

## SPEECH FOR CHINA-OCEANIA & CANADA SISTER CITIES FORUM

Shanghai, 9 September 2010

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Haere mai, Haere mai,  
Ko Bill toku ingoa,  
Ko Kanata toku iwi,  
Ko Omei Shan toku maunga,  
Ko Jin Jiang toku awa.

No reira, Tena Koutou Tena Koutou, Tena Koutou katou

Your Royal Highness Princess Pilolevu Tuita,

Dear friends and delegates from Oceania and Canada,

Chairman Qing Boming, on behalf of the New Zealand China Friendship Society delegation, I want to thank Youxie for the opportunity to visit Shanghai and attend this interesting and inspiring conference. Every branch of our Society is involved in sister-city links with China, and many of us have worked to build new links through the years. As an Honorary Life Member of Sister Cities New Zealand, I applaud their efforts.

New Zealand's first sister city link with China was established in 1981 between Guilin and Hastings, a city of 60,000 in the Hawkes Bay region of the North Island. Today there are 27 sister-city links between our two countries, and several more being developed.

In some cities, these links are run by the city council alone, while in others they are handled by a committee of citizens funded by the council but with considerable leeway to develop programme and arrange exchanges. We think the participation of citizens best serves the aims of sister cities, involving as many people as possible in the educational, cultural and commercial exchanges that take place.

So many sister-city links develop from personal relationships. The Hastings-Guilin link emerged from a connection between a Kiwi horticulturist (a member of NZCFS) and the Guangxi Botanical Institute. Hastings Mayor Jeremy Dwyer enthusiastically took up the challenge, and for many years that link has been the most active in our country.

Three years later (1984), Christchurch (my city) established a link with Gansu Province, again through personal connections, this time through the efforts of Rewi Alley, a New Zealander who lived 60 years in China and is one of China's "ten best foreign friends" recently chosen in a national internet survey. Alley suggested that the link be with a

province rather than a city because he believed that New Zealand could offer useful expertise to agriculture in what was then a very poor province in China's north-west.

Another early (1986) New Zealand link is between Tauranga and Yantai, Shandong, a link that has developed the commercial and economic side of the relationship very effectively. While the city council leads the relationship, it has encouraged citizen participation by working with such local institutions as the tourism board and the export and educational marketing organisations. Tauranga's Mayor Stuart Crosby came back from a recent visit to Yantai full of enthusiasm for the progress made in opening business opportunities and export possibilities for his city--and he pointed out that a sister-city link opens doors in both countries far beyond the cities themselves.

Active sister-city links do grow far beyond their original dimensions. For example, the success of the Hastings-Guilin relationship spawned a link in 1994 between neighbouring city Napier and Lianyungang in Jiangsu, and recently, in 2006, between the Hawkes Bay District (that includes both Hastings and Napier) and Xuzhou, Jiangsu. Out of the friendly feelings engendered by these links, the mayors of Hastings and Napier responded to the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan by signing a friendship understanding with Mianyang, as their district had suffered a similarly disastrous earthquake in 1931.

The same kind of expansion is evident in the Christchurch-Gansu link. Encouraged and enabled by the friendly relations it created, two educational institutions established sister-school links in Gansu: The Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology with the Lanzhou City University (formerly the Lanzhou Bailie Oil School originally established by Rewi Alley) and Darfield High School with the Shandan Bailie School (also established by Rewi Alley). And out of that link has now come a sister-county link between Shandan County and Selwyn District, which includes Darfield and Springfield, where Rewi Alley was born. The current president of Sister Cities New Zealand, Bill Woods, who lives in Springfield, told us about this new link yesterday.

And now Christchurch has another sister city in China: in 2006, we signed a sister-city agreement with Wuhan. This link is rich with educational and commercial relations, including helping Wuhan establish the first horse-racing course in China. The University of Canterbury has signed a memo of understanding with Central China (Hua Zhong) University of Science and Technology (HUST). Before that, Canterbury provided a three-month course in management for 23 middle-range managers from Wuhan government institutions that laid a groundwork of knowledge and friendship in that city that has served the link well.

In all our efforts to create commercially effective links, we must never forget the central purpose of sister cities: friendship between peoples in different countries, brought up in different cultures, and experiencing different circumstances. We must continue to build the cultural and educational aspects of our relationships or the rest will not prosper. Student exchanges and visits by performing cultural groups are crucial, and without them the economic links have little meaning. We need to be establishing and maintaining friendly links all the time. If we in New Zealand can assist other Pacific countries to make personal connections, we will be happy to help in any way we can.

I'll finish with one creative example of friendly links that I really like. In 2008, the Hastings Sister City committee held a contest for anyone who could find the names of a Chinese couple in Guilin by following a set of clues that were gradually published in the local paper. Hundreds of people followed the contest, learning about Guilin as they went. The winners after 19 days of clues were two high school students, and their prize was a week in Guilin.

The couple they identified had won a contest in Guilin, and their prize was to go to Hastings and to be married in the beautiful Osmanthus Chinese Garden followed by a week-long honeymoon in the Hawkes Bay region. A thousand local people attended the wedding. The bride's dress and coat were designed by a local designer and ornamented by a famous embroiderer. This dress has come to Shanghai, where it was modelled in the New Zealand Pavilion on 14 August by a young woman from Guilin--perhaps some of you saw it on CCTV. What a wonderfully creative programme to build links of personal friendship and give a sister-city link wide publicity in both countries!

Noreira, haere, haere ra. Tena koutou katoa

Xie xie da jia.