



CANTERBURY DISASTER
SALVAGE TEAM

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First Aid to Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis

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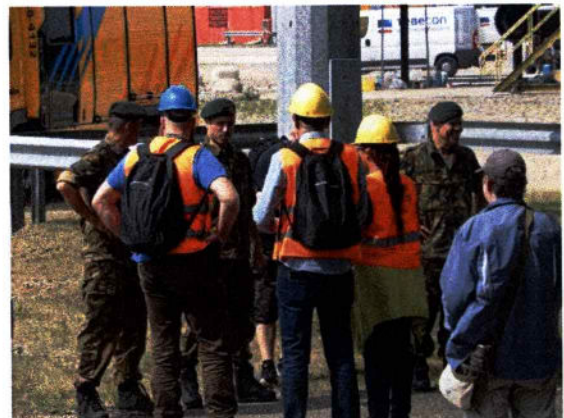


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Kia ora, I've recently returned from a three-week course in the Netherlands titled First Aid to Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis, where I was one of 24 participants from around the world, hailing from conflict areas or locations prone to natural disasters. I travelled under a scholarship which covered return flights, accommodation, all my meals and most of the course fees. The participants were an amazing group of passionate people who worked in fields such as building conservation, architecture, and engineering, along with museum curators, conservators, representatives from universities, ministries and civil defence. I loved learning about their own projects back home, such as fellow participant Elsa, who lives in Mexico City, and after their 7.1 earthquake in 2017 worked to salvage, document and store damaged wall paintings from 16th Century monasteries in the nearby world heritage area. Or Françoise who works with Blue Shield in France and although a clock conservator by trade, has considerable experience working with floods and co-ordinating efforts and training responses with the local fire brigade.

The course was organised by ICCROM (the International Council for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) along with the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative, the Netherlands commission for UNESCO and was funded by the Prince Claus Fund. The course was initially designed for conflict and titled First Aid to Cultural Heritage in Times of Conflict but has been opened up to include natural hazards and emergencies such as tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes, fire and flooding as data shows that there is an increase in instances where cultural heritage has been affected by these events.

The course was structured to have lectures, group work, table-top exercises, a participants' conference, case studies by contributors from all around the world and three main practical exercises leading up to a final simulation which combined all the techniques taught. An example of a day might be a lecture on Post Disaster Needs Assessment and how to complete the forms for Cultural Heritage or adapt to use in your own situation, followed by a case study on measuring intangible heritage needs following Haiti's natural disasters. Then we might complete group work on how to assign cultural values, followed by learning how to write a damage and risk assessment report and preparing for a practical exercise the following day.



The Art of Negotiation

The main practical exercises were stabilising a damaged wall by shoring, salvaging flood damaged collections, evacuating a collection from approaching fire and a final simulation which encompassed salvaging damaged items and evacuation mixed in with a bit of media liaison, gaining permission to access a site, working with military and firefighters, managing protestors, an unwanted ministry delegation on site and picking up workflows after numerous disruptions.



Klokkenberg Scenario

We learnt a lot about disaster risk management, mitigation and the importance of making emergency response plans, training and building capacity, which I found really useful as it can flow down the chain to anyone working in any part of heritage management.

We also did quite a bit of work around working with the military, firefighter and local emergency response personnel. As you all know, access was limited after Christchurch's earthquakes, and this is often the case following any natural disaster world-wide. So, we did a lot of group work about how to incorporate cultural heritage into existing national and local CDEM frameworks, how to make connections and relationships with emergency personnel in your own community and city, so that if the unthinkable does happen you have these ties in place already.

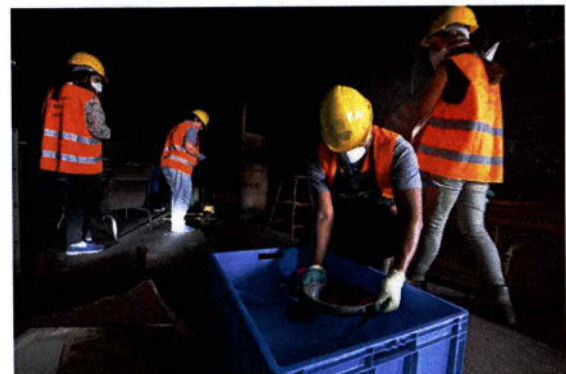
by Frances Husband

29 October 2018



Firefighters

Now that the course is completed and I'm a FAC Alumni I have access to a network of other graduates, from which I can request knowledge, help and assistance with any first aid projects I'm working on. I'm very grateful for the opportunity given to attend this course and have made some life-long connections and life-long learnings in the process. I look forward to learning more in the future and hopefully connecting with those already involved in these fields in New Zealand so we can exchange knowledge.



Triage Session

If anyone is interested in discussing this very interesting topic with Frances you can contact her at franceshusband@hotmail.com

