

## ***Philanthropy Matters – Philanthropy New Zealand Conference***

***Robyn Scott is the Executive Director Philanthropy New Zealand and shares this summary of the 2007 Philanthropy New Zealand Conference for WINGS-CF readers.***

Over 300 people from the philanthropic and grantmaking sector gathered together recently in Wellington, New Zealand for the Philanthropy New Zealand Conference to explore the theme 'Philanthropy Matters'. The conference was held at Te Papa Tongarewa – the National Museum of New Zealand – a most appropriate setting for such a meeting. This was the inaugural combined Community Trusts and Philanthropy New Zealand Conference.

The conference was a chance to learn more about what philanthropy achieves and to see examples of philanthropy at work; allowing us to take pride in what we have achieved as a sector while challenging us to think about how we can continually improve.

The conference opened with a powhiri – the traditional welcome of Maori – on the Te Papa marae. Here all guests were welcomed to the Conference by the host tribe – Ngai Tahu – the main South Island tribe of New Zealand. International guests including Tim Brodhead of the JW McConnell Foundation, Kathleen Enright of GEO, Anne Firth Murray, Founder of the Global Fund for Women, Liz Gillies of the Helen McPherson Smith Trust and Cole Wilbur of the Packard Foundation were joined by a number of leading New Zealand speakers.

The plenary session on the first day opened the conference with a stunning session to discover why philanthropy matters in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Speakers from five different parts of the philanthropic sector were asked to describe philanthropy from their perspective: community, family, Maori, corporate and international; and how it matters in this context.

In her presentation, Joyce-Anne Raihania of the Office of the Community and Voluntary Sector discussed the whakatauki (proverb) – “*oha atu, oha mai* – giving from the heart, giving for the heart”. This proverb beautifully summed up the spirit of the conference, with Ms Raihania describing it as “a life long journey of giving to people to fulfil their hopes, dreams and aspirations”.

It was clear from each of these five perspectives that philanthropy is the venture capital of social change and its importance within our communities was conveyed time and time again. Philanthropy takes risks and looks for opportunities to celebrate and support diversity within our communities that may otherwise be left untouched. Sessions covered a wide range of topics including:

- *How and why does philanthropy matter in the 21st century?*
- *Becoming a learning organisation: some core components of foundation learning*
- *Collaboration: The true power of strategic partnerships*

- *Investing in Leadership in the Community and Voluntary Sector*
- *Engaging young people in philanthropy*

It was very clear that the face of philanthropy is changing. Exciting examples of innovation and transformation that are happening in our sector were also discussed including the growing trend towards philanthropic lending and the continued development, understanding and application of evidence based approaches to funding.

The keynote addresses on *Future Directions* were especially engaging, with stimulating presentations on what the changing face of New Zealand society will mean for the future of our sector. Speakers covered areas such as Sustainability, Youth, Maori and Pacific issues and Community Led Development. Many delegates commented that the presenters challenged the way they would approach future funding allocation decisions.

Another highlight of the conference was the launch by the Minister of Revenue, of the *Giving New Zealand* research which sought to quantify giving in New Zealand over a one year period by Trusts and Foundations, Businesses and Individuals. Giving from these sources in New Zealand is estimated to be in the vicinity of 1.3 billion dollars. The research shows that as a total pool New Zealand's philanthropic giving stacks up well internationally. New Zealand fares comparably to other western counterparts when measuring giving as a percentage of the GDP with New Zealand's giving estimated to be 0.81 percent of New Zealand GDP. The research can be downloaded as a pdf. from the Philanthropy New Zealand website: [www.giving.org.nz](http://www.giving.org.nz)

This was a wonderful event with much sharing of ideas and a chance to hear from outstanding international and local speakers on a wide range of important topics. Many of the presentations are available on our website: [www.giving.org.nz](http://www.giving.org.nz).

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