

# Cultural Literacy in the Built Environment

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## Indigenous Peoples & Place & History

- ◆ Link between people, place & history critical to indigenous cultural identity
- ◆ Indigenous people define themselves by reference to their space & geographical markers
- ◆ Colonial experience has seen this link severed, both in urban and rural areas
- ◆ Space has been 'occupied' by settlers
- ◆ Challenge is to relink indigenous peoples with their spaces

## Whaktauaki

- ◆ Ko Aoraki Te Maunga  
– Aoraki is my mountain
- ◆ Ko Waitaki te Awa  
– Waitaki is my river
- ◆ Ko Ngai Tahu te Iwi  
– Ngai Tahu is my tribe

## Cultural Geography

- ◆ Spatial expressions of culture
- ◆ Interactions between human societies and their natural environment
- ◆ Includes
  - Cultural landscapes
  - Cultural ecologies
  - Cultural perceptions

## Landscapes

- ◆ Visual elements **and** relationships, associations, history, values
- ◆ Is more than what is observed
- ◆ The visual is interwoven with memory, stories, experience
- ◆ Visual landscape can 'veil' struggles, battles, conflict, experience
- ◆ Landscapes shape & are shaped by people (ie culture & social actions)

## Culture

- ◆ Behaviour and social systems that summarise the learned way of life of a group of people
- ◆ Mix of beliefs, practises, symbols and language created by people
- ◆ History, traditions, associations with a place **create** a cultural landscape

## Cultural Landscape

- ◆ Cultural processes in a specific:
  - Place,
  - Habitat, or
  - Environment
- ◆ Shape cultural landscapes

## Challenge

- ◆ To find ways to diminish the gap between what is 'seen' and what cannot be seen (ie history, traditions, former associations with a place)
- ◆ To relink indigenous people with their places and their history

## Cultural Literacy

- ◆ How different culture read, see or understand their relationship with a place, habitat or environment
- ◆ Includes the seen (visual) and the unseen (memory, perception, values)

## Indigenous cultural literacy ?

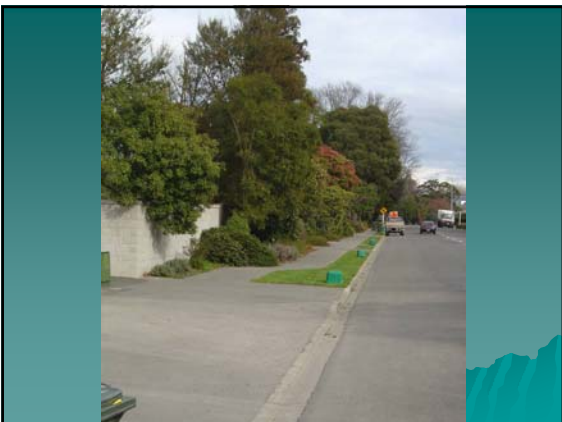
- ◆ Indigenous space has been occupied often violently by settlers, settler governments
- ◆ Has led to dispossession and exclusion of indigenous people from their spaces
- ◆ Indigenous perceptions of space now linked to three distinct phases
  - Pre contact
  - Colonial
  - Contemporary (particularly urban)

## Dominant Indigenous Stereotypes

- ◆ Rural native, natural, primitive, native, static
  - The essentialised, romanticised indigenous person, close to the land, nature
- ◆ Urban underclass
  - The demonised indigenous person, unemployed, crime, gangs, graffiti, bad housing

## Indigenous cultural literacy

- ◆ Within a broader context of historical and contemporary colonial processes ...how indigenous peoples read, see or understand their relationship with places, habitats, environments







## Challenges

- ◆ To become more culturally literate
- ◆ Work with indigenous peoples to understand, comprehend 'their' reading of their urban environment
- ◆ Translate, transform the 'seen' and 'unseen' into a visual (symbols) and ecological expression of this relationship
- ◆ Accept validity of indigenous knowledge and processes
- ◆ Create urban environments that express the relationship indigenous peoples have with place