

Week 3 Lessons 2 & 3:

Migration, Cultural Diversity & New Zealand



Objective: To introduce the topic of migration and cultural diversity to understand it within the context of recent global events involving mass migrations.

As you read through this lesson, write down the definitions of any words you do not understand.

There are many different definitions for this word. Here are a few:

- The seasonal movement of animals from one region to another.
- The movement of people from one place to another.
- The movement of people across a specified boundary for the purpose of establishing a new home.
- The movement of an object (the house migrated 3 feet after the flood).
- The infection migrated to his liver, making him feel unwell.

In this unit, we will use a simple definition of migration as the movement of people from one country to another to find work, better living conditions and a new, permanent home.¹ Having migrants arrive in a country like New Zealand has many **benefits**. Some invest money and create new businesses which provide jobs. Others bring with them skills that are in demand such as in IT (Information Technology) or engineering. They also bring religious and cultural diversity. New Zealand has people from virtually every country in the world. It also has a long history of welcoming people from different parts of the globe who have contributed to making it a better place. Mission Heights Junior College is a good example. We have students from many different cultural backgrounds. They make our school an exciting, interesting place to be. So long as no one tries to force their beliefs on others, and they do not advocate hurting others, our College is willing to accept people from any country or religious belief. Some Kiwis are worried that the government is taking in too many migrants. However, it is worth noting that about one in four Kiwis were born overseas, and the other 75% were **descendants** of people who came from other countries.²

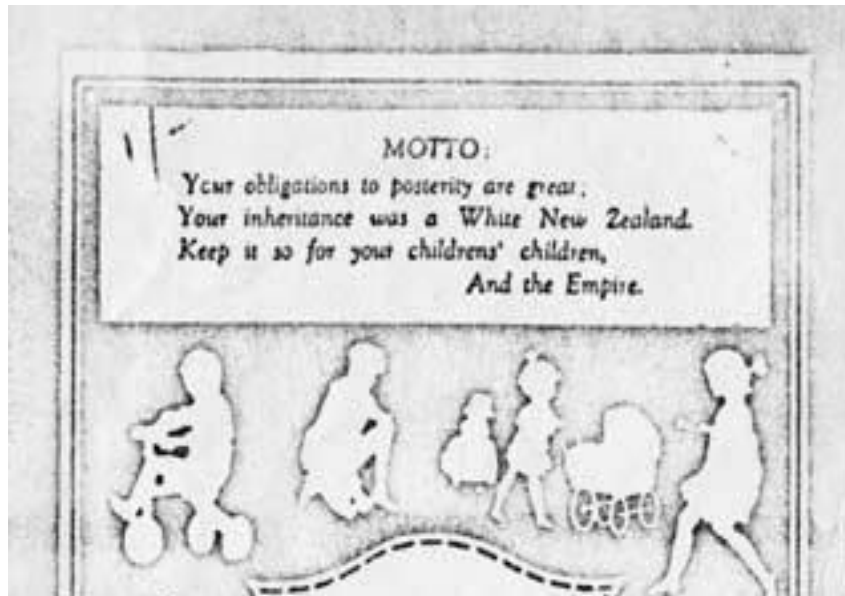
While this unit will focus on migration in New Zealand history, we will begin by placing this topic in global perspective. In recent years, there has been an **upsurge** in the number of migrants fleeing certain countries to escape poverty and war, especially in parts of Africa and in the Middle East. Countries in Europe, Africa and the Middle East have been especially hard hit by the migrant crisis because it is located nearby and many walk to their borders or make the dangerous journey in unsafe boats. In New Zealand, we have not been impacted as much because we are surrounded by water, and people have to fly in or reach here by boat. New Zealand has largely escaped the migrant crisis largely due to its geographical **isolation**. We are surrounded by ocean. While many of these migrants are poor and want to make a better life for themselves and their

children. Some migrants fall under the category of **refugees**. These are people who have been forced to flee their country because of war, **persecution**, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear that if they go back to their home country they would be in danger of being killed or arrested because of their religion, race, **nationality**, political opinion or membership in a particular group.

The Fear of Migrants

Today some people are afraid of migrants and refugees. There is a fear that they will bring with them high rates of crime, violence and illegal activity, or they will take our jobs and change our national values. The fear of foreigners is known as **xenophobia**. It comes from the Greek word *xenos* (strange) and *phobos* (fear). It literally means fear of strangers. In this sense, 'strangers' refers to people from foreign countries. Human beings have a natural tendency to fear foreigners: people from other countries who may have strange beliefs and customs. Of course, these customs are strange because we are not familiar with them. However, if we had grown up their shoes (assuming they wear shoes), it would be seen as normal. From time to time, every country experiences periods of exaggerated fear of foreigners migrating to their country and causing problems. New Zealand is no different. For instance during latter 1800s, there was a widespread fear of Chinese goldminers, especially in the Otago region where many of them worked. During the 1920s and 30s, a great fear swept across the country over the threat posed by immigrants from India and China. After it was reported that a small number of "Asiatics" – people from Asia, especially India and China, were having babies with Māori women. People worried that New Zealand society was going to fall apart if it continued. One New Zealand Member of Parliament, William Reeves (1857-1932) referred to Asians as a race or 'dirty' people of low intelligence who lacked morals (a sense of right and wrong).

On December 2, 1925, the editor of the *The Franklin Times* (a South Auckland newspaper) wrote that "the Hindoo (meaning people from India)...forms the danger point.... The great majority of the Hindoos we have are... a cowardly race, who never fought for themselves or anyone else... The people we get are the lowest **classes**... from the towns and farm labourers from the country." Fearful that the country would soon be overrun by these newcomers, that same year a group of European farmers and business owners formed The White New Zealand League to keep the New Zealand 'white' and stop all Asian migrants from coming into the country. Shortly after forming, the League sent letters to 200 local governing bodies across the country asking for their support. One hundred and sixty responded positively. Again, it is important to emphasize that most countries have a far worse record of treating migrants than Kiwis, but it is important to acknowledge that this is part of our history. It is also important to understand that up until the 1950s, people were taught in schools that there were **superior** and **inferior** races, and that people of European background were at the top of the scale, while Māori, Indian and Chinese people were less evolved.



A pamphlet from the White New Zealand League

It is also important to understand that the fear of people from different races is real, but 'race' itself is a myth. There is no such thing. People who believe that one race is superior to another are known as racists, and while their actions are real and harmful, their ideas are not grounded in science any more than if someone believed in the Easter Bunny or Santa Claus. If you believe, it is real to you, but they are still imaginary beings. For instance, there is no such thing as a full-blooded Māori or any 'pure' race. This is not an opinion. It is a scientific fact. Human DNA is 99.9% identical. There is only one race in the world: the human race. Jews, Muslims, Christians, Africans, Asians and Europeans all originate from the same genetic stock. When completing this chapter, it is vital to understand this as you move through it. Instead of race, it is more appropriate to refer to people by their ethnic group. 'American' or 'Kiwi' are not ethnic groups, they are nationalities and refer to the nations from where they originate. Examples of ethnic groups would be Irish, German, Jewish, Italian, Chinese. It does not refer to a religion or a political belief. For example, a Muslim is not an ethnic group.

Homework: In your books, list 5 ethnic groups that have not been mentioned in this lesson.

Extension: Create a mini poster on a page in your book extolling the importance of cultural diversity.

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1. While I write "humans and animals," from the standpoint of biology, humans are a form of animal.
 2. Fallow, Brian (2015). "Busting Winston Peters' Immigration Myths." *New Zealand Herald*, June 26.