



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
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## ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



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## **NZAA Representation in Archaeology Webinar**

**Patricia Pillay** (*NZAA Social Media Coordinator*)

On Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020, the New Zealand Archaeology Association (NZAA) held an important and timely kōrero regarding representation in archaeology in Aotearoa New Zealand, and to some extent, wider Oceania, during Te Wiki o te Reo Māori (Māori Language Week). The event was held as a live Zoom webinar with a panel of New Zealand-based archaeologists, heritage professionals, and kaitiaki: Dr Des Kahotea, Gena Moses-Te Kani, Rachel Wesley, and Mana Laumea. The event was chaired by NZAA Social Media Coordinator Patricia Pillay, facilitated by NZAA's immediate past president Katharine Watson, and hosted on Zoom by NZAA Secretary Isaac McIvor. Live documentation of this dialogue was managed by NZAA member Jessie Garland on the NZAA Twitter account. The event was received with a reassuring positive response of 80 registrations and approximately 40 attendees were present on the evening.

Dr Des Kahotea operates as a professional in Māori heritage professional based on archaeology, anthropology and cultural history. Des works mainly in the area of heritage under the Resource Management Act 1993 and Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, Treaty of Waitangi claims, hearings and settlement and more recently Takutai Moana claims. Des is active in the area of indigenous archaeology at an international level -attending and presenting at conferences on this topic and in association with other indigenous archaeologists. Currently, Des is also an Associate Research Fellow in Anthropology at the University of Waikato and teaches a summer semester paper at Stage 3 and Stage 4 titled 'Māori Heritage' with the Anthropology Department. Des mostly works with Māori communities.

Based in the Waikato, Gena Moses-Te Kani is the Pou Tātaki, lead kaitiaki (general manager) of Hōkai Nuku which is an Iwi and Hapū collaboration that provides cultural advice on the Pūhoi to Wellsford Roding Projects, north of Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland). She assisted in establishing the organisation and has been involved in the operation for the last 10 years. Learning on the job, Gena then trained and mentored kaitiaki for most of this time. Her background is firmly embedded in whānau and hapū development within the public service, which naturally led to heritage and environmental management and Treaty settlements. Gena says, 'it is all about tino rangatiratanga'.

Rachel Wesley is staunchly Kāi Tahu and grew up in her hau kāika (traditional village) at Ōtākou on the Muaupoko (Otago Peninsula). She studied archaeology

at Otago, and is currently undertaking a PhD there, investigating how different perceptions of ecological ‘knowledge’ can contribute to understanding resource use by southern Māori in Murihiku (the southern region of the South Island). Over the last 20 years, Rachel has fully immersed herself in fieldwork at wāhi tūpuna throughout her tribal area. However, more recently, she has focused on the Papanui Inlet- a site of much importance to her hapū. Rachel was the Curator Māori at Otago Museum, leaving there earlier this year for a very brief stint at Kaunihera a-rohe o Ōtepoti (Dunedin City Council). She has recently taken up the role of Chief Executive at Aukaha Ltd, a manawhenua-owned consultancy in Dunedin, which often works with Otago-based archaeologists on behalf of manawhenua.

Mana Laumea is a Sāmoan New Zealander who was raised in Tāmaki Makaurau. Mana is an experienced contract archaeologist, and has worked as such for several years, working in the Waikato, Te Tara-o-te-Ika a Māui (Coromandel Peninsula), Waiariki (Bay of Plenty), and Tāmaki Makaurau. Additionally, he has been actively involved in academic work in Sāmoa since 2014. Mana is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Auckland and is investigating changes in Sāmoan agriculture and social organisation. An aspect of this research interrogates links between negative ethnohistoric narratives and archaeological interpretations in Sāmoan and Pacific contexts. He believes that many of these narratives are ‘pervasive and reflect larger disciplinary imbalances that privilege certain types of knowledge while disempowering others’. Moreover, Mana views improved indigenous acknowledgement, engagement, and training as a key issue in Aotearoa New Zealand and the broader Pacific if the discipline aims to create knowledge that holds meaning for more communities

Drawing from individual experiences the panellists responded in detail to pre-approved questions and those put forth during the webinar by attendees. Central to the discussion were long-standing issues regarding the future of archaeology in Aotearoa and addressing how indigenous perspectives are at the core of representation in the discipline. The development of this kaupapa was inspired by the global movement of decolonisation, recent discussions on assembling archaeological pedagogy by the Society of Black Archaeologists, as well as broader themes of heritage management that are relevant to furthering the place and pedagogy of archaeology within Aotearoa New Zealand.

As panel tāngata mōhio, Des provided a mihi whakatau to open the session with a warm welcome. To begin, panellists were asked what had helped them arrive where they are, and a shared theme was the significance of community, of access to shared knowledge - whether it be kuia (aunties) in the community with knowledge of wāhi tūpuna, or, the support of other archaeologists.

Gena and Des both raised concerns about the difficulty of balancing mātauranga Māori and the demands of archaeology and science, while being part of both communities. In particular, they both identified the misconception that archaeology is the real science - prioritised at the expense of mātauranga Māori. Gena highlighted the problems that arise in communication and forming partnerships. For example, there is a perception by archaeological authority and resource consent applicants that archaeologists are the route to consulting with Māori communities. This places archaeologists in an unsafe space between these two parties. Mana noted the importance of recognising and acknowledging the colonial underpinnings of science and archaeology. He considered that archaeologists should be conscious of the merits of all forms of knowledge, stating, 'you cannot just take the points of view that suit the research'.

To add to this notion, Gena indicated 'there are some ideal examples of traditional kōrero that aligns with seismic evidence – technical information that needs interpretation; we need to acknowledge that we all have different world views – sometimes these connect, sometimes they don't'. Therefore, people need to be respectful of these different world views. Gena suggested perhaps the basis for reconciling mātauranga Māori and archaeology is finding grounds of mutual respect, for contrasting interpretations, and perspectives. She claimed that 'the technical information is one factor, but the interpretation is another, and there are a variety of approaches to consider'.

The panellists were asked their views on the difficulty of considering the perspectives of all key stakeholders and addressing the imbalance of Māori world views in Aotearoa's history. Specifically, how does one address the cognitive dissonance created? That is, the discomfort felt when there are multiple 'opposing' modes of thought? Des is deeply embedded within Māori knowledge and therefore has no problem with science. He made the point that 'archaeologists often trample the tikanga and there can be a lack of respect'. Rachel responded that she 'does not see any dissonance at times, but in other instances, it is really glaring'. She provided an example of the waka found at Papanui Inlet to further support her statement. There is a well-known story within her hapū about a conflict at Papanui Inlet about some waka being 'smashed up', as this waka had been. However, on the other hand, she notes, 'there are ideas like evolutionary ecological theory and optimal foraging theory, which remove agency and culture and reduce people to economic zoological units'.

One of the key questions of the representation theme put forth to the panellists was if they saw any evidence that NZ universities are decolonising their archaeology curriculum and they provided sobering answers:

Mana's answer was frank: 'there is a lot of progress to be made – I would like to see more cross-disciplinary engagement, particularly with the Māori/Pacific studies departments and archaeology made more appealing to Pacific students'. Des opined that archaeology in Aotearoa New Zealand is very 'narrow and not very inclusive'. To support his statement, he provided an example of an Hawaiian institution with many indigenous students and an emphasis by the University on being Hawaiian, and doing archaeology for them; in America, Canada and Australia, indigenous archaeology is backed up by high profile white archaeologists, which speaks volumes for itself.

Rachel explicitly felt that 'there is no sign of decolonisation'. She has heard 'horror stories of students with no idea about tikanga and is deeply concerned that there are still a number of Pākehā archaeologists teaching them about how to work with Māori'. Gena's response was loud and clear: 'universities are fundamentally racist'. She explained that 'Māori need to do more' because the universities have not addressed the issues and that both she and Des are exploring ways decolonisation in the sector can be implemented.

Amidst all the important points raised, central themes echoed throughout the evening: The obvious need for more Māori and Pasifika people and perspectives in archaeology going forward; better communication; more collaborative education at a University level, and, more respect for iwi and hapū in archaeology, particularly from archaeologists. Rachel raised the salient point that 'it is incredible (and not in a good way) that you can pass through a whole undergraduate and postgraduate archaeology degree from a university without encountering any papers or courses on working with Māori'. Rachel shared that she leads by example, demonstrating how she would envision change to be enacted. She justified her point further, stating that 'students are crying out to be able to work in a decolonised way and to learn how to work with Māori'. Rachel emphasised that 'Māori archaeologists are not given the same sort of credibility if there's not a Pākehā backing them up'.

Fittingly, Rachel's advice on best practice going forward in sector is that as the archaeologist or advocate of heritage you are on the same level as everyone else involved, not just providing an acknowledgement at the end of a paper. More importantly, Rachel informed that 'you need to have an understanding of the tikanga of those people; allow spaces for their voices to be heard and amplify them if necessary; recognise that others have valuable input; make sure that these people are on the same level as you, in terms of reports, making decisions'. To add to this, Des advised 'you have to give something back, not just take – developing a relationship is key'. This is formed, he said, 'by working for people and have a willingness to understand the context and your role'. Mana's personal experiences

closed this question with a consideration: ‘I am constantly navigating my own self-awareness of how I engage with my own people... it is really important for other people working in the same place to be making that same effort’.

Considering the future of the discipline, each of the panellists offered their advice for how the next generation of learners can actively regain control of their own cultural narratives. Des hinted that developing good research skills is key and to focus on projects to learn where you come from – in effect, learn to create a narrative from various sources. He also encourages students to visit places and sites, and ultimately, to get experience and exposure. Gena’s advice was ‘be a kaitiaki for your own people’ and to take any opportunities involving fieldwork. She expanded on this point further: ‘museums are great – go behind the scenes, connect to your people, go to the wānanga, learn from your people’. Similarly, Rachel strongly recommended ‘allowing yourself to be dragged along, be hands on, be confident to tell your own stories; research; talk to your kaumātua’. Rachel advised to ‘be confident, develop relationships, learn as much as you can, don’t take anything for granted’. Finally, Mana’s message addressed at educational bodies was to ‘attract more indigenous students, bring that indigenous knowledge; the importance of diversity and new ideas’. To aspiring students and those in their early career stages, Mana recommended ‘to be open-minded, be careful what you read (with reference to mis-leading or racist information), and to talk to people, and more importantly, to listen’.

The role of inclusive archaeological pedagogy and in essence, the survival of the discipline was another focal point of the discussion. Each of the panellists addressed what they deemed most critical changes to be made for effective and measurable change. Rachel finds herself circling back to how archaeologists are taught at university and the role of the legislation, specifically the Protected Objects Act (POA) 1975 and the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. She elaborates to say both acts ‘really favour the ‘other’ side; with the POA, there is a disconnect between if an individual finds taonga tūturu or if an archaeologist does’. Rachel repels the idea that ‘taonga tūturu are obliged to go to an institution, rather than a registered collector’. She provoked the question ‘why are archaeologists making these decisions?’ Moreover, communities require increased authority over what takes place during these discussions.

Mana voiced the urgent call for more Pasifika and Māori in archaeology and, ultimately, asked how do we attract more? ‘This would move us towards a space where there are more voices and more rounded interpretations’. Des also feels this strongly and suggested to have a programme that Pasifika and Māori students can truly feel they are part of and that can allow them to ‘own the space’. Des notes that the current programmes do not meet Māori needs, such as whakapapa, which

is the foundation of Māori knowledge. From this, he says, ‘we can then better understand what iwi and hapū say about themselves’.

Gena proposed that ‘iwi and hapū research interests should be the priority in universities’. Building relationships with Māori and seeing Māori retaining control are pivotal to the future of the discipline in Aotearoa. Gena predicts ‘this will change some of the dynamics and will change the attitude of young people wanting to go into the discipline’.

When asked by the audience who should be addressing misrepresentation in archaeology and how should this be delivered, particularly racism, and how this should be delivered, Des’s response was clear: ‘communicate – the problem has always been there, it never goes away’. We are all responsible, as Rachel put it. She said that ‘archaeologists are guilty of perpetuating some misrepresentations. It is the responsibility of archaeologists to put things right, and of iwi to make sure that they are heard, and of the wider community to educate themselves’.

The webinar concluded with sound advice from the panellists to aspiring archaeologists: talk to people and listen to their perspectives, connect to your people, connect to the whenua, be confident. Gena’s challenge to all students in Aotearoa is that ‘it is everyone’s responsibility to understand the place that they live in, no matter where in the world they come from. Decolonisation has to be a lifelong, everybody kind of programme’.

On behalf the NZAA we thank our panellists for investing their time and energy into this particularly important kōrero. This panel was made possible with tautoko (support) from the Kaupapa Māori Advisory Group, particularly Dr Gerard O’Regan who was instrumental in bringing our panel guests together. We are grateful to the NZAA council for their ongoing tautoko in progression of this kaupapa. This webinar was only the beginning to an already active dialogue alive here in Aotearoa and at a global scale. More questions were raised than those answered throughout the webinar, which we would regard as a successful outcome. Just as the archaeological record is dynamic, so are the necessary conversations about how archaeological research should be conducted.

We appreciate everyone who attended this session and those who have engaged with the dissemination of the video on our social media platforms. The Representation in Archaeology webinar is accessible on our newly established YouTube Channel. We endeavour to continue to create a space for this dialogue in future NZAA related events. Stay tuned.  
Ngā mihi ki a koutou.