

International Training Programme final report

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Supported by the Edith Murphy Foundation



(ITP Presentations - Tairāwhiti Museum)

My experience

The International Training Programme (ITP) has strengthened my confidence and identity as an individual, a Iwi/Hāpori (Tribe/Community) person, and a museum professional. It gave me the resilience to navigate foreign, often colonised, spaces while holding firm to my cultural values. This experience highlighted the importance of creating safe pathways for future Indigenous museum professionals to feel support in such contexts.

As an individual, the programme gave me the courage to voice concerns and challenge approaches that fell short of cultural awareness. It tested my resilience in navigating situations where my cultural identity and values were at odds with systems, yet it opened space for dialogue and growth.

As a Iwi/Hāpori engager, the programme allowed me to represent my people on an international stage, ensuring that their aspirations were present in conversations about the future of heritage and museums.

As a museum professional, the programme clarified my career aspirations in Textile Conservation. Reinforcing my commitment to becoming a Māori (Indigenous New

Zealander) Textile Conservator, grounded in Mātauranga Māori (Indigenous knowledge). There are few Māori conservators, and creating opportunities for future Māori to thrive in this field is one of my strongest aspirations.

The British Museum & UK Partnership Museum

My time at the British Museum offered valuable insight into the inner workings of a large-scale institution. Observing leadership, conservation, and collection management revealed how communication flows across teams, how responsibilities are distributed, and how funding models sustain programmes. Understanding these systems gave me a broader perspective and sharpened my ability to think strategically on how this can be adapted at home to create generational wealth for my people. It also raised important questions about where Indigenous knowledge can sit within such structures.

In contrast, my UK Partner Museum offered a more relatable model. A smaller-scale with stronger emphasis on people and community. It resonated with the values and realities of my own surroundings. Their community-led initiatives and people centred processes showed how museums can be built around this need. At the same time, I saw opportunities for them to deepen this further by ensuring minority and Indigenous voices are present at every level of decision making.

Together, these two experiences highlighted the spectrum of museum practice. Large institutions offer stability, resources, and systems, while smaller ones provide agility and closer relationships with communities. The challenge is how to combine these strengths, ensuring that institutional frameworks do not come at the expense of authentic cultural representation. For me, the insight is clear, Indigenous perspectives have the potential to bridge these two worlds, grounding museums in both professional excellence and genuine cultural voices.



(Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology – Waka Hoe from Tūranga)

Future of Museums

Indigenous perspectives create a dialogue of healing, at the level of the individual, the institution, and the global sector. From a Māori worldview, we continually seek Māori initiatives and knowledge in daily life – Māori-led, Māori-driven, and grounded in Mātauranga Māori. Through this programme, I have seen the strength of how this approach can benefit not only Indigenous communities but also the wider museum sector by reshaping narratives and reducing stigma.

The reality is that many of our taonga (sacred treasures) were acquired without consent during colonisation, and much of their provenance has been lost. For me, the way forward is not to remain locked in narratives of loss, but to bring Indigenous professionals into these spaces so dialogue shifts towards care and mutual respect.

One key insight from this programme is the potential to build an Indigenous-led extension of the ITP – centred on Indigenous values and practices of care. Such a programme would introduce global networks to ways of working with taonga that acknowledge their physical, spiritual, and cultural dimensions. It would allow curators, conservators, and collection managers who work closely with Māori treasures and other Indigenous collections to engage deeply with these perspectives.

I recognise that not all institutions will be able to fully engage with such a programme. Geographic, social, and financial contexts bring distinct challenges. Yet for those who hold Indigenous collections, the value is clear. Embedding principles such as Whānau (family/community), Manaakitanga (care), and Kaitiakitanga (guardianship) into practice offers pathways to more meaningful relationships with both treasures and their communities. Creating such a programme would extend the spirit of the ITP, bridging the gap between institutional systems and Indigenous approaches to care. It offers opportunities for growth, dialogue, and ultimately, healing within the sector.



(Poi – Traditional Māori dance)

Relationships

This programme has not only supported my personal growth but also enriched my community. By gaining knowledge and experience, I am better positioned to act as a conduit between community and institution, helping to heal some of the narratives I spoke of earlier. The way I adapted my values during the programme by voicing perspectives openly and engaging in dialogue, is the same way I intend to embed the learning at home.

Spending time with colleagues from across the globe was equally transformative. Hearing about the struggles and challenges they face within their own institutions provided perspective, reminding me that while contexts differ, many goals and obstacles are shared. These exchanges of successes and setbacks created trust, resilience, and solidarity. It highlighted the power of collective problem solving.

These global relationships are not only personally enriching but also crucial for my community. They ensure that Indigenous perspectives remain present in conversations while opening pathways for collaboration and knowledge sharing. By maintaining these connections, I can bring global insights home and carry Indigenous voices into global spaces. The relationships formed through the ITP become stepping stones, not just for my career, but for future generations.



(Object in focus event – Sponsor, Edith Murphy Foundation)

Acknowledgement

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the ITP team for organising such an incredible opportunity and for tailoring the programme to each participant. Claire is fortunate to have Amelia and George alongside her, but equally, they are fortunate to be guided by Claire's leadership. Their collective passion shines through in the thoughtful curation of this programme.

Secondly, my thanks to the AOA department and to my UK Partnership Museum – Glasgow, with a special mention to Polly Bence and Edward Johnson, for arranging valuable time with our taonga across the United Kingdom. These moments enabled me to build long-term connections with other museums while keeping the aspirations of my people at the forefront. Through these encounters I was able to bring Karakia (prayer), Waiata (song), and Poi (dance) into dialogue. My time in Glasgow allowed me to start building towards postgraduate study at the University of Glasgow in Textile Conservation, with the vision of working with Māori textiles across the world.

I also wish to acknowledge my sponsor, the Edith Murphy Foundation, for granting me the opportunity to further develop my skills. Their support ensures that my people will be enriched by the knowledge I have gained and the aspirations I carry forward. I return with a sense of deep growth that will create new opportunities for my community.

Lastly, to my Whānau, Iwi, Hāpori, and Tairāwhiti Museum who raised and instilled in me the knowledge I carry today, the foundation and purpose for why I continue to challenge and push boundaries within these spaces. Nā koutou tēnei i poipoi, ripo mārie atu – I am the product of many, and like a ripple effect, my devotion to our people will continue for generations.

Conclusion

To conclude my report the ITP affirmed for me that the future of museums must include pathways grounded in Mātauranga Māori and Indigenous knowledge systems. My journey strengthened not only my personal resilience but also my professional commitment to pursue a career as a Māori Textile Conservator. In a field with so few Māori Conservators, my aspiration is to create opportunities for others to thrive, ensuring that conservation is not only technically skilled but also culturally led.

This programme also revealed the value of Indigenous-led models of exchange. I envision hosting a smaller-scale version of the ITP in Aotearoa (New Zealand), where Māori professionals can share how museums act as extensions of our Whānau (family), Iwi (tribe), and Hāpori (community) relationships. By centering Indigenous voices and methods, we can reshape museum practice into one that heals, connects, and sustains our communities for future generations.



(Te Pahou Marae, Manutuke)

Terminology Guide (Māori to English)

Maori	English
Iwi	Indigenous Tribe
Hāpori	Community
Māori	Indigenous New Zealander
Mātauranga	Indigenous knowledge
Taonga	Sacred Treasures
Whānau	Family
Manaakitanga	Care
Kaitiakitanga	Guardianship
Karakia	Prayer
Waiata	Song
Poi	Traditional dance