

Transcript: EDI in Scottish Heritage - Dr Churnjeet Mahn

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00:00:19,000 --> 00:00:21,199

Hi, I am Dr Churnjeet Mahn.

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00:00:21,480 --> 00:00:24,719

I am an academic in English literature at the University of Strathclyde.

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00:00:25,679 --> 00:00:27,839

I'm wearing a grey blazer, a white shirt.

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00:00:27,839 --> 00:00:29,719

I have shoulder length black hair.

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00:00:29,719 --> 00:00:34,920

I have brown glasses and brown eyes and I am South Asian origin.

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00:00:35,560 --> 00:00:39,759

I'm an academic working predominantly on histories of travel.

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00:00:39,759 --> 00:00:42,240

That includes travel writing.

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00:00:42,240 --> 00:00:47,119

It includes forms of migration and forms of enforced displacement.

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00:00:55,280 --> 00:01:00,960

I'm broadly interested in a lot of
humanity subjects like history and archaeology.

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00:01:02,159 --> 00:01:09,920

And when I look around, they are some of
the most least diverse subjects in higher education.

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00:01:10,519 --> 00:01:16,280

And I think about the message we're
giving to the next generation of young people.

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00:01:16,280 --> 00:01:20,760

We're training to look after our
heritage or look after our history.

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00:01:22,760 --> 00:01:26,719

What is it that is so unhospitable to those people?

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00:01:27,760 --> 00:01:29,560

And how do we break that cycle?

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00:01:30,599 --> 00:01:31,680

My name is Taweel.

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00:01:31,920 --> 00:01:33,120

I'm a medical student.

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00:01:33,120 --> 00:01:37,000

I've just finished my placement here at
the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons.

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00:01:37,480 --> 00:01:39,359

I'm a British South Asian male.

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00:01:39,719 --> 00:01:44,079

I've got light brown skin,
light beard and my hair tied up in a ponytail.

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00:01:45,319 --> 00:01:49,480

Where my brother is studying right now,
through the University of Strathclyde.

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00:01:49,480 --> 00:01:52,159

He told me about this
placement that I might be interested in

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00:01:52,159 --> 00:01:55,400

because it was here at
the the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

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00:01:55,400 --> 00:01:59,879

It was talking about sort of the first
South Asian doctors that that came to Glasgow

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00:01:59,879 --> 00:02:06,359

and that really sort of interested me
because I felt like personally for me,

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00:02:06,359 --> 00:02:10,199

that sort of connexion and that
history was just completely missing.

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00:02:10,199 --> 00:02:13,919

Part of our project is working
with museums and Galleries Scotland

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00:02:13,919 --> 00:02:18,560
on a Scottish Government consultation
called Empire Slavery in Scotland's Museums.

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00:02:19,240 --> 00:02:28,240
Which is an investigation into how the story of
empire, slavery and colonialism is told in Scotland.

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00:02:31,680 --> 00:02:36,319
As part of that, we've been thinking
about material ways in which we can create

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00:02:36,319 --> 00:02:41,159
experimental interventions in the
existing heritage landscape in Scotland.

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00:02:41,680 --> 00:02:47,560
My main sort of role was to just look
through something called the Licentiates Register.

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00:02:50,919 --> 00:02:54,080
With entries on every person licenced by the college,

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00:02:55,560 --> 00:02:57,520
I just sort of went through and looked for

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00:02:58,080 --> 00:03:00,960
the very first names
that I could find from South Asia.

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00:03:10,039 --> 00:03:14,240
So there was the register and then
there was the medical directory of Britain.

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00:03:14,439 --> 00:03:15,479

Published every year.

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00:03:17,919 --> 00:03:20,120

And then I sort of pulled them together.

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00:03:20,120 --> 00:03:24,960

You could go through and
see where these doctors sort of lived.

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00:03:24,960 --> 00:03:27,879

If they moved.
Some of them joined the army.

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00:03:28,159 --> 00:03:31,039

And you could see sort of
where they were going through their lives.

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00:03:33,319 --> 00:03:36,840

We've been trying to think about ways
in which these young people can develop

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00:03:36,840 --> 00:03:41,280

new skills and new confidence
and imagine their own lives in the heritage sector.

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00:03:42,080 --> 00:03:45,400

But at the same time, we want to do
an evaluation of placements to think about

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00:03:45,400 --> 00:03:48,400

how they could be managed better
and how they could be supported better.

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00:03:48,400 --> 00:03:53,719

What actually do we need to do
to make placements more inclusive?

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00:03:54,439 --> 00:03:57,479

Hello, I'm Hope I'm a 19 year old biracial female.

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00:03:57,800 --> 00:04:00,439

I am a university student at the University of Glasgow

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00:04:00,439 --> 00:04:04,000

and a heritage trainee
here at the David Livingston birthplace.

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00:04:04,280 --> 00:04:08,360

I have dark brown, curly, short hair
and I'm wearing a bright blue jumper.

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00:04:08,800 --> 00:04:13,400

I am interested in manuscripts and texts

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00:04:13,400 --> 00:04:21,279

and empires and, you know,
the impact on indigenous people specifically.

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00:04:22,120 --> 00:04:24,560

Also Black history.

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00:04:25,240 --> 00:04:28,439

So today we're in the David Livingston Birthplace Museum.

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00:04:33,560 --> 00:04:39,720

The work here has been really at the
vanguard of some of the museum sector's work

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00:04:39,720 --> 00:04:45,160

on reaching new audiences and
reckonings with Scotland's colonial past.

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00:04:53,680 --> 00:04:55,720

I think my favourite exhibit.

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00:04:57,319 --> 00:04:59,480

Might be the legacy space.

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00:05:01,920 --> 00:05:03,639

It's dark, it has really cool lighting,

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00:05:03,639 --> 00:05:07,560

there are seven different narratives that
come up on a big screen.

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00:05:08,480 --> 00:05:12,199

It's sort of in line with what,
you know, triggered my interest.

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00:05:12,920 --> 00:05:17,759

My project is entitled Decolonising
Livingston Story for 21st century schools.

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00:05:17,759 --> 00:05:22,800

There's one exhibit in the museum
where they have these like portraits

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00:05:22,800 --> 00:05:26,519
you can flip up and see the
people who are on Livingtone's expeditions.

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00:05:28,519 --> 00:05:30,519
Sometimes we don't even know their name.

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00:05:30,519 --> 00:05:34,800
It would just be like fisherwoman
or headmen or something like that.

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00:05:35,560 --> 00:05:38,319
And so it's that sort of challenge that

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00:05:38,319 --> 00:05:42,959
I decided to make into a
learning opportunity in my workshops.

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00:05:43,639 --> 00:05:47,279
And the goal is to just sort of have
everyone acknowledge and identify

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00:05:47,279 --> 00:05:52,680
what the power system and value
system was that created the environment

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00:05:52,680 --> 00:06:01,040
to not be recognising these people, as, you know,
important contributors to this British achievement ...

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00:06:01,040 --> 00:06:02,079
(Laughs)

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00:06:02,079 --> 00:06:03,920
exploration ... I don't know.

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00:06:06,399 --> 00:06:11,879
There were South Asian
doctors here in Glasgow, in the 1800s.

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00:06:11,879 --> 00:06:18,759
In my head you know, I still feel like we're new
here in a sense, you know, but we're really not.

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00:06:21,800 --> 00:06:27,720
Telling more diverse stories
is about telling fuller stories

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00:06:27,720 --> 00:06:29,720
and telling more honest stories,

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00:06:29,720 --> 00:06:35,319
and I think we deserve that honesty
and we deserve some difficult conversations.

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00:06:35,319 --> 00:06:39,560
The way that I decided to address it is by making

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00:06:39,560 --> 00:06:44,439
resources that are accessible and
in familiar formats to teachers and pupils.

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00:06:49,160 --> 00:06:52,639
To show that conversations like this don't have to be

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00:06:52,639 --> 00:06:56,279

stiff and awkward,
they can be engaging and fun where appropriate.

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00:06:59,000 --> 00:07:02,199

They should also be
specifically driven by black narratives.

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00:07:08,680 --> 00:07:12,879

In the medium to longer term,
I think it's about asking difficult questions

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00:07:12,879 --> 00:07:16,560

that it's sometimes hard for
people in the heritage sector to ask

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00:07:16,560 --> 00:07:22,519

because let's be frank,
people have to think about their next funding bid.

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00:07:23,000 --> 00:07:26,639

They have to think about telling a
positive story and having positive outcomes

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00:07:26,639 --> 00:07:30,160

in order to evidence more funding.

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00:07:30,639 --> 00:07:34,360

I've learnt a lot about the decolonisation process

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00:07:34,360 --> 00:07:40,879

and one thing that I would say that
it's definitely a learning curve to get used to.

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00:07:45,800 --> 00:07:50,480

Learning to choose your language
carefully when discussing other cultures

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00:07:50,480 --> 00:07:56,720

and being mindful just of, learning
processes in the way that we portray others.

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00:07:59,720 --> 00:08:05,399

What I was able to do with the little amount of
time and resources that I had, you know, surprised me.

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00:08:05,800 --> 00:08:13,439

So I think that other people coming in with
more experience, better tools, more stuff to look at.

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00:08:13,759 --> 00:08:16,759

I think could uncover so much.

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00:08:17,360 --> 00:08:21,720

I want some of the relationships
we've forged on the project to continue,

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00:08:21,720 --> 00:08:27,519

and partly because I think it will
help with the sustainability of that work

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00:08:27,519 --> 00:08:32,320

in terms of supporting those people,
but also that it will create a set of

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00:08:32,320 --> 00:08:38,879

resources and a network of expertise
that can seed and foster future collaborations.

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00:08:38,879 --> 00:08:42,080

So that doesn't have to be so hard all of a time.

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00:08:42,679 --> 00:08:44,440

That you don't have to start from scratch.

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00:08:44,440 --> 00:08:48,279

That actually there is a readymade
community there to foster your work.

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00:08:48,799 --> 00:08:53,399

And I hope that people in general,
not just educators, not just, you know, learners,

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00:08:53,399 --> 00:08:59,039

but people in general sort of embrace
the idea that black history is Scottish history.