

# Cultural Capability Handbook —

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Ensuring culturally specific stories are represented on screen with accuracy and authenticity in Aotearoa New Zealand.

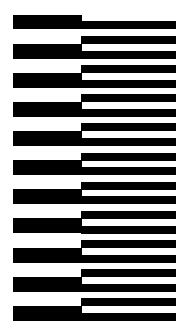
# He waka eke noa —

# We are all in this endeavour together

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Māori are tangata whenua, the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa. Māori have a Treaty relationship with the Crown, which means this bicultural relationship is a foundation for all diversity and inclusion considerations. Other cultural groups are manuhiri/visitors, with all the respect and responsibilities that entails. Pacific peoples have a special relationship with Māori through whakapapa/genealogy and voyaging traditions but are still considered manuhiri in Aotearoa today.

We acknowledge traditional guardians – past, present and future.



# In this Handbook —

Introduction	— 3
Acknowledgements	— 3
Why have we developed this resource, and who is it for?	— 4
Who are we?	— 4
How did we develop this Handbook?	— 5
Scope	— 5
Key principles	— 5
Partnerships	— 6
Consultation and Consent	— 6
Story Sovereignty	— 7
Ownership & Intellectual Property	— 7
Cultural Safety	— 7
Cultural Advisors	— 8
Diversity & Inclusion Policies	— 8
Specific cultural considerations	— 9
Research & Development	— 12
Production	— 13
Post-production	— 16
Release & marketing	— 17
Summary	— 18
Additional Resources	— 19

# Introduction —

**Aotearoa’s diverse and vibrant production industry is expanding to include a wider range of stories on our screens. Our domestic funding agencies, distribution platforms, training organisations and industry guilds have been working hard to ensure that Māori, Pasifika, Pan-Asian and other culturally specific stories are represented on screen with accuracy and authenticity, alongside New Zealand European/ Pākehā projects.**

**In this rich landscape, questions arise about how to approach screen projects with culturally diverse content and characters, how to engage with the communities represented on screen, and who has the right and authority to tell culturally specific stories.**

This Cultural Capability Handbook (the “Handbook”) encourages those questions to be asked safely and constructively, to foster better communication, strengthen collaboration, and enhance our ability to create excellent, authentic screen productions.

Spada hopes this information is helpful for domestic productions and for international projects with culturally diverse content.

## **Acknowledgements**

Many people assisted in the process of developing this Handbook. Spada would like to thank the producers who shared their stories with us. Thank you to Karin Williams for her leadership, writing and editing, and to Melanie Rakena for her thorough research and writing. Thanks to Spada President Irene Gardiner, Executive Director Sandy Gildea, Communications Coordinator Ness Simons and Spada’s Diversity & Inclusion Sub-Committee.

We are grateful to Ngā Aho Whakaari and Pan-Asian Screen Collective for their input, thoughts, and support for the development of this handbook. We’d also like to thank NZ On Air for its generous financial support.

**If you have any feedback please email them through to [office@spada.co.nz](mailto:office@spada.co.nz).**

## Why have we developed this resource, and who is it for?

Aotearoa is home to a diverse array of cultures and cultural protocols, and it's up to you to learn about them before you begin. While commonsense, respect and courtesy are invaluable, taking specific steps to understand and honour correct protocols on set and off will help your production run smoothly and ensure positive outcomes for everyone involved.

There are many examples of screen productions where differences in worldviews, gaps in understanding, and not following correct protocols on set or at other stages of the production process has led to cultural harm. This can be offensive and distressing for people working on the project. It may also cost time and money when disputes must be resolved, and problems fixed. It can lead to productions screening with cultural inaccuracies and inauthentic depictions, which also means that as storytellers we're letting our audiences down.

What are some of the fundamentals you should know? What should you do? What should you not do? Where do you go for help? It's about getting the groundwork right, respecting the people and cultures you're working with, being open and transparent, and asking for help if you need it.

The Handbook seeks to provide that information, guidance, resources and support for producers, productions, companies and other industry organisations and practitioners working on screen projects with content, characters, and people from cultural backgrounds outside their own lived experience. In general, this means European/Pākehā people and teams working on projects about other cultures and communities.

## Who are we?

Spada represents screen producers in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our remit is to promote, represent and advance the professional standards of producers, and to advocate for a robust and sustainable domestic screen production industry.

Producers are responsible for implementing and adhering to legislation and establishing policies, rules and guidelines for their companies and productions. They manage budgets to implement these practices and mitigate any problems. They set the tone and provide leadership both on-set and off-set. Producers are the people who put out the fires in case of trouble. The buck stops with them!

While producers can't solve all the problems for everyone, their role is key when it comes to leading by example and sharing information that furthers knowledge and understanding in our industry.

## How did we develop this Handbook?

Spada began this work in response to industry concerns about representation, authenticity and stereotyping, and the potential for cultural harm during the funding, development and production process. Practitioners have also raised issues around intellectual property, ownership, and rights to tell stories, depict characters, and use locations from specific cultures.

This Handbook is based on interviews with industry practitioners with experience in cross-cultural collaborations. Some had successful partnerships with positive results. Others, unfortunately, learned the hard way what not to do.

Spada researched best practice and protocols here and overseas, and we consulted with screen organisations representing diverse communities. Some of these contacts and resources are provided at the end of this Handbook.

## Scope

This Handbook covers culturally diverse productions in Aotearoa New Zealand, including Māori, Pacific, Pan-Asian and other non-Pākehā/NZ European communities including MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American, African). While the Handbook's principles and guidance may be relevant to various diverse communities — including the LGBTQIA+ community, differently-abled individuals, and people of various faiths — its primary focus is on ethnic communities and their unique cultural considerations.

Please note that the language used to describe these communities and issues is constantly evolving, and that one label or definition may not capture the complexity of diversity and inclusion. This also acknowledges that Pākehā/European productions are another aspect of diversity and inclusion.

## Key principles —

If your production has content or characters from a cultural background outside your own lived experience, ask yourself the following questions:

- Why do I want to tell this story?
- Is it ok for me to tell this story?
- Do I have the right to tell this story?
- In what role might I best serve this project?
- Who else could I bring on to best realise this story?
- Do I have permission to speak, write, record, or represent that person or culture?
- Am I being respectful of this person, family, group, tribe, or culture?
- Am I appropriating some else's story or culture?
- Am I accidentally giving the wrong impression about this person, family, group, tribe, or culture?
- Is my project reinforcing stereotypes or being disrespectful, such as linking indigenous people to violent crime and/or portraying minorities as victims?

## Partnerships

True partnerships are built on mutual respect, fairness, clear communication, power sharing, and equitable economic and creative control. In any collaboration, it's important to meet early on to define roles and expectations, and to establish how all parties will contribute to the project throughout its duration.

Established production companies frequently partner with new and emerging screen practitioners, offering expertise, guidance, infrastructure, and reassurance to funders that the project will be well-managed. This can be a valuable opportunity for less-experienced creators to tell their stories, gain screen credits, and bring fresh perspectives to established companies. However, it can also create an uneven power dynamic where the production company holds all the rights and controls key decisions.

If you plan to partner with practitioners from other cultures, ask these basic questions:

- **Is this an equitable partnership?**
- **What is the power dynamic?**
- **Who makes creative decisions?**
- **Who gets the economic benefit?**
- **Whose bank account does the money go into?**
- **Who is holding the pen?**
- **Who is looking through the lens?**
- **Who gets the credits?**
- **Is it appropriate for me to take a key creative role on this production?**

The *Best Practice Guide for Writers and Producers Working Together*, created by Spada and the NZ Writers Guild, is a valuable resource to support the development of robust and successful creative collaborations.

— Download the **Best Practice Guide for Writers and Producers Working Together** [here](#)

## Consultation and Consent

Best practice is to consult, collaborate and cooperate with people on any projects that include stories, characters, cast and crew from their communities. The depth of the consultation process will be reflected in the quality of the final product. Sometimes consultation alone is not enough, and a project will require consent, usually in written form.

- **Consultation** means sharing knowledge and opinions, being willing to listen, and making changes if that's the right thing to do. This may include consulting with the wider community, such as hapū/clan or iwi/tribe.
- **Consent** means obtaining informed permission based on a relationship of trust. Everyone should be clear about the production process, timelines, contract details, benefits, impacts and future uses of the material being licensed, and the stories being told.

## Story Sovereignty

Story sovereignty means telling your story on your own terms without undue outside influence. It means having control over your work, your narrative, your point of view.

This concept has gained momentum in Māori, Pacific, Indigenous, Asian, Rainbow and other communities as writers and filmmakers seek greater autonomy over their stories and images. People outside those communities may work alongside the key creatives with clear intentions, roles, and communication.

## Ownership & Intellectual Property

Don't assume that a story is free for anyone to use simply because it's fictional or in the public domain. Some producers in the past have claimed that traditional stories, like myths and legends, are New Zealand stories that belong to everyone. While this may be true in the European legal sense (upon which our copyright law is based), these stories may also be ancestral or tribal, holding deep significance for descendants connected by lineage or place.

Errors can be compounded when the source material was compiled or written by someone from outside that culture. For example, early anthropologists, missionaries, and writers may have incorrectly recorded or interpreted cultural stories which have entered the mainstream.

One way around this is to fictionalise characters, settings, locations, and storylines based on real or historical events. But again, it's important to ensure the cultural aspects are authentic and correct. It's up to you to do your due diligence to figure out where the story comes from, who it belongs to, who is associated with it, and how you need to get permissions.

## Cultural Safety

Cultural safety is about creating a working environment which is safe for all participants by respecting cultural and social differences. This includes self-determination, equity, participation in decision-making, respect for and protection of culture, and non-discrimination.

Productions have caused unwitting and inadvertent harm by disregarding cultural protocols they may not be aware of. What you don't know can hurt you and others, so always take steps to understand relevant cultural protocols and traditions at every stage of your project. Ignorance is never an acceptable excuse.

Examples of problematic issues include:

- **Insensitive depiction of kōiwi/human remains**
- **Inaccurate depiction of tā moko/tatau/tattoo**
- **Requiring child actors to perform roles, dialogue or actions which could be considered offensive by their families and communities**
- **Misuse of cultural items such as lamps, mats, clothing and jewellery**
- **Disrespecting elders by not following protocols around meals or prayers**
- **Making insensitive and inappropriate remarks about others' cultures.**



## Cultural Advisors

Cultural advisors can guide the entire production process, helping to ensure authenticity, monitor cultural subtleties and making sure everyone is on the right track. Cultural advisors should be more than “box tickers”. They need the experience, knowledge, credits, and authority to provide sound advice and make judgement calls. Ideally, cultural advisors would come on board early in the development stage to support planning and avoid pitfalls.

Culture may be specific and may differ between family, village, tribe, island, and nationality. For example, a Māori person from Te Arawa may not be familiar with specific tikanga and protocols from Kāi Tahu. A Pasifika person of Tongan heritage may not have expertise on Rarotongan culture. Ensure your advisor is the right person for the job.

Cultural advisors cannot represent their entire community, tribe, village, or nation – even if they are a spokesperson for an organisation or entity. They can only provide their own personal perspective, based on their own experience. Others may have different opinions, and the audience will always be the final judge.

When collaborating with a qualified cultural advisor, consider:

- **Does this person have specific cultural competency and authority to provide advice on your project?**
- **What experience do they have in the screen industry?**
- **Do they have expertise in assessing production needs and providing feedback?**
- **Do they have authority to make decisions to be implemented by the production?**
- **Does the budget include fair and equitable rates?**
- **Does the schedule include enough time for their work to be effective?**
- **Is their involvement significant enough that they should earn a producer credit?**

## Diversity & Inclusion Policies

Most screen funding agencies have diversity and inclusion policies in place. These may offer guidance and resourcing, but productions should always do their own due diligence or develop their own in-house policies to embed these practices. A lot of production companies have developed diversity and inclusion policies over the years, so research what other practitioners have put in place to support best practice across the sector.

# Specific cultural considerations —

## Māori

Aotearoa has an acclaimed indigenous screen production industry with enormous breadth and depth of expertise. Led by 20th Century pioneers like Barry Barclay, Merata Mita and Don Selwyn, our Māori screen whakapapa/heritage encompasses several generations of practitioners who are creating internationally acclaimed factual programming, documentaries, drama series and feature films.

If your production plans to incorporate aspects of Māori culture, such as artwork or symbols, it's important to respect intellectual property rights and understand how any assets should or shouldn't be used in accordance with tikanga. Make sure to get approval by seeking permissions and, if appropriate, offer fair compensation.

### Locations / Sites of Significance

During the development phase, it's crucial to do your research on your filming locations. Consider the land you are planning to shoot on. Do you know the tribal significance of that land? Who is the iwi/tribe and hapū/clans of the area? Do you understand the cultural significance and importance of that whenua? If your location happens to be a site of significance to Māori, request a hui/meeting to discuss your project. Listen to what people have to say, understand their values and be clear about what your project is all about. Building these relationships is critical.

You may also need to get permissions from agencies like the Department of Conservation, local councils, or other landowners. Locations may have overlapping jurisdictions with multiple stakeholders, which can lead to conflicting rules, regulations and requirements.

When your production takes place on culturally significant private land, it's essential to talk directly with the landowners. Establish access agreements that respect their rules and requests and include provisions to ensure protection of both the land and its cultural significance.

Allow time in the schedule for the crew to attend a pōwhiri/welcome if necessary. Where appropriate, start the day with a karakia/prayer. This should be arranged in advance with the appropriate people. Don't assume that Māori team members are the right people to lead these protocols – check in advance.

## Pacific

**The terms “Pacific” or “Pasifika” (Pacific immigrants in Aotearoa) encompass hundreds of islands and dozens of cultures, each of which are different and are not interchangeable. If your project includes Pacific characters or stories, it’s important to observe and respect cultural protocols of the specific Island cultures involved.**

For example, a Samoan actor recounted an incident where the art department was laying down mats for a scene, however the fine mats they were using were ceremonial and not meant for standing on, which made the Samoan actors feel uncomfortable walking on them. After they expressed their concerns, the art department changed the mats.

Cast respectfully and avoid stereotypes, such as reinforcing portrayals of Pacific Islanders as poor, uneducated, working-class, or criminal. Be aware that Pacific people may represent not only themselves as individuals but also their families, communities, and home islands. Their portrayals on screen can have real consequences not just for their careers but for their personal lives and wider communities.

Pacific actors may feel uncomfortable playing roles outside their own culture, for example a Samoan actor playing a Niuean character. This can and does happen, but it requires clear communication and robust discussion during the casting process.

Respecting community elders is essential in Pacific cultures. When elders are part of your production, allow additional time and effort to prioritise their comfort. For example, a producer or senior team member could meet them and take time to explain what’s going on. Failure to value their involvement could make younger cast members feel uncomfortable and unsafe.

While many Pacific peoples are part of religious communities, not all Pacific people are comfortable or capable of leading prayers or other cultural protocols. Again, it’s important to check in advance and line up the right person for the job, with appropriate compensation if necessary.

## Pan-Asian

**Pan-Asian communities in Aotearoa encompass hundreds of different communities and cultures. Asians are not a monolith; each culture has unique protocols and etiquette. Asian stories and characters are not interchangeable and it’s important that storytellers aim for authentic portrayals that represent the diversity of Asian cultures in a respectful manner.**

When casting, avoid stereotypes and clichés, such as the one-dimensional “dragon lady”, drug lord or academic nerd. To tell an authentic story, everyday practices and norms should be depicted accurately. For instance, the NZ McDonald’s ad that showed a Chinese family wearing shoes inside their home is an unrealistic representation.

It’s crucial to create a safe and supportive environment that encourages open conversation. Pan-Asian cultures often seek to avoid conflict or disputes, so discomfort among production staff, crew, or cast may go unvoiced to be amenable and avoid embarrassment.

For example, when shooting in a Pan-Asian residence, and it is not possible for shoes to be removed for safety reasons, crew should wear shoe coverings. When filming in Pan-Asian restaurants, some foods may look or smell unusual to production staff and crew. It is crucial to be considerate and avoid making disparaging remarks or noises. Common Asian foods, such as balut, chicken feet or durian may be unfamiliar to Westerners, so ensure the crew are briefed prior to the shoot and prepared for these cultural differences.

When working with elders, they should be treated with care, respect, and dignity, prioritising their comfort with gestures like offering a hot drink and seating. Elders should be addressed formally as Mr, Mrs, or Ms until they indicate a preferred name.

Many Pan-Asian cultures favour hot water over cold due to its association with health benefits and comfort. Providing a selection of hot beverages, such as tea or plain hot water, can have a meaningful positive effect, fostering a more inclusive environment that respects these cultural preferences. This gesture also reflects a commitment to the well-being and comfort of the cast and crew.

In many Asian cultures, it is customary to prioritise the elderly and those older than oneself. This practice includes ensuring that older individuals are seated and served food first, simple gestures that honour their status and promote their comfort. By respecting these cultural traditions, productions can create a truly inclusive environment, enriching the experience for everyone involved.

Additionally, when interacting with Pan-Asian individuals, giving and receiving items with two hands demonstrates sincerity and care. These small efforts in cultural awareness and sensitivity contribute to a positive production atmosphere.

# Research & Development —

## Development

Getting things right during the development phase is critical, as it impacts everything that follows in the production process. It's like building a house—when the foundation is solid, the entire structure is stable. Addressing issues is typically much easier in the planning stages than during the middle of production.

## Funding

When seeking to collaborate with practitioners from other communities ensure you meet with them to discuss your intentions before naming them in your proposal or in connection to the project. Especially if funding is dependent on their participation. Clearly explain the purpose and potential impact of their involvement, obtain informed consent from your participants in writing, and keep them informed of the project's progress.

Involve cultural advisors from the outset and be prepared to adjust your approach and timeline to work with the processes of the community or organisation. It may take time to sort through all the issues and find the right partners. There's always pressure from funding, production, and delivery deadlines. But this is also where problems arise through omission, misunderstanding, lack of clarity and poor planning.

## Writing

Writing culturally diverse stories and characters can be tricky and full of traps for the unwary. Problems arise on the page when writers make assumptions about cultures and characters outside their lived experience. This can be described as writing from the "outside in" rather than the "inside out".

Over the years we have seen many examples of writers unwittingly reinforcing stereotypes, causing offence and harm to those communities, and creating problems for funders, producers, and audiences.

Examples of common screen stereotypes include:

- **Violent Māori gangster**
- **Asian sex worker**
- **Friendly Samoan cleaner**
- **Radical Muslim terrorist.**

Giving characters a Māori, Pacific, Asian or other "ethnic" name doesn't make them authentic. People and characters are a product of their whakapapa/genealogy, heritage, location, era, and culture. The devil is always in the details and it's important to get those right.

This is not to say you can't write outside your own culture or experience. But do so consciously, cautiously, and carefully. Consider whether you could collaborate with a co-writer or turn the project over to a writer from that culture or community. Rely on your cultural advisors to provide open, honest feedback, and be prepared to make changes based on their advice.

# Production —

## Crew

Ideally the production team will reflect the project's diversity, both in front of and behind the camera. If you're running a series, engage a showrunner or lead director who truly understands the culture being portrayed. Aim to hire a crew with key HODs from those cultures.

Consult with cultural advisors about script, casting, and locations, and share this information with relevant crew. Consider providing cultural sensitivity training for the production team beforehand to help adapt their approach and workflow if necessary.

Unless discussed and agreed up front, responsibility shouldn't fall to a crew member by default because they are from that culture. For example, just because someone is Māori it doesn't mean they are fluent in te reo/Māori language or comfortable being asked to comment on someone else's pronunciation. A Pacific person may not wish to lead a prayer or karakia. Be sure to ask in advance and organise any cultural requirements beforehand, not at the last minute.

## Casting

When selecting actors for diverse roles, be mindful of the range of experience and capability within these communities. Serious mistakes have been made when producers and casting directors made incorrect assumptions about an actor's ethnicity and cultural background. If you're not sure, check with the actor or their agent. Seek guidance from cultural advisors, who should be familiar with the talent pool and their backgrounds.

While the concept of "blind casting" (selecting the best actor for the role regardless of cultural background) may seem like a good idea, this can also lead to problems. While it's generally no longer acceptable for white actors to play non-European roles, the reverse may also be true. If you cast ethnically diverse actors in roles originally written for Pākehā, your writers may need to adjust the script to reflect the actors' backgrounds.

Consider what's being asked of each actor by way of nudity or exposure of body elements which may be considered tapu/sacred in their cultures – for example tā moko/tatau/tattoo, hair and makeup. Ensure that discussions take place early on to avoid causing offence and to find solutions without the pressure of camera and crew standing by.

## Dialogue

If your story involves specific languages, dialects or accents, make sure pronunciation and usage is accurate. Hire the appropriate language experts as translators and coaches. Be aware that not all native speakers may have expertise in script writing, translation, or dialogue for screen. Consider what experience and credits are required for translators and coaches.

If your character has an accent, ensure your actor is comfortable performing it. Take the time to discuss the accent with the actor and provide them with resources or coaching if needed to achieve an accurate and respectful portrayal. If the accent comes across as stereotypical

or potentially harmful, critically evaluate whether it is essential to the character's identity and the story. Does the accent add meaningful depth to the character, or could it reinforce negative stereotypes? If the accent is not necessary, consider omitting it to avoid perpetuating harmful representations. Prioritising the actor's comfort and cultural sensitivity ensures a more authentic depiction of diverse characters.

If subtitles are required, engage a language expert in post-production and ensure these are checked for accuracy and readability in both languages.

## **On set**

Encourage an atmosphere of open and respectful communication among the cast and crew. Include diverse perspectives in the decision-making process, ensuring that cultural sensitivity is a priority at all levels of the production and make space for input within the hierarchy on set.

Plan regular production meetings where everyone's ideas and concerns can be aired, and problems can be sorted to get everyone back on the same page and keep the team motivated. Ensure that crew are aware that it is not the responsibility of cast (or vice versa) to educate others on the culture or community at the heart of the project. Wherever possible, provide everyone with resources in advance of the shoot to help support a shared understanding of how to adapt to specific cultural considerations.

No matter how smooth your collaboration is with iwi, hapū or other communities, allow for some bumps in the road. Address any issues quickly and take steps to make things right. Take responsibility for any mistakes or missteps in the production and be willing to make corrections, as necessary.

Taking the time to get things right can feel like extra pressure on productions with a tight schedule and limited resources. But fixing mistakes can take longer and cause additional problems during the shoot and down the line.

## **Actors**

Actors sometimes end up being cultural advisors by default if correct protocols and details have not been worked out in advance. This is neither appropriate nor fair to your cast members unless they have also been specifically engaged and compensated for their expertise.

If you're working with elders, be respectful and schedule extra time for them to move around and feel comfortable. When working with children, ensure they have a chaperone who can advocate for them in a culturally appropriate way.

If an intimacy coordinator is being used, make sure they have the information and support needed to understand any cultural implications for the actors and characters.

## **Design**

Cultural background and experience are especially important when hiring your production designer, costume supervisor and makeup leads. Where possible, bring on HODs from the communities you're portraying. If that isn't feasible, find people who are open to collaborating with cultural advisors.

Design, hair and makeup teams should conduct thorough research to ensure correct cultural context and nuance. Never rely on Google to check if an element is correct or authentic (yes, it has happened).

## Art department

Culture is expressed and reflected in everything around us. Locations, set dressing, costumes and props can be opportunities to add depth and authenticity. Consider whether pre-production meetings would benefit from having a cultural advisor present or provide other resources to support HODs in bringing the world to life. Wherever possible, people from the relevant cultures should be included in the design team and encouraged to raise any questions or concerns.

Ensure the art department understands any cultural issues before shooting and allow time for consultation and correction if required. For example, a gaffer changed the lamps in a yum cha restaurant without realising their cultural significance. When the cultural advisor pointed out the lamps wouldn't be hung this way, the producer agreed that they needed to be changed back. The production lost a few hours of filming, but they considered this was the right thing to do.

## Costume

If traditional clothing, accessories, or other cultural elements are in the script, work closely with advisors to ensure the choices are appropriate and genuine.

Talk to the actors about makeup and wardrobe choices and let them have input, especially if they're feeling uncomfortable. Understand they may need to cover personal tā moko/tatau/ tattoo or have cultural reasons to cover their hair or certain body parts. Work together to find a solution that suits them and the project.

If there are specific needs, such as chaperones or female crew members to manage attaching radio mics to female cast members, arrange these in advance before arriving on set. In some cultures, it may be highly inappropriate for a young male crew member to attach a mic or touch the clothing of an older female/elder, and the reverse may also apply.

## Catering

Food plays a significant role in many cultures. Sharing a meal can help bridge cultural differences and create a comfortable environment for people to bond. However, it's good to be mindful of different practices and protocols followed when preparing, serving and consuming food on set. Let your caterers know well in advance if there are any specific cultural needs and dietary requirements for your team. Be mindful that cultural practices and protocols are alive both on and off the set.

If you have a large number of extras, consider allowing extra time for lunch, especially if they include community elders. A small gesture, like having a producer or senior team member express gratitude and acknowledge their presence, can go a long way in fostering a harmonious and respectful atmosphere on set.

Take note of the quality of food provided to extras, as it may not always match the standard offered to the main cast and crew. This has been viewed by some Māori and Pasifika elders as a sign of disrespect.



# Post-production —

**Involve your post-production team from the outset and maintain regular consultation with them throughout production. Ensure you consult with cultural advisors and experts during post-production to address any emerging issues. Be open to creating alternative cuts or versions to address their concerns.**

Be mindful in the edit when selecting and incorporating photos and other images. Make sure visual elements align with the cultural context of the project and that you have the relevant permission to use them.

Pay attention to the sound design and music choices, as these can impact the cultural authenticity of the production. When incorporating waiata/songs, or any traditional music in post-production, be respectful of the significance and context. Don't assume that "folk songs" or traditional music is in the public domain. These may be subject to the same rights and licensing considerations as any other music. Seek permission or consult an advisor to ensure correct use.

Verify that subtitles and translations are precise, respectful, and culturally appropriate, especially when translating from one language to another.

Properly credit cultural advisors, consultants and community members who have contributed to the production to acknowledge their input.

Screen the project to culturally relevant focus groups of experts and gather feedback to ensure that it does not inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes or cultural insensitivities. Be open to feedback from individuals or groups who may have issues with the project and be willing to make appropriate changes or engage to address concerns.

The *DEGANZ Workflow Best Practice Guide* is a valuable resource for practical advice and principles.

— Read the **DEGANZ Workflow Best Practice Guide** [here](#)

# Release & Marketing —

**Ensure that any individuals, communities, or locations depicted in the production have supplied their informed consent for release of the final product. Where community engagement is important, involve your community and cultural advisors in the release and marketing process to ensure their representation is accurate and respectful. Be mindful of how the story is marketed and distributed to avoid culturally insensitive messaging.**

If you are holding a premiere, the audience should include key people involved in cultural advice. If possible, arrange an advance screening in a location or venue that has cultural significance to the community.

Even with thorough cultural consultation, concerns may still be raised by the media or the public. Decide in advance who will speak on behalf of the project, and make sure that person is fully prepared and backed up by the team.

# Summary —

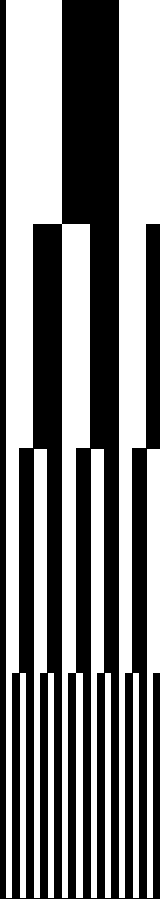
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Even when you think you have done everything right, conducted your due diligence and come to it with a good heart, things can still go wrong. Cultural capability is a sensitive area, and past wrongs may still be very present. If something does go wrong – apologise, reflect, seek guidance, take advice, and focus on fixing it. We all make mistakes, what is important is learning from them.

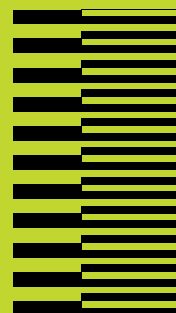
The goal of developing this Handbook is to help support a better and safer creative working environment for our screen sector, our communities, and our audiences.

Ngā mihi nui

Thank you.



# Additional Resources —



## Aotearoa New Zealand

### Irirangi Te Motu New Zealand On Air

- [Diversity Report \(2024\)](#)
- [Diversity Report \(2023\)](#)
- [Diversity Report \(2022\)](#)
- [Te Pae Tata – Rautaki Māori \(Māori Strategy\)](#)

### Te Tumu Whakaata Taonga – New Zealand Film Commission

- [Diversity and Inclusion Resources](#)  
A list of suggested organisations and tools that inspire diversity, inclusion and equity in the Aotearoa screen sector. (NB: This list should not be viewed as the NZFC’s official endorsement or affiliation.)
- [NZFC’s Organisational Diversity and Inclusion Strategy \(2022-2025\)](#)
- [Te Rautaki Māori Strategy](#)

### Ngā Aho Whakaari

- [The Brown Book - Māori in Screen Production](#)  
Written by Dr. Ella Henry and Melissa Wikaire. Published by Ngā Aho Whakaari: Association of Māori in Screen Production Publication, July 2013.
- [Ngā Aho Whakaari - Māori Screen Directory](#)  
Connect with Māori professionals who can bring your vision to life.

### Other resources

- [Traditional Knowledge Labels](#)  
Traditional Knowledge labels are a resource for Indigenous communities and local organisations to include protocols for use of digital materials.
- [Case Study: Warner Brothers Intl. TV Production NZ](#)  
2023 Diversity Awards NZ Small/Medium Company Winner

## International

- [British Film Institute's Diversity & Inclusion Resources](#)
- [Canadian Media Producers Association's Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Resources](#)
- [Creative Equity Toolkit \(Diversity Arts Australia and The British Council\)](#)
- [SBS Cultural Safety Plan Template](#)
- [Screen Diversity & Inclusion Network \(Australia\)](#)
- [Screen Australia: \*Pathways & Protocols\*: a filmmaker's guide to working with Indigenous people, culture and concepts](#)
- [Telefilm-Canada-Equity-Diversity-and-Inclusion-Action-Plan \(2022-2024\)](#)

# Let us know what you think —

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We hope you've found the Spada Cultural Capability Handbook useful as you carry out your work in the screen sector. If you have any feedback or further questions, please contact us on [comms@spada.co.nz](mailto:comms@spada.co.nz)

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