

Summary of meeting with representatives from Te Papa Tongarewa 17.11.04

Present: James Te Puni, Director Maori Strategy, Te Papa Tongarewa
Catherine Nesus, Repatriation Project Leader, Te Papa Tongarewa
Neil MacGregor, Director, British Museum
Andrew Burnett, Deputy-Director, British Museum
Brian Durrans, Keeper, Department of the Americas, Oceania and Asia, British Museum
Justin Morris, Policy Officer, Department of Communications, British Museum

James began by setting-out his role and Catherine's at Te Papa. James as Director of Maori Strategy is responsible for managing the relationships between Te Papa and the Maori communities in New Zealand and Catherine is the project leader of a new government-backed programme established 18 months ago to gather information about Maori human remains. This research programme consists of a small group of people at Te Papa with an advisory body made-up of eight Maori leaders.

James went on to explain that Te Papa and the New Zealand government hope that this research will ultimately lead to the repatriation of all unmodified Maori human remains from international sources to either Te Papa Tongarewa or the Maori communities themselves. Indeed some UK institutions had already agreed to proceed along these lines next year.

Catherine presented in more detail the nature of the project's research. Specifically the project is seeking to identify where Maori human remains are located throughout the world, their provenance and their acquisition history.

Andrew promised that the Museum would send them a detailed list of the human remains from New Zealand in the collection of the British Museum.

Catherine went on to say that the research is being conducted within a consensual framework whereby those institutions that hold such human remains and the source communities from which they are likely to have originated are kept informed of the research findings as they occur. At the same time the project is keen to more clearly understand the ultimate outcomes that both the source communities and the holding institutions desire.

James went on to explain the specific issues that the Maori have surrounding human remains:

- Remains of the ancestor should be in the community
- Communities are aware of research opportunities and some may want to participate but they really want to be clear about how they benefit from the research
- If no specific source community is identified then the communities would be happy for the remains to stay at Te Papa

James also explained that the display of Maori human remains never takes place at Te Papa and that research is only allowed when specific criteria have been met.

Neil then spoke briefly about the British Museum's position. Specifically the Museum is concerned that information generated through research should be available to a global audience.

Neil went on to talk about repatriation specifically and welcomed the fact that Te Papa had been mandated by the New Zealand government as the organisation to take this issue forward. The presence in New Zealand of one organisation in New Zealand acting as a single point of contact on this issue would allow future discussions to be far more constructive.

Neil also made it clear that the British Museum's criteria for repatriating human remains were not yet decided and that each claim would be assessed on an individual basis. Whatever these criteria might

be Neil reassured James and Catherine that the process of making such decisions would be carried out in a consistent, fair and transparent framework and that the British Museum would be working with the DCMS and other UK museums during the coming months to establish this.