Let’s Dance Together

The Significance of the Coolbaroo Club as a Potential Heritage Tourism, Education and Community Development space in Perth

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Discussion Today

- To understand and discuss how areas of urban, European-associated Aboriginal heritage are underrepresented in Perth’s heritage tourism and education.
- To provide recommendation as to how to counteract that underrepresentation through the presentation of a heritage place - The Coolbaroo Club.
Two predominant forms of Aboriginal heritage within tourism in Perth

Traditional and Positive
- Associated with traditional forms of culture
- Not associated with European people, built places or culture
- Eg. Bush tucker experiences, boomerang throwing, didgeridoo playing

Urban, European-Associated and Negative
- Places where Aboriginal people have interacted with Europeans
- Often viewed as negative heritage-places of imprisonment and mistreatment
- Eg. Wadjemup, Fremantle Prison, Moore River Native Settlement

Lacking of urban, non-traditional Aboriginal heritage places that are European-associated and positive
The Coolbaroo Club as positive, urban Aboriginal heritage

- 1940s Perth - a time of assimilation policies, segregation and mistreatment
- This mistreatment that contributed to a feeling of solidarity amongst the Noongar and wider Aboriginal community - led to the formation of the Coolbaroo League
- A space where people could socialise, enjoy each other’s company and the music free from dominant government control
- It was Aboriginal established and controlled and it provided people with a lot of joy and positive memories as well as being a political space for the rights of Aboriginal people
- Example of positive Aboriginal, urban heritage
How the Coolbaroo Club has previously been presented

- How the Coolbaroo Club has previously been presented publicly - predominantly through exhibitions
- 2010 exhibition at the Perth Town Hall - *The Coffee Pot and the Coolbaroo Club, two extraordinary places in 1950s Perth*
- 2014 exhibition at Berndt Museum *Wildflower Dreaming: Shirley Corunna and the Coolbaroo League 1952-1962*
- June 2016 - small sculpture detailing stories from the Coolbaroo Club erected in Weld Square
Successful heritage presentation of comparative places - The Ritz

- The Ritz Theatre and Museum, LaVilla, Jacksonville, Florida
- 1930s, ‘40s and ‘50s entertainment and business space for the African American community
- Provided a separate niche for the African American community, who constantly faced European American racism, were not welcome in white areas and who created these new areas as a response
- Sense of community and resilience was fostered through the shared segregation, but also through a shared enjoyment of jazz music
- Includes both a museum aspect, where people can come to learn about the history and significance of the place, but also an entertainment, theatre space, where people can come to hear jazz, take part in talent shows or enjoy other music that is being put on show
Successful heritage presentation of comparative places

- The Sophiatown Heritage and Cultural Centre, known as Sophiatown the Mix, in Sophiatown, Johannesburg.
- The centre is comprised of both a newly constructed memorial building and the original 1930s home of Dr Alfred Bitini Xuma, which is a national heritage site and museum.
- Sophiatown was one of the few areas in Johannesburg where African South Africans were able to own land before the enactment of the 1923 Urban Areas Act.
- In being able to own property the African South African community flourished as the population grew.
- Heavy concentration of Africans led to a intensity of culture and in particularly jazz culture.
- Current heritage space reflects both history and importance of jazz - provides visitors with a different, engaging heritage experience.
Presentation of the Coolbaroo Club as a heritage space in Perth

- Important that this theme of music and enjoyment is featured in the presentation of the Coolbaroo Club
- As discussed it is this positive effect of music and enjoyment and the ongoing demonstration of this theme that proved successful in the presentation of the Ritz and Sophiatown the Mix
- A combined entertainment space for the performance of contemporary, Indigenous music, as well as an exhibition space which details the history and significance of the Coolbaroo League would be an appropriate form of heritage presentation within Perth
- “There’s nothing like it for young performers to come together regularly in a space where local people, tourists and others could come and go... where it’s a lively, contemporary Aboriginal space... because that’s what Coolbaroo was” - Stephen Kinnane 2016
- Such presentation would help to fill that void within Perth’s current heritage tourism, education and community areas where there is a lack of positive, urban, often European-associated places
- Give students and tourists as well as the general public the opportunity to engage in a different heritage experience through the performance of contemporary, Indigenous music something which is not readily available in the city of Perth
- Has the potential to be beneficial for the Noongar community in being able to showcase local talent as well as the wider Perth community in being able to experience and learn about such talent and culture
A Discussion of Potential

Thank you
Picture References

- Anon. 1947 Planning Their Own Utopia, *The Daily News*
- Bynder, B. 2014 *Wildflower Dreaming: Shirley Corunna and The Coolbaroo League 1952-1962*. Crawley: Berndt Museum, University of Western Australia
- *The restored Ritz Theatre and Museum. Photograph from tripadvisor.com*
- The Ritz Theatre, [www.downtownjacksonville.org](http://www.downtownjacksonville.org) and [www.ritzjacksonville.com](http://www.ritzjacksonville.com)
- Sophiatown the Mix, 2015. [northcliffmrvilletimes.co.za](http://northcliffmrvilletimes.co.za)
- Exhibition space in home of Dr Xuma. [www.gauteng.net](http://www.gauteng.net)