

# Local Government Management Association of BC Taituarā Overseas Manager Exchange 2025 Report

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Aotearoa New Zealand

Jenni Cochrane and Linda Glenday  
at Hobbiton, located in Matamata-Piako District



Māori Koroneihana celebration  
at Turangawaewae Marae



## Executive Summary

The LGMA Taituarā Overseas Manager Exchange provided a unique opportunity to learn from local government colleagues in Aotearoa New Zealand. Endorsed by the District of Squamish and the Local Government Management Association of British Columbia and hosted by Matamata-Piako District Council (MPDC) and Taituarā, the exchange focused on Māori governance and working relationships, Māori cultural integration, organizational capacity building and innovative service delivery. Exchange locations included the three MPDC Councils (municipalities), neighbouring municipalities, and the Taituarā Conference in Christchurch.

## Key Learnings

### 1. Indigenous Relationships and Governance

Māori governance is rooted in the Treaty of Waitangi, emphasizing partnership, protection, and participation. National government legislative changes and referendums threaten Māori representation; in 2025, 24 of 42 local government municipalities voted to dismantle Māori wards for future local government elections. MPDC's Te Manawhenua Forum (standing committee of council) and cultural practices (*pōwhiri*, *waiata*, *karakia*) build relationships, trust and collaboration. Māori representation in leadership roles strengthens cultural integration and organizational capacity. Taupō's He Whare Hono ō Tūwharetoa (local facility building) demonstrates how joint infrastructure projects drive economic development and collaboration.

### 2. Preparing for the Future While Delivering Services Today

A shared challenge explored is the intersection of homelessness, the vulnerable population and impact on community safety and inclusiveness. Rotorua's Safe City Guardian Program and Community Safety Hub improve community safety and inclusiveness through integrated, approachable and collaborative service.

## Recommendations for Local Government in British Columbia

1. Advocate for legislated Indigenous representation, implement local government mechanisms to work together, for example council standing committees, while prioritizing trust-based relationships through cultural learning.
2. Embed Indigenous cultural practices into organizational life to deepen respect and inclusivity.
3. Increase Indigenous employment in municipal organizations to increase culturally informed decision making and capacity.
4. Pursue joint infrastructure projects to foster Indigenous economic development and collaboration.
5. Explore integrated community safety models, including centralized hubs and ambassador-style programs.

## Conclusion

The Exchange reinforced that building sustainable and thriving communities depends on authentic relationships, meaningful Indigenous cultural integration, and innovative approaches to community safety, including support for vulnerable populations. These lessons provide practical pathways for advancing genuine reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, improving service delivery, and creating inclusive, safe communities across British Columbia.

## Introduction

The Local Government Management Association of British Columbia (LGMA) Taituarā Overseas Manager Exchange ('the Exchange') provided a transformative opportunity to engage with local government colleagues in Aotearoa New Zealand. Hosted by Taituarā and Matamata-Piako District Council (MPDC), the exchange focused on Māori governance and working relationships, Māori cultural integration, organizational capacity building and innovative service delivery in local government. The Exchange learning took place with host municipal colleagues in the MPDC towns of Matamata, Morrinsville and Te Aroha. Additional exchange time was spent meeting with colleagues at municipalities in Hamilton, Rotorua and Taupō. The Taituarā conference in Ōtautahi Christchurch, themed 'Impact Unleashed', capped off a comprehensive exchange. This report outlines key learnings, comparative insights, and recommendations for applying these experiences within the British Columbia, Canadian context.

Please note that Māori *te reo* (language) terms are used throughout this report, the English definitions are provided from the [Te Aka Māori Dictionary](#).



Matamata-Piako District Council Offices and Library

## Learning Objectives

The primary objectives of the Exchange were:

- 1) **Indigenous relationships and governance:** Understand Māori governance and effective mechanisms for Indigenous participation in local decision-making; identify approaches to reduce racism, build community buy-in, and strengthen partnership.
- 2) **Preparing for the future while delivering services today:** Explore shared local government challenges and learn about innovative practices.

## Learning Objective 1:

**Indigenous relationships and governance:** Understand Māori governance and effective mechanisms for Indigenous participation in local decision-making; identify approaches to reduce racism, build community buy-in, and strengthen partnership.

### Māori Governance: Legislation

Māori are the *tangata whenua*, the people of the land. They are descendants of people from Polynesia who travelled on ocean going *waka* (canoes) to Aotearoa in the late 1200s. First European contact was in 1642.<sup>1</sup>

Aotearoa New Zealand's national governance today is shaped by the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, which established foundational principles of partnership, protection, and participation for Māori. Despite its significance, the Treaty has been subject to contested interpretations and historical breaches. The treaty has two language texts: one in *te reo* Māori and one in English; both are official Aotearoa New Zealand languages.

Under the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, the Waitangi Tribunal is tasked with determining the meaning and effect of the treaty for the purposes of inquiring into Māori claims. However, the Māori text is not an exact translation of the English text. For this reason, the Treaty of Waitangi Act requires the Tribunal to 'decide issues raised by the differences between them'.<sup>2</sup>

The Waitangi Tribunal has played a key role in addressing these breaches and guiding reconciliation efforts. Māori rights have since been integrated into various sectors, including local government.

In 2024–2025, the proposed Central Government Treaty Principles Bill sought to redefine Treaty principles in legislation, sparking widespread concern. Critics viewed the bill as a threat to Māori rights and Treaty settlements. Mass protests, including a *hīkoi* (march) and *haka* (Māori posture dance) in Parliament, led to the bill's defeat in April 2025<sup>3</sup>. This moment reaffirmed the importance of Treaty-based governance and the role of local government in upholding Indigenous rights.

The National Government includes a Ministry of Māori Development: Te Puni Kōkiri. Its statutory responsibilities are to promote Māori health, training and employment, education and economic development; and to monitor the adequacy of national services to Māori. Te Tautuhi ō Rongo is a public policy framework that helps the public service apply a consistent, structured approach when preparing public policy and advice affecting Māori. Te Tautuhi ō Rongo acknowledges that, through the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi | The Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti | the Treaty), Māori have collective and individual rights and interests.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Māori | Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#)

<sup>2</sup> [About the treaty | Waitangi Tribunal](#)

<sup>3</sup> [New Zealand parliament rejects controversial Indigenous law | Reuters](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Te Puni Kōkiri — Kāinga](#)



## Māori Trust Boards

Many Māori govern and support their *iwi* (tribe) through a Trust Board.<sup>5</sup> The Trust Board is responsible for managing the assets of the *iwi*, as well promote and financially support the health, education, vocational training, and the social and economic welfare of the people.

## Māori Local Government Wards

A Māori ward is an elected seat in a local government council. Their purpose is to provide specific democratic representation for Māori who otherwise may not have a voice in local government.

Māori wards exist alongside general council members, covering the same geographic areas, but they do not only represent Māori. Like all elected members, whether elected from general or Māori wards, they represent the entire community when on council. In 2021, MPDC voted to establish a Māori ward on their Council. During the Exchange, I spent time and learned from MPDC Council Māori seat Te Toa Horopū ā Matamata-Piako Ward Gary Tukawekai Paewitana Thompson, who in addition to representing the community on local council, leads many initiatives on behalf of the Māori community, including improved health screening and cancer prevention, education and housing (*papakāinga*<sup>6</sup>). While recognizing the importance of a Māori seat at council, Gary also discussed the challenges of influencing the decisions at council while being one vote out of 13 total elected council members.

In July 2024, the national government updated legislation mandating changes. Local governments had two options:

1. Disestablish the Māori ward and complete a shortened representation review by December 2024 (there would be no Māori ward for the 2025 local elections).
2. Hold a binding poll alongside the 2025 election with the outcome to come into effect for the 2028 election (there would still be a Māori ward for the 2025 local elections).<sup>7</sup>

The 2025 local elections across the country resulted in 24 out of 42 municipalities deciding to dismantle the wards for the 2028 and 2031 local elections.<sup>8</sup> MPDC was one of them.

This demonstrates that the political need for power and control at the expense of Indigenous citizens continue to override good governance and progress for all citizens, particularly Indigenous people, in many parts of the world including the Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand.

IN MPDC, there are twelve listed *iwi* in the region. These Māori *iwi* work with the MPDC council through the Te Manawhenua Forum ('the Forum'). The Forum is a standing committee of council, and the structure was developed through discussions with Māori nominated representatives. I had the opportunity to meet Forum Chair Hinerangi Vaimoso, a formidable and progressive leader. The Forum focuses on the social, economic,

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<sup>5</sup> [Māori Trust Board](#)

<sup>6</sup> [MPDC papakāinga presentation April 2024](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Māori ward referendum 2025](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Local Elections 2025: Final results confirm majority of councils reject Māori wards – Te Ao Māori News](#)

environmental and cultural well being of their Māori communities by providing input into MPDC council policy and decision making.

It is apparent through discussions with Māori Ward Gary Tukawekai Paewitana Thompson and the recent local elections that racism and the fear of losing control over land and resources continue to influence elections. However, outside of national government legislation and the local vote to dismantle the Māori ward system, councils can continue to lead work with Māori and ensure representation through other means. In MPDC it is currently a standing committee, the Te Manawhenua Forum.

Dispelling the racism, inaccuracies and fear can be achieved from the ground up, person to person, human to human through relationship, cultural learning and sharing as will be described below.

### Cultural Learning Develops Respectful Relationships



#### Pōwhiri at Kai-a-te-mata Marae

This exchange began before I arrived, as I was asked to memorize two Māori *waiata* (songs) to prepare for the *pōwhiri* (welcome ceremony) that would be hosted for my arrival. The *pōwhiri* at Kai-a-te-mata *Marae* (communal cultural place) was a deeply moving welcome that set the tone for the visit. Learning the *waiata* in advance allowed for genuine participation and connection during the *pōwhiri*. The experience was marked by warmth, openness, shared humour, and reflected the strong cultural foundation at MPDC.

*Waiata* practice occurs weekly at the MPDC organization with the staff (Māori and non-Māori ). This cultural practice occurs at other local governments, notably in Taupō, a part of the Exchange that will be described in more detail below.

The following day, I was welcomed to attend a quarterly MPDC Managers and Team Leaders daylong workshop that provided organizational policy updates and leadership development. It included a *waiata* learning session and *karakia* (prayer, blessing) to start and complete the meeting. I learned that most organizational meetings



commence and end with a *karakia*, to set both the tone of the meeting and the wrap up. It is a wonderful way to bring the Māori culture into the event and create a tone of unity throughout the meeting and as participants depart.

The openness of the Māori to share and the non-Māori to learn cultural practices demonstrates humility and genuine learning. It provides for connection, respect and a relationship foundation upon which to work together. I experienced that music in particular is an emotional and uplifting way to connect, creating what felt to me like a deeper way to connect.

### **Māori Employees in Local Government Increases Capacity**

Notable at MPDC was the number of Māori employees (those that identified). Starting at the top, with the Tumu Whakarae Chief Executive Officer, Manaia Te Wiata. In the District of Squamish, while we have a formal Human Resources initiative to work with Squamish Nation to hire Indigenous employees, the number of employees that work at our organization and identify as Indigenous is less than 10. One reason may be that the Squamish Nation has its own council and organization where Squamish people would prefer to work. While we are leading an Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) program at the District of Squamish, including Truth and Reconciliation<sup>9</sup> with Indigenous people, we do not currently ask any employee to self-identify. Anecdotally, the integration of Māori in the workplace in Aotearoa New Zealand appears more obvious, and higher in number. When I returned to Squamish and let the CAO of Squamish Nation know that our counterpart at MPDC is Māori, he was equally surprised.

At MPDC, there is a Māori staff position of Pou Tūhono Iwi Relationship Manager, Tuatahi Nightingale-Pene. This role leads a department to further the relationship with Māori through learning and collaborative work in the both the organization and community. During the Exchange, Tuatahi Nightingale-Pene and the Iwi Relationship Advisor Tayla Bamber, led a historical tour throughout the MPDC during which we saw culturally significant lands, learned Māori history and visited the Rukumoana *Marae*, which was historically used as a parliament house for the Māori *Kiingitanga*<sup>10</sup> (Māori monarchy).



**Rukumoana Marae**

The integration of Māori and non-Māori employees, including those in leadership roles, appeared to me to have developed trust, allowed for working relationships to build through both specific Māori learning and everyday operations. Leadership, strategy development and its implementation continue to benefit from an increased capacity to integrate Māori knowledge and community connection.

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<sup>9</sup> [Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action English2.pdf](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Kiingitanga - Kiingitanga](#)

## Joint Infrastructure Project Builds Economic Development and Collaboration

During the exchange, I had the opportunity to visit the town of Taupō. There, a facility project demonstrates the economic growth of the Māori, and the collaboration to build and occupy a needed local building.



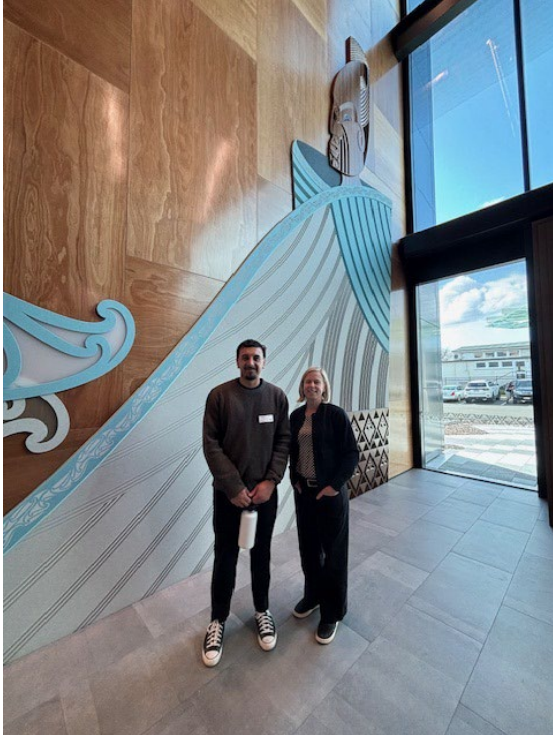
### He Whare Hono ō Tūwharetoa

The previous Taupō Council municipal office building was deemed seismically unsafe and needed replacing. An office and meeting facility was also needed for the Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board and other Tūwharetoa entities.

A limited partnership was created that includes the Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board, Tūwharetoa Settlement Trust, Tauhara Properties Limited, Tupu Angitu Limited, Ngāti Tūwharetoa Fisheries Holdings Limited, and Lake Rotoaira Trust. This limited partnership purchased the land and built a landmark building: He Whare Hono ō Tūwharetoa in the heart of Taupō<sup>11</sup>. Staff and elected officials from the above Tūwharetoa entities and Taupō District Council (municipality) now work in this one building; it is owned by the limited partnership, and the municipality leases space. I met with the Taupō Tumu Whakarae Chief Executive Officer Julie Gardyne, Kaiwhakahaere Matua – Hanganga Hapori, Ratonga General Manager of Community Infrastructure and Services, Tony Hale, Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board member Danny Loughlin and *Rangatahi* (Youth) Leader, Hepi Ferris-Bretherton. They served delicious smoked trout from Lake Taupō as a warm welcome to their visitor from coastal BC. They all agreed that improved relationships and working collaboration have increased because of the informal interactions and ability to meet regularly in the hallways and spaces in the same building. Every Thursday, members of all the organizations meet for *waiata* practice in the beautiful foyer of He Whare Hono ō Tūwharetoa.

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<sup>11</sup> [Ngāti Tūwharetoa and Taupō District Council Come Together Under One Roof | Tūwharetoa Maori Trust Board](#)



The He Whare Hono o Tūwharetoa facility project demonstrates the value in economic opportunity for the local Māori community, combined with the opportunity for collaboration with the local municipal government. The positive outcomes for both Māori and the local municipality are noteworthy: The project build and lease itself as an instrument for Māori economic benefit, the facility showcasing Māori culture and growing the working relationships and collaborative opportunities by sharing the working space.

Hapi and Linda in the He Whare Hono o Tūwharetoa foyer

## Learning Objective 2:

**Preparing for the future while delivering services today:** Explore shared local government challenges and learn about innovative practices.

### Community Safety Improves through Integrated Approach

MPDC is part of the greater Waikato Region that includes the municipalities of Rotorua Lakes Council and Taupō Council. Central (downtown) Rotorua has one of the highest crime rates in its region in New Zealand<sup>12</sup>. The local economy relies heavily on tourism, historically for its geothermal hot pools and more recently adventure sports, such as mountain biking.

At the Rotorua Lakes municipal offices, I met with the Director of Community Safety, Mihi Owen and Principal Advisor Peniel Elliot. We discussed the intersection of homelessness and community safety, which is a shared challenge faced in the Squamish community, and many municipalities in BC.

Rotorua runs a comprehensive Community Safety Program<sup>13</sup>. It includes a Regulatory Services team (Bylaw Services) Safe City Guardian Program, Inner City Community Safety Hub facility and Closed-Circuit Television

<sup>12</sup> [Rotorua Central Crime Statistics – NZ Police Data & Trends | CrimeStats.co.nz | Crime Stats New Zealand](https://www.crimestats.co.nz/crime-stats-new-zealand/rotorua-central-crime-statistics)

<sup>13</sup> [Safety - Rotorua Lakes Council](https://www.rotorualakes.govt.nz/safety)

program (CCTV). The focus of the Exchange learning were the elements of the Community Safety Program that were considered innovative: the Safe City Guardian Program and Community Safety Hub.

The Safe City Guardians ('the Guardians') provide a visible, responsive, and reassuring presence in the central area downtown in Rotorua. They are not a legislated authoritative role such as bylaw officers or police, nor are they Māori Wardens, who are a national organization that support communities through a peacekeeping role<sup>14</sup>. The Guardians are a diverse group of municipal staff members, representing the Rotorua community. Their role is to connect with everyone: business owners, citizens, visitors and the vulnerable citizens in the community. The Guardians, by connecting with the vulnerable, can deter what Rotorua refers to as anti-social behaviour that can create discomfort and deter business patrons. Additionally, they can support the vulnerable by assisting them to move on when needed before escalation occurs and by connecting them with social services. The Guardian role includes encouraging people to follow bylaws, offer information as ambassadors and provide a critical community engagement link by making it easier for people to interact with the municipality. Their approachable and knowledgeable presence means they deliver information about events, safety, parking, city news, and maintenance requirements, as well as gather feedback through surveys.

Mihi Owen described positive feedback from business owners regarding the Safe City Guardian Program and that they are continually moving towards achieving the vision of a safe and inviting community for all citizens and visitors. The program continues to grow and evolve based on its continued success<sup>15</sup>.

The Inner City Community Safety Hub in downtown Rotorua opened in November 2023. The objective of the Hub is to deliver visible and responsive community safety services to the Rotorua Community. The Safe City Guardians operate out of the Hub, and it provides a central facility for all safety personnel to meet and coordinate resources including Māori Wardens, police, the Regulatory Services team and contracted security



**Rotorua Inner City Community Safety Hub**

personnel. The Hub additionally provides information for citizens or visitors needing resources. According to staff I met and Aotearoa New Zealand Police statistics<sup>16</sup>, crimes in Central Rotorua have decreased since the Hub opened.

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<sup>14</sup> [Home - Māori Wardens of New Zealand](#)

<sup>15</sup> [New look for Rotorua Safe City Guardians - Rotorua Lakes Council](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Rotorua Central Crime Statistics – NZ Police Data & Trends | CrimeStats.co.nz | Crime Stats New Zealand](#)

## Recommendations and Knowledge Integration

Building on the learning gained through the LGMA Taituarā Overseas Manager Exchange, several key recommendations emerge for local government in British Columbia.

### Legislate Indigenous Governance to Create Integration

Municipalities should continue to advocate to the British Columbia provincial government to legislate Indigenous representation on local government councils and on provincial commissions and boards. For example, the Sea to Sky Regional Transit Committee (comprised of municipal and First Nation governments) is advocating for provincial legislation to allow for First Nation representation on Transit Commissions, as they work together to provide a regional transit system. I recommend that the advocacy continue, however while formal legislation requiring Indigenous elected roles provides an important framework for Indigenous representation, it remains vulnerable to political shifts. Sustainable progress depends on cultivating genuine, trust-based relationships at the local level. Municipalities should lead human-to-human engagement, fostering understanding and collaboration through ongoing dialogue and shared experiences. Formal structures, such as a local council standing committee dedicated to government-to-government interaction, can provide a formal way to reinforce these relationships within each council term.

**Knowledge Integration:** Local government legislated relationships with the Indigenous people are somewhat different in Canada, particularly with those working with First Nations. First Nations have their own elected councils, governed by the Federal Indian Act<sup>17</sup> (note, this report does not encompass legislation related to the Métis or Inuit people). At the local level, municipalities can create a Protocol Agreement and / or a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that prioritizes joint government to government with an Indigenous government, work such as has been achieved in Squamish<sup>18</sup>. Based on the engagement that the District of Squamish organization has commenced with the MOU, openness to genuinely achieving truth and reconciliation exists in Squamish, as well as racism and the fear of losing private land. Leaders in local government, both staff and elected, need to base the community engagement and implementation of joint work in integrity, courage, patience and move at a pace that allows for the learning, information sharing and dispelling of fear.

### Develop Relationships through Cultural Learning

A critical way to advance learning, reduce fear and develop genuine trust is Indigenous cultural learning and integration into daily life. Integrating cultural practices into organizational life such as joint music or drumming sessions and incorporating blessings or cultural acknowledgements into leadership meetings can deepen mutual respect and strengthen relationships. These practices should not be symbolic but embedded in the rhythm of municipal operations, signaling a commitment to reconciliation and inclusivity.

**Knowledge Integration:** At the District of Squamish, we are in discussion with the Squamish Nation organization staff about how to create joint musical learning and practice. At the District of Squamish, we open meetings with a land acknowledgement; that we are working on the traditional and unceded territory of the Squamish Nation, though consistency of this cultural practice needs to improve. I am committed to adding a cultural learning

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<sup>17</sup> [Indian Act](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Memorandum of Understanding - District of Squamish - Hardwired for Adventure](#)



session to every organization leadership team meeting agenda. At the District of Squamish there is a staff position that is dedicated to Inclusion, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility including Truth and Reconciliation, who I will recommend support this practice as they work closely with the cultural ambassadors of the Squamish Nation.

### **Increase Capacity by Hiring Indigenous Employees**

Employment strategies also require attention. Hiring Indigenous employees within local government creates opportunities for authentic cultural exchange and informed decision-making. Dedicated funding and resources should support these efforts, ensuring that recruitment and retention strategies foster cultural safety and meaningful participation. This approach will increase organizational capacity and strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities.

**Knowledge Integration:** The proposed District of Squamish 2026-2035 Financial Plan includes a budget to resource an internal employee position dedicated to Indigenous relationships, supported by an operational budget to implement initiatives. Ideally this position will be filled by an Indigenous person. More budget is proposed as capacity funding for the Squamish Nation's organization. This capacity funding is to provide their organization with the resources to work with the District of Squamish on joint initiatives including cultural learning, Squamish community land use planning, land use referrals, archeological studies and joint infrastructure projects.

### **Build Economic Development and Collaboration through Joint Infrastructure**

Joint infrastructure projects, such as shared civic facilities or community safety infrastructure can serve as catalysts for Indigenous economic development and cultural connection. A co-located municipal hall and community building, for example, could provide space for council meetings of both governments, office space for both organizations, provision of shared services and community space for cultural gatherings, creating both practical efficiencies and unity.

**Knowledge Integration:** The District of Squamish currently works with the Squamish Nation on joint infrastructure projects to increase community safety and economic development. For example, flood protection diking infrastructure, and the Cheekeye Fan Debris Flow barrier. As the District of Squamish looks to rebuild its municipal facilities, collaborating with the Squamish Nation for co-location in community buildings will be pursued. For example, a new building to house offices, council chambers and community gathering spaces.

### **Provide a Safe and Inclusive Community through an Integrated Approach**

Community safety is a challenge that continues to grow as municipalities in British Columbia, across Canada and internationally, grapple with the vulnerable population related to homelessness and addiction. Particularly in a growing community such as Squamish, the balance to implement growth and address the vulnerable population that are a part of the community remains a technically and emotionally difficult problem to solve. The District of Squamish is working with community agencies and other levels of government to address these issues, however the problem continues to grow. Downtown businesses and residents are frustrated with homeless encampments, the related disruptions near homes and businesses and perceived lack of safety.



Establishing a centralized hub for safety personnel that brings together municipal bylaw officers, police, First Nations public safety teams<sup>19</sup>, and community outreach workers would improve coordination and visibility. Complementing this, a program modeled on Rotorua's Safe City Guardians could enhance the vibrancy and security of downtown areas. By providing a welcoming, approachable presence, such a program would support businesses, assist vulnerable individuals, and foster a sense of safety for all during the current housing crisis and into the future.

**Knowledge Integration:** In the District of Squamish, we currently work across agencies to both reactively and proactively create a safe and welcoming community. For example, the District of Squamish leases land to the local homeless shelter Under One Roof, and a Safe Opioid Consumption Site managed by the provincial health authority. A formal Community Roundtable brings police, all non profit and government agencies together to collaborate on managing homeless encampments, supporting the vulnerable population, liaising with the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Business Association and providing information to visitors. A longer-term recommendation is to research development of a Safe City Guardian Program and create a Community Safety Hub downtown.

These recommendations and planned knowledge integration aim to strengthen Indigenous relationships and governance, and create safer, more inclusive communities. They reflect the lessons learned in Aotearoa New Zealand and offer practical pathways for adaptation within British Columbia.

## Exchange Overview

As described above, the exchange began with a *pōwhiri* at Kai-a-te-mata *Marae*, a deeply moving welcome that set the tone for the visit. Learning the *waiata* (Māori songs) in advance allowed for my genuine participation and connection. The experience was marked by warmth, openness, and shared humour, and reflected the strong cultural foundations of MPDC's work. The exchange was bookended by the privilege of attending the Ngā Kawe Mate o Tainui Waka *Koroneihana* celebrations with MPDC staff and council members, part of the week long annual celebration of the accession of the Māori monarch. The Māori *Kiingitanga*<sup>20</sup> was established in 1858 to unite the Māori tribes, protect land rights and preserve Māori Culture. The *Kiingitanga* continues to provide cultural and political leadership and represents Māori interests domestically and internationally. In 2025, the *Koroneihana* was celebrating the 2024 coronation of Māori Queen Te Arikinui Kuīni Ngā Wai Hono i te Pō, during which she presented her first public address.

The full exchange itinerary is attached as Appendix 3. A summary is below:

- Attendance at MPDC Managers and Team Leaders workshop
- Attendance at MPDC Council meeting
- Touring MPDC facilities: Library and customer service centre in Morrinsville, Library, Council (municipal) building and public swimming pool infrastructure in Matamata, Mineral Pool Spas, Silver Fern Event Center, MPDC Council Chambers and Municipal Offices in Te Araoha.

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<sup>19</sup> [Public Safety - Squamish Nation](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Kiingitanga - Kiingitanga](#)

- Engagement with staff across departments, including senior leadership, facilities, governance, planning, communications and Māori cultural development.
- Engagement with Hamilton Waikato Tourism at Hobbiton (Lord of the Rings / Hobbit movies set).
- Touring neighbouring towns in the Waikata Region and meeting with key staff and council members: Rotorua Lakes (Innovative Community Safety) and Taupō (Joint Infrastructure with Maori).
- Participation in the Ngā Kawe Mate o Tainui Waka at the Koroneihana celebrations – a cultural highlight!
- Taituara Conference

## Conference Attended

Te Hui Taituarā 2025 “Impact Unleashed”

3-5 September Ōtautahi Christchurch

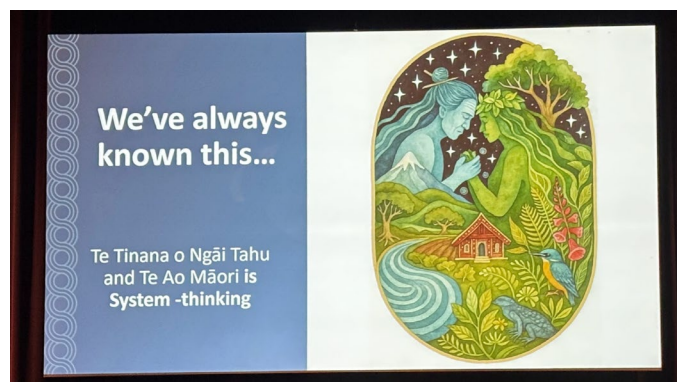
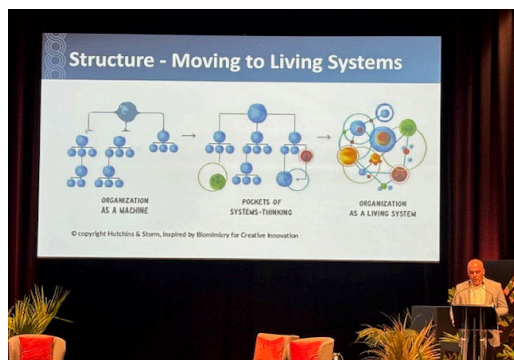


The conference was a comprehensive professional development experience that included captivating keynote speakers, immersive smaller working sessions, and networking. Learning highlights provided below.

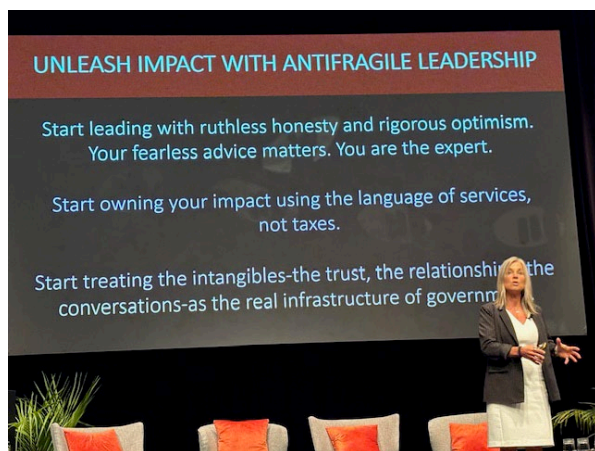
## Networking



**Keynote Speaker** Ben Bateman, CEO, [Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu](#) | Leadership & the Power of Purpose



**Keynote Speaker** Christina Bently, Former Mayor, Golden, BC | Antifragile Leadership



### Immersive Session | Arts and Culture Impact

A showcase of municipal projects that promoted community arts and culture, featuring Flare Ōtautahi Street Art Festival and the transformation of the Garden City (Ōtautahi Christchurch).



### Immersive Session | Mana Whenua Impact



A showcase of municipal projects that promote engagement with *mana whenua* (territorial rights, power from the land) featuring:

Far North District Council's Te Pae o Uta, providing staff with guidelines for improving inclusivity and responsiveness of Te Ao Māori in all aspects of work undertaken by Council. [Te Pae o Uta | Far North District Council](#) [Ka-Irihia-FINAL.pdf](#)





## Additional Learning

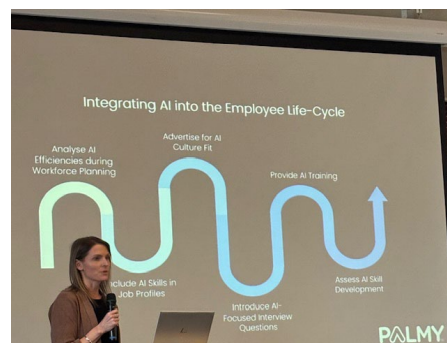
Infrastructure Pressures: Limited revenue and aging assets are common issues. “Sweat the Asset” is a term that can be used in the District of Squamish. It refers to stretching the use of a public facility long after its projected life because replacing it in the short term is not possible with current resources.

Increasing facility capacity: The MPDC upgraded municipal building includes a library that offers multi-use spaces for greater capacity use.



MPDC Library multipurpose room

Technology and Innovation: At the Association of Local Government Information Management<sup>21</sup> meeting in Hamilton, I learned forward thinking local government experts are leveraging AI and digital tools to improve service delivery.



<sup>21</sup> [ALGIM - Association of Local Government Information Management, NZ](#)

## **Conclusion and Acknowledgements**

LGMA Taituarā Overseas Manager Exchange was a professionally enriching and personally meaningful experience. Thank you to Taituarā and the Local Government Management Association of British Columbia for sponsoring such a valuable program. My sincere appreciation to the District of Squamish Council for endorsing my participation, and the team I am privileged to work there with who led the organization and managed the Squamish challenges during my absence.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Jenni Cochrane, the MPDC team, and all those who shared their time, knowledge, and hospitality. Your work and relationships have inspired me, and I look forward to applying these learnings in the District of Squamish, sharing them with colleagues throughout British Columbia and continuing the connection across borders.

Kia ora and mā te wā!



## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Exchange Reflections sent to Matamata-Piako District Council

#### Reflections from Squamish to Matamata-Piako: A Journey of Learning, Connection, and Gratitude

Kia ora MPDC whānau,

I'm writing this with a full heart and deep appreciation for the incredible experience I had through the Taituarā — Local Government Professionals Aotearoa Management Exchange program. From the moment I arrived, I felt welcomed not just as a visitor, but as a colleague and friend. My time with Matamata-Piako District Council was rich with learning, laughter, and meaningful connection—and I'm so grateful to each of you who made it so special.

The exchange was wonderfully balanced—comprehensive, engaging, and incredibly enjoyable—thanks to the thoughtful planning and hosting of my local government kindred spirit, **Jenni**. Jenni, you are an exceptional leader and a true gem in the local government sector. Your passion, insight, and kindness made every day of the exchange feel purposeful and joyful. I learned so much from and with you. I enjoyed that everyday was an adventure, and I'm so grateful for the friendship we've built.

The exchange began with the pōwhiri at the Kai-a-te-mata marae, a moment that will stay with me forever. I was humbled and touched by the warmth of the welcome and honoured to be invited into such a sacred space. Learning the waiata—thanks for sending it in advance, Jenni!—so I could genuinely participate was a highlight. It allowed me to connect more deeply with the ceremony and the people around me. This experience set the tone for the entire exchange: one of warmth, openness, shared humour, and respect.

My main learning objective was to understand how Māori culture and governance are woven into the fabric of local government in Aotearoa. Thanks to the generosity and insight of MPDC staff and Council, I was able to explore this in depth.

**Manaia**, thank you for including me in your Managers and Team Leaders Day workshop, and subsequently for the time your staff took to share their knowledge, teach, and learn with me. **Tuatahi**, the time you took to share the local Māori history and cultural practices was generous and patient, and I appreciated your grace as I took it all in—mispronunciations and all—and peppered you with questions. **Tayla**, your energy is infectious, and the MPDC team is fortunate to have you leading the learning of waiata and culture.

One-on-one time with **Councillor Gary Thompson** was deeply appreciated. Gary, your willingness to take the time to share your knowledge about Māori governance, Aotearoa legislation, and the socio-economic challenges facing communities was impressive. We discussed housing, business development, federal political impacts, and the importance of inclusive decision-making. **Councillor James Sainsbury**, our shared connection to Canada and the conversation about Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission report and outcomes helped link this learning across borders.

Our meeting with **Hinerangi Vaimoso, Chair** who also was generous with her time was both warm and insightful, and provided me a clearer understanding of the Te Manawhenua Forum and its formal representation of Māori within the MPDC.

**Mayor Adrienne Wilcock**, I appreciate you welcoming me to the Council meeting. I observed how the legislative systems and processes are very similar, and the challenging job of elected officials to meet a diverse community's needs is universal. A stark difference is the recent legislative change to water delivery and MPDC's decision to join Waikato Waters Ltd.

While touring MPDC facilities, I was struck by the similarities in our communities' challenges with the pressures to upgrade or replace infrastructure with limited revenue through rates. I learned a new phrase that will work well in Squamish: "sweating the asset." I was able to enjoy the calming and healing mineral spa at Te Aroha. For me, such a unique local government facility but one that cannot be replicated in Squamish unfortunately.

Tourism was another area of shared interest. Like Squamish, MPDC faces the challenge of encouraging visitors to stay longer and spend more locally—especially after visiting iconic attractions like Hobbiton. The conversation with Nicola Greenwell, Executive Director of Hamilton Waikato Tourism around tourism strategy and destination development were rich with ideas and parallels.

The exchange was beautifully bookended by the privilege of joining MPDC council and staff for the Ngā Kawe Mate o Tainui Waka at the Koroneihana. Being included in the powerful and emotional day, enjoying mutton bird and steamed pudding (thank you again, Tuatahi!), and spending one last day with MPDC colleagues—now friends—was the perfect conclusion to a journey filled with learning, connection, and cultural richness.

To everyone at MPDC who shared your time, knowledge, and hospitality—thank you. You've given me not only new ideas and insights, but also a renewed sense of purpose and connection. I return to Squamish inspired by your work, your relationships, and your unwavering commitment to community.


Kia ora and mā te wā!


Warmly,  
Linda Glenday


Chief Administrative Officer


District of Squamish, British Columbia


## Appendix 2: LinkedIn Post





 Home

 My Network

 Jobs

 Messaging

 Notifications




**Linda Glenday** ✓  
Chief Administrative Officer at District of Squamish  
Squamish, British Columbia  
District of Squamish

Grow your business and get ahead  
Rejoin Premium

Profile viewers 151  
Post impressions 4


Promote this post to reach people who matter to you. [Boost](#)

 **Linda Glenday** ✓ • You  
Chief Administrative Officer at District of Squamish  
3mo • Edited •

I recently had the incredible privilege of participating in the two-week Local Government Overseas Manager Exchange Program through the support of the British Columbia [Local Government Management Association \(LGMA\)](#), [Taituarā — Local Government Professionals Aotearoa](#) and the [District of Squamish](#). I return to Squamish with new insights, renewed purpose, and a deep appreciation for the power of international collaboration in local government.

My exchange with [Matamata-Piako District Council](#) in Aotearoa New Zealand was nothing short of transformative and I have brought back many learnings with me to Squamish as our community here continues to evolve. From the powerful pōwhiri at Kai-a-te-mata Marae to deep conversations about Māori governance and cultural integration, community infrastructure and tourism, every moment was rich with learning and connection. I was welcomed not just as a visitor, but as a colleague and friend. A heartfelt thank you to the [Matamata-Piako District Council](#) team for your warmth, generosity, and leadership. Your dedication to authentic partnership with iwi, innovation in service delivery, and community well-being is truly inspiring. A special shout out to my kindred local government spirit and host during this exchange, [Jenni Cochrane](#). Jenni is an incredible individual, a passionate leader in local government, and now a 'rest of my lifelong' friend.

To everyone who shared their time, knowledge, and hospitality: Ngā mihi nui.  
📷 Photos from the exchange below  
Kia ora and mā te wā!

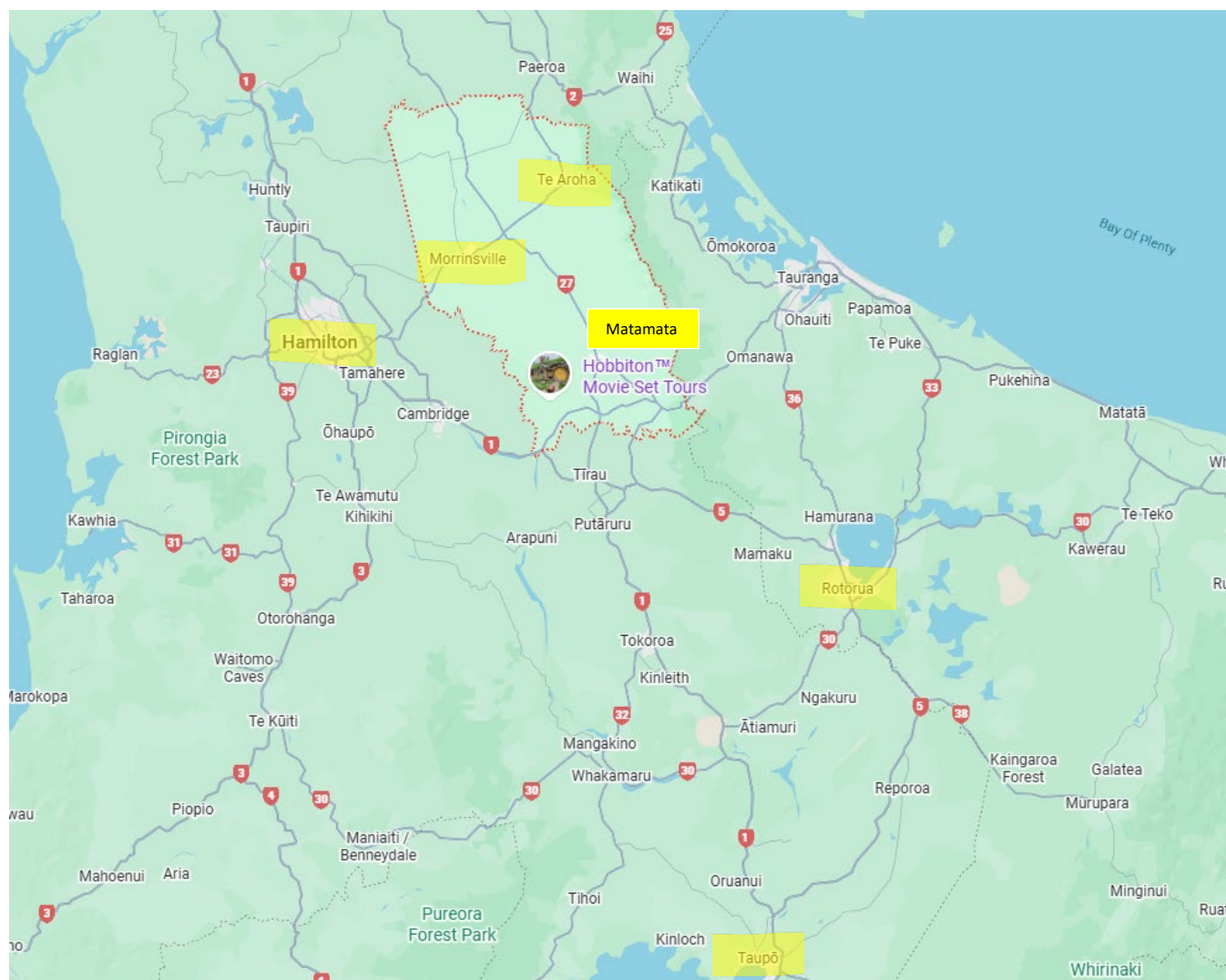


### Appendix 3: Aotearoa New Zealand Exchange 2025 – Linda Glenday Itinerary

Date	Activity	Time	Place	With	Status
Wednesday 20 August	Linda arrives in Auckland	5:45am			confirmed
Thursday 21 August	Jen picking up Linda from Auckland  Pōwhiri at Kai-a-te-mata marae in Morrinsville	Pōwhiri from 2-4pm	Waihi Beach / Kai-a-te-mata marae in Morrinsville	Jenni, Tuatahi	Confirmed
Friday 22 August	MPDC Managers & Team Leaders Day	8.30am - 3pm	Silver Fern Farms Event Centre, Te Aroha		confirmed
Saturday 23 August					
Sunday 24 August					
Monday 25 August	District tour - visit significant sites	8am - 5pm	MPDC	Jenni, Linda, Tuatahi & Tayla, Kelly, Melanie, Nathan +1 (Policy), Jamie, Toka	confirmed
Tuesday 26 August	ETeam meeting 8.30-9am Travel ALGIM Regional meet up – 10-3 Travel – 3-4pm		Hamilton		confirmed
Wednesday 27 August	<b>AM</b> - Council meeting. Observe formal meeting, Linda to observe/participate in Q&A		Te Aroha		confirmed
	<b>PM</b> - Meeting with Gary Thompson - Māori Ward Councillor	After council meeting	Te Aroha	Gary & Jenni	confirmed
Thursday 28 August	<b>AM</b> - Meeting Nicola Greenwell, Hamilton Waikato Tourism at Hobbiton Movie set café - 9am Hobbiton tour + Lunch – 10.10am				Confirmed
	<b>PM</b> 2pm Meeting with Hinerangi Vaimoso - Chair of Te Manawhenua Forum Practical example of working with council (waters consent)			Hinerangi, Tuatahi and Jenni	Confirmed

Date	Activity	Time	Place	With	Status
Friday 29 August	<b>AM</b> – Travel to Rotorua		Tauranga		Confirmed
	<b>PM</b> - Rotorua Council visit - Meet with Peniel re homelessness Meet with Mihi re safety strategy.	2-4pm	Rotorua council	Mihi and Kylie	confirmed
Saturday 30 August	Mountain biking & sightseeing in Rotorua				confirmed
Sunday 31 August	Travel to Taupo		Taupo		confirmed
Monday 1 September	<b>AM</b> - free time in Taupo		Taupo		confirmed
	<b>PM</b> - Taupo Council visit - meet with Tony Hale and Tuwharetoa - He Whare Hono o Tūwharetoa visit	12.30 - 2pm		Tony and Jenni	confirmed
	Drive/return to Waihi Beach				confirmed
Tuesday 2 September	Koroneihana (coronation celebration of the Māori Queen): <i>Councils across the Waikato have been invited to collectively attend on Tuesday 2 September for the 'Ngā Kawe Mate o Tainui Waka.'</i> <i>This day has been identified as an opportunity for local authorities to acknowledge and strengthen relationships with the Kīngitanga, iwi, hapū and marae within the Tainui waka rohe.</i>	8am meet at Waikato DC offices (yikes, early start!)		Kelly, Tuatahi, Tayla, Manaia	confirmed
	PM - Travel to Christchurch, fly from Hamilton	4.55pm departure			confirmed
Wednesday 3 September	Taituarā conference				confirmed
Thursday 4 September	Taituarā conference				confirmed
Friday 5 September	Taituarā conference				confirmed
Saturday 6 September	Linda returns to Canada				confirmed

#### Appendix 4: Exchange Locations



Matamata-Piako District, North Island, Aotearoa New Zealand -----

**Municipalities visited** during the Exchange