

## Appendix O

### Katie Cassels- Family Programs Producer- National Maritime Museum

Danielle Newman: Thank you very much for letting me interview you for my research. Could you please say your full name your role and where you work?

Katie Cassels: my name is Katie Cassels, and I am the Family Programs producer for the National Maritime Museum.

#### Q1

Q1 DN: to start if you could just tell me a little bit about your role here at the museum and the role that you do day today to help provide access?

KC: I program for families, so intergenerational groups with children aged between 0 and 13 years. That includes School holiday programming and weekend programming, the under-fives group, self-lead resources and interactions in galleries. Object handling and things like that. So obviously I'm much busier in the school holidays and big events. Chinese New Year and Diwali are two of our big events, and day today it's more linked with the self-lead resources. That's something that we've really developed in the last year, developing that as opposed to building on a foundation.

#### Q2

Q2 DN: So we will start a bit by talking about the uniqueness of the maritime context. Do you think that the challenges of providing access, so we are talking about physical and intellectual and even cultural access surrounding Maritime heritage. Do you think that dictates how you design programming?

KC: I think that it's a harder sell. Coming from a National Trust background which was more Outdoor Learning and then coming here there was a very different approach to selling the programming. Outdoor programming sells itself a little bit more. Here we talked about linking to our British maritime heritage so you have to be a little more creative. Everything we do links to the collection or a theme or do the uniqueness of this site. But often you have to sell that in a more exciting manner. So things like we will talk about maps but we will talk about them by looking at the monsters you find an illustrated maps. That's our way in. We look for things that are a bit more recognizable and engaging to then direct people to the actual collection items.

#### Q3

DN: Do you think that access to maritime heritage is being provided and can be provided at the same level as access to terrestrial heritage?

KC: Yes, but I think maritime heritage can be a bit more obscure. Obviously at the maritime Museum we believe that everybody has a link to maritime heritage in some way. But it can

be a little more difficult to encourage people to realize this connection. A lot of the time people just think it means the Navy, so reminding them that even if you just live near Beach or you live along the River Thames then you have a link to Maritime heritage. So I think it can be provided at that level but clarifying what Maritime Heritage is so that people can recognize its relevance to them.

#### Q4

DN: What they perceive is the effect of the public's fascination with treasure hunting on what perception of maritime heritage is?

KC: I think it's particularly relevant in Greenwich, with people walking along the Thames and the beaches that are created and pulling out all sorts of stuff. I think it can be quite useful sometimes. So some of the objects that we use in object handling like clay pipes are found all the time, and that can be a way into talking about maritime archaeology. I think the only difficulty that arises are people not necessarily recognizing the treasure they are pulling out as being archaeology and of significant use not just in museums and academia but more broadly. Having treasure hunting is something that maritime archaeology and museums need to work a bit more closely with and not put out as an evil being. Because that's almost the most public-facing part of Maritime archaeology in most people's lives, especially with the mudlarkers in Greenwich. You're always going to get people doing it. There needs to be more of a conversation between the two and way of using the public facing aspects of treasure hunting in mudlarking to talk about the importance of what's being found on a broader level.

#### Q5

DN: What do you think is the most effective way of changing the public's perception through engagement?

KC: Is that a maritime archaeology?

DN: Maritime heritage in general.

KC: The program that we're doing is helping with that. It's not necessarily facilitated engagement but using the museum and the collection and the interpretation as well as the resources really enables us to encourage people to chat more and look at an alternative perspective. I think I knew Pacific Encounters Gallery is one of the ways that we try to do that. Well facilitation allows us to say what we think is the right message actually at some point people will stop listening and you need them to be discussing amongst the family group and their Community groups. They need to be having these conversations and encountering different perspectives in order for them to be able to think about things seriously and challenging their own perspectives So I think we can facilitate these conversations in the space but just telling people what we think they should think is never going to work.

## Q6

DN: How do you think the messages being delivered by public access initiatives are being perceived and received by the public?

KC: Have you got an example?

DN: So it's the idea of looking at the messages that you're delivering and considering if they're being received and if they're being absorbed by people and do you think it's really contributing, like you said, to them having discussions.

KC: I think when they are in the museum yes. Because you are in that mindset when you visit, when you learn something new and you find out about something different. I think the real challenge is making sure that when you get home families are still having those conversations and that they relate back to it. For instance, I'm trying to use trails to do that. Encouraging families to take trail home with them and maybe think and reflect on the conversation they had. I think the reflection is the bits that we need to work on and finding a way of encouraging that outside of the museum is going to be the challenge in the future. It is very simple when you're in the museum but we need to encourage particularly the adults in the situation, because children tend to do it quite naturally.

## Q7

DN: What do you think of when you hear the term heritage models?

\*General laughter\*

KC: It's somewhat of a new phrase to me but I would interpret it as being something like best practice. Show examples of best practice that are around. That may be theoretical or something based in reality.

## Q8

DN: How do you think current theoretical models are being applied design and delivery of public access initiatives?

KC: I think there are attempts. Again I don't know masses of the theory but what I see are great ideas that people are trying and having the fiddle with and come back to in order to encourage new audiences to engage with maritime heritage. Not just on the visiting a museum scale but also volunteering with maritime heritage as well. I think there is quite a long way to go.

## Q9

DN: How do you design engagement initiatives?

KC: So we have a set program but we also run pop-up festivals, which are things that we are piloting and attempting. For regular programming we look at things that are coming up across all the galleries. Sometimes it can feel like the Pacific gallery and the Traders gallery have nothing in common so it's trying to find ways of drawing those themes out and make it really clear to visitors what links everything here other than this very nebulous idea of maritime. So I generally start with the theme that I want to encourage families to explore and then pull out a few different objects, the idea being that every Workshop they do they can go out and find an object somewhere. The workshop has been built on encouraging families to go out into the museum and explore a gallery and the team. We are trying new ways of doing that so we have always had images of the objects in the workshop but one of our team in particular is trialling making a trail with worksheet so once you've done the activity you can go out and find the object and do some extra activities relating to it and what you have already learned about. In terms of festivals and pop-up work-shops they tend to stem from alternative ideas. So this summer we are going to talk about wellbeing and maritime, and that's out of the Borough of Greenwich who are looking at in particular obesity in children. We are looking at how we can partner with them and look at what we have here slightly softer touch way of talking about nutrition and exercise. That may be looking at the polar gallery and talking about the diet they had, you know they are eating loads of chocolate because they are trekking for miles in the icy cold everyday. So it's bringing what here out for families to think about in a slightly different way add related to things that are relevant them as well.

#### Q10

DN: How do practicalities, things like national interest, target audiences, funding and staffing affect the aims and delivery of public programming?

KC: They have a massive impact! \*laughter\* so things like national interest, last year we did an Ocean's Day and we talked about plastics and that linked to national interest as a way of getting people maybe from a slightly different audience, but definitely a different conversation into the museum. So talking about both modern and historical maritime. The target audiences play into it as well, so I am always targeting a family audience, but last year with World Oceans Day there was a slightly older audience as the target. But in reality there was a younger audience on a Saturday during the day. It was something that schools for doing and so it was very relevant to the learning of families anyway. So this year World oceans day is going to target families. Once you have that basis you can try to do more things. Funding comes with success, so by changing that target audience were hoping to get more funding which will then allow us to try and maybe more pop-up things and things and events that Target the local community and could maybe lead into a national project. Staffing is the big one I guess, so some of the events that I run are getting quite full and that would mean ideally moving them over two weekends or 2 days. But that would mean having the staff having not just the time but the mental capacity to come in for 2 days to help with delivery of a busy event. That then doubles the cost because you are bringing people in for 2 days and that has a huge impact. It does mean that we have the ability to be more creative, so looking at ways to use what we already have here and encourage people to use things that don't cost money and don't require staffing. But there is a limit to how creative you can be in an indoor space. I definitely think it makes people have to be a lot

more creative and how we develop and deliver. We have to use the space and we have to work with partners, and that's the route that I'm trying to go down. Fingers crossed, but partnerships do help spreading the load.

#### Q11

DN: How do you evaluate your engagement initiatives?

KC: We use a mix of ways. There will tend to be a chat with volunteers and staff who were involved, so a verbal feedback session. With visitors I've never had much luck with forms so I tend to try and do an evaluation activity, does something that feels a bit more like a game or workshop or craft but is actually giving us useful feedback. Sometimes the most useful evaluation techniques that I found is actually just to have a space for people to write their thoughts and try to feel like it's part of the workshop itself. So what happened at half term was that the kids wrote down the whole bunch of useful and not useful comments about what they had been doing that day. They perceived it as just another activity in that space. Adults are bit harder and really if we've got a big event on the last thing people want to do at the end of it is fill out a form. So again in that context chatting to people in the workshops tends to help with that. I haven't found an answer to it yet and I don't really know anyone who has. I think the visitors guest book is quite helpful as well. Providing people with an opportunity to leave a mark and write down what they think without it being a facilitated or pressured environment. It does feel a bit Freer in a bit nicer than a form at the end of it.

#### Q12

DN: What do you think makes engagement successful?

KC: Oh! Personally for me, I'm never hoping that every child leaves knowing exactly about a specific object that relates to a specific person at a specific time. I think generally they will pick up Snippets and for me that's all I want them to take away, as a minimum. So making the engagement as fun as possible and then sliding in a fun fact tends to be the most successful thing. I mean, the perfect scenario here is for them to participate in a workshop where they learned about something and then go into the gallery space and find the object and then have a discussion with the adult in the group. I don't know what occasionally happens. It almost depends on the time of year, so school holidays there is less of that. Weekends there tends to be more of it. Perhaps because the aims of a family visit during the school holidays are slightly different to those of people who covered the weekend. It's a bit more of us just get out and do something over the holidays.

#### Q13

DN: Do you feel that the public is willing and interested in engaging with maritime heritage?

KC: I hope so! I would say yes because people are coming here. I think there's definitely more that we could do to increase the knowledge of and interest in maritime heritage. We could do more to go out to new community groups and local groups that are

established, just a chat a bit more about what it is that's in this building. I think it looks quite intimidating from the outside and so you might not necessarily want to come in. Even if you have a willingness to engage with maritime heritage, I think it'll really local level people just want to engage with their local history. But with the National Maritime Museum perhaps people don't see it as about their local history. So I think there is more that we could do for that as well. But I think at the base level there is an interest in it we just need to clarify what it is that we are talking about. The National Maritime Museum sounds really big and grand but doesn't tell you much so there is definitely scope to make it really clear what our identity is at the museum and how that relates to people.

#### Q14

DN: How do you believe your background has helped you prepare to deliver engagement programming?

KC: I guess the biggest thing that has helped me is actually my involvement with girl guides. I've been involved as a leader in some way for 9 years, having been a brownie and guide myself. And I think in terms of thinking creatively about various topics, because I'm girl guiding there's a lot of trying to link to citizenship and the national curriculum in a way that's not school. Kids pay to come every week during term time. I think that having to think creatively about what could be a very mundane topic to interest 20 girls age 9 to 11 has really helped. My first role in museums at a paid site was with the National Trust, and those are really sites that have an identity given to them which helps me have to sell what I'm doing as well. There's an element of having to make sure that there is value in everything you do in order to convince people to engage. So here the program is free and the museum is free, so people need to be not convinced of the value because they are getting it for free, but to convince them that what we are but to convince them that what we are putting on will engage them. It's something for them to come back for.

DN: There's a lot of competition out there for people's time

KC: There is! We've got Docklands down the road!

#### Q15

DN: How do you think engagement programming has changed since it became involved in it?

KC: I think that was lost more emphasis on learning as a family, rather than talking to the children and talking to an adult separately. It really is about getting intergenerational groups to have conversations here and elsewhere. There has been so much more focus on that sharing then when I started. Also there is a lot more emphasis now on the value of people's time, less so for people coming to engage, I'm more so for groups that are coming to engage and share their time. This helps us increase our knowledge and our offer to any audience. There has been a lot more focus on reimbursing people for that, for that time, which I think is really valuable. It's a big change for museums to be thinking about that I'm considering that in forward planning. Travel cost for volunteers, for instance, it's all well and good saying

that you'll do it but how do you go about doing it. Thinking more broadly it's all about a bit of forward-thinking and anticipating where you'll need to have those conversations. If you're just doing it without really thinking then you're not acknowledging it, but that conversation would have cost money for everyone involved.

#### Q16

DN: What do you believe your role is in heritage management?

KC: I don't think I'm managing heritage in any way. For me it's about the encouragement and I see my role as encouraging people to engage with their heritage which is here for them. It's about making sure they know about it because otherwise they aren't going to engage with it and giving them the confidence to engage with it. So things like the self-lead resources it's about telling families and in particular adults that you don't have to have all the answers in order to support your child's engagement. About giving them the confidence to go to the galleries and to say I don't know and then to ask someone who might know. That is my role.

#### Q17

DN: Do you consider yourself an archaeologist or an educator? And in this case, I guess by archaeologists but I really mean is somebody who works in heritage or an educator

KC: I think I see myself more as an educator. Because for me although my background is history and archaeology, in academia, actually there is a lot of stuff in here I don't know much detail about. So it's about encouraging other people to learn with me as we are having those conversations together, particularly with people who come from other communities who have those answers. So as much as I'm trying to spread the word I'm listening to other people who are teaching me so I can better spread that knowledge. I'm a facilitator really.

#### Q18

DN: Do you believe that your work is for the benefit of archaeology or the public?

KC: I guess in a funny way both. So for archaeology I'm hoping that by getting children at a young age and coming into contact with the museum and heritage and the themes and hopefully the staff they see that as a role that they could go into. And about making the different roles and heritage a bit clearer, so not everyone is a curator. That is a big thing. So that benefits the academic side of things as well because you can get more perspectives and more experiences and skills into archaeology and heritage. That is only going to benefit the industry. But I guess that's really a long-term ambition and the short-term is that you are benefiting the public because we are reminding them that this belongs to them and not us and it's something that they should be in can engage with at whatever level is relevant to them. You don't have to work in a museum, but I would like to think that by providing a free museum with free opportunities we are benefiting the public more immediately. We are giving adults the opportunity to bring their children to a new space to encounter new

cultures and have new discussions which could really brought in their understanding of the world.

#### Q19

DN: Why do you believe we are engaging with the public?

KC: It's a big discussion between people who are more commercially minded and people who are more educationally minded. Those are two really big parts of the sector. It's a conversation that I've had quite a few times and for me it's about the longevity of the sector and if this building and the collection. If no one is engaging with it and they're not going to engage with it in the future then what's the point? It's the big thing about why we engage with families because if the children don't come now then why would they come in the future and why would they bring their kids? It's a bad cycle. In order to keep the heritage that we have alive and looked after we didn't need people to have interest and to come back. But also we need to broaden the encounter the people are having. Museums are one of those places where you can go all over the world without going far. We can be a safe place to have discussions and to improve knowledge of other cultures and belief systems but maybe families won't be encountering elsewhere. That's it basically, get those discussions get that understanding. Develop people sympathizing and empathy through those conversations. These are things that need to happen and we just need to be really clear and not be afraid to get political or emotive. Museums are heading that way but we need to be brave.

#### Q20

DN: How do you think we've arrived at this point in heritage engagement?

KC: A lot of trial and error. I think it's really interesting to talk to other colleagues from other institutions as to what they see it as being the missing group that they are not working with, and therefore what they see is community engagement. I think here we are doing a pretty good job of noticing who is it visiting and working to increase that. The local audience was one of those groups. But it does require open and honest conversations and that's one of the things that's getting us where we are. Museums are going "okay we don't know about this community, we don't know about this object we don't know why people don't want to talk to us". I think the different programming that is going on this helped figure out what's missing because it allows us to have these conversations, these honest conversations with locals, both visiting and non visiting. These groups are pushing us forward and encouraging us to bring more opportunities.

#### Q21

DN: If you could design a public access initiative relating to maritime heritage with no concerns over any of the mitigating issues. So, location, pricing, staffing, national interest, anything like that at all.. What would you design?



KC: That's a good question. One of the things that I really want to be able to do more of is to actually be outside the museum. I don't necessarily mean going on a big tour of the country but actually just having our programming visible outside. I think that immediately brings people in because they can see what's going on. I love that we can use our collection, but I would like to actually be able to bring the collection outside as well. So our handling collection is all replica items and there are people doing brilliant things where they were using their actual collection and they've got loads of copies of the same thing so it doesn't matter if something gets slightly damaged. I would like to be able to take that collection out into our grounds I just talked to people about anything and everything. They don't have to come into the museum and that's a big thing. I honestly don't think there needs to be anything insanely high production for me it's about having something that's less intimidating I'm making use of what's around us and who's around us. Really giving people the opportunity to enter at whatever level they want to. And people would! But then like you say there are those mitigating issues. But I think it would be quite exciting because we always get people asking if this is real, and how cool would it be to say yes it's 2,000 years old! Even I would go whoa!

## Q22

DN: What do you think needs to change in order for you to be able to do something like this?

KC: So it's probably a museum attitude to risk. Museums need to recognize that yes, it's brilliant that we are looking after a collection and keeping it forever but what's the use of it in a store that no one can go to? It would really mean increasing our team's confidence. Their confidence in themselves to be able to bring these objects out and look after it and trust that the public are going to look after it as well and that it's in safe hands. We need to trust that if something changes in an object, so if something comes loose somewhere, we need to trust that someone will recognize that and do something about it. All of these situations make museums risk adverse. I think we need to get people to understand that in order to keep people engaged we have to take a few risks here and there.

## Q23

DN: Why would this be the ideal approach?

KC: For me it just seems pointless to have thousands of objects that aren't accessible. Who are we keeping them for if not the people who are here now as well as the people who are coming back to the future? People aren't going to come back in the future if we aren't engaging with them now. It's a balance between having things accessible in the future but making sure people are coming in the future. Bringing real objects out makes things more relevant and more exciting. People do recognize when they're holding something old that there is a level of respect and I think people are much more careful with real objects rather than something they suddenly realize it's a replica object. Even if it's in exactly the same situation and they're both on the same table. Immediately they look after something that's

older more carefully. I think that helps bring in an understanding of museums in general. I think it would make it more relevant to people, and make the museum more relevant.

#### Q24

DN: Is there anything else you'd like us to talk about?

KC: I think there are things that we are doing really well, things like the large festivals. Things like Chinese New Year and Diwali are more developed because they are large community-led celebrations. They are so relevant to us and to British maritime heritage. I think we need to recognize that there are more ways of doing that on a larger scale with other community groups, but also to recognize that people won't come to absolutely everything we do and we can't do absolutely everything. So it's recognizing the value of specific programming and then perhaps using other methods to target alternative community groups. Not everything has to be facilitated, and there is a move away from that generally speaking. We don't need to be having those conversations all the time. We have to have faith in families and communities to have these discussions once we have provoked them to discuss.