Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa

Collaborative Knowledge Construction at a Regional Art Gallery in New Zealand

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■ **ABSTRACT:** How can regional art galleries support the development of cultural understanding in their communities? The 2019 collaborative project *Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa* between Nelson, New Zealand's Suter Art Gallery te Aratoi o Whakatū and eight local schools explored this question. Students' artworks were hung alongside the gallery's collection, enriching dialogue within the exhibition through the provision of voices otherwise absent. Building on the gallery's collection and history, this project demonstrated the evolution of the gallery's colonial roots into a broader discussion of culture. Participating teachers believed the project allowed public recognition of students' abilities and ideas; expression of a school community's special character; cross-curricular learning; cohesive whole school learning; bicultural learning; and pre-service teacher development. It also enabled meaningful exploration of Aotearoa New Zealand's histories.

■ **KEYWORDS:** art gallery education, community of practice, cultural cohesion, cultural identity, innovative pedagogy, museum learning, wellbeing

This article presents an example of a regional art gallery's collaboration with local primary schools, and considers the potential of such a relationship.¹ The gallery-school collaboration linked to the draft Aotearoa New Zealand histories (ANZ histories) addition to the National Curriculum released on 3 February 2021, and explored its possibilities for learning in art galleries and the GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums) sector. In 2020, COVID-19 affected learning programs in this sector in many ways, inhibiting some aspects, but also stimulating innovation and connection (McNaughton 2020). In 2021 in Aotearoa New Zealand there was potential for coming out of this period with a sense of renewal. The draft ANZ histories curriculum was received largely positively by the art gallery education sector. This article presents an example of art gallery learning, putting forward this document as an opportunity to harness this period of revitalization for growth at a meaningful level. It gives the background, and then describes the community project *Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa*, before discussing its value for community building and its relationship to the ANZ histories curriculum document.

Students' contributions to this exhibition are shown to enrich its dialogue by increasing the possible themes and perspectives provided through the gallery's collection.

Background to Aratoi

Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa was a collaborative project between eight Nelson primary schools, in more than thirty classes, and their local public art gallery, The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū, in 2019. The project asked students to explore their diverse cultural backgrounds by considering their ancestry and the journeys that brought their families to Aotearoa New Zealand. It aimed to promote cultural understandings through the inclusive sharing of arrival stories. The classes involved created collaborative artworks, and these were set among key artworks from The Suter's collection. These visual stories made by children augmented the stories shown in the gallery's artworks, weaving both together to create an exhibition representing the cultural richness of their region at the top of Aotearoa New Zealand's South Island.

2019 was the 250-year anniversary of Captain James Cook's initial arrival in Aotearoa. In response to this, the Ministry for Culture and Heritage (2019a) developed *Tuia—Encounters 250* commemorating “250 years since the first onshore meetings between Māori—the tangata whenua of Aotearoa New Zealand—and Pākehā in 1769–70.” Schools and other cultural and educational institutions were encouraged to participate in the commemoration. The Cook narrative has particular significance in the Nelson region, which is close to Meretoto/Ship Cove, the favored campsite of Cook and the place where he planted a British flag, staking a claim for the British Empire. On another note, on 15 March 2019, mosque shootings took place in Christchurch, tragically killing 51 people and creating deep ripples in Aotearoa New Zealand society, leaving many of its citizens wanting to reinforce the cultural cohesion of the nation.

These factors provided the impetus to ask how an educational program for schools in a local art gallery could help children and their families explore, consider, celebrate, and share their roots in a public context. It was hoped that this program would increase awareness of the diversity of backgrounds of those who currently live in Aotearoa New Zealand—their varied arrival stories and what they left behind them in the process—all of whom are unified by having ancestry from elsewhere and ancestors or families who have made the journey. The project was designed to build on the rich resources of Nelson's public art gallery in order to develop a collaborative exhibition telling the stories of the local population. In addition, local schools wished to see their students' artwork represented at The Suter, and this project provided a meaningful opportunity.

The intent of *Tuia 250* was to celebrate “Aotearoa New Zealand's Pacific voyaging heritage and was a national opportunity to hold honest conversations about the past, the present and how we navigate our shared future” (Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2019c), but there was controversy and protest around the way this was developed and whether it was an appropriate event. For example, activist Marise Lant stated: “Two hundred and fifty years on we're dealing with the aftermath of the birthing (sic) of the *Endeavour*. It's pretty clear Māori have suffered tremendously” (One News 2019). A significant means of communicating the ideas of *Tuia 250* was through the education system, and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage (2019b) developed a detailed resource for the use of New Zealand schools in their teaching of *Tuia 250*. In the museum education sector, many applications made during this period for the contestable government funding, Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom (LEOTC), became contingent on an agreement to provide programs which supported the *Tuia 250* initiative. For many smaller galleries, LEOTC funding was essential for the ongoing running of their education programs

and its contestable nature may have made them reluctant to debate the inclusion of aspects of the contract such as this one.

Another concern relating to gallery education programs around *Tuia 250* was with devising ways to make history personally relevant to younger students. It is essential to make personal connections explicit for this level. For this reason, *Aratoi* was designed to launch The Suter's contribution to the *Tuia 250* program in a general way, with the students engaging in meaningful discussions about inclusiveness and what being a New Zealander meant to them. There was an emphasis on the local area, and personal and shared experiences. While it was possible that specifics of *Tuia 250* might fall within these discussions, it was hoped that a process of understanding our histories might start for students and their families by acknowledging the different journeys those of us living in Aotearoa New Zealand today have made to get here. One important principle of the project was that the learning process was to be developed by the community, rather than directed by the gallery. The Suter offered a starting point for schools and their communities to work with in their own ways.

The Setting

The Suter te Aratoi o Whakatū opened in 1899 and as such is one of the oldest art galleries in Aotearoa New Zealand. The building is a memorial to Andrew Burn Suter, the Anglican bishop of the then-small town of Nelson from 1866 to 1891. Suter was both a keen amateur painter and an art collector. He had a democratic philosophy about art, believing it was beneficial to everyone, and the gallery, built in his name, was gifted to the people of Nelson.

Figure 1. William Yeames (1876) *Dawn of the Reformation*, oil on canvas, The Bishop Suter Art Gallery founding donation, gifted by Amelia Suter in memory of her husband Bishop Andrew Burn Suter in 1895.

The Suter's collection began with Bishop Suter's personal art collection and thus reflected his attitudes and taste. He commissioned *Dawn of the Reformation* by Yeames (see Figure 1) upon his appointment as bishop and it travelled in Suter's cabin on his sea journey to Aotearoa New Zealand from England. This large painting was one of the founding artworks of The Suter Art Gallery's collection, gifted by Suter's wife Amelia in 1895. It depicts an important moment in the history of the Protestant Reformation: the fourteenth-century English religious leader, John Wycliffe, dispatching his followers to preach the gospel in English to the people. This painting demonstrates the strongly democratic Christian philosophy of Bishop Suter.

After arriving in Nelson, the bishop made friends with the landscape painter John Gully and developed a substantial collection of his work. These paintings, colonial views of the Aotearoa New Zealand landscape, also became founding artworks of The Suter Art Gallery's collection. Suter Director Julie Catchpole described Gully's work *Western Coast of Tasman Bay* (see Figure 2) thus, "If there was ever an artwork intended to 'sell' New Zealand and celebrate the picturesque and sublime beauty of the Nelson region then this is it" (Catchpole et al. 2016: 114). It was commissioned as the first painting to be freely accessible to all inhabitants of and visitors to Nelson and, thus created as public art, was seen to have qualities of edification for all.

Figure 2. John Gully (1885) *Western Coast of Tasman Bay*, watercolor on paper on a calico backing, collection of The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū: purchased 1885 by public subscription as the first painting for a public art collection in Nelson.

The establishment of art galleries in New Zealand is part of the country's colonial history and the origins of The Suter's collection reflect this. However, the gallery and its collection have evolved over their lifetimes alongside New Zealand society. While there are still many artworks that reflect the gallery's roots, such as picturesque artworks from the collection of the bishop himself, the range of artworks acquired over the years reflects the changes in values and concerns experienced in Aotearoa New Zealand over this time. Nowadays, as well as housing these colonial artworks, The Suter has a broad range of styles in its collection, including many British

and New Zealand Modernist artworks. Recent acquisitions include contemporary artworks, with many of these considering issues of *Māoritanga*, biculturalism, the re-visioning of histories and environmental concerns.

Bishop Suter was known for saying, “A bad artwork is a kind of a sin” (Orr 1993). He held particular views on what this might mean, relating to edification and the glorification of God. However, the diversification of subjects and styles over the years now provides great variety within The Suter’s approximately 2,500 artworks, and while any art collection will have limitations in the stories it can tell, due to its size and foci, this collection had a good number of touchstone artworks to build the project from. *Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa* began with the identification of works from The Suter’s collection that would facilitate discussion of origin stories of the *tangata whenua*/indigenous people and those stories related to the arrival of more recent residents.

Developing the Project

The seed of the idea for *Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa* arose from the request by The Suter’s Education Advisory Group (which is composed of educational professionals who provide guidance to the gallery regarding educational programming) for an exhibition of school students’ artwork at the gallery. The gallery’s education team saw the opportunity to embed maximum learning in such an experience and, thus, a co-operative project between schools and the gallery was developed using the model of a learning community where all participants can grow through the experience and ideas developed in a network. In *Aratoi* students (along with other supporting community members, such as teachers, teachers’ aides, and parents) initially visited a purpose-built exhibition with their classes in order to develop ideas toward the creation of their own artworks, which would contribute to a later associated exhibition. Important concepts in building the project were community building, community ownership, collaboration, and local curriculum.

The Initial Exhibition

The first stage of the project, which took place from 15 June to 4 August 2019, involved holding an exhibition featuring artworks from The Suter’s collection, demonstrating aspects related to arrival stories of the various people who live in Aotearoa New Zealand. A narrative was developed from The Suter’s collection that brought the students through history from the early Polynesian explorer Kupe’s journey to Aotearoa up to contemporary life. However, there were significant gaps; for instance, the specific stories of local refugees from countries such as Cambodia, Vietnam, Burma, and Nepal and those of other recent immigrants were not presented in the show. Despite the collection’s gaps, universal themes emerged, such as sea journeys, missing one’s homeland, and the novelty of a new environment.

Over this three-week period, each class involved visited this exhibition and observed the varied means the artists used to communicate their ideas. The artworks on show included a range of media and conceptual approaches. Students discussed the various stories shown, as well as the artistic expression of ideas and emotions. They used sketchbooks to record their ideas (see Figure 3). After the visit, and after returning to school, students and teachers used these ideas to develop their own collaborative artworks, which communicated their personal arrival stories. Classes were asked to creatively devise interesting ways of making their artworks.

Figure 3. A student using his sketchbook to gather ideas in the initial phase of *Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa*.

The Students' Exhibition

A few weeks after the classes made their initial visits to The Suter, the students' artworks were completed and brought to the gallery. The existing exhibition was reorganized with the student works hung amongst the original artworks. There were no limitations regarding dimensions or materials for the students' artworks. The brief was left deliberately loose to facilitate maximum creativity. As it turned out, classes responded in varied ways to a diverse range of the original artworks, and it was generally possible to hang the students' artworks near the artworks that provided their main inspiration. The students' artworks clearly enriched the dialogue within the exhibition, providing clear discussion and enhancement of the original exhibition's themes. Students also developed their own descriptive labels for their artworks, further facilitating the presence of the students' voices in the gallery.

The Opening

Once the student artworks were hung, all involved—students, *whānau*/extended families, and teachers—were invited to an opening celebration. Appropriately, this commenced with a *mihi*/welcome and *karakia*/prayer by local Māori, before being passed over to a city councillor to open the exhibition. Exhibitors from Māori medium classes performed a *waiata*/song that had special significance to the theme of their artwork, Kupe's journey, sung to honor the *taonga*/treasure they had created. For this event, the gallery was filled with students and *whānau*, and much time was spent poring over the details of the students' artwork.

School Visits to the Student Exhibition

After the opening celebration, the students' exhibition was open to the public and further school visits for several weeks. Classes who contributed visited to view the artworks of others, as well as their own, and classes who had not originally participated came to view the show and, during their visit, each of these students made an artwork that contributed to the exhibition and was displayed in the gallery.

Examples of Student Learning

An Opportunity for the Public Recognition of Students' Abilities and Ideas

Brigid Hindmarsh, from St Joseph's School, Nelson, was one of the teachers who provided the kernel of the idea for this exhibition by advocating for school students, in addition to making class visits to the gallery, to have their artworks displayed in an exhibition. Participating in *Aratoi* was a novel idea for her class, Room Four, and they were excited by the project, which built on a well-established relationship with The Suter through school visits. These had enabled these young six- and seven-year-olds to develop appreciation and understanding of a diverse range of art. The theme of *Aratoi* gave these students much to share. Hindmarsh wanted her children to feel ownership of their collaborative artwork and so encouraged them to think, discuss, and share their own ideas around their families' journeys.

In prior learning, the class had focused on Māori stories and showed a particular engagement with the well-known Polynesian character Maui, finding the idea of his arrival at a new land in a *waka*/canoe appealing. In addition, Hindmarsh was aware that, developmentally, these young children were very focused on themselves and that sharing information about their own family origins would be highly motivating. For these reasons, their artworks included self-portraits, which linked the children to maps of their own countries of origin. These were placed together in a large *waka*, symbolically on their journey to Nelson as one (see Figure 4).

This exhibition also provided the opportunity for some schools to develop artworks that aligned with the special character of their schools. One such school used the opportunity to emphasize their Catholic values in their contribution. Room Three from St Joseph's School, a class of six- and seven-year-olds, included their spiritual practice as a symbol of unity and diversity in their artwork called *Travelling with the Sign of the Cross* (see Figure 5). They used their families' languages of origin to write on crosses, which were located on a world map, emphasizing how they have brought their Catholic spiritual practices from many parts of the world.

This simple artwork demonstrates the class's rich diversity of culture, experiences, and language. Since they regularly recited the devotional practice, The Sign of the Cross, in a range of

Figure 4.
A family enjoys viewing Room Four,
St Joseph's School's contribution to
Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa.

Figure 5.
Students visit *Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa* and
view Room Three, St Joseph's School's contribution.

languages, they decided to write these on crosses to be included as part of their artwork. In the process, the students discovered that thirteen different languages were spoken within their classroom. The students were very engaged in the project. They particularly responded to patterning observed in the initial exhibition, for example in Gordon Walters's artwork (which can be seen in Figure 5 above the students' artwork), and this was reflected in their contribution. The *koru*/spiral design, which is featured in Walters's artwork, was significant to the students; thus, they decided to shape the crosses on the world map in a *koru*, which ended at their home, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Using Aratoi to Develop Cross-Curricular Learning

The class teacher of Room One of St Joseph's School, Tracey Malthus, developed a cross-curricular learning experience for her five-year-old students as their contribution to *Aratoi*, including language, art, science, social studies, health, and mathematics in the experience. They created a class *korowai*/cloak of national birds from the homelands of their families (see Figure 6) using feathers, fabric, thread, paper, pastels, dye, felt pens, and crayons.

In a post-experience survey Malthus described the development of the project, which had its roots in the social studies and health curricula, thus: "The children and I were talking about our nationalities and where our families come from. Somehow, we got onto looking at national birds for each country; the children were really intrigued by this. So, we went with it and the *korowai* idea just grew from there ..." She indicated that this was a strongly student-led project.

Figure 6. Room One, St Joseph's School's *korowai* (cloak) hung between the artworks by Bill Hammond and Don Binney that provided inspiration.

“We managed to create our special class *korowai* together, so everyone was involved. Many skills developed in coloring, cutting, sewing, and drawing. Plenty of discussion throughout and the children really learnt to slow down and follow the process ... They took a lot of pride and interest in this project and were so excited about it going into a real exhibition at The Suter Art Gallery.”

In line with the Living World strand of the science curriculum, Malthus's five-year-olds researched birds from around the world, and on a separate strip these national birds were displayed just above the *korowai*. In addition, a folder showing the making process and children wearing their *korowai* was displayed. Another way in which language was included in the project was where, as a class, they developed an exhibition label for their artwork. In this way, the students' own words were present in the gallery alongside the artwork.

Following the opening of the full exhibition, Room One visited again. This visit focused on mathematics, and Malthus got her students to use the artworks on display to work on numeracy. In Malthus's view, this revisit further piqued the students' interest, facilitating later visits with families. Malthus described her students' excitement about the exhibition and noted that they talked a lot to each other and to their families about it. The return of the artwork to school after the exhibition closed was significant to the children, too, and it was put up on display in the classroom.

Enriching the Cohesion of Learning with a Whole School Focus

For the first two terms of 2019, Lower Moutere School had focused, as a school, on journeys to Aotearoa New Zealand, concentrating on the Pacific explorer Kupe and Māori migration, as well as European explorers Abel Tasman and James Cook. Because of this, the whole school decided to participate in *Aratoi* as the culmination and celebration of this learning. Overall, six classes from the school made collaborative artworks for the exhibition.

One teacher from the school, Mike Lynch, explained that his class's project, *Raranga* (to weave) represented the interwoven story of his class, connecting each student's unique culture and heritage. He described how his class had previously discussed *taonga* that explorers, immigrants, and families brought with them to Aotearoa New Zealand, and so for *Aratoi* the students composed and photographed a square, representing their personal stories, including important possessions, which reflected their identity. The students described these on the reverse. Symbolic colors were used: the black and white of the photographs to represent the dual aspects of one's personality, and the red to represent family bloodlines. These are also traditional Māori design colors. The students suggested weaving the twenty-eight squares into a *whāriki*/mat using *harakeke*/flax to represent their connections and shared *aroha*/love for Aotearoa New Zealand. Lynch's students were very interested in the video animation by Rewiti Arapere, *Hīkoi Boe*, 2007, from the initial exhibition, in which the artist uses street-art self-portraits to map his journey through his home in an urban environment, and the students' finished work reflected this aesthetic (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. *Raranga: To Weave*, the contribution of Mike Lynch's class from Upper Moutere School.

Building on Bicultural Learning through the Gallery's Collection

In another example of special character learning, Te Pouahi Syndicate of Nelson Central School, where children learn immersed in the *tikanga*/customs and *reo*/language of the Māori culture, created the artwork *Te Ara o Kupe* (*Kupe's Journey*). These four classes of children from five to nine years old created this in response to the artwork by Niki Hastings-McFall, *The Long White Cloud* (see Figure 8). It shows the renowned Pacific navigator Kupe in pursuit of Te Wheke-a-Muturangi, an octopus, which he and his wife followed across the Pacific on his waka, guided by his two trusted *manu*/birds, a double-headed *kererū*/wood pigeon and a *kawau*/shag (see Figure 9). The artwork was designed to be installed perpendicular to Hastings-McFall's artwork, emulating Kupe's journey to Aotearoa. Teachers and students alike were very involved with and committed to this project. There was great pride shown by the teachers in their classes' contributions, and they were emphatic about the significance of Hastings-McFall's artwork in enhancing the students' prior in-school learning.

Figure 8. (top) Students inspired by Niki Hastings-McFall's artwork *A Long White Cloud*.

Figure 9. Te Pouahi's contribution to Aratoi telling the story of renowned Pacific navigator Kupe's journey to Aotearoa (detail).

A Student Teacher Learns the Value of Community Connections in Practice

Jennie Bate was in her final year of teacher training and undertaking her teaching practicum at Hira School at the time of the project. She was working also as an after-school art tutor at The Suter. Bate described how, after visiting the gallery, the three teachers within the junior syndicate of her school reflected on the trip and noted that the students were particularly drawn to the picture of *The Little Emigrant* (see Figure 10), deciding to use it as a springboard for student ideas and inspiration.

Figure 10. Laura Herford (1868) *The Little Emigrant*, oil on canvas, collection of The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū, Presented by Marjorie Sheat in 2007.

The students considered all the things the young British emigrant (pictured) may have had to leave behind, such as physical objects, cultural connections, people, and places. One teacher suggested using vintage hankies for the work, to be reminiscent of women farewelling by waving hankies as their ships departed the ports. The class created a ten-meter-long washing line with handkerchiefs hung along it, representing the sadness of such loss (see Figure 11). Each handkerchief was individually decorated by a child to represent what the children left behind when they had made a journey, whether it was between countries, cities, houses, or simply from kindergarten to school. They drew and stitched family, friends, pets, toys, gardens, and special places they could *not* bring with them on their journeys. The students, with support of a teacher aide and a parent, did the sewing. Students were able to try both hand stitching and sewing with a machine. They named their artwork *What We've Left Behind*.

Bate felt fortunate to see both sides of the project, namely the development in school and then the work on display at the gallery. While the exhibition was up, she ran a holiday program at The Suter with students from a range of different schools, and she was able to see at first hand the excitement and pride the students experienced when seeing their own works in the gallery, as well as their interest in other children's artworks.

Figure 11. Students enjoy interacting with the work *What We've Left Behind*.

Teachers' Views on the Value of the Project

The classroom teachers involved communicated strongly that *Aratoi* was a worthwhile and stimulating project for both themselves and their students. One important aspect of the project was seen to be that public display in a gallery gave the students' art increased *mana*; particularly because the students were able to show their work in a setting alongside that of professional artists. This provoked a strong sense of pride for students, teachers, and whānau. In a post-experience survey Bate explained: "Most teachers ... had never seen their students' work displayed in such a professional and formal way." In addition to this, Hindmarsh considered it very worthwhile to bring the wider community into her own students' learning process, providing a showcase for their artistic abilities and creative ideas. Lynch explained that in his view the project reinforced the idea that anyone can be an artist if they learn to communicate visual ideas effectively. There was a consensus amongst the teachers that one valuable aspect of the project was that it showed the students the role of art in communicating important messages, and making people stop and think. When surveyed after the project Malthus explained that she was pleased that, "It ... provoked plenty of discussion and interest in our origins and cultures." She also particularly appreciated that the project brought local schools together in the exhibition. The exhibition theme was unifying, and many involved remarked on the diversity of interpretations and responses to the brief across the schools involved.

Many teacher participants mentioned the value of the child-centered nature of the project. Bate described how the project allowed the students agency over all aspects of their artworks—the materials, processes, and design. That their pictures had their own personal stories attached made it even more meaningful and relevant to the students.

Overall, there was tremendous teacher and student enthusiasm and buy-in to *Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa*. Throughout the project, there were frequent positive teacher responses in incidental communication such as emails and face-to-face contact, in a similar vein to the following: "Thanks for your time today—the children have come back buzzing with excitement and we've already started planning ideas!" and "Thanks for this opportunity! So exciting!"

Likewise the classroom teachers' surveys of their students' attitudes after the experience also demonstrated this: "I felt it was really exciting that our art got to go up in The Suter Art Gallery;" "I felt proud making the art and then seeing it on The Suter Gallery wall;" "It was really exciting to go and see the art at The Suter and it was my class's art!" "I think it was cool that we got to show our art so people can see what we do/are in this school!"

Discussion: Aotearoa New Zealand Histories

Aratoi: Our Journey to Aotearoa took place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. By early 2021, there was a sense of reprieve in Aotearoa New Zealand and the possibility of a fresh start after a disrupted year. In this environment, on 3 February 2021, the draft Aotearoa New Zealand Histories addition to the National Curriculum was released. It was intended to embrace "the histories of all the people who live in Aotearoa New Zealand and encourage[s] schools and *kura* to develop local curriculum and *marau ā-kura* that reflect the histories of their communities" (Ministry of Education 2021b). Clearly, this is in line with the rationale of *Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa*, providing the possibility that an examination of the past might allow more understanding of Aotearoa New Zealand's national identity and its development, and through this, hopefully, enable New Zealanders to live harmoniously and productively together, celebrating

their country's diversity. In light of this, it is worthwhile to consider the potential of projects such as *Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa* in relation to the aims of this document.

ANZ histories was based on seven key themes agreed on by the government and announced in September 2019 (New Zealand Government 2019). Of these, the following were most specifically related to the objectives of the *Aratoi* project: the arrival of Māori to Aotearoa; the colonization of and immigration to Aotearoa New Zealand; the evolving national identity of Aotearoa New Zealand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and Aotearoa New Zealand in the late twentieth century and the evolution of a national identity with cultural plurality. There was a range of public responses to the draft document.

One submission was made by Te Pū Tiaki Mana Taonga | Association of Educators beyond the Classroom, which represents educators working in the culture and heritage sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. While being supportive of the document, they had a particular concern about the ownership and accuracy of historical stories, asking who has the right to share particular stories (Te Pū Tiaki Mana Taonga 2021). A project such as *Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa* ensures the participants are telling their own stories and communicating them to the public through the community, bypassing this issue and ensuring authenticity.

A submission by The Royal Society Te Apārangi, while generally praising the aims of the document, strongly emphasized the importance of representing diversity in Aotearoa's histories programs stating: "It is ... critical that all New Zealand children and young people see their own histories explicitly identified in the curriculum" (Royal Society Te Apārangi Expert Advisory Panel 2021). Educational vehicles such as *Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa* provide this by using the students' own varied experiences and backgrounds as a basis for learning content. However, The Royal Society Te Apārangi cautioned: "Inclusion does not simply require an understanding of the unique experiences of different migrant communities but understanding of their relationships with each other and the communities they form together occupying the same places" (Royal Society Te Apārangi Expert Advisory Panel 2021).

As discussed, *Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa* was devised as a celebration of diversity and unity, at the commencement of more in-depth learning in schools about specific histories and events relating to *Tuia 250*. In addition, since a significant number of the students involved were young children, with limited knowledge and understanding of the world beyond their immediate environments, the family-focused nature of their contributions was developmentally appropriate. However, there is clearly potential to develop similar projects that ask questions about the relationships between groups, and the historical events which have occurred due to the presence of different groups in Aotearoa New Zealand, as suggested by The Royal Society, in order to celebrate cultural diversity, and then to go on to ask more difficult questions.

Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa represented a beginning. Increased sophistication depends on taking the ideas further, either by the teachers in their classrooms scaffolding this learning with debates and analysis, or perhaps by a second community exhibition. At the time, it was suggested that a second exhibition might take place later to extend the ideas, considering Aotearoa New Zealand today and how the ideas in the original project have evolved over time.

Conclusion

In 2021, *Aratoi: Our Journey to Aotearoa* took on new significance. The compulsory pause in regular existence due to the COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity for the reconsideration of future directions for many. The year 2020 was a time of physical distancing but increased

closeness in some ways. Inhabitants of Aotearoa New Zealand came together against a shared foe and were able to have a mutual (if tentative) feeling of success in this. Some barriers between destinations became permeable during this time. COVID-19 caused a rethink of the idea of the gallery as an absolute destination. Around the world and in Aotearoa New Zealand, people entered each other's homes via Zoom for many reasons, with distance no issue, and gallery visits became virtual (McNaughton 2020). A new intimacy and connection developed through this exposure, and this reinforced the individual cultures existing within homes. The ANZ histories addition recognizes this range of stories and histories of families in Aotearoa New Zealand. This document also encourages us to go further, to respond to the stories we hear and to act.

In 2018, the School Strike for Climate launched. Young people globally have been primed to act in the current climate of protest. It is bitter irony for Aotearoa New Zealand that on 15 March 2019 the student protest had to be abandoned in Christchurch due to the mosque shootings that took place at the same time, and the solidarity and power of this protest was lost in pain and bewilderment. If one good thing can come from the mosque shooting tragedy, it might be the impetus to unite and celebrate Aotearoa New Zealand's national diversity.

Bishop Suter and his wife Amelia's original idea of gifting an art gallery to the people of Nelson for the edification of the population has different meaning in this era. A gallery's collection might now be used to promote cultural understandings, to question the past, and to protest. One important benefit of *Aratoi: Our Journeys to Aotearoa* is that it allowed an increased sense of ownership of the gallery by locals and enabled an increased diversity in the cultural narrative told through the gallery's collection. The cultural sector has an important role in promoting cultural understanding and wellbeing, and the project described here shows how collaboration with local schools can enrich the art gallery and the community alike.

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NOTE

1. This article uses the term “art gallery” to describe institutions for the display of art. These may or may not hold collections of artworks. In some countries, such as the United States, such institutions may be referred to as “art museums,” but in New Zealand, “art gallery” is usual.

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