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Session name- Archaeology in Polycrisis: Harnessing Heritage for Sustainability

Session proposer:

Presenter 1

Name: James L. Flexner

Organisation: The University of Sydney

Position: Associate Professor of Historical Archaeology and Heritage

Primary email: James.flexner@sydney.edu.au

Biography (max 50 words): James Flexner is a historical archaeologist focusing on autonomous and independent areas of the Pacific Islands. His research extends across French Polynesia, Vanuatu, Hawai'i, and parts of the east coast of Australia.

Summary abstract (minimum 100 words and maximum 150 words): The idea of living through crisis has become a fundamental cliché of 21 st century life. War, disasters, climate chaos, pandemic: scholars can basically take their pick of damaging and destructive phenomena. And yet, at least for the privileged, archaeology seems to largely carry on as if the world is still stable and predictable (if that was indeed ever the case). Excavation seasons happen, analysis goes ahead, research gets published. Archaeologists do this knowing that we can't carry on in this way forever. So what happens when we embrace the multiple crises facing us in the near and distant futures? A critical perspective that integrates concepts like degrowth and anarchism demands imagining a different archaeology for ourselves, and for future generations both inside and outside of the discipline.

Presenter 2

Name: Caitlin Allen

Organisation: The University of Sydney

Position: Senior Lecturer - Heritage

Primary email: caitlin.allen@sydney.edu.au

Biography (max 50 words): Dr Caitlin Allen is a Sydney-based heritage specialist and archaeologist. Her current research interests focus on social values and place attachment and the ways heritage contributes to the creation of liveable cities and community outcomes such as wellbeing and identity building. Caitlin is currently the President of Australia ICOMOS.

Summary abstract (minimum 100 words and maximum 150 words): Archaeological excavation is an unsustainable process. The number of available sites and research questions are finite, excavation is destructive by nature and the ensuing stores full of collections and stacks of professional reports often result in negligible public outcomes. What if there was another way to conceive of and realise the value of archaeological sites and the benefits of archaeological work? This paper will propose a reframing of archaeology that seeks more than the production

of knowledge about the past. It will explore the relationships that develop between people and archaeological places in the present and the ways they contribute to place attachment and placemaking and support individual and community wellbeing. In this way, archaeology recognises a new set of 'whys', expanding its capacity to support social sustainability in contemporary communities and enhancing the quality of life for current and future generations. We dig not just to learn, but to create.

Presenter 3

Name: Katharine Watson

Organisation: Christchurch Archaeology Project

Position: Director

Primary email: katharine.watson@christchurcharchaeology.org

Biography (max 50 words): Katharine is an archaeologist with over 20 years experience in the field. She currently runs Christchurch Archaeology Project, a not-for-profit established to save, share and preserve Ōtautahi Christchurch's archaeology.

Summary abstract (minimum 100 words and maximum 150 words): Aotearoa's archaeological collections are an irreplaceable taonga that provide unique insights into our past. In spite of this, there are few legal protections for these collections, few repositories that will provide secure long-term storage for them and little guidance on how best to curate and manage an archaeological collection. This threatens the survival of these collections and undermines both our ability to understand our past and our sustainability as a discipline. The New Zealand Archaeological Association's position is that this situation in untenable, and that a comprehensive plan for the sustainable long-term storage of Aotearoa's archaeological collections must be developed. Engagement with iwi, rūnanga and hapū, particularly around Māori data sovereignty and Māori data governance, must be fundamental to this. This paper reports on the progress of this project to date and the challenges that lie ahead.