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DEVELOPMENT OF BICULTURAL POLICY

for

THE AUCKLAND MUSEUM.

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requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

In common with the indigenous peoples of North America, Māori have undergone processes of colonisation that dispossessed them of their lands and diminished their cultures. Museums were institutions developed to house the material culture of the indigenous peoples dispossessed by the colonisers. Their interpretation of Māori culture, constructed in isolation from the people who had crafted the taonga, became primary sources of information about Māori.

Throughout the last three decades of the twentieth century Māori have noticeably engaged in a reaffirmation and rejuvenation of their culture. In those thirty years, there has been significant change in society - a growing awareness and recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi as fundamental to the polity of Aotearoa New Zealand. This has impacted on museums as Māori assert the rights guaranteed them by the Treaty of Waitangi.

Auckland Museum is one of the four major museums in Aotearoa New Zealand. It houses arguably the most extensive and significant collection of taonga in the world. To date, it is the only museum whose legislation includes reference to the Treaty of Waitangi and provision for a Māori governance body. This thesis examines the effectiveness of those statutory provisions and documents the progress of Māori involvement in Auckland Museum since the Auckland War Memorial Museum Act 1996 became effective. Developments amongst the indigenous peoples of North America in relation to museums, and the bicultural stance of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa are reviewed by way of comparison and example of bicultural policy development for Auckland Museum.

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