



Heritage & Community Conference - 27-28 February 2001

Forum 3: What methods and techniques work well, what doesn't?

Convenor: Chris Johnston

Posts: 11

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 09:19 AM



Chris Johnston is a Melbourne-based heritage consultant at Context Pty Ltd. She loves working with communities on the places they feel passionate about. Chris wrote *What is social value? A discussion paper*, worked on *Protecting Local Heritage Places: a guide for communities*, and has worked on many community heritage projects in Victoria, NSW, Tasmania and Queensland. Chris is a heritage activist in her local community, so she sees community involvement from both sides of the fence

Issues for discussion (discussion starter)

Getting involved is a big step for anyone. It means spending time, energy and perhaps money on something that you care about.

Over the years people have developed lots of different ways (or methods) of encouraging others to become involved. The possibilities are almost endless - some techniques are listed on this web site - go to [Techniques A-Z](#) in the Taking Action Guide.

So what's your experience tell you about the finding the right method. Choose a topic from this list and tell us what you think. Or contribute your own outrageous statement to get some debate going.

- Public meetings are bad consultation.
- When everyone in the room is yelling, there is no way to restore the peace. The best option is to cut and run.
- If you tell people the truth, they will use it against you.
- Most people just don't care. Apathy rules.
- Choose the wrong method and you are doomed.

- Controversy really gets the issues out into the open. Make controversy if you have to.
- Interest groups are just self-interest groups, and they always dominate proceedings.

That's enough to get started. Watch out for some more outrageous statement during the course of our two-day forum.

Discussion Summary

This forum was a place to talk about our experiences with involving the community - literally what works, what doesn't - and most importantly why! Many people joined in, telling their stories about community process they have been involved with.

Themes that emerged included:

- Honesty - the best way to demonstrate your respect for those at your public meeting, and to win their respect
- Setting the parameters for consultation so that people's expectations match the process. Be honest about what is and isn't negotiable in the process and why.
- Communities don't box up issues the way that government, consultants etc do. Communities have a holistic, integrated view. Be open to their agendas (and let go of your own) and start where the community is at.
- How to built trust, and what breaches it. Feedback to a community is essential if trust - once given - is to be maintained. Trust may take time to establish. It's not automatic! And don't forget to give something back (not just take).
- At times communities need to be difficult, angry and demanding to achieve their goals (don't take it personally - unless its meant that way of course!)
- Letting the community decide how they want to work with you, rather than government/consultant imposing their favourite method.
- Smaller, informal groups often work better (for everyone) than larger meetings/workshops.
- Its important to distinguish between community information (telling people about something that may affect them), community consultation (asking for people's reactions and views) and community involvement (which has more of a partnership element).
- Be flexible to the community's needs and timelines.
- Is consultation co-option, manipulation, market research or therapy? (read the debate!)
- Why not get communities more involved in archaeology - great opportunities to learn, participate and have fun too.
- When you are dealing with factions within a community, it is crucial to let people see that you are taking on board - and representing - their views impartially.
- Consultation methods can be creative and fun, and still have a serious purpose. Try new things!
- Photos speak louder than words!
- Intangible values (a common theme across the forums)
- Dealing with the loss of a place - the role of grieving and support.
- And even economic issues and financial incentives got an interesting run!

And as well as all these great ideas, the forum included lots of practical project examples. If you didn't get a chance to participate, please have a read. Any more thoughts - don't hesitate to email me directly (chris@context-pl.com.au).

Discussion: What methods and techniques work well, what doesn't?

Welcome to our forum on "What methods and techniques work well, and what doesn't?"

This forum is a place where we can talk about our experiences - literally what works, what doesn't - and most importantly why! This forum is a bit like a test kitchen, a place where tried and true recipes can be shared - but also where new dishes can be invented, combining the flavours and ingredients that everyone brings. Well that's my fantasy anyway.

I'm your convenor, and that means I'll be around to help facilitate discussion. I'm not here as the expert!

There are two helpful hints I'd like to share about participating. If your password is hard to remember, change it! Go to Profile at the top of this Forum page (next to that green box that says Add To Discussion) and log-in to give yourself a new easy password. Second, to see new messages you'll need to use Refresh (on my computer its under View use F5)

I'd like to see what everyone thinks about the first outrageous statement on my Issues for discussion list (find that on the OnLine Discussions - Let's Talk page): "PUBLIC MEETINGS ARE JUST BAD CONSULTATION". What do you think? What was the worst public meeting you've ever attended (and why?), and the best.

My worst was probably a meeting where everyone arrived, the room was packed, they raided the supper immediately and no-one would sit down while we explained why we were there. Were we about to be lynched? It certainly felt like it! (More on this story later!)

Now over to you.

Chris Johnston - Convenor

Administrator

Posts: 11

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 09:45 AM

To continue with my lynching mob story (see earlier post). Well, we were "from the government" so naturally (?!) people were suspicious. But at least we weren't from the most hated government department, and in fact we were from another part of government entirely. In fact the best part was that we might be able to help them sort out a couple of ongoing problems with this much-hated department.

Well, eventually the cups of tea, the cream cakes and some very honest talk worked its usual magic. In my experience, telling the absolute truth is very powerful. This may be a hard thing to do when you work for government, as you are not always authorised to say certain things. But "telling it like it is" is the best way to demonstrate your respect for those at your public meeting, and to win their respect.

And, in case you are wondering about why everyone was standing up. Well is a bit of a country style in that area. By the middle of the evening, all the women and a few of the men were sitting down, and everyone was really engaged in talking and helping us. It was really late before everyone left - we all wanted to stay and keep talking - and many had an hour or more to drive over mountain roads to get home.

Helen Martin

Member

Posts: 6

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 11:04 AM

Hi Chris. This is both a response to your query and a practice for the lunchtime forum. I think my worst public meeting was in a small town which will remain nameless. We had gone along for a 'drop in' chat session re our draft strategy (previously distributed to a very wide mailing list). There was a very good turnout, as usual at this location, but they insisted that we give formal a presentation - which we had not intended. They waited till we got to about the middle of it and suddenly attacked us about something unrelated to what had just been said. Their issue was about softwood plantations and their social effects in a small community that was fearful of losing population and services. We already knew from earlier meetings that this was a hot topic and that, while hardwood plantations were okay (largely because they were using non-agricultural land) softwoods were particularly hated. We had in fact been very specific about this in the draft that had gone to the Strategy Steering Committee, encouraging hardwood plantations only. The committee had changed this to just 'plantations' and we were reaping the whirlwind as a result.

The lesson, of course, is if a community tells you something once and it doesn't look as if you have listened - or worse, done something totally opposed to what they want - they will give you a hard time the next time you wander in. Since it is obviously not possible to do everything everyone wants all of the time, it might suggest that there is a need to make the parameters of the consultation clear at the beginning: what input we want from the community, what will be done with it, who will make the final decisions, how they will be informed of them and what chance/channels they have for comment/objection.

Marilyn Truscott

Member

Posts: 18

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 11:34

I think Helen's experience highlights a key issue for local communities - they do not separate issues into the neat boxes that many of us are obliged to do 'coming from the government' where administrative constraints parcel matters into separate departments. [not the least heritage into places and objects and memories all dealt with by separate organisations - a point I was going to make in Joy's forum.

Much of my heritage experience has been with indigenous communities, and they are even less patient with such bureaucratic compartments! and it is very common to have all sorts of other matters thrown into the pot and often most aggressively.

I find the key thing is to take on board ALL the points made, even when they are not central to the sliver of issues that I am meeting with a community about. I make it clear that I am not there primarily about those other matters, but that I will pass them on to the relevant other agency etc - and then I DO IT - and make it clear that the community knows that I have passed on their concerns.

If one just dismisses them or insists on restricting the discussion to what one is there for, the simmering frustration spoils one's own consultation.

What then happens with that other matter is of course over to others, and I find most communities do understand that one is powerless in certain directions - part of that honesty that Chris mentions.

Of course all of this is about trust and building a relationship - and if 'methods' or 'techniques' are the right terms, then I'd like to hear about how people have built up that trust and an ongoing relationship by feeding back to communities what happens after that initial consultation.

Lesley Mearns

New Member

Posts: 4

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 12:18 PM

Following what Marilyn had to say - I have found that feedback is an important mechanism in developing trust.

Best practice would involve providing that feedback ASAP. That is not always possible in practical terms, both because of time and distance constraints, but if trust is to be built up feedback should occur at some point, particularly on issues clearly important to that community.

Like Marilyn I have also worked extensively with Aboriginal people. I find that even if feedback happens months, or even a year later it is appreciated and people respond positively - sometimes even if the news is bad!

I find it is useful in this context to return some of the knowledge taken away - perhaps in the form of copies of photographs taken so that people can add them to their own records. I also try to make it possible for people to see what I have written, especially on important matters, either by reading it to them or by enabling them to access the report.

Marilyn Truscott

Member

Posts: 18

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 01:05 PM

Yes, Lesley - you probably know of the example of Colin Pardoe and his plain English mini-reports that he gave back to communities whilst doing his PhD research along the Darling. He was researching burial sites - a highly sensitive issue but built up tremendous trust by talking his project through with them in detail, without patronising, and by honouring his commitment to share his results with them - as a result there are many people who have a better understanding of the how physical anthropology may be of use to their own understanding of their past and history...[I hope Colin is registered and can comment further - I did send him the info re conference.]

Anyway, my real point is that this experience and these principles and methods for indigenous communities are just as valid for non-indigenous groups.

On a different note, mention is made elsewhere on different communities, and of course not all are geographically together - what experience do people have of techniques / methods work with such groups and 'imagined' communities?

Meredith Walker

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 01:21 PM

This is a very interesting discussion. Communities are so generous with their time when bureaucrats and consultants are wanting to get their input..They take on board our limitations and talk about the subjects we have put in the notice.

For the community with an issues they want addressed/solved there is often a dilemma about how much you go along with the bureaucrats- how much you trust them -, and how much you need to 'upset' their agenda in order to be heard. Sometimes it is necessary to be impolite - to make life difficult - in order for the issue to be properly addressed. In saving the Dawn Fraser pool in Balmain it was clear that the Council staff had good will but it didn't appear to translate into action (or budgets) big noise was needed by the community. [The pool community raised money for a conservation plan and had an active support group.] Fortunately the mayor realised it was a big issue, and then arranged for funds to be used for roadworks would be allocated to the pool, and the roadworks budget reduced for a year. That's the simple version.

When people are 'difficult' there is always a good reason. and the reason might be your subject or another subject. Some of these experiences are hard lessons!

Cris_Armstrong

New Member

Posts: 3

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 01:25 PM

I am new to the field, working in a "rural" area of North Carolina, USA: a community who has just begun exploring its heritage resources. Our first public meeting will be in less than a month. Are there any "key words" you folks have used in press releases to really get the community to come to such a meeting and get involved?

Cris_Armstrong

New Member

Posts: 3

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 02:03 PM

In the US, the National Park Service produces both online and in print format hundreds of informative booklets, technical briefs, etc. that are available to the community themselves. Maybe that can take some of the "sting" out of the bureaucracy telling "us" what to do - if the community can investigate the process and value of heritage planning and management.

Chris Johnston - Convenor

Administrator

Posts: 11

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 02:18 PM

Greetings everyone - great discussion!

Two things. I agree with Meredith that sometimes we each have to be angry or impatient or whatever in certain circumstances. I have a preference for not getting angry, but I've

learnt how to thump the table (literally!) because sometimes its necessary! So when faced with table thumping, don't take it personally (unless it meant that way). Try and step back and work out what might be going on for the table thumper - step into their shoes.

And key words/ideas that might get communities involved - I'd start with what they might get out of the project (therefore why they might want to contribute their time and energy). And if you are not sure what that community might want, perhaps a chat with some "opinion leaders" locally could help. One of the projects on the database attached to the site is about some work I did (with Jim Russell, Simon Cubit and John Hepper) in the Upper Mersey Valley in Tasmania. There we decided to talk with key people before we even decided how to approach the task (the task was identifying cultural places within a large "natural area" that were valued by the community). As a result we held "kitchen table" meetings with very small groups of friends/people who shared an interest, rather than larger workshops. One of the kitchen table meetings was held while out fishing (well the boys on the team tell me it was a meeting anyway!?)

Louise Thom

New Member

Posts: 1

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 02:49 PM

Speaking as a bureaucrat I have found the most important thing for me to do is to let go of my own agendas and listen to what the community wants. This is also the most challenging thing about working with the community. Working with Meredith Walker on the Dapto Community Heritage Study made this very clear to me. The Dapto Study worked with a community which were delighted to be involved in a heritage study. The fact that they were so grateful to be consulted made me realise how deficient our planning processes usually are.

Doug Williams

Member

Posts: 5

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 03:07 PM

Chris' point about where to start is a good one. In most communities either 'leaders' or people with above average knowledge of and/or interest in their heritage should be able to be identified. These people often have a good feel for what is the best way to approach a group or community.

I further agree with her point about smaller discussion groups as opposed to larger community meetings, particularly in the first phase or stages of a consultative project. Although perhaps more time consuming, you are more likely to:

- a) get responses from people who might not bother to go to a bigger forum
- b) get responses from people who would go, but might not say anything
- c) build a rapport with the community with which you are working
- d) be able to keep discussions relatively on track most of the time, perhaps avoiding instances where the "community meeting" is used to air grievances or issues that are peripheral to the one you want to discuss.

Chris Johnston - Convenor

Administrator

Posts: 11

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 04:34 PM

One of the common views about consultation is that it just creates a platform for interest groups - from which they can dominate proceedings.

Is this true? How do you balance out the views of different and competing interests, and what methods work well to do this?

Kristal Buckley

New Member

Posts: 2

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 04:38 PM

Hi Everyone - great discussion! Something that has clarified my thinking about these issues is to distinguish between providing community information (telling people about something that may affect them), community consultation (asking for people's reactions and views) and community involvement (which has more of a partnership element). Many times when we 'consult' we are really 'informing'. Being clear about these distinctions can help us formulate more effective methods.

Four crucial aspects for me which have been touched on in the discussion so far are:

1. Consider carefully why people/communities might be willing to spend their time, energy and knowledge with us! Sometimes, communities can suffer from consultation overload!! without ever getting to talk about what matters to THEM (my feeling is that this is especially a problem for Indigenous communities). It is really important to allow consultation to start at the point the community is 'at', rather than launching in at the point that suits your (possibly) narrower purposes. If that means that a 'consultation process' doesn't follow a neat and quick path - so be it. The improvement in the outcome can be worth it.
2. Be honest about what is and isn't negotiable in the process and why. Don't ever lie.
3. Be prepared to consider changing the timelines and processes. Sometimes it just takes longer to come to a clear community view about what is needed. A far better outcome can be achieved if communities have the space to sort things out.
4. As several people have already said, we need to give something back! At the very least, always provide follow-up info or reports to people who have contributed. Consider producing additional materials/products that the community will find more useful.

Helen Brayshaw

New Member

Posts: 1

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 04:44 PM

Chris - You said one of the common views about consultation is that it just creates a platform for interest groups - from which they can dominate proceedings. I appreciate that this is a problem. I also wonder about the philosophical implications of getting all the interest groups into the process with a view to minimising opposition and so getting a development/project through. Once they are part of the process they become complicit in the outcome. Or am I splitting hairs?

Gaye Nayton

Member

Posts: 10

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 05:04 PM

I am a historical archaeologist working in WA. When I get involved in community consultations I am usually a small part of a team and not the one handling the consultation.

Where I get involved with the community is generally in the field or giving talks to community groups.

I used to give lots of free talks to community groups such as schools, local interest groups and collector groups. This has mainly stopped since I left Uni. I think because such groups don't know how to find me now. I am in the yellow pages under archaeologist but only get people with individual inquiries calling. Anyone got an idea how to solve this?

I think face to face talking with communities about what I do and what might be in their area/ field of interest is important because how are we ever going to rise the communities awareness that we have an archaeological heritage of importance if we don't communicate with them. It is particularly difficult for archaeological sites because they are not as immediately obvious as a heritage building and even other heritage professionals tend to decide they are not there because they cannot be seen.

For instance archaeology was virtually excluded from the local heritage inventory process with the result that sites that the local history matrix for the inventories suggest are importance in the areas history and development are not registered in the inventories because they are no longer standing buildings. The same is true at state level after 11 years there still aren't any purely archaeological sites on the register (last time I checked).

Which is a shame because everytime the local community is invited to share in a dig or view one in process I get a great response even when the dig itself is disappointing archaeologically. One thing about archaeologists is that we are very visible. The word gets around fast that we are in the area either digging or wandering around with a metal detector. The media response well to archaeologists too and conservation projects which cannot get a mention otherwise can suddenly find themselves in the spotlight.

That happened at the cell restoration project at Fremantle Prison which was having trouble attracting media attention until I arrived on the scene. It may be shades of Indiana Jones but three newspapers turned up and the next day two radio stations called. We included the dig on the prison tours as well and I stationed my volunteer sorter where she could talk to the guides and the public as they peered in at the strange creatures crawling around under the floorboards. This was a very successful project in terms of community awareness if not direct participation but strangely most projects and site mangers here do not go down this road even on tourist orientated sites. Why? and is the situation different in the east where historical archaeology is a much more accepted part of the official heritage scene.

Chris Johnston - Convenor

Administrator

Posts: 11

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 05:31

Helen - I agree. In a paper written some years ago now, Leonie Sandercock described a number of reasons why organisations might want to community participation: in summary they are (1) participation as market research (where the citizen is consumer, and a source of feedback on services provided by government) (2) participation as decision-making (participatory democracy); (3) participation as the dissolution of organised opposition (as you said Helen) (4) participation as social therapy (citizens as

free labour essentially, representing the citizen at "his most cooperative") and (5) participation as grass roots radicalism (yes! eg. Green bans)

Her article is called Citizen Participation: The New Conservatism and was first published in Federal Power in Australia's Cities, Patrick Troy (ed), Hale and Iremonger, 1978.

Gaye Nayton

Member

Posts: 10

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 07:43 PM

I have lost this forum. All I am getting now is the blurb about the administers which started the list. Help!!!

David Rhodes

New Member

Posts: 2

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 27 February 2001 08:47 PM

An interesting discussion. I agree that maintaining an integrity about community consultation is extremely important, no matter how you conduct the consultation process. It seems to me that the practitioners who have the most success with community consultation are those who are up front and do not give the impression that they are trying to pull the wool over anyone's eyes.

This is important when dealing with any community group or groups - Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. When you are dealing with factions within a community, it is crucial to let people see that you are taking on board - and representing - their views impartially, even if those views may be personally repugnant to you. For example, in developing management plans for Aboriginal heritage places, I have frequently had to deal with local non-Aboriginal community groups who are quite racist in their opinions and approach. But if you sit down and listen to their opinions, it is often possible to find some degree of common ground, from which you can begin to build a more constructive and positive relationship.

Chris Johnston - Convenor

Administrator

Posts: 11

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 09:03 AM

Good morning! Welcome back. Yesterday's discussion on this forum focused a lot on integrity. This is critically important.

But what about methods?

Are there tried and true methods that you use and would like to share. Especially ways of working that enable people to relax, relate to you and each other, think outside the square, work cooperatively?

So let me share one that worked well for me - such a simple idea, but good fun. The scenario was a group of people evaluating the success of a project that they had all been part of. The evaluation process was being run by the funding body (so it could have all

been a bit tense). A started by asking people to tell the story of the project, starting with the first person who'd been involved and passing the story along as others joined the project. And as they passed the story on, they also passed on a ball of wool. Each story created a wonderful tangled web, and everyone was surprised at all the interconnections.

Was it just a silly, fun thing? I don't think so. I think it did a lot of good work to set a positive scene for the evaluation, but also it enabled people to start with their story and reconnect with each other and the project, giving them a better foundation to talk about what worked and what didn't.

Who else wants to share a trade secret or too?!

Meredith Walker

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 10:27 AM

chris - great technique. Communication is a lot about language, and making it clear that personal experience is acceptable is essential to creating a good atmosphere.

I like providing opportunities for people to take photographs. It is easier for many people to take a photo than express something in words and the combination of photo and caption is more lasting and can carry on after the event itself.

recently I asked people to take photos of some intangibles - a seeming contradiction - but they managed it - eg. a photo of the local butcher and his customers with a caption about community spirit.

Everyone understood what was meant.

Lynne Dore

New Member

Posts: 1

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 12:55 PM

A few comments about a successful partnership with local government, community and university.

Last year I helped to place 4 archaeology honours students into a local government region. The task was to undertake research on a particular heritage component within the Shire and to explore possibilities for developing their tourism potential. The students succeeded in satisfying their tertiary requirements but also in being involved in real world projects. The beauty of this partnership was that each student was supported by a community network in each location, had access to local knowledge, the projects showcased the student's capabilities and that of the University. At the completion of the projects the Shire received a copy of the theses, a copy of recommendations drawn from the research. The students provided a public presentation on their project and results and gave each community a copy of their thesis as well. One student's work is now providing a valuable document for the heritage study about to be undertaken; all four students hope to publish their work; the local community have access to a body of research otherwise restricted and the Shire have experienced an excellent outcome for a small remuneration toward expenses.

The University has gained a valuable lead into regional heritage development and the tourism potential can be more accurately assessed.

Therefore I believe community involvement is worthwhile. It does however take an enormous amount of time for long term gains. I am now looking to help provide this service to local governments, industry and community. These projects help to raise community interest, contribute to developing a sense of place for newer residents and promote co-operation between local government and community.

Happy to share more information on this for those interested.

Anna Gurnhill

New Member

Posts: 2

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 01:21 PM

hi Lynne Dore

Your project sounds great, and I'd like to know more about it. What shire was it, and is there any way to access any of the information in the research yet? I am particularly interested in the notion of intangible values and the community. Did the research for your project have any focus on this at all?

hi Meredith Walker

As just noted, I am interested in intangible values, and particularly those of non-indigenous communities. Your use of the term seems to correspond to either indigenous or non-indigenous communities. In many of the discussions taking place, notions of community involvement and intangibles seem to deal mostly with indigenous communities. However, it is just as feasible for non-indigenous communities to also have values of an intangible nature, as you have suggested, although these seem more obscure and difficult to decipher.

Do you, or does anyone else, have any other ideas of how to go about defining intangible values of non-indigenous communities, or have any experience in this? the obvious answer is to ask the communities themselves, but perhaps they may not realise that they hold these values (similar to what someone was saying in another forum). I understand that it is going to be different for different people and communities, and is difficult to produce guidelines for a reasonably abstract notion, but is there any advice?

Alison Brain

New Member

Posts: 3

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 01:29 PM

If Gaye receives this message, relocate your advertising under the key word Heritage or Community Heritage

Suze

Member

Posts: 6

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 01:47 PM

Just a little thought. When it is not possible to protect an item regarded as significant for some people, and you people are placed in a position of having to pass on unhappy

news; might it be useful to make available a trained 'grief counsellor' to speak with those people who are sadly losing something very important to them?

Marilyn Truscott

Member

Posts: 18

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 01:47 PM

To Anna

please see the main ICOMOS site: www.icomos.org where there is a whole onsite discussion about intangible values, leading up the next ICOMOS General Assembly in Zimbabwe in 2002 when Intangible Values is theme of the conference - this is a strong attempt by many of us to put back together the fragmented elements of heritage - place, object, intangible

also UNESCO is looking at this issue in its Cultural Division www.unesco.org

and in Australia as you probably know Australia ICOMOS has been tangling with this issue for a while [as has AHC], much of it under the notion of 'social value', but AI had been able to incorporate the intangible into the revised Burra Charter with several references to 'meanings' and 'association' for place (see Australia ICOMOS site at www.icomos.org/australia

of course being ICOMOS the focus is on place, but there may be intangible values that are less place oriented - I would however contest that usually they all come together in a community's sense of self and their heritage

Benjamin Briggs

New Member

Posts: 3

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 02:57 PM

Chris Armstrong noted earlier a reference to a public meeting she and I are preparing for here in North Carolina, USA. At issue is whether local government is to adopt state legislation to allow for the creation of county level landmarking, which can come with protection and tax credits.

Exploration of the feasibility of this action was initiated by local government officials (after the preservation community patiently waited for 20 years!). As an instructor, I have involved a Preservation Law class from the local college in this process. The students are involved in assembling data (such as the impact of designation on property value), as well as community models and press relations.

Our meeting late in March will include a panel of conservation "experts" who are local...not from the state. The panel will include staff of similar commissions in nearby communities and as well as leaders of private "non-bureaucrat" organizations. The students will also be present to answer questions in need be.

Using Marilyn's advice, we will certainly be open and honest and inclusive of all ideas expressed during the forum. The press will be invited to cover the event.

Any additional advice? I hope we don't end up with a "bashing" session. Wish us luck!!!

Trina Whitehurst

New Member

Posts: 1

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 03:18 PM

I am energized by the discussions taking place in this forum -- community involvement is absolutely integral to sustained heritage preservation and presentation. I work for a non-profit museum association in Nova Scotia, Canada and we are presently planning a conference to tackle some of the issues presented here so far: "Heritage in 3D: Digging, Documents and Display" We want our heritage community to make those links between the archaeologists, the archivists and those who present heritage: curators, interpreters, etc... While seemingly an obvious link, it is too often that we focus narrowly on a specific piece of the heritage puzzle. This electronic forum provides a superb model for linking demographic populations and people from various organizational backgrounds. The tool which we use to plan these conferences is continuous membership feedback -- nothing scientific, but as one participant suggested, it is these small, informal discussions which often prove to be the most effective planning tool. The frustrating part to this constant "check-in" via phone calls and emails is the inability to easily quantify the information so that government funders approve and accept the information as worthwhile. I will continue to observe the discussions taking place here -- great stuff!!

Paul Maxwell

Member

Posts: 11

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 03:22 PM

Benjamin Briggs
protection and tax credits

Hi again, and thanks Benjamin for raising the issue of tax credits.

I live in a house registered by the National Estate, the Victoria Heritage Register and the National Trust - Victoria. I am not grumbling about this - it's wonderful!

However there is I believe an opportunity for a more comprehensive approach to heritage protection and funding this by pooling and incentives. It has often been suggested to me that I am unfortunate to have 'protection' placed on my house as it affects (badly) on the resale value. This may be true - but IF there were tax/rate breaks available THEN the story would be quite different and more folk might want to opt-in. Then there is the potential for diversion of tax/rates into heritage funds that would allow us all to preserve and protect more, and with more effect.

Just a thought.

Meredith Walker

Administrator

Posts: 23

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 04:24 PM

Hi Anna -in relation to intangible, I believe that most of what we care about is related to 'intangibles' - the places are the most obvious link to the intangible values. part of the problem with heritage is that we start with that notion rather than looking more generally at what a community values generally, which can include all manner of things=. this cultural mapping approach is very effective and from the broad perspective one can hone in on various types of things- such as organisations and heritage

to Suze

Yes I agree with the grief counsellor. I think we should put less effort in to 'saving' and more into experiencing a place before it goes (or before it is radically changed). A farewell with inspections, talks, oral history and a wake should be requirement with demolition consent (or consent for major change) is given. The grief counselor should be present to record the proceedings

Chris Johnston - Convenor

Administrator

Posts: 11

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 04:38 PM

Suze wrote earlier about grief counselling when a place that people care about is about to be lost.

What ways have people tried to allow that grief process to be expressed?

I've used back-tos and oral history projects - in other words excuses to spend time at the place, share the place with others, share memories, record and collect.

Chris Johnston - Convenor

Administrator

Posts: 11

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 05:06 PM

AFTER THE CONFERENCE!

No it's not time too close yet - but we need to start thinking about WHERE TO FROM HERE!

The five conference forums will close at 9am (Australian Eastern Summer Time) Thursday 1 March. Each Forum Convenor will prepare a summary of their forum discussions. Hopefully, this will be loaded onto the site on Friday 2 March - we'll send out an email when that happens.

A single Post-conference forum will stay open - so please keep chatting and sharing. And you can email each other directly using the envelope logo above each person's post. An important next decision is the future of this site. It will stay on the web until at least mid April 2001. Before then the organisers will working out the future of the site, possible future conferences etc!

SO WHERE TO FROM HERE?

We would like your views and ideas about (at least) the following (and you can reply in this forum, or the Post Conference Forum or later using the feedback form).

- * What do you think of the overall site (including the Taking Action Guide and the Projects Database - have a look!)? And how could it be improved?
- * How did the on-line conference work for you? Did you get involved or just watch? Was the 2 days a good way to concentrate discussion?
- * Do you want more on-line conferences or workshops in future (and on what issues)?
- * How about a discussion list, where discussion happens by email to a whole group?
- * Would you like to see future online conferences on other heritage or community subjects?

Gaye Nayton

Member

Posts: 10

Registered: Feb 2001

posted 28 February 2001 07:12 PM

To Benjamin & Paul

I have been researching the economic benefits of heritage using our American friends.

To Paul don't worry research suggests the value of your property will go up faster than non heritage places once the area you are in becomes valued for it's character.

To Ben Do you have any statistical information on the benefits/draw backs of tax credits or rate deals that the heritage community here could look at to see if its appropriate for us. And to persuade our governments that this might be a way to go?

Chris I think the conference has been wonderful. Not only could I attend (living in WA places me too far for most conferences) but you appear to have attracted a wide range of disciplines from a surprisingly wide geographical area. We would never normally hear their views. One of the forums was concerned about divisions, between heritage people and local community but also between different disciplines. This is a great way to break down some of those professional barriers at least.

I am a member of an archaeological discussion list but I don't think it achieves the same kind of feedback as this conference has done. I would certainly like to see more conferences of this kind.

Also thanks to the person, I did not write down the name, who suggested adveristing under heritage too.