

Creative New Zealand, Cultural Diversity and the Arts

Helen Bartle and Catherine Nesus

Over the last 18 months Creative New Zealand has been working on the development of its Cultural Diversity Strategy. This article discusses that Strategy, its philosophy and broader work that Creative New Zealand is undertaking in this area.

In developing a Cultural Diversity Strategy, Creative New Zealand has taken account of the changing ethnic demographics of New Zealand. A conscious attempt has been made to enable Creative New Zealand to respond to this changing environment and to examine long term equity of access approaches to the work that it undertakes.

Arts and Identity

Arts and culture are integral to the lives and well-being of all New Zealanders. The arts reflect and define who we are. Artistic expression enables each of us to celebrate our own culture and heritage as well as our shared New Zealand culture and heritage. Visibility of all New Zealanders in the arts is also pivotal to building national identity and pride.¹³

Creative New Zealand's purpose is 'to encourage, promote and support the arts in New Zealand for the benefit of all New Zealanders'. One of the cornerstones of making this a reality is by recognising New Zealand's cultural diversity and celebrating the arts of ethnic communities.

Why is Diversity Important?

Cultural Diversity is one of Creative New Zealand's six strategic priorities. In 2004, Creative New Zealand is committed to the development of a Cultural Diversity Strategy in partnership with tangata whenua. In the first instance this Strategy focuses on the ethnic diversity of New Zealand.

The Arts Council has adopted the following objectives for Creative New Zealand in respect of Cultural Diversity:

- That Creative New Zealand will be an organisation with the cultural knowledge and understanding to engage with, and respond to, the ethnic diversity of New Zealand
- To ensure that artists from diverse ethnic communities and backgrounds have a range of creative and artistic opportunities within New Zealand's arts sector
- The arts of New Zealand reflect our country's ethnic diversity.

Cultural Diversity in Partnership with Tangata Whenua

One of the defining parameters of Creative New Zealand's approach to examining its work with respect to diversity is that it is done 'in partnership with tangata whenua'. As a result it is seen as important that the Strategy is underpinned by a

¹³ National identity is a key theme for the Government. The arts have been discussed as being integral to the building of national identity and pride for New Zealanders.

Māori world view. Therefore the Strategy is constructed around a set of Māori values. Central to this is *whanaungatanga*¹⁴. This embraces the values of tika, pono and aroha which together symbolize an approach which is correct and just, with an intent which is based on integrity and sincerity, and seeking to achieve respect across diverse communities.

Strategy

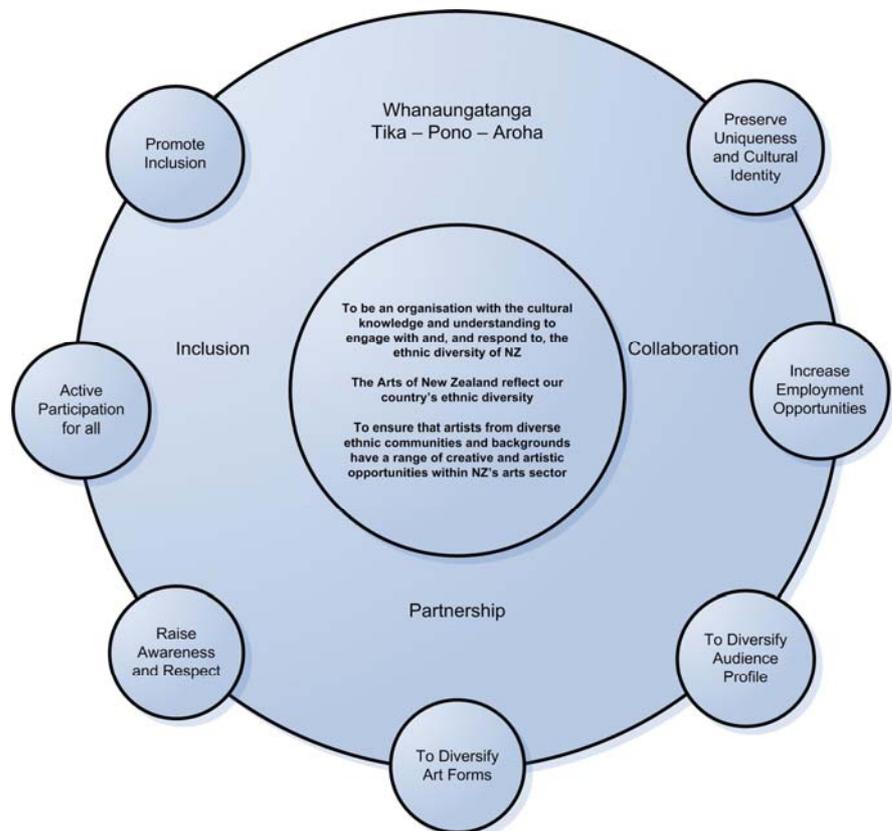
This is the first Cultural Diversity Strategy for Creative New Zealand and provides the organisation with the opportunity to look back on progress to date and to signal its approach for the next three years. This Strategy is for all ethnically distinct communities including Māori, Pacific, European, Asian, Middle Eastern, and African, and acknowledges the unique place of Māori as tangata whenua of New Zealand.

Creative New Zealand’s Cultural Diversity Strategy looks to further develop culturally diverse approaches both within Creative New Zealand and across the arts sector. It is noted that achieving these priorities will require a long term approach. The priority areas that have been identified are:

- Promoting Inclusion – New Zealand’s cultural and ethnic communities have a voice in the arts
- Preserving Distinctiveness and Cultural Identity – protecting and preserving New Zealand’s distinctive culture/s
- Diversification of art forms – arts programmes will reflect the spread of art forms, values and beliefs of New Zealand’s diverse artists. This can include the reflection and encouragement of traditional art forms of ethnic artists as well as the hybrid art forms

- that are created through a fusion of New Zealand’s unique range of cultural influences
- Raising awareness, understanding and respect for culturally diverse arts
- Encouraging and supporting active participation in the arts by all New Zealanders – ensuring that more culturally diverse art is visible and available to all New Zealanders
- Diversification of audience profile – audiences have access to arts that reflect the communities of New Zealand
- Increasing employment opportunities – there are increasing opportunities for people from a range of ethnic groups to work in the arts, including in management and governance positions.

Conceptually, these all establish the foundation upon which the Strategy is based, and more importantly how Creative New Zealand will undertake work in this area.



¹⁴ Whanaungatanga means ‘kinship’ or ‘connections’. Whanaungatanga is about finding connections with people you meet and understanding where they come from. It is the foundation of building relationships.

What is Creative New Zealand Doing?

Creative New Zealand is undertaking a number of pieces of work to further understand demands and expectations in this area.

New Zealand Diversity Forum

Creative New Zealand recently hosted a special topic forum 'Diversity and the Arts' as part of the New Zealand Diversity Forum. This Forum provided an opportunity to further explore questions and issues around diversity, identity and the arts. A number of key themes came out of this forum that have been taken on board, e.g.

- We all possess multiple identities – therefore strategies and approaches must be inclusive rather than exclusive
- We are already living in a diverse society. It is important that organisations reflect that
- Organisations must take flexible approaches to defining diversity
- Organisations need to demonstrate leadership by beginning to examine the issues and opportunities associated with diversity

Asians and the Arts

Creative New Zealand, in partnership with Auckland City and the ASB Community Trust is about to embark on **Asians and the Arts**, a research initiative following on from the study into attendance at, participation in and attitudes towards the arts in New Zealand, which was commissioned in 2005.

The research is focusing on arts attendance and participation within Asian communities and the overall research objectives are to inform the implementation of Creative New Zealand's strategic initiatives in audience development through our Participation and Cultural Diversity strategies. We also aim to provide our organisation and the arts sector with in-depth knowledge about attitudes, attendance and participation in the arts for Asian communities and, by doing so, deepen the participation of Asians in the arts and increase Asian audiences for the arts.

What Do We Want to Know?

The research will include canvassing opinion on:

- 'What do Asian communities and individuals define as the arts?';
- 'Do recent immigrant communities from Asia differ in their attitudes and behaviours in arts attendance and participation from more established Asian communities?';
- 'What arts events/organisations in Auckland do they currently attend/participate in at present?';
- 'Do Asian parents have future aspirations for their children with regard to arts participation/attendance? What are these?';
- 'What are the attitudes of Asian young people (under 25) to the arts?';
- 'What are the attitudes to New Zealand arts? (e.g. new theatre and dance, Māori and Pacific arts)'; and
- 'What are the differences in arts attendance, participation and attitudes between the main ethnic groupings e.g. Chinese (Taiwanese and mainland China, Singaporean, Hong Kong), Korean, Japanese and Indian?'

Our Role in Providing Market Intelligence

Creative New Zealand recurrently funds a number of organisations in Auckland, among them Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, Auckland Theatre Company, NBR New Zealand Opera, Black Grace Dance Company, Moving Image Centre, Artspace and Objectspace. In partnership with these organisations, we play a leadership role in providing market intelligence to help them understand different audiences' needs for future artistic and audience development. A growing diversity of communities is acknowledged by these mainly performing arts organisations but many questions remain as to how they adapt and reframe their art product offering to cater for a more multi-cultural society. Creative New Zealand aims to provide arts organisations that aspire to forge long-term relationships with Asian communities and organisations with the tools and the knowledge that "tell a story" and enable them to redefine awareness, accessibility and attraction of their programming to successfully grow a range of audiences. But this research will have wider applications than just the arts; it has the potential for community building, breaking down barriers between communities and fostering creativity.

We are incredibly lucky to have enlisted the support of a highly skilled group of Asian community leaders to better connect with Asian communities, and to tap into wider networks to inform and disseminate the progress and learnings from the research. The challenge for us, the research partners, is to accommodate heterogeneity in Asian culture within the confines of the resources available! The research is an Auckland sample of mixed qualitative focus groups made up of Indian, Chinese, Japanese and Korean segment populations, with a spread of New Zealand born and non-New Zealand born as well as gender, age and socio-economic segments. Research company Colmar Brunton has been commissioned to undertake the research which begins in October 2006 and is scheduled to be completed by April 2007.

Future Generations of Asian Artists

The research is both timely and well targeted. One of the most dramatic recent changes in New Zealand has been the unprecedented growth of the Asian population. New Zealand's Asian population is projected to reach 670,000 by 2021, an increase of 390,000 or 145 percent over the 2001 figure of 270,000. Out of this rapidly changing demographic shift there is something very special for the arts. It is clear that there are many young artists under the age of 25, pioneering web based creative arts, and changing the creative landscape, especially in Auckland. Take young hip-hop artist, David Tsai who, for example: his debut performance was at Auckland City's Lantern Festival, sandwiched between a classical violin performance and Cambodian Chinese dancers. He is a great example of the 1.5 generation. Not first generation because he didn't choose to come to New Zealand, he came with his family from Taiwan. But he's not second generation either – as he was born in and spent the first six years of his life in Taiwan. Then there's comic writer and Chinese New Zealander, Ant Sang, designer of characters and backgrounds for hit television show Bro' Town, part of the new wave of New Zealand Chinese artists. Both are role models for future generations of Asian artists.

Asian youth are also having an impact on New Zealand youth culture. The Providence Report "Kiwi Asia" found that rather than looking to New York, Los Angeles or London for fashion and music trends, young Asian youth are more plugged into

what's happening in cities like Tokyo, Seoul, Shanghai or Mumbai. Young Asian New Zealanders are adapting these trends – Japanese manga comics, quirky street fashion, the latest cellphone technology – to a New Zealand environment to create a hybrid type of pop culture that in turn influences young New Zealanders.¹⁵

National and International Audience and Market Development

This insight informs our work in audience and market development in providing national and international audiences with greater access to New Zealand arts and developing market opportunities for artists and arts organisations. This year, we have developed and launched a pilot programme to grow business capability within export ready arts companies, in conjunction with Incubators New Zealand and the IceHouse in Auckland. The pilot started in August 2006 with Indian Ink Theatre Company being the first participants.

Asians and the Arts will be benchmarked in the 2008 study on New Zealanders and the Arts, Attendance, Participation and Attitudes.

Conclusion

Creative New Zealand acknowledges that input and support it has received from tangata whenua, artists and the diverse communities it has engaged with. We know that in order to achieve its objectives, and those of communities, in this area Creative New Zealand must work collaboratively over a sustained period of time. This Strategy, and the work associated with it, will lay the foundation for Creative New Zealand's work in this area for many years to come.

- www.creativenz.govt.nz
- www.indianink.co.nz

Helen Bartle is the national Adviser for Audience and Market Development at Creative New Zealand. In 10 years of arts marketing and audience development experience in the UK and New Zealand, Helen has worked in various arts marketing roles including Watford Palace Theatre, Lyric Theatre Hammersmith and The Oxford Playhouse. The New Zealand Comedy Festival brought her to New Zealand in 2000 and this was followed by five years as

¹⁵ Sandy Burgham, "Kiwi Asia" Providence Report, 2003

Marketing and Sponsorship Manager for Auckland Theatre Company during which time she won a Marketing Magazine Award for "txt2U". Helen is responsible for development and delivery of audience development activity to grow existing and new audiences for the arts in New Zealand. She is currently project managing a research initiative on Asians and the Arts, Attitudes, Attendance and Participation in the arts.

Catherine Nesus is the Corporate Planner at Creative New Zealand. She is of Ngati Porou and Te Whanau-a-Apanui descent. Catherine has worked for over 10 years in the Arts, Culture and Heritage sectors. While at Te Papa she was instrumental in the review of that organisations Bicultural Policy, and in the development of organisational capability frameworks to deliver effective bicultural solutions across the organisation. In 2006, Catherine facilitated the development of Creative New Zealand's Cultural Diversity Strategy, and will now be focusing on making this Strategy a reality across Creative New Zealand.