

## From the Board

### Message from President Mayor Grant Smith



Kia ora,

Thank you everyone that participated in our recent AGM meeting, both those online and those who attended in Wellington. It was heartening to see a good attendance by those that care about Sister Cities in New Zealand and the internationalism it represents.

I want to thank Tom Yuan from Wellington City Council for the meeting venue and acknowledge a couple of longtime volunteers. Former Vice President Ray Wallace who after many years on the board has retired but will still manage our Conference Awards programme. Also Kevin Watkins who has capably led the Hastings sister city programme for many years and received a Queen's Honour recently. On behalf of GCNZ thank you both for your service to the sector.

This newsletter's content represents a real reconnect with our many partners across the globe.

I recently had my own experience having just returned from a sister city trip leading a Palmerston North City business, educational and iwi delegation to visit our city partners in Montana USA and Netherlands. The reconnections were great, and very much like meeting long lost friends and family. But what it did tell me is that the world is well and truly open again.

We really value articles and snippets from your own international programmes for this newsletter plus our online and social media platforms, no matter how small or large they may be. So please do send material into Caroline our editor for future editions.

Don't forget to save the date for our biannual conference in Marlborough on November 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, where the theme will be "Reconnecting with the World".

Consider entering your sister city programme, school engagement or international programme into the GCNZ Awards. These will be announced at the Conference. Nominations are open now - keep reading for further details in this newsletter.

Finally, we have a new Administrator. Sally Ho has taken over from Sarah Ma, who we thank for her contributions over the last 12+ months. Sarah stays on as a Youth Subcommittee member.

I look forward to connecting with as many members as possible around the country in the near future. Stay warm in these coming winter months.

**Ngā mihi nui,**  
**Mayor Grant Smith, JP, GCNZ President**

## Plan now for Marlborough conference

**Members planning on attending the Global Cities New Zealand conference in Blenheim on 7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> November should book travel and accommodation now.**

Marlborough Mayor Nadine Taylor says she is looking forward to welcoming delegates to this year's GCNZ conference, but they should book soon.

"Marlborough in November is brilliant. The weather is fantastic, and there are lots of things to see and do."

The conference has been timed to show off Marlborough - straight afterwards, Garden Marlborough starts, and Mayor Taylor encourages delegates to stay on in the district to enjoy what is one of Marlborough's premium events.

"However, it does mean there will be a lot of other people looking to enjoy Marlborough, so GCNZ delegates should

register for the conference when registration opens and make their travel arrangements now."

Mayor Taylor says the Marlborough team organising the conference is working on providing a good programme, based around the theme of "Reconnecting to the World". Delegates will be able to share their experiences of reconnecting with sister city partners after the global COVID pandemic, and for Marlborough, this will have a focus on youth activities and economic development.

Marlborough sister city sub-committee chairman Councillor Jonathan Rosene says the benefits of being able to get together in-person and share experiences makes conferences really valuable.

"I am looking forward to seeing GCNZ delegates in Blenheim in November."

# GCNZ Youth Subcommittee: looking toward the future

By Taylor Marston, Youth Director for GCNZ

**Sister cities have come to fill a rather ambiguous position in recent years. In contrast to the heavily peace and somewhat politically driven movement of the late 1950s and 1960s known at the time as the “People-to-People Programme”, the sister city relationships of today are eclectic, broad, and ever changing.**

The past 60 years has seen rapid technological advancements culminating in increased local and individual autonomy, international travel and communication, and diversity of thought. Arguably, the current geopolitical climate is the ideal stomping ground for local-to-global relationships that celebrate and promote cultural diversity, interconnectivity, and local identity. The unfortunate reality, however, is that sister cities have by and large struggled to attain the steady flow of youth engagement required to remain relevant.

This is of course not due to a lack of effort. I have been fortunate to speak with numerous passionate sister city practitioners who share similar concerns about the sister city model, but despite their best efforts, have been unable to garner youth engagement.

Outside of just sister cities, there is a prevalent assumption that the youth of today are simply not interested in their local community. Such assumptions are usually coupled with a bleak proposition that community-based groups and programmes are doomed to obscurity. However, having taught some 300 or so ‘youth’ at university over the past three years and interacted with countless others operating in this space, I have drawn my own conclusion that when it comes to youth community involvement, the issue does not pertain to a lack of interest. Rather the problem is one of choice.

Today’s youth are overwhelmed with choice, especially in comparison to the youth of 50 years ago. While engaging in a sister city relationship may be an appealing choice on

paper, to a young person it is only one of a multitude of choices. Furthermore, community is no longer restricted to place. At the touch of their fingertips youth have access to hundreds of thousands of online communities which are specifically catered and designed to hold their attention.

In the past prestige, companionship, and altruism alone may have been enough to garner youth interest. Today, however, the model has flipped on itself. Community driven groups and programmes, such as sister cities, now must actively incentivise youth to participate, primarily through offering something unique. The challenge for sister cities going forward will be their ability to identify and capitalise on their niche; to create and offer unique experiences and opportunities; and to help foster unparalleled global connections. It is through such actions that I believe sister cities can be competitive.

Reality, however, is obviously not so straightforward. This is where I hope the recently relaunched GCNZ Youth Subcommittee can come into play. The Youth Subcommittee comprises a growing number of young people across Aotearoa New Zealand from a variety of backgrounds, all with a motivation to help sister cities succeed in the youth space. Acting as pseudo bridge, the Youth Subcommittee aims to help sister city practitioners and committees alike to realise their niche and attract youth interest. While the youth subcommittee does not proclaim to know all the answers, or to possess the secret key to unlocking youth engagement, our hope is that our experiences as ‘youth’ can help alleviate what is otherwise a difficult hurdle.

Although the Youth Subcommittee is relatively new to this, we are nonetheless eager to hit the ground running. If you are someone operating in the sister city space and would be interested in collaborating with the Youth Subcommittee, please do not hesitate to contact us at [youth@globalcities.org.nz](mailto:youth@globalcities.org.nz)



GCNZ Youth Subcommittee members at the recent Forum

# Ningxia delegation visits sister region Marlborough

By Cathie Bell, Marlborough Sister City Subcommittee

**Six Chinese officials visited Marlborough last week, meeting with industry, business, education and Council representatives.**

The delegates were from Marlborough's sister region of Ningxia and were here to reconnect following the COVID pandemic. They met with Mayor Nadine Taylor, councillors and staff at the New Zealand Wine Centre.

Discussions were held about opportunities for talent exchange, international education, wine consultancy and technology and agritech, Council's Economic Development Manager Neil Henry said.

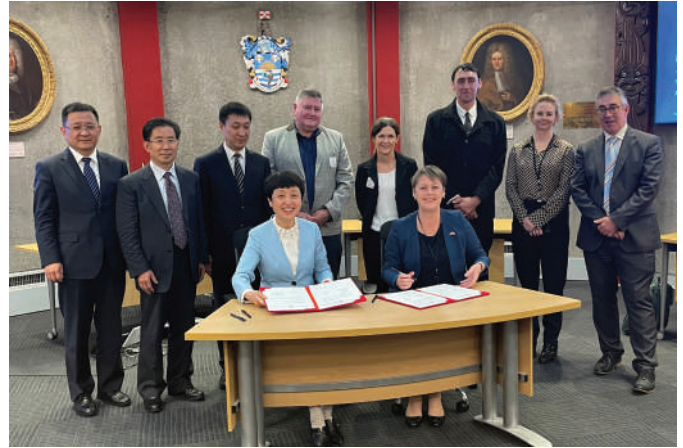
"The delegation was impressed with Marlborough and positive about how our regions could work together in future to deliver benefits," he said.

The delegation was led by Ms Shi Dai, member of the Standing Committee and Director-General of Organization Department of the CPC Ningxia Committee.

The Marlborough-Ningxia sister region relationship was signed in 2017 and is based on a mutual economic partnership through wine consultancy, technology and education.

Ningxia is the third largest wine region in China and one of the largest in the world.

For further information see [www.marlborough.govt.nz/your-council/marlborough-sister-cities](http://www.marlborough.govt.nz/your-council/marlborough-sister-cities)



Mayor Taylor and Ms Shi Dai with Chinese delegates, John Inglis and Catherine Harris from NMIT, councillors Jamie and Sally Arbuckle, and Dean Heiford

# GCNZ member receives a Queen's Service Medal

**GCNZ member Kevin Watkins, of Hastings, recently received a QSM for services to the community and New Zealand-China relations.**

Hastings District Councillor Kevin Watkins has been instrumental in the annual Hastings Blossom Parade and Christmas Parade since 1957, as well as building the city's Father Christmas float.

He created the Chinese Lantern Festival, which attracts up to 15,000 people annually and has been a key driver of the Sister-City friendship between Hastings and Guilin, China, and created the Amazing China Face Races, connecting Hastings secondary school students with their Chinese counterparts.

Mr Watkins created the 'Year of Tourism', which launched at the New Zealand Embassy in Beijing in 2019.

On behalf of Global Cities NZ, congratulations Kevin and Hastings.



Kevin with the Governor General, The Rt Hon Dame Cindy Kiro, GNZM, QSO

*Save the Date*

**CONFERENCE 2023**

Blenheim, Marlborough

*Registrations open soon*



# Selwyn hosts visitor from sister city Toraja, Indonesia

By Allison J Rosanowski, Selwyn Sister City Committee Chairperson

Reviving in-person relationships after the years of COVID is a rewarding experience. Selwyn's in-person relationship with Toraja, a Christian Community in the highlands of Sulawesi has begun with a three week visit of senior English teacher, Lordna Lambe from Barana Christian Secondary School. Barana is a boarding school of 500 students who come from throughout Indonesia.

Lordna was a key person when three retired Selwyn teachers visited Toraja in 2019. These teachers worked with 25 junior English teachers for three weeks.

Selwyn was asked to repeat the Programme in Toraja and Selwyn requested Toraja teachers to visit Selwyn. COVID interrupted these plans.

Lordna comments on her three weeks professional development in Selwyn:

"I came as an English teacher who thinks I am sufficient enough to teach English in my school. Yet, this experience has opened my understanding that as a teacher I have to learn, grow, and develop to be able to help my students to prepare for the global world. I am so grateful to experience many different classrooms from various schools in Selwyn District. To my surprise, every school has its own characteristics in teaching, in curriculum designing, in student development programmes which enriches my experience. Not only that I had the chance to experience the school environment, but also to experience the daily life, the culture, the food and the beautiful scenery of New Zealand. The friendliness and welcoming attitude of the people made me feel at home during my visit in Selwyn District. I wish that the sister city relationship between Selwyn District and North Toraja Region keeps on growing, nourished and be fruitful for the development of both cities."

Rolleston College was the main host school for Lordna where she was able to observe interactive teaching methods. She also spent a day each at Darfield High School, Ellesmere College and Lincoln High School. At Lincoln she was delighted to see a published author teaching creative writing to Year 13 students. A half day at Middleton Grange was an opportunity to observe a Christian School.



Lordna at Selwyn District Council Headquarters with Feature panel



Feeding sheep Middle Rock, Coleridge

Barana's headmaster asked the Selwyn Sister City Committee to arrange visits to tertiary institutions with a view to opening opportunities for their students. Canterbury University, CCEL Language School, Lincoln University, ARA Polytechnic, and SIT Polytechnic welcomed Lordna and displayed the variety of courses available.

Lordna was able to experience jetboating on the Rakaia River, farm visits, a kiwi experience and the Antarctic Centre - her first time to touch snow and see penguins. She met with extended family from Rolleston and Blenheim who live in New Zealand. Living with homestay families was invaluable introduction to life in New Zealand.

In turn, we learnt that in her Christian Community Ascension day is a public holiday. Lordna attended church services at Rolleston's Hope Church and Darfield's Trinity Anglican service. Many Selwyn residents who have visited Toraja were able to share their experiences with Lordna during a drinks and nibbles reception and a farewell dinner. Graham Robertson, whose Canterbury Rural Toraja Trust, initiated relationships between Canterbury and Toraja was a welcome guest at these functions.



Lordna at Trinity Church Darfield with the Rev Tom Innes, centre and Layreader Robin Cattell



Friends meeting again: teachers who worked with Junior English teachers in Toraja in 2019. From left - Joan, Nick, Lordna and Pam

# Wellington's sister city honours Royal NZ airmen

By Melanie Crawford, Senior International Relations Advisor, Wellington City Council

**2023 marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of sister city relations between Wellington and Harrogate, a town in North Yorkshire, England.**

Harrogate is Wellington's only sister city in the United Kingdom. The relationship was established in 1953 when Wellington City Council donated plants for Harrogate Borough Council's Valley Gardens. This prompted the establishment of a New Zealand Garden, which officially opened in 1954.

In 1954, Harrogate Borough Council presented Wellington with a gold mace created by a local jeweller. The mace is still used at Council meetings and on ceremonial occasions.

In 2010, kaumātua Sam Jackson travelled to Harrogate to bless the newly restored New Zealand Garden. He travelled with Dame June Temuranga Jackson, and Councillor Ray Ahipene-Mercer. A pou whenua (ceremonial carved post) was additionally gifted by Wellington City and iwi partner Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust.

The New Zealand Garden honours the 23 New Zealand airmen (including four from Wellington) who were stationed in North Yorkshire during WWII and died in the war. The men are now buried in the Commonwealth War Cemetery in Harrogate.

Following an initiative by Kate Spencer of Harrogate International Partnerships in 2022, the 23 New Zealand airmen are now honoured at a wreath-laying ceremony each Anzac Day.

This year the airmen were commemorated by the refurbishment of the New Zealand Garden. A commemorative wooden bench, made by a local Yorkshire craftsman, was placed in the newly refurbished garden during a ceremony on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> April.

"The placement of the bench seat marks 70 years of our sister city relationship and also honours the RNZAF airmen buried nearby. Harrogate and the Friends of the Valley Gardens are delighted and honoured to receive the gift," said Kate.

From left: Gravestone of Alfred Lockyer, one of the four Wellington airmen buried in Harrogate; Flight Lieutenant Dan Channon, Royal New Zealand Air Force and Lieutenant Colonel Colin Morrison, Royal Australian Defence Force at the Anzac Day service in Harrogate; New bench in the Harrogate New Zealand Garden.



## 2023 GCNZ Awards nominations open 1 July

By Ray Wallace ONZM, Awards Co-ordinator

**I am delighted to announce that nominations for the highly anticipated 2023 Global Cities New Zealand Awards will open on 1 July. These awards celebrate the significance of people-to-people relationships in shaping our global community.**

Participating in the Global Cities New Zealand Awards is an exceptional opportunity for cities and towns to showcase their dedication to fostering strong and inclusive communities. It provides a platform to recognise the initiatives that have strengthened sister city Relationships through social cohesion, encouraged cultural exchange, and promoted diversity and inclusion.

These awards celebrate the cities and towns that have successfully bridge divides, promote understanding, and cultivate a sense of belonging.

Moreover, the Global Cities New Zealand Awards promote the exchange of ideas and experiences, enabling cities and towns to learn from one another's successes and challenges. By participating, cities and towns can forge partnerships and build networks that enhance collaboration on a global scale, fostering mutual understanding and cooperation

among diverse communities.

Ultimately, the 2023 Global Cities New Zealand Awards emphasize that cities and towns are more than just buildings and infrastructure – they are living entities built on the foundations of human connections.

By placing people-to-people relationships at the forefront, we recognize the pivotal role individuals play in shaping the future of their cities and towns and collectively building a more inclusive, empathetic, and prosperous world.

Join us in celebrating the outstanding achievements of people-to-people relationships. Talk to your group and look at what great projects or milestones you have achieved over the past 18 months and put in a nomination for the 2023 GCNZ Awards. You could be our 2023 winner.

### Categories:

1. Best Project (Community and School Members)
2. Best Project (Local Government Members)
3. Best Commercially Focused Project (All Members)

**Information packs will be emailed to members after 1 July.**



# Wellington Sakai Association creates mascot to celebrate relationship with Japan

By Roxie Orr, President, Wellington Sakai Association and WSA committee

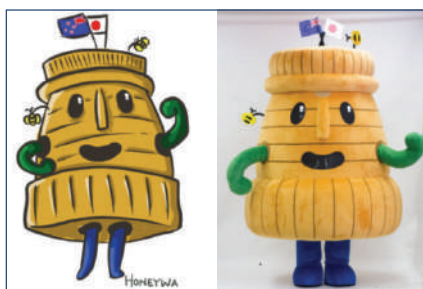
In 2022 we created our Wellington Sakai Association mascot or yuru-chara – HONEYWA – to celebrate our relationship with the Sakai Wellington Association.

The yuru-chara project began in July 2020, with earlier president Esther Harrison, beginning with a design competition held from December 2020 to February 2021 during the Pandemic via our in social media platform. With support from the Wellington City Council and after a local competition we selected our favourite design by Roseanna Finkle-Vern.

The winner and runners-up were announced at the Crofton Downs School "Matsuri" event in March 2021. With much commitment and communication with Kigurumix company in Japan, Rieko Woodford-Robinson, committee member, all committee members and our 2021/2022 president, Xan Wetherall, we launched HONEYWA at the Japan Festival in Wellington in March 2022.

Yuru-chara (Japanese: ゆるキャラ) is a Japanese term for a category of mascot characters; usually created to promote a place or region, event, organisation or business. They are characterized by their kawaii (cute) and unsophisticated designs, often incorporating motifs that represent local culture, history or produce. They may be created by local government or other organizations to stimulate tourism and economic development, or created by a company to build on their corporate identity. They may appear as costumed characters at promotional events and festivals. Yuru-chara has become a popular and lucrative business, with character-driven sales reaching billions of dollars in economic benefits.

KIGURUMIX costume company (located in Sumida-ku, Tokyo) have a reputation for quality designs (the Director of KIGURUMIX has a masters in Advanced Art Expression from Tokyo University of the Arts). They make inflatable sculpture costumes which are easily transportable. We ordered the Yuru-chara costume from them in June 2021

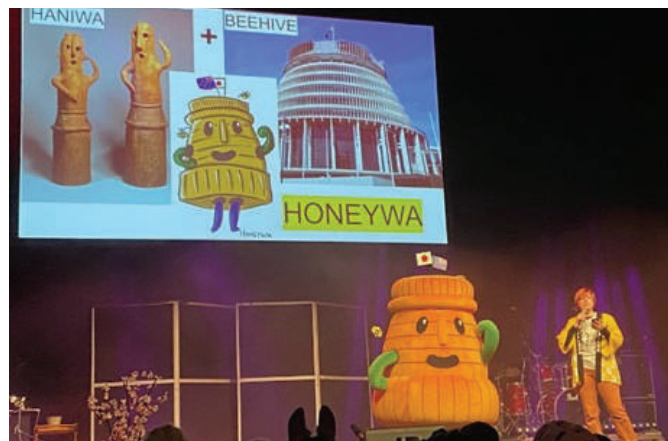


and it was completed in April 2022.

To give you a bit of understanding of our HONEYWA, she represents a combination of Wellington's Beehive and the Haniwa clay sculptures, which were famous during the Kofun period. Her blue legs are the ocean that Wellington and Sakai, both port cities, are blessed with, and her green arms are strong,

like the forests around Wellington and in Sakai's Kofun areas. "Honey" is a nod to Aotearoa New Zealand's famous honey production, and "Wa" means harmony in Japanese. She is named with the hope that Wellington and Sakai continue to be harmonious sister cities and we can share in our appreciation of things Wellingtonian and from Sakai in our ongoing activities and exchanges.

At our next event we look forward to Mikki Schweitzer being in HONEYWA and entertaining our members and the community, bringing people of all ages together. We look forward to HONEYWA being part of our activities for the Wellington Sakai Association, and particularly our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wellington Sakai sister city relationship in 2024.



Xan Wetherall (previous president) at the Japan Festival where we launched HONEYWA.



Raewyn MacGregor (Vice President) with HONEYWA. Roseanna Finkle-Vern is inside HONEYWA at the launch.

HONEYWA accompanied by the Zespri Kiwi mascots at the Japan Festival 2022. In July 2022 we had the Japanese Business Breakfast at Parliament. Here is Mr Chris Seed, CEO of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ambassador Ito and Roxie Orr (current president) at the event. Rieko Woodford-Robinson (committee member) was inside HONEYWA.



Left: Tauranga Head Commissioner, Anne Tolley and Japan Deputy Head of Mission, Mr Tatsushi Nishioka, cutting the sister city anniversary cake. Right: Hitachi Girl Scouts perform traditional Japanese song and dance to attendees - Celebrating their 22-year relationship with the Tauranga Girl Guides

## From past collaborations to future prosperity: Tauranga and Hitachi celebrate 35 years as sister cities

By Dean Prendergast, International Relations Specialist, Priority One

**Tauranga and Hitachi City recently commemorated their 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary as sister cities, celebrating a longstanding relationship of friendship, cultural exchange, and economic cooperation. The event acknowledged the many community leaders, business representatives, and educators who had contributed to the relationship over many years.**

Hosted by Tauranga City Council Head Commissioner, Anne Tolley, notable guests included Japan's Deputy Head of Mission, Mr Tatsushi Nishioka, former Tauranga City Council CEO, Mr Alan Bickers and former Mayoress Mrs Ena Pope, both who attended the original signing ceremony in 1988, and representative from Global Cities New Zealand, Hiromi Morris. The event was timed to coincide with a visit to Tauranga by the Hitachi City Girl Scouts, who performed a traditional Japanese dance alongside Tauranga Intermediate School's kapa haka group.

Commissioner Tolley spoke about the importance of sister city relationships in fostering mutual respect and understanding between the people of both cities, and highlighted past collaborations in the arts, education and business. A special video message featured Hitachi City Mayor, Mr Haruki Ogawa, emphasising the significance of the relationship to him, including his positive experience visiting Tauranga in the past.

The formalities concluded with Japan's Deputy Head of Mission, Mr. Nishioka, speaking on the importance of international relationships in fostering global diplomacy and understanding, before a ceremonial cutting of the anniversary cake by Commissioner Tolley and Mr. Nishioka.

### About the Tauranga/Hitachi sister city relationship

The sister city relationship between Tauranga and Hitachi, established in 1988, has fostered cooperation in various areas. Educational exchanges involve English language teachers from Tauranga working in Hitachi and regular student exchanges. Cultural initiatives, such as arts collaborations and local quilt maker exhibitions, have strengthened international arts communities.

Last year's celebration of 70 years of diplomatic relations between New Zealand and Japan further cements the importance of international connections, with trade promotion activities and information exchange on disaster planning further deepening the relationship between the cities.

An upcoming delegation from Tauranga to Hitachi, led by Commissioner Tolley, aims to further strengthen the sister city bond and pave the way for future collaboration.



Over one-hundred attendees came together to celebrate the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hitachi and Tauranga sister city relationship

# Sister cities book club exchange

By Ben Van Rooy, Vice President, Wellington Xiamen Association

About two years ago, during the COVID-19 lockdown I hatched a plan to somehow keep in contact with Xiamen and its sister cities.

I searched hard and found email addresses and contacts for some of them and in particular the English speaking countries. With the blessing and participation of Xiamen Foreign Affairs Office this resulted in an almost two hour Zoom meeting because we had not seen one another for so long and had lots to talk about.

The sister cities involved were Baltimore and Sarasota (USA), Richmond (Canada), Sunshine Coast (Australia), Wellington and Xiamen of course.

Late last year Xiamen Foreign Affairs Office wrote to seek participation in a Book Club not knowing that we have our annual holidays and we substantially shut down. Dates were renegotiated but still ended up with the inaugural launch to be on 25 April, yes ANZAC Day.

I happened to be in Xiamen and happy to be present at the Xiamen Library for the official opening attended by zoom

in Wellington by Wellington City Council International Relations Specialist Jennifer Zhou and Confucius Institute staff.

The opening was a great success where the above sister cities all participated and all had the books sent by XMFAO at hand. Dr Bill Brown, author of several books he wrote over his many years as honorary citizen of Xiamen spoke animatedly presented one of his books called 'Off the Wall'.

There was no doubt we all endorsed the happy outcome of the innovation. I too was asked to say a few words and it was fortuitous to see myself on the news with Xiamen TV that night.

Of course, Wellington is no stranger to books exchange. I was lucky enough to be present with the handover of some 60 books when Former Mayor Prendergast visited Xiamen to open an official New Zealand Corner at the Xiamen Museum Library. Those books are still there today and many students come to seek knowledge about Wellington and New Zealand.



## 2023 – 2024 GCNZ Board and Advisors

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