



## **Multicultural Nelson Tasman**

### **AGM 2019 Chairperson's Report**

Kia Ora  
As-salamu alaykum  
Marri Marri pu lamgnen

Tena Kotou katoa.

I want to welcome and acknowledge all the people who came today to Multicultural Nelson Tasman's Annual General Meeting. Our members, friends, partners, community organizations and government agencies representatives.

It is a requirement of the New Zealand Laws and regulations to have a meeting like this every year. However, it is much more than that. When we talk about "a year" we generally refer to time as lineal, where you can cut a bit and watch it as something separate of the time before and after. This is arguably very useful to measure funding outcomes, however, it does not account for the bigger picture, the holistic concept of time as a cycle, as a continuum. A Maori proverb summarises this concept of time:

"Ka mura, Ka muri" (Walking backwards into the future)

Coming back to this ancestral wisdom, this report presents where and how Multicultural Nelson Tasman has moved through its cycle during 2018 and the beginning of 2019 and how this period fits within our organization's cycle of life.

Multicultural Nelson Tasman completed 25 years of existence in 2018 and somehow, it was also the beginning of a new cycle. We changed our image to a logo that intends to reflect the weaving of different cultural identities, in a circle that is open to the past, the future, to the spirituality and to the "land we walk", where we all live together.

Our organization developed a strategic plan in 2018, based on a vision of all the ethnicities living happily and in harmony and also looking to a mission that proposes to celebrate and strengthen our communities, helping newcomers to settle. Our strategic plan defined five objectives/ lines of work:

1. Our organisation is sustainable
2. Communities, families and individuals connect and communicate
3. Tangata Whenua and migrants have strong relationships
4. Communities, families and individuals are supported to maintain and practise their cultural identity
5. Effective services, systems and opportunities are available for communities, families and Individuals

From a strategic point of view, here are some of the highlights of the period we are observing at this AGM:

In terms of community connections and practice of their different cultural identities, in togetherness, we have to highlight our main events:

- Multicultural Nelson Tasman anniversary celebration, where 150 members, partners and friends attended and got motivated with our new image and name.
- Tasman Asian Food Fair, went ahead in the middle of the terrible crisis of the Tasman bush fires. The event was another success, because thousands came to enjoy the food, music and performances and could have a deserved break of all the anguish that the fire brought for weeks getting together and connecting with others.
- Our main and most traditional event, Race Unity Day, could be held week after of the Christchurch massacre. Our organization and the whole local community realised immediately that this Race Unity Day was going to be different, because it was the opportunity to stand by our Muslim brothers and sisters, and also by the values of peace, inclusion, identity and common wellbeing. And we did. More than 200 volunteers participated in the event and more than 5000 attended. Christchurch has given us brand new lens to better look at ourselves. And that is part of our strength now.

Walking backwards into the future, Multicultural Nelson Tasman's response to Christchurch, completed with our homage to the martyrs, standing with our ethnic communities, the Majors of Nelson and Tasman, Members of Parliament, Maori and Muslim people of the region, highlights how deep is our motto Unity in Diversity, embedded in the consciousness of local communities. And I am sure that our organization was slowly building that strength of our unity, acceptance and respect for every culture, since our beginnings 25 years ago. There is where our response came from, and that is why was so strong.

Reflecting in some new initiatives that Multicultural Nelson Tasman is developing from 2018 onwards, they all have in common that they are responding to our principle of collaboration with strategic partners, including government agencies, community organizations and ethnic communities. They are also part of a common response to implement the findings of the Needs Analysis research we lead, with the support of Victoria University and the steering group of agencies who supported its delivery and later, committed to its implementation. The Nelson Tasman Settlement Forum has been a main driver behind any initiative that comes as a response, whether it comes from MNT or any other organization looking to make their part to help newcomers to settle. From this partnership MNT-NTSF-Research findings, I'd like to highlight:

- The Navigator Role Collaboration agreement. The idea was born from NTSF, supported by NCC and Rata Foundation and developed by Victory Community Centre, English Language Partners and Multicultural Nelson Tasman. The Community Navigator is a service that supports migrants and former refugees to access services, make connections and find opportunities to improve their settlement. Being managed by Victory, our three organizations meet regularly to observe and evaluate how the position can be developed further.
- Colombian Community Empowerment sessions. Also an idea prompted at NTSF, after MNT heard how the Kidpower Trust designed a tailored programme to address violence among the Pacifica Community. We had heard the Colombian community's concerns about their problems with violence and the Pacifica Trust recommended the idea to them, through

us. Again, collaboration in action. One session was done and there are three more to come. The founding came from Multicultural New Zealand and the E Tu Whanau programme.

- Participation in strategic development with government agencies . Eg: Top of the South Cross Sector Action Plan. MNT is part of a working group that informed a comprehensive proposal of actions for the better settlement of migrants and former refugees through all government services of the Top of the South.

Future challenges:

Again, drawing from our strengths built during our life as an organization, I would like to call attention to certain lines of action that, being present for long time, are now specially relevant in the current context of intercultural relations in our region.

- Re-direction of Speak Out Nelson Tasman (SONT). SONT's website is still receiving reports of racist incidents, and cases are still individually followed up by us, Police and Nelson Bays Community Law, according to each case's needs. However, the impact of what we are finding and dealing with and the scope of what racism really means to our society needs to be communicated publicly and appropriately. Looking back, through NTSF, some ideas had been presented as to how to go about it and we need to keep trying to further SONT's reach and response, particularly in light of the Christchurch events and the current discussion about freedom of speech and latent forms of antisocial behaviour linked to racism and discrimination. We need to have this difficult conversations and come up with a proposal, which should also include a media strategy on the subject.
- Intercultural Awareness programme within a New Zealand bicultural context. One of our main strategic goals that is also responding to a wish presented by our communities during the research is to strengthen our relationship with Tangata Whenua. For us, this has meant to start and re-start our conversations with local Iwi and get involved in common initiatives. Among them is our intention to participate in a Noho Marae, facilitated, supported and validated by Maori, where we want to invite members, friends and partners. The Kaupapa of this encounter will be to reflect and hopefully come up with an agreed vision about where do we stand as Tau Iwi in Nelson Tasman, what does it mean New Zealand biculturalism for our local intercultural relations. For Multicultural Nelson Tasman, there is one outcome that we pursue with this discussions: to update and maybe re-design our Intercultural Awareness Programme, under the lens of NZ biculturalism. Further than that, we expect that we can develop also an updated framework to guide us through our mission.

Multicultural Nelson Tasman stands in a place of confluence of many cultural streams of people living together. We are a living collective of minds and souls. We are active, we are relevant, we don't fear knowing that we have many needs: because we also have many hands to solve them. We don't fear change, we embrace it because it makes us move forward, reflecting on the past from the present.

The cycle continues moving, with the energy of our souls.

No reira, Tena kotou, tena kotou, tena tatou katoa. Nga mihi nui

**Luz Zúñiga Vega**  
**Chairperson**  
**Multicultural Nelson Tasman**  
**Kotahitanga i roto i te Kanorau / Unity in Diversity**