

Cultural Celebration Award Entrant: Auckland Airport

Video link: <https://vimeo.com/album/4446506/video/229798731>

Sponsorship of this year's ASB Polyfest and a strong focus on Māori Language Week have helped Auckland Airport strengthen cultural skills and taonga to further connect the airport community.

The airport community includes airport staff, the travelling public and the people in the airport's South Auckland neighbourhood.

Airport General Manager – People and Safety Anna Cassels-Brown believes the stronger partnerships are benefiting the airport. “As a result of this programme we are continuing to develop greater cultural ties with our Māori and Pasifika communities. These stronger connections are helping us build the partnerships we need to be ‘authentically New Zealand’, develop a uniquely New Zealand travel offer, and meet the needs of our many Māori and Pasifika customers,” she says.

There have already been several tangible benefits. For example the business now has an airport waiata and haka to use at company events and employees have gained confidence to represent the airport in te reo at community events.

Richard Barker, Auckland Airport General Manager – Retail and Commercial, attended the prize-giving of a local full immersion kura in November to make an Auckland Airport award. Richard gave his greeting in te reo, with coaching from one of the airport's Māori employees.

The airport's support of ASB Polyfest was a first this year and encompassed several areas. The company sponsored the 80 judges, plus eight new awards for the Polyfest stages (including the three Māori divisions) acknowledging the role teachers and cultural advisers play in schools' Polyfest success. Financial support was also provided for local schools managing the six stages.

Airport employees of Māori, Cook Island and Samoan ethnicity presented awards and employees received complimentary tickets to Polyfest.

The company utilised the opportunity to promote “Ara,” the airport jobs and skills hub. Ara is connecting South Auckland people (including many Māori and Pasifika) with long-term job and training opportunities at and around the airport.

The airport has received requests for more information about Ara from influential members of its community including local MP Jenny Sosene, members of local community boards and judging teams.

“We are inviting these people to Ara to learn more about the work we do,” says Anna.

Māori Language Week 2016 spanned a range of initiatives. Lunchtime employee seminars were run by two Māori employees fluent in reo Māori and familiar with tikanga Maori. They designed and delivered the programme which covered Māori history of the land surrounding the airport, teachings on the airport marae (Te Manukanuka o Hoturoa Marae) and basic te reo, including a karakia, waiata, greetings, pepeha and te reo aviation.”

Richard Barker, who has Māori whakapapa, introduced Māori Language week activities with a launch message to all employees. The message included a personal story about his Māori whakapapa, and data and commentary to explain why celebrating Māori Language Week and te reo and tikanga Māori in general is important to the airport’s business.

Labels were placed throughout company tearooms to help employees learn common words. And Te Reo Māori announcements in the domestic and international terminals were recorded by a staff member. Kapa haka performances were given in the international terminal by local schools Aorere College and Kedgley Intermediate.

The airport has received positive feedback from customers, local businesses and its community about its efforts to develop our cultural skills and taonga. This feedback has come from the local kura, the Māori royal family and judges on the Māori stage at ASB Polyfest 2017, travellers, visitors and people working in its international terminal who enjoyed the kapa haka performances.

Auckland Airport has developed a strong base it can build on in future years. It plans to expand its activities in 2017/2018. Plans include investigating NCEA-accredited seminars in te reo and tikanga Māori for staff.