

# Asian Aucklanders and the Arts

*An example of a unique partnership between central government, local government and a philanthropic trust.*

***“I would love to see an arts community that represented the multi-cultural richness of New Zealand’s population ... Rich is the best word for it, lush and rich in culture.”***

**Artist, born here, Chinese heritage**

## **Identifying the Need**

The Asian population is the fastest growing segment of New Zealand’s total population, with most of this growth happening in Auckland. Recognising the significance of this trend, Creative New Zealand, Auckland City Council and ASB Community Trust formed a partnership in 2006 to commission research on Asian peoples and arts.

## **The Research**

*Asian Aucklanders and the Arts: Attitudes, attendance and participation.*

Learning more about the diverse Asian communities in the Auckland region and how individuals, artists and families engage with the arts in New Zealand was a key focus of this research.

*Asian Aucklanders and the Arts: Attitudes, attendance and participation in 2006* research, therefore, provided a vital snapshot into the experiences of people living in Auckland who have diverse and often deep cultural connections to Asia.

The study was a qualitative research initiative which focused on Chinese, Indian, Korean and Japanese communities – the ethnic groups with some of the largest representation in the Auckland population.

A reference group, made up of seven members representing a range of Asian cultures and experience, was consulted during the project. The group played a significant role in shaping and advising on the project.

### **What we wanted to know**

What do we mean by the terms “Asian communities” or “Asian Aucklanders”? This is a very broad term, a label we have used in this report to capture the individuals, families and communities in Auckland whose origins lie in the Asian region.

Auckland is a vibrant, multicultural society and the home of Asian peoples from many countries. However, this research focused on Chinese, Indian, Japanese and Korean communities – the ethnic groups with the largest representation in the Auckland population.

In undertaking this research, we wanted to explore three areas:

- Asian peoples’ attitudes to the arts
- the arts events they go to
- the arts activities they take part in.

### **What the findings told us**

#### **An overview**

A key feature of this research was the huge diversity within and across the groups we talked to. This diversity and range of views were reflected in a number of ways, including:

- a desire to hold on to traditional values and also to embrace contemporary values
- the degree of exposure to New Zealand lifestyles and traditions, influenced by the length of time interviewees had lived in New Zealand and been able to engage with wider community
- levels of income
- stage of life, ranging from school children through to young professionals and the elderly
- a wide variation of knowledge of the arts and particular artforms.

For Asian peoples in Auckland – particularly those who were not born here – one of the main differences between their country of origin and New Zealand is the size and diversity of the Asian region. There are also differences in the role of the arts in the country of origin, the level of funding for the arts and the scale of audiences. Clearly, language is also an important factor in Asian peoples' ability to engage with the arts in New Zealand.

It is important to remember that these findings are the result of a qualitative study and cannot be seen to represent the whole community.

### **Developing a framework**

Creative New Zealand, Auckland City Council and ASB Community Trust are currently developing "Asians and the Arts 5 year action Framework" with the support of the reference group.

It is intended that this framework will help guide and inform the partners on possible approaches to engaging with Asian Aucklanders in the Arts.

The Framework provides a pathway for how the partners can collectively resource and implement projects that will support engagement and participation in the Arts by Asian Aucklanders.

### **Asians Aucklanders and the Arts**

#### **Strategic Action Framework 2007 – 2012 Celebrating and nurturing diversity in New Zealand's arts**

##### **Vision:**

Asian communities are engaged in the arts through the development of opportunities to participate in, have access to and develop their art.

The arts of Asian communities in Auckland are recognised and developed.

##### **Goals:**

To develop Asian audiences for the arts in Auckland

To increase the profile of Asian arts work in Auckland

To invest in Asian artists, practitioners and organisations engaged in innovative, excellent and challenging artistic development in Auckland

To invest in Asian communities to participate in and develop their art in Auckland