

FLAME (Future Libraries, Archives and Museums in Excavation) – Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR).

Podcast series of the CLIR Curated Futures Project | Season One | 2021-2023

Review by Lindsay Bilodeau

FLAME (Future Libraries, Archives, and Museums in Excavation) is a podcast series that ran from December 2021 to September 2023.¹ It was created by Laura Wilson, Ece Turnator, Petrouchka Moise, Jennifer Grayburn and Keith Smith as part of the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) Curated Futures Project within the CLIP Post-Doctoral Fellowship programme. The Podcast series has eight episodes consisting of interviews with experts, researchers, and gallery, libraries, archives and museums (GLAM) sector workers who focus on the decolonisation of GLAM institutions. Interview segments are interspersed with commentary from the hosts, in which they connect themes from across the episodes and include data and other citations that reinforce or provide context to the interviewees' statements.

Host commentary is differentiated by vocal modulation, designed to make the hosts sound like they're speaking through a recorder, which is at times distracting, but the content of the podcast is engaging enough that this is not a serious issue. The

hosts create a listening experience akin to reading an edited volume by highlighting two main themes across all eight episodes: the current lack of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) people working in GLAM institutions, and the need for more reparative practices in the sector.

The most prevalent theme in the series is the lack of diverse voices in GLAMs and the need for more BIPOC people to take part in the sector. Several solutions to this issue are suggested, including encouraging BIPOC people to pursue library school or other related academic studies, engaging with BIPOC community groups, and changing the fundamental ways institutions operate. One example of this last solution is the creation of an Indigenous-led version of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).²

Though the podcast is successful in highlighting the need for diverse voices in GLAMs, the question of *why* there are so few BIPOC workers in the sector remains to be fully addressed. This is arguably a question that cannot be addressed in an eight-episode podcast series, but it is worth noting that there is room for more discussion about how the sector excludes these people and why individuals are reluctant to study,

apply for and work in GLAMs.

The second theme is the turn toward reparative work within GLAMs. Both the guests and hosts highlight emergent reparative / restorative practices across the sector, from reparative description work to reparative archaeological practices. Episode seven, titled *Indigenous Knowledge is Living Knowledge: Context and Resources for Describing Indigenous Collections* was of particular interest, with a discussion of Indigenous knowledge and copyright. In a 2021 interview with PhD student Lydia Curliss (Nipmuc), hosts Wilson and Turnator interrogate the ways archival collections are described, how their copyright is managed and how this might change in the future. One of the most poignant segments in this episode is when Curliss reminds listeners of the need to challenge the supremacy of the written record and emphasises the need to find ways to support and preserve Indigenous history-keeping to privilege Indigenous voices.³ She reminds listeners that Indigenous knowledge, as is quoted in the title of the episode, is living and dynamic knowledge and therefore copyright cannot be applied to it in the same way as a static, written document. In this episode, both hosts and guest highlight the themes of the whole series by demonstrating how current GLAMs practices and laws cannot serve Indigenous peoples and therefore the field needs more

Indigenous / BIPOC peoples on the ground to change Eurocentric GLAM practices.⁴

This podcast series challenges the GLAMs sector, bringing together diverse, expert voices who are all calling for a change to the ways heritage institutions work. *FLAME* maintains a strong position – that the decolonisation of the sector is the way forward and that this can only be done through the inclusion and privileging of underrepresented people. Though the podcast is focused on the United States, it has implications more broadly, as there are collections related to BIPOC communities at GLAM institutions across the world.

ENDNOTES

1. Available on Spotify. See <https://open.spotify.com/show/5dq7mdhEPnc3i2n-hsYpsyD>.
2. Laura Wilson and Ece Turnator, hosts, "Indigenous Knowledge is Living Knowledge", *Context and Resources for Describing Indigenous Collections*, *FLAME Future Libraries, Archives, and Museums in Excavation (Podcast)*, February 27, 2023, available at <https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/futures-flame/episodes/Indigenous-Knowledge-is-Living-Knowledge-Context-and-Resources-for-Describing-Indigenous-Collections-A-Conversation-with-Lydia-Curliss-e1vick5>, accessed May 16, 2024.
3. *ibid.*
4. *ibid.*