



*Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Embassy, Wellington*

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Speech (as prepared) by **Ambassador William P. McCormick**
in Celebration of the 232nd Anniversary of the **Declaration of Independence.**
at Camperdown, Lower Hutt.

THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND NEW ZEALAND

Welcome to the 232nd Anniversary celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America.

Although ‘announced’ on July 4th, an interesting historical note is that the ‘declaration’ was actually signed on July 2nd and announced on the 4th. So it has worked out just fine that we are celebrating on the actual day it was signed.

The Declaration of Independence may have been signed and declared in 1776, yet it wasn’t until 1788 – 12 years later - that our constitution was agreed upon and ratified... and this was amongst like-minded men of common purpose.

From its beginning in Philadelphia, the Declaration of Independence has become the wellspring of the definition of America – its direction and destiny. The USA is an evolving democracy of fifty states, and one could say each was like a country in its own right.

It takes time and perseverance to construct a government that truly represents the will of the people and for them to determine their own path.

Tonight I have the honor of wearing a taonga (made from whale-bone) that was given to me by the Ngati Wai iwi when I visited Whangarei. It is a double honor for me to wear it tonight. It was a greatly appreciated gift from Maori, who know so much about the migration and conservation of whales in the Northland region -- and it is also the iwi of my friend, the Rt. Honorable Winston Peters.

Over the last three years I have had the opportunity of meeting New Zealanders – in their places of work, at leisure, or in their homes.

I've visited ordinary and extraordinary places, science facilities, factories, aquaculture farms, vineyards, sheep and dairy farms. I've been to all the universities, to a good number of high schools and special education facilities.

Between the two of us, Gail and I have spoken to many civic organizations throughout the country; we've entertained hundreds of people here in our home, including representatives of all the political parties. I've enjoyed museums and my favorite opera, "La Boheme"; and we've seen some great rugby games at Westpac Stadium.

I've attended extraordinary high-level events and ceremonies – many by the New Zealand government, others by fellow members of the diplomatic corps. I must say the honor and friendship reflected in these events will always be part of me.

From my first-hand experience I can say the friendship between our two countries is strong. And this strength is supported by much activity.

Both our governments have been engaged in meaningful discussions and activity on regional and multi-regional issues. Prime Minister Clark and Foreign Affairs Minister Winston Peters have had productive talks in Washington, and there have been two successful 'Partnership Forum' meetings, where our countries' political, commercial, and cultural leaders have increased commitment to cooperation and friendship.

My government is grateful for New Zealand's leadership in the Pacific and contributions as peacekeepers in the Solomon Islands, East Timor, and Afghanistan. It was powerfully significant for me (as I've known the honor of a Maori welcome) to see America's First Lady, Laura Bush, extended the same honor when she visited New Zealand's Provincial Reconstruction Team in Bamyan province last month.

Our two countries' cooperation on science and technology is excellent. For over fifty years the United States and New Zealand have been cooperating in Antarctica on research that is now essential to our understanding of the great issues of our time -- climate change and global warming.

Issues expressed in headlines of the world's newspapers today have been major areas of study on the ice for over half a century. This cooperation is forging new understanding of environmental puzzles that can benefit all people of all nations in the future.

It was one of my greatest experiences ever to be able to visit Antarctica with Prime Minister Clark and a large delegation from both our countries. The group included Sir Edmund Hillary. It was one of my saddest duties in January this year to attend the funeral of New Zealand's great hero.

It is evident to me how you become part of a community when there has been time enough to attend the funerals of people you have learned to know and respect. My sadness on hearing the news of Sir Edmund Hillary's passing was tempered with gratitude that I had actually spent time with him. My opportunity of being part of the delegation to the ice provided me the chance to get to know Sir Ed, and I have many happy memories.

I am pleased to have so many people here in our Lower Hutt home tonight – Gail and I love having small groups of people over. One of the first things Gail arranged for here was the exhibition you can see in the lounge of historic and contemporary Native American and contemporary Maori art. Gail and I greatly admire the cultures of our indigenous peoples. To have art work that demonstrates common themes and standards of complementary excellence has brought great pleasure to us and to our visitors.

The exhibition could not have happened without the generosity of Darcy and Anne Nicolas, who loaned many pieces from their own collection of the best contemporary Maori artists. Darcy went on a Fulbright scholarship to the United States, and he's the epitome of one who has made the difference for countless others by establishing valuable exchange programs and events between Native American and Maori artists. I'd like to thank him sincerely tonight.

[Presentation of Certificate of Appreciation to Darcy Nicholas.]

As I said earlier, America's Declaration of Independence was a wellspring of the definition of America – its direction and destiny.

But as we know, if you live to a 'good age,' direction and destiny are also determined by the friends you make along the way.

People (and nations) are made all the more prosperous and valued because of the friends they keep over the long term.

I am enriched by the friendship that has been expressed to me and my country.

I look forward positively to the future of friendship and cooperation between our two countries, and so it gives me great pleasure to ask everyone to join me in toasting

Her Majesty THE QUEEN.

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