



Expanding Cultures

Arts and Local Government Conference

July 24-27 2007

Chapel off Chapel, Prahran, Victoria, Australia

THE REBIRTH OF INDIGENOUS IDENTITY AND CULTURE IN NEW ZEALAND

The Hon. Nanaia Mahuta

Minister of Customs and Youth Affairs,
Associate Minister for Local Government and the Environment,
New Zealand

Abstract

The last ten years has seen a huge revitalisation of Indigenous identity throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. Presenter Nanaia Mahuta, speaking from the unique position of an experienced Government minister who is relatively young, female and Maori, will describe areas of significant progress in indigenous power, language, culture and identity. Examples include the enthusiastic recovery of language and culture, the Haka becoming a symbol of national pride and increased Indigenous voice and control in education, health, social programmes and broadcasting. Resolution of native title issues has been a significant factor in this progress, but other strategies that governments and non-government organisations can employ to support Indigenous communities will be discussed.

Mihi

E nga mana, e nga reo, e nga karangatangamaha teenaa koutou, teenaa koutou, teenaa koutou katoa. He tino mihi rawa atu ki ngaa tangata whenua o teenei motu, ki o koutou maatua tuupuna, o maunga korero, o awa, roto, ngaa kowhatu tawhito teenaa koutou.

I greet you in the language of my ancestors and in doing so I acknowledge the first peoples of this land.

No reira, Taloha Ni, Ni sam bula, malo e lelei, Talofa lava, Fakalofa Lahi atu, Bula Vanaka, Namu, Kia Orana and Warm Pacific Greetings from Aotearoa New Zealand.

It's my pleasure to be here to contribute to the Arts and Local Government Conference in Melbourne. I do so offering an Aotearoa/New Zealand and very Kiwi perspective about the linkages between culture and community, and how we can work towards improved outcomes and greater social cohesion at local and central government level. After all, our Nations are becoming more diverse and recognise that there is an increasing need to be responsive to this challenge if we are to promote the values of a free and democratic society. Values that underpin what type of nation we aspire to be where everybody gets a good shot at things and can contribute to the overall quality of

life and society that we want to maintain.

The fourth pillar and the New Zealand context

My presentation will outline what the New Zealand Government is doing to promote culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability – how we are translating words into action by working in partnership with local government, community organisations, iwi, peoples of the Pacific and ethnic communities.

The Government has three high-level goals which are:

- National identity: where Aotearoa/NZ our values, culture and environment shape who we are and what makes us so unique;
- Families – young and old: where we want to build a sense of pride in the way we look after and provide security for all our families;
- Economic transformation: leading through new global partnerships, creative innovation, research and development and new industries to transform our economic opportunity towards high value markets.

The Government is also committed to making Aotearoa/New Zealand a sustainable country. If we take a look at our country we note that Aotearoa/New Zealand is;

- geographically small but culturally diverse
- there are 4 million people mainly living in urban areas
- around 65 percent of New Zealand's population is aged between 15 and 60 years, 21 percent of people are aged over 60
- 80 percent of New Zealanders identified themselves as European or New Zealander
- 14.7 percent as Māori (the indigenous people, or *tū ngā gata whenua*, of Aotearoa)
- 6.5 percent as Pacific and 6.6 percent as Asian
- 20 percent of New Zealand children aged under five belong to at least two ethnic groups,
- and by 2051, it is estimated that 3 in 5 New Zealanders will claim Māori, Pacific or Asian descent.

Sustainable community development can only occur in a community that has a strong sense of identity or culture. Recognising and valuing culture is an essential ingredient in getting individuals and groups involved with the wider community and engaged in civic matters. I certainly believe that sustainable community development and cultural prosperity go hand in hand.

Reform of local government

A brief history of local government in New Zealand would show that prior to 2002, legislation governing local government in New Zealand was very prescriptive. The principles of sustainable community development, cultural wellbeing, and public consultation quickly became the key drivers in local government legislative reform.

The reform of the Local Government Act 2002 was a tangible result of closer collaboration between central and local government. Both arms of government recognised the importance of collaboration to meet current and future challenges. The reforms provided a strong platform for councils to provide strong local leadership, respond to local priorities, and ensure the economic and cultural well-being of their

communities. This empowering legislation gives councils more flexibility to decide what they should be doing for their communities, and how they intend to do it.

This is balanced with the need to provide good information to the public and to engage the public in consultation and discussion. This recognises that the participation of well-informed citizens in government is vital for the health of our democratic system, and for the planning and building of sustainable communities.

The result was the Local Government Act 2002, which provides a practical and constructive framework for local government. The Act sets out the purpose of local government as:

- a) enabling democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and
- b) promoting the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities, in the present and for the future.

This takes the responsibility of local government beyond roads, rates and rubbish towards a broader range of issues ranging from public transport and waste management, to supporting cultural vitality and social inclusion. Our local councils are finding local answers for local issues, and working with communities towards sustainable solutions for the future.

In New Zealand, the community can become involved in council decision-making processes in a number of ways:

- voting in local authority elections;
- being elected as a councillor or community board member;
- making a submission to planning and decision-making processes;
- attending council meetings.

One key example of community involvement in council processes is the Long Term Council Community Plan. These are documents that set out what the council will do to achieve community outcomes over the next ten years. As part of this process, councils must identify the outcomes that their communities want through a process of consultation and discussion – this is required in the Local Government Act 2002.

During the discussion phase of this process, people have an opportunity to give their feedback and influence the final shape of their community plan. Many communities have done just this when submissions were called for the draft 2006 plans that extend until 2016.

The outcome has reaffirmed the rights of local people to participate in decisions about their communities, and the value of long term planning and decision making that considers the impact of decisions on future generations. It recognises that local residents, members of community organisations, business leaders and young people – with their skills, experience and knowledge of their communities – have a vital part to play.

Local and central government working together

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The key to cultural sustainability is fostering partnerships between the different levels of government. Central and local government serve communities at different levels, but are often working to achieve the same social, economic, cultural and sustainable outcomes on issues such as infrastructure, social needs, protecting the environment and employment. A close relationship between the two involving better sharing of information, understanding respective roles and priorities and cooperating on difficult issues is crucial.

To facilitate a close relationship, the Government and Local Government New Zealand (a representative body of the local government sector) established the Central and Local Government Forum. At the forum, which is held about every six months, ministers and local government leaders get together to talk about critical issues facing local government. The Forum has been very successful as it has enabled the early identification of potential hazards and new opportunities.

Social well being and sustainability

Investments in social development help build a strong economy, a sustainable environment, and a society that is characterised by inclusiveness and a strong sense of self esteem and pride among our citizens. Many New Zealanders want to feel a sense of belonging and to contribute to the well-being of their communities. The more we can reflect community aspirations in our decision making processes, the more we develop a more enduring approach to community development.

We want to build a fair and sustainable society and our policies in the social area must continually respond to new issues. Policies must pursue different ways of working that require different agencies – both central and local government, and the not-for-profit sector – to better co-ordinate their activities.

Budget 2007, for instance, delivered greater investment in families through a number of ways:

- assisting families with the cost of primary healthcare by lowering the cost of GP visits and prescription fees;
- assisting families with the cost of rental housing, education, and providing families with 20 hours per week of free early childcare; and
- assisting families with the cost of rates through the enhanced Rates Rebate Scheme.

As we strive to build a strong and diverse society, a commitment to social cohesion and inclusion across ethnic groups, cultures, and faith is more important than ever before. And so is completing our own unique reconciliation process through the settlement of historical Treaty claims by Māori against the Crown. These claims address breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi that the Crown committed against Māori, largely during the colonial period. If we understand and reconcile our past, we can better plan for our future together.

Having travelled a path of active reconciliation over the past 22 years, our Treaty Settlement experience has been fraught with antagonism, animosity, and failed expectation. But we have also seen a genuine determination to resolve the grievances. Critical to our successive gains is a growing consensus that we must do this if our nation is to move forward.

Embracing diversity

New Zealand communities are becoming ethnically diverse, particularly in the Auckland region. We cannot hope to have strong communities unless all groups within those communities respect and support each other. We have seen overseas what happens when there is a lack of understanding between different ethnic or cultural communities. To that end, the Government has established a 'Connecting Diverse Communities' programme. This program co-ordinates initiatives across many government agencies to promote social cohesion and stronger relationships between our diverse communities.

The work program contains short-term and long-term initiatives, focusing on five key areas:

- strengthening intercultural relationships;
- addressing discrimination and promoting respect;
- improving connections with cultural identity;
- capacity building and community development; and
- building knowledge about the make-up of communities.

An example of an initiative in this programme is an education programme for new migrants about conservation efforts in New Zealand. This is to ensure that they too understand the importance of protecting our unique landscape, flora and fauna.

Local initiatives

The 'Connecting Diverse Communities' program is only a first step. Government needs to engage with local government and non-government organisations, as initiatives that involve people at the 'grassroots' will always be the most effective at building strong sustainable communities.

Many local authorities are involved in migrant settlement and have developed regional settlement strategies and new settler policies. For example, Auckland councils employ settlement support coordinators and have better co-ordinated their efforts. The Waitakere City Council makes new citizens welcome by supporting citizenship ceremonies, and improving understanding between the community and the Islamic community.

Targeted outcomes like these will create a society in which people from ethnic communities feel included, acknowledged and appreciated as fully contributing citizens, both socially and economically.

International arena

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New Zealand is also engaged in these issues on an international level. In May 2007, New Zealand hosted the third Asia-Pacific Regional Inter-faith Dialogue and the Alliance of Civilisations high level symposium. These gatherings focused on embracing diversity and building bridges between societies to promote dialogue and understanding. Fostering understanding and cooperation between different faith communities throughout the Asia-Pacific region, and isolating religious extremism, reinforces efforts at home to promote harmonious inter-community relations.

The Alliance of Civilisations seeks to reaffirm mutual respect between people from different cultural and religious traditions. It aims to diminish hostility and promote harmony among nations and cultures of the world. The Alliance sees the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the foundation for stable and peaceful international relations. It recognises the links between peace, security, social and economic development, and human rights.

The Alliance recognises that cultural identities are an integral part of the richness of human experience and must be respected and promoted. Fundamentalism and extremism develop where communities feel marginalised in the face of discrimination and humiliation. The Alliance's message is to renew our commitment to multilateral peace processes, to recognise international law and human rights, and to combat poverty and inequality.

This international message parallels the message the Government is sending to New Zealanders: giving people a stake in society and promoting cultural well-being and vitality is essential if we are to build strong sustainable communities.

Arts and culture

The arts are central to New Zealand's identity especially in local communities, and central to our goal of promoting cultural vitality as a pillar of sustainability.

Local government has a long-standing interest in cultural activities, such as providing museum services, libraries and performance spaces. The Ministry for Culture and Heritage has been working with local government and central agencies to increase knowledge about cultural well-being. This has led to a series of regional workshops for mayors, councillors and staff, about what cultural well-being could mean in their communities.

Some councils have responded by hosting events recognising the diversity of their citizens, and the special relationship of *Mōri as tū gata whenua*. Others have responded by protecting special places and heritage sites, and recognising the importance of family space, which in any culture is at the core of well-being.

The Government has recently announced additional investments in the arts, cultural, and heritage infrastructure. The new funding is aimed at preserving and promoting the unique elements of New Zealand's nationhood.

New Zealand has also developed cultural indicators that measure Government's performance through a cultural lens. This has been a joint initiative of the Ministry for

Culture and Heritage and Statistics New Zealand. It has focused on developing, collecting and making available statistics over a wide range of areas in the cultural sector.

The report: *Cultural Indicators for New Zealand 2006* sets a framework of five theme areas that reflect the key goals for the cultural sector and those involved in it. The five key areas are:

- engagement – including employment, and experience of culture;
- cultural identity – including speakers of Te Reo Māori, local content on television, and Māori television ratings;
- diversity – including grants to minority ethnic cultural events and participation in ethnic cultural events;
- economic development – including income levels from the arts and the value added contributed by creative industries; and
- social cohesion.

Specific initiatives

I've talked about the higher-level policies that form a framework for promoting culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability. I now want to provide you with some examples of work going on around New Zealand – work that is being undertaken by central and local government and community groups, in partnership with each other.

Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna

An example of a local council investing in culture is the new Christchurch Art Gallery, Te Puna o Waiwhetu. Te Puna o Waiwhetu is the largest art institution in the South Island and home to one of New Zealand's most important public art collections. It is situated in the heart of Christchurch's cultural precinct and aims to make this area the most visited cultural tourism site in New Zealand.

The Gallery strives to connect people with art – emotionally and intellectually. It celebrates art and the creative art spirit. The collection and acquisition policy is focused on the art of Canterbury, placed within a New Zealand and international context.

Language Line

It can be very hard for new migrants to connect with government departments and local councils when English is not their first language. But new migrants have a basic right to government services, just like all other New Zealanders. Recognising this, the Government adapted a telephone interpreting service used here in Victoria to establish Language Line – a telephone interpreting service that offers free interpretation in 39 languages.

To date, Language Line has been a real success, conducting more than 80,000 interpreting sessions for non-English speakers.

Youth initiatives

Young people make up 20 percent of New Zealand's population. We need to encourage them to contribute to decisions that affect their communities and the country, and to vote in local and central government elections. Central and local government are actively looking for ways to engage with youth in communities – examples include:

- the Youth Parliament, which provides 121 young people from around New Zealand with the opportunity to interact with the Parliament and get a taste of how government works as ‘Youth MPs’;
- the 42 youth councils operated by local councils across New Zealand. The focus of youth councils is on getting young people to have a say in decision-making processes that affect them at the local level; and
- the EnviroSchools Programme, which encourages schools to incorporate environmental practices in their day to day activities and to work towards becoming sustainable. Today, there are more than 330 schools involved.

The Mayors’ Taskforce for Jobs

The Mayors’ Taskforce for Jobs, established in 2000, is jointly funded by central government and local government and is a nationwide network of 70 mayors. The group has a number of employment goals:

- a job guarantee – that all adults who are long-term unemployed (registered for more than 12 months) have the opportunity, and are encouraged, to be in paid work, in training or education, or in useful activities in communities;
- a youth guarantee – that all young people under 25 years be in paid work, training or education, or in useful activities in our communities; and
- by 2007, all 15-19 year olds will be engaged in appropriate education, training, work, or other activities that contribute to their long-term economic independence and wellbeing.

Te Araroa – the Long Pathway

Te Araroa Trust is an excellent example of central and local government, and of communities working together. Te Araroa – the Long Pathway – is a 2,020 kilometre walking track currently under construction from the top to the bottom of New Zealand. This has been a significant undertaking involving central government, more than twenty councils, as well as seven regional trusts and volunteer track-making organisations within communities. The project has provided local young people with paid employment, new skills and supervised training. The Trust has put unemployed youth to work and have about an 80% success rate providing youth with qualifications and skills that help them into full-time work.

The Department of Conservation has been granted \$3.8 million over four years in Budget 2007 to support the ongoing development of Te Araroa. It will fund signage to create 150 km of new track on land administered by the Government and assist with track construction costs.

Eco City Waitakere

Auckland’s Waitakere City is New Zealand’s first eco-city. It has a commitment to Agenda 21 and the principles have become an important part in the Council’s decision making. The objective of Agenda 21, and of the Waitakere City Council, is to take a holistic approach to sustainable development and encourage a cautious and long-term view on future development and present activity. Community-led initiatives and community involvement are encouraged in the council’s decision making. Being an eco-city means working together for better social, economic and environmental outcomes. This includes working with people and communities to build good road and passenger networks, protect and expand the green network, use resources more efficiently, and produce less waste.

Since adopting the eco city direction, Waitakere has achieved some significant changes:

- between 1997 and 2000, there has been an average 3% increase in local jobs each year;
- 95% of new homes built in Waitakere City are in the urban area, reducing the pressure to subdivide countryside and the Waitakere Ranges;
- the Council plants over 80,000 native trees and plants each year;
- there has been a 30% drop since 1998/99 in the amount of rubbish each resident generates - including litter, illegal dumping and inorganic rubbish;
- from having some of the worst road safety statistics in New Zealand, Waitakere now has some of the best, including a halving of child pedestrian and cycle injuries since 1998; and
- the city has built strong partnerships with the two local iwi, Te Kawerau a Maki and Ngāi i Whāua, and has set up a Taumata Rāanga – a group of representatives of key Māori groups – as a standing committee of the Council.

Conclusion

New Zealanders are a practical bunch of people – we like to get stuck in and tackle difficult problems with a minimum of fuss and bother. We have a ‘can do’ attitude, and the view that everyone should ‘do their bit’ to advance the welfare of their communities, their regions, and their country. You can see these practical philosophies at work in our collective approach to sustainability, and the way in which we promote culture as the fourth pillar of our sustainable development strategy.

The Government, working in partnership with local government, is providing the overall framework to guide our nation’s moves toward true sustainability. But, critically, the Government is seeking to ensure that local people, local businesses, and local organisations play a vital role in shaping the decisions that move us toward our local and national goals.

New Zealand, like other nations around the world, faces great challenges. But we view these challenges as opportunities – opportunities to develop a secure and vibrant society, to build a strong economy and a healthy environment, and to ensure the cultural well-being of all our citizens. New Zealand will achieve these goals, and we will do it by working together.

No reira teena koutou katoa.

Nanaia Mahuta is a Maori New Zealander of Waikato-Maniapoto and Ngaapuhi descent. She is currently the Minister of Customs and Youth Affairs, and Associate Minister for Local Government and the Environment. She represents the Tainui electorate, closely aligned to the Tainui confederation of tribes of Waikato, Maniapoto, Raukawa and Hauraki. Employment, Housing, Health, Education and Treaty Settlement are the key issues facing the. Since being elected to Parliament Ms Mahuta has been a member of the Regulations Review, Electoral Law, Transport & Environment, Maaori Affairs, Education & Science, Local Government & Environment Select Committees. In 1999 she became Parliamentary Private Secretary for Education and Local Government. Nanaia works with Maaori and Iwi in her electorate to find creative solutions to age-old problems and long-term sustainable opportunities that involve Maaori, Local Government, Central Government, business and community sectors

mmahuta@ministers.govt.nz www.newzealand.govt.nz

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