

Senior Curator NZ Histories and Cultures

Position Description

Directorate:	Collections, Knowledge and Communities	
Reports to:	Head of Mātauranga Māori and Humanities	
Delegated Authority:	Financial	As per financial delegation policy
	Human Resources	Tier 4

Tuia te tangata, tuia ngā kōrero, tuia ngā taonga Connecting people, taonga and stories

Te Papa is Aotearoa New Zealand's national museum and a proud symbol of our shared identity, history, and aspirations. As a vital piece of national infrastructure, Te Papa is more than a cultural institution - it is a living, evolving space that anchors our collective memory while shaping the future. We are committed to excellence, relevance, and impact, recognising that public investment in Te Papa is a shared commitment to innovation, inclusivity, and national pride.

Guided by our bicultural foundation and global outlook, we are dedicated to sharing New Zealand's unique stories with the world. Our strategic direction focuses on deepening our investment in collections, research, people, infrastructure, and partnerships. Central to this is our commitment to Mana Taonga, ensuring communities are actively involved in the care and interpretation of their cultural heritage.

Our enduring partnership with Tangata Whenua and the embedding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi into our practices are fundamental to our identity. As we continue to evolve, we remain focused on delivering meaningful experiences for all New Zealanders and visitors, ensuring Te Papa remains a sustainable, world-class museum for generations to come.

Ka pēhea tō whai wāhi atu The Directorate

The Collections, Knowledge and Communities Directorate develops, cares for and creates physical and digital access to the taonga Te Papa holds on behalf of the nation, alongside our important mahi in national sector development and support to museums, galleries, whare taonga and iwi.

The directorate is built on Te Papa's foundations as a bicultural organisation, which values and upholds Mātauranga Māori, indigenous ways of knowing, and Western forms of scholarship, and embraces multidisciplinary practice.

The Directorate works in partnership with iwi, source communities, makers and donors in all aspects of collections-related mahi and curatorial activity. Mana Taonga is central to our organisational practice, with collection development, care, access and research aligned to our Mana Taonga principle, emphasising community inclusion and partnership. Approaches are taken that maximise collaboration and connection beyond the museum, including research and exhibition partnerships, loans of collection items, sharing expert perspectives and advice through diverse channels, the reconnection of communities to their cultural heritage, and a proactive approach to the return of cultural heritage.

Sector development through National Services Te Paerangi provides the strategic and practical support that meets the needs of museums, galleries, iwi and whare taonga. Relationships with the sector are also fostered through collaboration, expert advice, and access to Te Papa's collections for research, access projects and loans.

The directorate's strong leadership, technical expertise and ability to build enduring relationships ensure our collections, research, experiences and sector support reflect the diverse communities and histories of Aotearoa and the Pacific, and forge connections that help make Te Papa meaningful for all.

The teams that make up the Directorate are:

- Natural History
- Mātauranga Māori and Humanities
- Collection Care and Access
- Sector Development

Ko te āhua e whai hua ai te tūranga

Position purpose

The Senior Curator NZ Histories and Cultures leads a team of curators responsible for developing and enhancing curatorial practice and collections-based knowledge within their discipline. They also work collectively with other Senior Curators and the Head of Mātauranga Māori and Humanities to develop and enhance curatorial practice across disciplines, ensuring an aligned and cohesive approach.

The position develops, supervises, and undertakes research projects aligned with Te Papa's organisational strategies and priorities and plays an integral part in the development and delivery of exhibitions and experiences. Working closely with the Audience and Experience directorate, the Senior Curator leads projects as business owner where required.

They maintain and grow relationships with communities alongside national and international networks and lead collection development in their discipline area.

Ka kawea e koe te aha ki ētahi atu

Key relationships

Internal

- Collections, Knowledge and Communities Leadership team
- Collection Care and Access teams
- Curators across all disciplines
- Natural History team
- Exhibitions and Experience Team
- Learning Team
- Live Programming Team
- Enterprise Programme Management Office
- Audience and Experience Directorate
- Māori Partnerships team

External

- GLAMs (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) across New Zealand and internationally
- Research and learning institutions
- Relevant communities and stakeholders
- Media organisations

Ka kaweā mai e koe te aha ki Te Papa

Knowledge, experience & qualifications

- Proven people management expertise and experience inspiring, motivating, leading and managing a team, planning the various work of the team and encouraging innovation.
- Highly competent at developing and implementing operational / business plans.
- Highly competent at preparing written communications including, business cases, and background and discussion papers.
- Ability to work collaboratively as a manager across an organisation, building relationships and leveraging interdependencies to achieve organisational outcomes.
- Demonstrated ability to build and nurture effective relationships with internal and external stakeholders.
- Proven ability to identify and mitigate risks.
- A strong understanding and proven experience embedding Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Mana Taonga across team planning, projects, and decision-making, the capability to ensure tikanga-led practices, te reo Māori and Māori values are implemented appropriately in leadership practice.
- Academic qualification (ideally a PhD or equivalent experience and skills) in New Zealand Histories and Cultures.
- Acknowledged New Zealand expert in their New Zealand Histories and Cultures portfolio area with deep curatorial research experience, strong research skills
- A personal record of research, inquiry, publication and conference presentation in this field.
- Proven ability to develop exhibitions and public programmes, contribute to scholarship and mātauranga Māori, and to work collaboratively in multidisciplinary teams on a range of museological outputs.
- Significant experience in collection development with demonstrable success in building and shaping collections to support organisational strategies/ priorities.
- Demonstrated ability to work as a reflective museum professional with a high level of initiative, persistence in completing assignments, and ability to manage multiple projects simultaneously.

Desirable

- Experience developing others' cultural capability including supporting kaimahi to use te Tiriti aligned tools, tikanga, te reo and Māori values in their mahi.

Ō mātau whāinga Our expectations

The following Behavioural Competencies are expected from Tier 4 managers across Te Papa.

Navigating for the future	Leading strategically	Engages people in the vision
	Leading with influence	Communicates clearly and with impact
Stewardship	Enhancing organisational performance	Strengthens team performance and fosters continuous improvement
	Enhancing system performance	Manage internal and external relationships
	Leading at the political interface	Shows political awareness
	Creates an environment where Te Tiriti can flourish	Role-model Te Tiriti-aligned leadership behaviours, build team capability, confidence, and cultural centredness, integrate Te Tiriti into planning, performance, team culture, and decision-making. Ensure Māori staff have equitable access to opportunities, resources, and pathways to excel. Demonstrates Te Tiriti responsibilities through ongoing personal learning and the consistent use of Te Tiriti tools, resources, and guidance, strengthening everyday practice and contribution to Te Tiriti-aligned outcomes.
Identifying and developing our people	Enhancing people performance	Sets clear expectations for individuals
	Developing talent	Develops team capability
	Enhancing team performance	Monitors team cohesion and performance.
	Recruiting and onboarding	Plan and prepare for recruitment process Lead Recruitment Induct to build role mastery
	Offboard	Complete the exit process
Making it happen	Managing work priorities	Manages and delivers on work priorities
	Achieving through others	Delegates to individuals
Leadership character	Curious	Thinks analytically and critically. Displays curiosity. Mitigates analytical and decision making biases
	Honest and courageous	Shows courage. Shows decisiveness. Leads with integrity Act in accordance with Te Papa's Code of Conduct, Museums Aotearoa's Code of Ethics and the Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission's Code of Conduct - Standards of Integrity and Conduct
	Resilient	Displays resilience. Demonstrates composure
	Self-aware and agile	Encourages feedback on own performance. Can self-assess. Adapts approach. Shows commitment to development

Ka kawea e koe te aha Key accountabilities

- Support and work within the New Zealand Histories and Cultures team, Collections, Knowledge and Communities directorate and across Te Papa teams to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the philosophy of Mana Taonga, ensuring te ao Māori is woven through all that is planned, remaining innovative and future focused.
- Provide technical leadership and direction, overseeing and supporting the work of curators and developing and enhancing curatorial practice.
- Develop, supervise, and undertake research projects aligned with Te Papa's organisational strategies and priorities.
- Lead contributions to exhibitions, visitor experiences and promotions in collaboration with the Audience and Experience directorate.
- Develop operation plans for the New Zealand Histories and Cultures team ensuring that they are innovative, future focussed and customer centric.
- Lead, manage, motivate, inspire the New Zealand Histories and Cultures team, creating an environment that fosters growth, wellbeing, engagement and high performance, making sure work is culturally, financially, and operationally sustainable
- Build and nurture influential internal and external relationships with a customer centric focus.
- Support and lead risk management and identify potential risks and mitigation strategies.

Ka kawea e koe te aha Accountabilities

Focus Area	Accountabilities
Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Te Ao Māori	Support and Manage work within the team that embeds Te Tiriti o Waitangi and champions the Mana Taonga principle. • Integrates Te Tiriti commitments across team planning, recruitment, performance, and project design, setting clear expectations and driving accountability. • Incorporates Te Tiriti core commitments and outcomes into everyday practice. • Leads and embeds Te Tiriti capability by creating learning opportunities, providing access to tools and guidance, and demonstrating continuous learning in leadership and decision-making. • Ensures tikanga Māori, based on te ao Māori values, is followed in individual and collective workplace practices and places including Rongomaraeroa. • Contributes to the design and embedding of te reo Māori across organisational spaces, services, and experiences so it is consistently spoken, heard, read, valued and celebrated by staff and visitors. • Monitors and reports outcomes.

Curatorial Leadership	Provide technical leadership and direction, overseeing and supporting the work of curators and developing and enhancing curatorial practice. • Lead the development and delivery of a research agenda for New Zealand Histories and Cultures, ensuring alignment with Te Papa's organisational strategies and priorities. • Maintain currency with national and international research, scholarship, and emerging trends and work with the Head of Mātauranga Māori and Humanities to identify the strategic challenges and opportunities affecting New Zealand Histories and Cultures at Te Papa, • Work collectively with other Senior Curators and the Head of Mātauranga Māori and Humanities to develop and enhance curatorial practice across disciplines, ensuring an aligned and cohesive approach. • Lead and support curators and oversee work programmes ensuring that roles and expectations are clear, processes are followed, issues are resolved effectively, and commitments are met. • Foster collaborative, culturally grounded, and inclusive ways of working and support curators to broaden their practice across research, exhibitions, outreach, and community partnerships • Contribute expertise, advice and leadership to the wider gallery, museum, and cultural heritage sector. • Work with the Head of Mātauranga Māori and Humanities to develop, implement, and monitor the collection development plan in the context of Te Papa's national obligations • Facilitate research access to the collections. • Oversee acquisition activities, ensuring all acquisitions align with approved proposals, strategic priorities, and Te Papa policies. • Make and oversee recommendations for loans to and from Te Papa, working with Collection Care and Access teams to ensure appropriateness, safety, and object integrity.
Research and Scholarship	Develop, supervise, and undertake research projects aligned with Te Papa's cross-curatorial strategy, Mana Taonga framework, and audience engagement priorities. • Produce and disseminate research outputs that deliver clear public value, including: ○ Publications in internationally recognised, peer-reviewed journals and books ○ Contributions to reputable popular and digital media ○ Internal knowledge-sharing within Te Papa • Undertake and oversee research to identify, interpret, and contextualise collection items, working collaboratively with other teams and Te Papa Communities. • Report regularly on research activity, outputs, and impacts. • Prepare, manage, and supervise external research grant applications, and identify and secure additional funding where appropriate to support research activity

Exhibitions and Project Work	Lead contributions to exhibitions, visitor experiences and promotions in collaboration with Audience and Experience directorate. • Provide senior curatorial oversight and work collaboratively with the Audience and Experience directorate and EPMO on exhibition proposals, development processes and delivery plans. • Lead and/or contribute to the scoping, planning, and delivery of non-exhibition projects, including development of project plans, resource plans, and staffing budgets as required. • Provide project and/or business ownership where required. • Collaborate with Visitor Engagement and other teams to develop and deliver public, community, and educational programmes that support engagement and learning outcomes.
Operational Delivery	Manage and lead the operational delivery of the New Zealand Histories and Cultures team. • Develop and implement actionable operational plans and measures for the team that: ○ aligns to the Rautaki ○ reflects Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the mana taonga philosophy ○ looks to the future and adapts to changes in the internal and external operating context for the team and Te Papa ○ creates a new level of performance and/or operational environment ○ puts customers and visitors at the centre ○ is holistic and connects all parts of the organisation ○ focuses on real outcomes and impacts. • Prepare quality papers, business cases, background reports and discussion papers. • Set clear team priorities. Work to create the optimum working climate (team and organisation) to enable successful delivery of the strategy and plan. • Lead by example to embed health and safety as a core value across Te Papa, actively influencing colleagues and project teams to prioritise safe practices, challenge complacency, and champion a culture of collective responsibility.
People Leadership	Lead and develop the New Zealand Histories team, fostering a positive working environment. • Lead, manage, motivate, inspire and plan the work-streams of the operational team • Create an environment that fosters growth, wellbeing, engagement and high performance, making sure work is cultural, financial, and operationally sustainable in the short, medium and long term. • Proactively shape and lead the team's culture that aligns to the Rautaki and reflects the unique work the team does. • Keep looking for ways to lift performance, productivity and impact and empower your team to manage these changes confidently. • Create opportunities to bring Te Papa's Uara/Values into everyday work so how we work matters as much as what we deliver.

	• Make sure the team's structure is sustainable and gives good value to others. • Operate within the salary budget. • Deliver on all people management accountabilities relating to: ○ Attracting ○ Recruiting and on-boarding ○ Developing ○ Engaging ○ Retaining, and ○ Off boarding and make sure any people managers in your team do the same. • Set yearly team objectives and targets to improve the health, safety and wellbeing for kaimahi. • Manage the team's financial resources and budget, including reporting and compliance. • Meet all statutory, legal and best practice employer obligations. • Support and provide resources for cross functional and organisational priorities.
Stakeholder Engagement	Build and nurture influential relationships with internal and external stakeholders with a customer centric focus. • Develop new partnerships and leverage established networks and business relationships within and beyond Te Papa to strengthen collection development and research, and advance Te Papa scholarship, Mātauranga Māori, and curatorial expertise. • Seek opportunities for external collaboration and funding • Work closely with the Directorate leadership team and other Te Papa teams to develop and deliver mutually beneficial initiatives and collaborations • Represent and positively promote Te Papa, its vision and objectives, to build stakeholder engagement and support. • Make sure that positions are clear, that commitments are met, and problems and issues are resolved effectively. • Make sure appropriate systems and procedures are in place to protect the interests of the team and to meet all statutory obligations.
Risk Management	Lead and implement risk management practices for the team. • Ensure safety, business continuity, and compliance. • Identify potential risks and mitigation strategies. • Monitor compliance with solutions and escalate risks or issues to your manager/Tier 3 Leader, when appropriate. • Make sure appropriate systems and procedures are in place to protect the interests of the team and to meet all statutory obligations.