

Controversy and local politics

Hi Nina, I just wanted to build on what you
were just talking about.

Have you got examples

of how the museum

has dealt with the situation

where you've identified

a contemporary issue

or an issue has been brought to you

which is facing the city

that might be controversial,

or just is controversial?

You know, how do you deal

with the issues that arise from that?

Yeah, I think, you know, a lot of museums

are doing a lot of good work around this

and, you can look wherever you want, it's OK.

Yeah (laughs).

I can see you either way

it just depends which way

your head is facing.

So, yes and we are trying to

do more with that on the history side

It's interesting being a museum

of art and history, that it's kinda easy

to get people started with creative practice

and getting their hands

on art in different ways

and the way were looking at history

is really around civic action

and so, we've started doing

some programming around future-casting

we are trying this thing called Past-Future,

its actually an exhibit module.

We take an issue that is very hot right now

and we look at what was this issue

you know, what was the history

of this issue, and then invite people to kinda

do some future-casting about where is it going.

And so, you know, trying

to root it in history but then also invite

other opportunities for people to engage.

The other thing is;

there are many ways we've been using some

of the public spaces in our museum

to do things like public forums.

But also one of the more interesting

things that happens here is

our city council, their offices

are really lousy, they are very small

and so, it started with one

and now there are more

city council members

who actually hold office hours

in the lobby at the museum.

So you will often see people
on a couch talking to the Vice Mayor
and one day they are talking
about a planning issue
or some issue about downtown,
I don't know, dogs or something.

They are having those conversations in the museum.

And so, it becomes a place
for that to happen even if
we are not programming it.

We have had, definitely had some
experiences with controversial topics
and honestly, what we find
is as long as we are creating
opportunities for lots of people to have a voice,
whether that's through talk-back walls or
through programming,
we haven't really had issues about it.

The funnier issue we have being in a small town
is that everybody is connected.

So, you know, for example,
I live with a woman who runs a major
social service organisation
in town that works with a lot of poor people.

And there has been opportunities
that come out of that.

There are also, I'm always
careful politically about, kind of, you know,
my husband is on the board
of the homeless service centre,
I mean there are these varieties
of interactions and kinda thinking about those things.

One of the ways that's really changed for us, is around
facility rentals, where we basically decided
we will be a place for anyone
and if you want to have
a campaign rally you can do that here.

If you want to have a fundraiser
for your event, as long as it's not
intentionally promoting,
you know, hate in some way,
you can do that here.

And that we have to keep our
pricing scheme really consistent.

So, while there are lots of people,
for lots of reasons, we want
to give discounts to, we don't.

Which is an interesting thing to realise
about being inclusive sometimes
means being fair in this weird way
that is actually not as supportive
as we want to be of some of our partners.

And so, there are those kinds

of complexities that happen
that are more about just being in a small town
and the politics of a small town
than they are about the issues themselves.