



Heritage & Community Conference - 27-28 February 2001

Forum 1 - Heritage and Community - what do they mean to you?

posted 26 February 2001 06:49 PM

Convenor: Joy McCann



Joy McCann is a historian who has worked for many years on heritage projects with both communities and government agencies. Her recent work includes a study of the movable heritage of shops and shopping in NSW, contributing to the development of a guide for migrant communities to identify their heritage, and current research with farming communities and their attachment to land. Joy has postgraduate qualifications in public history.

Issues for discussion (discussion starter)

Subjects we hope to cover in this forum include:

- 1) Thinking about your own heritage
- 2) Why it's important
- 3) How a community comes to know and share its heritage
- 4) Different kinds of heritage places
- 5) Who looks after them?

- Let's start with the word 'heritage': 'that which comes or belongs to one by reason of birth; an inherited lot or portion' (*Macquarie Dictionary*, Macquarie University, NSW 1985).

Think about your own inheritance or 'heritage' – a family heirloom, perhaps a precious letter from your grandmother, a tradition of celebrating particular days, something that symbolises an important part of your life, or your family's identity. Note the words 'comes or belongs to one'. There is a sense that your inheritance is yours already, rather than having to be given to you. Why is it important that you 'inherit' these things?

- So, what about a community's heritage - an inheritance that 'comes or belongs' to a group of people who are part of a community?

What do you think community means? Do you belong to a community that shares a particular heritage? Are places a key part of the community's identity? How is a sense of place important to them?

- We're interested here in heritage places. How can a group feel that a place somehow comes or belongs to them, even though they may not actually own it? They might never have even visited the place, but somehow they have come to think of it as their heritage, and that they want to see it kept for the future.

An ordinary piece of land (or building, or any kind of place) can unite all kinds of people, if they see their 'heritage' as being under threat. Mining in Kakadu or the Franklin Dam are obvious examples. What local examples do you know of? What was the 'community'? What was the place? What brought them together to protect it? Was it a sense of wanting to protect their 'heritage', or other motives?

- People have different ideas about what heritage places might be, and who should look after them.

Do you share with others some kind of activity, place, or experience that you think helps to define who you are? Who do you share it with? If the place is an important part of it, are there ways that you can have a say in what happens to that place? Is it easier to have a say because you are one of a number of people that care about it? If it is a privately owned place, is there some issue here about whether they should look after your community's heritage?

General comments

Thank you to all who contributed or tuned into this forum. Here are some themes and issues that emerged in this discussion. Some of the issues were also raised in other forums, so it is worth having a look at them for relevant comments, examples and case studies.

Key themes and issues (summary)

1. Defining heritage

- Heritage is what we inherit, and generally defines us - it embraces different aspects of culture, including objects, dress, traditional practices, songs, stories, etc.
- Formal heritage processes tend to focus on places and ignore intangible heritage.
- Heritage practitioners tend to compartmentalise heritage when consulting communities, while communities see their heritage holistically.
- The concept of 'place' is often reduced to 'site', and ignores larger units such as streetscapes that are often more important and valued than a single site.

2. Defining levels of heritage significance

- Communities can play a key role in the process of defining significance and making local comparisons, but if communities adopt heritage processes such as ranking significance, they may lose confidence in appreciating their own environment and look to professionals to verify what their heritage is.

- People value many more things than those places that may end up on registers. Oral history one way of finding what people really value, rather than asking them to 'rate' significant places.

3. Intangible heritage

- Intangible heritage is integral to cultural identity, but is vulnerable in a rapidly changing world (e.g. urban development, redundant industry). For example, municipal mergers in Canada show how such changes can have a huge impact on the cultural heritage of a community through loss of its distinctive cultural institutions, and pose threats to the less obvious heritage sites of the different cultural groups.
- A need to challenge the view that community heritage values and intangible heritage values such as social value are too 'warm and fuzzy', not professional or reliable.
- Where tangible heritage can be readily linked into a heritage program, the community can be on its own in preserving intangible heritage like music and dance. Examples showed how intangible heritage can be managed and cultural identity maintained through oral traditions, stories, customs, songs, ceremonies, etc associated with Indigenous communities, including being actively backed by legislation.
- Concern about how information, once collected, can be protected and used in culturally appropriate ways.
- A need to develop assessment and management techniques that deal with traditional community uses of a place with cultural values in areas managed for natural values.
- A need to look at examples of where intangible practices are being invigorated or where legislation and policies promote continuity and respect for traditional practices, and to consider ways other than listing to actively manage change and continuity.

4. Many heritages, different voices

- Lessons to be learned by heritage practitioners from consultation with indigenous communities about respecting differences of other groups and their right to speak for themselves.
- Consulting communities requires taking many heritages into account, but this can be difficult with resource constraints. Changing exhibitions, displays and other activities can help a community appreciate different views and changing sense of its heritage, and keep it from fossilising.
- Defining a community's heritage often involves the need to deal with contested views of the past.

Recommendations or other outcomes

- It would be useful to have contributions of good examples and techniques for assessing and managing intangible values from forum participants and others, to be included on an Australia ICOMOS web page.
- The web page could also include Internet sites suggested during the forum concerning indigenous communities and their interests.

Issues for further discussion

- How heritage practices be adapted to ensure that communities don't just end up 'playing the heritage game', but remain confident in valuing their own heritage, and are able to remain involved in the process.
- How is intangible community heritage being recognised and cared for in Australia and overseas?
- Should heritage listings encompass cultural activities associated with place?
- How heritage agencies can form partnerships to overcome the generally fragmented approach to heritage work in Australia.

Posts: 14

Registered: Feb 2001

Discussion: Heritage and the community –what do they mean to you?

Good morning and a very warm welcome to Forum 1 of the online conference. You have arrived!

This forum is about HERITAGE AND COMMUNITY - WHAT DO THEY MEAN TO YOU?

Over the next two days, we want to explore ideas about 'heritage' and community, and what they mean to us. Based on people's experience, we will be looking for views and ideas about the relationship between communities and the places important to their sense of heritage and identity.

- It is one of 5 forums being held simultaneously between 8.30 am and 9.00 pm today (Tuesday 27 February) and tomorrow (Wednesday 28 February). Feel free to 'tune in' to any of the other forum topics during these two days.
- You can come and go as you please. Just remember that each time you want to check on new messages, press the REFRESH or RELOAD button on your computer, to ensure that you receive the most up-to-date messages.
- Whenever you log out and want to log in again, just enter your name and password.
- It might be helpful to treat this site as though we are brainstorming ideas on a white board - you 'post' a message and other people read it and add to it or respond if they feel they want to. Incidentally, a live Internet 'chat site' was not possible because it would not have been accessible for most people, so bear with us in this brave new world of the online conference!

So, here we go. Would anyone like to start the ball rolling? Are there some burning topics that you want to raise or questions you want to ask?

Juliet Ramsay

New Member

Posts: 4

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 09:36 AM

Hi Joy

It would be interesting to hear what community groups or people in the community think heritage is. For those of us who work in heritage, it is always places. Heritage can be much more extensive, embracing traditions, symbolism and other intangible values and many of these are difficult to relate to place.

Stephen Powell

New Member

Posts: 4

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 09:39 AM

Hello all I'm fairly new to the work of thinking about heritage and communities, so I would be really interested to hear the views of some more experienced people on this issue. Does it help or hinder a community when its members are called on to define the level of their area's heritage, e.g. as local OR regional OR national (or even world heritage, I guess)?

laurag

Moderator

Posts: 20

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 09:50 AM

Hi joy... all the best... in my experience, a community's heritage can be many diverse things, and often it is difficult to articulate what they are, or even agree on what they are... doesn't make it any less significant to those who value it, for whatever reason, does it?

Joy McCann

Administrator

Posts: 14

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 10:01 AM

Re: what 'heritage' encompasses.

Perhaps there is an issue here about the fact that some professionals (from heritage agencies, museums. etc) are intent on identifying places as part of a planning or legislative process - they have to come up with something material...while people may not see the need to break up their world into categories. Is there an issue here about people having different purposes, or perhaps some people feel safer dealing with physical/tangible things?

laurag

Moderator

Posts: 20

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 10:17 AM

Certainly the issue of legislative processes- heritage surveys (Municipal inventories in WA) forced people into thinking about what cultural heritage was, and it was a place dominated process, for justifiable reasons, but it certainly goes far beyond labeling places Of course places are identified for their cultural heritage value not necessarily for the place as such, but for the events and memories of people who have associated in

that place.... So does that make the 'place' of heritage value... would those people still have the 'cultural heritage value' of their experiences if the place wasn't there?

Peter Marquis-Kyle

Member

Posts: 10

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 10:55 AM

Stephen Powell asked "Does it help or hinder a community when its members are called on to define the level of their area's heritage..."

I think community debate on this issue is "helpful". It may be contentious. But working through the contention, saying what is important, and hearing people say "this is more important to me than that", are things that give me a deeper sense of connection to the scene.

Stephen's question was actually more specific. He asked about determining the "level" of significance on the local/regional/national/world scale. I'll think about that next (after I have worked out how many angels can stand on the head of a pin).

Lucy Williams

Member

Posts: 5

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 11:22 AM

Although we have assessment criteria, measuring and quantifying social value is always difficult. People do not often consider the value a certain place has for them - unless the place is under threat!

Chris Johnston - Convenor

Administrator

Posts: 11

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 11:30 AM

Stephen asked Does it help or hinder a community when its members are called on to define the level of their area's heritage. A related question is about the roles a community can play in defining significance. In my experience, a local community is very good at knowing what's in their local area and making local comparisons. In some regions, the same is true. For example, in East Gippsland there is a Heritage Network of community organisations that have been working together for a while and could easily do a regional comparative analysis.

But not all communities are "local". So communities defined by ethnicity for example, might feel they could define significance nationally, again through a comparative process.

I'm just counting angels too - what do others think!

Joy McCann

Administrator

Posts: 14

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 12:03 PM

Just a reminder that there will be a debate taking place between 12noon-1pm EST - go to Online Forums: Let's Talk! and scroll down to the LUNCHTIME DEBATE. It will be worth having a look in at what the debate panel is saying.

In this forum, FORUM 1, we have a few topics being discussed already:

1. Does it help or hinder a community when members are called on to define the level (local/regional/national) of their area's heritage? SEE comments from Stephen Powell, Peter Marquis-Kyle, and Chris Johnston.
2. What does heritage cover - places yes, but it's really about what people value and people don't necessarily consider this until there's a threat. SEE comments from laurag, Lucy Williams, and me. Also see Marilyn Truscott's post under Forum 3.

[This message has been edited by Joy McCann (edited 27 February 2001).]

[This message has been edited by Joy McCann (edited 27 February 2001).]

Meredith Walker

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 01:30 PM

Re: Stephen's question and the notion of ranking. Whilst communities such as East Gippsland may be able to learn to assess places using our methods (or approximations of them), I think there are real dangers in requiring the communities to play the heritage game our way. After a while they ask use whether something is 'heritage' - i.e. they may lose confidence in their own appreciation of the environment. At community workshops I have attended, it is clear that people appreciate a much wider range of things than would get on registers. How can we adapt our process to reflect people's concerns?

Kirsty Altenburg

New Member

Posts: 2

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 02:09 PM

Local government and communities are increasingly being given more responsibility for heritage conservation. I would be interested in hearing from communities how heritage professionals can assist them. What role do communities see for heritage professionals?

Joy McCann

Administrator

Posts: 14

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 02:09 PM

Re: Stephen's question about ranking:

Thanks - there are some useful comments on this one.

One of my favourite projects was from 1993 called 'All my lifetime it was there...' by PLACE Inc on the valuing of Ballarat East in Victoria. I suggest having a quick squizz at SEARCH THE PROJECT DATABASE (see the button above) and search on EAST BALLARAT.

It aimed to capture the 'flavour' of Ballarat East by finding out what mattered to the people who lived there, rather than asking them about their 'heritage'. Roughly paraphrasing, they found the term 'heritage' meant people only focused on old buildings. Also, that defining local values, character and quality should be an end in itself, rather than being necessary for rating their local places at a state or national level...it was all about local community values anyway.

Marilyn Truscott

Member

Posts: 18

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 02:25 PM

Back to 'what is heritage' or 'rather what is community' - I said in Forum 3 and Lorraine Cairnes in Forum 5 - we practitioners are accustomed to the compartments that our different disciplines or administrative structures have divided heritage into - but communities don't see it that way. Heritage is NOT place at all.

I'm not about to launch into a definition of heritage as there are many better ones around than I could give, but want to remind all of us that heritage is what we inherit, and is generally what defines us. So it is place, and it is also objects, and it is also dress, and custom, and song and jokes etc etc i.e. communities are defined by their heritage (or their culture if you prefer that term).

And all communities sense that, and that is why they find it difficult when we practitioners go in and what to limit our consultation with them on one separate element. Yes to everyone here and in the other Forums who have said it is too divided the way we practitioners go about it. How then can we learn to go to a community and ask them what their heritage is in the fullest sense? Without in that very act, starting to interfere with that sense of wholeness, or as someone said elsewhere (sorry can't find who it was) causing a community to doubt its own sense of its heritage/its sense of self and defer to 'experts' as to what their heritage is.

The East Gippsland model and no doubt others may be able to teach us 'heritage experts' a thing or two.

And another side on the divisions - as an archaeologist I'm accustomed to looking at everything possible to arrive at an understanding of a past community, so place and object and related stories and writings and and and - but these are surely only devices to cherish communities and their special difference and special story, and how that story may give us an understanding of our situation - not a means to an end of itself - that is antiquarianism - is that the trap we heritage practitioners are falling into? .

Jim Russell

New Member

Posts: 3

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 02:49 PM

I too think that heritage is much broader than those compartments being referred to. It seems that we are possibly getting into the realm of intangible values here, if not other realms.

In this context, a definition of heritage that was used in the Tasmanian State of the Environment Report (1996) is interesting. The first part of the definition refers generally to the community's inheritance from the past and how heritage management is about what will be retained and how it will be used. The second part says that the most fundamental aim of management is understanding others and ourselves AND how that knowledge can be used to shape the present and a future.

It also brings to mind the World Heritage 'prescription' about how policy for the heritage resource is to be aimed at giving it a function in the life of the community.

Sandy blair

New Member

Posts: 4

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 02:55 PM

My understanding of what is heritage was completely changed through the process of running community heritage workshops in the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) process.

The workshops turned up literally 100s of places not on heritage registers and the range of places was very broad, and included places that would not have been evident to heritage professionals without a consultation process.

I think we were able to influence forest-planning processes to an extent, to consider such places as worthy of conservation. Many people were (and still are?) very suspicious and saw the community based assessment process as 'soft and fuzzy', and hence not professional or reliable. I think we still have a huge task of education to do in relation to community heritage values.

Organisations such as Australia ICOMOS have helped with the revisions to the Burra Charter, but there is still much to be done to change practice.

This conference, for instance!

Meredith Walker

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 03:13 PM

I agree with Jim, whatever the definition of 'heritage' it needs a goal or context for it to be understood. If we are to learn about ourselves, the places we live and our communities, listing is only one method. If heritage is to have a broader meaning (and

broader support) perhaps action in ways other than listing and development control need more attention?

Paul Maxwell

Member

Posts: 11

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 03:20 PM

Re Juliet Ramsay's point - what is heritage, "is it always places"

I'm sure many of us would not want to limit heritage to 'places' alone. Industry, activity, worship, art, crafts, traditional events, music, dance and more would properly fall under the banner of 'heritage'. It seems to me however that we have evolved theatres, galleries and museums, for instance, to honor some of these heritage matters and whilst these are effective to a degree we want more. I certainly do. I want my community to revel in its' rich maritime, industrial, commercial and residential past without making my township a kitsch "museum" oddity.

I have been concerned for some time now over the emphasis of 'place' which so often comes down to 'site'. In other words heritage registers that devote energies to individual houses for instance. I would like to see greater emphasis given to larger units - that a cluster of historic buildings is exponentially more important than one, that 'streetscape' be valued more highly than the individual pieces of the street, and historic neighbourhoods valued as irreplaceable and extraordinary gifts.

We still seem to be gripped with our infamous 'cultural cringe' unable to discern that we do have culture, that we do have heritage and much of this is unique and worthwhile. I cite as evidence here the fact that all of Australia's "world heritage areas" are natural wonders - as yet we feel too insignificant to propose any 'built heritage' as worthy.

So Juliet, I have strayed from your point and back onto my hobbyhorse. Yes heritage is vastly broader than 'place' - but 'place' is so important to the context of heritage it demands our attention.

Marilyn Truscott

Member

Posts: 18

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 03:20 PM

I agree with Meredith, and PeterMK in another forum, in regards to imbalance of the effort given to listing - and identification - it is time that we practitioners, facilitated [as many of us now do rather than being experts communities to make their own decisions

As both Jim and I say above heritage is about how communities identify themselves - and we seem to have been in the process of first telling them what their heritage is, and then more recently asking them for their values and then taking them away from them. Despite that, as Sandy says, it was very heartening at the community heritage workshops that were held as part of the Regional Forest Agreements - to see that the process did allow communities to 'own' what they were identifying and that it was very empowering for them. I am however concerned that that community consultation process pretty much stopped - yet again - with identification, and there was little done to ensure that local community groups have an ONGOING say and role in what happens to those values that they offered up to be identified in the RFAs.

I'm constantly reminded that in Australia we have in heritage practice been informed by what is happening in indigenous heritage - there consultation was well entrenched before non-indigenous [with exceptions], there such consultation has shifted to negotiation, with a real say by the relevant indigenous groups - I think it is because we have acknowledged the difference, the otherness of the indigenous community, and that we, as experts, wouldn't DARE speak for them any longer [I don't for a moment ignore that it was pretty bad for ages, and still can be].

However, we seem only slowly to be acknowledging the specialness and the diversity of communities within Australia - and the complexity of not only local, but also communities of interest and association etc, and that we can no longer speak for them.

So I would suggest that we continue to keep an eye on the indigenous situation as there is likely to be more we can learn from it - eg in the case of the RFAs we were able to ensure an ongoing decision-making role for indigenous groups for their heritage [although it wasn't as I said even attempted for non-indigenous community heritage].

Ava Tomlinson

New Member

Posts: 4

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 03:50 PM

As it draws closer to midnight here my colleague logged off. We had a stimulating conversation off line on Australian indigenous peoples (he has visited Australia, I am motivated to visit and study there by the 2000 Olympics).

The essence of the conversation was

1. How do the Aboriginal communities maintain their cultural identity in a rapidly changing world while the modernist encroach on them (this is his opinion).

Perhaps some one could enlighten me, as I am not as familiar with that aspect of your heritage. In the case our indigenous peoples have lost them all in the fifteen century as a result of Spanish colonialism, we are now learning more about them- the Tainos, from archaeological excavations.

Joy McCann

Administrator

Posts: 14

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 04:04 PM

Ava - welcome to you (and your colleague) to this discussion, and thank you for your interest in the conference even as midnight approaches in your part of the world! You raise a very important question - is there anyone who could have a go at answering Ava's question in the Australian context?

[This message has been edited by Joy McCann (edited 27 February 2001).]

Juliet Ramsay

New Member

Posts: 4

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 05:30 PM

All the responses regarding 'is heritage place' are interesting. Of course heritage is more than place being all sorts of inherited aspects of culture. I agree with Peter Maxwell that 'place' is too often converted to 'site' and I like the term Jim used 'inheritance'. I am very interested in intangible values and they are having a higher profile in heritage nowadays. But what we deal with are indeed attached to place. In fact I received a paper on Africa Mountain Protected Areas today that mentioned the spiritual values - sacredness, fear, ceremony and mystique and places of pilgrimage attached to mountains. The heritage is very similar to Aboriginal values. The paper also touched on some of the management issues that could be of interest to all of you 'out there'. I can pass it on if you are interested.

However the heritage profession is focussed on protecting 'places'. Should the heritage agencies be more encompassing in their listings and include all the cultural activities associated with a place such as recipes, songs, gardening techniques, and dances? Should we be forming partnerships with other agencies that cover those aspects of heritage?

Joan Croll

New Member

Posts: 3

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 05:57 PM

Dear Ava Tomlinson ? NZ

Who can speak for indigenous Australians?

Are they one people? No. The disparate groups of Aboriginals from the Central Desert, Tiwi Island, Torres Strait, Arnhem Land, the Kimberleys together with thousands of urban dwelling non-traditional kids, seen performing together by billions around the world at the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games were unbelievably excited by their first ever meeting with others of different cultural, language and skin groups, and yet we lump them all together as Aboriginals of meeting their d. The recent archeological finding of an 'Australoid' skull in North America suggests that aboriginal-like people came from somewhere to the US and to Australia at about the same time, or that they developed independently of each other quite co-incidentally.

No, every group must represent itself, and despite the horrors inflicted by white man's abuse and diseases, many white settlers and their aboriginal neighbours exist in harmony, and share their farms and sacred sites without problems. Perhaps there are too many stirrers in the mix?

Marilyn Truscott

Member

Posts: 18

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 06:16 PM

Ava

Your question and how to answer it - as others say it is only indigenous people themselves who can but have a look at the many sites that may help
eg the Reconciliation site: www.reconciliation.org.au - that includes just so much that is inspiring

www.aiatsis.gov.au - again a wonderful place that has just so much heritage information some originating when scientists and anthropologists studied indigenous people a bit like the fauna and flora, but now run by a majority indigenous council with special programs that enable indigenous groups to rediscover their languages, rituals, stories and dance - to reinherit their heritage

or www.atsic.gov.au - the indigenous council that administers indigenous interests

and many hundreds of websites by individual councils and bodies
eg www.nlc.com.au or www.clc.com.au

these also discuss how heritage is being dealt with from those communities perspectives

all there for you to find when you wake up Ava!

Su Ferreira

New Member

Posts: 1

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 07:31 PM

Hi Joy and all,

Yes Heritage is the \$64,000 question. It seems sometimes that it does not matter what you try and do to make dealing with heritage, and the plethora of issues that go with it, as fair and as equitable as possible you get yourself into deeper water.

I am currently setting up a local museum for a local government and we have recently attempted to redefine our advisory committee. We felt that we needed more community input and so invited community members to the facilitated meeting. Firstly we could not agree on a definition of heritage and secondly the members of the community were in fact representing themselves in terms of what they considered historically significant and what should be done. They were token's I suppose not an answer to our public representation problem.

We are also attempting to include the pre-European heritage of the area as well as the European heritage and then of course there is the multicultural heritage.

Are there many heritages? Instead of just one big one? And, is it possible ever to grasp a true representation of heritage from the community given the constraints of policy, politics, subjectiveness and resources etc?

Joy McCann

Administrator

Posts: 14

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 07:43

Great discussion. I'm learning a great deal from this and the other forums.

Incidentally, Ava is from Jamaica. For those of you on evening shift, or if you have been keeping in touch all day (with refreshments I hope), you will find a few 'threads' to follow in our conversations today. By all means, put in your 'two bob's worth' (sorry, showing my English heritage) on any of them at any time.

For me, it's the intangible stuff that has kept me inspired through my work - whether it be personal heritage through oral history or with community groups, and often feeling less like a practitioner and more like I simply share a fascination with that powerful sense of the past that comes through stories or old-time gatherings like country dances. I recently watched a fantastic documentary (SBS?) called 'Wool Princesses', where daughters of a farming family in Queensland came home to see how life was now, after some 40 years, and reflected on local social gatherings like the debutante ball and the humourously named 'Beach Ball' (this was in outback Queensland!), and the effects of declining populations on these traditions.

Sorry, I digress...I'm really talking here about the power of living places, and the grieving that goes with their loss.

[This message has been edited by Joy McCann (edited 27 February 2001).]

Joy McCann

Administrator

Posts: 14

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 09:07 PM

Well folks, I'm off to bed, with my mind buzzing. Thank you for joining in with this forum and I look forward to what the new day brings. For our friends in other time zones, welcome and we look forward to hearing from you if you have just tuned in.

I'll be back online at 9 am Wednesday (Eastern Standard Time). Good evening.

Ava Tomlinson

New Member

Posts: 4

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 09:52 PM

Good morning from Jamaica (6am). Thanks for your response to my question. I will be sure to log on to the sites later to day when I return from work. See you then.

Dinu Bumbaru

New Member

Posts: 1

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 11:35 PM

Hello from Below-zero land

Quite interested in the whole discussion I only glided over. A comment I could make from our perspective is that often you see the issue of community established or

understood through the one of leadership or representative democracy. We're often caught in this here in Montreal, especially with the different viewpoints that come from having large cultures here -- francocatholics and angloprotestant with a whole range of other ones --. A current issue that illustrates this is that of municipal mergers (the provincial government decided to merge all 28 municipalities of the island into one supposedly to save taxes) which are seen by many as a heritage issue as it will make 100-150 years old institutions, some of which quite cherished by the English Community as a mean to ensure biligual status, will disappear in a large, faceless entity. Some are thinking of going to the United Nations like the Cree Indians did. Such a concern has made authorities sensitive to the idea of having civic institutions developed in the process (which would otherwise focus mostly on trade union collective bargaining and snow removal budgets). In that context, how do we deal with different types of heritage resources, some of which tend to be less obvious like archaeological sites in workers neighbourhoods or pre-french sites in a modern metropolis or even recent heritage? We have a meeting this afternoon with people from Ottawa, who went through similar mergers last year (without the French-English thing) to look at models to deal with Community as Heritage in a context where not all Heritage is known by the Community. I'm off to turn the heat on. D.

Suze

Member

Posts: 6

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 12:32 AM

Hi Ava Tomlinson & Colleague,

Speaking as a Wiradjuri descendant, we have maintained cultural identity mainly via oral tradition which includes 'stories' of places and their significance; also songs of journeys through the country. We also utilised tree markings to indicate that this place has significance, take notice; perhaps a burial site, an initiation ground, a bora circle. Stable and enduring natural features in the environment have been given great significance, as these can house or symbolise messages for many generations to follow ie: cave paintings, rock paintings, stories scribed on rock. Piles of rocks to mark significant places, perhaps burial sites, or secret water sources. We have also transfered stories to artwork via symbols, much as an excercise to remember its essence, keep it alive. If not painted then drawn in the dirt. A lot of drawing symbols and maps in the dirt with a stick, and sitting round the fire, testing memory...point out some stars and ask who are those, and what are their stories. Also learning all the stories of the animals, birds, fish, reptiles and plants that teach the wisdoms of natural relationships.

All this teaching is via our Elders. Our tribe was very split up, people scattered, many died, so it has been a long, slow process to find and re-connect with remaining Elders from different clans; to fan our cultural embers, and learn about our heritage. Some clans have lost their knowledge of their heritage, yet descendants will feel their connections through their ancestors' footsteps when they walk in their country again. Hear messages in the wind, feel subtle vibrations, the country guides it's children. To have our Elders taken from us before passing their teaching is catastrophic to culture maintenance, as is, destroying sites of significance. Many of the scar trees lost forever. If it is all destroyed...there are still the stories of the stars. So I think you could say we were multi-tasking in various ways to maintain heritage and culture.

Suze (Nharrandjera Wirradjuri - Southern NSW)

Suze

Member

Posts: 6

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 12:36 AM

Hi Juliet Ramsay,

Yes I think it would be wise to form partnerships with other agencies so that a more holistic view of a people's heritage can be gained. Otherwise wouldn't it be sort of fragmented...with some individual relics seeming insignificant "until" seen in context with the whole story?

Suze

Benjamin Briggs

New Member

Posts: 3

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 01:18 AM

Hi all, good to see your names again!

Here in North Carolina, USA, we are faced with similar challenges of what our heritage is. For example, a class I teach is involved in assisting a small textile mill village with preserving its history. This town is fairly proud about its past, despite the overall negative perceptions concerning textile history here in the American South.

To date, what "" we "preservationists" have valued stories, records and the built/ natural environment of this village which is fairly intact and unique. Those elements in the village we value include the mill, the workers housing, the commercial center and the owners house...to give you some idea of the inventory. Fortunately, we still have verbal and written history to breathe life into these objects and places.

What we cannot protect is the way of life in the community...our textile industry is in the final stages of moving off to Mexico and Asia. Therefore, the mill will likely become an interpretive museum, showing the textile manufacturing process to tourists. Mill housing will slowly become filled with families no longer affiliated with textiles at all. There is little we can do to prevent that...

What we can do is protect the built environment. The town nominated itself to the National Register around 1985 (which really offers no protection here, only an honor!), so I think there is local understanding of the value of the community. The citizens are working hard to preserve the mill as a museum, and the natural areas around the river as parks.

Still, we too face challenges concerning inclusiveness of all aspects of heritage as you all have pointed out. I hate the idea of ending the manufacturing heritage of the community by turning its workhorse into a museum. On the other hand, that is twenty-first century reality, and a valuable and common story of the rise and fall of textile history here (founded 1836- closed 1980). Perhaps it is the "full cycle" story this town experienced that can best be preserved.

Joy McCann

Administrator

Posts: 14

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 09:23 AM

Good morning to Day 2 of our online conference and welcome to Forum 1. Yesterday's discussion covered several threads, including:

- is defining local/regional/national levels of significance a help or hindrance to communities
- heritage as a community's inheritance from the past, being much more than place to embrace the intangible things that define community identity like arts, traditional activities and events, objects, stories - and ways to better acknowledge these as part of our heritage
- how can heritage professionals help local government and communities, who are taking more responsibility for heritage conservation
- acknowledging the specialness and diversity of communities and their right to speak for themselves
- the impacts of a changing world on cultural identity, ways of life, and related places (eg local government mergers, urban development, changing landuse practices)
- recognising cultural diversity, and protecting the heritage of different groups that is not necessarily known by the community
- the dilemmas of conserving all aspects of a community's heritage, while avoiding museumisation
- This is just a rough summary from which to embark on today's discussions (and I shall be doing a more precise overview at the end of the conference, as will all forum facilitators). (I look forward to hearing the results of Dinu's discussion of models for Community as Heritage in Canada.)

[This message has been edited by Joy McCann (edited 28 February 2001).]

Anna Gurnhill

New Member

Posts: 2

Registered: Feb 2001

Hi Juliet Ramsay,

I am interested in the Africa Mt. Protected Areas paper you mentioned. Could you explain more about how management issues dealt with the intangible values here? Does anyone else also have experiences of dealing with intangible values in management?

Barry Jones

Moderator

Posts: 16

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 10:14 AM

Good Morning, It's Barry Jones and I'm logging on and looking forward (nervously) to 12 noon.

Peter Cloughton

New Member

Posts: 1

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 10:49 AM

Unfortunately I'm coming to this debate rather late in the day but I would like to pick up on a query from Stephen Powell on the ranking of heritage sites.

In the UK protection of heritage sites is related to the surviving features, structures, earthworks, etc., and is defined on their value at regional and national level. When a significant structure fails to meet the criteria for protection yet is regarded as important locally, it can become a focus for local action, driving the community forward to provide protection from local resources. Examples can be found for non-ferrous metal mining features at various sites in England and Wales.

Once you move into the area of cultural heritage as distinct from the heritage of the built environment, the community is really on its own. Relating culture to surviving structures, artefacts, even artwork, can provide an anchor to link it into a heritage programme. But where are we to stand when the cultural heritage is only in a form like music and dance, handed down from generation to generation?

Lesley Mearns

Member

Posts: 5

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 10:59 AM

Hi Anne Gurnhill

I work for the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority in the Northern Territory. We protect Aboriginal sacred sites at the request of the Aboriginal custodians of those sites. Because we protect sites that are defined essentially through their religious values we collect an enormous amount of information on "intangibles" - dreamtime stories, appropriate behaviour at sites, songs, ceremonies, etc. Interestingly, Australian law then backs those custodians in placing constraints on developers on the basis of those intangibles - the presence of a sacred site can stop an entire project. The management of this process itself, however, has become almost routine - regardless of the controversy it can evoke.

An increasingly challenging problem, however, has developed in managing all the information collected in accordance with the wishes of those who still own that information - the custodians. Knowledge is an extremely powerful force in Aboriginal society and a major resource - it is the basis of the authority of elders, and knowledge of country gives groups title to that country over generations.

Imagine the issues:

Much of this information has been written down for the first time.

It exists on paper in filing cabinets.

It exists in computer systems - potentially accessible at the pressing of a keyboard.

Many aspects of this concerns custodians:

Some of the information should traditionally be restricted by gender (and this is a very serious issue that is often difficult for non-Aboriginal people to comprehend).

While elders may want the younger generation to be able to access the information later (this is a real plus in the system) - such information should not fall into inexperienced and immature hands.

Many groups are in dispute with other Aboriginal groups over land and do not want the information that they entrust to my organisation to fall into the hands of those competitors.

I am sure similar, albeit not identical, problems must also attach to collecting information from other community groups. Does anyone have experience in this?

Kirsty Altenburg

New Member

Posts: 2

Registered: Feb 2001

[posted 28 February 2001 11:32 AM](#)

Su asked if there are many heritages and suggested that heritage gets us into deep water - in one of the other forums people have gone fishing. There are many heritages - we each have one, and there is a shared heritage at many levels, only some of which is captured in heritage listings. Heritage is never static - this conference demonstrates this. As our understanding of heritage keeps evolving and changing any representation of a community's heritage will reflect this and be responsive to changes. Exploring community responses through changing displays/exhibitions, inviting participation in displays/activities raises awareness of heritage and keeps heritage from being fossilised.

Joy McCann

Administrator

Posts: 14

Registered: Feb 2001

[posted 28 February 2001 11:54 AM](#)

One of the difficulties I see in Australia is the way in which governments 'straightjacket' heritage policy and funding in the different categories we spoke about earlier: heritage places are usually grouped under planning/environment portfolios, objects under museums, and intangible heritage under the arts portfolios

...and never the twain shall meet. I recall that Canada has a better system, where these all come together.