

Sharing Experiences. Seeking Opportunities.

Notes from the Sister Cities Dunedin Regional Focus Group Meeting

Workshop held at the Theomin Balcony, HD Skinner Annex, Otago Museum Reserve

15 March 2016

The purpose of this meeting was to keep the momentum going from the positive outcomes of the 2015 SCNZ Conference held in Wellington, and to provide another opportunity for networking, information sharing and exchanging of local sister city activities and experiences. It was welcomed by Hiromi Morris, President of Sister Cities New Zealand and facilitated by Paul Duffy, SCNZ Board Member and Southern Delegate.



Developing Relationships and Opportunities Arising

Margo Reid Business Development Advisor, International Relations and Projects Economic Development Unit Dunedin City Council

Margot spoke of the four Sister City connections. Of those there is active activity with Shanghai, Edinburgh and Otaru, but the relationship is inactive with Portsmouth, US.

1. Edinburgh
Celebrated 40 years of the relationship in 2014
Good pre-existing links to build on with Dunedin's Scottish heritage and 'Edinburgh of the South'
Lots of Arts & Culture links, particularly with the shared UNESCO City of Literature status.
2. Otaru
Celebrated their 35th anniversary in 2015 as a Sister City.

The relationship began on an economic premise but is now more focused on culture and education.

There is an education exchange every 2nd year with Otaru-Dunedin and Dunedin-Otaru. The relationship has been steady over the years with Otaru keeping up steady communication.

In 2014 there was a mayoral visit, and there is a very active network in Otaru with significant business links supporting the arrangement.

University of Otago has been facilitating an Exchange through the School of Business for 20 years.

There is a recognised growing importance and opportunity of Social media in relationship building.

3. Shanghai

In February Dunedin welcomed in the Year of the Monkey at the Chinese Garden. The city is now focusing on China and not just Shanghai.

There is both a Friendship link and a Memorandum of Understanding with an aim to achieve quality experiences.

The friendship and ensuing relationship building came first. Importantly the Shanghai relationship started culturally and moved to economic.

To help enter the Chinese market the council identified three-four areas where Dunedin is world-class: Education; Food & Beverage; Hi-tech and Healthcare.

There is a 22 year long relationship with Shanghai.

2008 saw the Chinese Garden built in conjunction with the Shanghai Municipal Government.

Education is a positive basis of the relationship and there is also a Shanghai photography competition.

Commerce and Connections

Dougal McGowan CEO Otago Chamber of Commerce

Dougal has been with the Chamber for the past year, prior to 20 years of teaching including roles incorporating international students to his Dunedin-based high schools.

He spoke of building relationships and engagement and the importance of connections. People don't buy goods and services they want to engage in relationships, stories and magic.

When dealing in an international space he spoke of expecting the unexpected where you give (and at times receive) more than the usual so they get a sense of being treated individually and uniquely. His approach was to promote the destination by selling them: 1. What is NZ? 2. What is Dunedin? 3. Who are we?

He works from a perspective of creating 'cornerstone' agents in education. After three years of getting results they received a bonus. As a result his school picked up 18 students in the first 6 months after a prior annual quantity of 8. He talked of the importance of visiting regularly (every 6 months in his case) to maintain the relationship.

The steps in the engagement building need to be:

1. Relationship
2. Agreement
3. Work plans
4. Outcomes

Sometimes it can be as much as 3–5 years before rewards come. There is a resilience needed in both business and relationship building. It requires selling the magic of what is Distinctly Dunedin and

nurturing the first follower as an equal. It (as the video of persuading people to dance at a music concert showed) requires patience.

Forging links for Mutual Benefit

Dr Ian Griffin Director Otago Museum

Ian's approach is one of linking communities across the planet. The early Otago Museum directors were entrepreneurs and that is very much the spirit he is operating in.

In 2002 they developed an exhibition for Otaru and the Museum staff learned a lot during the relationship.

In 2008 there was a successful Collaboration of 'The Emperor's Dragon' from Shanghai. And in 2010 the Otaru Museum exhibited in Dunedin and went on to donate many items.

The Shanghai Museum has 6 million visitors each year so there is an opportunity for Dunedin to really engage with some of the visitors. Te Ao Maori also went to Shanghai and it was a fantastic cultural experience fostering a lot of good will.

Dr Griffin was invited to an Astronomy Museum selection panel in Shanghai and was the only European delegate on the selection panel. This was because of the Dunedin Shanghai Sister City relationship and shows the high regard the relationship is held in official circles. It is a reflection of the deep and longstanding goodwill they hold toward Dunedin. The museum has also had a successful staff exchange with the Shanghai Museum and this is something they wish to foster. Ian felt that the Sister City relationship begins with mutual trust and the sharing of cultures.

Reaching Out

Byron Sanders On behalf of Asian NZ Foundation

Byron began by giving a lovely round up of others' presentation and spoke about the importance for organisations in connections and playing to their strengths.

Asia, he indicated, was a complex and diverse beast. Asia New Zealand Foundation was a leadership network that wanted to further the skills of young New Zealanders and did so through regional Hui and sector specific meetings.

Why Asia? It's the Asian Century and they are a culture of tradition and extreme innovation. New Zealand has an increasing diversity in its cultural make-up and the increase of those of Asian background and experience in Asia (whether from Asian background or other).

Byron used his personal homestay/host experience and his previous career in education and teaching as a platform for what he does now. He spoke about how language and education is a great way of becoming both 'Asia Aware' and 'Asia Ready' both of which are needed for cultural and economic engagement.

China, Japan and South Korea dominate the conversation but other Asian countries including Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, India and Taiwan are all great opportunities for education, business and cultural connection and understanding.

Finding Value in Sister City Relationships

Marc Doesburg Director: Internationalisation Otago Polytechnic

Otago Polytechnic has clearly defined aspirational objectives when it comes to engagement with Sister City activity.

Formal activity for students:

- Exchanges and study abroad
- Articulation and the transfer of credits
- Staff exchanges: teaching and research
- Curriculum development
- Bespoke training programmes

How do they value Sister City opportunities?

- Assistance to achieve aspirations
- Endorsement of central agency
- Access to institutions and organisation
- Facilitating the development of relationship.

The Otago Sister City Relationship they saw of little value to Otago Polytechnic, and Edinburgh is seen as one of untapped potential in terms of value.

Shanghai has high value and has good support and assistance from the City and the Chamber of Commerce. There is also support and assistance from the Shanghai Education Commission. It is a multiple institution relationship providing multiple opportunities.

In any relationship exploration for Sister City relationship it needs:

- Clear objectives
- Planning
- Resourcing
- Commitment and relationship building.

Edinburgh and Dunedin: World Cities of Literature

Bernie Hawke Group Manager Arts and Culture Dunedin City Council

Edinburgh relationship

Bernie gave a thorough background to the Edinburgh relationship with a literary focus. Edinburgh was the first city of literature. The criteria revolved around writers and books. It has a vibrant contemporary and important tradition and is the Festival City of Europe. The Book Festival in Edinburgh is the largest in the world and they have 50+ bookshops.

Edinburgh operates under a Trust for their City of Literature. Dunedin is also going through the process of employing a Director for Dunedin City of Literature and Bernie felt that Dunedin and Edinburgh share the same types of objectives.

Bernie suggested workshop attendees explore what other UNESCO Creative City links might exist with their Sister City around the Creative arts.

City of Literature

10 Fast Facts about the City of Literature and the successful Dunedin bid.

1. Multi-cultural heritage
2. A great city for writers
3. Impressive publishing background: AH Reed; McIndoe; Otago University Press
4. Libraries
5. Centre for the Book
6. Books for Children
7. Theatres and Playwrights
8. Musical Lyricists
9. Literary Patronage

10. Literary Events: Regent Book Sale; Dunedin Writers & Readers Festival; more recently Young Writers Festival

The City of Literature has now developed the model it will operate under and it is an exciting time to see things develop and the cementing of a framework from which the community can both build and be built around the UNESCO City of Literature designation.

[Dunedin Otaru Thirty Five Year Sister City Relationship](#)

Jackie Yoshioka-Braid Dunedin-Otaru Sister City Society

Jackie uses her personal links through building and maintaining the core group behind the Otaru Sister City relationship. They support the Council wherever they can with visiting dignitaries and run an annual Japanese speech competition among secondary school students with the winner invited to speak at the International Japanese Speech Competition in Tokyo.

They celebrate the annual cherry blossom festival. Jackie spoke about the challenge of maintaining the small group of volunteers.

The sister city relationship began in July 1980 with the encouragement of then Mayor, Sir Clifford Skeggs within a context of understanding New Zealand's economic future lay in the Pacific Rim. Through the relationship there has been a gift of a playground to Otaru, the Otaru Teien Garden in the Dunedin Botanic Gardens and a gift to Dunedin of 100 kimonos.

Dunedin became the sister city of Otaru in Hokkaido three decades ago. The Dunedin-Otaru Sister City Society often organizes various events to deepen the Dunedin community's understanding of Otaru, and of Japan as whole. These events include a Cherry Blossom Day, Youth Forums, a World Youth Fest, and the Southland-Otago Japanese Speech Competition. The Dunedin City Council developed a Japanese Festival concept which took place in conjunction with the "Japanese Art and Artefacts" exhibition, held at the Dunedin Art Gallery to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Dunedin's sister city relationship with Otaru in 2006.

[Discussion from workshop attendees and participants](#)

The feedback at the end of the workshop and some of the various things discussed included:

- That the organisations are a key link with the sister city communities
- That there are synergies, networking and knowledge that can and should be shared among the local government boundaries to enhance the visitor experience of any group
- We all need strategies on keeping the relationship vital and active
- That there is an opportunity for the Southland Museums to connect together and learn from the Otago Museums
- The importance of not losing the history of the relationship. There may need to be further support/learning for the organisations on how to do this accurately and in a way that is easy for those coming later to access.
- The importance of engaging positively with local media who are sometimes focused on the short-term cost. We may require strategies for articulating and getting into print the long-term economic benefit of the relationships.

- What opportunity does Social Media hold for long-term networking of individuals and the sustaining of the relationship of organisations?
- What do those outside of organisations know of sister cities? How can we link to the wider community?

During the afternoon tea and also the meeting close it was obvious there were some interesting and unexpected networking spin-offs, and connections already being made by participants. The challenge and the opportunity is to build on this, both in terms of how SCNZ can support the strategic, economic and cultural endeavours of the group and also in terms of how participants can understand that their ability to leverage off the Sister City foundation is one that they have the opportunity to harness through their own initiative. In this collaborative way the mission of Sister Cities International, as imagined by US President Eisenhower *To promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation — one individual, one community at a time* can be achieved.