

Governor-Generals speech at the relaunch of the Nikau Foundation, New Zealand Portrait Gallery, Wellington - 14 Sep 2009

May I begin by greeting everyone in the languages of the realm of New Zealand, in English, Māori, Cook Island Māori, Niuean, Tokelauan and New Zealand Sign Language. Greetings, Kia Ora, Kia Orana, Fakalofa Lahi Atu, Taloha Ni-and as it is evening (sign)

May I then specifically greet you: Hon Fran Wilde, Chair of the Greater Wellington Regional Council and the Patron of the Nikau Foundation; Your Worship, Kerry Prendergast, Mayor of Wellington and your deputy, Ian McKinnon; Your Worship Wayne Guppy, Mayor of Upper Hutt; Richard Caughley, Gus van de Roer and other trustees of the Nikau Foundation; Brian Burge, Foundation manager and your fellow staff; Distinguished Guests otherwise; Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you for inviting my wife Susan and I to the New Zealand Portrait Gallery this evening for the relaunch of the Nikau Foundation amidst, it is obviously to be noted, some of the most dramatic and inspiring images appearing in the international media during the last year.

These images are a reminder of events and emotions of the recent past. But they also form a link to the future.

When future generations look back at the history of our time, they might well see some of these photographs as encapsulating the essence of the era-just as we now do in looking at what have become iconic images of the past.

These photographs also form a part of the legacy of the individual photographers who took them and are an expression of their talent and hard work.

This exhibition is therefore a highly appropriate setting in which to launch Wellington's community foundation under its new name. It is appropriate because the Nikau Foundation provides a means by which Wellingtonians can leave a legacy for the region's future generations.

The Foundation began in 1991 and has more recently been known as the Wellington Region Foundation. Tonight it is being relaunched as the Nikau Foundation.

I have recently seen a vivid example of the Nikau Foundation in action. In May, Susan and I attended a dinner to launch the establishment of a reconstructive and plastic surgery research institute to be named after the famous plastic surgeons Sir Harold Gillies and his nephew Sir Archibald McIndoe.

I am advised that of the Institute's initial funding, \$50,000 came from the Nikau Foundation. Of that funding, half came from a trust set up by Henry and Eileen Wise who specifically wanted their legacy to be used for health research. The other half came from Richard and Doreen Evans' charitable trust. Through the Nikau Foundation, proceeds from their trust have also funded the re-roofing of the Mary Potter Hospice and renovations at the Wellington Cancer Society's premises-where the new extension will bear their names.

It is notable that a plastic surgery research institute was not even thought of when these two couples left their legacies-but that the Gillies McIndoe Institute fits suitably with what they wanted them to be used for. Therein lies the value of making a bequest to a community foundation.

It is often said that New Zealand does not have a strong tradition of public philanthropy. In a national generalisation we do tend to paint ourselves as people who raise funds by forming committees and setting up cake stalls, sausage sizzles and working bees - in other words short term activities.

In fact, philanthropy at a local, regional and national level has funded many organisations and individuals in every field-from ambulances to artists. As the Patrons of more than 150 community organisations, Susan and I are very conscious of the support that these hardworking organisations receive from donors and donor organisations.

New Zealand has some substantial charitable foundations and trusts. Ones that readily come to mind include the McKenzie Trust, the Todd Foundation, the Tindall Foundation and the Sutherland Trust, to name just a few of the most well known.

Behind these names are individuals who had the impulse to give something back to the community in perpetuity.

Through the Nikau Foundation, others with more modest resources will also be able to do something substantial and long-lasting for their local community.

Many community foundations operating in New Zealand and overseas often use a quote a Greek proverb to express their underlying philosophy. It goes: "When a person plants a tree under which they know they will never sit, then you know that civilisation has come to that land."

The concept that "civilisation" is measured by the actions taken by a society for its future citizens is exactly the one that inspires people today to leave legacies through community foundations. Not surprisingly, more and more people are opting for this form of philanthropy.

I would like to congratulate all those associated with Wellington's community foundation for having made a bold new start under a new name and I wish you and the Nikau Foundation all the best for the future.

One of New Zealand's most well known philanthropists, the well-known and respected Wellingtonian, the late Sir Roy McKenzie, once said that the giving away of money calls for more skill and judgment than the making of it. The Nikau Foundation seems to have both skill and judgment in abundance.

And on that note, I will close in New Zealand's first language Māori, by offering everyone greetings and wishing you all good health and fortitude in your endeavours. No reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, kia ora, kia kaha, tēnā koutou katoa.