

Cultural Wellbeing

Cultural wellbeing encompasses the customs, practices, languages, values and world views that define different social groups such as those based on nationality, ethnicity, region or common interests.

Cultural activities are an integral part of leisure and recreation. People participate in these activities for enjoyment and entertainment, personal growth and development, as a means of expression, to learn new skills and meet people or to pass on cultural traditions.

There is little monitoring information on cultural wellbeing compared with other wellbeings, where there are vast amounts of data available. Thus it is difficult to gauge and monitor progress on the quality of the District's cultural wellbeing.

Ruapehu District has a diverse cultural identity and its unique heritage is one of its major strengths. Increased cultural wellbeing in the District is integral to promoting its profile and achieving overall community wellbeing.

The area encompasses the volcanic mountains and Whanganui River which has much historical and spiritual significance to local Maori tribes.

European history began around 1850 with the building of the main trunk railway line and, since then, the railway, timber milling, farming and market gardening have helped shape the District's history.



“The cultural diversity of the District is recognised”



Indicator	State	Trend
Visitors to Libraries	☹️	↓

Libraries are community assets and contribute to the development and wellbeing of the community. In addition to the library's role as a place to meet, relax and get out a good book to read, the library also acts a resource centre for the community. The library enhances the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of its communities by providing resources that enables the community and businesses to increase its capacity and effectiveness in a cost efficient way. The openness of the library service also promotes social cohesion.

The three District libraries have a combined active membership base of 1,812 borrowers. Taumarunui library has the most active memberships at 1,125 while Ohakune has 556 members and Raethi has 131. From 1 July 2005 to 31 May 2006 a total of 39,943 books were issued and a further 9,970 of those books were renewed across all three libraries.

In the 2005 Customer Satisfaction Survey 47% of respondents reported that they have

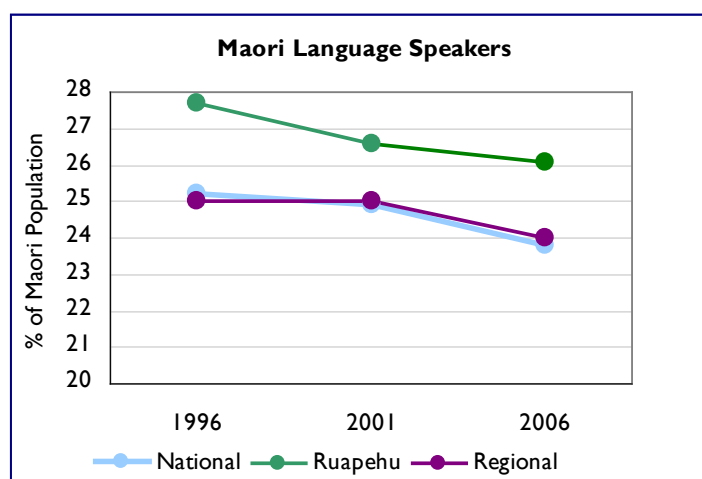
used Council's library service in the last year, a decline from 52% in 2001 when the survey was last undertaken. At the end of 2007 Council was developing a District-wide Library Strategy aimed at delivering improvements and changes to the service to ensure it continues to meet the community's needs and expectations.



Indicator	State	Trend
Maori Language Speakers	☹️	↓

As a central component of Maori culture, Te Reo is an important aspect of cultural participation and identity. It forms part of the broader cultural identity and heritage of the District and the number of Maori speakers is a commonly used indicator of cultural wellbeing.

Across New Zealand, the proportion of Maori who were fluent Maori speakers declined markedly over the last century, particularly following the rapid urbanisation of the Maori population in the 1950s and 1960s. A survey of the health of the Maori language conducted in 2001 showed that more people could understand Maori than speak it. In 2006, 10% of the District population cited Te Reo as their first language, while 26% of the Maori population could hold a conversation about everyday things, down from 27.7% in 1996.



Source: Census 2006, The Social Report

However, this is still slightly higher than the regional (23%) and national (24%) proportions of the Maori population fluent in Te Reo.

Indicator	State	Trend
Recognition of Heritage	☺	↑

Heritage of any nature, once lost or altered, is irreplaceable. The conservation of heritage of historic interest allows people to develop a greater understanding of history and identity. Even if there is little left to preserve, heritage items offer linkages and stories of interest to locals and visitors alike. Recognising and acknowledging the importance of the past contributes to the community's understanding and awareness of a sense of place. Ruapehu District's unique identity and its appeal as a cultural and tourist centre are built on its historic, cultural and scenic attractions.

The recognition of the District's heritage has increased significantly in recent years. Council adopted its first Heritage Policy in late 2007,

with the aim to "identify, recognise and record the diverse heritage of the Ruapehu District for the benefit of its communities and visitors, of both present and future generations". As a result, the Ruapehu Heritage Inventory has been created as a resource for learning about heritage items in the District and its history.

The New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT) is the country's leading heritage agency responsible for keeping its heritage alive and useful. It is responsible by law for identifying, registering and protecting heritage of national importance to New Zealand. There are currently 29 heritage items in the Ruapehu District registered by NZHPT, an increase of 69% from nine items registered in 2003.

Indicator	State	Trend
Local Events	☺	?

Since June 2007, Council's regional tourism organisation, Visit Ruapehu, has been publishing a monthly Events Calendar for the District. The aim of the Calendar is to co-ordinate and publicise events taking place within the District, to increase community and visitor awareness and participation. During the last six months of 2007 there was over 80 events on the Calendar and there are currently nearly 100 events scheduled for 2008. Since this is a new initiative, the growth in number and type of events will be monitored and reported on in future years.

Many of the events are winter sport or adventure sport related and there are also several environmental education and conservation events. Included in the Events Calendar are around 20 annual cultural events covering arts, crafts, film, literature, fashion, music and local heritage.



Ohakune Carrot © Visit Ruapehu