

Aotearoa New Zealand – *Know your local community*

Did you know that there are over 940,000 people in Aotearoa New Zealand who identify as a member of an ethnic community; that over 120 languages are spoken by people in our communities; that there are 45 distinct religious affiliations within Aotearoa New Zealand?

As we approach our Centenary in 2025, we want to find out more about what our rural communities look like today. To help us achieve this, the Board has decided that **Aotearoa New Zealand will be this year's Country of Study and a new National Project**, providing us with an opportunity to learn more about our own backyard.

This Country of Study National Project commenced in April 2022 and will end in June 2023. This will mean it aligns with our financial year end and Statement of Service Performance reporting.

The information we gather during this study will be collated together by the National Office to create a document that **describes the people and cultures that make up our rural communities in the 21st century**. The information and insights gathered during the project will be reported on at the RWNZ AGM in 2023.

Members of WDFU, WDFP and RWNZ have always welcomed new people throughout the decades and this project is an opportunity to learn more about the people that currently make up our communities. The aim of **Aotearoa New Zealand – Know your local community** is to step outside of our own experience; to be open minded and curious to learn about, and better understand, **the rich tapestry of cultures that are represented in today's rural communities and how we can support each other better in times of need**.

This information may also stimulate ideas for centenary celebrations and contribute to the rich history of our organisation.

How to take part in this Project

Members could respectfully approach people from different experiences, cultures and ethnicities within their communities to find out more about aspects of their culture, to learn about their lives and the things that are important to them. This could include language, day-to-day experiences, family life, religion and beliefs, customs and traditions or food. They might come from a different country or culture; they may have been in Aotearoa New Zealand for a very short time or for many generations; they may speak a language you know, or you might need help to understand each other.

Be thoughtful, curious and enquiring in your investigations while recognising that some people might take some encouragement to take in this project or may not wish to be involved. Be mindful that some people may be less confident to talk to you for cultural reasons or they might feel that they don't speak English well enough or they might just have never been asked about themselves before.

A great place to start learning about the huge range of cultures in Aotearoa New Zealand is the **Ministry for Ethnic Communities Te Tari Mātāwaka** which has excellent resources about ethnic populations across the regions. You can specifically search and find data about the people and cultures represented in your area.

Visit: <https://www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz/community-directory/>

Where to find people to talk to

You may have **family, friends or neighbours** that you might connect with. There are many cultures represented in our communities including tangata whenua and pasifika from many nations.

Here are some other places that you can find out about who makes up your community:

- **Schools:** Our schools are truly multi-cultural environments

- **Church groups:** Many churches offer support and connection services for their parishioners and outreach programmes in the community
- **Citizen Advice Bureau** offers a Migrant Connect Service / Te āwhina i ngā kaiheke
Visit: <https://www.redcross.org.nz/what-we-do/in-new-zealand/migration-programmes/pathways-settlement/>
- **Local migrant community groups, refugee organisations and Multicultural Councils**
- **Cultural clubs and expat groups** - search for local organisations by using specific identifying criteria and your location (For example: Somali Canterbury)
- **Red Cross** (primary provider of community refugee settlement programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand)
- **English language classes**

What do we want to find out?

Think about what you would like to learn about the people or culture you have identified in your community and what might be the best ways to achieve that. It may be that on making initial contact that there are a number of ways to build connection. You might be invited to join a special occasion or upcoming celebration. It may be that an invitation for people to speak at a meeting or take part in an organised day or event is more appropriate. A one-on-one discussion might provide a better opportunity to talk about a broader range of topics.

What information should you or your group share with National Office for inclusion in the Express and the final National Project Report?

1. *Introductory information about what culture you chose to learn about and why you chose it.*
2. *A description of how you found out more about your chosen culture including any meetings or events you took part in and copies of any photographs that were taken*
3. *Insights and reflections on the aspects of your research that most surprised you and what did you or your group notice the most.*
4. *Whether you recognised similarities between your own experience and culture and the one you studied.*
5. *What were the aspects of life in Aotearoa New Zealand that most surprised new migrants and what would be the best piece of advice that they would give to new arrivals?*
6. *What were your lasting impressions of taking part in this Project.*

What will we achieve?

- Greater understanding of the cultures and people that make up our communities means that we will be better able to offer appropriate support in times of need including adverse events.
- By connecting with others, we create opportunities to strengthen and grow our membership through increased knowledge and understanding of our people and communities.
- By sharing the information we gather, we will gain greater appreciation of the cultural diversity throughout Aotearoa New Zealand and specific data on regional differences.
- Increase awareness of RWNZ and who we are and what we can offer.