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Te Puni Kōkiri
REALISING MĀORI POTENTIAL

Closing the Gaps – Lessons from New Zealand

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To

**Ministerial Council for Aboriginal & Torres Strait
Islander Affairs**

Evolution of Māori Affairs Policy

1989

Te Urupare Rangapū

Partnership Response, devolution of service provision to Māori authorities

Evolution of Māori Affairs Policy

1991

***Ka Awatea* - mainstreaming policy**

Mainstream agencies charged with delivery of services to Māori, Ministry of Māori Development established with policy and monitoring roles.

Closing the Gaps

1999

Closing the Gaps

Closing the Gaps

- Arose from discharge of monitoring role, through a comparative analysis of social and economic outcomes experienced by Māori vis-à-vis the rest of New Zealand
- Report showed that Māori experienced significantly poorer outcomes than the rest of the population
- Findings of this report embraced by incoming administration, which launched Closing the Gaps as its Māori Affairs policy platform

Closing the Gaps

- **The early policy platform:**
 - Improved and coordinated approach from mainstream
 - Māori communities have a part to play, and included a community capacity building dimension
 - Enhanced the Ministry's monitoring role

Closing the Gaps

- **What it meant from a policy perspective:**
 - Shift to equality of outcome
- **But in practice:**
 - Heavily programmatic response
 - Focus on activity rather than outcome
 - Enhanced monitoring role created a compliance focus across the state sector

What we learned

- **Indicators never tell the full story**
 - We measured what we could, which wasn't what we should
 - Gaps didn't close
 - Changes in outcome indicators occur over a longer timeframe than politics!

What we learned

- **From the community capacity building dimension:**
 - Communities are best placed to understand their local issues and develop localised solutions
 - Indigenous organisations are well placed to deliver services to their constituents
 - Capacity building focus on strengthening governance, management and ensuring transparency and accountability for delivery of taxpayer funded services

What we learned

- **From a deficit based approach:**
 - Can become a self fulfilling prophecy
 - Can constrain policy thinking to relative rather than optimal gains
 - Does generate negative public perceptions about the value of the population group to the population
 - Did create political fuel

The tide of public opinion

- Political capital – “race based policies”
- Government initiated review on all “race based spending” to ensure was anchored in need
- Re-branding of Closing the Gaps to more general approach of reducing social inequalities

Moving the mindset

- From the negative perceptions that arose from the deficit based approach to Closing the Gaps
- To recognising that Māori success is essential to New Zealand's success
- And that Māori must be able to succeed as Māori

The next policy step

- **Realising Māori Potential, anchored in:**
 - Cultural distinctiveness
 - Capability
 - Aspiration
- **Māori succeeding as Māori**

Realising Māori potential

- **In practice is a platform for:**
 - Policy led options for better understanding and progressing Māori aspirations
 - Enhancing the Crown-Māori relationship, including for example explicit recognition of Māori as capable and aspirational (rather than underperforming), changing how we engage
 - Government and Māori investment in opportunities
 - Reshaping public opinion.

What has been achieved

- **Across the life span of the Ministry:**
 - Significant growth of the Māori asset base
 - Positive shifts across most indicators of well-being (although Māori still do not achieve the same level of outcome as non-Māori)
 - Diverse, active and capable Māori organisations, involved in all levels of policy, service delivery and Māori development
 - Settlement of historical grievances, and associated gains in the quality of the Crown-Māori relationship
 - And.....

What has been achieved

Māori are now in the mainstream of political, economic and cultural thinking in New Zealand