that relate back to those ones that the provenance has been identified on the database, but just hasn't been included in other records...We're hopefully going to engage a researcher to work on that and identify provenance for all of those and create a kind of database of language names that we can then put on the digital archive and use to pepper throughout the exhibition language. <sup>81</sup>

For the data enhancement captured throughout the redevelopment projects, Stanton confirmed that within the KE EMu collections database in 2010 the collections information team '...introduced a new module called exhibition items (in KE EMu)...because we don't necessarily have the resources for people to concentrate on building research for descriptions or stories, we try and take advantage of research that's already happening. Exhibitions is the most obvious one...' <sup>82</sup> When considering language engagement from exhibitions to collections management systems Moulton commented '...that's

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Sluki, David (Senior Curator, Bunjilaka Redevelopment, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 6 January, 2011.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Stanton, Giselle (Collections Information Manager – Standards and Support, Te Papa), , Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Wellington, 24 February, 2011.

something we need to start looking into. For instance the Mullet family exhibition they used a lot of language in that. That could have been an opportunity I guess to record some of that but there is no, for us here, there is no formal process...'<sup>83</sup>

Bunjilaka's digital archive incorporated indigenous languages in oral history and on film is an example of collaborative research practice that achieves on exhibition goals, while also preserving languages for source communities. As discussed earlier in this chapter, that does not mean that research found its way to collection management systems. As Raberts explained;

With the Bunjilaka redevelopment, all resources are channelled toward the development of the exhibition and then of course a number of other digital outputs on the floor or Internet. That's all very much program-oriented and public-oriented. There will be a hell of a lot of other information that's of relevance to us as background primary data that also need to make their way into the database. As I said, yes, there's room. It's just getting the fingers typing or the downloading or whatever happening...That certainly was the example of the Bunjilaka 2000 exhibition where a great deal of documentation was done, whether that be oral recordings, written histories, or whatever; and historical data as well. They're on the shelves in files. They're not on the database, and that's been actually a point of major frustration for the development of this current Bunjilaka exhibition.<sup>84</sup>

Data enhancement for Victorian cultural collections in collection management systems requires clearly defined processes for recording and documenting indigenous languages. Recommendations for the Australian museum sector in chapter 5 are provided as a contribution to the sector to improve language documentation. For objects that have limited provenance information, collaboration with source communities is essential to identify marks, forms, collate histories, timelines and cultural knowledge of the objects to enhance collection records.

The significant challenge for Victorian cultural collections is the lack of correct documentation due to historic collecting practices. For contemporary collection items, museum professionals agree that indigenous languages can be included in collections management systems if the language extends from the artist themselves, positioning the artist as the expert in their language and therefore responsible for sourcing permissions and aligning to cultural protocols for use. Troon confirmed that '...whenever we acquire an artwork, especially from an artist, we always want to get their story in their words about

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<sup>83</sup> Moulton, Kimberely (Project Officer, Bunjilaka Redevelopment, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Melbourne, 7 January, 2011.

<sup>84</sup> Raberts, Melanie (Manager – Indigenous Cultures, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January, 2011.



the object. That is the main way that we want to interpret a work...'<sup>85</sup> Dowd agreed '...I think it should come from the artist. I wouldn't pressure them to use language because they may not know that much, they may not know what words in their language for it...'<sup>86</sup> Collections Managers are in agreeance with the need for language words to be sourced from the artists themselves.

The absence of information in collections management systems results in inaccurate and incomplete records that become useless to researchers and therefore to source communities. The disconnect in professional practices and the discovery in fieldwork that Curators' research can take years to reach collection management systems, results in collections records that are incorrect historical records. As Jenny Harper suggested '...an unfortunate level of museum collection cataloguing and relatively little cross-referencing of items makes many objects inaccessible in practical terms to researchers other than the Curator directly responsible for these collections...'<sup>87</sup> For museum professionals to engage indigenous languages in collection management systems, museums are required to implement new methods for communication, both internal and with source communities, and revise the role of Collection Managers to be leaders in relationship development directly with the source community.

The role of Collections Managers in Australia has long been to process data more than create data through collaboration with the community. As we discussed a new concept for Collection Managers to play a part in the development of documentation, Keeler stated; '...I'm not sure that that's our role. I think if an artist or a craft person wants to give us statements as a part of their work, then yes we'd accept that with open arms...I don't know if we can go much further than that...'<sup>88</sup> Broben stated that '...we need to assume that that artist is the expert on their expression and their culture...' but also agreed that Collection Managers have a place in data enhancement and research as she stated, '...in the instances where we don't know who the artist or maker is, we need to look at VACL as the expert on the spelling and the language groups...'<sup>89</sup> Moulton agreed that in contemporary exhibitions '...it's purely up to the artist if they choose to use language or not. If they do use language, I think in the

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<sup>85</sup> Troon, Miriam (Senior Collections Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 28 October, 2010.

<sup>86</sup> Dowd, Jodie (Collections Cadet, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 7 December, 2010.

<sup>87</sup> Harper 1989, op.cit. p.30.

<sup>88</sup> Keeler, Chris (Assistant Collections Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 4 November, 2010.

<sup>89</sup> Broben, Nerissa (Senior Collections Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 20 October, 2010.

future we could potentially have a catalogue or have something to record that use...it is really important to use language, but there's a fine line...Just making sure it's done right.'<sup>90</sup>

Consultation within museums is reliant on the depth of relationships that are built between museum professionals and community members. As Raberts confirmed '...even though it's a really old collection, it's about staff keeping the bonds together. They are personal...the community doesn't engage with the Museum Victoria as Museum Victoria. It engages with Lindy Allen. 'OK. I know Lindy. She's a good person to go to. I know Caroline Martin.' It does get down to individual people and the relationships they have...'<sup>91</sup> There are sensitivities required when discussing language with Victorian Aboriginal communities and an understanding of cultural protocols and permission when discussing indigenous objects. Troon stated that:

As a Curator or a Collections Manager in this field, you kind of have to be very tactful as well. Actually even asking the question 'What's that in your language?' isn't necessarily one that you can ask comfortably because that might really upset someone. You certainly can't assume that people have knowledge because the case is often that they don't.<sup>92</sup>

A priority for museum leaders is then to also continue to build the communication and community engagement skills of museum professionals while allowing the time, even outside of projects timelines, to develop stronger relationships with source communities.

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<sup>90</sup> Moulton, Kimberely (Project Officer, Bunjilaka Redevelopment, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Melbourne, 7 January, 2011.

<sup>91</sup> Raberts, Melanie (Manager – Indigenous Cultures, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January, 2011.

<sup>92</sup> Troon, Miriam (Senior Collections Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 28 October, 2010.



**Figure 24 – Figure 25** Jodie Dowd Collections Management Assistant working in the Trust collections stores and baskets stored within the collections (photographs) Karina Lamb, October 2010.

Cultural permissions are required when handling, viewing and managing Victorian restricted collections and that does make the process of data enhancement difficult for both indigenous and non-indigenous staff members. Museum leaders need to ensure indigenous museum professionals are employed within all levels of the museum. Having a presence of professionals from multiple language groups will ensure that guidance in cultural protocols is possible for those when working with indigenous collections. As Raberts suggested, the time and funding required to ‘go back’ to the communities to discuss collection items is difficult due to cultural protocols, and the length of time it takes to build on personal relationships; ‘...we like to go back each time but of course it's a complicated business of going back each time to ask for copyright, it's time consuming, and things change over time...’<sup>93</sup> It is through consultation that knowledge is shared and as Melbourne Museum has stated itself ‘...knowledge is the key that allows objects and the symbols or designs to be read like a map...’<sup>94</sup> Opening the collections to source communities it is assumed to be commonplace in museums. But as Dowd confirmed this is not always an easy process: ‘...it depends on what museums we're referring to.

<sup>93</sup> Raberts, Melanie (Manager – Indigenous Cultures, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January, 2011.

<sup>94</sup> Museum of Victoria 2000, op.cit. p.34.

I know the keeping places, it's more accessible for the community to just go and view their objects, learn about their culture that way. Some of the larger institutions it's a lot more difficult...'<sup>95</sup>

In this chapter, I identified a turning point in Australian museums in 2010–2011 as indigenous communities were becoming increasingly aware of the poor status and inaccuracy of cultural documentation held with their cultural materials. It was a period when Australian museums were encouraged to take a closer look at their professional practices and align with a national framework and standards within AMaGA's MAP program. Rapid advances in technologies increased the need for museums to update collections records into digital formats. Museums were undergoing shifts in funding models that placed higher pressures on museum professionals including Collection Managers. Collection Managers were dealing with inaccurate records as a result of historic collecting practices and a disconnect between museum departments. Within this critical time, indigenous communities were also increasing requests for access to collections to assist with language revitalisation and strengthening programs.

Through the research gathered from fieldwork at two Victorian collecting institutions with nationally significant indigenous collections, I have identified significant similar issues within the indigenous and state-led museums. This is evidence that the Australian cultural sector has struggled with the concept of documenting objects using indigenous languages due to historic collecting practices, the inability to dedicate time and resources for data enhancement, and an internal disconnection between Curators and Collection Managers within institutions. As a result, collections are left with collections management systems holding minimal information available for future researchers or source communities. This problem is not peculiar to Australia. An American study by Mary Case concluded in 1988:

Historically museums have engaged databases as simply an inventory, with information such as connections to people, information on context and links to other items acquired at the same time, and cultural knowledge associated with the item often neglected. Databases can hold greater information if staff have the availability of time for data enhancement, positioning the database as a real research tool.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Dowd, Jodie (Collections Cadet, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 7 December, 2010.

<sup>96</sup> Case, Mary and American Association of Museums. Registrars Committee. (eds.) 1988, *Registrars on record: essays on museum collections management*, The Registrars Committee of the American Association of Museums, Washington, D.C., p.199.

This chapter has demonstrated that both the Koorie Heritage Trust and Melbourne Museum's Indigenous Cultures collections, representative of Victorian Koori communities, held little information in the collections management systems on provenance, context or maker in indigenous languages. In revealing these shortcomings, this research has highlighted the lack of interconnection between Koori languages and objects which shows that museum professionals and their collection practices fail to respond to the demands of indigenous communities leading indigenous language revival.

Now that we have explored the situation in Australia, we turn to consider what museums can learn from across the Tasman. Although language and colonial histories are different between Australia and New Zealand, there are comparative standards for museum professionals and practice to be shared. The following chapter addresses te reo Māori and professional museum practice through an ethnography of a regional museum that was renowned for their collaboration with local Māori communities. It explores changing professional collection practices in a comparable museum setting as a means to understand and learn new ways of working that can be adapted to Australian institutions. Since the fieldwork on Victorian museums, changes in professional museum practices and documentation in collections management systems continues to be a significant issue. It is time for the Australian museum sector to listen to indigenous communities and consider the importance of completing collection records in indigenous languages. As New Zealand scholar and Gallery Director Jenny Harper argued:

Are we prepared to lay open our collections, to genuinely see them as a resource, to use them and let others use them in a variety of ways, to experiment with one framework of assumptions or methodological perspectives and then another, at times combining elements of several approaches?<sup>97</sup>

Indigenous language groups in Australia continue to demand that we do.

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<sup>97</sup> Harper 1989, op.cit. p.13.

## Chapter 3: Māori collections in Tairāwhiti Museum

Te Whare Pupuri Taonga o Te Tairāwhiti  
E mihi atu ki a koutou  
Te Whare Pupuri Taonga o Te Tairāwhiti  
E manaaki nei i ngā taonga  
A window of the past  
Celebrating the talents of the present  
Looking to the treasures of the future  
Kia whakakotahi tātou i ngā miro o te aroha  
Te Whare Taonga o Te Tairāwhiti.<sup>1</sup>

Tairāwhiti is acknowledged as an internationally significant region, where Māori arrived from Hawaiki in the fourteenth century and Captain James Cook held the first meetings on land between Pākehā and Māori in 1769.<sup>2</sup> The intersection of both Pākehā and Māori heritage were represented in the Tairāwhiti Museum, established in 1954 on the banks of the Taruheru River in Gisborne. The institution held the façade of The Star of Canada that ran aground in Gisborne in 1912.<sup>3</sup> The ships' remnants were incorporated into the building design following a public appeal to find the vessel a new home in 1983.<sup>4</sup> In 2011, a brown sign across the ship's bow labelled the site as a 'museum'. There was no evidence of the nationally significant Māori taonga collections held behind the facade. Adjacent to the central museum building stood Wylie cottage, the oldest European house still standing in Gisborne that shares the colonial heritage of the Wylie family.<sup>5</sup> The intersection of both colonial and Māori historic and contemporary cultural heritage became evident as visitors entered the museum. A museum shop exhibited Māori contemporary artworks for sale, and exhibitions were divided into displays of both historic collections and contemporary art works. The site appeared to hold confusion on whether it was a museum, a cultural venue or a contemporary art gallery.

In 2011, I arrived at the Tairāwhiti museum to undertake fieldwork with the knowledge that my children's ancestor Kahungunu descended from the Tākitimu waka (canoe) that berthed along the

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<sup>1</sup> Creator unknown, waiata (song) on record at Tairāwhiti museum. Found during placement in April 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Museum, Tairāwhiti 2019, *Tairāwhiti Gisborne: About*, Activate Tairāwhiti, viewed 19 April 2019, <<http://tairawhitigisborne.co.nz/about/>>.

<sup>3</sup> As seen in Figure 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Tairāwhiti Museum Date unknown*, *Tairāwhiti Museum: Te Whare Taonga o te Tairāwhiti*, Gisborne, New Zealand, viewed 10 August 2017, <<http://www.tairawhitimuseum.org.nz/index.asp>>.

<sup>5</sup> Restoration on Wylie cottage began during my placement in 2011, including conservators working to revive displays that had sat dormant within the cottage for many years. The cottage was re-opened to the public on 23 February 2017. Further information is included at <<http://www.Tairāwhitimuseum.org.nz/index.asp>>.

coast not far from central Gisborne.<sup>6</sup> It immediately felt welcoming with the surf, sun and mountains surrounding the city.



**Figure 26** Tairāwhiti Museum as seen from the bridge over the Taruheru river in Gisborne (photograph), Karina Lamb, April 2011.

On the first day within the museum, five members of the small museum team held a pōwhiri (formal welcome). In te reo Māori, I presented my mihi (introductions) and was welcomed by the Kaitiaki Māori, Jody Wylie and the museum Director, Dr David Butts.<sup>7</sup> It was a warm introduction to the fieldwork that would involve four weeks of interviews, observation of professional practices, work within the collection stories and, as a contribution to the museum, the development of a language policy to be presented to the Museum Board to support indigenous language documentation in the collections.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Further information on the journey of the waka Tākitimu is included at Whaanga, Mere 2005, *Ngāti Kahungunu*, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, viewed 5 April 2020, <<http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/ngati-kahungunu/print>>.

<sup>7</sup> Dr Butts was the Director of the museum between 2008–2015 and is renowned for his work on bicultural management and understanding. Dr Butts has written extensively on Māori and museum practice including Butts, David 2007, 'Māori, Museums and the Treaty of Waitangi: The changing politics of representation and control' in S. J. Knell et al 2007, *op.cit.* pp.215–227; Butts 2003, *op.cit.* pp. 1–366.

<sup>8</sup> The draft language policy, included in chapter 6, was approved by the Tairāwhiti Museum Board of Management in 2014, and steps to implement actions from the policy were taken by the Museum Director at the time, Dr David Butts.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the neglect of indigenous languages in the collections management systems and museum practices in Australian museums and cultural collections, and observed a disconnect between museum departments resulting in catalogues that were outdated and inaccurate as historical records. Turning to a regional museum in New Zealand, I provide an ethnography of professional practices at Tairāwhiti Museum as a comparative where professional practices are guided by the same international codes of practice, and cultural protocols when working with collections. I examine whether new museology was leading professional practice within a provincial museum in Aotearoa.

This chapter outlines how a focus on bicultural and bilingual management was affecting language documentation in a regional institution. Tairāwhiti Museum held nationally significant indigenous collections managed under the guidance of a Kaitiaki Māori in line with Kaupapa Māori. The collections were categorised as Taonga Māori, Contemporary Art, 28<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Photography, Colonial and Archival collections. The museum storage areas were at capacity with collection items representing both Māori and colonial historic and contemporary life. The development of the taonga Māori audit in 2006 is discussed as the turning point for the museum when collections management practices were examined through an extensive audit and documentation project. I discuss how a Pākehā Collections Manager was responsible for collections documentation, and the challenges that existed without te reo Māori knowledge in this position.

In 2011, despite a large percentage of Māori living within the Tairāwhiti region te reo Māori was declining in line with the national average. The iwi in the region, Te Aitanga-a-Māhaki, Rongowhakaata, Ngāi Tāmanuhiri, Te Aitanga-a-Hauti and Ngāti Porou were represented across 104 marae. In 2011, over half of the population in Tairāwhiti identified as Māori.<sup>9</sup> Ngāti Porou were leading a focus on language revitalisation as they identified low numbers of Māori within the iwi that could speak te reo Māori. The relationship between the museum and iwi is examined. I identify examples of co-curation and co-collaboration through the *Iwi Karioi Hakanation*, *Ngā Tamatoa* and *Watersheds* exhibitions and explore whether collaboration between museum collections and indigenous communities was occurring to support collections management.

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<sup>9</sup> Pohatu, Mere (Director, Te Puni Kōkiri) and Wylie, Marsha (Administration, Te Puni Kōkiri), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 21 April 2011.





**Figure 27** Karina Lamb at the entrance to Tairāwhiti Museum in Gisborne (photograph) April 2011.

Tairāwhiti Museum is renowned as an early adopter of bicultural governance in the management of both the site and collections. In the 1950s, a Māori Advisory Committee was established to advise on the creation of a new Māori wing.<sup>10</sup> Sitting with me in the café area of the Tairāwhiti Museum in 2011, Whaea Ingrid Searancke, Elder and Founder of the Māori Advisory Committee, reminisced on the history of Māori involvement in the institution:

We formed the Māori advisory and that was based on committees of Tairāwhiti — we had about 20 advisors on the committee of the museum and we were subsidiary of the Māori council and the Māori women's welfare league came along to support the museum. We would advise the director if there was anything he or she wanted to know on local things... Which area they came from. We made a response...The museum had hundreds and hundreds of taonga here that weren't given away completely. Most things that were here were just on loan, not gifted. The only gifted taonga were the ones that were given to Pākehā people and they would return them here instead of to the gifter. They didn't understand that first they should have enquired of the gifter.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Simpson, Moira G. 1996, *Making representations: museums in the post-colonial era*, Routledge, London; New York. p.52.

<sup>11</sup> Searancke, Ingrid, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Tairāwhiti Museum, Gisborne, New Zealand, 21 April 2011.

While many indigenous voices were not being heard in the 1950s, Tairāwhiti Museum was engaging Elders and inviting them to partner on decisions within the institution regarding display and representation. Smith confirmed that engaging indigenous community members in discussions regarding cultural materials involves reconnection and the reclaiming of knowledge:

After the Second World War, when the post-colonial period was beginning according to some cultural studies theorists, many indigenous peoples around the world were still not recognised as humans, let alone citizens. The effect of such discipline was to silence...or suppress the ways of knowing, and the languages for knowing, of many different indigenous peoples. Reclaiming a voice in this context has also been about reclaiming, reconnecting and reordering those ways of knowing which were submerged, hidden or driven underground.<sup>12</sup>

Through the advisory committee, the museum included source communities in all aspects of collection development, display and management decisions. More than a contact zone, Tairāwhiti Museum was a place of translation where cultural knowledge and heritage was shared using a method of co-curation that satisfied both Māori and Pākehā communities.<sup>13</sup>

The engagement of Māori within Tairāwhiti Museum in the 1950s was evidence of early bicultural management practices within the Aotearoa museum practice. As discussed in the next chapter it was not until 1984 that the National Museum's *Te Māori* exhibition led the development of Māori museum workers, researchers and engagement for the New Zealand museum sector.<sup>14</sup>

In a newspaper advertisement on 16 December 2000, the museum declared that 'It's time for a change!' Michael Spedding the Museum Director announced a name change to coincide with a new focus for the provincial museum:

In the year 2000 the word Gisborne does not adequately represent who we are and what we do...hence the change to Tairāwhiti Museum, Te Whare Taonga o te Tairāwhiti...We have a vision of being a museum that forms an integral part of the community of the Tairāwhiti. The vision will see us move away from the more traditional notion of a museum that focuses principally our role extending beyond our own four walls out to the most remote parts of the regions.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Smith 1999, op.cit. p.69.

<sup>13</sup> Clifford from Mary Louise Pratt's 'contact zone' as described by Peers et al 2003 op.cit. p.5.

<sup>14</sup> Mead, S. M. and American Federation of Arts. 1984, *Te Māori: Māori Art from New Zealand Collections*, Abrams in association with the American Federation of Arts, New York.

<sup>15</sup> Spedding, Michael (Director, Tairāwhiti Museum) 16 December, 2000, 'Tairāwhiti Museum: Te Whare Taonga o te Tairāwhiti', *The Gisborne Herald*, 16 December, 2000: Gisborne, New Zealand.

Parallel to the institution's name change was the change of '...providing places on the Trust Board for all the iwi in the Tairāwhiti region...'<sup>16</sup> Māori staff were engaged to care for the taonga tuku iho (treasures handed down). The museum produced a separate collections policy for taonga, Te Pou Arahi, and a Taonga Māori Repatriation Policy.<sup>17</sup>

In 2002, Tairāwhiti Museum underwent a restructure to introduce a Trust Board incorporating eleven new Board members with five Māori representatives from local iwi and region; four from the Friends of the Museum, two members from the Gisborne District Council and the Director. In what Butts has termed 'treaty-based constitutional arrangements', the Tairāwhiti Museum identified a process for bicultural management within the terms of reference for the new Board.<sup>18</sup> Api Mahuika, a Ngāti Porou representative on the Museum's Trust Board stated that:

The key to this governance is the enhancement and retention of mana (authority) of each of the groups and nobody rides roughshod over another's mana. For us here in Tairāwhiti, it is recognition of mana, the understanding of mana and what it means to people who own the mana, and what it means for us to share mana with other people and vice versa. And that's real governance.<sup>19</sup>

Dr Butts confirmed that when he became Director in 2008, that the museum was in a period of transition that required a strong focus on building relationships with the wider community across Tairāwhiti;

I am continuing to develop relationships...working in a context where it's important to balance the relationships with iwi with the greater community in an institution that has gone through a period where it's perceived to have turned its interest much more strongly to the Māori community.<sup>20</sup>

In my initial interview with Butts, he raised concerns about funding and the loss of holistic understanding of heritage occurring across the museum sector. He confirmed that a shift in thinking was required when working with taonga and timelines, and that Māori collections do not always align to the definitions of art and cultural heritage as identified by museum studies. That '...there is a more

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<sup>16</sup> Butts, David 2007, 'Māori, Museums and the Treaty of Waitangi: The changing politics of representation and control', in S. J. Knell et al 2007, op.cit. pp.215–227.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Butts, David 2007, 'Māori, Museums and the Treaty of Waitangi: The changing politics of representation and control', in S. J. Knell et al 2007, op.cit. pp.215–227.

<sup>19</sup> Mahuika, Api in ibid; Butts 2003, op.cit.p.292.

<sup>20</sup> Butts, David (Director, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 27 April, 2011.

holistic view of the different types of heritage resources (when working with taonga) between the past and the present and the future, and where you stand in relation to those things...I think increasingly the community is seeing the wider connections...'<sup>21</sup> The governance structure and significant collections of Tairāwhiti Museum represented a regional example of bicultural museum practices in line with the bicultural practices of the national museum, the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa to be discussed in the next chapter.

In 2011, Māori community leaders and members continued to have direct involvement in decisions relating to collections management and remained as collaborators on content and display for the collections. Dr Mahuika stated that '...gone are the days when another culture determines what should be done to this culture. We are working closely together now. I feel we have a real partnership now...'<sup>22</sup> Through an ethnography of Tairāwhiti Museum collections and professional practices, I identify that community engagement and collaboration was strong within the institution. The Curator of Art, Joelene Douglas confirmed that '...we as a museum have always been part of our community. We live and breathe what they do. We wouldn't survive without them...We are a community orientated museum and always have been.'<sup>23</sup> The following section examines the community orientation and impacts to the care of indigenous cultural materials, professional practices and the connection to te reo Māori within the institution.

## **Caring for Collections**

Learn what the community needs - fit the museum to those needs.<sup>24</sup>

As an institution built on a history of co-collaboration in governance, the following section identifies how community involvement improved or impacted professional practices when caring for collections. I examine the role of Kaitiaki Māori appointed to manage the Taonga Māori collections, and the engagement with a Pākehā Collections Manager. I analyse collections management changes in response to a Taonga Māori Audit conducted in 2006, and discuss responses from museum staff and the community, on the significance of te reo and collections documentation.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Knell et al 2007, op.cit. p.221-222.

<sup>23</sup> Douglas, Joelene (Curator of Art, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 26 April 2011.

<sup>24</sup> John Cotton Dana, 1917 quoted in Simpson, Moira G. 1996, *Making representations: museums in the post-colonial era*, Routledge, London; New York. p. 51.



**Figure 28 – Figure 29** Taonga Māori in Tairāwhiti Museum collections store (photographs) Karina Lamb, April 2011.

Tairāwhiti Museum is the guardian of a nationally significant collection incorporating 1,700 taonga and cultural materials.<sup>25</sup> Taonga are more than static objects. People, place and social history of objects transcend from static to living ancestors holding mana and spirit. As Henare described ‘...a taonga might equally be a historic whalebone weapon, the Māori language, a native plant or a body of knowledge, distinctions between the material and the ephemeral are not relevant here...’<sup>26</sup> Arapata Hakiwai confirmed that ‘...our taonga are not just wooden objects or aesthetic heirlooms, they speak and represent our origins, our beliefs, our very foundation on which we order our lives. We believe that our taonga possess a mauri or life force and wairua, spirit, all of their own...’<sup>27</sup> Taonga can hold power for engagement and debates on or off marae. Phillips advised that ‘...historical objects are witness to things that were then; they bear their markers’ marks in their weaves, textures and shapes...’ and hold a connection between present communities to those ancestors.<sup>28</sup> Tapsell stated that ‘...each taonga provides a genealogical pathway bridging the generations, which allows the

<sup>25</sup> Wylie, Jody (Kaitiaki Māori, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, 21 April, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Henare et al 2005, op.cit. p.47.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p.56.

<sup>28</sup> Sleeper-Smith 2009 op.cit. p.334.

descendants to ritually meet their ancestors, face-to-face...'<sup>29</sup> The life force, mana, and wairua (spirit) of taonga demands a level of care that goes beyond normal collections management practices. Museums with taonga collections become guardians of ancestors. The professional role responsible for championing the political and social relations of taonga is the Kaitiaki Māori.<sup>30</sup>

At the time of my fieldwork, Jody Wylie held the position of Kaitiaki Māori within Tairāwhiti museum. Wylie described taonga as being '...like people, even though they are inanimate objects, my philosophy has always been - you look after them and they'll look after you...'<sup>31</sup> The role of Kaitiaki Māori is the protector of cultural knowledge held within the institution, a guardian of ancestors as well as a conduit between taonga and living communities. Kaitiaki Māori are required to hold a deep understanding of cultural knowledge, practices, engagement and te reo Māori. They are the channel between '...the spiritual and intellectual dimensions of taonga and not simply their physical aspects...'which, as McCarthy suggests, places high level of responsibility and pressure on this position.<sup>32</sup>

Led by the Kaitiaki Māori, Tairāwhiti Museum engages Kaupapa Māori research methodology within professional practices including engagement of Māori community members from the initial exhibition idea, right through to the distribution of information once a program is complete.<sup>33</sup> As Wylie confirmed, the method for project development involving taonga depends on the kaupapa:

We usually involve the tribe. It makes it a hell of a lot easier to curate the show when you are borrowing from the people who actually own the property. Particularly if you are talking about ancestors...Our policy over the last few years is to actually have focus groups and bring the community in at a very early stage into the curation process so that when the final product is produced, it's had community input right from the start.<sup>34</sup>

The Tairāwhiti Museum Policies Manual identified institutional policies adopted by the Board of Trustees including the Kaitiakitanga policy.<sup>35</sup> The policy confirmed that the role of Kaitiaki Māori would manage each step of collections management for the taonga collections including acquisition, care, representation, research and most importantly, repatriation. The Kaitiakitanga policy outlined that '...through our role as kaitiaki, we recognise there are spiritual and cultural ownership rights conferred

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<sup>29</sup> Tapsell 1997, op.cit.p.335.

<sup>30</sup> The role of Kaitiaki Māori is described further in Chapter 4.

<sup>31</sup> Wylie, Jody (Kaitiaki Māori, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, 21 April, 2011.

<sup>32</sup> McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: Indigenous professionals and current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington.

<sup>33</sup> Further information on Kaupapa Māori methodology is included in the introduction to this thesis.

<sup>34</sup> Wylie, Jody (Kaitiaki Māori, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, 21 April, 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Tairāwhiti Museum 2007, 'Policies manual', unpublished, internal document, Tairāwhiti Museum, p.1–28.



through the whakapapa in respect of the traditions and histories that taonga represent, as well as whakapapa of the creator of the taonga...'<sup>36</sup> Wylie spoke with me about his responsibilities in the role:

As the kaitiaki for them (the taonga) first and foremost I have to ensure that I am protected. Like Australia, we have taonga in the collection associated with battle, and with warfare, and we have a number of significant artefacts that have been used to execute people...I have to ensure that I follow necessary protocols around karakia, around the use of water for cleansing, particularly spiritual cleansing. Some tribes are very particular about their taonga, the intellectual property shared with other groups. We have a lot of taonga that has been put in here for safe-keeping and a lot of those things are considered tapu because they belong to a certain ancestor.<sup>37</sup>

As with the collections held in Te Papa discussed in the next chapter, there is a great level of respect and cultural practices to engage when working with taonga Māori collections, including karakia (prayer), water for cleansing, the placement of taonga in collections stores and display to minimise spiritual battles or disruption between iwi, and the restriction of women who are menstruating to be around the taonga.<sup>38</sup> The Education Officer at Tairāwhiti Museum, Jennifer Pewhairangi explained further:

When a woman is menstruating, you don't go near the taonga. I don't want to be near the taonga when I'm in that state. I don't want anything to do with them and I know they don't want me around them either... We find ways to get around it. Those are some of the challenges for wāhine working with Taonga Māori in museums. The more conversation you have about it, the more awareness.<sup>39</sup>

For the engagement of Kaupapa Māori and Māori ways of working with collections, Wylie was required to be fluent in te reo Māori to be able to perform blessings required for the collections to ensure the cultural safety of all staff and the public that come in contact with the taonga. During observations of Wylie's professional practice at Tairāwhiti Museum, it was clear that te reo Māori connected the guardian to a deeper understanding of the taonga, its provenance, its maker and its significance to the living contemporary community connected to the ancestor. Wylie confirmed that:

In order for me to understand the nature of what we hold here, you must have an understanding of the language otherwise you can't unlock the associated intellectual property,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Wylie, Jody (Kaitiaki Māori, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, 21 April, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Professional practices directly relating to taonga collections are also detailed within Chapter 4.

<sup>39</sup> Pewhairangi, Jennifer (Education Officer, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 19 April, 2011.

or knowledge, or even wairua of some of the artefacts that we have in the collection without the language. So, the language is very important Karina, and as we are moving forward to the future, it's becoming very very important to the future generations.<sup>40</sup>

When Wylie began working with the Taonga Māori collections, he had difficulty in locating significant taonga in the collections and made it a priority to engage a consultant to audit and rehouse the collections.<sup>41</sup> In 2006, Moana Colmer a Masters Degree candidate from Massey University, was engaged to complete an audit of the collection.

When I first started here, I was getting enquiries from people who had taonga stored in the collection here, and one of the things I found after about 3 or 4 enquiries, I found that our books weren't in order...People were making enquiries about taonga that they'd put in here on loan and I couldn't find them. That's what triggered alarm bells and led to the process of the audit...What I was very mindful of was coming into an organisation and accepting responsibility for what other people had done in the past...I wanted to come in and start with a clean slate. As a part of developing the Terms of Reference we felt it was important to get in someone from outside of the district - an independent from outside of this district. As a result of that and through David Butts, and a program developed through museum studies program at Massey University, we were able to take on one of the top students to do the audit for us. We engaged her for 9 months to complete the full audit through funding by an endowment Trust.<sup>42</sup>

Funding to support the project was received through Te Puni Kōkiri, a government subsidiary to the Ministry for Māori Affairs. The Minister, the Honorary Parekura Horomia, was unaware of the extensive taonga Māori collections prior to his visit and was supportive of changes to improve and make visible the Taonga Māori collections.<sup>43</sup> Colmer was directed to investigate digital and hardcopy collection materials and examine each collection item using 'holistic collection management practices', a term engaged by Colmer in a Masters of Arts thesis delivered following the Taonga Māori audit.<sup>44</sup> When Colmer started working with the collections there were 1200 taonga within the collections management systems and hardcopy records. On completion this had increased to 1700.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Wylie, Jody (Kaitiaki Māori, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, 21 April, 2011.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Wylie, Jody (Kaitiaki Māori, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, 21 April, 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Pohatu, Mere (Director, Te Puni Kōkiri) and Wylie, Marsha (Administration, Te Puni Kōkiri), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 21 April 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Colmer 2010, op.cit.p.i.

<sup>45</sup> Wylie, Jody (Kaitiaki Māori, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, 21 April, 2011.



We had three types of collection records. In order for Moana to get a full picture of the collection and artefact she had to go through three different collection systems - catalogue cards, the first port of call —they were the system that predated Vernon. It seemed to be the most accurate of the record systems. Accession books and Vernon itself and collection files — actually four. What we found was that some of the information on the catalogue cards wasn't actually on Vernon. She brought everything into the one system, Vernon.<sup>46</sup>

It is unfortunate that at the time of the audit, data enhancement in te reo was not completed within the collections management system. Butts suggested this was due to the limited capabilities and time for the researcher to assess data held within accession books, catalogue cards, collection files and the Vernon database. Butts explained issues relating to the audit:

The audit was done by a recent graduate from museum studies who in the general sense was a very capable person, and brought to that work a reasonably good understanding of collections management...She didn't have a background in ethnology, Māori studies or Māori language...although she is Māori so brought a level of understanding. That in itself you can see a number of quite significant weaknesses because of that. Trading off a range of skills that are hard to find in one person and also a person that you can afford to pay. The most significant outcome of the audit is that all the taonga Māori are now documented and on the Vernon system but there is a huge amount of retrospective work to be done to bring the way the collection is documented up to a reasonable standard.<sup>47</sup>

Butts raised a significant issue on staff competency with language, and the operational challenges of engaging staff with a complete set of skills in this field. This is discussed further in this chapter when I identify collection examples. Additional outcomes following the audit included stronger relationships between Tairāwhiti Museum, Te Papa and Auckland War Memorial who supported the sharing of data for the collections audit.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Butts, David (Director, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 27 April, 2011.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 30 – Figure 31** Poupou and Kete labels in te reo Māori, collections stores, Tairāwhiti Museum (photographs) Karina Lamb, April 2011

The audit documentation not only identified a neglect of te reo Māori in collections documentation, but the significant loss of a 100-year-old cloak crafted by a Tūhoe iwi chief. The cloak was gifted to a family member to honour Waiwika Brown, a prominent elder for the Tūhoe tribe. The museum, led by Wylie, was required to undergo difficult conversations with the family regarding the loss. No documentation existed to identify where the taonga had been moved to, and the collection management system was lacking location information. As a result, the Tairāwhiti Museum had chosen to fund the creation of a new cloak for the family.<sup>49</sup> As Marstine explained ‘...for most source communities, what’s important is that their culture – not the object – is transmitted through time. When an object becomes too fragile to be useful, a replacement is made; the culture is not static or frozen but continues to maintain its identity by creating new objects, each with its own personality...’<sup>50</sup>

The Taonga Māori audit identified the need for conservation and restoration of collection items. Storage systems were acquired through Te Papa and environmental controls were upgraded as a result of the audit.<sup>51</sup> The previous museum Director, Dr Monty Soutar explained that:

Storage is always the problem. It's probably the one thing I never got finished...There's so much in storage that could be out on display...whether we do that through open access to the store rooms, or more exhibition space. I'd like to see more stuff visible to the public. I think the

<sup>49</sup> Wylie, Jody (Kaitiaki Māori, Tairāwhiti Museum), Collection tour with Jody Wylie, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio recording, Gisborne, 21 April, 2011.

<sup>50</sup> Marstine 2006, op.cit. p.17.

<sup>51</sup> Wylie, Jody (Kaitiaki Māori, Tairāwhiti Museum), Collection tour with Jody Wylie, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio recording, Gisborne, 21 April, 2011.

whole idea of a museum without walls is something we should be moving towards, and that might mean an electronic museum that you access through the internet. I think things are moving that way naturally for museums. I look forward to seeing that sort of accessibility.<sup>52</sup>

The audit raised concerns for immediate protection for taonga in line with industry standards for collections management practices.



**Figure 32** Inside the Taonga Māori Collections Store, Tairāwhiti Museum, (photograph), Karina Lamb April 2011.

### ***Collections Management Practices***

The care of collections in line with cultural protocols was observed through professional practices within the institution. Wylie spoke a karakia when entering and leaving the collections stores. Water was held at the entrance of the stores to cleanse when leaving the stores. Taonga were stored in careful order to represent significance and connection to iwi. There was an understanding amongst

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<sup>52</sup> Soutar, Monty (Previous Director, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 24 April, 2011.

staff of the potential for spiritual disruption if an object was relocated in the stores. Objects were considered living ancestors that hold an ongoing connection to source communities. As Cobb identified:

Traditional care highlights the fact that Native peoples care deeply about their cultural property, just as Eurocentric museums do, but not always for the same reasons. Whereas Western museology is concerned with an object's 'physical integrity and attributes as evidence of cultural, historical or scientific phenomena' Native traditional care is concerned with an object's spiritual integrity and meaning and function within its community.<sup>53</sup>

McCarthy described collections practices with taonga as '...evidence-based customary practices for collection care and management...'<sup>54</sup> Within the Tairāwhiti Museum, te reo Māori was engaged by staff as a means to speak and connect to the taonga, but there was little te reo Māori held in the collection management system and associated documentation. Similar to the EMu collections database at the Melbourne Museum discussed in the previous chapter, the Vernon database had difficulty with macrons which prevented the correct spelling of words in the catalogue. Macrons are crucial to uphold the integrity of the language. Language documentation can be achieved if thesauri and language corpus are entered into the pick lists for collections management systems, but this takes time and skill in the system management.<sup>55</sup> The preparation of Māori thesauri is discussed further in the following chapter on Te Papa.

The Collections Manager at Tairāwhiti Museum was Anne Milton-Tee who began with the institution in 1998. As a Pākehā with little language knowledge, Milton-Tee did not develop a te reo Māori thesaurus for the Vernon collections database and stated that '...our classifications grew out of my head, trying to be consistent. Although in the early days our registrar insisted we do certain classifications that I don't agree with...I'm hugely aware that because we did it from its infancy (Vernon) there are problems...As in any filing system or vertical file system – often it's only as good as the thinking and mind of the person that establishes it...'<sup>56</sup> Milton-Tee leaned on the museum's Māori Advisory Committee in the early days for advice on taonga but admitted '...there are still objects here that I don't know what they are...periodically I place objects out on the registrars network to find

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<sup>53</sup> Cobb, Amanda J 2008, 'The National Museum of the American Indian as Cultural Sovereignty', *The National Museum of the American Indian: critical conversations*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, pp.331-352.

<sup>54</sup> McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: heritage professionals, indigenous collections, current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, N.Z. p.11.

<sup>55</sup> Stanton, Giselle (Collections Information Manager – Standards and Support, Te Papa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 24 February, 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Milton-Tee, Anne (Collections Manager, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research - General discussion on collections background, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Tairāwhiti Museum, Gisborne, New Zealand, 11 April 2011.

results...'<sup>57</sup> Unprovenanced materials and objects place a large burden and risk on the institution as they continued to support and hold cultural materials that could not be shown to the public without relevant connections to history or people. Unprovenanced items were discussed by Lee-Ann Martin, Interim Curator Canadian Museum of Civilisation as she stated that:

It is a very severe indictment of the museum profession for failing to document stuff adequately. If they don't have the documentation on something that has come in, perhaps because it might have been a bequest, they have the responsibility of doing the research that's required. The only way of doing that is to go back to the communities to use the various agencies already available.<sup>58</sup>

Within the Tairāwhiti Museum no hardcopy registration forms were available for recent taonga acquisitions. As a contemporary taonga was acquired for the collection, basic registration data was captured by Milton-Tee on the catalogue. Milton-Tee explained that the collecting practices and standards for documentation prior to the Taonga Māori audit were 'very Eurocentric', implying that changes had been made.<sup>59</sup>

Discussing a change from Eurocentric standards to include the concept of te reo Māori inclusion in collections documentation, Milton-Tee considered that it was an impossibility for the institution due to limited staff time to complete the backlog of entries, and day-to-day work required. Milton-Tee emphasised difficulties as the small museum wore 'many hats' and were required to assist with exhibition installations, storage management and events. Data enhancement for the collections management systems would be limited unless driven by a significant project. This aligned to the responses received by Collection Managers within Australian collecting institutions discussed in the previous chapter. Milton-Tee confirmed that in her role as Collection Manager that she had little involvement in, or the ability to, assess which objects required further documentation and that her responsibilities remained to process the work completed by others throughout the institution.<sup>60</sup> This implies that research or a deeper level of content development on the collection items would extend from the Kaitiaki Maori or the Collection Curators within the institution.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Canadian Museum of Civilization 1994, op.cit. p.29.

<sup>59</sup> Milton-Tee, Anne (Collections Manager, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research - General discussion on collections background, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Tairāwhiti Museum, Gisborne, New Zealand, 11 April 2011.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

In back of house collections management practices, I observed that te reo Māori was not documented on acquisition reports, donation forms or hardcopy collections documentation unless the information was completed by the Kaitiaki Māori. Milton-Tee confirmed the backlog of digitisation of the collections documentation was a significant concern in her role, stating that ‘...half the art collection is not on [the collections database].’<sup>61</sup> The level of research required for data enhancement and to reconnect objects to source communities was an impossibility due to time, unless the process occurred during a well-funded project to develop an exhibition.

Exhibition development, and the funding often received to support significant project timelines for development, can lead consultations and documentation for the data enhancement of catalogues. But on completion of the exhibition, as was the observations at Australian museums, research from exhibitions at Tairāwhiti Museum seldom returned to collections management systems. Tairāwhiti Museum staff were conscious of this issue throughout my placement and Wylie identified that:

As a result of doing a number of taonga exhibitions, we generate quite a large bit of information from our records. Once the exhibition is over the information basically goes back into the cupboard and stored around the back. So, what we’re doing now is when thinking about the exhibition process – before an exhibition is curated think about what is actually going to happen with all of the labels and information from the exhibition – education with schools through our education program – that’s come about recently through an exhibition we had about Matatini.<sup>62</sup>

Wylie identified the need for the information developed as a result of exhibitions to be available for the community on completion of projects. This information could be attached to collections management systems if a change of professional practice was to take place. The gap and loss of this information in collections records is a consistent issue in museum practice for both state and regional museums.<sup>63</sup> Wylie, as quoted in McCarthy, agreed that ‘...good collection management makes sense because it enhances collection use, allowing them to do things that would not be possible without the basic information that good documentation provides.’<sup>64</sup> I raised with Milton-Tee the issue of the disconnect between exhibition content and the collections management system, and in particular a

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Wylie, Jody (Kaitiaki Māori, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, 21 April, 2011.

<sup>63</sup> The loss of research from the exhibition development period or collections management – often managed by separate departments within cultural institutions – is discussed within all case study chapters and solutions are approached in chapter 5.

<sup>64</sup> McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: Indigenous professionals and current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington. p.172.

taonga on display within the *Watersheds* exhibition 'Toki - Adze head with Spirals (1975.55)' where information was clearly missing from the collections documentation.

### ***Collection Examples***

#### **Toki - Adze head with Spirals (1975.55)**

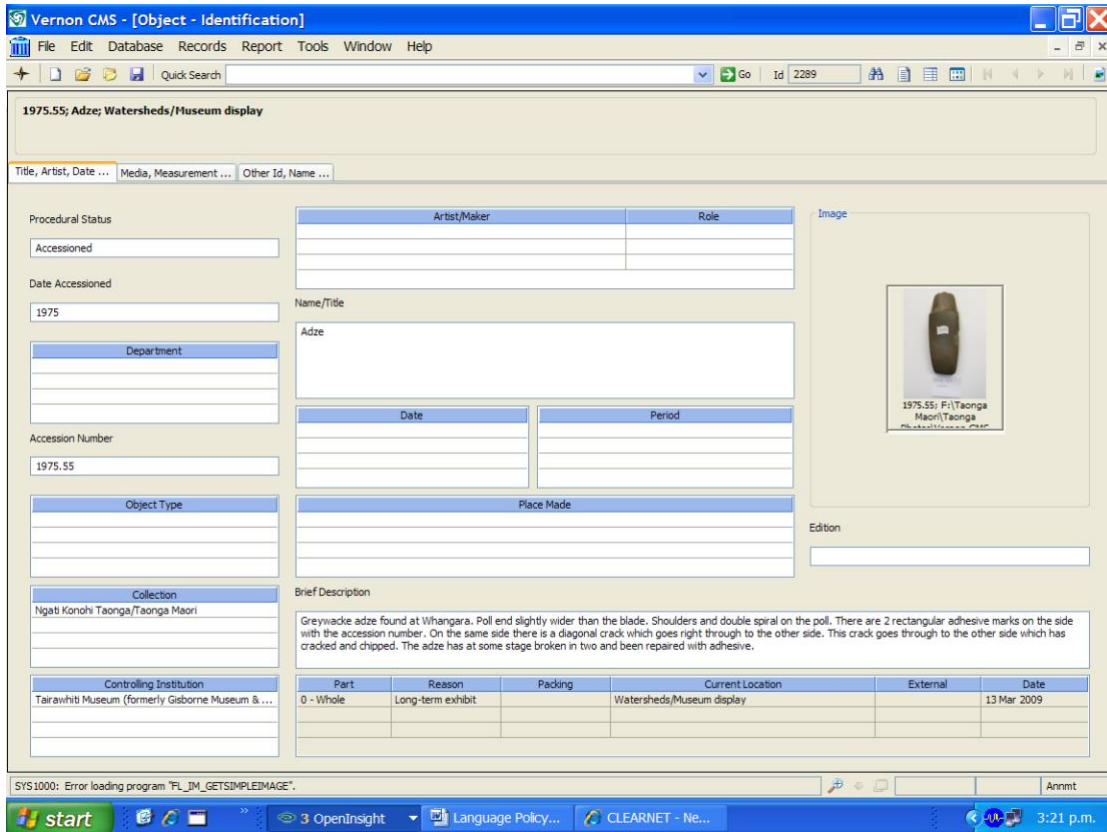
Toki - Adze head with Spirals (1975.55) was gifted to the institution in 1975 after the item was found at Whāngārā, North Island. The collection management system, Vernon, held little information in te reo Māori other than the name of the object. Toki means an adze (chisel) often used by Māori to create carvings on waka or marae.<sup>65</sup>



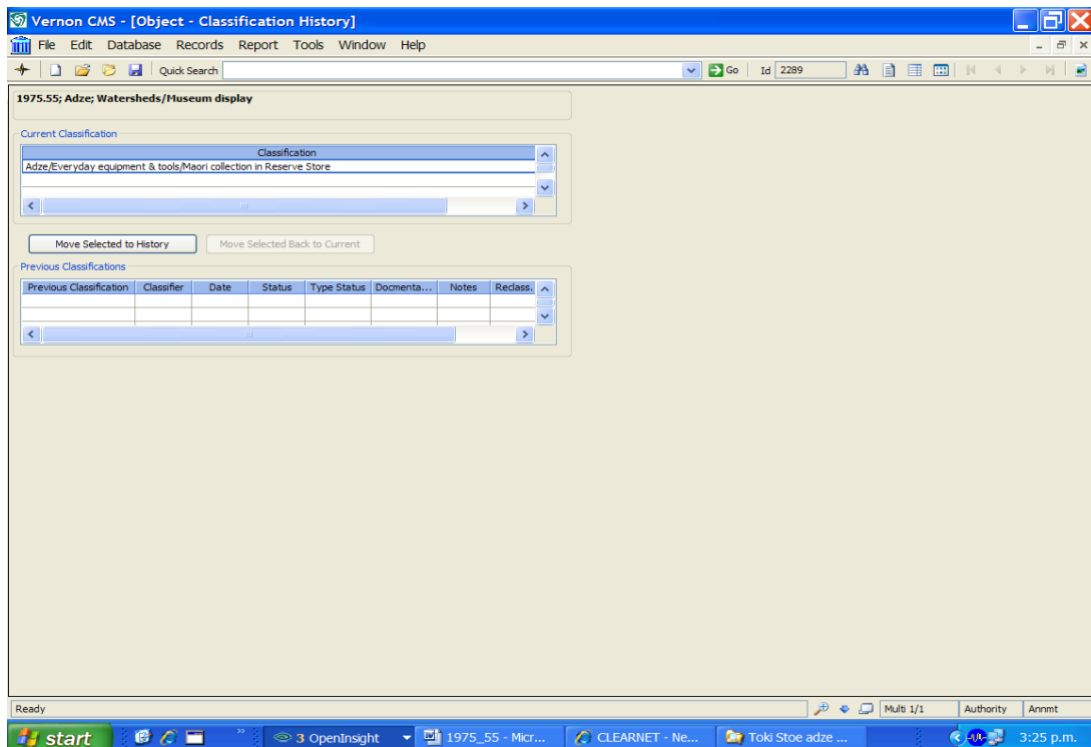
**Figure 33** Toki (stone adze with spirals, detail), Tairāwhiti Museum (installation view)  
(1975.55) Karina Lamb, April 2011

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<sup>65</sup> NZ Pacific 2020, Hand carved Adze / Toki, Wellington, viewed 12 April 2020, <<https://www.nzpacific.com/collections/adze-toki>>.



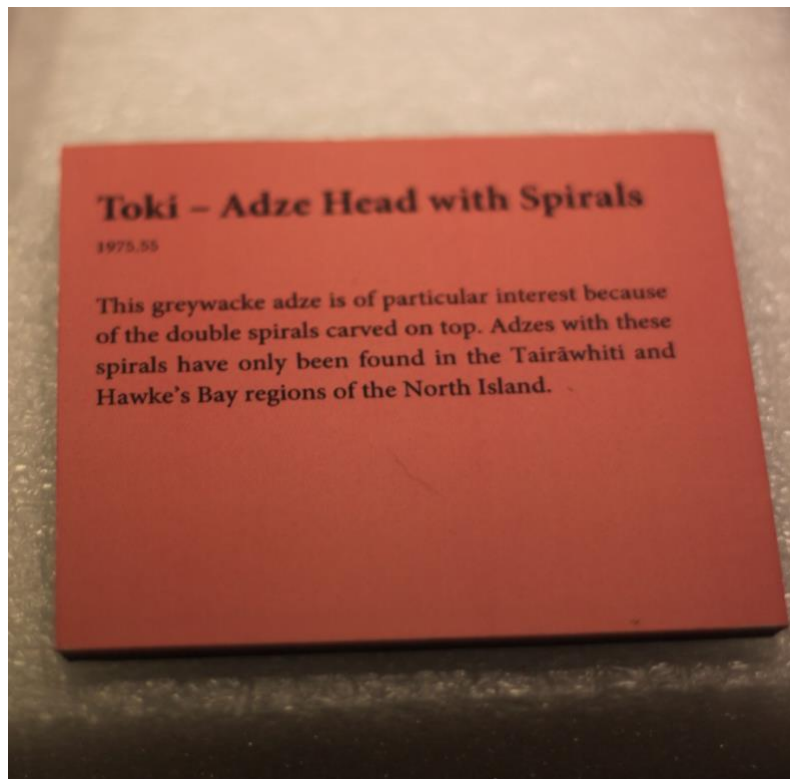
**Figure 34** Toki (1975.55), Vernon collection management system entry, Title, Artist, Date, Tairāwhiti Museum (screenshot) Karina Lamb, April 2011.



**Figure 35** Toki (1975.55), Vernon collection management system entry, Classification, Tairāwhiti Museum, (screenshot) Karina Lamb, April 2011.



The catalogue entry for this item holds basic information on the physical aspects of the object with condition details documented. Interestingly, the entry identified the object as Ngāti Konohi Taonga, as seen in Figure 34, but no further information is included in the record to indicate how this was determined. The taonga in 2011 was included on display within the *Ngā Wai Pupū – Watersheds* exhibition and the label, as seen in Figure 36, identified that the stone exhibited a double spiral design that was associated with the Tairāwhiti and Hawkes Bay areas of Aotearoa. On the label, the form and design on the taonga connect it to place. This significant information is not included in the catalogue record for the taonga.



**Figure 36** Label for Toki (1975.55), Tairāwhiti Museum (installation view) Karina Lamb, April 2011.

The exhibition and collections management system records are not consistent. I discussed this with Milton-Tee who stated that '...it is interesting for me that there is information that is on display that has never made it to me and that I didn't know about...'<sup>66</sup> Identifying a disconnect between information held on a label, and that held within the collections record, Milton-Tee stated '...I don't know who wrote the labels for the exhibition. I have no idea. Probably it would be a combination of the guest Curator Damien Skinner because I have no part of that side of things...'<sup>67</sup> Although Milton-Tee would

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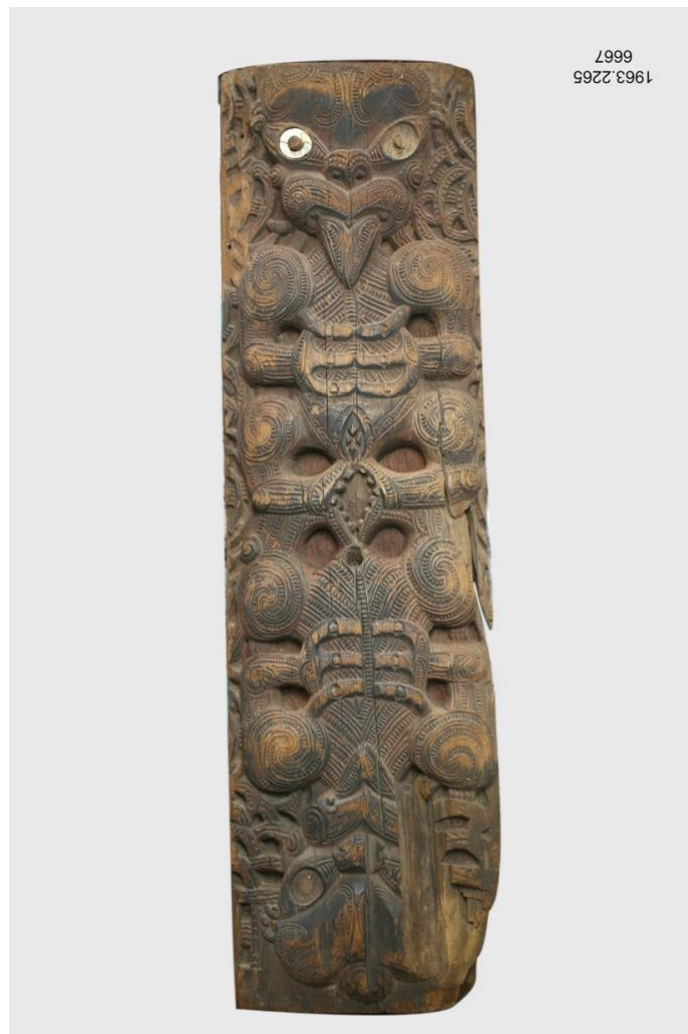
<sup>66</sup> Milton-Tee, Anne (Collections Manager, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research - General discussion on collections background, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio recording, Tairāwhiti Museum, Gisborne, New Zealand, 11 April 2011.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

walk through the exhibitions on site on a regular basis, I observed that her role would only process information that was given to her, and not seek out additional that may be available and accessible on the site. This is a significant issue in museum professional roles that do not incorporate a holistic view of working with collections. Museums are often seen as placing a greater emphasis on exhibition and outward looking outcomes on sites instead of ensuring collections management systems and documentation back of house are kept up to date.

### **Pātaka Tāhuhu (1963.2265)**

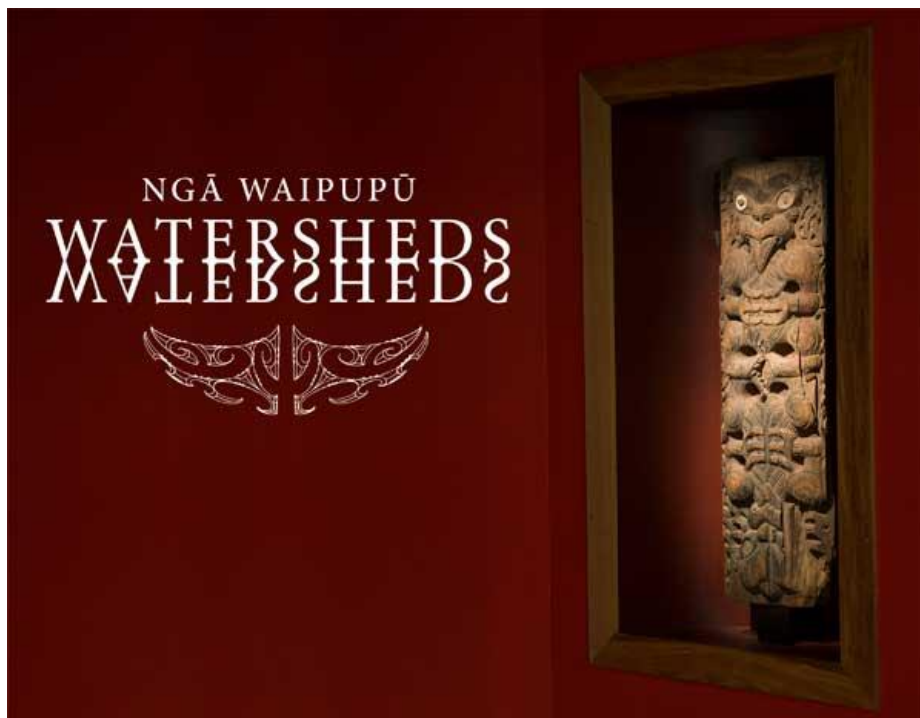
Located at the entrance to the main exhibition within the museum *Ngā Wai Pupū – Watersheds* stood Pātaka Tāhuhu (1963.2265). Pātaka Tāhuhu, a Ngāti Kahungunu taonga believed to have been crafted in the 1700s, was acclaimed as a highly significant object in the exhibition and was promoted on all marketing materials for the exhibition as seen in Figure 39.



**Figure 37** Pātaka Tāhuhu (1963.2265), Tairāwhiti Museum, (collection photograph), sourced April 2011.



**Figure 38** Pātaka Tāhuhu (1963.2265), *Ngā Wai Pupū – Watersheds* exhibition, Tairāwhiti Museum (installation view) Karina Lamb, April 2011.



**Figure 39** Marketing for *Ngā Wai Pupū – Watersheds* exhibition, Tairāwhiti Museum (screenshot) April 2011.

The taonga was also exhibited in the landmark *Te Māori* exhibition, as seen in the catalogue listing for the exhibition in Figure 40.<sup>68</sup> The significance of *Te Māori* to the Aotearoa museum sector is discussed in detail in Chapter 4: Mātauranga Māori within Te Papa. The *Te Māori* catalogue listing assumes, due to the carving style and detail of the ridgepole of a storehouse, that the carving is connected to ‘an important chief’. This important information should be documented on both the exhibition label and the collections management system with the Tairāwhiti Museum. The catalogue records for Pātaka Tāhuhu, as seen in Figures 41–43 do not identify that the taonga was on loan to the *Te Māori* exhibition. The catalogue entries do not include details that can be found in the *Te Māori* catalogue listing or extensive research attached to the exhibition. No te reo Māori is seen in the catalogue record except for the title of the work. The neglect and incomplete record disconnects this important taonga from its provenance, social history and displaces significant information for future researchers and curators. This is a clear example of the tension between exhibition data and collection management systems.

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<sup>68</sup> Mead, S. M 1984, op.cit. p.127.



**124. Ridgepole of a storehouse. Tahuhu**

*Wood, shell, 109 cm. (42<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.) high*

*Ngati Kahungunu tribe*

*Te Puawaitanga period (1500–1800)*

*Gisborne Museum and Art Gallery (63.2265)*

This tahuhu, ridgepole of a small pataka, was carved with stone tools. The two figures depicted are male and female and represent Rangī, the Sky Father, and Papa, the Earth Mother, from whose union came the gods, who in turn made man. The style of carving is the northern form of Kahungunu carving, which has a close relationship with the contiguous Rongowhakaata tribal area. The pataka to which this ridgepole belonged would have been the personal storehouse of an important chief.

**Figure 40** Pātaka Tāhuhu (1963.2265) in Mead 1984, *Te Māori: Māori Art from New Zealand Collection*, p.127.



Object  
1 record

14:23:15 06 APR 2011  
Page 1

Object (short  
summary)

1963.2265; Tahu; Watersheds/Museum display

Brief Description

Tahu/ ridgepole. Rectangular panel, triangular at cross section. High relief carving. May be a representation of Rangī and Papa. Unpainted (possibly been stained in the past but has faded off). 2 stylised figures depicted, one feminine one masculine. The feet of the two figures are joined in the centre of the piece. Decorative carved motifs in the background. The female figure: Flat head at crown, almond shaped eyes, one paua eye inlay present in right hand eye, the other is missing. The eyes had wooden pegs in the centre. Carved nose, mouth and tongue. 3 teeth, central tongue in mid line. Spirals on shoulders, elbows and hips. Both hands on belly, 3 fingers and 1 thumb on each hand. Torso carved in a diagonal patterning on either side of the central ridge line. Carved oval female genitalia with 4 triangular projections. Feet underneath body with three toes, the feet overlap the toes of the male figure. Manaia heads on either side of the main figures head just above the eye line. The male figure has a central top knot. Almond shaped left eye. Right side of head completely destroyed. Eye inlays missing. Central tongue. Torso carved in the same patterning of the female. Carved with European tools. Spirals on shoulders, hips and knees. Hole in piece at base of body, may have been male genitalia protruding from the hole but this has been removed. Feet have 3 toes. Manaia figure discernable on undamaged side of the males head. Catalogue card states: Carved in the Gisborne style by a well-trained carver (not Rukupo). Went to America with the Te Maori exhibition. Has Coll.File



Condition Desc

Poor/ Fair. One side of figures head on the left hand side is completely destroyed 16cm x 12cm. Chipped also through forehead and nose 17cm x 3cm. Large crack in left edge runs 44 cm down piece and 40cm from the top. Risk of the edge fracturing. Large chip in leg on left hand side of male 9 x 4cm. Numerous vertical cracks in surface piece, some run the entire length. Scuffing, fading and chipping has resulted in loss of stain/ colouration. Thin layer of grime over surface. Chipping on right hand side bottom edge, 26cm long and on left hand side bottom edge 8cm long. 2 nail holes right hand side bottom edge. Top edge chipped and packed with foam. Reverse side: Nail holes, gouging and compression marks. Vertical cracking right hand side 55cm crack on mid edge, 35cm crack running medially to large crack. Flat ridge line, red and white foreign matter (paint), accession number in red vivid pen ink, nail remnants present.

Acquisition  
Source

Unknown

Acquisition  
Notes

Acquisition and donor/lender details unknown. No details on register. Probably gifted.

Measurement  
Reading

1100mm

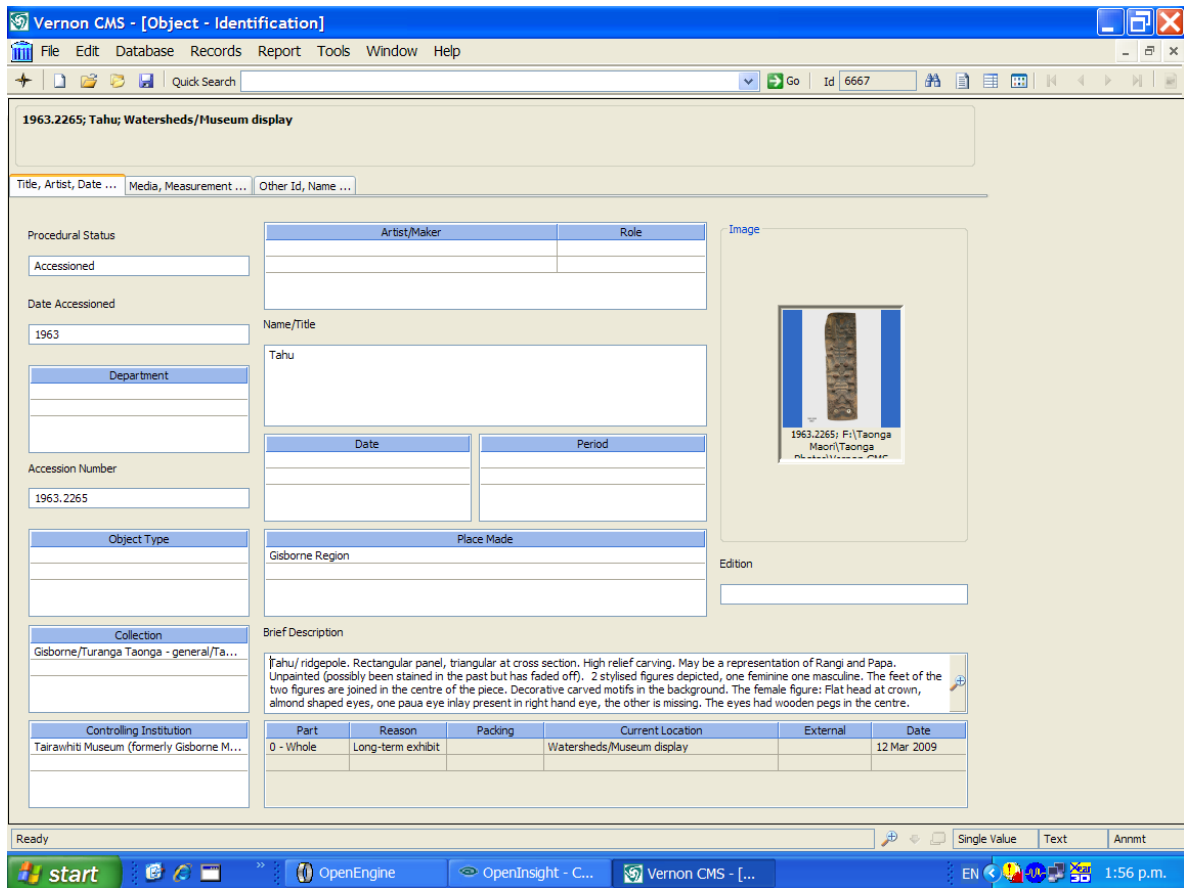
300mm

190mm

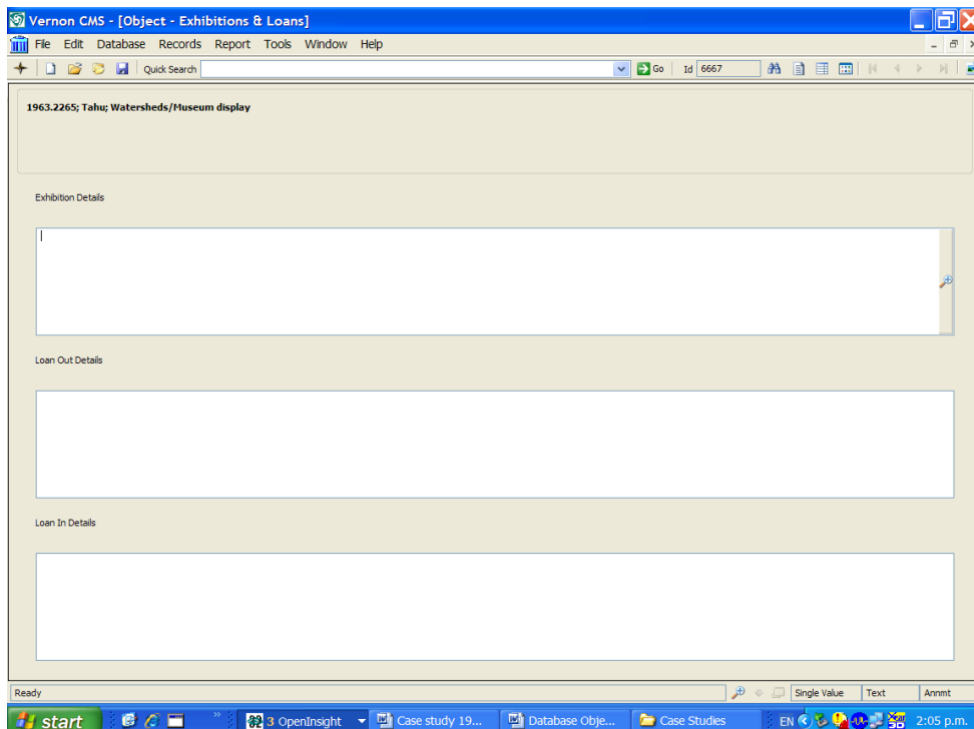
System ID

6667

Figure 41 Pātaka Tāhuhu (1963.2265), Vernon catalogue entry, Tairāwhiti Museum (screenshot), April 2011.



**Figure 42** Pātaka Tāhuhu (1963.2265), Vernon catalogue entry, Title, Artist, Date, Tairāwhiti Museum (screenshot), April 2011.



**Figure 43** Pātaka Tāhuhu (1963.2265), Vernon catalogue entry, Exhibitions and Loans, No documentation of Pātaka Tāhuhu on loan for the *Te Māori* exhibition (screenshot), April 2011.

Within Tairāwhiti Museum, there was some confusion on who would be responsible to update information in collections management systems. Although in the museum sector it is widely assigned to the Registrar or Collections Manager to update records, at Tairāwhiti Museum the Collections Manager did not complete data enhancement to the records unless it was directed by the Kaitiaki Māori or Director to do so. I argue that as greater research and data is received on collections objects that the inclusion of this information, by Collections Managers in collections documentation is essential to ensure correct historical records are held. Butts was clear during our discussions that data enhancement to the records was welcomed as long as there were clear distinctions between the entries and the original records to ensure authenticity in the records management.<sup>69</sup>

The collection examples are included not only as evidence that te reo Māori was disconnected from taonga in the collections management systems, but also that general provenance was neglected and that the records were incomplete. Wylie and Milton-Tee agree that the collections management system and records are imperfect. Milton-Tee observed that the migration of information from the old collections system to Vernon was ‘...almost perfect, with some record files distorted...’<sup>70</sup> Milton-Tee felt that it was solely the limited hours in the week that had impacted the process of updating collections management documentation.<sup>71</sup> Te reo Māori was in the majority of records, only used when the title of taonga was documented in Vernon. Milton-Tee confirmed that:

Te reo Māori here (in collections) from my perspective has been ad hoc. There's always been a desire over 50 years from the staff to be sensitive towards it, but apart from the taonga Māori collection you would find very few words to describe anything else. I would have to say because the bulk of the catalogue cards, and the descriptions, started in the mid-seventies...that was the period of time the museum was quite Eurocentric. There was virtually no Māori staff.<sup>72</sup>

The Taonga Māori collections required time for museum staff to reconnect research to the object’s catalogue entries to ensure that ongoing use, display and the sharing of knowledge was correct.

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<sup>69</sup> Interestingly this opinion was also held by Jason Eades, CEO of the Koorie Heritage Trust as he spoke about the opportunity for data enhancement in chapter 2.

<sup>70</sup> Milton-Tee, Anne (Collections Manager, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Tairāwhiti Museum, Gisborne, New Zealand, 11 April 2011.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Milton-Tee, Anne (Collections Manager, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Tairāwhiti Museum, Gisborne, New Zealand, 11 April 2011.



## **Repatriation**

Although this thesis is not focused on repatriation policy or process for cultural institutions, when discussing Tairāwhiti Museum it is noted that significant work has been completed for the return of taonga to source communities including the return of koiwi (ancestral remains). During my placement in 2011, a large flax net was repatriated to Wairoa Museum, the location of descendants of the maker. Wylie confirmed that:

I'm quite lucky here Karina. Most of the Board are indigenous and that helps enormously particularly with many things like taonga Māori being repatriated to other tribes. They're very sympathetic and they're very good with that. The directive has come from them about returning stuff to other museums. Our philosophy is that if something doesn't belong to us, let's give it back to the people it belongs to and there's no strings attached.<sup>73</sup>

In this section, observations and an analysis of collections records has confirmed that although best practice for the management of the Taonga Māori collections at Tairāwhiti Museum was intended, there is clear evidence that collections management systems are inaccurate and neglect significant information. Following the Taonga Māori audit changes were made in the institution's storage management and practices in line with Māori caring of collections. But there was a lack of focus on te reo Māori in the descriptions, provenance or historical records within the Vernon database. It was hoped that a focus on documentation would be prioritised once a language policy for the institution was adopted. I prepared a language policy for the institution as a contribution to the professional practices of the institution that was later adopted by the Museum Board.<sup>74</sup>

## **Language Policy Development**

In 2011, language policies highlighting the significance of indigenous languages for display and for the continued connection between cultural knowledge and source communities were rare in both the Australian and New Zealand museum sectors. As discussed in Chapter 2: Australian Museums and Cultural Collections, a language policy was prepared for the Koorie Heritage Trust following my fieldwork and in response to the work I completed on the Oral History significance assessment. While located at Tairāwhiti Museum, Butts requested that I deliver a draft policy for the museum to lead a new understanding on language for the Board and the museum team. I spoke intently with Butts prior

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<sup>73</sup> Wylie, Jody (Kaitiaki Māori, Tairāwhiti Museum), Collection tour with Jody Wylie, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, 21 April, 2011.

<sup>74</sup> Included in Chapter 6: Lamb, Karina 2011, 'Draft Tairāwhiti Museum Language Policy', unpublished, Tairāwhiti Museum, p.1–4.

to drafting the policy. When I enquired about the role the museum had in facilitating and sharing the use of te reo Māori, he replied:

In the museum context, particular with te reo language, it is about identity. It's about mana. It's about a particular world view. It's about forms of expression. Language is not something that is just written, or spoken, it's sung. It's poetry. It comes in some many forms, it's political, it's about resilience, status, there is so many issues that arise around te reo. It's the vehicle to which those things are brought to the world.<sup>75</sup>

The response by museum staff to the development of the policy was positive. Throughout my placement, community members agreed that the documentation of cultural knowledge in language was required. Derek Lardelli, the Senior Lecturer and Tā Moko Artist based within Toi Houkura Tairāwhiti Polytech confirmed that:

You can utilise the English language – it does a certain job of being a surrogate in terms of passing a certain type of knowledge on. But if you really want to know the essence of what's being said about the art piece, you've got to have the ancient tongue or the language from that particular land to activate the art piece.<sup>76</sup>

In this section, I argue that a collection cannot be managed under international best practice and in line with new museum theory without a language policy in place. I presented a draft language policy for Tairāwhiti Museum. The policy was approved by the Board of Management and was an asset to remind Trust Board members, staff and community stakeholders on the significance of language discussions required early in project management, throughout the acquisition process and at each stage of data enhancement for the collections. It was intended that policy would drive a change to improve professional practices.

In what McCarthy called 'grey matter' there are many institutional documents and policies that '...are confidential or not widely disseminated...' held within museums. These documents may be the evidence of change in museum practice but without a connection inside the museum, or a willingness for the museum to share, communities are unaware that policies and processes exist.<sup>77</sup> A language

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<sup>75</sup> Butts, David (Director, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 27 April, 2011.

<sup>76</sup> Lardelli, Derek (Senior Lecturer, Tā Moko Artist, Toi Houkura - Tairāwhiti Polytech), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 11 April, 2011.

<sup>77</sup> McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: Indigenous professionals and current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington. p.6.

policy is the conduit between the significance of te reo Māori, taonga, kaupapa Māori, source communities and professional practice. As Smith contends;

The significance of Kaupapa Māori to Māori language is tied to the connection between language, knowledge and culture...The language is like a cloak with clothes, envelopes, and adorns the myriad of one's thoughts...The revitalisation of Māori language has brought with it the revitalisation of Māori forms of knowledge and the debates which accompany those knowledge forms.<sup>78</sup>

Policy can lead an operational framework for language, to formalise understanding on the ways of working and thinking through languages other than English. Butts agrees that:

Going through the process of creating a policy is a good mechanism for actually unpacking things which we make assumptions about, but don't necessarily talk about a lot or that perhaps we can start to address some of those questions outside the contexts of particular exhibition, which is not always the best context for which to formulate a policy.<sup>79</sup>

Within the museum, each exhibition or project is an opportunity to engage the policy and make adjustments to professional practices. The policy to be reviewed on a yearly basis is a document to be adjusted when agreed change is evident and required; '...policy is only as useful as your capacity to continue to adjust it, to take account of things you haven't thought about before, or, to acknowledge that the situation is actually changing...'<sup>80</sup> Butts confirmed that there is a 'danger' in areas of museum practice that museum staff '...become comfortable without thinking about issues and it's sometimes quite hard to adjust that...the rules and framework of thinking about something...'<sup>81</sup> He considers a continued review and questioning of museum practice as the role of all museum professionals and the museum industry.

To present the draft language policy, I reviewed existing policy structures and considered other institutional examples including the policy of Te Papa as described in Chapter four: Mātauranga Māori within Te Papa. Within the policy I confirmed that:

Language use, and the acknowledgement of the diversity of dialectal regions in Gisborne and the Tairāwhiti, fulfils the commitment to conserve, interpret and deliver heritage of Aotearoa to local and international audiences. Language use in collections management, interpretation

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<sup>78</sup> Smith 1999, op.cit. p.188.

<sup>79</sup> Butts, David (Director, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 27 April, 2011.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Butts, David (Director, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 27 April, 2011.

and education resources establish records that in future will be accessed for the wealth and distinction of local knowledge.<sup>82</sup>

The policy is the institution's commitment as a bilingual museum to contribute to language revitalisation, the celebration of dialectal diversity and to seek to document te reo Māori in collections management systems and documentation, including contemporary acquisitions and historic database records. In communication received by Dr David Butts following my placement, Butts confirmed that the language policy had been adopted by the Board of Management and a commitment to te reo documentation including for collections management systems was confirmed. A successful outcome of my fieldwork and one that is hoped will have a long-term impact on the collections management practices. While I was developing the language policy for the museum, the local iwi, Ngāti Porou were producing their own language strategy to lead the revitalisation and strengthening of the dialectal differences and te reo Māori use within the boundaries of the iwi.

### ***Ngāti Porou Iwi Reo Strategy***

In 2011, Ngāti Porou presented a draft regional iwi reo strategy as a '...planned approach for ensuring the survival of a regionally distinct form of reo as a living language...'<sup>83</sup> The strategy identified significance in the dialect of Ngāti Porou, and approached challenges faced including declining language use in the home, dispersed population of Māori that identify as Ngāti Porou, and a depth of understanding on language significance for the region. Strategic priorities listed the needs and rationale for te reo Māori recovery. Victor Walker, the Chief Executive Officer of Ngāti Porou spoke with me to explain that:

The necessity for the strategy is because in our view our language is dying - so out of crisis there is always a response. Dying in the sense that we are losing our Elders who are our repositories of our language. If we don't make a huge effort for them to enrich our own lives with language, then we're going to lose it.<sup>84</sup>

The relationship between Ngāti Porou and the Tairāwhiti Museum was strong. Walker was one of four iwi representatives on the museum's Trust Board, and the strategy was discussed with the Board to look to ways the museum could support the implementation. Walker confirmed that '...there are two key themes that underpin successful language revitalisation; influencing people's attitudes and

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<sup>82</sup> Lamb, Karina 2011, 'Draft Tairāwhiti Museum Language Policy', unpublished, Tairāwhiti Museum, p.1–4.

<sup>83</sup> TRONP Consultation 2011, 'Ngāti Porou Iwi Reo Strategy (draft)', unpublished, Ngāti Porou Board of Trustees, p.1–18.

<sup>84</sup> Walker, Victor (CEO, Ngāti Porou), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 29 April, 2011.

developing the capacity for speaker communities...'<sup>85</sup> The region held robust representation from Kōhanga Reo, Te Ataarangi and Māori language schools. However, a loss of language use in the home was contributing to the decline, as confirmed also by Glennis Barbara, Chief Executive Officer of the Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori The Māori Language Commission in Chapter 1. Without immersion in language, parents found it difficult in Ngāti Porou to pass dialectal differences, stories and cultural knowledge to the next generation. Despite the iwi efforts and awareness across Aotearoa on the loss of language, Dr Monty Soutar, a previous Director of Tairāwhiti Museum, confirmed that:

We're in a desperate situation. I figure we have 10–15 years left with significant number of significant speakers, which is my parents' generation, before they are all gone. It doesn't take much to realise we're not having as many infants coming through the Kōhanga Reo, or the Māori language school system...The problem is, if you don't have those skills on your staff, you've got to contract out for it, and it's becoming more and more difficult because of the pool of speakers.<sup>86</sup>

Soutar emphasised throughout our discussions the need to build capacity of language speakers, and an urgency to raise the number of speakers available for the workforce to complete demands across all sectors of art, culture and industry.

The relationship between Ngāti Porou with the Tairāwhiti museum was strengthened with the repatriation of the first taonga, a patu, crafted by one of Walker's ancestors, to source community.<sup>87</sup> As he spoke to me about the taonga Walker became emotional and emphasised the importance of communities being able to access taonga; '...the taonga itself is about our history...this has always been about our history, and we make no apologies for that. The very core of everything we do is our identity. We must know who we are...'<sup>88</sup> The completed Ngāti Porou language strategy *Te Reo Ake o Ngāti Porou: Ngāti Porou Language Strategy* later published in 2016.<sup>89</sup>

If iwi themselves are concerned with language decline, then museums entrusted to guard taonga and represent cultural heritage for the source communities need to simultaneously work towards

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<sup>85</sup> Walker, Victor (CEO, Ngāti Porou), 'Letter sent with Ngāti Porou draft language strategy', personal communication with Tairāwhiti Museum, 14 March 2011.

<sup>86</sup> Soutar, Monty (Previous Director, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 24 April, 2011.

<sup>87</sup> Walker, Victor (CEO, Ngāti Porou), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 29 April, 2011.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ngāti Porou 2016, 4 May 2019, *Te Reo Ake o Ngāti Porou: Toitū te Reo: Ngāti Porou Language Strategy*, Ngāti Porou, Gisborne, New Zealand.

advocating for language documentation, use and understanding. Derek Lardelli believed there was an urgency to capture language speakers;

...making sure you have them well recorded and documented. So that the written word doesn't become the dominant factor....The essence of the language is how you say it. And how you express that language. If you listen to Māori especially on the coast we cut a lot of our words short and have a very guttural sound compared to other language groups. A lot of that is actually part and parcel with how the artwork works. The artworks looks like us – and so is the language like us – and you can see the balance between them.<sup>90</sup>

For iwi represented within Tairāwhiti Museum, language diversity and acknowledgement was important. Soutar agreed that ‘...some of the ways taonga are described here (in the museum) using archaeological terms, takes away from the spirit and the context of the object...in a place like this region, where Māori terms are more commonly known, it makes sense to describe it as a taiaha for example...’<sup>91</sup> I have addressed that a collection cannot be managed under best practice and represent past and living culture without a language policy in place to acknowledge awareness and commitment to local dialects, language diversity and the reconnection to source communities within institutions. Within the Tairāwhiti Museum, the strongest evidence of co-collaboration to document te reo Māori was observed in the project development for exhibitions. I now identify three examples within the institutions where language was prominent.

## **Exhibitions and Language**

### ***Iwi Karioi Hakanation***

Kapa Haka (Māori song and performance) holds a rich history in the Tairāwhiti region and throughout Aotearoa. The national competition for Kapa Haka, Te Matatini was held in Gisborne in 2011. To coincide with this nationally significant event, the Tairāwhiti Museum planned for the development and implementation of an extensive celebration of kapa haka leaders and composers from Tairāwhiti dating back to the early 1900s to be presented in the exhibition *Iwi Karioi Hakanation*.<sup>92</sup> This extensive project engaged Māori community members and specialists in the field to co-curate an exhibition right from the start of the exhibition development. Led by Jen Pewhairangi, Education Officer who in this project was positioned as Curator, held the language skills and subject matter experience to deliver

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<sup>90</sup>Lardelli, Derek (Senior Lecturer, Tā Moko Artist, Toihoukura - Tairāwhiti Polytech), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 11 April, 2011.

<sup>91</sup>Soutar, Monty (Previous Director, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 24 April, 2011.

<sup>92</sup>Pewhairangi, Jennifer (Curator) March - April 2011, *Iwi Karioi Hakanation*, exhibition, Tairāwhiti Museum, Gisborne, New Zealand.

successful community engagement and the documentation of language in song and written form to tell the stories of local Kapa Haka. Pewhairangi explained:

When the word came that the national Matatini would be held here – straight away we knew we had to have an exhibition. I wanted to be a part of it because I knew that there were prominent people from this area that had a huge influence on kapa haka - not just locally, regionally but nationally. I saw it as a vehicle to get our stories out there more.<sup>93</sup>

In line with Kaupapa Māori, Pewhairangi established an advisory committee including inviting descendants of the kapa haka leaders to be celebrated to contribute to the direction of the project through the committee. Whānau (family) were contacted to source permission for tīpuna (ancestors) to be included in the exhibition. Co-curating with source community led to an exhibition rich with personal connections and stories from the families held with didactic panels displayed. Taonga held by the descendants were selected based on a spiritual connection to the kapa haka leader. Personal experience and family knowledge were considered an equal to curatorial knowledge within the exhibition.

A significant difference in the kaupapa of this exhibition was Pewhairangi's decision as the Curator to establish te reo Māori as the leading language. Te reo Māori was engaged to produce content for didactic panels, education kits and collateral and then materials were translated into English. This was a completely new way of working for the Tairāwhiti Museum. Wylie confirmed that Pewhairangi:

...came forward and said here's how I want to do it – all in Māori and then translate in English. We hadn't had a policy in terms of exhibition language. We would do it in English and translate it in Māori. So, we decided to do it the other way around...it was a wonderful exhibition that was participated both within Aotearoa and abroad... Jen was the conduit for that.<sup>94</sup>

Pewhairangi stated that '...like every indigenous people, when you want to talk about their own people, it's gotta be in their language. When it's in the indigenous language of that person, the way of saying things come a lot better...'<sup>95</sup> Elder Ingrid Searancke agrees that '...when you're dealing with Māori things you need to know about the essence of things in Māori – because it's a warmer

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<sup>93</sup> Pewhairangi, Jennifer (Education Officer, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 19 April, 2011.

<sup>94</sup> Wylie, Jody (Kaitiaki Māori, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, 21 April, 2011.

<sup>95</sup> Pewhairangi, Jennifer (Education Officer, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 19 April, 2011.

language...'<sup>96</sup> This new practice for exhibitions development ensured that epistemology, methodology, process and representation was in Māori. Butts stated that '...what was interesting was that the labels were written in Māori and then translated in English; so that was an innovation in the institution. Previously they were written in English and then translated into Māori (which, he suggested) did cause issues at times due to the difficulty in translation...'<sup>97</sup>



**Figure 44** Marketing on billboard for *Iwi Karioi Hakanation: The history of Kapa Haka*, Gisborne, (photograph) Karina Lamb, April 2011.

In the exhibition design, personal belonging of nine Elders were presented in front of the pou (meeting house structures). A performance space in the centre created a circular exhibition design. The Curator of Art, Joelene Douglas confirmed that the circular design was immersive – drawing visitors in to be intimately connected to the ancestors, taonga from families, and a historic film of performances on a

<sup>96</sup>Searancke, Ingrid, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Tairāwhiti Museum, Gisborne, New Zealand, 21 April 2011.

<sup>97</sup> Butts, David (Director, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 27 April, 2011.



loop of notable kapa haka groups.<sup>98</sup> As Bennett argued ‘...when museums present their objects in ways that allow them to communicate not only cognitively, but effectively – that allows the objects to be ‘felt’ as well as ‘read’ – they draw visitors to the conceptual and analytical via the sensory and experienced...’<sup>99</sup> The exhibition achieved record visitation for the museum, with visitors to the national competition in attendance to pay respects to the kapa haka leaders. The education program created in parallel to the exhibition likewise achieved record attendance.<sup>100</sup> On completion of the exhibition the didactic panels were delivered to local schools to continue learning and celebrating kapa haka leaders from the region.

This is an example of a bilingual museum outcome as both languages were represented throughout the exhibitions, marketing and collateral. The development of *Iwi Karioi Hakanation* extended the kaupapa to engage an indigenous methodology where te reo Māori led the development of the research and exhibition content. This is a powerful example of the difference to Tairāwhiti Museum’s thinking and engagement of source communities to co-curate exhibitions and historical documentation.

### ***Ngā Tamatoa: The price of citizenship: 28th Māori Battalion***

In 2011, Dr Monty Soutar was the project manager for a new website for the 28<sup>th</sup> Māori Battalion for the Department of Culture and Heritage. He developed content for the site in both English and te reo Māori and was the author of *Ngā Tamatoa: The price of citizenship* launched in October 2008 in Gisborne and translated in the dialect of the Ngāti Porou iwi.<sup>101</sup> As the previous Director, Soutar developed the C Company 28<sup>th</sup> Māori Battalion exhibition, a powerful and popular exhibition within the Tairāwhiti Museum that includes films of soldiers speaking and singing in te reo Māori. The language of the soldiers is prominent in the exhibition. Speaking about the use of te reo Māori, Soutar stated that:

Ninety-five percent of the men, and there’s just under a thousand of them, who went with the Māori battalion from this region, were native speakers of Māori. So, you have to reflect that in the exhibition space through the voices that have been heard – and there are also a lot of

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<sup>98</sup> Douglas, Joeline (Curator of Art, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 26 April 2011.

<sup>99</sup> Bennet, Jill in Healy 2006, op.cit.p.06.10.

<sup>100</sup> Pewhairangi, Jennifer (Education Officer, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 19 April, 2011.

<sup>101</sup> Soutar, Monty 2008, *Ngā Tamatoa: The price of citizenship: C Company 28 (Māori) Battalion 1939-1945*, New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Auckland.

waiata (songs) – war compositions – that are in Māori that we use to play in the exhibition space.<sup>102</sup>

Soutar discussed visitors drawn to the te reo Māori spoken from the 1940s, which holds historic information and dialectal differences to today. Changes in the language and standardised version of te reo Māori has resulted in iwi knowledge diminishing across Aotearoa. Soutar suggests that ‘...language has changed. And in the last fifteen years, we have been working towards standardising language for the country so that school children (if they move schools) can readily adapt. But the negative effect of it is that dialect has taken second place...’<sup>103</sup> Soutar was confident that the museum’s role was to promote the language of the region; ‘...I think as a result of the changes that have occurred since the 1990s, its more acceptable now to see exhibitions in both languages.....especially for a regional museum like this, that reflects the region’s history, it should reflect the Māori language of this region...’<sup>104</sup> Soutar explained that during the development of the *Watersheds* exhibition it was directed that the didactic panels and collateral would hold information presented in the dialects of the region.

### ***Watersheds: History of Tairāwhiti***

In 2011, the *Te Moana* exhibition within the museum represented the stories of maritime culture in Tairāwhiti. Adjacent to this exhibition was *Watershed: History of Tairāwhiti* that exhibited taonga and colonial heritage in a permanent exhibition gallery. The main didactic panels throughout the exhibition positioned te reo Māori on the left-hand side of the panel and English to the right. The smaller labels predominately presented English, unless the taonga held a Māori title, as seen in Figures 48–49. Within the exhibition, not all of the taonga had labels so it was difficult to determine their significance and whether they were included to represent the maker, iwi or type. One display case in particular held a korowai (cloak) but there was no label to identify its source community, provenance, details of the design or date. The exhibition also engaged te reo Māori played through audio speakers throughout the exhibition area.

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<sup>102</sup> Soutar, Monty (Previous Director, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 24 April, 2011.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Soutar, Monty (Previous Director, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 24 April, 2011.

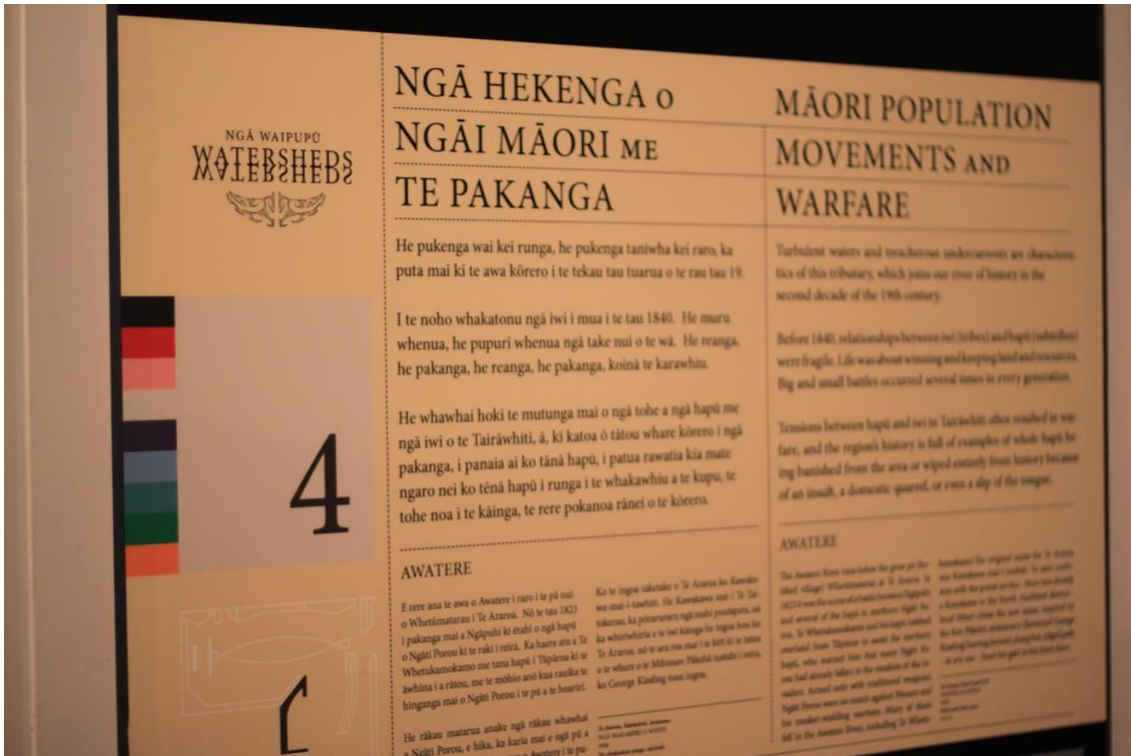


Figure 45 Ngā Wai Pupū – Watersheds exhibition didactic panels with te reo Māori on left and English on the right, Tairāwhiti Museum (installation view) Karina Lamb, April 2011.

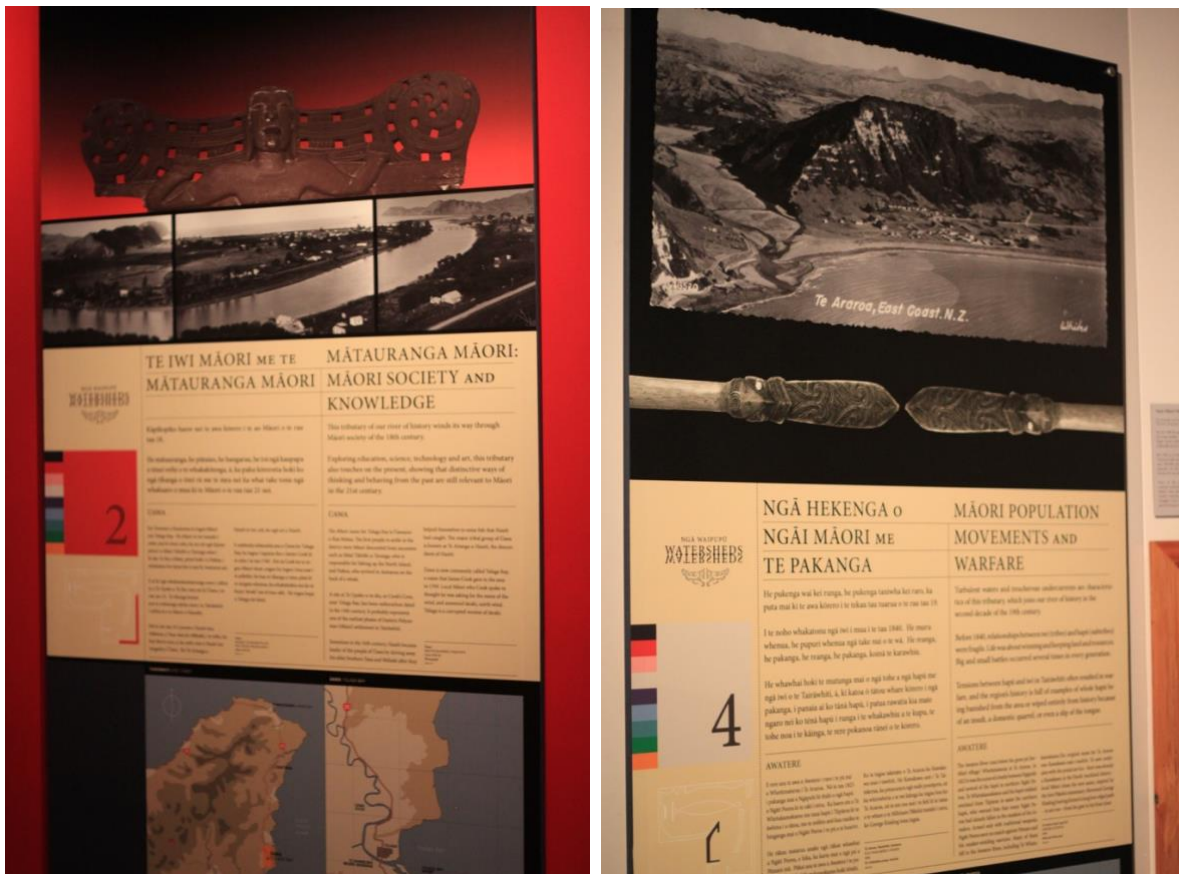
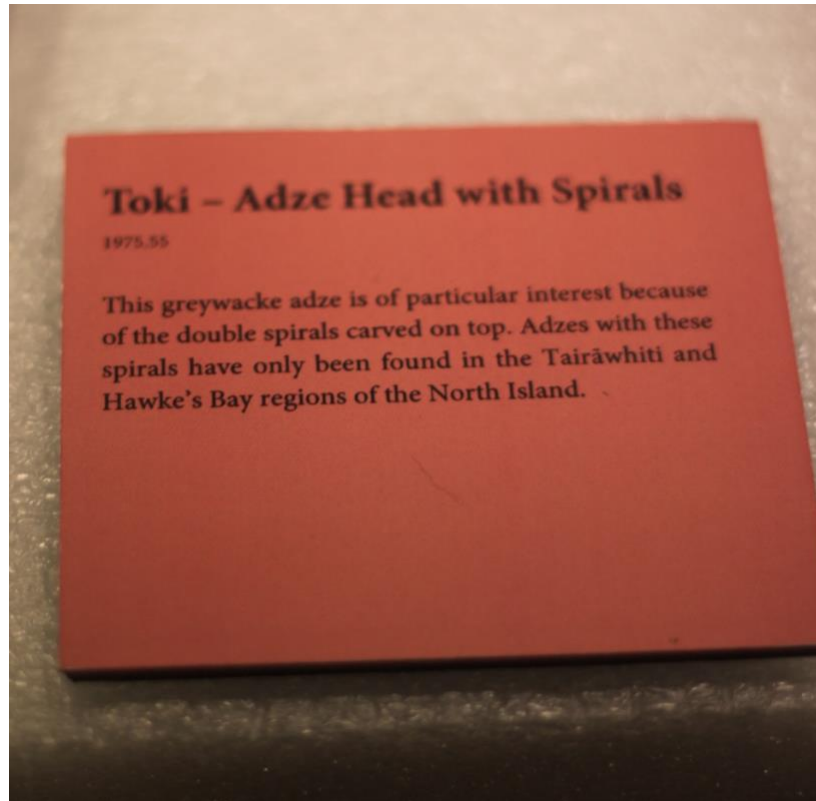
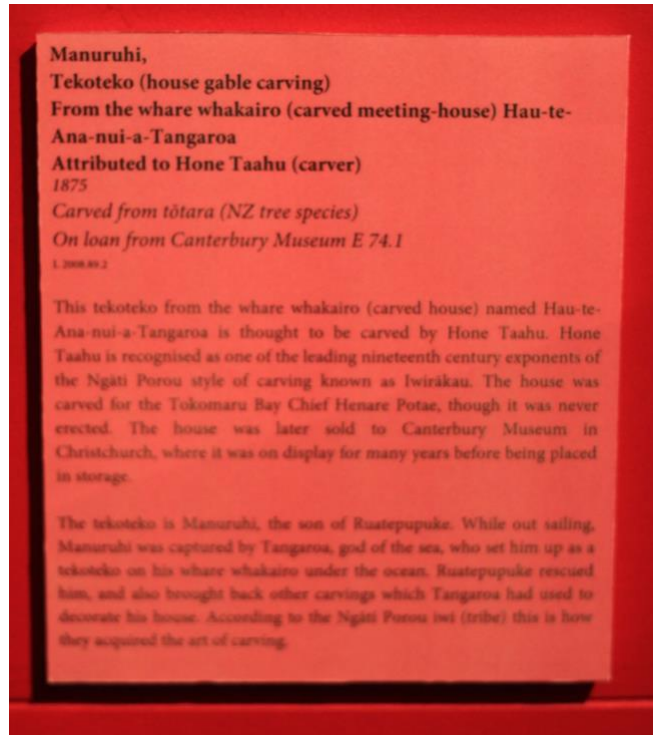


Figure 46 – Figure 47 Ngā Wai Pupū – Watersheds exhibition didactic panels with te reo Māori on left and English on the right, Tairāwhiti Museum (installation view) Karina Lamb, April 2011.



**Figure 48** *Ngā Wai Pupū – Watersheds* exhibition label on Toki – Adze head with Spirals, Tairāwhiti Museum (installation view) Karina Lamb, April 2011.



**Figure 49** *Ngā Wai Pupū – Watersheds* exhibition small and large object labels, Tairāwhiti Museum (installation view) Karina Lamb, April 2011.



**Figure 50** Kotiate, Māori weapon on display in *Ngā Wai Pupū – Watersheds* exhibition. No te reo Māori is included on label except for title. Tairāwhiti Museum (installation view) Karina Lamb, April 2011.

The labels within the exhibition were inconsistent in design, language and placement and many held a worn appearance. It was evident that a renewal of the exhibition was required. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the content on labels did not always correlate to the collections management records. There were elements of context, provenance and te reo Māori held in the exhibition labels that would have enhanced the collections records. The diverse exhibitions on display within the Tairāwhiti museum throughout my fieldwork that represented both colonial and Māori heritage, historic exhibitions and contemporary art exhibitions, ensured there was a rich body of content to draw on for the production and delivery of public programs associated with the exhibitions. The education division within the museum delivered both in-house public programs and a successful outreach program across the Tairāwhiti region that incorporated the use of te reo Māori in the delivery.

## Outreach and Public Programs

Within the Tairāwhiti Museum, the success of the Museum education program is due to the method of the delivery. Tairāwhiti is an expansive region and for many schools gaining access to the taonga and collections by visiting the institution is not possible due to lack of funding. The museum has three strands in the education programs; in-house education delivery, where students explore the exhibitions and approach themes relevant to their kaupapa (curriculum and contexts), outreach programs that are developed and delivered by the Education team via a museum bus, and the waenga (middle location) strand, where the school and museum meet somewhere else to facilitate the program, usually a marae. Soutar confirmed that the outreach program not only connected the taonga to people who could not travel to see the collection but was also an important tool for the development of new research, stories, whakapapa (genealogy) and provenance that is shared as people sit and connect with the taonga.<sup>105</sup> Pewhairangi described the importance of taking taonga to communities; ‘...the taonga is the physical link between us now and our tīpuna back then. Without that physical link we’re just imagining...to hold and feel the grooves of the tiki, that is the link.’<sup>106</sup>

Loaning taonga for inclusion in the education programs is an important part of connected learning for students to Tairāwhiti. The educators explain to students that the museum is the same as a Māori whare (marae/house) where high respect for the taonga needs to be upheld. It is a unique institution where the Collections Manager and Director are supportive of permanent collection items to be loaned for the engagement of the education program. I have not observed a practice like this in Australian museum, but replica collection items are engaged in public programs. Pewhairangi confirmed that:

Without the taonga the lesson just doesn’t go right...the taonga is the physical link between us now and our tīpuna back then. Without that physical link we’re just imaging. We have an art program where we look at tiki (greenstone taonga). We have some very old tiki in the collection...even though they have gloves on, the kids just want to touch them, feel their grooves – that’s the physical link. It engages children in a different way.<sup>107</sup>

It is the taonga that connects students to an understanding of the past.<sup>108</sup> I attended the delivery of the education program in Tolaga Bay during the fieldwork. Throughout one day every class in the high school attended the outreach program located in the school hall. I observed te reo Māori use as the

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<sup>105</sup> Soutar, Monty (Previous Director, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 24 April, 2011.

<sup>106</sup> Pewhairangi, Jennifer (Education Officer, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 19 April, 2011.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> The significance of access to collections in this way will be discussed further in Chapter 5.



main language for the education program delivery. Pewhairangi confirmed that ‘...the teachers that come in may not have the best pronunciation, but by the time I’ve finished the program with them, which is only an hour-and-a-half, pronunciation has got a whole lot better...even for place names...’<sup>109</sup> The program was co-curated with a committee to develop ideas from early years through to advanced students. One program in particular targeted the primary sector titled ‘Creations’ engages art and language to educate students on how to represent family histories and cultural knowledge; ‘...using Māori patterns, they learn language connecting to symbols and then use those to tell the story of their whānau (family)...’<sup>110</sup>

Language use in education programs keeps the language of the Tairāwhiti region active. It allows museum staff to hear and practice language around the taonga and gives rise to opportunities to document new ways of thinking about form, techniques and methods used for the creation of the taonga.

Although the museum was neglecting language use on exhibition labels and collections management documentation, particularly in Vernon, the education programs were dominant in language use and celebration. Co-Curation for public program development engaged source communities in the presentation of cultural heritage and learning connected to their cultural materials. Tairāwhiti Museum contributed back to cultural revival and understanding on historic and contemporary indigenous life through their relationships with community and strong staff abilities in language within the education programs.

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<sup>109</sup> Pewhairangi, Jennifer (Education Officer, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 19 April, 2011.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 51** Tairāwhiti Museum van, outreach program (photograph) Karina Lamb, April 2011.



**Figure 52** Jennifer Pewhairangi delivers the C Company 28th Māori Battalion outreach program to Tolaga Bay high school students (photograph) Karina Lamb, April 2011.

This chapter has examined te reo Māori documentation through an analysis of professional practices within the Tairāwhiti Museum in 2011. The chapter demonstrates how an institution highly regarded



for its bicultural practices managed challenges of indigenous language documentation in collections management systems. The Tairāwhiti Museum, and its iwi representatives, were clear on the changes required to improve language engagement and education across the region. The local newspaper printed an entire newspaper in te reo Māori every year during Māori Language Week. The support for language development in the community was strong. As a provincial museum, Tairāwhiti Museum was leading the way in the dedication to the care of the Taonga Māori collections, and the close involvement and inclusion of its surrounding Pākehā and Māori communities. As the Whaea Ingrid Searnake confirmed ‘...this is a place where everyone can feel comfortable. It is a very very strong part of our community. It holds the history...’<sup>111</sup> With the adoption of the Language policy and a review of professional practices to commit to language, it was anticipated that the museum would complete the backlog of data enhancement and add te reo Māori to the collections management documentation. The significant issue in professional practices would need to be addressed to ensure data enhancement of catalogues could be achieved; the disconnect between front of house engagement of language in research and labels and experienced staff with language skills to present language, to the back of house collections practices where a collections manager with little language skills controlled the extent of documentation in the collection management system. The neglect of language skills impacted the degree of language use in the collection management system. This will be addressed further in Chapter 5 as I provide recommendations to the museum sector on professional practices.

In the next chapter, I explore the national collecting institution, the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa where during 2011, te reo Māori was leading the development of exhibitions, Māori thesauri were being created for collections management systems, and the institution’s language policy identified its commitment to language engagement and use. This chapter will argue that Te Papa, in dealing more successfully with language use in collections by engaging an indigenous framework in professional practices, is a collecting institution that the Australian Museum sector can learn and be inspired from.

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<sup>111</sup> Searancke, Ingrid, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Tairāwhiti Museum, Gisborne, New Zealand, 21 April 2011.

## Chapter 4: Mātauranga Māori within Te Papa

Titiro whakamuri. Whakarite ināianeī, hei hāngai whakamua.

Embrace the past. Prepare now for the future.<sup>1</sup>

The Head Curator of Mātauranga Māori, Rhonda Paku stopped at the entrance to the first collections store. We joined together in reciting a karakia. Paku explained conditions of entry – the need to keep a clear mind without judgment, no touching of the taonga, and a request for negative thoughts and issues involving the outside world to be left at the door. We were to be witnesses to the presence of the taonga. Women who were hapū (pregnant) or menstruating, as well as children, were not permitted. The taonga, she explained, had travelled from a different time and consideration must be given to their needs. Visitors to the collection stores may have strong reactions to ‘feeling the taonga’ such as crying, emotional waves, and headaches, especially if they hold an existing connection to spirituality. The taonga may be tapu.<sup>2</sup> No kai (food) or wai (water) is to be taken into the store. Paku pushed open the heavy sealed door, looked back and declared; ‘Ok, let’s go see who’s home...’<sup>3</sup>

Paku started working at the museum in early 1986 as a part of a museum training program following the successful and well documented *Te Māori* exhibition.<sup>4</sup> *Te Māori* widened opportunities for tāngata

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<sup>1</sup> Unknown Author. Māori proverb displayed on a didactic panel with the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

<sup>2</sup> Tapu is a supernatural condition. In collections, when describing objects, it may refer to restricted materials for objects that have been used in war, those connected to significant elders, or objects made from human remains. The violation of tapu, either through disrespect or by breaking cultural permissions/rules would result in retribution sometimes including the death of the violator and others involved directly or indirectly. Tapu is considered not only a spiritual concept or belief, but an occupational, health and safety issue when working with collections for both Māori and Pākehā staff or visitors to the collections. Tapu is discussed further by Mead, Hirini Moko and Grove, Neil 2003, *Ngā Pēpeha a Ngā Tipuna: The Sayings of the Ancestors*, Victoria University of Wellington Press, Wellington, New Zealand.

<sup>3</sup> Paku, Rhonda, Tour of Mātauranga Māori collection stores, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 8 February, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Te Māori exhibition opened within the Metropolitan Museum, New York in 1984 with 220,000 people attending. It is highly regarded as the first time taonga Māori were exhibited to the world under Māori understanding and iwi approval and, from this exhibition, an industry of Māori cultural heritage workers extends. Speaking about the significance of the exhibition, Rhonda Paku explained ‘...when I was at college, the Te Māori exhibition started. And I was absolutely captivated by what happened when our taonga hit the streets in America. I remembered being glued to the TV. I remember reading every article about it...wondering what this had to do with me. At the time I was just learning to speak te reo Māori. I had to learn to speak Māori at college because my parents weren't fluent. Although my mother had attended a Māori boarding school, she hadn't continued to use the language, so she did lose quite a lot of that.... I started to learn te reo, and then the Te Māori exhibition came along and I wanted to be a part of it. So, I came into the museum when it arrived here in Wellington. And took more than a key interest when my tribe was in charge of the paepae. Each tribe had a turn and it rotated around the tribes to look after the paepae which meant for a week or so, you had to look after the paepae and made sure that you greeted all of the visitors that came in... I remember thinking then that this is how I wanted to work with the taonga. I wanted to know more, I wanted to be a part of that reawakened connection to the taonga....’ (Paku, Rhonda, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 2 March, 2011). The exhibition has been documented and analysed by writers including the well-respected Professor Hirini Moko Mead and more recently by Dr Conal McCarthy. Discussion on the exhibition is included within Mead, S. M. 1984, op.cit.; Mead, S. M. 1986, *Magnificent Te Māori: Te Māori whakahirahira*, Heinemann, Auckland, N.Z.; McCarthy, Conal 2007,

whenua to work, study and teach within the museum sector in Aotearoa. As I followed Paku on the first day, walking down the corridors of the museum and being introduced to taonga I would work closely with over the next four weeks, I was aware that my mahi within the Mātauranga Māori team would be transformative. I would experience new ways of working very different to my years working with collections back home in Australia. Paku reflected on what Māori professionals had learned from the *Te Māori* exhibition:

I think it taught us that no matter what our cultural expressions, our cultural concepts and our language and our traditions are still valid, and that in fact that expression of the living culture is just as important as displays of taonga. In fact it further enhances the richness of the story that the taonga tells. It brings them to life. *Te Māori* taught us that whilst our taonga sit in facilities that are quite un-Māori to us, them being museums and sometimes galleries, we none the less need to keep them warm. And the language is one way that we do that. We teach the language around the taonga, that we express the stories that the taonga and using the Māori language to do that, and that we bring the communities from which they've come from into meet them, to have access with them, all the time keeping them warm. So, it's a multi-pronged strategy here to keep the taonga warm and contextualise those taonga appropriately, so that we don't continue to do what we use to do in the old days which was all that was known at the time, but *Te Māori* taught us many things.<sup>5</sup>

In the collection stores, the whare of the taonga, I was an honoured witness to carvings, textiles, sculptures, and paintings — sorted and categorised not by type – but predominately by their connection to iwi and hapū across three main areas – Te Whare Pora o Hineteiwaiwa (weaving stores), Tatau Pounamu (greenstone stores) and Āhuru Mōwai (main larger storeroom).

Paku spoke te reo Māori, introducing me to ancestors as we walked across the six storeys of museum floors – through exhibitions, back of house and libraries. I viewed korowai from the tribal home of my children, Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāti Rakaipaaka. I noticed te reo Māori on tags delicately attached to the taonga with acid-free tape. Labels in te reo Māori identified provenance, iwi and directions for the handle or movement. Te reo Māori surrounded taonga, not only a means of communication but as the highest form of respect to ancestors and creators connected to the objects. On leaving the collection stores, we washed our hands in bowls adjacent to the door and sprinkled water over our heads to

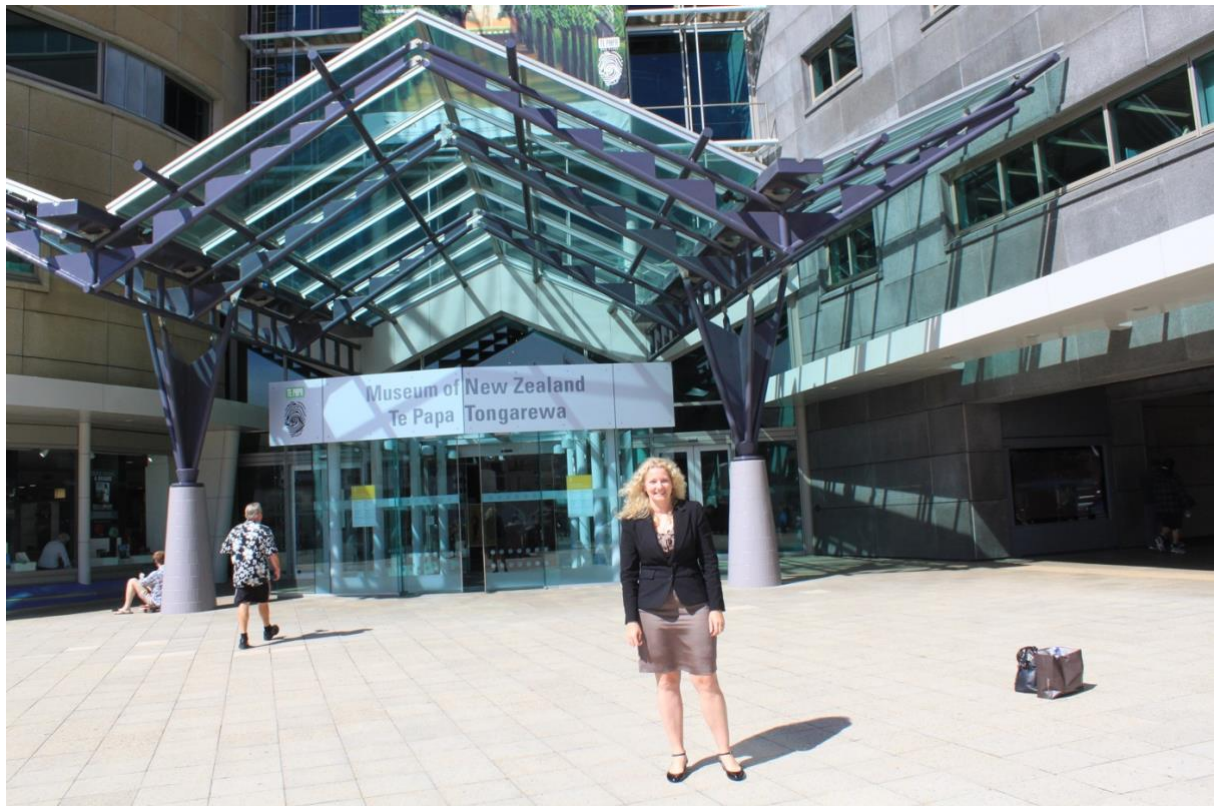
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*'Before 'Te Māori': A revolution deconstructed'*, Knell et al 2007, op.cit. pp.117–133; McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: heritage professionals, indigenous collections, current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, N.Z; McCarthy, Conal 2011, 'Reforming museology at Te Papa', *Museums and Māori*, C. McCarthy (ed.) Te Papa Press, Wellington, pp.111–145.

<sup>5</sup> Paku, Rhonda, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 2 March, 2011.

cleanse and leave behind the spirits we had been in contact with. The introduction to the taonga took place after a powerful welcome to the museum earlier that morning.

In line with Kaupapa Māori, a pōwhiri (formal welcome) occurred on my first day at Te Papa.<sup>6</sup> My then in-laws, kaumātua (elders) Mana Elizabeth Hunkin and Graeme Hunkin, as well as Dr Conal McCarthy from Victoria University of Wellington, were present to support my entrance to the Mātauranga Māori team. The pōwhiri involved the sharing of mihi from museum staff and our family, a waiata (song) and a karakia. The pōwhiri conducted solely in te reo Māori prepared me for the four weeks working alongside Curators and Collection Managers where I would listen, learn and contribute to collection management practices using te reo Māori daily. It prepared me for the ethnographic exploration of collections management practice within the framework of Māori knowledge, and began my journey in understanding the close connections between taonga and te reo Māori.



**Figure 53** Prior to the pōwhiri at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa on 8 February 2011.

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<sup>6</sup>A pōwhiri is a ritual of encounter, or a formal welcome, common place in formalities on a marae when guests are welcomed into the whare through a singing/speech exchange. In my case, the pōwhiri occurred in a large meeting room where Te Papa staff came to welcome me into the Mātauranga Māori team.

In the previous chapter, I explored professional practices within the small regional institution Tairāwhiti Museum and identified the challenges that prevented language documentation with the Taonga Māori collections including inexperienced staff, a disconnect between exhibition research and collection management systems, and a neglect of language documentation. This chapter in comparison, discusses language use and documentation at the national collecting institution and identifies whether the issues observed in the smaller institution were also present in the large public-funded institution.

The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa) is a leading international example of bicultural practice; a national institution where both Māori and Pākehā heritage, knowledge, research and contemporary arts align.<sup>7</sup> In 2011, I worked within the Mātauranga Māori team to research te reo Māori positioning in collections management systems and related professional practice. The following chapter uses ethnographic methods to gather data on museum practices observed during the placement. While analysing and discussing the research findings, I refer to writers that have described the unique ‘bicultural’ professional practices of which Te Papa is renowned.

In the section ‘Holding a place for taonga’, I present my observations of professional practice within the museum’s Māori collections management team — practices guided by international policy and standards, but also by relationships to source communities with distinctive Māori ways of working that includes a commitment to the use of te reo Māori. Te Papa staff were engaged in language revival and strengthening across the institution that was directed by policy and institutional priorities. The extent of language use has at times been contested with critics suggesting the national institution as not doing enough to advance language further than the front of house presentations.

The next section ‘Collection Management Practices’ investigates a deeper understanding of the impact of te reo Māori in the development of new, language-led collections management practices including

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<sup>7</sup> Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa holds a rich history beginning with the foundations as the Colonial Museum. The current building incorporates Māori within the north face and Pākehā (non-indigenous) exhibitions within the south face of the building. In the centre of the building, between the Māori and Pākehā areas, is an exhibition on the Treaty of Waitangi. Symbolic as the joining of cultures in the heart of the building. Te Papa holds an active marae, Rongomaraeroa, where ceremonies and formalities take place on a daily basis. Although I do not detail the history of the forming of the bicultural institution, many writers have approached this including; Goldsmith, Michael 2003, ‘Our place in New Zealand culture: How the Museum of New Zealand constructs biculturalism’, *Ethnologies comparées*, no.6, pp.1–14; Gore, J. M. 2002, Representations of history and nation in museums in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand: the National Museum of Australia and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, University of Melbourne, Department of History, Melbourne; Leonard, R. 1998, ‘Papa’s bag: New-Zealand’s Te-Papa-Tongarewa museum’, *Artforum*, vol. 36, no.5, p.42; McCarthy, Conal 2007, *Exhibiting Māori: a history of colonial cultures of display*, Berg Publishers, Oxford, U.K; McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: heritage professionals, indigenous collections, current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, N.Z.

the development of Māori thesauri. Changes in industry practices led by the Mātauranga Māori team are analysed and considered not only as a contribution to the industry, but also as a means to determine language in collections management, thus improve understanding of the historical life and contemporary role of indigenous objects held in museums today, the very topic being investigated in this thesis.

Using a direct example of the new curatorial praxis, I describe a language-led Te Papa project, *Whatu Kākahu – Māori cloaks* that resulted in a significant exhibition, publication and new ways of working within the institution. I address the question of whether this project contributes to language revival and strengthening due to the access and relationship between the collections and source communities.

In Aotearoa, taonga carry language, stories and the knowledge of their makers or ancestors. Taonga are considered alive and hold an energy and meaning that goes deeper than physical information documented on acquisition forms and collection management databases. As outlined in the literature review, material culture and museum studies has shifted a focus on the museums as institutions of authority to custodians of indigenous collections. This shift, a rethinking of the new museum acknowledges the significance of an ongoing connection between objects and source communities, whereby two-way relationships exist.<sup>8</sup> The museum is no longer seen as the holder of knowledge and truth, but rather as a space of contact established to create a ‘...more responsive interchange of ideas...’<sup>9</sup> The rethinking leads to the examination of values, services, approaches to leadership and professional practices as collections are no longer defined as the primary measure for the institution. The museum’s relationships with the public becomes central to its contemporary significance.

At Te Papa, objects and research are no longer solely selected by the Curators or scholars and exhibited as authentic, or the truth told by colonisers. Rather source communities, through strong relationships within the museum, select materials, taonga, and present research to share cultural heritage. The relationship between source communities is prioritised through institutional policies and professional practices. In institutions funded by the public, a change has been essential in professional practices as public demands for ownership of cultural heritage by source communities increases. The shift in

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<sup>8</sup> ‘New museum’ theory has been addressed by writers including Message, Kylie 2006, *New museums and the making of culture*, Berg Publishers, Oxford.; Witcomb 2003, op.cit.; Anderson 2004, op.cit.; Edwards 2006, op.cit.; Healy 2006, op.cit.; Janes 2007, op.cit., S. J. Knell et al 2007, op.cit. pp.134–146; Knell et al 2007, op.cit.; Kreps 2003, op.cit.; McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: heritage professionals, indigenous collections, current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, N.Z.; Schrader 2010, op.cit.

<sup>9</sup> Anderson 2004, op.cit.

institutional focus keeps contemporary institutions relevant in a world where knowledge can be accessed via mobile devices at the consumer's convenience.



**Figure 54** The Treaty of Waitangi in both Te Reo and English, installed facing each other in the building's centre at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (installation view) Karina Lamb, February 2011.

## Holding a place for taonga

Taonga held in collections at Te Papa were cared for by a full Māori team who were directed by institutional biculturalism, language policies and international guidelines for working with collections. The daily practices of karakia, te reo Māori use and Māori ways of working observed during my fieldwork were evidence of a greater depth to professional practice when working with indigenous collections. From my observations, personal cultural heritage and relationships with iwi and source communities lead the team's mahi (work). Language use played an essential role in everyday professional practice. Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal stated that museums '...have the possibility of recreating areas where social relationships through reflective and possible inclusions can readdress the historical unevenness in the production of the 'other...'<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Charles 2006, op.cit.

Although ethnographies of museums and practices that align with material culture theory are rare, Sharon Macdonald's *Behind the scenes at the Science Museum*, as discussed in the literature review, addressed evidence of the shift in museological discourse and material culture theory through professional practices exhibited within the museum. The shift empowers makers, descendants and communities to work closely with institutions to rewrite inaccuracies in representation.<sup>11</sup> Similarly to Macdonald, whose ethnography of behind the scenes at the museum was the model for my research methodology, I observed first-hand organisational policies and practices that were examples of the effort to re-create social relationships and re-address historical unevenness in the representation of both historic and contemporary life in Aotearoa. By placing relationships with iwi or source communities at the forefront of decision-making, the management and staff structure of Te Papa, from the Co-CEO positions between a Māori and Pākehā leader to Collections Managers in a full Māori team caring for Māori collections, it was an attempt by the institution to align with contemporary public demands and shifts in theory to become inclusive and relevant as a contemporary 'new museum'. This was not without critique on the level of organisational support for tāngata whenua, as discussed by Tapsell.<sup>12</sup> There were Māori staff within the institution who believed more should be done, particularly with the engagement of language.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike Macdonald's ethnography, however, I do not focus on display, interpretation or marketing within the following chapter. Instead, I document collections management practices and associated systems, an area that is lacking in detailed research. In doing so I follow McCarthy's argument that confirms that research and attention must be drawn to internal museum practice and away from the display and collecting histories, to understand museums as they moved through the paradigm shift.<sup>14</sup> The changes in methodological and social inclusion brought added pressures for museum staff, who attempted to align programs to collaborative approaches for all museum visitors.<sup>15</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1: Revitalisations and strengthening of indigenous languages, source communities in Aotearoa did not understand why language had been separated from cultural materials. Within the Mātauranga Māori team, te reo Māori was engaged as the dominant language in both internal and public discussions. For Paku, speaking te reo Māori was the central means to connect to cultural knowledge:

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<sup>11</sup> Macdonald 2002, op.cit.

<sup>12</sup> Tapsell 1998, op.cit.

<sup>13</sup> Discussions with Te Papa staff throughout the placement did exhibit a need for the institution to be more active in language strengthening amongst staff use of language.

<sup>14</sup> McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: heritage professionals, indigenous collections, current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, N.Z.

<sup>15</sup> Kreps 2003, op.cit.; Healy 2006, op.cit.



We talk a lot about decontextualised cultural items and our practices, and as Curators in the role to try to bring the voice and the stories of the items. But for me, it's about trying to add some of the contexts back in. And certainly, as a Curator when I'm speaking with Māori, I prefer to speak to them in Māori about the taonga that we have here. I find it much easier to speak in our own language when we're talking about the taonga. Because when I'm using English, as best as you might try, it still isn't good enough really. And sometimes you continue to add that depth and contextualisation as you're using adjectives and you're describing in the language that isn't from the same culture as the taonga themselves.<sup>16</sup>

Paku addressed a need to speak in the original language of the object to capture context and knowledge that cannot be expressed using English. As I witnessed within the team, language was also spoken as a means of respect for the taonga. Similarly, for Awhina Tamarapa Curator Mātauranga Māori mana taonga and Māori 'ways of doing' are ingrained in her professional practice. Te reo Māori was engaged to ensure source communities held a continued connection to collections.

Mātauranga Māori is multi-dimensional, so it has the ability to heal, and to grow, that's my understanding and experience of Māori knowledge. So, to be a Kaitiaki for the taonga that are here, means that you've got an obligation to be able to look after them, look after the Mātauranga that's around them. And be able to pass that on in some way and help in the facilitation of people reconnecting to those taonga...in terms of te reo, it really goes back to the people who those taonga belong to, and trying to establish a communication between our people and the taonga that are here.<sup>17</sup>

Tamarapa emphasised language as a tool to reconnect the object and communities. The paths the taonga has travelled across its lifetime was respected and celebrated through professional practices at Te Papa. The Kaihautū Māori, co-CEO at the time, Michelle Hippolite expressed that:

Taonga are made for a reason – taonga has a motive, a spiritual being, they have a reason for capturing an event or something that happened. So how we care for what we hold is really important because they are, not all of them, but a lot of them are reflective of a thought...and as kaitiaki we have an obligation to treat them for what they represent and to care for them in a way that represents their whakapapa (genealogy) and where they came from...<sup>18</sup>

The relationships between people and objects the Kaihautū Māori suggested, is what drives Te Papa staff to care for taonga using methods, including language, that is very different to Australian

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<sup>16</sup> Paku, Rhonda, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 2 March, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Tamarapa, Awhina, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Hippolite, Michelle (Kaihautū Māori), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, New Zealand, 4 March, 2011.

contemporary professional practice. Amiria Henare explained that artefacts 'constitute and instantiate social relations' and do not merely symbolise or represent, but bring meaning into being.<sup>19</sup> Neil Osbourne, one of four Collection Managers in the Mātauranga Māori team explained that for him the taonga '...they're just precious....I often feel that they are my tīpuna (ancestors). I feel their stories...I can feel their history in some way...'<sup>20</sup> For the Collection Manager Lisa Ward; '...words can't even express what the taonga mean to me...when I'm in those rooms (collection stores) it's like this world doesn't even exist. It's two different worlds...just to be amongst them is quite overwhelming at times. Just to feel the wairua (spirit/soul). We know when it's good for us to go into the room, and (when) it's not good for us to go into that room. They let us know...'<sup>21</sup>

During our discussions, Ward confirmed that she considered the collection stores as urupā (cemeteries). Many of the taonga had been found in urupā. Ward emphasised the need for good thoughts and no swearing in the space to pay respects, as is the common practice at a funeral or cemetery.<sup>22</sup> Ward stated that even though the taonga extend from all over Aotearoa she believed they had formed their own whānau (family) with the collection stores.<sup>23</sup> The Collection Managers working alongside and together with the taonga every day expressed a deep sense of spiritual understanding and knowing that extended from the collections. This is unique and very different to my experience working in collections management in cultural venues in Australia. I was to witness an openness and understanding on the spiritual relationships in collections that was enlightening to my professional practices, with taonga considered ancestors that could still communicate their wishes and desires through storage, exhibitions and placements.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Mātauranga Māori is holistic and encompasses all Māori ways of thinking, doing and understanding the world. As an observer of the Mātauranga Māori team, as I attended meetings and worked side by side with Collection Managers and Curators, I was required to speak and take notes in te reo Māori. I interviewed seventeen members of Te Papa staff to discuss language use and documentation in light of their professional practices. All participants expressed a need in the language remaining with the taonga. This understanding on the importance of ongoing connection

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<sup>19</sup> Henare, Amiria 2005, op.cit. p.2.

<sup>20</sup> Osbourne, Neil (Collections Manager), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 1 March, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Ward, Lisa (Collections Manager, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 2 March, 2001.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ward, Lisa (Collections Manager, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 2 March, 2001.

through language, and the reconnection of objects to source communities through language, was nowhere more evident than in the iwi partnerships program of Te Papa.

### ***Iwi partnership program***

A unique and highly successful engagement that occurs in Te Papa every 2-3 years is the development of the iwi exhibition. Members of the iwi work with museum staff to prepare cultural knowledge and materials to be shared through an extensive exhibition. Hippolite explained that when an iwi is 'in the house' and based at Te Papa, it is their tikanga (Māori customs, culture and protocols) that prevail. Tikanga are often based on fundamental practices but some iwi and hapū hold different versions of practices that are acknowledged and celebrated during the iwi exhibition development.<sup>24</sup> Lisa Ward described the iwi partnership period as a time when Te Papa staff really learn and understand culture directly from kaumātua (Elders) who are located within Wellington and the museum for the entire 2-3 years development period. Shane Pasene, a Conservation Technician and Pākehā confirmed that '...anytime we have someone here from an iwi exhibition they come here and they keep the poupou warm. We work from their tikanga...We learn their songs and their hakas and their traditions...'<sup>25</sup> The engagement of language was acknowledged as a means to keep collections 'warm'.<sup>26</sup> McCarthy confirmed that the notion of warmth is '...as an essential element on the care of taonga, and refers to the bond between people and treasures which is activated and maintained when they come together...'<sup>27</sup> Paku described the iwi exhibition as 'fundamental' to the working practices and strong relationships of Te Papa with iwi. Te Papa staff work closely with kaumātua and representatives from the tribe to document stories and prepare the taonga for display.

They get the capacity from our staff to draw from our collections to help tell their stories. However if some of their stories are better enabled by objects that have to be loaned taonga from other institutes, then again we're able to help that and we leverage our relationships with other museums....The most important thing is that they get to lead it...The dialogue starts 3-4 years out from opening day. And it's about building trust and faith and confidence and our processes and our capacities and our staff. Once the trust is built, then the stories start to be unravelled. And that's the point where that collaboration really starts to click and buzz...<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Hippolite, Michelle (Kaihautū Māori), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, New Zealand, 4 March, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Pasene, Shane (Conservation Technician, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio recording, Wellington, 22 February, 2001.

<sup>26</sup> Tamarapa, Awhina, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: heritage professionals, indigenous collections, current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, N.Z., p.29.

<sup>28</sup> Paku, Rhonda, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 2 March, 2011.

The iwi partnership program allows museum staff the time to go deeper with community relationships, capture stories and knowledge for data enhancement in collections systems and archives, and also support tāngata whenua as the directors of the strategic focus for the exhibition. Dougal Austin, Curator Mātauranga Māori described the level of trust required by iwi to ensure confidence in the care of stories, knowledge and taonga during the iwi partnership periods. It takes negotiation and understanding on how and why iwi choose particular taonga to represent their stories, and some, Austin suggested, would prefer to hold back on information through fear of releasing knowledge to the wider population.<sup>29</sup> Te Papa collection management staff held a responsibility to develop the trust of iwi representatives, and to ensure their taonga are managed under correct guidelines and requests by iwi. This took a great deal of dedication when working with diverse cultural materials representative of all Aotearoa iwi held in the same storerooms.

To support the kaumātua and iwi representatives based within the museum during the development periods, the Iwi Relationships Division is responsible for the logistics, comfort and support, prioritising mana whenua in all consultations and requests to and from iwi.<sup>30</sup> The division manages applications for clearances to iwi for loans or the display of their taonga.<sup>31</sup> The Mātauranga Māori team worked closely with this department to ensure the relationships between source communities and the collections was a priority across the museum. Later in this chapter in 'Whatu Kākahu – Māori cloaks' I detail an example of a collections project where partnership and collaboration with iwi was invaluable in its success. The iwi exhibition is held on site at Te Papa every 2–3 years is made possible through the professional practices of Te Papa staff who hold local knowledge and ways of working parallel to international standards of collections management practices. The following section observes professional practices witnessed throughout my fieldwork within the institution.

## **Collections Management Practices**

There is no comparison to the extensive and dynamic collections held at Te Papa. In 2011, there were three collection stores on site and an additional highly restricted collection of wāhi tapu. During my placement I visited and worked beside a variety of taonga including taiaha (weapons with small feather cloaks around the bone/wood handles); whakairo (carvings that tell the history of the iwi and place

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<sup>29</sup> Austin, Dougal (Curator Mātauranga Māori, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.

<sup>30</sup> The Iwi Relationships Division was formed in 2002 and is managed under the direction of the Iwi Relationships Strategy; Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa 2002, 'Iwi Relationships strategy', unpublished, policy, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, p.1–7.

<sup>31</sup> Davis, Sonya (Iwi relationships), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 3 March, 2011.

through the kōwhaiwhai design); koruru (heads at the top of marae); heke (carvings placed inside of the whare); paintings of iwi chiefs including a chief from from Nūhaka; hunting and fishing materials including bird traps, eel traps and hīnaki (eel pots); musical instruments including shells; and tokotoko (carved speaking sticks highly significant taonga for iwi with designs to remind the speaker and prompt memory for their speech) and waka huia (carved treasure boxes that were hung from the front of the house and included all of the family's most precious possessions). One of the most interesting classifications of taonga was the patu collections (hand-held clubs), with some patu depicting representations of the Māori goddess of death Hine-nui-te-pō. Paku explained that Hine-nui-te-pō would have been '...the last thing you saw before you met your maker...'<sup>32</sup> Throughout the collection stores, Māori names labelled drawers and racks where the taonga were held. The most prominent stores were the Tatau Pounamu where the world's largest collection of greenstones were held. The *Kura Pounamu: Treasured stone of Aotearoa* exhibition on display throughout my placement was the largest exhibition ever shown exhibiting greenstones from the extensive Te Papa collections, and loans directly from iwi across Aotearoa.<sup>33</sup> Located at Tory Street in Wellington, additional storage sites held the larger waka (canoes), large carvings and the Pacific collections.

The diverse collections of Te Papa were managed under the 'Policy on Collection Development at Te Papa' approved by the Board at its meeting in 2007.<sup>34</sup> The policy outlined general collections management direction, aligning to international protocols as well as defining collection requirements in line with kaitiakitanga (guardianship) and the responsibilities of managing taonga of tangata whenua (original inhabitants of the land). The spiritual ownership of taonga that rests with hapū, iwi and whānau is acknowledged.<sup>35</sup> The Kaihautū and CEO decide whether any special conditions or restrictions are attached to collection items.<sup>36</sup> The Kaihautū and CEO likewise approves the acquisition strategy in consultation with the Board. The collections policy made it very clear that no kōiwi (human remains) were to be acquired but that Te Papa provided a place to protect kōiwi until repatriation took place. Within the capabilities of physical resources, collection items in the storage areas are grouped in iwi areas as requested by iwi.<sup>37</sup> Te Papa conceptualises collections in line with Kaupapa Māori (Māori

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<sup>32</sup> Paku, Rhonda, Tour of Mātauranga Māori collection stores, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio recording, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 8 February, 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa 2011, September 2009 to July 2011, *Kura Pounamu: Treasured stone of Aotearoa New Zealand*, exhibition, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington.

<sup>34</sup> Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa 2007, 'Policy on Collection Development at Te Papa', unpublished, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, p.1–12.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa 2007, 'Policy on Collection Development at Te Papa', unpublished, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, p.5.

<sup>37</sup> Austin, Dougal (Curator Mātauranga Māori, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.

knowledge) and ways of seeing. The public then view objects on display with an understanding that each has been chosen to represent stories through a partnership between museum staff, scholars, museum workers and iwi. As Duncan F Cameron suggests:

It has to be understood that the very nature of an object changes when it becomes a museum object. A work of art, an archaeological specimen or an antique is just that and nothing more when it is in a shop or in the street or perhaps a forum...When the object was not in the museum, we were completely free to decide whether we approved or disapproved, liked or disliked it. Once it is in the museum, we make our judgement in the knowledge, if not awe, of the fact that the experts have already said "This is good" or "This is important" or "This is real". The object has been enshrined.<sup>38</sup>

Within the Mātauranga Māori team, the selection of objects for acquisition, conservation or exhibition were managed under Kaupapa Māori, considering mana taonga and mātauranga methods that directed collaborative approaches to collections management and exhibition development. This governance and conceptual practice allowed for source communities to request language use and documentation. Staff, both Māori and Pākehā, are aware of cultural knowledge, rights and ways of working. A high fluency of language understanding and use was required in the collections management divisions. As Ward suggested, Collection Managers in the department '...need to understand Kaupapa Māori and the need for speaking a karakia (prayer)'.<sup>39</sup> To know the mihi in te reo Māori is important as Collection Managers are seen by the public as representatives for the institution and were required to take collection tours with te reo Māori speakers.

An interesting example of staff understanding Kaupapa Māori when working with collections was discussed during my visit to the Tory Street conservation areas. I met Drew Ward, a Pākehā Conservation Assistant preparing taonga for the upcoming *E Tū Ake* exhibition.<sup>40</sup> Ward in his day-to-day work is conscious of storage and the placement of artworks, especially photographs in the conservation area. Photographs of men and women are not to be stored in stacks together. While working with black and white portraits of Elders, two framed facing each other, Ward acknowledged a feeling of discomfort. He received strong feelings of unease and decided to engage the advice of kaumātua on the photographs:

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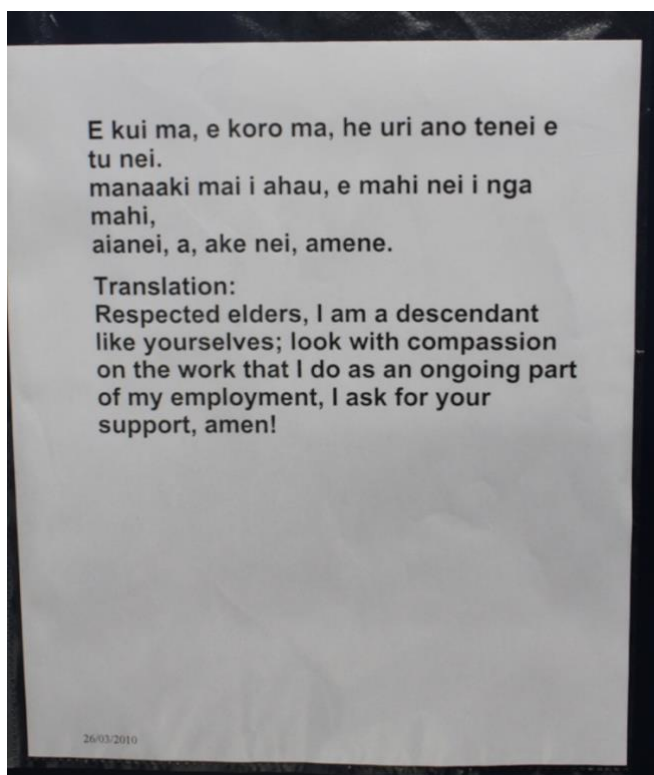
<sup>38</sup> Cameron, F. Duncan 2004, 'The Museum: A temple of the forum', *Reinventing the Museum*, G. Anderson (ed.) Altamira Press, London, pp.61–73.

<sup>39</sup> Ward, Lisa (Collections Manager, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 2 March, 2001.

<sup>40</sup> *E Tū Ake* exhibition was held in Te Papa in 2010. It was a successful exhibition including customary and contemporary taonga that addressed Māori self-determination and contemporary Māori life. This exhibition was documented in the publication; Smith, Huhana 2011, *E tū ake: Māori standing strong*, Te Papa Press, Wellington.

I just got really bad vibes from it (the framed photographs). I called our kaumātua and he came down. Nobody was able to identify these people. He came down and said 'Well, I can understand why these two don't want to be in here together...This guy (pointing to one elder) was from a certain tribe and this guy (pointing to the other) slaughtered his tribe. So, there's bad blood going on.'<sup>41</sup>

Ward, a Pākehā staff member, was confident in following his intuition to source further information and acted on the advice from a senior Māori Elder. The kaumātua prepared a karakia for all staff to use when working with the taonga, as depicted in Figure 55. Ward engaged the karakia if he mistakenly touched the head of someone in photographs, or if a photograph is placed face down, or when he feels the need for additional protection; '...when you work in the cultural sector, it makes you appreciate your culture and other cultures as well...'<sup>42</sup> Te reo Māori is used for signage within the department, for example: to warn of sensitive nature of the work, or to inform the viewer that there is an artwork underneath packaging, as seen in Figure 56.



**Figure 55 – Figure 56** Signs in the collections store at Tory Street. On left, Collections Managers and staff use the karakia prior to working with taonga collection. On right, sign states 'Warning – artwork underneath' (photographs) Karina Lamb, February 2011.

<sup>41</sup> Drew, Conservation Assistant, discussed during tour of conservation stores at Tory Street, Wellington, on 22 February 2011.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

These examples exposed the degree of understanding Kaupapa Māori when working with collection items across the institution. Taonga were understood to be alive and hold strong connections to stories, knowledge and situations that can be felt by both Māori and non-Māori staff. Henare suggested that the ‘...artefacts are passed down and across lines of descent, providing substantive links between people who will never meet ‘in person’. Enacting such ties through exchange may indeed be integral to the lives of those groups, crucial to their particular ways of being...’<sup>43</sup> Collection Managers that worked directly with the taonga, understood that they were guardians, protectors of the social lives of the taonga. Their practices indicated a commitment to language documentation, even when it wasn’t always straight forward due to translations or language loss. Speaking about the professional practice of registration of taonga, Tamarapa confirmed that:

I guess it's a work in progress. It's not quite there. It's so much better than how things use to be, where it was totally from a western framework. And that use to bug us a lot. Trying to fit a Māori thing into a Western construct....It's really hard. The European term doesn't convey what we understand that taonga to be. For instance, I was saying that the karetao was a jumping jack, that's so limiting in terms of what we know that that karetao represents. And we find that a lot. It's almost demeaning in a way having to classify taonga Māori into another frame of thinking.<sup>44</sup>

The capacity of museum staff who were at times overworked, managing competing demands from iwi and aligned to professional international standards of conservation or access, was acknowledged as a barrier to language documentation or data enhancement for collections during registration. In Te Papa, language documentation at the point of registration was common practice when possible. Ross O’Rourke, Collections Manager for the international collections had been based at the museum for over fifty years and remembers the earliest forms of registration for the Māori collections including paper-based handwritten ledger systems. In the earliest registrations basic te reo Māori was documented – giving an object a generalised name like taiaha (club), excluding dialectal differences. O’Rourke suggested that these early methods of registration and language recorded were dependent on who the museum staff member was registering the item:

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<sup>43</sup> Henare, Amiria 2005, op.cit. p.7.

<sup>44</sup> Tamarapa, Awhina, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.



Even when we had no Māori staff, everybody was familiar with what the Māori names were for the various weapons and things anyway. I don't know. When we're dealing with cloaks, I imagine it depended a lot on whoever was doing the registration.<sup>45</sup>

Additional research or data enhancement was not completed due to workloads and an inability of Collections Managers to undertake research directly with iwi. O'Rourke suggested that this '...got better and better as time went on and the more we employed scholars really because I think in the early, early days there were people who were amateurs more than professionally trained folk...'<sup>46</sup> Many items would have been documented with general Māori terms and the connection to source communities through dialectal documentation was separated. The early registration systems of paper-based ledgers and cards were migrated to the KE EMu collections management system that is still used across each museum department today.

### ***Collections management systems***

The collections management system preferred by Te Papa is KE EMu, the well-known collections database also used within Melbourne Museum and many larger collecting institutions throughout the world, including the Smithsonian Anthropological Collection, American Museum of Natural History and Vancouver Art Gallery. Te Papa Curators at the time of my fieldwork were responsible for data enhancement and research development and were dedicated to placing items online as a means of sourcing further information from the public. This is the opposite practice engaged at the Melbourne Museum where information is required to be correct and extensive prior to placing items online.<sup>47</sup> Giselle Stanton, the Collections Information Manager – Standards and Support at Te Papa confirmed that data enhancement and language documentation is often driven by Curator's research interests and not always common practice.<sup>48</sup>

A significant difference to the Te Papa collections management systems to the other museums examined throughout this research was that multimedia, including stories and articles produced in conjunction with the Māori television network, are uploaded online via the Te Papa YouTube channel and linked back to the database through the narrative module. The marketing benefits of developing narrative structures and placing research information online is that Te Papa could track search results

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<sup>45</sup> O'Rourke, Ross, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 17 February, 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Raberts, Melanie (Manager – Indigenous Cultures, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January, 2011.

<sup>48</sup> Stanton, Giselle (Collections Information Manager – Standards and Support, Te Papa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 24 February, 2011.

and understand more about their audience's online activity and interests. Stanton confirmed that there were 6400 Māori collection items online that did not hold provenance details; that is, taonga that are not connected to iwi due to a lack of historical information in collections records.<sup>49</sup> This data was to be completed as Curators completed research and filled gaps, or the taonga were incorporated in projects that required further information to be known.

The advantage that Te Papa had over other collecting institutions explored throughout the research, was having an in-house department and staff dedicated to adjusting terms and assisting with online processes. The additional advantage was having experienced staff that could prepare content in Māori in line with appropriate protocols and dialects for the language. The significant issue was that the database, as previously discussed, did not support macrons or unicode for te reo Māori. The database was seen by many as not respecting language due to its neglect of macrons – the correct spelling of words was therefore lost in the system.<sup>50</sup> The documentation of language with collections, Tamarapa confirmed was '...an ongoing process. We're not completely there at the moment [documenting language with the objects] but certainly things did start to change with the increase in Māori people working for the museum...'<sup>51</sup> The process of language documentation and data enhancement requires efficient databases and systems in place to be able to manage languages other than English. The original documentation with cultural materials was not always complete in Te Papa. The original documentation was described by Austin as '...thick and archaic even – calling cloaks 'mats' and that sort of thing. It might have been a different connotation at the time than we see it today, but we're moving away from that...'<sup>52</sup> Austin made a point of documenting all information he could when researching new acquisitions or enhancing documentation as he worked with cultural materials. The work '...might be contemporary, an artwork, but the meanings on that can be very deep in and traditional so I decided to capture that as well....'<sup>53</sup> Language documentation in collections management systems is considered as additional work for staff but as O'Rourke confirmed there was no other reason it could not be done:

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Stanton, Giselle (Collections Information Manager – Standards and Support, Te Papa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 24 February, 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Tamarapa, Awhina, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.

<sup>52</sup> Austin, Dougal (Curator Mātauranga Māori, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

All the formal mechanisms are there, the intellect. There's no stopping it really if you've got the time to check out what these items are called elsewhere in their cultural areas...(it's) just having enough manpower to cope with all these particular problems.<sup>54</sup>

For a large institution like Te Papa with a dedicated team to manage the collections management system in conjunction with Curators, Collections Managers and Māori writers, language documentation in te reo Māori is not impossible with successful planning. In response to the systems in place, Paku commented that:

Anything you can input language into textually is really useful. What I think is less intuitive is the fields and the way you have selection boxes [in the database]. The selections are a little bit narrow for us. We're still working with our IT about how we can best manage those systems so that we can better utilise our language....For instance, when you're asked to provide historical information about a taonga and you're asked for a provenance or association - where there isn't a clear provenance we might be able to tell by the style of the carving. We might be able to attribute the carving style to a particular iwi, or region more specifically, but some of the choices in the drop-down box are just too narrow. And that does lead to issues for us, we'd like to be able to describe it in a little more detail...We just need to articulate in te reo Māori what are the choices likely to be.<sup>55</sup>

Working closely with the collections information systems division, the Mātauranga Māori team could include the full context and interpretation of taonga, social lives and histories through the use of language. The team were experienced language speakers and within the institution there were professionals fluent in te reo Māori who were available to complete the work required. I will now examine collection items and the collection management system records as examples of how and where language was documented through professional practices.

### ***Collection examples***

Museum professionals and source communities understood the significance of language documentation with collections and confirmed their preference to hold language as a means of respect, gaining deeper understanding of an object's context and on a spiritual level keeping the taonga 'warm'. Ward suggested that in all documentation she engaged te reo Māori. She added that it was extremely important and saw no issue with asking iwi and source community members for

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<sup>54</sup> O'Rourke, Ross, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 17 February, 2011.

<sup>55</sup> Paku, Rhonda, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 2 March, 2011.

further information on historical materials for data enhancement of collections objects.<sup>56</sup> In the following section, I investigate two Ngāti Kahungunu kākahu (cloaks) held within the Māori collections to identify the employment of language in the collections management systems.

### **Kahu huruhuru (feather cloak) – ME010936**

A detailed provenance for this feather cloak identified the significance of the taonga. The taonga was made for Sir James Carroll from Wairoa, North Island, in 1900 by an unknown maker. Sir Carroll (c.1857-1926) was born from an Australian father and a Ngāti Kahungunu woman, fought in a Māori force and became a prominent politician who led a well-documented bicultural life. He fought for empowering Māori in economic and social life and is renowned in the iwi of Ngāti Kahungunu as a prominent leader.<sup>57</sup> The catalogue description for the taonga focused on the method for weaving and included Māori language terminology including Kahu huruhuru (feather cloak), kurupatu (neck fringe) and kererū (white), but the overall description was in English, as seen in Figures 58—61. There was no further information held in the collections record on why Sir Carroll was given the feather cloak. The description is signed by the Collections Manager Hokimate Harwood who completed inspection and enhanced the description of the cloak for the collection record.

Of particular interest in the design of this taonga is the woven words 'KAARI' into the top line of the diamond shaped weaving using Black Tui feathers. The collections management system and associated hardcopy files does not identify what 'Kaari' means, but Awhina suggested that it could have been the translation of Carroll.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ward, Lisa (Collections Manager, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 2 March, 2001.

<sup>57</sup> Ward, Alan 1993, Carroll, James Biography, *Manatū Taonga*, Ministry for Culture & Heritage, Auckland, viewed 25 July 2017, <<https://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2c10/carroll-james>>.

<sup>58</sup> Tamarapa, Awhina, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.



**Figure 57** Kahu huruhuru (feather cloak), (ME010936), maker unknown, Te Papa Collection (collection photo), sourced April 2011.

The original registration form, handwritten from the Dominion Museum included very basic information on the materials, style and acquisition of the cloak, as seen in Figure 62. In 2007, when the data was enhanced, Harwood thought it essential to include te reo Māori in the descriptors where possible. The online information available to the public is limited and does not connect Sir Carroll with the taonga at all.<sup>59</sup> The limitations with the online templates restricted access to all information from the collection management systems but the intent of the online collections was to make collections accessible. Paku confirmed that data enhancement, and the addition of context, histories and re-connection of taonga back to source communities by linking language in collections management systems was a work in progress:

The breadth of the collection and the depth of the information is something that we continue to increase and add to. We're just a chapter in the history of any taonga whose story has to be told online or not. So, we're just adding to the richness of each chapter. I don't think that any

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<sup>59</sup> Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa 2017, *Collections: Kohinga Ipurangi*. Object: *Kahu huruhuru (feather cloak)*, Wellington, viewed 25 July 2017, <<http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/Object/64899>>.

previous museum worker ethnologist or researcher could say in 15 years' time that their work is absolutely perfect or correct. We put it up there for others to contribute to...I think what museums are doing more is embracing community input and feedback and we must be doing that because these artefacts of culture don't come from museums, they come from communities and we must let communities direct and inform us and help us to build that research and body of knowledge.<sup>60</sup>

The opportunity to develop greater content is reliant on research directives and the availability of staff to consult with iwi. Dougal Austin confirmed that the best time to complete this work is on acquisition, but he did see the process of including language as continuing the momentum of documentation.<sup>61</sup> The relationship with iwi from where the taonga extend must lead the development of any further data enhancements with te reo Māori.

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<sup>60</sup> Paku, Rhonda, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 2 March, 2011.

<sup>61</sup> Austin, Dougal (Curator Mātauranga Māori, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.

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## Te Papa Object Summary Report

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Registration Number	ME010936
Title	Kahu huruhuru (feather cloak)
Production Details	Unknown weaver
Description	<p>Accession Schedule reads:- Kahuhuruhuru Cloak, triangular pattern with Kuku and Kaka feathers with the word "KAARI" in white feathers across the shoulders.</p> <p>Kahu huruhuru, with a border of green kereru around all edges. whatu aho rua. Black/brown muka interwoven into the first and last whenu of kaupapa. Loss of huruhuru kereru along the top, just beneath the kurupatu (neck fringe). At the top of the proper right side are damaged huruhuru tui, possibly due to insects. Loss of huruhuru kereru (white) to the top of the proper left side. Kurupatu is single pair spiral. Back of kākahu is in good condition. (L.Ward, Jan 2008)</p> <p>There are alternating triangles of black tūi and white kererū feathers lined with orange kākā feathers. Green kererū feathers line all four borders of the cloak, with orange kākā feathers lining the side borders. Black tūi feathers are used to word "KAARI" in the top white kererū triangles. The black nape feathers of tūi are also positioned in the bottom of most of the white triangles. Hokimate Harwood 31/8/07.</p>
Materials	feather
Technique	hand weaving
Measurements	Overall 1015 1275
Inscriptions	Letters "KAARI" in top triangles

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**Figure 58** Kahu huruhuru (ME010936) Te Papa Collection, entry in KE EMU collections management system (screenshot), sourced March 2011.

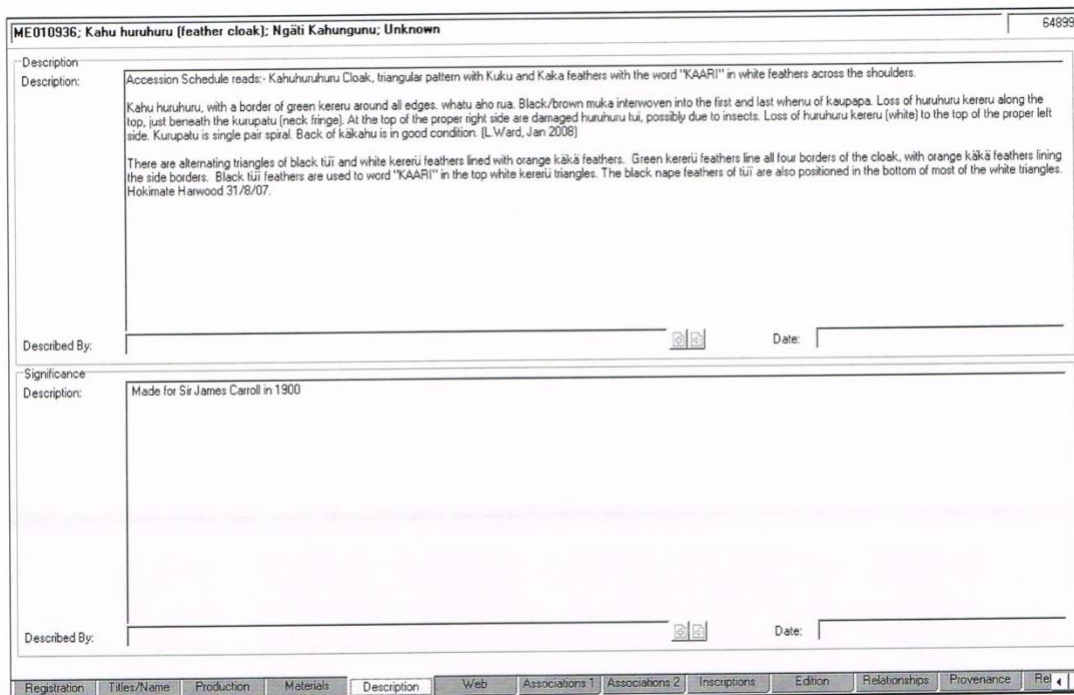
ME010936; Kahu huruhuru (feather cloak); Ngāti Kahungunu; Unknown



Registration No	ME010936
Title / Object Name	Kahu huruhuru (feather cloak)
Maker	Unknown
Production Date	
Production Place	North Island
Description	<p>Accession Schedule reads:- Kahuhuruhuru Cloak, triangular pattern with Kuku and Kaka feathers with the word "KAARI" in white feathers across the shoulders.</p> <p>Kahu huruhuru, with a border of green kereru around all edges. whatu aho rua. Black/brown muka interwoven into the first and last whenu of kaupapa. Loss of huruhuru kereru along the top, just beneath the kurupatu (neck fringe). At the top of the proper right side are damaged huruhuru tui, possibly due to insects. Loss of huruhuru kereru (white) to the top of the proper left side. Kurupatu is single pair spiral. Back of kākahu is in good condition. (L.Ward, Jan 2008)</p> <p>There are alternating triangles of black tūi and white kererū feathers lined with orange kākā feathers. Green kererū feathers line all four borders of the cloak, with orange kākā feathers lining the side borders. Black tūi feathers are used to word "KAARI" in the top white kererū triangles. The black nape feathers of tūi are also positioned in the bottom of most of the white triangles. Hokimate Harwood 31/8/07.</p>
Object Classification	cloaks costume
Materials	feather
Technique	hand weaving
Period/Style	Te Huringa II period (1900-present)
Provenance	secured in London by Mrs Driscoll about 1928
Source/Vendor:	Mr Wheeler
Note	Unique/treasure Made for Sir James Carroll in 1900
Rights	Right 1755; Copyright; Unknown; Orphaned

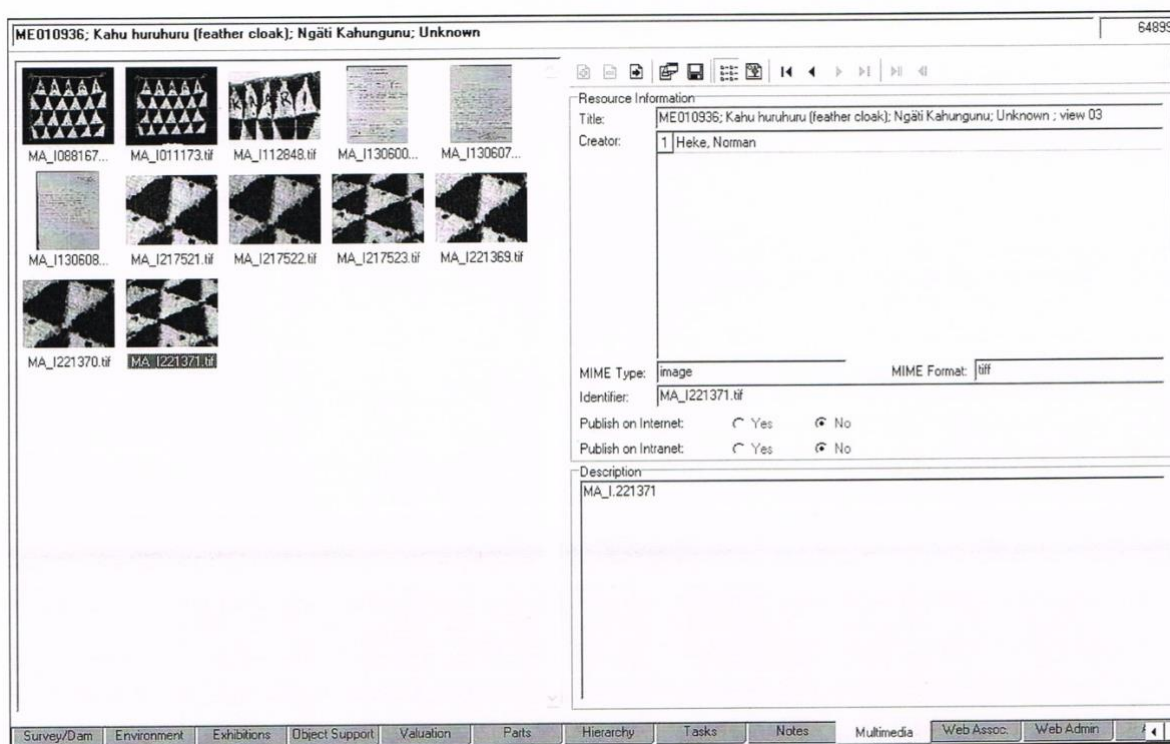
**Figure 59** Kahu huruhuru (ME010936), Te Papa Collection, entry in KE EMu collections management system (screenshot), sourced March 2011.





Catalogue Module - Description Tab

**Figure 60** Kahu huruhuru (ME010936), Te Papa Collection, entry in KE EMU collections management system, description tab (screenshot), sourced March 2011.



Catalogue Module - Multimedia Tab

**Figure 61** Kahu huruhuru (ME010936), Te Papa Collection, entry in KE EMU collections management system, multimedia tab (screenshot), sourced March 2011.

ME010936  
- copy held in Kemu

DOMINION MUSEUM

ACCESSION SCHEDULE

Name and classification:

MADRI CLOAK and  
2 poi balls, feathered kete, 6 photographs.

Locality: Mata-atua, Urewera country, north of Lake Waikaremoana.	Collector: secured in London by Mrs Driscoll.	Date collected: circa 1928.
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No. and description of specimens:

- 10936 one feather cloak, made in 1900 for Sir James Carroll when he was Native Minister. dimensions: top 3'9", base 4'1", length 4'5" (feathers are kuku and kaka (G. Doane) 3'5" triangular pattern, black, green, white, orange feathers. letters " K A A R I " - Carroll. in top triangles.
- 10937 two plain poi balls on short strings.  
small kete, 7"x5 1/2", decorated with black and white feathers.  
4 photos of maoris; one of a carving; one of Sir Maui Pomare conducting Duke and Duchess of Windsor around pa Rotorua. 1928? York.

File No. of correspondence if any:		Date received: May 14, 1963.
How acquired and from whom: other objects presented. ph. 7214	Cloak purchased; \$50. Mr. G.G. Wheeler, c/o Mrs. C.M. Wheeler, 197 Hospital Road, Eastbourne, Wairarapa.	Date acknowledged:
Accession No. 1963/97	D.M. Nos. ME 10936-ME 10938.	Negatives:

Location:	Departmental Officer's Signature: <i>Richardson</i>
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1,000/1/61-33291 W

Figure 62 Kahu huruhuru (ME010936), Dominion Museum, Registration form 1963 (screenshot), sourced March 2011.

### **Collection loans**

In Te Papa, requests are received for collection loans by iwi to use taonga in ceremony, important events or on community marae for tangihanga. Taonga as living objects are relevant to both the historical and contemporary life of indigenous communities. Similarly, Brian Isaac Daniels identified the collections within the Hoopa Tribal Museum where the museum ‘...describes itself as a living museum, a place where objects are preserved and stored until they leave the museum to be used in a cultural event. In this sense, it acts as a repository of objects and of knowledge rather like a safety deposit box.’<sup>62</sup> Ward explained that in line with international policy and standards, taonga undergo condition reporting including photography and close examination for documentation before being removed from the museum by iwi, with the same process engaged on return. The relationship with iwi, Ward emphasised, lead her professional work practices and that did not change once she left work for the day ‘...as Collection Managers we work 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, but as descendants we are open 24/7...’<sup>63</sup>

Indigenous communities have the right to tell the stories, and share knowledge, connected to taonga in a language of their choice. The use of te reo Māori is recognised as an official language of Aotearoa and the language itself, as discussed in Chapter 1, is identified as a taonga as a determination of the Treaty of Waitangi. It is supported through international codes such as the Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>64</sup> It is a fundamental human right for first nations to use language in both oral and written form. Smith stated that ‘...indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes...’<sup>65</sup> In this section I have analysed the collections management practices at Te Papa and assessed the extent of current language use. In line with Kaupapa Māori methodology, Māori museum staff expressed their view of positioning language in the collections management systems. Understanding collection items as taonga using Mātauranga Māori is evidence of strong bicultural management structures.

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<sup>62</sup> Daniels, Brian Isaac 2009, 'Reimagining Tribal Sovereignty through Tribal History: Museums, Libraries and Archives in the Klamath River Region', *Contesting Knowledge*, S. Sleep-Smith (ed.) University of Nebraska, Nebraska, pp.283–302.

<sup>63</sup> Ward, Lisa (Collections Manager, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 2 March, 2001.

<sup>64</sup> Māori Language Review Panel 2011, *Te reo Mauriora: Te Arotakenga o te rāngai reo Māori me te rautaki reo Māori/ Review of the Māori language sector and the Māori language strategy*, report prepared by Reedy, Sir Tamati, Auckland, New Zealand, pp.1–96.

<sup>65</sup> Smith 1999, op.cit. p.28.

### ***Language thesauri directing change***

In line with the bicultural direction of the museum with the support of indigenous terminology and language as a means of implementing Kaupapa Māori, the use of language thesauri in Te Papa's collections management system aligned with contemporary theory on indigenous control and empowerment of cultural materials. Te Papa was leading the way with the creation of thesauri to be used within collections management systems and shared with institutions throughout the world. It is understood that only te reo Māori can give Māori understanding and context to taonga and collection items. Dougal Austin pointed out that language use is a means to maintain the integrity of culture and local dialects and ways of knowing should be distinguished in thesauri.<sup>66</sup> Austin produced three main extensive thesauri over the ten years covering wharehenui (marae carvings), fishing materials and weaponry. The thesauri created a new classification system for taonga in line with the Māori language and Māori cultural protocols (tikanga) which also involved the creation of new Māori words.

Discussing the development of the fishing thesauri, Austin clarified that '...the fishing (thesauri) was a couple of years (to complete). Researching. I use them regularly in my work...Say you look at a Māori fishhook. The different parts of the fishhook have different names. The bait string, how they tied the bait on, etc. The little knobs at the top, tying this line thing on, different names for sink, koapi and so forth. The points on them, the matter, there's different names there too...all of those parts, it's really good to have it on record...'<sup>67</sup> The thesauri produced were contributed to the Getty worldwide collections which made the te reo Māori available to other collecting institutions, libraries and researchers.

### ***Mana Pasifika collections***

Te Papa held other significant collections where the lack of language documentation and thesauri was a concern. The Mana Pasifika – Pacific Cultures collections consists of over 13,000 items including historic canoes. The collection focused on the contemporary '...art and material culture of Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa...'<sup>68</sup> Sean Mallon, the then Senior Curator Pacific Cultures, contended that language documentation was an ongoing task and there were difficulties where original documentation included generalised terms. The diverse nature of the cultures and countries represented by the Pacific collections, and at the time were managed by one museum staff member,

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<sup>66</sup> Austin, Dougal (Curator Mātauranga Māori, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa 2017, *Pacific cultures at Te Papa*, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, viewed 25 July 2017, <<http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/Topic/1330>>.

was a barrier to completing extensive research required for data enhancement for the collections. Mallon was completing work on a thesaurus focused on languages within the Cook Islands. The research for this area alone took three years to complete:

Instead of calling a hat a hat, we might call it a *pati*. So, there are little tweaks that are very small, but they are a part of preserving the language in the catalogue – and hopefully that will translate into labels, associated materials, etc.<sup>69</sup>

Mallon suggested that indigenous languages often take a larger amount of space on didactic panels to explain the context and stories represented. There are issues with logistics when using language for display. He suggested that due to the countries represented by the collections, there was a need to justify with the likelihood of visitors who can read the panels. For the larger countries he sees the language use as an option, but for smaller countries located further away from Aotearoa, he would prefer to use the panel space to give greater access to the information to a greater number of visitors with additional translations available online. Mallon confirmed that in collections documentation they did attempt to privilege the indigenous terminology over English as it broadened understanding. Austin agreed that language terminology extended understanding about the *taonga*:

I think it's really important for us to recognise that with each term and description it opens up our knowledge about what the function and purpose was of the (*taonga*), who might have worn them, what purpose they were worn for, when they were worn, it just opens up and enhances our knowledge of a collection. Because in the language itself and the descriptors we gain a lot more in sights. Some of the simple terms we thought were very simple, but actually there's a whole richness of vocabulary around one part of the collection...that's very exciting.<sup>70</sup>

This thesis although focused on the engagement of indigenous languages in collection management systems, acknowledges that the research and findings can benefit all languages other than English where cultural collections can be described and recorded in the language of the object. The following example of a successful co-collaboration that aligned to 'new museum' theory, resulting in both a publication and an exhibition that connected objects with source communities, also revitalised use and understanding of *te reo Māori* and left behind extensive information for collection records.

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<sup>69</sup> Mallon, Sean, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audi recording, Wellington, 18 April, 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Austin, Dougal (Curator *Mātauranga Māori*, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.

## Whatu Kākahu - Māori cloaks

This section focuses on a direct example of consultation and co-collaboration practices which created successful participatory outcomes within a collecting institution. In 2010, Te Papa began an extensive project to document selected kākahu (Māori cloaks) within the collections which resulted in a publication and an exhibition both titled *Whatu Kākahu/Māori cloaks*.<sup>71</sup> The Kākahu project, and co-collaboration practices engaged, are examples of the 'new curatorial praxis' as discussed in the Introduction to the thesis.<sup>72</sup> Using the Kākahu project as a model for the new curatorial praxis, I confirm that through access to museum collections by community members - be they descendants of makers, artists or source community members – collaboration can lead to improved collections management practices on the one hand, and language rejuvenation on the other. The project showed a direct example of how museum collections can contribute to cultural revival and a greater understanding of historic and contemporary indigenous life, thus answering two of the main thesis questions.

In the kākahu storeroom in Te Papa, master weavers from the national body – Te Roopu Raranga Whatu o Aotearoa (Weavers of Aotearoa) – worked alongside Curators and iwi advisors to investigate techniques, stories, ceremonies and ancestors associated with the cloaks. The kākahu are known as highly valued taonga not merely objects for the Māori people, but rather considered as ancestors that require the highest form of respect, understanding and language.<sup>73</sup> As the co-collaboration progressed through Māori research practices, a body of te reo Māori was rediscovered. The language had been lying with the taonga waiting to be found. The lights went on and the language flowed.

Interviews with Kaitiaki Māori/Curators are presented as evidence of methodologies and research paradigms employed through the Kākahu project. Secondary sources are addressed to support the contention that language documentation in consultation with communities is essential for the correct management of taonga. I align to the statement by Peers and Brown that:

The actions taken within the museum storeroom need to happen within the context of relationships in the present with the community: the consultation, the human interaction, the willingness to learn, and the investment of time, effort, and money are far more important, and genuinely respectful, than gestures learned from books. These relationships are the most

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<sup>71</sup> Tamarapa, Awhina (ed.) 2011, *Whatu Kākahu/Māori Cloaks*, Te Papa Press, Wellington.

<sup>72</sup> Peers et al 2003 op.cit. pp.519–537.

<sup>73</sup> Taonga is defined as cultural treasures and consider to be elders/ancestors for Māori people.

important manifestation of the new curatorial praxis, but the process of establishing them has not received much attention in the critical literature...<sup>74</sup>

The new curatorial praxis, drawn from critical museum theory was in the process of revising and reforming museum practice during 2010–2011.<sup>75</sup> It re-directed curatorship away from an internal focus on scholarship to a two-way partnership between museums and source communities.<sup>76</sup> Community service was a priority over service to the state.<sup>77</sup> This change from past museum practices shifted relationships and empowered communities to become experts on cultural heritage. The Curator is therefore positioned as a facilitator between communities and the taonga. From my observations within Te Papa; new museum theory aligned to the principles of Mātauranga Māori, mana taonga and Māori ways of working. It had a direct impact on the everyday practices of Curators within the Mātauranga Māori team.

The following section addresses the methodology and practices employed throughout the Kākahu project under the sections of rangahau (the research) and whakawhanaungatanga (a relationship through shared experiences and working together). Aligning to indigenous methodology, staff interviewed within the Mātauranga Māori team discuss the project using their own voices.

### ***Rangahau – the research***

The Kākahu in Te Papa collections were acquired from diverse sources. The Māori collections within Te Papa included 35,000 items; of these 352 are kākahu. Only 64 of the Kākahu held iwi provenance information with the taonga.<sup>78</sup> The lack of information restricted their use in research, display, access and use in education programs for staff and visitors. This was considered shameful as Kākahu are some of the most respected and prestigious cultural objects; representing heritage through motifs, design, materials and ownership. The cloaks encompass security, protection, tapu and mana.

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<sup>74</sup> P Peers et al 2003 op.cit. pp.519–537.

<sup>75</sup> 'New museum' theory has been addressed by writers including Message, Kylie 2006, *New museums and the making of culture*, Berg Publishers, Oxford; Witcomb 2003, op.cit.; Anderson 2004, op.cit.; Edwards 2006, op.cit.; Healy 2006, op.cit.; Knell et al 2007, op.cit. pp.134–146; Kreps 2003, op.cit.; McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: heritage professionals, indigenous collections, current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, N.Z; Schrader 2010, op.cit. Māori curatorship at Te Papa is also discussed in Schorch, Phillip and McCarthy, Conal (eds.) 2019, *Curatopia: museums and the future of curatorship*, Manchester University Press, UK.

<sup>76</sup> Knell et al 2007, op.cit.

<sup>77</sup> Halpin 2007, op.cit.

<sup>78</sup> Harwood, Hokimate P. 2011, 'Identification and description of feather's in Te Papa's Māori cloaks', *Tuhinga*, vol. 22, pp.125–147; Tamarapa, Awhina, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.

Editor of *Whatu Kākahu/Māori cloaks* and Curator Mātauranga Māori, Awhina Tamarapa confirmed that the greatest honour for those that have passed is to have a cloak laid across the casket.<sup>79</sup> The high level of cultural significance for source communities directed the museum to undertake an extensive research project to reconnect the Kākahu collection back to iwi and hapū.

Information on materials, makers and people connected to the taonga were either separated from the item before it was acquired, or the information was neglected as priorities in collections management changed.<sup>80</sup> In museum practice, we understand that over time priorities change and information is occasionally disconnected from the objects. Henare suggested that objects gather ‘...a variety of histories and names, including those of various collectors, donors and experts...over time these layers of text were attached to the artefacts, only to be removed or edited later, leaving trailing stings of words to be cut off or woven back in...’<sup>81</sup> Aspiring to reattach hidden and forgotten knowledge to the taonga, Arapata Hakiwai the then Senior Curator for the Mātauranga Māori team suggested the extensive research project and a subsequent publication to be produced.<sup>82</sup> Wanting the Kākahu to be seen by a wider audience was likewise a driver for the project.<sup>83</sup> The Kākahu project progressed over four years across three stages.<sup>84</sup>

The first; a scientific analysis of materials used within the Kākahu. A Kākahu can be woven from hair, grass, feathers, string, wool and other materials; materials found both pre and post colonialisation. Hokimate Harwood, the Bicultural Science Researcher within the Mātauranga Māori team, undertook the first of its kind, scientific analysis of materials used in the weaves of 110 of the Kākahu and concluded that over 30 different bird feathers were found within the cloaks.<sup>85</sup> This information assisted in reconnecting taonga to different iwi and hapū throughout the country. Māori terminology for bird types, feathers and styles of weaves were reconnected to the taonga on completion of this analysis. Collection management documentation was then revised.

The second stage involved the Kaitiaki Māori/Curator Awhina Tamarapa reviewing scholarly literature on Kākahu that identified production methods for cloaks, significant events and connections to people.

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<sup>79</sup> Tamarapa, Awhina (ed.) 2011, op.cit.

<sup>80</sup> Harwood, Hokimate P. 2011, 'Identification and description of feather's in Te Papa's Māori cloaks', *Tuhinga*, vol. 22, pp.125–147.

<sup>81</sup> Henare, Amiria 2005, op.cit.

<sup>82</sup> Arapata Hakiwai is now the Māori Scholar based within the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

<sup>83</sup> Tamarapa, Awhina, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.

<sup>84</sup> Tamarapa, Awhina (ed.) 2011, op.cit.

<sup>85</sup> Harwood, Hokimate P. 2011, 'Identification and description of feather's in Te Papa's Māori cloaks', *Tuhinga*, vol. 22, pp.125–147.



During our interview, Tamarapa highlighted the work of Māori scholar Te Rangi Hīroa (Ngāti Mutunga) who wrote in detail on weaving and cloaks throughout his illustrious career and was a main source throughout the research stage.<sup>86</sup> The second stage prepared the Mātauranga Māori team for the third critical stage of the project's development – the wānanga (to meet and discuss tribal knowledge, lore or learning).

The wānanga encompassed consultation with the national body for master weavers, Te Roopu Raranga Whatu o Aotearoa. Master weavers were invited into the collection storerooms over three days in 2007 to view the Kākahu and encouraged to share their knowledge on style, techniques and connections to the taonga.<sup>87</sup> It was their opportunity to advise the museum teams on information and knowledge to be included in the final publication on the collection. Tamarapa explained:

The methodology was that it's collaboration with the weavers, because it's their knowledge and understanding of the art form that is our guide.... It's a bringing together of different forms of knowledge around weaving, around cloak weaving specifically. And it's an attempt to be able to open the doors of the museum so that there's an engagement, and a communication, and a reconnection with these taonga. So, within that there's the whole reclamation of lots of things to do with cloaks... And importantly are the names of different cloaks, which isn't really well known...names have been lost over time. In the process of the research it became really important that we reclaim those Māori names once again.<sup>88</sup>

The most important aspect of this engagement was the reclaiming of te reo Māori names for the cloaks. As referenced in Chapter 1, when discussing indigenous empowerment through language, the renaming and reconnection of places and objects with indigenous names is significant in the process of decolonisation and self-empowerment. Renaming the land, places and objects re-establishes connections that were lost as a result of power and manipulation by colonial invaders. As Smith described:

Renaming the land was probably as powerful ideologically as changing the land. Indigenous children in schools, for example, were taught the new names for places that they and their parents had lived in for generations...This newly named land became increasingly

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<sup>86</sup> Te Rangi Hīroa – Sir Peter Henry Buck (1877-1951) was a prominent member of the Ngāti Mutunga Māori iwi – Doctor, Military leader, health administrator, politician, anthropologist, Māori scholar and previous museum Director. Full biography at; Sorrenson, M. P. K. 2017, *Story: Buck, Peter Henry Biography*, New Zealand Government - Manatū Taonga, Ministry for Culture & Heritage, Auckland, viewed 17 July 2017, <<https://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3b54/buck-peter-henry>>.

<sup>87</sup> Tamarapa, Awhina, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

disconnected from the songs and chants used by indigenous peoples to trace their histories, to bring forth spiritual elements or to carry out the simplest of ceremonies.<sup>89</sup>

The bicultural policy of Te Papa acknowledged tāngata whenua and the need for consultation and Kaupapa Māori to be implemented in professional practices throughout the institution. Tamarapa detailed that consultation with tāngata whenua is ‘...the most fundamental aspect of one’s responsibility as a Kaitiaki Māori. If this museum is to make credible its commitment as a bicultural institution, then tribal consultation must certainly be the foundation of cultural partnership...’<sup>90</sup> Implementation of Māori methodologies and ways of working is championed through the roles of Kaitiaki Māori as discussed earlier in this chapter.

### ***Whakawhanaungatanga – Maintaining relationships***

The Kaitiaki Māori connect taonga to contemporary Māori indigenous life by opening access to collections and sharing knowledge between cultural partners. The Curator becomes facilitator, in charge of developing and maintaining relationships. Curators connect descendants of makers, artists or previous owners to taonga in collections, which then develop a stronger line of whakapapa (genealogy), kōrero (narrative) and mana (spiritual force) surrounding the item. The sharing of knowledge between community and the museum begins with the forming of trust between individuals. Trust extends from faith and confidence in the team’s processes and capabilities. Paku, agreed that ‘...once the trust is built, then the stories start to be unravelled. And that’s the point where that collaboration really starts to click...’<sup>91</sup> Henare outlined that ‘...things have no real efficacy or agency independent from that of human beings...’<sup>92</sup> It is the relationship between museum staff, community members and the objects themselves that brought the social lives of objects to light.

*Whatu Kākahu: Māori cloaks* identified that ‘fundamental connections between makers’ and ‘modern-day descendants’ have been established throughout the project.<sup>93</sup> Māori terminology was revived and documented as descendants interacted with the taonga. Tapsell concedes that some descendants can receive knowledge from ancestors through taonga ‘...on a non-verbal plane...’<sup>94</sup> He suggested that it is the descendant’s role to ‘know’ what to listen for. He adheres that kōrero, or cultural understanding through narratives, must remain with the taonga:

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<sup>89</sup> Smith 1999, op.cit. p.51.

<sup>90</sup> Tamarapa, Awhina (ed.) 2011, op.cit., p.167.

<sup>91</sup> Paku, Rhonda, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 2 March, 2011.

<sup>92</sup> Henare, Amiria 2005, op.cit. p.226.

<sup>93</sup> Tamarapa, Awhina (ed.) 2011, op.cit.

<sup>94</sup> Tapsell 1997, op.cit.

The role of kōrero associated with taonga is to maintain the kin group's genealogical connection with their lands. If the kōrero, or knowledge, surrounding a taonga becomes separated from it, then its mana and tapu are also threatened. Without kōrero, the item ceases to communicate, loses context, and fails to link kin groups identify to specific ancestral landscapes.<sup>95</sup>

For Māori, language is the vehicle to contextualise stories, knowledge and narratives. It is therefore important to keep Māori language with taonga in collections to ensure the kōrero (narrative) remains intact. Kōrero identifies iwi links and connections to people through whakapapa. Dr Huhana Smith confirms that Kaitiaki Māori and Curators use a genealogical reference system in consultation with Elders and leaders when developing research.<sup>96</sup> In line with Māori practices extending from traditional practices on marae, te reo Māori is engaged during important discussions as a form of respect to the leaders, and the knowledge to be discussed. In Te Papa, whakawhanaungatanga (relationships) are central to the Māori way of life and professional practices. The Kākahu project followed consultation guidelines in line with Māori practices and assisted in the rediscovery of te reo Māori connected to the collections.

The Mātauranga Māori team understood that their work could impact contemporary Māori life. An emphasis within the new curatorial praxis is for community service to be the priority over the state's interest. Generating positive community pride through the acknowledgement of language aligns to the praxis. Museum practice during the Kākahu project focused on the documentation of the correct terminology and language structure associated to the taonga. Documentation included descriptions such as the whenu (warp - lengthwise threads of a woven flax garment), aho (weft or cross-threads of weaving), thread patterns and styles such as waharua kōpito (a pattern of vertical pairs of diamond shapes), whakarua kōpito (patterns that extend downwards in two or more complete repeats), tukemata (weaving pattern made up of notched zigzag lines) and aronui (finely woven cloak).<sup>97</sup> The terminology is now documented on permanent record within the collections management systems of Te Papa. Cultural knowledge associated to the terms has been recorded and placed on the permanent record.

Although Te Papa exhibits both te reo Māori and English on didactic panels and in marketing for the institution; as discussed in Chapter 1 translating information to English and vice versa is difficult.

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Smith, Huhana 2009, 'Mana taonga and the micro world of intricate research and findings around taonga Māori at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa', *Sites: New series*, vol. 6, no.2, pp.7–31.

<sup>97</sup> Tamarapa, Awhina (ed.) 2011, op.cit.

Providing an English equivalent for te reo Māori was an issue confronted during the development of *Whatu Kākahu/Māori cloaks*. The Curator found that it was increasingly hard to break te reo Māori to define words in English. Tamarapa described it as being ‘distressing’ and ‘quite a shock’ to have to define te reo using western constructs of the language. Issues were solved through negotiations with the publisher.<sup>98</sup> Paora Tibble, the te reo Māori Writer of Te Papa, explained difficulties faced in translation between the languages.<sup>99</sup> Osbourne confirmed that he would prefer only Māori in catalogues without an English translation. He suggested that if people want to know the meaning then they would need to take the time to learn about the language and the culture.<sup>100</sup> I argue that te reo Māori can stand on its own in panels, marketing and museum documentation with limited translation. Glossaries and reference material can support those who do not understand the language. The use of indigenous language to tell the stories and explain knowledge connected to taonga is a universal human right. Language documentation can assist museum professionals to support the wellbeing of communities. During the Kākahu project’s wānanga (meetings), Tamarapa confirmed:

The weavers were able to tell us the really main ideas that should be expressed in the book. Really it came down to conveying the cultural importance and significance of cloaks to Māori...and also looking at the different kinds of cloaks that have techniques that aren't practiced anymore, so it's like reclaiming that knowledge as well.<sup>101</sup>

The documentation of language contributed to the reintroduction of terms surrounding techniques and production styles of the Kākahu. With the reclaiming of past techniques comes inspiration in the contemporary community to produce new works incorporating old styles. The Kākahu project has inspired master weavers to incorporate styles and techniques observed within the collections. The project revitalised style, techniques, materials and language.

Through the museum practices of the Mātauranga Māori team, and methodologies followed throughout the development of *Whatu Kākahu/Māori cloaks*, I aligned museum practices with critical literature on the ‘new curatorial praxis’. For those museums that do not hold a strong bicultural mandate or awareness of indigenous language, the engagement and partnership required to complete language documentation can appear overwhelming. The new curatorial praxis transforms professional

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<sup>98</sup>Tamarapa, Awhina, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.

<sup>99</sup>Tibble, Paora (Writer Te reo Māori, Te Papa Tongarewa National Museum of New Zealand), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, New Zealand, 17 February, 2011.

<sup>100</sup>Osbourne, Neil (Collections Manager), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 1 March, 2011.

<sup>101</sup>Tamarapa, Awhina, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.

practice within institutions to be focused on relationships. Peers and Brown state that the forming of the new relationships promotes learning and growth for the museum profession; ‘...as the roles are reversed and museum staff find that they are being educated by community members, they begin to see in a new light the assumptions embedded in traditional museum training, and become open to alternate ways of doing things...’<sup>102</sup>

This section has addressed an example of the new curatorial praxis and reformed museum practices within Te Papa through the development of the new publication *Whatu Kākahu/Māori cloaks*. Through the ‘Rangahau – the research’ I approached the meaning of kākahu to Māori, objectives of the Kākahu project, the three stages followed throughout the research including the scientific analysis of materials, literature review and meetings. I identified the wānanga (meetings to discuss important cultural knowledge) as ingrained in Kaupapa Māori (Māori approach) and ways of working within Te Papa. The community engagement is a direct example of the new curatorial praxis.

I explained that the role of Kaitiaki Māori/Curator as a facilitator between community and museum that opens access to taonga. The importance of maintaining relationships between the museum and communities was emphasised. Te reo Māori is the vehicle that supports these relationships. It is understood by staff that taonga and language can educate descendants and learned community members on cultural knowledge. When language with collections is documented it ensures that collections are kept ‘warm’ in line with the kaupapa and guardianship of collections. The Kākahu project revived a body of language that had previously been lost to communities. The terminology and words surrounding techniques, materials and styles were to become a part of the weaver’s ongoing education role and a part of the wider community due to the publication. Language documentation in museums can therefore assist in developing healthy communities outside of the institution.

Similarly, to the engagement of taonga for language revival and education Peter Addis, Meegan Hall, Rawinia Higgins, and Te Ripowai Higgins identify the use of cultural spaces as tools for education and advocate for spaces to be built and available for the teaching of Māori knowledge and practices to align with traditional practices in iwi communities:

The marae was regarded as ‘a strong symbolic cultural pedagogical tool to teach and learn using Māori specific forum’ and the environment provided opportunities to practice traditional Maori teaching pedagogies such as ako...Ako means both to learn and to teach. It highlights the notion that learning is reciprocal and that knowledge is acquired both through the act of

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<sup>102</sup> Peers et al 2003 op.cit. pp.519–537.

learning but also through teaching. It also recognises that learning does not always happen in formal contexts and acknowledges that learning also occurs through working alongside elders and watching, observing and developing behaviours with their guidance.<sup>103</sup>

Throughout the *Whatu Kākahu/Māori cloaks* project, learning took place in just this way, through observations, watching and guidance by the expert weavers who visited the taonga in collections. Cultural spaces, as described above, can be engaged as sites for cultural knowledge sharing similar to access to taonga.

Located in the centre of Te Papa stood Te Marae Rongomaraeroa, Te Papa's marae. The Kaihautū Hippolite explained that Te Marae Rongomaraeroa was a space within the museum to welcome visitors, perform ceremony and undertake important talks; a cultural space that was reflective of protocols and practices conducted on over 700 maraes located within iwi communities in Aotearoa.<sup>104</sup>

Within Te Papa a marae working group, including representatives from the iwi relationships department, would meet twice per month to discuss relevant tikanga, ceremonies and events to be held in the marae. Te reo Māori was the dominant language used for all events on the marae, and it was acknowledged as a significant space, a taonga, in which to engage cultural revitalisation and the sharing of language.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Adds, Peter, Hall, Meegan, Higgins, Rawinia and Higgins, Te Ripowai 2011, 'Ask the posts of our house: using cultural spaces to encourage quality learning in higher education', *Teaching in Higher Education*, vol. 15, no.5, pp.541-551.

<sup>104</sup> Hippolite, Michelle (Kaihatu Māori), Interview for PhD research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Wellington, New Zealand, 4 March, 2011.

<sup>105</sup> Davis, Sonya (Iwi relationships), Interview for PhD research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Wellington, 3 March, 2011.



**Figure 63 – Figure 64** Te Marae Rongomaraeroa located within Te Papa was also accessible from outside of the building to allow for formal welcome ceremonies to take place (photographs), Karina Lamb, February 2011.

The development of *Whatu Kākahu/Māori cloaks* was a project that reinforced dedication to community engagement and willingness to revise and update documentation held with their collections. As Paku suggested, it was the role of Te Papa to educate others on the methodologies and practices required for the correct community engagement and guardianship of taonga Māori:

I actually think that we're moving in a direction now that encourages not only greater collaboration, I think we are a very collaborative organisation that encourages a lot of community participation....I think for Māori engagement the future is going to go very well...there's a lot more to be excited about if you are iwi and wanting to have a role in the telling of the stories here in the national institution. But I think also Te Papa has an enormously positive role to play for other museums and galleries who also want to learn how to work and strengthen their relationships with tāngata whenua...The more we do that, the more we help our museums to tell more authentic stories and stories that better reflect those dual histories.<sup>106</sup>

The bicultural management structures of Te Papa and Mātauranga Māori embedded in professional practices were evidence of the dedication to the representation and celebration of both Māori and

<sup>106</sup> Paku, Rhonda, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 2 March, 2011.

Pākehā histories. The everyday practices of those working with collections revealed a museum centred on representing living indigenous cultures.

Through an ethnography of the collections practices at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa this chapter has revealed unique features of a bicultural institution that reflected wider debates in progressive museum discourse about museums and indigenous people. Using methods outlined in the research design for this thesis, I gathered data from observations and interviews with kaitiaki which presented Te Papa as an example of new museum and new curatorial praxis theory incorporating indigenous concepts, frameworks and values. This ethnology supports my argument that understanding taonga requires a presence of te reo Māori, and through professional practices Te Papa staff are engaged in language revival and strengthening.

The fieldwork completed on site at Te Papa indicated that even in a national bicultural institution that aimed to be bilingual in practice, it was the language skills of the museum Collection Managers that was leading the implementation of change towards language documentation for taonga. It is clear from my observations of practice, interviews with museum staff and review of governance documents, that language documentation and data enhancement within collections was occurring when led by major projects, and that further data enhancement was possible with the assistance of internal and external partnerships.

On a deeply personal note, the Christchurch earthquake took place while I was on placement at Te Papa in 2011. Te Papa and the marae were used as an emergency response centre with over 800 people through the centre in the week following the earthquake. Many of the museum staff I worked beside had friends and family in the earthquake zone. We were affected by aftershocks for many days in Wellington. My thoughts and prayers continue to be with families who lost whanau and homes and each year I send my aroha to all those affected.

In the next chapter, I conclude the close examination of fieldwork from the Australian and Aotearoa museums conducted in 2010–2011. I present Macleay Museum's *Makarr-Garma: Aboriginal collections from a Yolŋu perspective (Makarr-Garma)* exhibition as evidence that language documentation was achieved during this period of time.<sup>107</sup> I argue that although there was a need for language documentation in collections management practices in Australia, ten years after the

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<sup>107</sup> University of Sydney, 2010, *Makarr-Garma: Aboriginal collections from a Yolŋu perspective*, exhibition, Macleay Museum, 29 November 2009 - 15 May 2010.



fieldwork was completed and *Makarr-Garma* was presented, there continues to be a gap in understanding or action in professional practice to engage indigenous language in collections management systems. I discuss strategies to assist the Australian museum sector to action change and contribute this thesis as a catalyst for the sector to implement changes in professional practice.

## Chapter 5: Sharing culture – Strategies for improved practice

Indigenous and cultural property rights include the right to own and control indigenous cultural and intellectual property...control the recording of cultural customs and expressions, and particular languages which may be intrinsic to cultural identity, knowledge, skill, and teaching of culture.<sup>1</sup>

In Australia, the neglect of truth-telling on genocide, forcible removal of culture and languages and the mistreatment of First Nations communities has resulted in generational pain carried by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The revival and strengthening of indigenous languages support self-determination and imparts the rights of indigenous communities. Data enhancement and the inclusion of indigenous languages in collections management systems, and a revision of professional practices within museums, supports decolonisation of museum collections and aligns with literature on the new museum and new curatorial praxis theory. The previous chapter considered the professional practices at Te Papa during a critical period in time in 2010–2011 as indigenous languages in collecting institutions and indigenous and cultural property rights were at the forefront of discussions in the Australian and New Zealand cultural sectors.

The thesis findings on museum practices in 2010–2011 revealed that even though indigenous communities were requesting collecting institutions to be active participants in language strengthening and renewal, and literature on new museology was directing changes in museum practice, collections management systems remained devoid of indigenous languages. Museum professionals' rationale for the neglect of indigenous languages was a lack of time in workloads to complete the research and data enhancement required.

This chapter concludes ethnographies on the museums identified within the thesis and reviews findings to provide strategies for collecting institutions to assist in the sharing of culture. When indigenous communities are provided access to cultural materials and documentation in collections there is evidence that collections can be engaged in the revitalisation of language and assist in sharing a greater awareness of historic and contemporary indigenous life. Beginning with an example for the museum sector that achieved the sharing of culture through co-curation, co-collaboration and indigenous language documentation, I discuss the University of Sydney Macleay Museum's *Makarr-*

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<sup>1</sup> Crayford, et al 2005, op.cit. p.23.

*Garma: Aboriginal collections from a Yolŋu perspective (Makarr-Garma)* exhibition presented in 2010 as a best practice approach for collecting institutions.<sup>2</sup>

With its collaborative approach, the *Makarr-Garma* exhibition of Yolŋu knowledge and objects was presented in 2010; during the turning point in the Australian museum sector when indigenous language significance and the connection to collections was growing in the consciousness of indigenous communities. *Makarr-Garma* did not receive the acclaim it should have at the time of presentation, but nonetheless I argue that it was a positive model of engagement with source communities. The Yolŋu community were invited to engage with the objects, given the time to undertake research following an indigenous methodology and the language flowed while Curators and Collections Managers documented information for collections records.

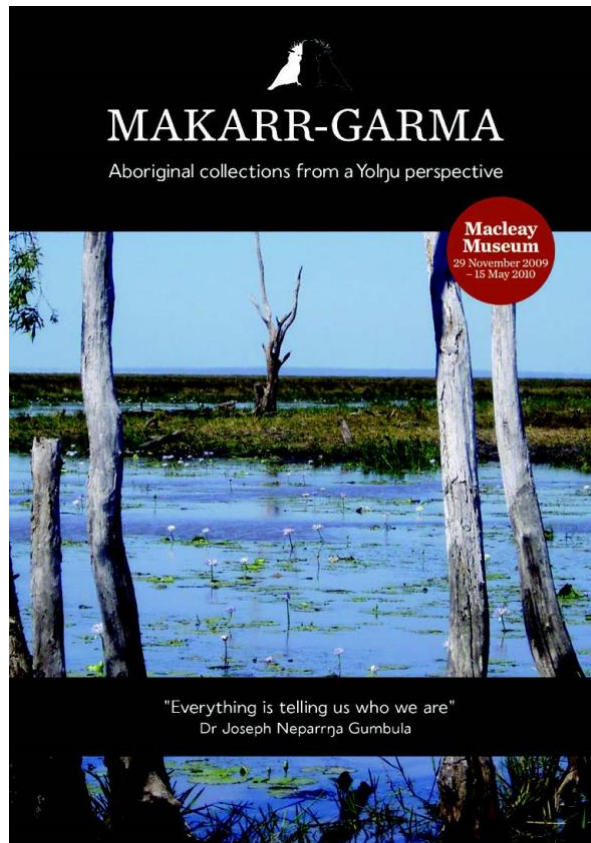
### **Makarr-Garma: Aboriginal collections from a Yolŋu perspective**

The Macleay Museum's *Makarr-Garma: Aboriginal collections from a Yolŋu perspective* exhibition was presented between 29 November 2009 to 15 May 2010; a successful exhibition that prioritised co-curation with source communities. Communities were invited to view, debate and consult on their cultural materials held in the University of Sydney collections. The exhibition, curated by Dr Joseph Neparrŋa Gumbula a senior Elder within the Yolŋu communities in north-east Arnhem Land. The exhibition led viewers on a journey through one day from sunrise to sunset for Yolŋu people. The title of the exhibition suggested a ceremonial space; a place for connection, debate and the joining together of 62 artworks and cultural objects, 39 natural history specimens, 40 photographs and 15 recorded songs which represented 18 clans.<sup>3</sup> The exhibition saw the integration of diverse collections, information and materials including indigenous language, music, historic and contemporary photographs, raw materials, cultural artefacts, artworks and animal species.

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<sup>2</sup> University of Sydney, 2010, *Makarr-Garma: Aboriginal collections from a Yolŋu perspective*, exhibition, Macleay Museum, 29 November 2009 - 15 May 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Philp, Jude 2016, 'The natural object: Exhibiting the Macleay Museum's specimen collections', *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, vol. 29, pp.11–28.



**Figure 65** The poster and front cover of the catalogue for the exhibition *Makarr-Garma: Aboriginal collections from a Yolŋu perspective*. Image courtesy Macleay Museum, University of Sydney.



**Figure 66** Dr Joseph Neparrŋa Gumbula inspecting objects for *Makarr-Garma* (photograph). Image courtesy of Joseph Neparrŋa Gumbula and the Macleay Museum, University of Sydney.

Gumbula began working with the University of Sydney during an Australian Research Council funded project within the University Archives in which he examined and recorded historic photographs taken within Yolŋu communities.<sup>4</sup> The project was extended to include a review of ethnographic and natural history collections at the invitation of the Macleay Museum. The Curator of Ethnography, Rebecca Conway assisted Gumbula to access objects in storage relating to his country. Macleay Museum's Senior Curator, Jude Philp confirmed that '...if something was not appropriately exhibited, stored or recorded, Gumbula helped Curators to understand why...'<sup>5</sup>

Through oral recordings, indigenous language names and cultural knowledge including the object's maker, known context, meaning and stories surrounding the collection item were registered. Conway confirmed the intent was to then enter the new information into the collections management database.<sup>6</sup> Although not a professional translator, Conway sat with Gumbula to document objects. The transcripts from the one-on-one interviews were edited and published on didactic panels for the exhibition.<sup>7</sup> Conway in 2018 described the process of documentation:

We sat with the physical objects or photographs in front of us in the museum storeroom and Gumbula spoke with almost no interjection from me. I transcribed and structurally edited his texts in consultation with him with the Yolŋu-language spellings, checked by specialists, but they were not otherwise copyedited. This retained Gumbula's narrative style, together with his natural speech and grammar patterns, when expressing himself in English.<sup>8</sup>

The research methodology included Gumbula '... interviewing his kin and community, as well as interrogating the works themselves...For each artwork in his show, Gumbula painstakingly assigned locational information including the ancestral source of its miny'tji (design) when it had not previously been recorded...'<sup>9</sup> Speaking about the process of documentation Gumbula explained;

What I've seen and experienced on the notebook or the footnote of the anthropologists who came to our community...it wasn't a full story...this is the time we'll try to explore...to give that respect to the materials, give more information and more respect in the community...or places like Sydney or places like exhibitions, we need to update or have...things named properly...this

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<sup>4</sup> For a full description of the project undertaken with Dr Joseph Neparrŋa Gumbula and the University of Sydney Archives, see Gumbula, Joe Neparrŋa, Corn, Aaron, & Mant, Julia 2009, 'Matjabala Mali' Buku-Ruŋanmaram: implications for archives and access in Arnhem Land', *Archival Science*, vol. 9, no.1–2, pp. 7–14.

<sup>5</sup> Philp, Jude 2016, 'The natural object: Exhibiting the Macleay Museum's specimen collections', *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, vol. 29, pp.11–28.

<sup>6</sup> Rebecca Conway, Development of the Makarr-Garma exhibition, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio recording, Melbourne, 17 June, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Conway, Rebecca 2018, 'Collaboration with the Past, Collaboration for the Future: Joseph Neparrŋa Gumbula's Makarr-garma Exhibition', *Preservation, Digital Technology & Culture*, vol. 47, no.3-4, pp.115–132.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Conway, Rebecca 2018, op.cit.

is sharing things and sharing knowledge as well and hopefully things will go better in the future for all of us.<sup>10</sup>

The correct naming of artworks and objects was of the utmost importance for the exhibition. Speaking about the historic documentation that was held with objects prior to the research project, Gumbula stated ‘...names and information. These are important...Some of the text...the way the information was there was not good enough to satisfy the Yolŋu. The concepts of the Yolŋu...’<sup>11</sup> Conway confirmed that historic archival and collections documentation on the collection was sparse ‘...the anthropological milieu in which some of the earliest Yolŋu collections were made was functionalism, in which theories about societies did not require individuals to be named and material culture collection was generally not a core focus...’<sup>12</sup> Throughout the thesis I have identified a lack of indigenous language held with collections due to historic collecting practices in museums as objects were acquired as representative of indigenous communities or type. Stories and knowledge connected to the objects were not considered as necessary for documentation, and this was the case for the Yolŋu collections at Macleay museum prior to access by Gumbula.

Within *Makarr-Garma* audio recordings throughout the research period generated 70,000 words of text. This was edited in consultation with Gumbula to form the catalogue, exhibition titles, labels and introductory panel for the exhibition.<sup>13</sup> Djambarrpuyŋu patrilect was used as the main language for descriptions as this was the most widely spoken language for Yolŋu.

The linguistic parameters of the Yolŋu that Gumbula worked within are complex, encompassing 7 main languages that comprise specific ancestral and sacred vocabularies belonging to each of the many clans...While not the patrilect of his own Gupapuyŋu clan, the Djambarrpuyŋu patrilect was chosen because it is more widely spoken.<sup>14</sup>

The edited transcripts approved by Gumbula were attached to the collections management systems and records. Conway identified that if the museum had had greater financial resources and time, that recordings in language professionally translated would have also been attached to records. Recordings could have captured ‘...the poetry of his philosophy and way of explaining the world, as people tend to express themselves more eloquently in their own tongues. However, this would not have been a

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<sup>10</sup> Conway, Rebecca and Gumbula, Dr Joseph Neparrŋa n.d, *Beyond the collector: social relations, politics and objects, unpublished, powerpoint presentation*, Macleay Museum, University of Sydney, pp.1–44.

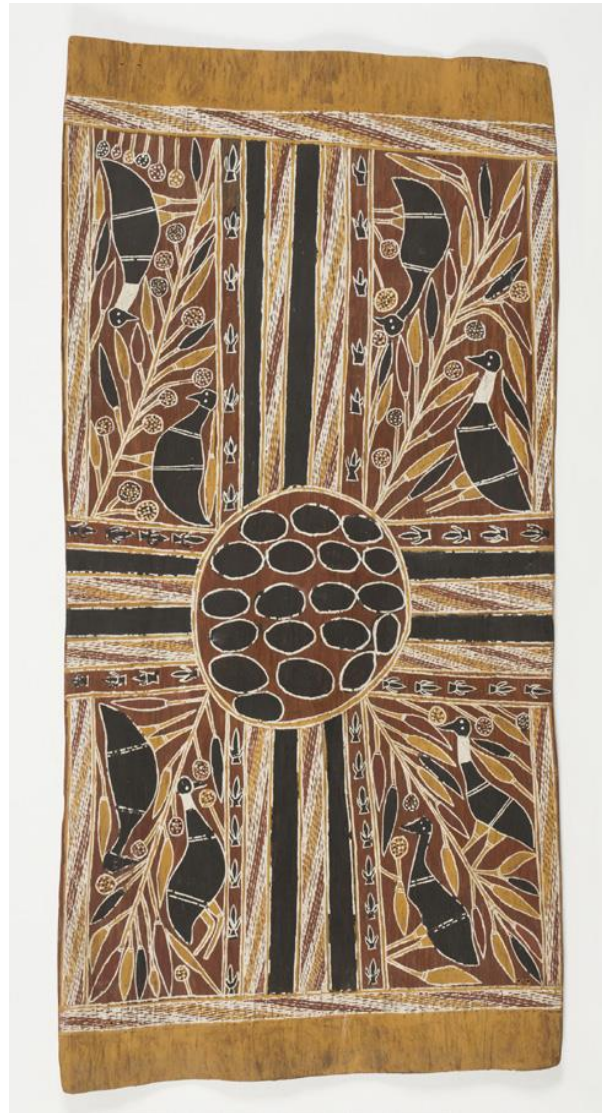
<sup>11</sup> Conway 2018, op.cit.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Rebecca Conway, Development of the Makarr-Garma exhibition, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio recording, Melbourne, 17 June, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Conway 2018, op.cit.

simple or easy task. Yolŋu languages, like other Australian indigenous languages, are rich in metaphor and esoteric meanings that do not exist in English...'<sup>15</sup>



**Figure 67** Example of object included in the exhibition - Wurrpan (Emu) painting c.1964 by Tom Dj.wa, Gumbula's father, of the Daygurrurr Gupapuyŋu clan. Yirritja-moiety design from the country of Gapuwiyak (Lake Evella). Acquired in Milingimbi, Northern Territory by D. Sutherland, 1964. Natural pigments on bark. Macleay Museum, ETP. 2005. Image courtesy Macleay Museum, The University of Sydney.

*Makarr-Garma* illustrates a successful co-curation and co-collaboration that resulted in data enhancement for collections management systems. The exhibition revealed that if funding and resources are supported by institutions, museum professionals can work successfully with appropriate individuals from indigenous communities to document language and cultural information as data

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<sup>15</sup> Conway 2018, op.cit.

enhancement for collection catalogues and records. Australian indigenous languages, even those holding multiple clans and dialects, can be engaged to contribute a greater connection of museum collections to people, place and culture. Positioning indigenous communities as the experts in the field in the development of research is essential if successful co-collaboration is to occur.

If we are to develop collections to represent, educate and promote understanding about human life and the relationships to 'things', how then can we exclude language from collections and separate it from the objects themselves? Although this project was driven by the needs of an exhibition, it is an example of successful data enhancement that can be achieved when all areas of the institution are dedicated to revisiting collections and records. For data enhancement to be ingrained in practice, museums professionals need training to understand local cultural protocols and be supported to achieve building relationships with source communities. This chapter resolves that collaborations between Australian museum collections and indigenous communities can lead to improved collections management practice and language rejuvenation if local protocols and co-collaboration become central to museum practice.

In the section 'Local protocols and collaboration' I address in response to the findings that Collection Managers do not have the time in work plans to undertake consultation or build relationships with communities, and that relationship building is an essential element of the day-to-day practices for museum professionals. Theory and indigenous communities demand that changes in practice be made to develop a closer connection to the management of collections with indigenous communities. I address the need for local protocols, law and relationships to be a focus of the work of Collection Managers to address indigenous language data enhancement for collections records.

In 'Contemporary practice and roles' I discuss the finding that if Collection Management departments have indigenous staff managing collections with language skills, there is a greater chance of language being incorporated into the collection management systems. The tension between Curator and Collection Manager roles is addressed as a barrier to updating collections catalogues with the latest research undertaken by the institution.

In 'New Strategies for Documentation' I bring forward approaches for indigenous language documentation with collection management systems including a requirement for the museum sector and indigenous communities to lead the development of a national standard and framework on languages other than English. A national standards would support institutions to develop language policies and explore new collection management systems with the capabilities of holding languages



other than English. The standards would recommend a review of the *Significance 2.0* framework that has been challenged by research participants and the museum sector as it does not address language use or inclusion of indigenous languages to identify significance.

Finally, I explore new research in indigenous studies that identifies cultural determinants for the health and wellbeing of indigenous communities. Research that supports the revisiting of discussions that were started in 2010–2011 on the need for indigenous languages to be a priority when working with research and content including indigenous cultural materials.

Throughout the research there has been a focus on mainstream museums with indigenous staff. In the following sections, I discuss recommendations for the transformation of collection care, professional practice and management of documentation in mainstream institutions resulting from research findings addressed in Chapters 1 to 4.

## **Local protocols and collaboration**

The diversity of language groups, law and rights within Australia and Torres Strait Islander communities requires localised consideration for the development of indigenous language documentation with collections, and for the path followed for documentation to be led by local community protocols and law. Alternate ways of navigating the relationships between museums and indigenous communities that align to local indigenous protocols are discussed by Jason Gibson as he explored repatriation of collection items to the Anmatyerr people of central Australia:

Wanting to be true to the historical relationships that these objects instantiated as well as the specific cultural rights and responsibilities inherent in them, Anmatyerr men began to suggest alternative ways of navigating museum/community relationships. These counter options were derived from a distinctively Anmatyerr view and offered suggestions about how museums might be subsumed within Anmatyerr social frameworks. Rather than having to respond to proposals couched in Western political, moral and legal discourses, these men suggested that settler-colonial institutions and agents work in accordance with central Australian protocols.<sup>16</sup>

In this example, relationships with indigenous communities followed local social frameworks and museum staff were required to hold knowledge on local customs, law and genealogies. It was necessary to allocate time in work plans for communications regularly with communities and for local protocols to be included in the research design.

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<sup>16</sup> Gibson, Jason 2019, 'You're my kwertengerl': transforming models of care for central Australian aboriginal museum collections', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, vol. 34, no.3, pp.240-256.

Within each of the case studies examined, Collection Managers indicated that it was the time to assign to connecting with community and build trusting relationships that was the greatest barrier to data enhancement and language documentation in collections. With significant backlogs in digitisation, increased demands for access to collections and pressure from museum leaders to achieve more, Collection Managers found the concept of language documentation difficult to process amongst competing demands of everyday workloads. Te Papa was the point of difference as the Mātauranga Maori team, experienced in language, held existing community connections. The team also had access to Te Papa professionals to assist in relationship building through the Iwi partnership division and the writing of te reo Maori by content specialists. Kaitiaki Maori were confident that collections catalogues could be enhanced as a part of everyday practices.

The use of indigenous languages in collection documentation is critical and ensures the rights of indigenous communities are upheld. Indigenous language positions objects within a cultural framework. As Austin confirms '...once you name it, you're classifying it within a cultural framework. It's moving away from western academic practice...when you're working with taonga we're thinking of our own people being able to come in and understand it in a Māori way...'<sup>17</sup> Indigenous community members interviewed throughout the research for this thesis were clear on the need to document indigenous cultural materials with indigenous terminology.<sup>18</sup> Many were in fact surprised that this practice was not already occurring in museums. Indigenous museum professionals identified that there was a separation between academia, professional practices and indigenous knowledge surrounding objects. Duggan remarked that '...I've come from a collections management background and now I've gone into the world of academia. I see big differences that exist between studying collecting methods, and in ways of working...'<sup>19</sup> As revealed within the research findings, theory can be quite different to professional practices occurring in museums.

The employment of indigenous languages in museum practice acknowledges respect for indigenous ancestors and contributes to healing for communities. It is the fundamental right of indigenous people to have their cultural materials cared for through cultural practice. As Stanton suggested '...indigenous communities are using the materials held in ethnographic collections to elaborate, reconstitute, or

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<sup>17</sup> Dougal Austin in McCarthy, Conal 2011, 'Reforming museology at Te Papa', *Museums and Māori*, C. McCarthy (ed.) Te Papa Press, Wellington, pp.111–145.

<sup>18</sup> As discussed in interviews with indigenous Elders, museum professionals and language specialists. Complete listing of all research participants is included on pages 275–276.

<sup>19</sup> Duggan, John (Assistant Collections Manager – Australia Ethnographic Collection), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January 2011.

event reconstruct what has been broken and torn and disturbed in their lives...'<sup>20</sup> Building on the findings in previous chapters that identify a neglect of indigenous languages in collections management systems, this chapter contributes new strategies for improved professional practices to uphold indigenous rights and improve cultural awareness within Australia, and to provide solutions to the overarching thesis questions. The following strategies for museums encourage transformation and are offered as a contribution to professional practice for the advancement of the museum sector and for the ongoing support and understanding of historic and living indigenous cultures.

## **Contemporary practice and roles**

Through observations, qualitative and quantitative data from Australian and Aotearoa museums, a consistent theme in findings was that for success of indigenous language documentation, professional staff would need to hold knowledge and skills in language and cultural protocols. At the Melbourne Museum, Koorie Heritage Trust and Tairāwhiti Museum, although there were indigenous staff front of house in both curatorial and public program divisions, it was non-indigenous staff with little to no language experience who were managing collections documentation back of house. This affected the level of language information entered into collection management systems.

Within the Melbourne Museum's Indigenous Cultures department, only one indigenous Collection Manager was present in the team, John Duggan. This staff member was the sole point of contact for accessing, handling and documenting restricted materials in the indigenous collections. Duggan was also a central contact point for source community requests to access and view cultural materials. Since the fieldwork in 2010, the museum has increased the number of indigenous staff, particularly through the development of Bunjilaka Cultural Centre, but when we spoke it was clear that the weight of responsibility was heavy on the sole indigenous team member.

At Tairāwhiti Museum, both Jody Wylie and Jen Pewhairangi were employed for their strong understanding and practice of te reo Māori. The Collections Manager, Anne Milton-Tee, was however a Pākehā who held little language knowledge and confirmed '...I am biased because I don't speak te reo. It cannot be a priority with me. I have to do it (documentation) all in English. If the entry was done in te reo, only Jody Wylie would be able to read it. So that could be a problem for the museum...'<sup>21</sup> Both Māori staff members made considerable changes to professional practice within the museum to

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<sup>20</sup> Stanton, John E. 2011, op.cit.

<sup>21</sup> Milton-Tee, Anne (Collections Manager, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Tairāwhiti Museum, Gisborne, New Zealand, 11 April 2011.

incorporate language in research development, collection storage labels, education programs and exhibitions development. There was, however, a neglect of indigenous language in the collections management systems simply due to the lack of language skill held by the Collections Manager.

Museum professionals within the Koorie Heritage Trust required a high-level understanding of Victorian Aboriginal cultural awareness and knowledge but only one indigenous Collections Manager, Jodie Dowd, was employed within the team. Dowd described difficulties in having non-indigenous staff managing collections with complications when relocating or accessing restricted items, and the ongoing care for collections in line with cultural protocols.<sup>22</sup> Collection Managers who were indigenous, or non-indigenous staff with strong knowledge of cultural practices, felt the pressure to make indigenous language and cultural documentation a priority in practice, but were not able to compete with existing demands on their positions as indigenous team members. At Te Papa, as the Mātauranga Māori team were responsible for collection management of the Māori collections language was visible, present and strong not only in catalogue documentation but in labels, spoken widely in meetings and always considered as an integral part of professional practices required for collections management roles.

If the museum sector is to be responsible and honest in its intent to develop stronger relationships with indigenous communities, raise indigenous rights at the forefront of practice and uphold community requests for language documentation, then a greater level of funding and support is required to focus on career development and professional practices to increase indigenous representation in Collections Management roles. In 2011, ESILWG's statement identified '...a key to the long-term success...is the employment of professionally trained indigenous staff in significant roles...More broadly, institutions will also need to establish a wide network of 'experts' who can provide advice on the significance of the materials that are located (within their sites)...'<sup>23</sup> Increasing the presence of indigenous Collection Managers back of house, or non-indigenous Collection Managers that hold cultural permissions with strong language capabilities and skills, will ensure that indigenous voices are represented in decisions relating to the care and management of collections in Australia.

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<sup>22</sup> Jodie Dowd (Collections Cadet, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 7 December, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group 2011, *Indigenous languages collections - issues and actions paper. Framework for National Indigenous Languages Collections Policy*, report prepared by Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group, ESILWG, Sydney, pp.1–17.

During fieldwork at each museum, the tension and lack of integration between the professional roles of Curator and Collections Manager was evident. It was observed that the Curator developed research for inclusion in exhibitions and public programs to be presented front of house. This research was rarely returned to Collection Managers for inclusion in collection records. As Karp stated ‘...the exhibition team’s ability to determine the authentic use of objects is grounded in its research. The team’s acquired knowledge guides it in establishing the circumstances in which a specific object would have been used as well as the types of objects used in specific circumstances...’<sup>24</sup> It is the Curator in collecting institutions that forms exhibitions through research while Collection Managers care for physicality and documentation for collections.<sup>25</sup> The roles of the Curator and Collection Manager have been well documented and challenged in the past. McCarthy described the position of Curator within Te Papa’s Mātauranga Māori team as being ‘...separated from the task of Collection Managers; Curators manage the ‘intellectual; access to and use of taonga in collections, while collection manager look after the ‘...physical side of things on a day to day basis...’<sup>26</sup>

Across each of the case studies, Curator’s research from exhibitions rarely made it back as entries or data enhancement in collections records. Te Papa was the exception, as both Curator and Collections Manager were based within the same Mātauranga Māori department. Curator journals and documentation were often held in archives separate to the collections themselves. Collection Managers indicated that they could in fact not update collection records without the permission of the Curator.<sup>27</sup> Tensions often exist in collecting institutions between these roles due to the lesser acknowledged Collections Manager position. The public see Curators as prominent in front of house, in the media, represented in films, and visible at exhibition openings. Meanwhile, Collection Managers are rarely known or acknowledged for their work within the collecting institutions. It is, however

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<sup>24</sup> Karp et al 1991, op.cit.

<sup>25</sup> Although I do not acknowledge registrars through the thesis, it is acknowledged, particularly in large institutions, that both registrar and collections manager are responsible for the documentation of collection items. In the case studies explored, collection managers were predominantly responsible for collection records, relocation and care of collection within Melbourne Museum, Koorie Heritage Trust, Te Papa and Tairāwhiti Museum. This does not diminish the importance of the registrar’s role within collecting institutions.

<sup>26</sup> McCarthy, Conal 2011, *Museums and Māori: heritage professionals, indigenous collections, current practice*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, N.Z; McCarthy has also explored the role and differences in professional practices in McCarthy, Conal 2018, op.cit.; McCarthy, Conal 2007, *Exhibiting Māori: a history of colonial cultures of display*, Berg Publishers, Oxford, U.K.

<sup>27</sup> As confirmed by Milton-Tee, Anne (Collections Manager, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Tairāwhiti Museum, Gisborne, New Zealand, 11 April 2011; Raberts, Melanie (Manager – Indigenous Cultures, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January, 2011; Wylie, Jody (Kaitiaki Māori, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, 21 April, 2011; Duggan, John (Assistant Collections Manager – Australia Ethnographic Collection), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January 2011; Douglas, Joeline (Curator of Art, Tairāwhiti Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Gisborne, New Zealand, 26 April 2011; Austin, Dougal (Curator Mātauranga Māori, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011.

Collection Managers who deliver tours of collections for indigenous community members. They are the connectors between the objects, ancestors and indigenous language groups. By providing access to collection items they often overhear memories, stories, language and discuss cultural knowledge surrounding the objects. The *Whatu Kākahu – Māori Cloaks* project as described in Chapter 4 is evidence of this. *Whatu Kākahu* led to the rediscovery of te reo Māori as community members gained access to the cloak collections to discuss, debate and explore techniques and form of the collection items.

A review of the traditional positions of Curator and Collections Manager in collecting institutions is required to increase opportunities for data enhancement and a greater focus on building relationships with community. I have identified the need to increase cultural awareness and language training for existing Collection Managers in both Australia and Aotearoa. It takes co-curation and relationships built between museums and indigenous communities for language audits, data enhancement, and language documentation to be successfully ingrained in professional practice.

Throughout the fieldwork, it was evident that for language documentation to occur in collections management systems the role of Collection Managers would need to be re-envisioned. Collection Managers require freedom to undertake research and work closely with communities for data enhancement for collections. The role of Collections Manager involves the handling and intimate care of objects and they are often the position within the institution that has observed and understands differences in communities through markings, materials, form or style. They prepare objects for exhibitions and are holders of knowledge, associations and allocations of an object's connections across the institution through the collections management system. I propose that the role of the traditional Collections Manager develop to become synthesis between Curator and Collection Manager, to form a position dedicated to both the research and the documentation of collections. The new position would hold cultural permissions and knowledge and develop intimate knowledge of collections, community relationships and methods for documentation in language as a co-collaborator, co-curator and co-researcher.

A change in museum professional practice requires Collections Managers to form closer relationships with source communities. A shift in reputation and understanding on the position within the museum sector is required. Data enhancement is work that does need to be completed in addition to exhibition development and relationship building requires priority in the day-to-day work of museum professionals. As Rita Morrison, Oral History Manager at the Koori Heritage Trust stated; '...building strong relationships and trust with source communities takes time...the most important thing is that

the people know you...They know you're going to respect their language. They know you're going to respect their point of view...'28 Melanie Raberts at Melbourne Museum confirmed that: '...all that retrospective connecting, and inter-connectivity, to be honest, doesn't get done systematically. Sometimes it's done well, like say for the Thompson Ethnohistory Collection, because it's a really discrete collection. The staff member has the resources to track back and tick every box. But with the other object collections in the State Ethnohistory collection, the amount of work is just all we can do to just get the data out there...'29 For Rhonda Paku at Te Papa, the time to build the relationships with the community is invaluable; '...it's about building trust and faith and confidence in our processes and our capacities and our staff. Once the trust is built, then the stories start to be unravelled. And that's the point where that collaboration really starts to click and buzz...'30 Uncle Sandy Atkinson was clear that collaboration between museum professionals and source communities was critical to cultural heritage continuance, but he also raised the need for understanding required by those who sit outside of the community:

I think that every community needs an opportunity to tell you what happened to them...you need to acknowledge that; that it's going to be different when you go there or there. You might find that they're still a bit stand-offish with each other too, but they have a bar down the middle where they come and meet.<sup>31</sup>

As with the redevelopment project for Bunjilaka at Melbourne Museum, consultations that successfully 'meet in the middle' are best to take place on Country following local and cultural protocols that differ for each language group. In the museum sector, a Curator's role builds relationships with source communities during large scale projects or exhibition development. I advocate that this needs to be shifted and incorporated into Collections Managers' responsibilities to ensure that data enhancement can be achieved. To do so requires an adoption of new collections management protocols and processes.

For a shift in professional practice to occur, museum professionals will need to have a willingness to make changes and be supported to do so by the institution and the wider museum sector. It is time for professional practices and roles within collecting institutions to be re-envisioned. To review

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<sup>28</sup> Morrison, Rita (Oral History Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 29 October, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Raberts, Melanie (Manager – Indigenous Cultures, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January, 2011.

<sup>30</sup> Paku, Rhonda, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 2 March, 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Atkinson, John Sandy (Bangerang Elder, Board Member VACL), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 15 October, 2010.

Collection Manager roles and responsibilities, further education and higher learning opportunities will be necessary. Language significance could be incorporated into University curriculums for museum and cultural studies, and training for Collection Managers be led by indigenous communities. Elements of cultural education for museum professionals were offered at Te Papa with staff accessing free te reo Māori classes. This showed a commitment to cultural competency and building capacity for all team members to be able to work with indigenous communities. A provincial or regional museum that is constrained by funding, or institutions based in areas whereby language revitalisation is just beginning would find challenges with this model.

Advocacy from the museum sector and cultural institutions for greater funding for higher learning and career development of museum professionals is essential. It is only through a commitment from institutions that professional abilities will rise, and language documentation can become integrated into professional practice. Aligned to the re-envisioning of roles and learning for museum professionals are strategies to ensure language documentation for collections management system becomes a priority for institutions.

## **New Strategies for Documentation**

Collection management systems in Australia and Aotearoa predominately hold English terminology and descriptors for cultural materials. Addressed previously, this is in conflict with demands by indigenous communities who request a re-connection between indigenous language and objects to support the strengthening of languages and to provide a connection to Country. In response to the interview responses with indigenous community members and museum professionals, I advocate for new ways of working with language in collecting institutions. The new strategies and contribution to the sector includes the development of a national standards on indigenous language documentation, language policy development, new collection management system designs and a review of the *Significance* framework when working with indigenous collections.

### ***National Standards and Framework***

To ensure a consistent approach to language documentation, I address the need for an Australian national standards and framework with indigenous languages in collecting institutions. The national framework would be developed in conjunction with indigenous language organisations and professionals, museum and gallery industry bodies including AMaGA, and leading universities in the fields of cultural heritage and museum studies. A national cultural policy focused on indigenous language and associated standards would create consistency in the sector on why language



documentation is important. National standards would provide a commitment at all levels of government to increase opportunities for institutions to source funding and support for changes in museum practice.

Although roadmaps and policies have been developed by the museum sector in the past, a concentrated campaign with training outcomes connected to professional accreditation is required, to ensure that professional practices are embedded in, and supported by, all cultural institutions.<sup>32</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, AMaGA delivers the Museum Accreditation Program (MAP). The national standards for language use in museums can merge with this accreditation to ensure all museums and collecting institutions embrace indigenous language documentation. AMaGA is also the co-convenor of GLAM Peak network (peak bodies in the galleries, libraries, archives and museum sector) that focuses on digital access to and for Australian collections. National standards, digital solutions, and training to be distributed via this network would encourage a greater reach and understanding across Australian collecting institutions.<sup>33</sup> An aim of GLAM Peak is to ‘...provide advice on finding and using national and international standards relevant for different collection formats..’ as well as advice on funding, digital resources and collection management systems.<sup>34</sup> The network is an ideal partner in the development and distribution of national standards for indigenous language documentation.

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<sup>32</sup> Previous roadmaps and policies include: Museums Australia 2000, *Previous possessions, new obligations*, report prepared by Museums Australia, Canberra, pp.1–8; Museums Australia 2005, *Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities: Principles and guidelines for Australia museums working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage*, report prepared by Australia, Museums, Canberra, pp.1–28; Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) 2018, *First peoples: A roadmap for enhancing indigenous engagement in museums and galleries*, report prepared by Janke, Terri and Grant, Sarah, AMaGA, Canberra, pp.1–48.

<sup>33</sup> GLAM Peak 2020, *Digital access to collections*, AMaGA, Canberra, viewed 14 September 2020, <<http://www.digitalcollections.org.au/>>.

<sup>34</sup> GLAM Peak 2016, 'Draft national framework for digital access to Australia's collections', unpublished, AMaGA, p.1–7.



**Figure 68** Museums Aotearoa Conference, Nelson, South Island (photograph) Karina Lamb, April 2011.

### ***Language Policies***

Te Rea  
 He Taonga Tuku iho mai  
 ngā Tīpuna  
 He hononga wairua ki  
 te Whaiao ki te Ao  
 Marama  
 Tihei Mauri Ora

The language is a gift inherited from the ancestors  
 It links the spiritual  
 with the living on to  
 the world of enlightenment  
 I sneeze and the essence  
 life fills me, I live.<sup>35</sup>

The innovation of language policies within collecting institutions provides an opportunity for collecting institutions to work closely with local language groups. As discussed in Chapters 2–3, museums that do have indigenous representation on the Board or staff may choose to develop policies in house in conjunction with local language groups. For those without, the release of a national standard extends to funding opportunities to engage a specialist in the field to produce an effective language policy for

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<sup>35</sup> Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa 1996, 'Language policy 96-07', unpublished, pp.1–2.

the institution. Policies need not be arduous but are important to confirm a commitment of the institution to language revival and strengthening.

Within Te Papa's Language Policy outlined in Chapter 4, the museum confirms a commitment to an official language of Aotearoa with the vision to '...advance the use of te reo for the benefit of all New Zealanders and our international audience. In so doing, the individual traditions of each iwi will be recognised and respected...'<sup>36</sup> The policy addresses staff training, spoken language and language use throughout the museum, corporate documentation and communications, and the combination of both te reo Māori and English in didactic panels. The policy is heavily reliant on outward interpretation and front of house use of te reo Māori, stating that '...language is more than a tool by which we communicate values and meaning; it gives legitimacy and authority to its cultural context. As such, language forms a key component in the Museum's interpretative goals...'<sup>37</sup> The policy neglects to identify language documentation or engagement back of house including in collections management systems or records.

As a result of my fieldwork in 2010, Collections Managers within the Koorie Heritage Trust did produce a draft language policy to lead the reconnection of language to collection objects.<sup>38</sup> Troon confirmed that '...until now this hasn't been written down in a policy. It's been an unofficial policy...with you coming in and actually focusing our attention a little more on this area, it's kind of brought into contrast why it might be important to put down on paper those things that we're already doing...'<sup>39</sup> The draft language policy acknowledged the *artist as the expert* in their language, and the need to seek advice from VACL regarding language for the collections management records. The language policy articulates a priority for language documentation at all levels within the institution.

In Chapter 3 and 6, I discuss the language policy prepared for the Tairāwhiti Museum that was adopted following my fieldwork. Within a museum acclaimed for indigenous representation and engagement, staff had not previously considered the need for a language policy. This policy is discussed further in the next chapter. Likewise, Melbourne Museum did not have a language policy at the time of my placement in 2010, although the Manager of the Indigenous Cultures department, Melanie Raberts, identified the need for a policy for the institution; '...if it's to include language, you want to get policy

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa 1996, 'Language policy 96-07', unpublished, pp.1–2.

<sup>38</sup> Broben, Nerissa (Collections Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust) 2010, 'Koorie Heritage Trust Language Policy (draft)', unpublished, draft policy, Koorie Heritage Trust, p.1–2, attached in appendix 2.

<sup>39</sup> Troon, Miriam (Senior Collections Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 28 October, 2010.

recognition. Because the policies, and you've seen them, they are broad two-page statements about the museum's overall position. It does not take into account the unique needs of an indigenous collection or a social history collection or anything of that nature...'<sup>40</sup>

Language policies are not commonplace in Australian museums, as they are in other international museum sectors. A language policy confirms an institutions' focus on collection development plans, and positions languages as significant when working with indigenous cultural materials. As a result of my research findings, I advocate for Australian institutions to develop and adopt language policies in conjunction with local language groups, language organisations, and to be led by the proposed national standards and framework for working with indigenous languages to do so.

### ***Collection Management Systems***

Contemporary Collections Management Systems have been designed and developed with English as the prominent language for fields, tabs and documentation areas. Although languages other than English can be accommodated in some systems, I am advocating for, in response to the thesis, a new way of working with language in collections management systems.<sup>41</sup>

At Tairāwhiti Museum and Te Papa, when exhibitions incorporate cultural knowledge and stories, exhibition content is prepared in te reo Māori first with English translations. To document indigenous language in collections management systems as the dominant language, new systems will need to be designed and procedures for collections management cataloguing reviewed. I assert that indigenous language be held first in catalogue fields and for English to sit alongside as the secondary source. Audio and visual recordings of community members speaking language would remain in collection management systems as a priority and not be separated into archive departments. This change of practice positions collection management systems as a central record for the object. As suggested by ESILWG, metalanguage and data that is cognisant with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders ways of knowing needs to be developed in conjunction with source communities.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Raberts, Melanie (Manager – Indigenous Cultures, Melbourne Museum), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 January, 2011.

<sup>41</sup> In 2010–2011, a number of databases were in development that intended the documentation of indigenous languages to be made searchable for communities including Austlang and the Austkin project as detailed in; Dousset, Laurent, Hendery, Rachel, Bownern, Claire, Koch, Harold and McConvell, Patrick 2010, 'Developing a database for Australian Indigenous kinship terminology: The AustKin project', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, vol. 2010, no.1, pp.42–56. I do not focus on a review and in-depth discussion of these databases as they have been used primarily for linguistics and language revival, and not connected to significant collections management systems for collecting institutions.

<sup>42</sup> Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group 2011, *Indigenous languages collections - issues and actions paper. Framework for National Indigenous Languages Collections Policy*, report prepared by Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group, ESILWG, Sydney, pp.1–17.

A focus on indigenous thesauri for all language groups in a national collections management system would ensure consistency when working with languages and make it easier for future researchers searching for language key words. Similar to Victorian Collections databases distributed and managed by AMaGA, as discussed in Chapter 2, a national collections management system produced with clear parameters for indigenous languages may be designed and distributed through national museum bodies. Training in the new system would be provided as it is for Victorian collections. Support for funding to undertake consultations and documentation would complement the delivery of the new system across State and regional institutions. National collections management standards for the implementation of successful language documentation by both museums and source communities would be of benefit to both museums and source communities.

I maintain that indigenous languages should not be a translation from English but rather descriptions, stories and terminology as directed by source communities in language first, with English as the translation. Historic records attached to the collections management systems would keep the social history and provenance of the object intact. As Sturge explains in her analysis of the work of Kulick and Hill:

The retention of the transcribed material alongside its translation thus involves a significant change in the balance of power between the translator, the source-language speaker, and the target-language reader. In the classic synthesizing approach, all discourse flowed through the translator's unifying voice, with the speakers reduced to a faraway, anonymised data source and the readers forced to take the translator's interpretations more or less as given – in Clifford's terms, an unbroken 'ethnographic authority'. By including untranslated material, Kulick and Hill in their different ways reduce the authority: they enable different readers to read from different perspectives and try to preserve the specific voice of the other speaker in the conversation.<sup>43</sup>

In Te Papa, the collections management system in 2011 was undergoing a review to ensure consistent use of te reo Māori in object names, as Stanton confirmed:

For Māori collections we've tried to make just the object's name consistent. We've encouraged the Māori name first and then the English in brackets...That just allows someone browsing from say Japan to understand what taiaha means. The other thing we do is encourage

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<sup>43</sup> Sturge 2007, op.cit. p.77.

(language) in materials, so that we have Māori materials names as well as English. Also, for techniques we've encouraged, if there's Māori terms, to add those as well.<sup>44</sup>

Terminology and naming conventions utilised within Te Papa's system extend from the Getty Museum Trust's Art and Archaeology Thesaurus (AAT) of which Te Papa was a contributor. As discussed in Chapter 4, Dougal Austin was producing iwi-specific thesauri to be incorporated in the collection management system and aimed to enter the thesauri as a contribution to the Getty Museum's AAT.<sup>45</sup> For indigenous language thesauri and adoption of a language-accessible CMS for cultural institutions, it will take a shift in professional practices and a dedication by collecting institutions to language documentation. This digital transformation will be by no means the only solution for institutions. If the internal disconnect between front of house curatorial research and back of house collections management documentation is not addressed by the museum sector, or within individual institutions themselves, then data enhancement will continue to be neglected. As discussed in the Introduction to the thesis, I do not describe technology and digital solutions as the only resolve to the gap in indigenous language documentation, but rather a combination of solutions to shift museum professional practice.

### ***Review of Significance Framework***

Aligned to the need for national standards and policies, is a need for the reassessment of Australia's national framework to assess significance for collections - *Significance 2.0*.<sup>46</sup> The framework is employed to assess collections, or sections of collections, against a number of primary and comparative criteria. Although indigenous culture and consultation is considered in the framework, indigenous language documentation is not included as a consideration.

In Australia, the primary focus of significance assessments is to produce strategic plans for collections. As important records that can lead the future development of collections, indigenous language and indigenous epistemology does need to be incorporated into the structure of the framework where collections include indigenous cultural materials. During my placement at the Koorie Heritage Trust in 2010, Collection Managers requested that I undertake significance assessment for the Oral History Collections using the acknowledged Collections Council of Australia's *Significance 2.0* methodology, to

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<sup>44</sup> Stanton, Giselle (Collections Information Manager – Standards and Support, Te Papa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audi-visual recording, Wellington, 24 February, 2011.

<sup>45</sup> Austin, Dougal (Curator Mātauranga Māori, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Wellington, 18 February, 2011. It should be noted that Dougal Austin has gone on to publish a significant work on the Te Papa Māori Pounamu collections and tikanga: Austin, Dougal 2019, *Te Hei Tiki: An Enduring Treasure in a Cultural Continuum*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, New Zealand.

<sup>46</sup> Collections Council of Australia 2009, *Significance 2.0: A guide to assessing the significance of collections*, 2nd edn, report prepared by Russell, Roslyn and Winkworth, Kylie, Rundle Mall, South Australia, pp.1–71.

provide recommendations for ongoing focus for the collections. The assessment is included in the following Chapter 6. The significance assessment does not identify language documentation requirements or reference to indigenous epistemology as I was required to follow the *Significance* framework. The oral history collection does however include language materials and recordings of community members speaking in language. Jason Eades, CEO at the Koorie Heritage Trust identified concerns with the existing *Significance* framework as it did not identify diversity understands the significance of indigenous objects by language groups. He described Jim Bergs' purchase of a boomerang as an example:

Jim talks about a boomerang that he acquired at auction. He said on the day there was all of these ornate beautiful boomerangs going up and people were bidding quite furiously for them. He said there was a boomerang that was unmarked, just a beautifully made one, and he said by far it was the best boomerang that was sold on that day. So, he acquired it relatively cheap compared to the others because people just didn't see the value of it...the others were about decoration. They weren't about the function.<sup>47</sup>

A review of the *Significance* framework would align with the development and implementation of national standards and frameworks to prioritise language revival and strengthening in Australian collecting institutions. This is discussed further in the next chapter as I examine the *Significance* assessment presented for the Koorie Heritage Trust.

### ***First Peoples Roadmap***

Since the fieldwork was completed, there have been further developments and steps in the right direction for inclusion and equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In 2018, AMaGA commissioned *First Peoples: A Roadmap for enhancing indigenous engagement in museums and galleries* by Terri Janke to provide a framework to identify actions for indigenous people in the museum sector. The report identified five key elements for change including '...reimagining representation; embedding indigenous values into museum and gallery business; increasing indigenous opportunities; two-way caretaking of cultural material; and connecting with indigenous communities...'<sup>48</sup> This included critical pathways with targets for museums and galleries to meet over the 10-year period, including identifying all cultural materials in inventories, increasing indigenous employment and indigenous led and designed content.

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<sup>47</sup> Eades, Jason, Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 23 November, 2010.

<sup>48</sup> Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) 2018, *First peoples: A roadmap for enhancing indigenous engagement in museums and galleries*, report prepared by Janke, Terri and Grant, Sarah, AMaGA, Canberra, pp.1–48.

Throughout the development of the roadmap it was confirmed that ‘...an overwhelming number of respondents to a survey (for the roadmap) admitted they lacked any policy for interpreting indigenous cultural material; few museums have indigenous people on their boards and most were unaware that there had long been a policy on museums and indigenous peoples...’<sup>49</sup> The roadmap is an extensive report that covers elements of inclusive and indigenous rights to collection access, storytelling and research. The roadmap identifies the ‘key transformations to indicate we will reach our destination in 2029’ with item 18 as the ‘...integration of indigenous languages throughout museum and galleries...’ and Janke expands that indigenous people are to be the key interpreters on indigenous content in exhibitions.<sup>50</sup> However, no consideration for back of house collections practice or records is given in the report. This is where my research differs from others.

In comparison, Aotearoa does not have a national accreditation program for the museums sector. The independent association, Museum Aotearoa focuses on providing a national conference and advocacy for museum practice with a vision to ensure that ‘...Kia tino toitū tonu ngā whare taonga o Aotearoa. Aotearoa has thriving and sustainable museums...’<sup>51</sup> The sector is invited to consider releasing a national framework for the documentation of language within collections through a partnership between Museums Aotearoa, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (Māori Language Commission) and Te Papa’s National Services.

In 2021, the roadmap has been distributed throughout the sector, but real action in museum practice is yet to be seen. Museums are still unaware of the importance of indigenous language engagement. This is indicative of a lack of focus and understanding of indigenous diversity, culture and First Nations rights. Australia remains the only developed country that does not hold a treaty with its First Nations people.

### ***Cultural Determinants***

Looking back on the literature and museum practice during this critical time in both Australia and New Zealand in 2010–2011, the research findings indicate that there is an ingrained connection to indigenous cultural knowledge, cultural materials and indigenous languages with the wellbeing of indigenous communities.

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<sup>49</sup> Griffin refers to the 1993 *Previous Possessions, New Obligations* and 2005 *Continuing Cultures: Ongoing Responsibilities* produced by Museums Australia. Quote in Griffin 2020, op.cit. pp.1–88.

<sup>50</sup> Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) 2018, op.cit.

<sup>51</sup> Museums Aotearoa 2020, *About Museums Aotearoa*, Museums Aotearoa, Wellington, New Zealand, viewed 13 September 2020, <<https://www.museumsaotearoa.org.nz/about/about-MA>>.



In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant report was released by the Australian indigenous academic Dr Kerry Arabena that identifies cultural determinants for the health and wellbeing of indigenous communities. The research supports the revisiting of discussions that began in 2010–2011 on the need for indigenous languages to be a priority when working with research and content, including indigenous cultural materials. Arabena links the engagement of indigenous languages to health and wellbeing for cultural knowledge holders and addresses the need for ‘co-design’ and ‘co-implementation’ when addressing change to support cultural health and wellbeing.<sup>52</sup> Although the research extends from health sector, the need for co-design and co-implementation replicates museology in 2011 that identified co-collaboration with the new museum to produce culturally supportive, safe and respectful outcomes.

This aligns with the thesis that cultural leaders and language groups must be involved at all levels of documentation review, and that a focus on indigenous language supports positive health of communities ahead. Arabena places culture at the centre of change and provides a model for wellbeing that identifies ‘...the importance of connection to Country as a place-based approach to implementing cultural determinants...’<sup>53</sup> A detailed list of ‘imagined actions and activities to support indigenous language’ is documented and the six cultural determinants contributed in the research include;

1. Connection to Country
2. Indigenous beliefs and knowledge
3. Indigenous Language
4. Family, kinship and community
5. Cultural expressions and continuity
6. Self-determination and Leadership.

The interconnections between the social and historical determinants and a model of social and emotional wellbeing for First Nations communities supports the significance of indigenous languages and connection to country, community, mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing. With this in mind, museums as public institutions hold a mandate to support, advance and educate communities, and they must play a significant role in supporting the health and wellbeing of indigenous community

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<sup>52</sup> Kerry Arabena Consulting 2020, ‘...Country Can’t Hear English...’: A guide supporting the implementation of cultural determinants of health and wellbeing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, report prepared by Arabena, Kerry, K. A. Consulting, Riddell’s Creek, pp.1–106.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

members. The model of contemporary cultural determinants can be adapted to the documentation of objects in museum collections.

In 2020, almost ten years after I undertook the fieldwork on Australian and New Zealand museum sites to discuss indigenous languages in collections management systems, Howard Morphy discussed collections catalogues in museums and the need for indigenous societies to be recognised within categories. He stated:

The catalogues of institutions with significant Australian collections need to build those categories into their systems and apply them appropriately. Devising appropriate terminology will always be a work in progress that responds to the different interests and requirements of users of collections.<sup>54</sup>

This current focus on catalogue and terminology supports the thesis that it is now time for Australian collecting institutions to revisit language documentation in collection management systems.

This chapter has discussed the research findings to argue that a shift is required in museum practice to align to indigenous and source community needs for the support of indigenous languages. Using *Makar-Garma* as an Australian example of a successful co-collaboration, I argue that indigenous language documentation in collections documentation is possible through effective partnerships. Furthermore, I addressed the need to re-think Collections Manager positions within museums to become a hybrid of Curator and Collections Manager – focused on relationships *and* data enhancement following local cultural protocols. Finally, I contribute new thinking on strategies for improved museum practice including national standards, language policies, collection management system design and a review of significance frameworks.

In the following chapter, I provide the action research completed while on museum sites as direct examples of a language policy that can be adapted for the museum sector, and the significance assessment report presented on a Victorian oral history collection. I provide clear recommendations to the Australian museum sector that resulted from the research findings.

Language revitalisation and data enhancement will not be perfect and fluency is simply not possible in many threatened language groups where revitalisation programs currently exist. Collecting institutions that hold indigenous cultural materials are required to work with indigenous communities to address

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<sup>54</sup> Morphy, Howard 2020, *Museums, infinity and the cultures of protocols*, Routledge, New York, p.111.

the historical inaccuracies held in collections documentation. Through the employment of indigenous museum professionals, supported training in language learning and a revision of processes for collections management systems, Australian and international museums can begin to address the need for indigenous cultural materials to be documented using indigenous terminology. This would increase understanding of historic and contemporary indigenous life and open the opportunity for museums to be active participants in revitalisation and strengthening programs.

## Chapter 6: Policy recommendations

This chapter provides the action research outcomes produced while on museum sites during fieldwork in 2010–2011 as a contribution to those museums. I provide an example policy to adapt for the Australian museum sector and a Significance Assessment report to show the disconnect to indigenous languages within the *Significance* framework. Finally, I present recommendations for the Australian museum sector that emerged in response to the research findings.

### Tairāwhiti Museum Language Policy Draft

April 2011

#### STATEMENT

Te reo Māori as an official national language of New Zealand is a taonga that must be protected and preserved under the Treaty of Waitangi. This policy states the importance of te reo Māori use in collections management, interpretation and public programs for the Tairāwhiti Museum.

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide an operational framework for language to enrich professional practice and outcomes for the museum. In line with the Museum aims outlined in the annual plan and service agreement with local government, the museum will operate a:

Cultural centre where the history, art, culture, environment and heritage of Aotearoa, with special reference to the Gisborne District, may be conserved, interpreted, studied, cherished and made available for the benefit of the people of New Zealand.<sup>1</sup>

Language use, and the acknowledgement of the diversity of dialectal regions in Gisborne and the Tairāwhiti, fulfils the commitment to conserve, interpret and deliver heritage of Aotearoa to local and international audiences. Language use in collections management, interpretation and education resources establish records that in future will be accessed for the wealth and distinction of local knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> Tairāwhiti Museum 2010, *Tairāwhiti Museum annual plan 2010–2011*, Tairāwhiti Museum, Gisborne, New Zealand.

The policy is a commitment from the Museum to align to current Māori language revitalisation and strengthening strategies throughout the Tairāwhiti region. The following addresses both policy and procedures that will direct the Tairāwhiti Museum as a bilingual museum.

## **POLICY & PROCEDURES**

### **Governance**

Documents relating to the governance of the Museum including the annual report, plan, service agreements, policies and corporate public documents will be presented in both English and te reo Māori to represent a commitment at the governance level to language strengthening and use across the Tairāwhiti region.

### **Dialectal differences & Display**

The Museum will seek to use te reo Māori in the interpretation of all collection items through didactic panels, object labels, waiata, spoken audio and signage.

Te reo Māori will be displayed on the left-hand side of didactic panels, with English to the right.

The Museum acknowledges, respects and values the diversity between iwi, hapū and diverse dialectal regions in the Tairāwhiti. The Museum aims to represent diversity of te reo Māori in documentation, marketing, public programs, education and interpretation for communities.

The Museum recognises the iwi/artist/craftsperson/individual as the expert on language words (including spelling) to document and interpret their work.

The Museum will display the iwi/hapū of an artist/craftsperson/individual alongside the individual's name; where this information is known. This distinguishes for the public why dialectal differences may occur in didactic panels and object labels.

### **Collections Management**

The Museum will use Māori names for collection items in the records, documentation and interpretation for exhibitions.

The Museum will seek to document te reo Māori in data collected on all new acquisitions to the collections. This may involve the development of new acquisition forms where te reo Māori can be entered beside English.

Thesauri using local dialects will be developed, or relevant thesauri acquired, to ensure consistency when entering data on collections items in the collections catalogue (Vernon database).

Research developed for display, public and education programs will be included in the collections catalogue (Vernon database) to ensure consistency of information and clear records on information placed in the public sphere. Te reo Māori use contributes to the social history and mana for the item. Didactic panels or object labels could be attached to collection item records in the collections catalogue. A clear distinction between each new addition to the catalogue record must be made.

The acquisition of te reo Māori descriptions, context and knowledge will be included in the Collection Development Plans.

It is preferable that te reo Māori sits beside English in the collection catalogue (Vernon database) but staff may choose to establish certain field/tabs where language will be recorded. When acquiring items or conducting research for data enhancement or exhibition development, perhaps Curators/Collection Managers could ask: Would you like to describe the stories/knowledge/use of this item in te reo Māori? What is the spelling of the words? What is the meaning of the words? Which dialect/region is this information from?

The documentation of interpretation, context and description of items in te reo Māori may need to be recorded on audio and attached to the collection item in the catalogue as AV/Multimedia files until staff are able to transcribe the information. This korero on collection items adds significance to the life of the item.

### **Public programs and Education**

The Museum will continue to actively support, promote and deliver bilingual programs and work across communities to deliver research, knowledge and materials in te reo Māori.

The Museum may consider developing education programs and special museum days involving te reo Māori to coincide with International Mother Languages Day (21 February), New Zealand Sign Language Week (May), Māori Language Week (July) and International Languages Week (August).

## **Staff**

The Museum identifies the importance of staff as the face of the organisation and as interpreters for the public on exhibitions, programs and research within the Museum. Staff will be encouraged to answer telephones and prepare written documentation using te reo Māori to acknowledge the Museum's commitment to language use, strengthening and revitalisation.

Training for staff in te reo Māori will be supplied and rewarded.

Staff will be supported to ensure correct pronunciation and understanding of te reo Māori words, especially those incorporated in new exhibitions and programs in the museum.

## **Research & Review**

The Museum will continue to be aware of new strategies, policies and national directions for the preservation, strengthening and use of te reo Māori such as the recent releases of the 'Ngāti Porou Iwi Reo Strategy' (March 2011) and the national report on the 'Review of the Māori Language Sector and the Māori Language Strategy' (April 2011).<sup>2</sup>

It is recommended that the Museum join the Te Waka Reo: National Language Policy network to keep informed on te reo Māori activities.

<http://www.hrc.co.nz/newsletters/diversity-action-programme/te-waka-reo/>

The Language Policy will be reviewed every 2 years.

## **Resources related to this policy**

Waitangi Tribunal 1986, Findings of the Waitangi Tribunal Relating to Te Reo Māori (WAI 11), <http://www.waitangi-tribunal.govt.nz/scripts/reports/reports/11/2580F91B-5D6F-46F4-ADE0-BC27CA535C01.pdf>

Māori Language Act 1987, <http://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/act87/index.shtml>

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<sup>2</sup> TRONP Consultation 2011, 'Ngāti Porou Iwi Reo Strategy (draft)', unpublished, Ngāti Porou Board of Trustees, pp.1–18; Māori Language Review Panel 2011, *Te reo Mauriora: Te Arotakenga o te rāngai reo Māori me te rautaki reo Māori: Review of the Māori Language Sector and the Māori Language Strategy*, report prepared by Reedy, Sir Tamati, Auckland, New Zealand, pp.1–96.

Māori Language Review Panel 2011, Te reo Mauriora: Te Arotakenga o te rāngai reo Māori me te rautaki reo Māori: Review of the Māori Language Sector and the Māori Language Strategy, report prepared by Reedy, Sir Tamati, Auckland, New Zealand, pp.1–96 [http://www.tpk.govt.nz/\\_documents/te-reo-mauriora.pdf](http://www.tpk.govt.nz/_documents/te-reo-mauriora.pdf)

Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa 1996, Language policy 96-07, unpublished, pp.1–2.

TRONP Consultation 2011, Ngāti Porou Iwi Reo Strategy (draft), unpublished, Ngāti Porou Board of Trustees, pp.1–18, [http://www.ngatiporou.com/myfiles/Te\\_Reo\\_Strategy\\_Paper\\_for\\_TRNP\\_Board\\_of\\_Trustees\\_Consideration.pdf](http://www.ngatiporou.com/myfiles/Te_Reo_Strategy_Paper_for_TRNP_Board_of_Trustees_Consideration.pdf)



# Koorie Heritage Trust Oral History Collection Significance Assessment

October 2010.

## Acknowledgements

It is with appreciation that I acknowledge previous staff, Koorie community members and other organisations that have taken the time to discuss the oral history collection including Uncle Sandy Atkinson, Jim Berg, Dr Christina Eira and Paul Paton (Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages - VACL), AIATSIS, Oral History Association of Australia Inc. (Victorian Branch) and the Eastern States Indigenous Languages Working Group (ESILWG).

The Significance Assessment could not have proceeded without the support from the staff within the current Koorie Heritage Trust Collections Unit; Nerissa Broben, Miriam Troon, Chris Keeler, Jodie Dowd and Rita Morrison, the Oral History Manager. I would like to acknowledge the work of other writers who have discussed the collection, and who have been an invaluable resource for this assessment, including Beth Charles and Caroline Sproll.

It must be acknowledged that during the time available for the development of this assessment, important previous stakeholders and staff members that have worked closely with the collection, including Dr Wayne Atkinson and Genevieve Grieg, were not available to discuss the history or development of the collection with the author. This is a gap in the assessment and needs to be filled at a later date.

## The Significance Process

This Significance assessment follows the methodology outlined in the Collection Council of Australia's *Significance 2.0*.<sup>3</sup> Significance is an agreed process for collecting institutions across Australia to understand the meanings and values of collections, to document the provenance and context of collections, to communicate the importance of collections and to assist with strategic planning and funding opportunities.

## Statement of Significance

I would be very pleased to attest to the vital significance of the Koorie Heritage Trust Oral History collection, which I believe is a very valuable collection, whose greatest value is realised

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<sup>3</sup> Collections Council of Australia 2009, op.cit.

in its relationship to the Victorian community it represents, but whose significance extends to National and international forums.

Kevin Bradley, Curator Oral History and Folklore, National Library of Australia

The Victorian Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia recognises the value of the Koorie Heritage Trust oral history collection as a democratising, community building and inclusive collection for the Koorie people of Victoria and as a collection that can be accessed for research.

Louise Blake, Secretary, Oral History Association of Australia (Victorian Branch)

This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Koorie Heritage Trust Incorporated (the Trust). The Trust was established as a non-for-profit keeping place for South-Eastern Aboriginal cultural materials and heritage by Jim Berg, the late Ron Castan A.M. Q.C. and Justice Ron Merkel in 1985.<sup>4</sup> The Trust is located at 295 King Street in Melbourne. The community organisation employs over 40 staff in the units of collections, exhibitions, education, oral history, family history, training, philanthropy and the book shop. The current site includes three exhibition spaces, a retail shop, a library, education facilities and a members' lounge accessible to the public.

Central to the Trust's aims of preservation, protection and promotion of Koorie heritage are the collections. The Koorie Heritage Trust's collections began with a grinding stone given to Jim Berg in the early 1980s.<sup>5</sup> The collections have grown through active collecting practices and donations to over 2,700 artefacts, 900 artworks, 48,000+ photographs, 6,000 Library items and 1,600+ oral history items.<sup>6</sup>

The Trust encourages and supports South-East Australian Koori people to rewrite history by capturing their ways of seeing and understanding on important events, issues and knowledge. Oral history is defined as "*...a picture of the past in people's own words...*"<sup>7</sup> The oral history collection is central to the objective of the Trust to empower Koori people to tell history through their voice.

The collection of oral histories began in 1987 through the Koori Oral History Program located within the State Library of Victoria. The program was founded by Wayne Atkinson, the Koori Oral Historian<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Koorie Heritage Trust 2010, *About the Trust*, Melbourne, viewed 20 October 2010

<[http://www.koorieheritagetrust.com/about\\_the\\_trust](http://www.koorieheritagetrust.com/about_the_trust)>.

<sup>5</sup> Charles, Beth Z. 2006, DVD, *The Koorie Heritage Trust's Cultural Centre: unmasking the in between*, interviews for PhD thesis, Beth Charles & La Trobe University, Melbourne.

<sup>6</sup> Koorie Heritage Trust (Collections Unit) 2010, 'Strategic plan 2010-2011: Collections', unpublished, internal document, p.1-12.

<sup>7</sup> Robertson, Beth M 2006, *Oral History Handbook*, Oral History Association of Australia Inc (South Australian Branch).

<sup>8</sup> Atkinson, Wayne, Request for an interview, personal communication with Nerissa Broben, email, Koorie Heritage Trust, 7 October, 2010.

and was funded by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV).<sup>9</sup> In 1996, the program and the collection were contracted to the Koorie Heritage Trust. The collection has been managed by a number of staff including Sandy Atkinson, Ralph Hume, Victor Briggs Genevieve Grieves and the current Oral History Manager, Rita Morrison.

The themes represented in the recordings held in the collection include the life histories of Elders and community members that reveal important family genealogies, connections to land, language, cultural information, school life, work life and portray memories on important events in history from a Koorie perspective, including the Stolen Generations. Many of the interviewees are no longer with us, so the value and importance of these recordings for families and future generations is immeasurable. Community members and families have requested that important memorial services and funerals also be filmed to preserve records of speeches, ceremony and people. Community and government proceedings are represented in recordings of events held at the Aborigines Advancement League, Aboriginal Legal Service, NAIDOC celebrations, Mission sites, Elders luncheons, Keeping Places, Reconciliation forums, exhibition openings, university graduations, book launches, conferences, lectures, rallies and community organisation openings (including the Trust's). Koori children undertaking education programs, learning from Elders and taking part in community events are represented in the collection. Remarkable moments in Australian history have been documented in the collection, including each determination for Native Title for cultural groups throughout Victoria. Interviews with political figures and recordings on issues relevant to Aboriginal rights are represented in the collection. Cultural knowledge, artistic and craft skills have been captured as workshops and education programs on basket weaving, canoe making, bush tucker, stone artefacts are documented with both men and women's programs represented.

The repatriation of artefacts from museums and other organisations back to communities is evident in the recordings. Sporting achievements have been captured and discussed, predominately in Australian Rules football and cricket. Descriptions and footage of Victorian landscapes, with heritage reviews and discussions with site officers are held in the collection. The collection recordings document invaluable knowledge, and capture images of the artefacts and artworks held within the Trust's other collections. It is evident that the collection items in the medias of film, audio and photography, reflect the objectives of the Koorie Heritage Trust and relate to the history of Victoria.

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<sup>9</sup> Broben, Nerissa, Koorie Heritage Trust oral history timeframes, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Melbourne, 14 October, 2010.

The Oral History collection and program is known by Koori communities. Community members know why the collection exists and who it is for. Communities have an understanding that the Trust's staff will protect the knowledge shared.<sup>10</sup> This relationship between a collection and community is invaluable to achieve the aims of developing a collection 'for the community' and is evident of the social and spiritual value of the collection.

The collection holds copyright and collection documentation issues that have begun to be resolved. Once resolved, the ability to access the collection will be invaluable to researchers and the wider community on Koori Victorian history and contemporary life.

The extent, quantity and diversity in the recordings held within the collection represent South Eastern Australian Aboriginal history, life and knowledge. The Koorie Heritage Trust Oral History collection holds definite national significance.

*This statement was prepared by Karina Lamb on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010.*

### **The Koorie Heritage Trust**

'Gnokan Danna Murra Kor-ki' is the motto of the Trust and is the combination of two Koori languages and means 'Give me your hand my friend' and bridge the cultural gap. The Koorie Heritage Trust Inc believes that through education and promotion it can raise an awareness and appreciation of the cultural diversity of Koori culture in south-eastern Australia and work towards the broader goals of reconciliation for all Australians.<sup>11</sup>

As included in the statement of significance, this year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Koorie Heritage Trust Incorporated (the Trust). The Trust was established as a non-for-profit keeping place for South-Eastern Aboriginal cultural materials and heritage by Jim Berg, the late Ron Castan A.M. Q.C. and Justice Ron Merkel in 1985.<sup>12</sup> The Trust is located at 295 King Street in Melbourne. The community organisation employs over 40 staff in the units of collections, exhibitions, education, oral history, family history, training, philanthropy and the book shop. The current site includes three exhibition spaces, a retail shop, a library, education facilities and a members' lounge accessible to the public.

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<sup>10</sup> Morrison, Rita (Oral History Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 29 October, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Koorie Heritage Trust 2010, *About the Trust*, Melbourne, viewed 20 October 2010  
<[http://www.koorieheritagetrust.com/about\\_the\\_trust](http://www.koorieheritagetrust.com/about_the_trust)>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Central to the Trust's aims of preservation, protection and promotion of Koorie heritage are the collections. The Koorie Heritage Trust's collections began with a grinding stone given to Jim Berg in the early 1980's.<sup>13</sup> The collections have grown through active collecting practices and donations to over 2,700 artefacts, 900 artworks, 48,000+ photographs, 6,000 Library items and 1,600+ oral history items.<sup>14</sup> With Koorie and non-Koorie staff, the Trust aims to ensure both tangible and intangible Aboriginal cultural heritage of Victoria is shared and protected for many generations to come.

### **Introduction to the Oral History collection**

Oral history is a history built around people. It thrusts life into history itself and it widens its scope. It allows heroes not just from the leaders, but from the unknown majority of the people...It brings history into, and out of, the community. ...It makes for contact – and hence understanding – between social classes, and between generations...In short, it makes for fuller human beings.<sup>15</sup>

The Koorie Heritage Trust is a nationally significant community organisation. It encourages and supports South-East Australian Koorie people to rewrite history by capturing their ways of seeing and understanding on important events, issues and knowledge. Oral history is defined as “...a picture of the past in people's own words...”<sup>16</sup> The oral history collection is central to the objective of the Trust to empower Koorie people to tell history through their voice.

The oral history collection items (recordings, photographs and transcripts) document events held throughout many of the 38 languages and cultural groups throughout Victoria, including significant meetings, education programs on Country and Elders sharing their knowledge to others. The recordings place a Koorie record in Victoria's history so that future generations will understand historic and current Koorie life.

The development of the oral history collection has involved many institutions, partners and staff that have created a large collection of audio-visual recordings with corresponding photographs and transcripts. Each new staff member has brought with them particular interests and direction for the

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<sup>13</sup> Charles, Beth Z. 2006, DVD, *The Koorie Heritage Trust's Cultural Centre: unmasking the in between*, interviews for PhD thesis, Beth Charles & La Trobe University, Melbourne.

<sup>14</sup> Koorie Heritage Trust (Collections Unit) 2010, 'Strategic plan 2010-2011: Collections', unpublished, internal document, p.1-12.

<sup>15</sup> Thompson, Paul 2000, *The voice of the past: Oral history*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

<sup>16</sup> Robertson 2006, op.cit.

collection that can be seen by what was collected during their time. Documentation has not always been perfect. The significance of the interviews and the knowledge documented within the collection out ways the less traditional collection management practices followed over the years. The collection involves current funding and copyright issues that need to be resolved as a priority to make the collection accessible to the community, researchers and for educators. It is evident that the collection is a rich resource for research and could be utilised to promote an understanding on Aboriginal life in Victoria, significant for both Koori and non-Koori Australians.

In 2006, Caroline Sproll, a German Cultural Anthropology student, undertook a placement within the Oral History unit. Sproll prepared a brief history of the oral history collection.<sup>17</sup> Beth Charles also dedicated her thesis to the history of the Koorie Heritage Trust, and in brief the oral history collection and program. The following is a summary of the collection history as a way to introduce the themes, staff interests and items held within the collection.

The collection of oral histories began in 1987 through the Koori Oral History Program located within the State Library of Victoria. The program was founded by Wayne Atkinson, the Koori Oral Historian<sup>18</sup> and was funded by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV).<sup>19</sup> As described in Sproll's history of the collection, and referenced from a transcript held in the collection of Wayne Atkinson speaking on the Koori Oral History Program; the theme of the program was "Keeping it to the future"<sup>20</sup> Other staff supported the program including Norm Hunter and Lynette Hime.<sup>21</sup> The active collecting of recordings at this time was due to generous funds available for the travel required and access to the latest equipment to record and edit.<sup>22</sup>

The collection records demonstrate that Wayne Atkinson's focus for the collection was in the documentation of the stories of community Elders and events on Country. Wayne Atkinson's preference for both audio and visual recordings is evident as the majority of recordings completed were in Hi8 format.<sup>23</sup> Wayne Atkinson took extended leave from the position in 1991 at which time

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<sup>17</sup> A copy of 2006, Sproll, C 'The History of the KOHP' is filed under 'History' in the Significance folder. This document was sourced from Rita Morrison in October 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Atkinson, Wayne, Request for an interview, personal communication with Nerissa Broben, email, Koorie Heritage Trust, 7 October, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Broben, Nerissa, Koorie Heritage Trust oral history timeframes, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 14 October, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Sproll, Caroline 2006, History of the Koorie oral history program, unpublished, essay to fulfill student placement, Koorie Heritage Trust, p.1–22.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Sproll, Caroline 2006, op.cit.

<sup>23</sup> Sproll, Caroline 2006, op.cit.

Sandy Atkinson took over the management of the collection and Koori Oral History Program. Sandy Atkinson left the program in 1993.<sup>24</sup>

After a period of no activity, the collection and program were relocated to the offices of AAV in 1995. In 1996, the program and the collection were contracted to the Koorie Heritage Trust and relocated then within the Museum of Victoria where the Trust resided.<sup>25</sup> Sandy Atkinson was at this time already working for the Koorie Heritage Trust and returned to working with the collection and program.<sup>26</sup> The oral history program was integrated into the Family History genealogy unit already in place with the organisation.<sup>27</sup>

Sandy Atkinson's interests and direction for the collection can be seen in the registration of a large quantity of audio tapes and recordings, preferring not to record on film or other visual formats. Sandy Atkinson was assisted by Janina Harding and Angela Bishop. Sandy Atkinson retired from the role of Oral Historian in 1998.<sup>28</sup>

The program and the collection were then managed by Ralph Hume in 1998-1999, and by Victor Briggs until 2000.<sup>29</sup> Between 1998 to 2000 there are a large number of recordings of meetings, including ATSIC Directors training, Warrakoo men's camp, ATSIRILIRN Conference and Native Title.<sup>30</sup> No transcriptions held in the collection correspond to these dates. Audio recordings were preferred by these collection managers, as seen by the formats identified in the collection. It should be noted that Jim Berg has also undertaken interviews from the collection from time to time.

Genevieve Grieves commenced as the Oral Historian in February 2000. Genevieve was assisted by Sharon Huebner, Gloria Meltzer, Kirsten Atkinson, Vicki Keenan, James Hawthorne, Merinda-Kotinka Morgan and various Koori community members who undertook filming duties.<sup>31</sup> The collecting focus at this time was directed towards projects and essentially the Mission Voices website.<sup>32</sup> The

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<sup>24</sup> Sproll, Caroline 2006, op.cit.

<sup>25</sup> Broben, Nerissa, Koorie Heritage Trust oral history timeframes, personal communication with Karina Lamb, Melbourne, 14 October, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Atkinson, John Sandy (Bangerang Elder, Board Member VACL), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 15 October, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Sproll, Caroline 2006, op.cit.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Sproll, Caroline 2006, op.cit.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> The Mission Voices website was a joint collaboration between the Koorie Heritage Trust, State Library of Victoria, Film Victoria, ABC and DesignIT. It will be discussed within the 'Acquisition & active recording' section of this report. The website is available at Koorie Heritage Trust, Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), State Library of Victoria, Film Victoria and DesignIT 2004, Mission Voices, Koorie Heritage Trust, viewed 17 October 2010, <<http://www.abc.net.au/missionvoices/>>.

management of the collection was directed towards cataloguing and making items accessible to community members involved in the Family History program, not in actively collecting new recordings outside of projects.<sup>33</sup> It is understood that Genevieve Grieves also felt that as AAV funded the program, it owned the copyright of the interviews. This prompted Jim Berg to hold discussions with AAV and come to an agreement that copyright may be returned to the interviewee if they applied for it.<sup>34</sup> I am unsure whether this prompted a change in the format of 'permission of use' forms and this should be clarified with Genevieve Grieves in future.<sup>35</sup>

In 2004, Rita Morrison began working with the collection in a project-based role to develop the CD-ROM 'Looking back, Moving forward: The journey of the Stolen Generations of Victoria'.<sup>36</sup> In 2007, the Trust's divisions underwent a re-structure. The management of the oral history collection was shifted to the Collections Unit, who were also responsible for the management of the photographic, artefact, picture and library collections. The active collecting is undertaken by the Oral History manager. This division requires successful communication between the departments for future strategic collections development.

Rita Morrison's collection focus has been on community-driven requests for the filming of events, interviews and education programs. Her collecting practices have been directed recently on the documentation of the native title determinations held on country across the State and revisiting interviews of the Stolen Generations. Rita Morrison has expressed an urgent need for permission for use forms to be retrospectively investigated and signed by interviewees or family members. The collection cannot be accessed due to this gap in documentation.<sup>37</sup> The Oral History program currently contracts young Koori technicians to assist with the filming duties.

As the collection is not currently searchable on a database, I am not able to confirm the exact number of interviews completed by each of the previous staff members.

The current Collections Unit does not have staff available to undertake the important, and immense, tasks of clarifying the copyright and ownership issues, entering the collection within the database

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<sup>33</sup> Faulkhead, S as quote in Sproll, Caroline 2006, 'History of the Koorie oral history program', unpublished, essay to fulfill student placement, Koorie Heritage Trust, p.1–22.

<sup>34</sup> Faulkhead in *ibid*.

<sup>35</sup> This is included in the recommendations list.

<sup>36</sup> Koorie Heritage Trust, Rightside Response Pty Ltd and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria 2004, CD Rom, *Looking back, moving forward: The journey of the Stolen Generations of Victoria*, Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne.

<sup>37</sup> Morrison, Rita (Oral History Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 29 October, 2010.



(currently eHive), managing condition of storage under best practice guidelines or ensuring that future documentation and systems are in place.<sup>38</sup> The following assessment establishes the current state and needs of the oral history collection.

### **Description of the collection**

The Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Robert 'Jumbo' Pierce in the recent Annual Report 09/10 reinstates the central objective of the Trust to "...*preserve, protect and promote the Aboriginal culture of South-Eastern Australia and in doing so, bridge the cultural gap between the Koories and the wider community...*"<sup>39</sup> The oral history collection reflects this objective, as it preserves Koori stories, protects cultural knowledge through restrictions and access, and aims in future to promote understanding on Aboriginal culture through the use of recordings for exhibitions and education programs.

### **Themes**

The significant themes throughout the collection are identified through the descriptions in the hardcopy inventories and registration forms. The following is a brief description on the significant themes and those that relate to the history of Victoria.

The life histories of Elders and community members reveal important family genealogies, connections to land, language, cultural information, school life, work life and portray memories on important events in history from a Koori perspective including memories by the Stolen Generations. Many of the interviewees are no longer with us, so the value and importance of these recordings for families and future generations is immeasurable. Community members and families have requested that important memorial services and funerals also be filmed to preserve records of speeches, ceremony and people.

Community and government proceedings have been captured through film, audio and photographic recordings of events held at the Aborigines Advancement League, Aboriginal Legal Service, NAIDOC celebrations, Mission sites, Elders luncheons, Keeping Places, Reconciliation forums, exhibition openings, university graduations, book launches, conferences, lectures, rallies and community organisation openings (including the Trust's).

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<sup>38</sup> Staff priorities of the Collections Unit are outlined in Koorie Heritage Trust (Collections Unit) 2010, 'Strategic plan 2010-2011: Collections', unpublished, internal document, p.1-12. A major gap exists in staff responsibility to ensure the collection is managed under museum standards and correct documentation is implemented for the future.

<sup>39</sup> Koorie Heritage Trust 2010, *Annual report 09/10*, Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne.

Koori children undertaking education programs, learning from Elders and taking part in community events are also represented in the collection.

Remarkable moments in Australian history have been documented in the collection, including each determination for Native Title for cultural groups throughout Victoria. The most recent being the GunaiKurnai determination on 22 October 2010. The collection holds DVD footage and photographs of the High Court sitting on Country to deliver the determinations. The annual Indigenous Veterans service has been recorded and will be a priority each year. The collection holds an interview with Aunty Dot Peters who instigated the annual ceremony.<sup>40</sup> The events held on 'Sorry day' and the 'Long Walk' are significant to all Victorians.

Interviews with political figures and recordings on issues relevant to Aboriginal rights are represented in the collection.

Cultural knowledge, artistic and craft skills have been captured as workshops and education programs on basket weaving, canoe making, bush tucker, stone artefacts are documented with both men and women's programs represented.

The repatriation of artefacts from museums and other organisations back to communities is evident in the recordings.

Sporting achievements have been captured and discussed, predominately in Australian rules football and cricket.

Descriptions and footage of Victorian landscapes, with Koori knowledge of country, may one day be an invaluable resource for conservation, sustainability and tourism programs. Heritage reviews and discussions with site officers are held in the collection.

The collection recordings document invaluable knowledge, and capture images of the artefacts and artworks held within the Trust's other collections.

It is evident that the collection items in the medias of film, audio and photography, reflect the objectives of the Koorie Heritage Trust and relate to the history of Victoria.

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<sup>40</sup> Koorie Heritage Trust 2009, *Annual Report 08/09*, Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne.

## Acquisition & active recording

The Oral History collection and program is well known by Koori communities. Rita Morrison explains that community members know why the collection exists and who it is for. Communities have an understanding that the Trust's staff will protect the knowledge shared.<sup>41</sup> This relationship between a collection and community is invaluable to achieve the aims of developing a collection 'for the community'. Without the relationship of trust, interviewees would not feel secure and safe to speak honestly to staff.

These interviews are not given for a 'Collection' or for scholars, they are a way of recording their experiences and knowledge for their [Koori] families and communities.<sup>42</sup>

The aim to preserve family and community knowledge extends to the collections in the past being integrated in the Family History Unit. The collection development, and decisions on what should be filmed and what should not, is driven by community requests.<sup>43</sup>

In addition, it is evident from the collection records and from current staff, that a focus on acquiring contemporary recordings has been project based, such as the Binjirru Women's Book, Mission Voices, Native Title and Elders projects. Early collecting practices and interests prior to 2000 have been discussed previously in the 'Introduction to the Oral History Collection'.

A nationally recognisable project, that is still accessible to all, is the Mission Voices website. A collaboration between the Koorie Heritage Trust, Australian Broadcasting Commission, New Media, Digital Services and Film Victoria,<sup>44</sup> the website was launched in 2004.<sup>45</sup> The site utilises the voices of individual Koori people to shape the historical story of the impact of mission and reserve life on their community through the themes of Christianity, war, activism, work and wages, spirituality, rules and regulations, education, separation and the Stolen Generations, borders and boundaries, justice and

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<sup>41</sup> Morrison, Rita (Oral History Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 29 October, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> Koorie Heritage Trust 2009, *Annual Report 08/09*, Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne.

<sup>43</sup> Morrison, Rita (Oral History Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 29 October, 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Charles, Beth Z. 2006, DVD, *The Koorie Heritage Trust's Cultural Centre: unmasking the in between*, interviews for PhD thesis, Beth Charles & La Trobe University, Melbourne.

<sup>45</sup> As discussed in the 'Introduction to the oral history collection' the website can be accessed at Koorie Heritage Trust, Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), State Library of Victoria, Film Victoria and DesignIT 2004, *Mission Voices, Koorie Heritage Trust*, viewed 17 October 2010, <<http://www.abc.net.au/missionvoices/>>.

land rights.<sup>46</sup> The website aimed to ‘...rewrite history and to tell it in a different way...’<sup>47</sup> The Koorie Heritage Trust staff were required to interview, prepare archival referencing and work with community members to complete the project.<sup>48</sup> Future planned projects for the collection include interviews with Elders throughout Victoria.<sup>49</sup>

The active collecting and acquisition of new items to the oral history collection shows a dedication by the Trust to ensure the collection holds contemporary recordings of events, people and place for the future access by communities and understanding of Koori life for wider communities.

It must be noted that not all of the items held in the collection were recorded and produced by the Trust. Important significant television programs, multimedia and interviews by other institutions are represented in the collection. The collection has also received donations of audio-visual materials by other institutions.

## Registration

The methodology *Significance 2.0* states that ‘goods records’ are the basis for significance assessment.<sup>50</sup> For there to be good records, a consistent registration process needs to be in place. Consistent paperwork needs to be completed at the point of interview (permission for use forms, copyright release, letters of acknowledgement) and following the interview (transcripts or interview summaries, registration numbers assigned, registration book completed, labels and location of items updated, entry in collection database, back up of records and digital recordings). Unfortunately, these processes have not always been followed throughout the registration of the collection items.

At the heart of any collection is the register. Due to large staff turnover working with the oral history collection, and possibly not having an understanding on the importance of this document, the register is not a record of the complete collection. There are recordings that can no longer be found in the collection. Each new Manager assigned a different numbering system to the items, which makes the register unusable. It is now a record in itself of the management styles over the years.

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<sup>46</sup> Koorie Heritage Trust News 2004, No 4, as quoted in Charles, Beth Z. 2006, DVD, *The Koorie Heritage Trust's Cultural Centre: unmasking the in between*, interviews for PhD thesis, Beth Charles & La Trobe University, Melbourne.

<sup>47</sup> Genevieve Grieves as quotes in *ibid*.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>49</sup> Morrison, Rita (Oral History Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 29 October, 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Collections Council of Australia 2009, *op.cit*.

The registration difficulties have begun to be resolved. In 2008, Tim Church, a cadet within the Collections Unit, began the immense task of listening to the recordings to assign restrictions. Rita Morrison listened to the recordings and completed brief registration forms and assigned new numbers with an OH prefix to each item. As a result, the Collection Unit now hold hardcopy registration forms, with brief information, that can be entered into a database to make the collection searchable in the future. The Collections Unit have identified 'tactics' in the recent strategic plan for the area to 'maintain the collection unit's key documents', implement a 'digitisation plan for all collections' and to consolidate the eHive database.<sup>51</sup> This will ensure that the oral history collection is managed under best practice.

The large collection of photographs that relate to the recordings have not been registered or catalogued and are therefore unusable. No documentation for 'permissions for use' forms accompany the photographs.

Transcriptions were produced for the collection during the time Wayne Atkinson was managing the collection. The transcriptions held within the collection are not easily identifiable as 'matches' to the recordings in the collection. Sproll suggested that in 2006, only 35 transcripts of the 157 held in the collection were able to be positively identified as from the oral history tapes.<sup>52</sup> Rita Morrison stated that a decision was made not to continue to transcribe interviews due to the costs and staff time required.<sup>53</sup> It is assumed that researchers will undertake this task if the information is required. This makes the search-ability of information and an understanding on the intangible meanings held in the recordings difficult. If interviews were transcribed, access to information for researchers, to include correct data in the database and to complete inquiries by community members would be possible.

The 'Permission for use' forms<sup>54</sup> is a pressing issue for the collection. There are many recordings in the collection that do not have evidence that the forms were completed at the time of collection. This poses difficult legal issues on copyright and availability for access to the collection items. This will be discussed further in recommendations for the collection. Wayne Atkinson refers to guidelines from the Institute of Aboriginal Studies that guided his process to ask interviewees to sign permission of use

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<sup>51</sup> Koorie Heritage Trust (Collections Unit) 2010, 'Strategic plan 2010-2011: Collections', unpublished, internal document, p.1-12.

<sup>52</sup> Sproll 2006, op.cit.

<sup>53</sup> Morrison, Rita (Oral History Manager, Koorie Heritage Trust), Interview: PhD Research, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 29 October, 2010.

<sup>54</sup> Koorie Heritage Trust 2010, 'Agreement for use form', unpublished, internal document, p.1-2.

forms which defined confidentiality, copies of items and recommendations for future use.<sup>55</sup> Sandy Atkinson discussed simplifying permission of use forms for interviewees during his collection period, which implies that forms were completed at the time.<sup>56</sup> At this stage, the number of items that hold 'permission to use' forms cannot be evaluated as a complete inventory and list of forms held is not searchable. This needs to be resolved for the successful management of the collection in line with international standards for an oral history collection.

### **Condition, integrity & conservation**

The collection is currently stored in a secure facility on site. The facility does not allow for environmental monitoring and adjustments. It is hoped that this will be accounted for in the plans for the new museum site. The active collecting of new recordings is funded by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, but the storage and collections management is funded through the Trust's general funding for collections, which is limited.

In 2007, a report was completed by Rob Healy Consultancy and Nerissa Broben to identify issues and priorities for the digitisation of collection items that are at risk of being lost due to obsolete equipment and formats.<sup>57</sup> The digitised collection items are now housed on external drives and archival DVDs within the Trust. In line with the report, the files should be converted to web streaming files and uploaded to a secure server.

### **Comparative collections**

The Koorie Heritage Trust oral history collection is unique, as it documents ways of life and seeing by South Eastern Aboriginal community members. The collection is unprecedented. There is not a comparative collection of size or content that expresses Victorian Koori perspectives on Victoria's history. There are however significant collections of recordings on memory and history from Aboriginal people throughout Australia in public and organisational collections, including those held within the National Library of Australia (Oral history and folklore collections), National Film and sound archive (NFSA), Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA), Film Australia Library, Museum Victoria, Pacific and Regional Archive for digital sources in endangered cultures (PARADISEC), Ronin Films and Tweed River Regional

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<sup>55</sup> Sproll 2006, op.cit.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Broben, Nerissa and Rob Healy Consultancy 2007, 'Preservation/ Digitisation plan for the Trust's oral history collection', unpublished, Koorie Heritage Trust, p.1–6.

Museum. The National Film and Sound Archives' 'National register of audio-visual collections' identifies oral history, local history and large significant audio-visual collections that hold items related to 'indigenous materials'.<sup>58</sup>

Other smaller collections around Australia are linked to museums managed by local government bodies and connected to local history collections in local libraries, such as the one held at the Mandurah Community Museum (WA). Keeping places and community organisations have undertaken oral history projects centred around themes from time to time. In Victoria, there is not a comparative collection of themes, size and longevity to the Trust's. The ongoing active collecting and funding is critical in making this collection unique and invaluable to all Victorians.

### **Assessment against the criteria**

The assessment of the oral history collection against the criteria outlined in *Significance 2.0* is the heart of the significance statement. The following addresses the relevant criteria. It must be noted that not all of the primary and comparative criteria need to be addressed for the collection to be identified as significant.

### **Primary criteria**

#### **Historic significance**

I'm proud of the fact that it [the oral histories] has been entrusted [at the Trust] with the responsibility of recording the stories of our people and the community in general, for future generations to study and enjoy. Government and institutions made everything sensitive and [this sensitivity] locked the stories away, which was destructive to us. We felt we couldn't access our own stories and genealogies. There was fear in the community.<sup>59</sup>

The oral history collection is associated with, and connected closely to, the Aboriginal people of Victoria through recordings produced over the past 23 years. The audio-visual recordings include interviews with Elders, family members and community representatives on family history, actions, motives and reactions to events in time. These represent a Koori view and understanding of Australian history.

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<sup>58</sup> National Film and Sound Archives of Australia 2007, *National registry of audiovisual collections*, Australian Film Commission, Canberra, viewed 2 October 2010, <<http://www.screen sound.gov.au/docs/AVregistryWeb.pdf>>.

<sup>59</sup> Sandy Atkinson, as quoted in Charles, Beth 2006, op.cit.

Important events and meetings that have affected on Koori people in Victoria are represented in the recordings. Cultural knowledge is documented for the continued education and transference of cultural practices including those involving connection to country, traditional arts and crafts, survival skills and law. Celebrations and achievements are preserved. The themes outlined earlier in this assessment direct that the collection items hold historic significance for both Koori and non-Koori Australians.

### **Scientific or Research significance**

The oral history collection holds certain research potential and significance. The Koori Oral History Program began as an “...alternative source of knowledge for people who want to learn about our culture, our history, our more recent history and some of the major events that have taken place...”<sup>60</sup> The collection has always been a source for research through the connection to the Trust’s Family History unit. The genealogies discussed by community members in the interviews.

The collection’s potential to promote understanding through research by the wider community will be seen as the collection becomes more accessible following registration, collection documentation and digitisation. There is undoubtedly an interest for researchers to gain an understanding on Koori interpretations and records of history. The new national curriculum in schools includes Aboriginal and Indigenous rewriting of all subjects from maths, LOTE, science and history. An oral history collection such as this could hold invaluable information directly related to Victorian communities. Schools would find the recordings an invaluable teaching tool on Aboriginal ways of seeing history and for all subjects.

Government support of Aboriginal language and culture programs has been increasing since the national apology given by Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd. The apology has brought a focus in the wider community on Aboriginal heritage and issues. A collection such as this has the value to assist researchers to educate the wider community from the first-person perspective. Oral history recordings ‘...enable interviewers to create verifiable source material that can be used by other researchers. Note-taking or shorthand records of interviews are much more open to distortion or omission...’<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Sproll 2006, op.cit.

<sup>61</sup> Robertson 2006, op.cit.



It is not only the content in the recordings that hold research significance. As Sproll suggested, the use of different technologies and formats gives an insight into technological changes and trends in recording oral history over the past 27 years.<sup>62</sup>

It should be noted that the oral history collection may one day be a rich resource for other collections held in the Trust, including the 48,000+ photographs held therein. To identify each person photographed as data enhancement for the database and collections management records, the oral history recordings could be called upon to assist. Many of the groups, meetings and interviews begin with people introducing themselves and others.

Oral history does not claim to be the last word in a historical record. It supplements other sources, and when no other evidence is available, it may be the only way of adding to our understanding of history.<sup>63</sup> The future potential for research development from this collection is of high value and will assist in recording Australian history.

### **Social and spiritual significance**

The Oral History Association of Australia Inc. confirms that;

The Victorian Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia recognises the value of the Koorie Heritage Trust oral history collection as a democratising, community building and inclusive collection for the Koori people of Victoria and as a collection that can be accessed for research.<sup>64</sup>

The Trust's oral history collection holds strong social value that can be seen through the connection between collection items and Koori communities. The recordings hold information that can educate and form identity and beliefs for Koori people throughout Victoria.

Wayne Atkinson has been quoted as saying that the young trainees and staff he took along to record and film important events in communities were given the opportunity to learn more than just the processes of oral history. They were able to speak with Elders and "*...come to grips with their identity and gain...confidence and self-esteem...*"<sup>65</sup> This connection between Koori people both behind and in

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<sup>62</sup> Sproll 2006, op.cit.

<sup>63</sup> Thompson, Paul 2000, *The voice of the past: Oral history*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

<sup>64</sup> Louise Blake (Oral History Association of Australia Victorian Branch), The significance of the Koorie Heritage Trust Oral History collection, personal communication with Karina Lamb, letter, 22 October, 2010.

<sup>65</sup> Wayne Atkinson in Sproll, Caroline 2006, 'History of the Koorie oral history program', unpublished, essay to fulfill student placement, Koorie Heritage Trust, p.1–22.

front of the camera, is very real evidence of the social interactions and powerful identity building values held within the collection and development of the collection over the years.

It is evident that the Family History division and the Oral history unit still hold some crossovers in offering services to community members who identify needs for family members to be recorded, stories preserved or are searching for their family connections.

A medium, such as memories and reminiscing, provides a service that reconnects people and family members.<sup>66</sup>

Communities have a strong 'sense of attachment' to the aims of the collection. The trust in staff to protect sensitive information in interviews ensures that the collection holds an honest perspective on life, knowledge and history from the Koori perspective.

The 'hidden element' contained in the participants' recollections, away from government and institutional presence, are made more unreservedly available but, at the same time, those elements are treated at the Trust with sensitivity and respect.<sup>67</sup>

In her interviews with staff at the Koorie Heritage Trust, Beth Charles described non-Koori staff as learning about '*...a 'Koori way of doing things' and of the importance of Koori history and culture being understood on a Koori level'...*'<sup>68</sup> The oral history collection is a reflection of this interaction and understanding between staff and communities.

The social value and connection between communities and the organisation can be seen throughout history as Koori and non-Koori supporters have rallied for the Koorie Heritage Trust through difficult times. The most disastrous being when the Trust's building was destroyed by arson in 1999. Staff and the community pulled together to ensure that a new facility was found – to keep the organisation alive. It was at this time that the current location in King Street was chosen. The connection between communities and the Trust is strong and must remain strong for the survival of the collection and the organisation – as the Business Development Manager, Ian Scott explained '*...the success of the*

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<sup>66</sup> Charles, Beth Z. 2006, DVD, *The Koorie Heritage Trust's Cultural Centre: unmasking the in between*, interviews for PhD thesis, Beth Charles & La Trobe University, Melbourne.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

organisation really depends on the support you get from the community. If you don't get support from community, you may as well go home.'<sup>69</sup>

## **Comparative criteria**

### **Provenance**

The provenance of the collection involves actively collected recordings from the Koorie Heritage Trust staff. But of important mention are the partnerships with many government and non-government bodies that have funded projects and acquisitions for the formation of the collection including the ongoing funding from Aboriginal Affairs Victoria. Other organisations that have contributed to the organisation include private donors, Heritage Victoria and the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

There are other issues with the collection documentation that have been discussed previously. It should be noted in this section that the collection is not well documented and the chain of ownership regarding copyright and funding needs to be addressed.

### **Rarity and representativeness**

The oral history collection is rare as it holds interviews with individuals that are not held in other collections throughout Australia. The size, formats and types of recordings (interviews, documentation of events, specific programs) on South Eastern Aboriginal ways of life and reactions to history, represent a new view for Australian history and future researchers.

### **Condition and completeness**

The collection holds original equipment for the replaying of media held in the collection. This equipment is difficult to maintain and replace. It is of high importance that the collection be digitised for future preservation, and to allow access by the community and researchers to the recordings.

If funds are not received to undertake collections management required, and to complete digitisation, the collection is in danger of losing recordings and significant knowledge as media types become obsolete.

It is difficult to comment on the completeness of the collection, without being able to view a searchable inventory of items.

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<sup>69</sup> Ian Scott (Business Development Manager), Position at the Trust, PhD research interview, personal communication with Karina Lamb, audio-visual recording, Melbourne, 13 October, 2010.

## **Recommendations**

The following are recommendations for the collection to adhere to best practice collections management and to ensure the collection is 'preserved, protected and promoted' for many years to come.

## **Condition**

- Complete the digitisation of the collection items to ensure long-term preservation of the recordings. Ensure items that have previously been digitised are backed up on archival quality DVDs and files are converted to web streaming files and uploaded to a secure server.
- Ensure hours owed to the collection by the previous technician are utilised to complete digitisation.<sup>70</sup>
- Replay recordings in line with the National Library of Australia's audio preservation technical standards and the Koorie Heritage Trust's collection policy.
- Digitise original register for the collection.
- Ensure environmental controls in the storage area are implemented and maintained.
- Connect to film, early media and oral history community interest groups throughout the State (and Australia) to source equipment or hire equipment for the digitisation process. A large museum known to the writer that holds an extensive collection of equipment for recording and replaying is the Wireless Hill Telecommunications Museum (WA). This museum attracts many interest groups who own extensive private collections of early recording equipment.

## **Collections documentation**

- Establish an oral history advisory committee to assist with collection planning, access requirements, promotion and to assist with sourcing funding. A collection 'for the community' should have community members involved at a strategic planning level.
- Ascertain copyright and permission to use information and complete appropriate forms for each item in the collection to understand how the collection can be accessed and used by researchers/communities. The collection is currently not accessible and legal issues regarding copyright and use remain, due to a lack of signed agreements between the interviewees and the Trust. Genevieve Griegs and Jim Berg need to be consulted on the discussions and agreement reached between AAV and the Koorie Heritage Trust, as mentioned in the history of the collection

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<sup>70</sup>The previous technician owes to the collection considerable digitisation time. Rita Morrison can expand on this employment issue.

prepared by Caroline Sproll. If no written agreement between the Trust and the funding body is on file, one may be developed and an agreement reached to ensure the future access and use of the collection items are within copyright and ownership rights. Rights on intellectual property for information discussed in the interviews may also need to be investigated.

- The current 'permission for use' forms should hold a direct reference to the internet and not regard this as general publication.
- Complete detailed registration forms.
- Place dates on all documentation relevant to the collection. The paperwork reviewed for the assessment was difficult to contextualise without knowing dates of when documents were created.
- Update collection register. Consider creating a new one and placing old ones in the collection archives.
- Complete data entry of collection items into the Collections database (eHive) to ensure a consistent, searchable and up to date inventory of the collection.
- Plan and implement a process for filing paperwork related to current collecting projects—during and on completion of projects.
- Define standard for the completion of transcripts or interview summaries.
- Ensure an agreed procedure is developed for the assessment of approvals for access to recordings.
- Update and complete the creation of 'open files' on interviewees and significant events represented in the collection.
- The corresponding photographs to the recordings should be considered a part of the Oral History collection as they were captured to complement the recordings. They can be seen as a large, valuable resource in the documentation for this collection. If the recording was corrupted, but audio remained, the photographs would be invaluable to the collection. A system needs to be put into place to manage the connection between the photographs taken and the recordings. A formal process needs to be developed for the management of these photographs to remain with the collection which they are directly related. If by chance the oral history collection should be separated from the Trust in the future, then photographs taken at the time of the recordings should remain with the collection items.
- If photographs are to be continued to be taken at each of the events then 'permission for use' forms will need to be completed to ensure that correct documentation exists for the future use and access of the images.

## Strategic planning

- The oral history collection and program should be managed in line with the publication recommended by the Oral History Association of Australia; Beth M Robertson's *Oral History Handbook*. (Robertson 2006)
- Policies and procedures (including digitisation decisions) should follow those outlined by the National Library of Australia, Oral History Association of Australia and the ICOM (International Council of Museums) Code of ethics.
- The Collections Unit may consider adopting guidelines on ethical practice directly related to oral history, such as those adhered to by the Oral History Association of Australia; *Guidelines of Ethical practice*. The collections policy could represent this.

## Staffing

- The Collections Unit have identified that they do not have the staff time available to complete the required collection management tasks under best practice guidelines. It is recommended that an Oral History Collections Manager be employed to undertake the extensive tasks of documentation, digitisation and management of access required.

## Funding

- Collections always require more funding, but for the oral history collection it is critical that increased funds are received to coordinate the successful management and preservation of the collection, before the recordings and media become obsolete, and the highly significant records in Australian history are lost.
- Current funding for active collecting is received through the Aboriginal Affairs Victoria. An application could be made to increase funding to include collections management and storage needs.
- Funding bodies that could be approached include the National Library of Australia's 'Community Heritage Grants Program'<sup>71</sup> and the Victorian Public Record Office's 'Local History Grants Program'.<sup>72</sup> Health organisations, such as Vic Health, may be interested in funding an important collection that holds very real identity building and understanding of culture for communities. Partnerships could be discussed with other collecting institutions that may assist with digitisation

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<sup>71</sup> National Library of Australia 2010, *Community heritage grants*, Canberra, viewed 22 October 2010, <<http://www.nla.gov.au/chg/>>.

<sup>72</sup> Public Records Office of Victoria 2010, *Local History Grants Program*, Victorian Government, Melbourne, viewed 22 October 2010, <<http://www.prov.vic.gov.au/lhgp/welcome.asp>>.

and funding of collections management, including AIATSIS or the Australia Council's Community Cultural Development and Literature funds.

### **Promotion**

- As permission of use forms are clarified, the collection items could be made accessible to researchers and community members. Promotion of access and information available could be done through the registered Elder committees in Koorie communities.
- It would be invaluable for the collection to be included in the Australian 'National Registry of Audio visual collections'. See [http://www.screensound.gov.au/the\\_collection/avregistry.html](http://www.screensound.gov.au/the_collection/avregistry.html)
- A long term vision for the collection could be to promote to international networks through conference presentations at the Oral History Association of Australia national conference, Museums Australia national conference, or through the inclusion in wide world catalogues such as the WorldCat Registry, see <http://www.worldcat.org/registry/institutions/> or UNESCO's Memory of the world register.

### **Review**

It is recommended that the Significance Statement and assessment be reviewed for the Oral History collection every 2 years. The next review will be due in October 2012.

Dr Wayne Atkinson was a significant stakeholder as the founder of the oral history collection. At this point in time, he does not wish to speak about the history and the development of the collection. In future it is critical that his knowledge, vision and history be included within this Significance statement. Without his input, a large proportion of the historical information and knowledge on the collection development is missing. Likewise, Genève Griegs should be consulted on the collection management and development during her reign as Oral History Manager.

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## Recommendations for the Australian Museum Sector

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 5, the framework for Significance assessments in Australia does not include acknowledgment of indigenous language documentation and the methodology for the assessments requires reviewing by the Australian museum sector in conjunction with indigenous communities.

Extending from the research findings addressed in the previous chapter, I provide the following recommendations for the Australian museum sector to shift and respond to the requests of indigenous communities to take indigenous language documentation seriously.

Recommendation for the Australian Museum Sector include:

- Undertake further research with Elders and cultural knowledge holders to release a national standard for collecting institutions on language documentation in collection management systems, this can be incorporated into AMaGA's MAP accreditation program for museums.
- Challenge traditional westernised museum thinking through national discussions on the transformation required in professional practice through the AMaGA, ICOM and indigenous language sector and organisations.
- Direct that participation in research, data enhancement and the fostering of relationships is to occur on Country, or a place deemed as culturally appropriate by indigenous source communities.
- Review museum professional practices and roles to advance consultation and collaboration in line with indigenous community requests for the care of their collections.
- Implement a shift in traditional Curator and Collection Manager positions; developing a synthesis to Collection Relationship Managers who will be responsible for research development, relationships building, collections documentation and front of house deliveries including exhibitions that incorporate and involve cultural materials.
- Lead the requirement for all collecting institutions to hold Language Policies and action plans for the engagement, employment and documentation of languages other than English.
- Build on university and sector training opportunities for Collection Managers to gain cultural knowledge, language education and cultural permissions from indigenous communities to be able to undertake data enhancement for collections in language.
- Advocate and lobby government for increased funding for collecting and cultural institutions to be able to employ skilled professionals, to support the backlog of collections cataloguing, and implement the new process for language documentation as instructed by new national standards.

- Continue to provide and increase levels of access and use of collections for indigenous communities from which the objects extend.
- Engage indigenous objects in collections as a means to open conversations on truth-telling and be active allies in Black Lives Matter discussions. Centre the rights of indigenous peoples at the forefront of all decisions based on land, culture, art, language and health.

The inclusion of indigenous languages in collection management systems and professional awareness of these languages in museum practice can allow cultural materials to be managed in such a way as to meet the expectations of source communities. Records can reflect cultural protocols and frameworks through the engagement of indigenous languages. For the source community, this will ensure that collections when viewed in 100 years' time clearly represent their culture, using their voice. In the Conclusion to follow, I summarise the thesis and illustrate how theory and the analysis of the fieldwork completed in 2010–2011 assists to shift museum practice in the contemporary Australian museum sector.

## Conclusion

Language expresses our spiritual life. Language is essential to linking past, present and future for all generations. I believe that language revival is most important in that we can again gather, learn and practice the lost ceremonial songs, dances and spiritual stories of our culture.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis provides a historical perspective on professional museum practice and language revitalisation in Australia and Aotearoa between 2010–2011; a period that saw a significant shift in awareness by indigenous communities towards the importance of language held in cultural institutions, and a greater awareness of the neglect of documentation kept with cultural materials. Meanwhile, changes in the disciplines of museum studies, material culture studies, indigenous studies and linguistics challenged collecting institutions to decentralise western models of collection ownership. The key theories engaged for the research include the new curatorial praxis, new museum, reflexive museum and post-museum critical theory, and what Colmer described as holistic collections management.

In Australia, indigenous communities were awakening to the need for existing language corpus held in the collections to be audited to assist in language revitalisation programs. Indigenous communities were aware that their cultural materials were poorly documented. A high backlog of catalogue entries sat within collection management departments and language if documented at the time of acquisition was held within archives and departments separate to the Collection Managers who were caring for their collections. As demonstrated throughout Chapters 1–2, source communities were demanding changes in practice and requesting that museums become active participants in language revival and strengthening programs.

In Aotearoa, although te reo Māori was visible in front of house public programs and exhibitions, there was a disconnect between back of house documentation practices and information recorded in collection management systems. Iwi were requesting that collecting institutions, as custodians of their materials, become active participants in projects of language strengthening. The engagement of Kaitiaki Māori and indigenous professionals in collections management was leading a change in the understanding of indigenous protocols and ways of caring for materials. I presented professional

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<sup>1</sup> Moate, Joyce (Taungurung Elder), found in Keeler, Chris and Couzens, Vicki (eds.) 2010, *Meerreeng-an Here is my country: the story of Aboriginal Victoria told through art*, Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne.

practices engaged in Aotearoa as an example of those that Australian museum professionals can learn, and be inspired from.

Through ethnographies of collections management, curatorial and registration professional practices at Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne Museum, Tairāwhiti Museum and Te Papa Tongarewa National Museum of New Zealand, the thesis identified the need to realign museum professional practices and prioritise cultural knowledge, context and social history of indigenous collections to be preserved for future generations. I raised the significant need for language documentation within collections management systems across all cultural institutions.

Through 68 interviews, I captured data on both indigenous and non-indigenous responses to language documentation and confirmed that for museum, language and education professionals, there was a great need for language to remain with the objects held in collections. Through my investigations of collections catalogue, policies and associated documentation, I delivered real outcomes on each museum site, including language policies, data enhancement, and a significant assessment report to support the development of the cultural collections. Although there existed diversity in language styles, use and understanding, the history of the forced removal of languages in both countries led to feelings of loss and shame in source communities in both countries. I identified the support and challenges for data enhancement in Australia for both historic and contemporary collections.

A finding not expected throughout the research was the internal divide between the roles of Curator and Collections Manager in museums in both countries. The divide prevented significant data enhancement in collections. Institutions holding traditional organisational structure positioned the Curator as holder of knowledge and the Collections Manager as the record-keeper. Through observations of professionals working in museums, the Collection Manager appeared lower in the hierarchical structure of a museum than the position of Curator. The Collections Manager, however, held intimate knowledge of the collections required for language revival and strengthening. Often, it was the Collection Manager who had first built a strong relationship with source communities connected to the collections as community members visited museums to access materials, or permission was sourced to prepare objects for display.

The divide between the professional positions was evident in the fieldwork undertaken at Tairāwhiti Museum as described in Chapter 3. I observed that even though the institution was highly regarded for bicultural management, the museum had significant challenges in language documentation due to staff abilities and a disconnect between the role of Curator (Kaitiaki Māori) and the Collections

Manager. As a leader in bicultural management, and at the time holding an indigenous department dedicated to the care and sharing of taonga Māori, Te Papa was a national collecting institution proud of tikanga Māori leading staff professional practices. Language documentation and data enhancement within collections occurred when led by major exhibitions. Further data enhancement was identified as a priority for the Collections Management team. But there did exist confusion between Curators and Collection Managers on who would complete this body of work.

As the Introduction to this thesis demonstrated, extensive literature existed on the importance of indigenous language renewal and the need for museums to address cultural diversity in collections, but there was a significant gap in the writing as to whether, why and how indigenous language should be documented along with the object. This thesis addresses that gap and provides a significant contribution to museum studies and practice through a greater understanding of the benefits and complications of language documentation in professional museum practice.

In Chapter 1: Revitalisation and strengthening of indigenous languages, a turning point in Australian museum and language sector was identified in 2010–2011. A period in time when indigenous communities through the development of working groups and action papers to the Australian Government, were requesting collecting institutions to be active participants in indigenous language revival and strengthening. The field of linguistics was being challenged by VACL's new typology that identified distinct differences between revival languages and other indigenous languages. Both in Australia and Aotearoa, indigenous peoples were demanding active and urgent attention to language revival by the State. It was clear in both countries the focus on language strengthening in the past was not producing the required results; indigenous languages were not being spoken in the home. A shift was required at all levels of government to ensure indigenous language was a priority for funding, policy and program development.

Using two case studies within Victoria in Chapter 2: Australian Museums and Cultural Collections, I addressed a lack of indigenous language support in collections management systems in both the Koorie Heritage Trust and Melbourne Museum. Although a national accreditation framework was beginning to take shape for the Australian museum sector led by AMaGA, findings from this period show a distinct lack of understanding in the sector on indigenous rights to language access and documentation. Two significant projects that attempted to bridge the cultural gap, *Meerreeng-An: Here is my Country – The Story of Aboriginal Victoria told through art* and Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural centre were provided as successful examples in highlighting the significance of co-collaboration between collecting institutions and indigenous communities.

Turning to a provincial museum in the North Island of New Zealand, Chapter 3: Māori collections in Tairāwhiti Museum, I demonstrated through an ethnography of professional practices how an institution highly regarded for its bicultural practices still faced challenges in indigenous language documentation in collections management systems. This was in large due to a Pākehā Collections Manager with little language skill leading the development of the collection management system. I examine collections items on display and collection records to show the neglect in language documentation. It was within this chapter that I revealed, similar to the Australian case studies, the finding of an internal disconnect between the roles of Curator and Collections Manager and documentation practices. I examined three exhibitions, *Iwi Karioi Hakanation*, *Ngā Tamatoa: The price of citizenship: 28th Māori Battalion* and *Watersheds: History of Tairāwhiti*, as examples of the difference of information shown front of house, to the research held back of house in collection management systems. I identified language policy as being crucial in creating awareness of language practices at all levels of the institution and addressed the care of taonga Māori by Kaitiaki Māori and Māori ways of working with collections that were very different to Australian professional practice.

In Chapter 4: Mātauranga Māori within Te Papa, I present exploration of professional practice within the museum's Mātauranga Māori collections management team with distinctive Māori ways of working that included a commitment to the use of te reo Māori daily. Through interviews and observations, I investigated the impact of te reo in language-led collections management practices including the development of Māori thesauri. Engaging the new curatorial praxis theory I described a language-led Te Papa project, *Whatu Kākahu – Māori cloaks* that resulted in a significant exhibition, publication and the revival of te reo Māori. This chapter revealed unique features of a bicultural institution reflecting wider debates in progressive museum discourse about museums and indigenous people.

Concluding the case study investigations, Chapter 5: Sharing culture – Strategies for improved practice connected the findings from ethnographies to provide new strategies for the Australian museum sector including understanding local protocols, a review of contemporary museum roles, a national standards and framework for indigenous language documentation, language policies and collections management systems, as well the *Significance* methodology used for collections in Australia. I provide information on contemporary research on the need for indigenous language engagement as a means for wellbeing and health for indigenous communities that supports the revisiting of indigenous community needs during the critical point in Australia in 2010–2011.

Finally, I provide direct examples of the contributions I prepared while undertaking fieldwork as contributions to policy and significance assessment reports for the Australian museum sector.

The thesis has examined interconnections between professional practice and indigenous languages within museums on both sides of the Tasman to provide new understanding and a contribution to contemporary theory. Looking to New Zealand as a means of understanding innovative professional practices in museums, I address methods, policy and process that could have led, and may still lead to, change in the Australian museum sector.

Indigenous communities continue to demand languages be held with objects in collecting institutions and require increased involvement in museums to support language revitalisation. Although in Victoria challenges exist due to language revival programs, as discussed in chapters 1–2, language documentation can become visible in collecting practices if given the support by national and international museum sectors.

Similarly in both countries, low numbers of indigenous staffing in collections management departments resulted in the neglect of indigenous language use in collections management systems and records. A consistent issue revealed across indigenous-run institutions and larger state institutions was the disconnect between curatorial research practices, language exhibited front of house, to the language information held in collections management systems back of house. The only difference observed was at Te Papa where Māori professionals with strong language skills held Collections Management positions.

This thesis has identified that indigenous communities continue to request greater access to cultural materials, co-curation, co-collaboration and a greater depth of collections documentation to assist with language revitalisation and strengthening programs. Indigenous research participants confirmed that although challenges exist particular to the revitalisation of languages, more attention to and work with language in collection management systems would assist with the continuance, and a deeper understanding of, historic and contemporary indigenous life. Therefore, I argue in this thesis that language holds cultural knowledge and context for indigenous communities that cannot be translated or explained using English, the language of the coloniser. Indigenous language documentation can be enhanced through a commitment by museum professionals to develop partnerships between source communities. A commitment by museum professionals to listen to source communities on issues such as the handling, interpretation, care and management of objects will deepen understanding of collections overall.



Even though in 2010–2011 there were clear shifts in the understanding of the need for language engagement, in the interim not a lot has changed in collections management practices. Backlogs of catalogue entries still exist. There are still low numbers of indigenous Collections Managers employed in Australian museums. The need for indigenous language recognition and engagement in collections management records is an ongoing challenge for museum professionals. Academic theory in museum studies, indigenous studies and cultural studies continues to decentralise western models of management and encourages a new understanding of indigenous collections according to indigenous concepts and frameworks, including language, but there is as yet, little sign that professional practice is keeping up with this new thinking. There is a need for further research on collections management practices with language to be dispersed through conferences, publications and professional development throughout the Australian museum sector.

More investigation needs to be undertaken to assist museum professionals to implement indigenous language documentation in current practices by working with the museum sector including AMaGA, Museums Aotearoa and ICOM, to develop and implement protocols and training for language incorporation in collection management systems. Museums will be required to source funding to support new indigenous Collection Manager positions, and to provide existing Managers the time to build relationships, complete consultation and clear the backlog of registration and documentation. This thesis provides the platform for further research on collections management systems and the integration of indigenous languages into contemporary professional museum practice.

The year 2020 was like no other in our living memory with COVID-19 and the impact of isolation drawing people back to culture, arts and communications. The internet and digital communications kept the world connected during a period in time when health and wellbeing rose to the top of our conscious life. Museums prioritised digital programming, provided back of house access through virtual tours and focused intently on the connection between collections and community. Digital tools can enable the transformation for a greater level of documentation of collections in indigenous languages. In an issue of *Artlink* dedicated solely to digital connection to language, culture and indigenous peoples, Kimberly Moulton and Leuli Eshraghi (Sāmoan artist and Curator) wrote in response to COVID-19:

The forced isolation of the world has allowed us time for reflection on how we live, work, consume and treat ourselves...The many forms of cultural expression have shifted to extensive digital experiences...it is in the digital constellations where our connections are evolving into a

new era of art and making; for First Nations peoples, our cultures and practices on these platforms are integral to forging on.<sup>2</sup>

In Victoria, the isolation period continued for over eight months. Virtual links to arts and culture changed the face of engagement for all. For museums to continue to move forward in building stronger relationships with source communities, an extension of digital platforms will be the tool to transform practice. As well as the adoption of new collections management systems that prioritise indigenous languages, museums are required to adopt a community engagement system and platforms to undertake change online.

Digital platforms engaged in language revitalisation programs in Victoria continue to show hopeful signs of language revival through data enhancement projects. Digital transformation and fast-paced changing technological advances can lead to improved collections management practices and language rejuvenation. The new museum attempts to adapt to changing technologies and engages a curatorial praxis that is led by co-curation. Museums must fight for the leisure time of visitors through the development of exciting and relevant programs, often through a more ethical mandate.<sup>3</sup> In the new museum, relationships with living cross-cultural communities, and an understanding by museum professionals on control and ownership of cultural heritage and preservation, is mandatory.

Supported by the findings of this research, the thesis argues that museums can and should explore deeper understanding of language employed in terminology, vocabulary and stories connected to indigenous collections, and this is possible once a commitment to language is instilled at all levels of the institution. I conclude that theory and literature have little impact on professional practice unless the museums themselves are open to change in governance structures, policy and procedures. In short, I argue that language is as important to preserve as the objects themselves.

The thesis concludes that a developed awareness of indigenous terminology and language as an integral part of museum practice does improve understandings of historical life and the contemporary role of indigenous objects for both indigenous and non-indigenous professionals and community, and that collaboration can lead to improved collections management and language rejuvenation.

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<sup>2</sup> Eshraghi, Leuli and Moulton, Kimberely 2020, 'Editorial: Kin Costellations - languages, waters, futures', *Artlink*, vol. 40, no.2, pp.7–10. Kimberly Moulton is now Senior Curator, South-Eastern Aboriginal Collections at Museums Victoria.

<sup>3</sup> Healy 2006, *op.cit.*; Message, Kylie 2006, *New museums and the making of culture*, Berg Publishers, Oxford.

Although the thesis focused on a paradigm shift in Australian and Aotearoa museums and language connection during 2010–2011, improvements to language documentation in collections management practice are still not at a level that might be expected almost a decade later. Museums continue to realise the complexities of consultation, struggle with a backlog of catalogue entries to be digitised, and front of house research on languages remains disconnected from collections management systems. As acknowledged in the discussion and analysis of the research in chapter 5, a re-envisioning of the roles of Curator and Collection Manager is required to enable professional practice to be better aligned with communities through co-curation and co-collaboration.

There are further lessons for Australian museums from this research. Australian museums are not accustomed to producing language policies with local language groups. A national body for the management of indigenous languages in Australia does not exist. State language bodies continue to be challenged by funding changes and shifts in government priorities. Further research is required to produce an interdisciplinary focus for collections documentation in Australia, and a national standards and framework for professional practices and procedures on indigenous language documentation for cultural institutions.

The museum sector can become a leader in engaging with cultural knowledge holders and language groups to ensure language revival and strengthening continues. Working in partnership to re-connect communities to language and collections is a tangible approach to building strength and wellbeing in communities. Language specialists, community members and researchers need to be reconnected to objects held in collections for true records and understanding of culture to be documented for many years to come. It is time for museums to acknowledge and lead the practice of data enhancement with indigenous languages. If the Australian museum sector learns to listen, objects can speak.



**Figure 69** Koori artworks stand in front of office buildings, (photograph) Karina Lamb, Melbourne 2010.

## Appendix 1: Research Participants

Thank you to all of the research participants who shared with me their knowledge. The following list includes all interviewees and positions at the time the interviews took place.

### **Melbourne Museum**

Antoinette Smith, Senior Curator – Southeast Australia Collection  
David Sluki, Senior Curator, Bunjilaka Redevelopment  
Elizabeth Suda, Public Programs Co-Ordinator – Humanities  
John Duggan, Assistant Collections Manager – Australia Ethnographic Collection  
Kimberley Moulton, Project Officer, Bunjilaka Redevelopment  
Lindy Allen, Senior Curator, Northern Australian Collection and Acting Head of Department  
Melanie Raberts, Manager – Indigenous Cultures  
Nancy Ladas, Manager, Collections Information Systems  
Penny Iking, Collection Manager – International Collections  
Philip Batty, Senior Curator – Central Australian Collection  
Sandra Smith, Family History Coordinator

### **Koorie Heritage Trust**

Christine Keeler, Assistant Collections Manager  
Ian Scott, Business Development Manager  
Jason Eades, Chief Executive Officer  
Jim Berg, Founder  
Jodie Dowd, Collection Cadet  
Judith Williams, Librarian  
Maree Clarke, Manager Exhibitions  
Miriam Troon, Senior Collections Manager  
Nerissa Broben, Senior Collections Manager  
Rita Morrison, Oral History Manager

### **Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa**

Arapata Hakiwai, Māori Scholar  
Awhina Tamarapa, Curator Mātauranga Māori  
Dougal Austin, Curator Mātauranga Māori  
Gabrielle Lawson, Education Operations & Communications Coordinator  
Giselle Stanton, Collections Information Manager – Standards and Support  
Joan Costello, Te reo Māori teacher  
Julie Noanoa, Education Program Developer  
Lisa Ward, Collections Manager, Māori  
Michael Houlihan, Chief Executive Officer  
Michelle Hippolite, Kaihautū Māori  
Noel Osbourne, Collections Manager, Māori  
Paora Tibble, Writer, Te reo Māori  
Rhonda Paku, Senior Curator, Mātauranga Māori  
Ross O'Rouke, Collections Manager, International Collections

Sean Mallon, Senior Collections Manager, Pacific Collections  
Shane Pasene, Conservator Technician  
Sonya Davis, Iwi Relationships

### **Tairāwhiti Museum**

Anne Milton-Tee, Collections Manager  
David Butts, Director  
Dudley Meadows, Photography Collections Management  
Ingrid Searancke, Board Member, Friends of the Museum  
Jen Pewhairangi, Education Officer  
Jody Wylie, Research Manager/ Kaitiaki  
Joelene Douglas, Curator of Art  
Michael Muir, Board Member & Owner Gisborne Herald  
Monty Soutar, Previous Director  
Victor Walker, Trustee/ Chief Executive Officer, Ngāti Porou

### **Other Research Participants**

Barbara Glennis, Chief Executive Officer, Māori Language Commission  
Christina Eira, Community Linguist, VACL  
Derek Lardelli, Tā Moko Artist & Senior Lecturer, Toi Houkura, Tairāwhiti Polytech  
Elizabeth Mana Hunkin, Kuia from Ngāti Rakaipaaka / Te Ataarangi Tutor  
Graham Hunkin, Te Ataarangi Tutor  
Jim Samson, Director, Wairoa Museum  
John 'Sandy' Atkinson, Elder & VACL Board Member, VACL  
Mere Pohatu & Marsha, Te Puni Kōkiri - Te Puni Kōkiri  
N'Arweet Carolyn Briggs, Boon Wurrung Elder/ VACL Board Members  
Neil Pardington, Artist, *The Vault* exhibition  
Paul Paton, Executive Manager, VACL  
Sarah Pohatu, Masters Student, PA to Victor Walker, Ngāti Porou  
Thomas Kinchela, Language Worker, VACL  
Vicki Couzens, Artist, Language Worker, VACL

## Appendix 2: Koorie Heritage Trust Language Policy Draft

Received by Nerissa Broben, 2010.

### Language Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide an operational framework for the management and interpretation of items in the Koorie Heritage Trust Inc.'s Collections. This policy helps KHT Curators understand how we can support the maintenance and revival of Koorie languages in Victoria and enhance the interpretation of items in our collections.

'Language is central to culture as the repository of cultural knowledge, continuing the unbroken songline and emphasizing the vibrancy of the living culture'.

C.Keeler & V.Couzens, Meerreeng-An, 2010 p.3

### Background

Victorian Aboriginal languages started being documented by non-indigenous people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, using English letters to spell sounds that do not exist in English. As a result we need to recognise that there may be different versions of language words and spelling of words may evolve as some communities adopt consistent spelling rules.

'Language expresses our spiritual life. It is like the people and land belong together, as do language and land, and language is essential to linking past, present and future for all Australians. I believe that language revival is most important in that we can again gather, learn and practice the lost ceremonial songs, dances and spiritual stories of our culture.'

J. Moate, Tangurung, Meerreeng-An

### Guidelines

The artist/craftsperson/individual is recognised as the expert on language groups and language words (including spelling) to document and interpret their work. Where this individual is not known the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages is considered the key resource.

KHT Curators will always display the Language group/s of an artist/craftsperson alongside the individual's name, where this information is known i.e. *Vicki Couzens, Keerray Wooroong Gunditjmarra*.

KHT Curators will actively seek to document Aboriginal language in the data collected about new acquisitions i.e. The word '*pungart*' be used as the title to describe a basket made by a Dharwurd Wurrung artist.

KHT Curators will actively seek to use Aboriginal language in the interpretation of collection items through use on labels, stories and signage created for exhibitions and other educational resources.

The policy draft is directed heavily towards display (which I would consider may need to also extend from the exhibitions Unit within the Trust). I suggested to Nerissa that feedback is received from

VACL and that all departments may add to the policy so that it becomes an overarching organisational policy. I will prepare detailed comments for the CMs next week.

I received an email from Nerissa today to say that they had received feedback from VACL on their draft of the language policy for the collections unit. Copied below:

The new policy will include the following points:

1) KHT Curators will actively seek to document Aboriginal language in the data collected about new acquisitions, i.e. 'do you have any language words you use in association with this work or in the making of this work?'

2) KHT Curators will facilitate sharing language connected with new acquisitions back to the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL). The following questions surrounding language will be added to an Acquisitions Details form including;

What is the spelling of the word?

What is the meaning of the word?

What language group is this word from?

History of where they got the word from i.e. Uncle etc.

Would you like the language word/s to be shared/recorded in the VACL database?

Where KHT Curators believe the word/s may not be recorded and the artist has given permission for the word/s to be shared, they will email the answers to the following questions to VACL to add to their database.



# **Appendix 3: Indigenous Languages Collections Issues and Actions**

## **Paper (extract)**

### **Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group 2011**

#### **Executive summary**

#### **Background**

The Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group coordinated the National Indigenous Languages Collections Forum to address key points contained in the National Indigenous Languages Policy, these noting the role of national collecting institutions in preserving and making accessible materials relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

The Forum brought together representatives of major national, state and territory collecting institutions to recommend strategies relevant to the development of a National Indigenous Language Materials Collection Policy. This would aim to ensure effective and appropriate management of language materials into the future.

#### **Discussion outcomes**

Participants were asked to draft a set of issues for consideration and discussion related to four key areas – auditing and identification of resources, access to collections, indigenous knowledge and growing collections. Each set of issues was then summarised into statements to guide future action, as follows:

#### **Auditing and identification of resources**

There is a need for funding of a national awareness campaign to investigate the location of materials concerning indigenous language and knowledges, and to maximise indigenous ownership, access to and intellectual property rights over this material. A central information database should be established for community people to locate their own materials. Partnerships should be established between indigenous communities, libraries, universities and museums, with grants provided for indigenous community research.

## **Access to collections**

The ultimate purpose of this project is to bring both the historical and contemporary records that are kept in collection institutions to the notice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is envisaged that this will be done in a format that allows maximum access and engagement by language researchers. It is acknowledged that the matter of access can be contentious, with community members expressing concerns about how language knowledge can be protected until decisions are made about the materials and the knowledge that it contains.

## **Indigenous Knowledge**

It is vital that indigenous ownership of our knowledge and languages be fully recognised and reflected in a robust set of uniform national guidelines for the use of and access to indigenous knowledge.

## **Growing Collections**

It was widely acknowledged by the conference participants that current collection policies and library practices have not supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to effectively access services and resources. Collection agencies can undertake to grow collections with historic and contemporary resources that hold language information. It was agreed that the ever-changing models of collection impact on the range of materials held as well as how they are made accessible. It was the consensus view that work must be done to establish a national framework, based on existing infrastructures.

## **Key Recommendations**

In order to address the issues raised, a number of strategies were proposed by forum participants. These have informed the following recommendations.

That the peak National and State collection institutions:

1. develop in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities an overarching policy that states their commitment to making indigenous language and cultural resources accessible,
2. develop strategic plans of action for work to commence on providing high quality access to language and materials,
3. develop and adopt a set of protocols to provide advice on the collection and management of current and future materials,

4. develop procedures to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in full consultation to ensure appropriate storage and access to collections,
5. develop a national strategy to locate items and improve access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to resources currently held by institutions,
6. develop a set of appropriate and sensitive cataloguing standards for cultural items held in collections,
7. establish a central database of materials held across all major institutions in Australia,
8. develop strategies to discover, describe and undertake initial linguistic investigation of materials that are held within their collections,
9. develop strategies to monitor emerging technologies and the impact that these will have on the management of cultural materials, and
10. allocate resources to audit, update and maintain existing collections.

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