Field research report
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Scientific, linguistic and migration research: Croatian Dalmatian communities in New Zealand

Abstract

Croatian immigration to New Zealand dates back to the 1850s. Today, there are well over 100,000 New Zealanders of Croatian descent. The earliest Croatian settlers were almost exclusively from Dalmatia. Over 90% of them came from Makarska and the surrounding area (Podgora, Drašnice, Drvenik, Zaostrog, Živogošće), then from the islands of Korčula, Hvar, Brač and the Pelješac peninsula. After World War II, immigrants also came from other parts of Croatia for economic reasons. In the last ten to twenty years, more than 10,000 highly educated Croats have immigrated to New Zealand. Croatians are the second largest immigrant group in New Zealand after the Irish. Generally speaking, Croats in New Zealand are successful and respectable, and a fairly large number of them play an important role in the economic life of New Zealand. In February/March 2023, in the initial phase of research into Croatian/Dalmatian communities in New Zealand, Dr. (Hon. Causa) Luka Budak, Dr. Marijana Borić and Dr. Josip Lasić began to unlock layers of rich cultural heritage through field research, recording the speeches and migration stories of members of local Croatian/Dalmatian communities on the North Island, through lectures and meetings in their societies/clubs, their museums and libraries, and in addition collecting material and creating numerous contacts and collaborations that will enable further research into Croatian heritage and the contribution of Croats to the development of New Zealand's multicultural society, and the systematic monitoring of their trace preserved not only in archives, museums and libraries, but also in the places where their daily lives took place: from gum-digging fields and churches to final resting places in cemeteries. The research study showed that in each of the visited cities in New Zealand, the Croatian community was and remains closely connected, preserving language and tradition, creating its own

collections and funds filled with memories, with the aim of preserving identity, tangible and intangible heritage. By preserving their community and Croatian heritage, to which they added the contributions they made in their new homeland, they simultaneously successfully integrated into New Zealand multicultural society while preserving their Croatian identity.

Keywords: Croatian immigrants, New Zealand, Croatian/Dalmatian communities, cultural heritage, multicultural society, Croatian identity

1. Introduction

The aim of our scientific research project in February and March 2023 was to investigate the tangible and intangible legacy of immigrants from Croatian territories to New Zealand as well as to present and highlight some aspects of Croatian scientific, linguistic and cultural heritage. Thanks to the support received from the Croatian Studies Foundation in Australia, the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts Foundation and the Central State Office for Croats Outside the Republic of Croatia, we were able to implement the first part or the first stage of our planned project. We established and created the necessary programs and contacts well before our departure to New Zealand. And after almost three years of preparations, we managed to visit and meet with Croatian communities in the North Island (Auckland, Whangarei, Kaitaia, and Dargaville). It was a very tiring but highly productive 12 days of versatile, dynamic and rich experience.

2. Preparations for New Zealand

The research trip to New Zealand was preceded by extensive preparations for the design of the material to be presented and work on the digitisation of materials for the exhibition on Croatian scientific heritage spanning a wide range from the 12th to the 20th century. Although the project's content was primarily intended for the descendants of Croatian emigrants in New Zealand, it was also adapted to the wider New Zealand public and academic circles to have the widest possible reach. Educational, scientific and cultural content has been designed and provided, along with accompanying activities, through which the most significant world-renowned Croatians would be presented, whose achievements have contributed to the development of civilisation and the overall recognition

of Croatian identity[1] in the world. The project also included research into archival materials and online sources. The materials collected by the end of the year 2024 are still being worked on, and the results of the combined research conducted in New Zealand will be systematised and made public.

Due to the need to gain insight into the terminological "variety" in the ethnic and cultural naming of emigrants in the past, the approach used in previous research into the contributions of Croatian emigrants in other Anglophone overseas countries (Australia, Canada and the USA) was partially and comparatively followed. The emphasis was on the ancestors who arrived in New Zealand in three waves of emigration between 1890 and 1967, and who were poorly educated, without institutional education (and knowledge) of the language in their country of birth, mostly semi-literate, and some even illiterate. They identified themselves in the new country most often as Dalmatians, later partly as Yugoslavs; they are mainly from the Makarska Littoral and the hinterland of Biokovo Mountain areas, and often identified themselves individually according to their affiliation with the place from which they emigrated. The common identity in the new living space is the language and culture of the place of emigration. In research to date, insufficient attention has been paid to descriptions and models of ancestral adaptation to New Zealand's multicultural society. In this regard, we decided to conduct research more systematically with this project, first in scientific fields, then in visible cultural markers through which Croatian emigrants contributed to the construction and shaping of today's recognisable New Zealand multiculturalism.

3. Two levels of activities

Due to the specificity of scientific heritage in relation to the linguistic and cultural heritage that poorly educated Croatian emigrants brought with them from their homeland and preserved in the emigrant communities of their new country, this was not the case with scientific heritage, since it

[1] Identity reflects our primal need to belong and share, for our sense of pride in the community we come from or live in. Heritage is the basis of identity building, and conveys different messages and values (historical, scientific, artistic, aesthetic, political, religious, spiritual, etc.) that contribute to the understanding of people's lives in history. This is why heritage represents the identity of a social group. And that is why heritage is a means of understanding the diversity of people and recognising the connections that exist despite differences.

implies a certain level of knowledge and education, which was not available to the first generations of emigrants due to economic and social circumstances. Since present-day generations of descendants of emigrants have access to schooling and education, we also raised the issue of scientific heritage, since it is an important part of Croatian national identity.

However, Croatia's scientific heritage (which is equally cherished by Croatians at home and abroad) is an unavoidable part of Croatian identity. To become true heirs of this heritage, it is crucial to know it at least in its basic ideas. Therefore, we believed that in relation to the Croatian scientific heritage, targeted project activities should necessarily be carried out at two levels.

The first level of project activity was achieved through two years of work on processing selected materials, preparing digitized material, and creating an educational display in English (since this is the language in which they were educated) with topics from the rich scientific history of Croatia, all adapted in style and content so that it could be successfully interpreted by new generations of Croatians in New Zealand with diverse education and interest them in their own heritage and its further study.

The second level of project activity aimed to research and introduce Croatian emigrants and their descendants in New Zealand, from a contemporary perspective, as one of the most remote and less well-known emigrant communities. The research was conducted on the significance and according to the areas in which they left their mark on New Zealand society. The work used a comprehensive model, and the research was focused on the third and fourth generations of descendants on the North Island of New Zealand, with whom we managed to come into contact.

4. Two-way flow of knowledge

Since the project was designed as a two-way flow of knowledge and research results from Croatia to the emigrant community and vice versa, in early 2022 we began preparing an educational, multimedia exhibition and an accompanying series of lectures and educational workshops on Croatian scientific, cultural and linguistic heritage for the field implementation of the project in New Zealand, which was carried out in February and March 2023.

This was preceded by extensive preparations for the design of the material to be presented and work on the digitisation of materials for the exhibition on Croatian scientific heritage spanning a wide range from the 12th to the 20th century. Although the project's content was primarily intended for the descendants of Croatian emigrants in New Zealand, it was also adapted to the wider New Zealand public and academic circles to have the widest possible reach. Educational, scientific and cultural content has been designed and provided, along with accompanying activities, through which the most significant world-renowned Croatians would be presented, whose achievements have contributed to the development of civilisation and the overall recognition of Croatian identity in the world.

5. Description of the final realisation

The project included various contents incorporated into a single whole, consisting of: (1) setting up an educational, multimedia exhibition about famous Croatians (organised in cooperation with the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the National and University Library in Zagreb) in the New Zealand cities of Auckland, Whangarei, Kaitaia and Dargaville; (2) thematic presentations accompanying the exhibition on Croatian science, culture, and language in the context of the development of world cultural thought from the 12th century to the present day; and (3) thematic workshops accompanying the exhibition and presentations of multimedia and interactive contents about great figures from Croatian scientific and cultural history.

The final implementation took place during the second half of February and early March 2023 in New Zealand (the beginning and end of the journey date from 17 February to 3 March 2023). Project activities included the following: archival research, presentation of the exhibition "The World Reach of Croatian Science," holding accompanying lectures and workshops on Croatian science, culture and language. In addition, archival research was also conducted in the Archives of Dalmatian Cultural Society in Auckland and the Dargaville Museum.

6. Welcome to New Zealand

Kaye Dragicevich, the author of the excellent book *Pioneer Dalmatian Settlers of the Far North*, published in three editions, organised a few events for us. She also organised a pleasant surprise welcome for us. In a

place called Awanui, we were met and greeted by Shane Jones, a New Zealand politician and former Minister of Regional Economic Development and the first MP of the New Zealand First Party,[2] along with several other people of his Māori descent. Shane welcomed us to New Zealand and sang us a welcome song in Māori, which he translated into English. Shane is of Māori, English, Welsh and Croatian ancestry and is very proud of his Croatian and Māori heritage. His great-grandfather, Andrija Klešković, was the first Croat to marry a Māori woman in 1892.

Along with this magnificent welcome, another wonderful surprise happened. And here once again Kaye Dragicevich showed not only her excellent organisational skills but also her goodwill to make our arrival and trip in New Zealand not only pleasant but also as successful and memorable as possible. Kaye also invited Professor Hans Peter Stoffel[3] and his wife, Gerti, to this meeting. Peter and Gerti were on their vacation on the Northern Island at the time.

7. Professor H. P. Stoffel and Dalmatian dialects in New Zealand

Professor Stoffel's acquaintance and cooperation with Luka Budak go back to the 1980s; they have always been in touch, they saw each other and hung out at various conferences, corresponded, and were mutual mentors for postgraduate students, then, they did not see each other for years, since Peter moved to his native Switzerland after retirement. So, this was a real and pleasant surprise for both. Professor Stoffel also taught an introductory course in Croatian at the University of Auckland, but with his retirement, that course unfortunately closed. Professor Stoffel is well-known in the Croatian and Dalmatian communities in New Zealand for his pioneering, dedicated and meticulous work within Croatian/Dalmatian communities, studying their language and recording their stories.

[2] In the elections in NZ in October 2023 Shane won the election in Northland constituency. He and Tanya Unkovich are in the same political party – New Zealand First. We take this opportunity and congratulate both Shane and Tanya and wish them both very successful mandate in NZ Parliament!

[3] Professor Stoffel is originally Swiss but has lived and worked in New Zealand for more than three decades. He was the Head of the Department of Russian and Slavic Studies for many years at the University of Auckland. Kaye knew from our e-correspondence that Peter and Luka had known each other since the early eighties, so she made sure that Peter and his wife were here for our welcome and meeting. We are sincerely grateful to Kaye

Professor Stoffel published several excellent papers on the dialects of Dalmatian Croats in various scholarly journals.[4] But what is even more important, in the 1970s, he recorded these dialects in the family homes of the speakers themselves or in the language laboratory of the University of Auckland. We spent almost two whole days in Kaitaia, talking about times that were much different from today, and so in the course of our conversation, we came up with the idea that he would donate his recordings of Dalmatian dialects to Croatia. I suggested to him to donate this very valuable and precious material, actually a monument to the Croatian language and its dialects, to the leading Croatian institutions dealing with the Croatian language and its dialects – the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts and/or the Institute for the Croatian Language. After several conversations, discussions and deliberations during the implementation of our scientific research project, which was conducting research on the material and intangible legacy of immigrants from Croatian territories to New Zealand, we agreed in February 2023 about the handover of Professor Stoffel's audio cassettes.[5]

[4] One of his articles, "Dialect and Standard Language in a Migrant Situation: The Case of New Zealand Croatian", was published in *Croatian Studies Review*, Vol. 2 (2002/2003), pp. 1 – 23.

[5] We agreed together with our colleague Josip Lasić to meet in Zagreb in June 2023. And so, we did. We met in Zagreb, and after a good Croatian lunch, drove to Samobor, so that on 18 June in Samobor, we carried out the first part of the handover of recordings of Croatian dialects from NZ. At that time, Professor Stoffel handed over 24 audio cassettes of recorded Croatian dialects in NZ to our colleague, Josip Lasić. The handover stated that Professor Stoffel should bring the remaining 22 audio cassettes to Zagreb by the end of 2023. Professor Stoffel kept his promise and delivered the remaining 22 audio cassettes in early December of that year and handed them over to Josip Lasić. Therefore, all of 46 audio cassettes are now in Josip Lasić's possession, waiting for their digital recording so that they can be accessible to all institutions and researchers interested in these language recordings of exceptional value. Unfortunately, due to commitments in Australia, but also due to the long journey, I was not able to attend this second part of the handover, which I am very sorry about.

It is important to note here that the first part of the handover has been minuted and photographed. The Minutes of the handover, co-signed by Professor Hans Peter Stoffel, Luka Budak and Dr Josip Lasić, state the following: According to the expressed wish of Professor H. P. Stoffel, the recipients of the cassettes, L. Budak and J. Lasić, undertake to send two copies of the complete material recorded on CD to Professor Stoffel after digitisation. Also, two copies of the complete material recorded on CD will be taken over by L. Budak on behalf of the project supporters, that of the Croatian Studies Foundation in Sydney.

8. Presentations and workshops

As already stipulated, we created the necessary contacts and program before our departure to New Zealand. By doing this ahead of time, it made it a lot easier for us to implement our project, which involved presentations and workshops in Croatian communities on the North Island. Presentations and workshops were held in Croatian and Dalmatian cultural societies in Auckland, Whangarei, Kaitaia and Dargaville. All our presentations and workshops were well attended. We also visited local libraries and exchanged books[6] and journals in English with them about Croatia, we visited local museums, churches and cemeteries and took hundreds of photographs which will be analysed at some point.

Professor Stoffel subsequently added the following to the Minutes: I also wish to give a copy of the digitised version to the following persons in New Zealand (this is important) and several others (the list follows herewith):
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington; Auckland Museum Library; Croatian Cultural Society Auckland; Dalmatian Cultural Societies Auckland, Dargaville and Kaitaia; Leo Panzic, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Croatia, Auckland; Professor Margaret Mutu, Department of Maori Studies, University of Auckland; Department of Linguistics, University of Auckland; Jim Hlavac, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia; and Diana Stolac, University of Rijeka, Croatia.
This joint venture of our project is a success story; indeed, as already mentioned, audio cassettes are temporarily with J. Lasić until they are processed and made available to scholarly institutions, individual scholars and researchers, as well as to the general public.

[6] We were also given many books about the history of Croatian/Dalmatian settlement and migrant life in New Zealand, on which our further joint projects will be based. They are all great reads; however, one of the most interesting ones is the book *A Better Life: The Diary of Ivana Ivanovich, Dargaville, 1924–25* by Amelia Batistich, a well-known New Zealand author of Croatian heritage. This *Diary* is an easy and pleasant read; it has great emotional value, both linguistic and heritage, and as such, it fits nicely into the plans of our project. Therefore, we plan to translate it into Croatian and recommend it to the Croatia's Ministry of Science, Education and Youth to be included in the curriculum of elementary schools in Croatia as a reading material.
After months of correspondence and discussions with the publisher of Amelia's book, and Amelia's late son in Auckland, we have received permission from him on 30th July 2023 to translate and publish Amelia Batistich's book. According to this permission, the rights to translate and publish the book are for a one-off publication to show the general public in Croatia that there are some excellent writers outside Croatia, be they ex-patriates or people of Croatian heritage like Amelia Batistich.
Also, in the Statement of Permission from late Amelia's son, the following is stated: While the project is not-for-profit, should there be any family royalties from the work, they go directly to the Auckland Rescue Helicopter Trust, as Luka and I discussed in our emails.

The project also included research into archival materials and online sources. The materials collected by the end of this year are still being worked on, and the results of the combined research conducted in New Zealand will be systematised and made public in 2025.

The project Scientific and Cultural Contribution of Croatians to the World – from Humanism to Multiculturalism, attracted particular attention in both Croatian communities and in the broader multicultural society in New Zealand. This project was launched in 2021 with the support of the Central State Office for Croats Abroad (project leader is Dr Marijana Borić). The project included various contents incorporated into a single whole, consisting of: (1) setting up an educational, multimedia exhibition about famous Croatians (organised in cooperation with the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the National and University Library in Zagreb); (2) thematic presentations accompanying the exhibition on Croatian science, culture, and language in the context of the development of world cultural thought from the 12th century to the present day; and (3) thematic workshops accompanying the exhibition and presentations of multimedia and interactive contents about great figures from Croatian scientific and cultural history.

9. Visible results of the project

Through the above-mentioned contents within the realisation of the project by (1) exhibitions, lectures and presentations and (2) multimedia workshops, (3) the interpenetration of various activities was achieved, which ensured the strengthening of existing and the dissemination of new knowledge about the importance and significance of Croats in the creation of a new world. After the described activities were carried out in the city libraries and the premises of Croatian cultural associations and archives, contents of lasting value were transferred to them for use and ownership: (1) bilingual exhibition materials (2) original, scientific, professional and popular works, (3) films and presentations (4) educational computer games, through which the initiated cooperation on the affirmation and preservation of Croatian heritage will continue, as the basis for building and preserving Croatian identity in the homeland and abroad.

The project achieved its goals on both planned levels. Our findings in the Croatian/Dalmatian communities were impressive in every sense, especially how they preserved and maintained their Croatian customs and

traditions, language, unfortunately, to a much lesser extent. The results of our research will, in due course, be arranged, processed and presented in appropriate Croatian venues and published in appropriate Croatian scholarly journals as we stated in our applications for support. Some of our events and mobilities in Croatian communities on the North Island of New Zealand have already been published for the general public on Facebook in a dozen instalments and have so far been favourably received and positively commented on by a large number of visitors across continents.

Sažetak

Hrvatsko useljavanje na Novi Zeland datira još od 1850-ih. Danas ima više od 100.00 Novozelanđana hrvatskog podrijetla. Najraniji hrvatski doseljenici bili su gotovo isključivo iz Dalmacije. Preko 90% njih dolazi iz Makarske i okolice (Podgora, Drašnice, Drvenik, Zaostrog, Živogošće), zatim s otoka Korčule, Hvara, Brača i poluotoka Pelješca. Nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata doseljenici dolaze i iz drugih krajeva Hrvatske zbog gospodarskih razloga. U posljednjih deset do dvadeset godina više od 10.000 visokoobrazovanih Hrvata doselilo je na Novi Zeland. Hrvati su druga najveća useljenička skupina na Novom Zelandu nakon Iraca. Općenito govoreći, Hrvati na Novom Zelandu su uspješna i ugledna, a prilično veliki broj njih ima važnu ulogu u gospodarskom životu Novog Zelanda. U veljači/ožujku 2023. godine, u početnoj fazi istraživanja hrvatskih/dalmatinskih zajednica na Novom Zelandu, dr. mr. sc. (Hon. Causa) Luka Budak, dr. sc. Marijana Borić i dr. sc. Josip Lasić počeli su otključavati slojeve bogate kulturne baštine kroz terenska istraživanja, bilježenje govora i migracijskih priča članova lokalnih hrvatskih/dalmatinskih zajednica na Sjevernom otoku, kroz predavanja i susrete u njihovim društvima/klubovima, njihovim muzejima i knjižnicama, i pored toga prikupljajući građu i stvarajući brojne kontakte i suradnje koje će omogućiti daljnja istraživanja hrvatskog nasljeđa i doprinosa Hrvata u razvitku novozelandskog društva te sustavno praćenje njihova traga sačuvanog ne samo u arhivima, muzejima i knjižnicama već i na mjestima na kojima se odvijao njihov svakodnevni život: od parkova kopača gume i crkava do posljednjih počivališta na grobljima. Studijsko istraživanje je pokazalo da je u svakom od posjećenih gradova Novog Zelanda, hrvatska zajednica bila i ostala usko povezana, čuvajući jezik i tradiciju, stvarajući vlastite zbirke i fondove ispunjene sjećanjima, s ciljem čuvanja identiteta, materijalne i nematerijalne baštine. Čuvanjem zajednice i hrvatskog nasljeđa kojem su dodali prinose ostvarene u novoj domovini, istovremeno su uspješno uklopljeni u novozelandsko društvo ali i sačuvali svoj hrvatski identitet.

Ključne riječi: : Hrvatski doseljenici, Novi Zeland, hrvatske/dalmatinske zajednice, kulturna baština, multikulturalno društvo, hrvatski identitet

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