

PUKE ARIKI

“How do you successfully brand a new and controversial public institution but avoid the ‘Te Papa’ syndrome?”

New Plymouth District Council’s decision to develop a multi-million dollar state of the art library, museum and information centre had caused heated public debate.

A consultative brand development process was required to minimise the potential for controversy.

Link the past, present and future: A new Museum/Library/Visitor Information Centre and Museum venture in Taranaki – Puke Ariki – needed to clearly brand and launch itself, as well as engage a diverse range of ages, cultures and interest if it was to be a success. The unifying idea of ‘discovery’ was vital to unifying funders, local iwi, the council, community groups, staff and other stakeholders in the first instance, and ultimately the local and tourism market in Taranaki. Six years on the museum is growing stronger than ever year by year. It is definitely part of Taranaki’s past, present and future.



The Challenge

Built on the revitalised New Plymouth waterfront, Puke Ariki is a unique experience where library, museum and visitor information centre merge. When it opened in late 2003 it was considered the first resource of its kind worldwide. The Council’s original vision for the Puke Ariki was brave and built on two foundations:

1. Create a new, state of the art way of providing information and heritage services.
2. In so doing create a regional icon to house and foster Taranaki’s past, present and future.

In developing the brand the principal challenges were:

- Winning buy-in from a wide range of stakeholders including councillors, staff, iwi, community groups and eight corporate/regional authority sponsors who had made significant contributions. A key part of the brief was the goal of avoiding controversy i.e. the “Te Papa syndrome”, where media coverage around the cost of the brand’s development and the very nature of the institution’s logo marred the launch.
- Reflecting the diversity of the region, its people, its history, its current vibrancy and its positive vision for the future in a ‘unifying’ brand.

The Solution

The first step was working with the client team to develop a robust project plan. It was agreed up front that sound process and well facilitated stakeholder consultation would be required to ensure community buy-in. This involved:

- Working with a small and proactive client team committed to making and standing by strategic and creative decisions.
- Using DNA’s methodology to develop a compelling and differentiated brand strategy.
- Agreement that the brand should be brave enough to achieve its goals without alienating the stakeholder group or the broader community.
- Committing to several rounds of stakeholder consultation

(groups of 30+), including an initial education session on brand to get everyone on the same page.

- Agreement up front that the client would pro-actively manage stakeholder expectations regarding input and feedback during the process.

Initial work-shopping with the project team identified that Puke Ariki achieves two quite different goals. On one hand it is a world class centre of research and learning excellence. But it also functions on multiple levels for everyone in the community. This ‘highbrow/lowbrow challenge’ fed into the brand strategy and the core promise - **Empowering and Inclusive: Barefoot Wisdom.**

Concept development then included:

Logo – the idea of different and sometimes incompatible elements coming together to create something extraordinary was captured in a design reflecting the grit, mana, pride and value of the Taranaki persona.

Horizon Line – Puke Ariki working on multiple levels and being the place where past, present and future merge.

Strap-line – This Is Us

Supporting Statement Graphics – Taranaki and Past, Present, Future

People Imagery, Typography, Colour Palette – bringing the brand to life in a dynamic way.

Brand Application – referencing the idea of discovery and Puke Ariki’s surprising depth of resources through imaginative application across an extensive range of formats.

Sub-Branding – naming and branding of Vivid - Puke Ariki’s retail outlet.

The Result

The key outcome was capturing Puke Ariki’s unique and exciting personality in way that worked effectively for all its varied audiences. It was clear from the first stakeholder meeting that both the brand and the thinking behind it had struck the right chord. While brave and emotive, there was unanimous buy-in and a real sense of excitement about the spirit of Puke Ariki’s visual expression.

The rest of the consultative process went just as well. This was mirrored in the successful opening of Puke Ariki. The brand was received very favourably and crucially there was absolutely no controversy. Soon after Puke Ariki won two major Creative New Zealand awards:

- Strategic Arts Initiative Category
- The Premier Creative Places Award

In October 2008 Puke Ariki celebrated its fifth birthday. During the celebrations it was acknowledged what a key role it has played in focusing the community and functioning as ‘the new heart of Taranaki’. Over this period the brand has worked hard with little change or evolution and it continues to provide an effective articulation of what Puke Ariki is and what it stands for.

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