Introduction

This book is called Choice. 'Choice' is a word that has two meanings in New Zealand. One meaning is to decide on an action or an option. The other, more informal, meaning is ‘good, great, excellent’. "It's choice!"

Choice is expressed here as Whiriwhiria. 'Whiri' is the word which means 'choice' in Māori. It also means 'plait', and the two meanings are thought to originate from the constant choices made as weavers selected each thread to plait together. It's a great image of the way different people and cultures draw together to create New Zealand society.

Eleven people who chose New Zealand citizenship share their inspirational stories with us. They have come to New Zealand from many different parts of the world, each with a unique story of why they have chosen to call New Zealand home. The words they use tell us there is more to citizenship than a simple calculation of personal advantage.

These are the words of people who are making New Zealand stronger through diversity. They are maintaining international links, retaining pride in their origins, and committing to their new country. In becoming citizens, the threads of their traditions, cultures and languages join with those of all other New Zealanders to build a future for us all, and further strengthen New Zealand's place in the world.

We thank all those who contributed to this book, and all new citizens for your contribution to New Zealand. We hope you will keep this book as a memento of your citizenship ceremony, and share it with others in your family and community who may be considering becoming New Zealand citizens.

There is information in this book about New Zealand, New Zealanders and our history and society. We are indebted to the Ministry for Culture and Heritage for their contribution and there is further information available at their website www.mch.govt.nz.

You can also find more information about citizenship at www.citizenship.govt.nz and in Te Ara, the online encyclopedia of New Zealand: http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/citizenship.

"I was reminded of how much this country had given me and how I was determined to pay that back"

"It makes me feel strong and proud to be a New Zealander"

"I wanted to show my commitment to New Zealand"

"At that moment, getting my citizenship, New Zealand truly felt like home"

"I now have a stronger sense of belonging here"

"I didn't want to have a foot in both countries"

"I wanted to have a permanent base here and to feel I belonged"
Whiri means choice or plait and draws to mind the saying of the first Māori King Pōtatau te Wherowhero. It is now widely quoted as a saying symbolising unity in diversity. He said:

“Kotahi te kōhao o te ngira. E kuhuna ai te miro ma te miro whero me te miro pango. A muri i a au kia mau ki te ture, ki te whakapono, ki te aroha. Hei aha te aha! Hei aha te aha!”

“There is only one eye of the needle, through which white, black and red threads must pass. Hold fast to the law, hold fast to faith, hold fast to love, Forsake all else!”

Further information available at www.kiingitanga.com