

**Partnerships with Indigenous people:
Modifying the cultural mainstream**

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ABSTRACT

What we know and understand about conducting personal partnerships in life can guide us in establishing effective partnerships with indigenous people. When a personal partnership is threatened it is usually because one partner has come to dominate, speak for, and control the other, or presumes to know what is best for the other. Often, it turns out that the dominant partner knows very little about that the thoughts, feelings, wants and needs of the other. The voice of the dominant partner is the one that is heard. This typically results in the other having little opportunity to speak or act on their own behalf. If the partnership is to be restored, it is the dominant partner who must change.

Introduction

This paper examines how a collaborative working partnership with indigenous people should begin by acknowledging who they are and how they differ from us, and not by asserting that we are all the same. The partnership will be strengthened when each partner is able to understand and respect the worldview of the other. To achieve this each partner needs to know and appreciate the different icons, images, metaphors, and proverbs the other uses to understand the world. This will help each partner learn to be comfortable within the other's cultural space as well as their own. This is particularly challenging for the dominant partners, as they are more used to the indigenous partner adapting to their continuing requirements. Partnerships for indigenous peoples must not come at the cost of their own language and culture.

We are a whānau from the Specialist Education Services, Poutama Pounamu Education Research Centre in Tauranga, and the School of Education at the University of Waikato. We have journeyed together as a whānau for ten years, maintaining close links with Hairini marae under the guidance and protection of the Ngāi Te Ahi hapū (sub-tribe) of the Ngāti Ranginui people. The cultural validity and safety of our work is watched over by our kuia whakaruruhau (provider of shelter and protection), Rangiwakaehu Walker, and by our whaea Mate Reweti from the Ngāti Porou people and Kaa O'Brien from the Ngāti Pūkiao and Ngāti Awa people. Mere Berryman, from the people of Ngāi Tūhoe, is our kaiwhakahaere (manager). Ted Glynn is an academic and education researcher at the University of Waikato. We all work at the interface between Māori and Pākehā cultures. We all work to improve learning outcomes for Māori students in Māori immersion and mainstream education. In

collaboration with Māori whānau and elders (kaumātua) we produce video and written resources to assist students learning to speak, read and write in Māori and in English. We produce tools for assessing students' progress in these areas. We also develop collaborative home, school and community approaches to managing student behaviour. We deliver professional development programmes on the use of these resources for Māori teachers and communities.

Working to support learning and cultural needs of Māori students presents a challenging dilemma. On the one hand, we strive to ensure Māori students can access all the resources and benefits available within the New Zealand education system. On the other hand, we strive to protect the language and cultural identity of these students as well as our own identity and integrity. This positions us all in the risky spaces at the boundaries between the indigenous Māori and the dominant Pākehā cultures.

What we know and understand about conducting personal partnerships in life can guide us in establishing effective partnerships with indigenous people.

In this address we will show how this analogy with a personal partnership can help us to "make sense" of our work as education professionals working in support of an indigenous minority.

Many of us here have ourselves experienced, or known friends who have experienced, living with a more powerful, dominating and controlling partner. We have seen at first hand the destruction of personal identity, self esteem, the sense of powerlessness and the loss of vital energy that can occur to one partner within relationships of this kind. We have seen dominant partners who speak and act "for" or "on behalf of" the weaker partner, because they claim to "know" what the other wants and thinks and feels. They "know" what is best for their partner. What is seen as best for the weaker partner all too often involves their being pressured to accept unilateral proposals for change, agreeing to new initiatives and complying with requests, or even demands, all made by the dominant partner. And when the dominant partner resorts to power to ensure compliance with these proposals, initiatives or demands, then we have an abusive relationship that can cause serious long-term damage to the weaker partner.

We believe that the hurt and damage occurring to weaker partners in abusive relationships also occur within relationships between dominant or mainstream and minority indigenous cultures, and for the same reasons. Mainstream educational professionals frequently speak and act for and on behalf of indigenous people, and claim to know how indigenous people think, and feel and claim to know what is best for them. This is easily seen in the construction and delivery of the New Zealand national curriculum. It is also seen in the lack of Māori-preferred learning, teaching and assessment strategies available in many schools.

Sometimes schools and education systems resort to political or economic power to ensure compliance of indigenous cultural groups with mainstream decisions. Abuses of power can and do occur, and serious long-term damage can result. Often this damage reaches across generations. When this occurs, indigenous peoples continue to suffer loss of autonomy and control over their own knowledge base, loss of their own language and cultural practices, and ultimately, for many, loss of their individual and collective identity. These continuing losses exacerbate the damage resulting from the loss of their land and natural resources. Given the extent of this damage, we believe that any attempts to improve relationships with indigenous people are best seen as first steps on a long journey. It has taken ten years for the work of our whānau to reach the point where it holds some credibility in both cultures.

The plight of indigenous people in relationships with mainstream "partners", as we have seen, is analogous with that of the weaker party in a controlling and overpowering life partnership. However, the partnership analogy not only helps to illuminate problems, it may also help to suggest solutions.

As we know from our own life experience, two types of solution are possible. The first is that the less powerful partner breaks out of the relationship and withdraws to repair the damage and regain their personal autonomy and strength. The partnership is dissolved. Reaching this solution usually requires a great deal of support for the less-powerful partner, from friends or from professionals. The second solution requires even more help, for both partners, from friends or professionals. This requires addressing the power imbalance and restoring the partnership. However, if the partnership is to be restored effectively, it is the dominant and controlling partner who must change.

In trying to repair the damage done within the historical relationship between Māori and non-Māori in New Zealand education, many Māori have chosen the first solution. They have

pursued strategies of resistance to mainstream educational policies and practices. At the same time they have pursued positive actions to reclaim control over their own education. Māori have established a national system of Māori language immersion pre-schools, kōhanga reo as well as a growing system of primary schools or kura kaupapa Māori. A number of these are moving to retain their graduating students by establishing secondary classes, (whare kura). There is an increasing number of Māori tertiary institutions, universities (wānanga) or polytechnics (kura tini). In all these institutions Māori teachers, students and whānau work together from within a Māori worldview where their language and culture is validated and affirmed.

These initiatives have proved to be crucial elements in the struggle to revitalise and restore the Māori language and culture throughout New Zealand. They allow the less powerful indigenous partner to create safe cultural spaces in which to reclaim their autonomy, their distinctive languages, tribal identities, traditional knowledge bases, and to define their preferred strategies for teaching and learning. This is beginning to repair some of the damage done over successive generations. Much of the work of our whānau has been in this context.

However, we in New Zealand still have to address the second solution and restore and honour the partnership between the two peoples, formalised in 1840 by the Treaty of Waitangi. As noted in the analogy with life partnership, if the treaty partnership with Māori is to be restored effectively, it is the dominant and controlling partner who must change. It is in this arena that our team also operates.

This is a complex, challenging and highly contested arena. Dominant and controlling partners do not relinquish power easily. Nor do they readily see themselves as part of the problem. They find it threatening to acknowledge that their minority treaty partner has a language, culture, curriculum and pedagogy that are all alive and well, with their own integrity, but rendered largely invisible within our school system.

Over many years, Māori people have continually asserted their rights under the Treaty of Waitangi to define and promote Māori knowledge and pedagogy. Despite this, many New Zealand teachers and school management people still operate from the position that Māori students are welcome to participate fully in the national curriculum provided in mainstream schools, so long as their language and culture remain at home. They frequently cite the

words of Governor Hobson: He iwi kotahi tātou. We are one people. The greatest challenge in our own work as a research whānau lies in helping educational professionals to shift from this colonising position.

We believe that for members of the dominant culture to assert that "we are all one people", is to assert that "we are all the same". Indigenous people are very different from people from the dominant culture. People from the dominant culture often interpret these differences as failures or shortcomings in measuring up to dominant culture expectations. This is not a respectful way to begin a relationship with indigenous people. Such a position runs the risk of marginalising or trivialising their languages, their cultural practices and their identity. It may even render them invisible. A more respectful way to begin a relationship, we believe, is to acknowledge and appreciate differences. There is a Māori whakataukī (proverb):

He iwi ke koutou,
He iwi ke mātou,
Engari i tēnei wa,
Tātou, tātou e.

Freely translated this means: "you are a different people from us, we are a different people from you, but in this context we can live and work together". Fortunately, in recent years, Government education agencies such as the National Qualifications Authority (NZQA), the Education Review Office (ERO), and the Specialist Education Services (SES) have responded to long-standing challenges from Māori educators. They now employ Māori professionals at senior level to undertake policy development and strategic planning, as well as employing Māori at the levels of service delivery. The SES, in particular, has recognised the advantages for its Māori clients, and for its own organisation, of employing kaumātua and kuia (elders) as experts in the Māori language and culture *and* in designing policy specifically related to their services to Māori (Berryman, Kaiwai, Harawira, Glynn, Atvars & Mackey, 1999).

There is one respectful way in which majority culture professionals can enter into more effective and balanced working partnerships with indigenous people. This is to learn to think, speak and explain themselves and their work using icons, images and metaphors of the indigenous people rather than their own. The first and most important step in this process is to learn to listen to the indigenous partner. This, we believe, is best achieved in a

context where the language and culture of the indigenous partner is validated and affirmed, and where the indigenous partner is in control of procedures and protocol. In short, majority culture professionals need to put themselves in the less powerful position. They are visitors in someone else's cultural space. Good visitors do not tell their hosts what to do.

Working with Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour

Some majority culture professionals do not find it easy to be good visitors. Our whānau has contributed to the delivery of a national professional development programme for over 700 Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB). The RTLB role is one of working in a collaborative relationship with classroom teachers, school management and school communities to promote the use of a range of inclusive teaching strategies. These are strategies that allow students experiencing learning and behaviour difficulties to participate more fully in regular classroom lessons. A great many of these students are Māori. Hence, a critical component of the RTLB training programme, is exposure to Māori theory on human development, growing up Māori and Māori-preferred learning and teaching strategies. One of the course assignments includes the task of presenting a mihi (introducing yourself) to colleagues and Māori people on a marae.

We explained that a mihi involves two core elements. The first is to greet the icons, images, landscape, tribal ancestors, ancestral house, and the people present on the day. The second is to "represent" yourself in a way that "makes sense" within a Māori worldview. Both of these elements require a shift in mind-set. There needs to be a shift away from the familiar ways in which we introduce ourselves to people from the dominant culture. In presenting a mihi, we need to convey a respectful sense of place.

We asked RTLB to consider questions like:

- Whose cultural space am I now standing in?
- What do I know about this place, and about these people?
- How am I going to acknowledge this?
- What should I say about myself in this place, and to these people?
- What is it about me that these people regard as most important?

We also asked RTLB to try to do this by using the Māori language, or at the very least to practise their pronunciation of all key words, names of key ancestors, names of tribes and

sub-tribes, names, of landscape features, and names of people present. We encouraged RTLB to seek help and guidance from Māori people. Māori colleagues and friends who respected the intent and purpose of the task gave their help and guidance freely.

We were blown away at the level of resistance, animosity, anger, frustration and panic this assignment engendered among a number of RTLB. Despite assurances that this assignment, together with its mode of assessment, had been devised and planned with the full collaboration of the caucus of Māori staff from the three Universities involved, we were strongly challenged by non-Māori RTLB on a number of fronts. We were imposing non-Māori pedagogical procedures onto Māori. We were using wharehau for inappropriate purposes. If this assignment were to go ahead at all, it should not be marked or graded, because to do so would be belittling or degrading to Māori. The assignment was mere tokenism. The assignment was not relevant to the work of some RTLB because they worked in areas where there were very few Māori students. The strength of this resistance and panic alerted us to the level of fear that many RTLB had of being required to move out of their cultural comfort zone, and of being asked to learn to change their own behaviour. It appeared that it was not only difficult, but also dangerous to expect the dominant partner to be the one to change!

Somewhat shaken, we stood firm. A number of Māori RTLB supported us strongly and indicated they would challenge us if the assignment did not go ahead! The assignment went ahead. RTLB presented their mihi within their tutor groups in marae all over the country. To be fair, we also received a few challenges about the assignment from some Māori RTLB. However, these related mainly to differences between iwi about appropriate protocols for mihi. Some iwi have different expectations and protocols for men and women. We simply went along with whatever protocol was appropriate to each iwi.

Without exception, the mihi presented by non-Māori RTLB were appreciated and warmly responded to by local kaumātua, whānau members, Māori teaching staff and our kuia from Poutama Pounamu. The experience turned out to be emotionally charged, challenging but also warm and highly affirming for RTLB. Feedback from RTLB around the country was overwhelmingly positive. Typical feedback stated that initially they found the assignment frightening and stressful. However, on completion they found it had been worthwhile and very rewarding. The experience had focused their attention on how little they knew or

understood about how different a Māori worldview is from a Western European worldview. For many, the experience provided the first step on a bicultural journey.

The proverb about being different, but being able to work together captures the essence of pōwhiri, the formal ritual of encounter on a marae between tangata whenua (locals) and manuhiri (visitors). The pōwhiri is initiated by a karanga (call) from a local kuia (elder woman) and is answered with a karanga from a kuia on the visitors' side. The encounter begins with the two groups standing apart at a respectful distance. The space between them provides a place for the spirits of the ancestors from both groups *to be represented and acknowledged*. Across this distance, kaikōrero (orators) exchange formal speeches. The kaikōrero draw on their extensive knowledge of whakapapa (genealogy) to establish extended family relationships and other connections between the two groups. Their role is to recognise and respond to the mana (autonomy, dignity, integrity) of the other side, to acknowledge their ancestors, and any of their members who have died recently. The kaikōrero then greet the living elders and all those who are present on the other side. The kaikōrero acknowledge with respect the other side's long-standing connections to their physical environment (mountains, rivers and sea).

Woven throughout the pōwhiri is the singing of waiata (songs). The function of waiata extends far beyond providing entertainment. The many different forms of waiata carry information about genealogy, ancient and modern tribal events, famous ancestors, naming of landscape features and natural resources, and the connection of these landscape features with the people. Some forms of waiata reach back through centuries of history. Māori women composed many of the modern waiata during the 1940s and 1950s. These composers cleverly utilised popular tunes of the day to ensure that cultural values and information were passed on to the next generations. These waiata sustained the spirits and affirmed the cultural identity of young Māori men serving overseas during the Second World War. The work of many contemporary Māori composers draws as much on traditional Māori knowledge as it does on contemporary knowledge and events from both cultures.

Within the pōwhiri, waiata play a powerful role. The karanga (call) of the kuia from the host side, and the returning call from the kuia for the visiting side, serve to initiate the pōwhiri and to lay down the kaupapa (set the agenda). The work of each of the kaikōrero is affirmed and embellished by the song chosen by women from his iwi. Their song is carefully chosen

to suit the occasion, to reinforce connections between locals and visitors, and to "fit" the content of each speech. Through their choice of waiata, women have the power to affirm, or otherwise, the message of each speaker.

Only after this process has been completed do the two groups move together to exchange a hongi, (the pressing of noses in a close personal greeting). The hongi has deep cultural significance. People approach close enough to acknowledge each other's very being, and to share the same breath of life. After this, food or refreshments are shared. The two groups are now free to interact socially and work together as one on common tasks or problems to be solved.

Pōwhiri: Guidelines for inclusion

The pōwhiri therefore provides a powerful analogy of the process of inclusion based on respect for differences. The pōwhiri provides us with four guidelines for establishing relationships with indigenous people that are based on mutual respect and trust.

(1) The relationship needs to be initiated by the indigenous people, with people from the dominant culture taking the less powerful, responsive, role. They are not in charge. They are visitors.

(2) Interaction needs to occur within cultural space over which indigenous people have control. This is to ensure that the use of their own language and cultural processes is validated, affirmed and takes precedence.

(3) Majority culture members need to demonstrate respect for the cultural space and cultural context in which they find themselves. They need to adopt the less-powerful position, concentrating on listening and understanding, and not on controlling and directing the proceedings.

(4) Proposals for new initiatives, or for collaboration on a new project, however important they may seem, should not be presented unless and until these prior processes have taken place. There is a further parallel here with a personal partnership. It is the less-powerful partner, (in this context the indigenous people), and not the more-powerful partner, who determines whether any such initiatives are appropriate and effective.

Applying these guidelines in research

We now show how these four guidelines drove our own work in developing a home, school and community behaviour management programme to assist Māori students experiencing behavioural difficulties. This programme is known as Hei Āwhina Mātua (helping parents). We will follow the programme through its developmental phases of research, resource production, and professional training.

1. Research

The Hei Āwhina Mātua research project was initiated by Māori (Glynn, Berryman, Atvars & Harawira (1997). There was a growing concern, nationally and locally, about the number of Māori students getting into serious trouble because of their behaviour. Māori people also raised grave concerns about schools' lack of effective responses to the behaviour difficulties experienced by Māori students other than resorting to suspensions and stand-downs. Kaiako (teachers) from several kōhanga reo around Tauranga raised with the local SES team their need for behaviour management strategies that are culturally appropriate and effective for Māori students. One of the kaiako gave the name to this project.

At this time, several of our whānau were teaching in three Māori immersion classes at a large urban intermediate school. Māori students connected with our whānau were also experiencing behavioural difficulties in this school. These difficulties arose in their interactions with other students and teachers outside of their immersion classes. We were increasingly concerned at the lack of common ownership of the problem between school staff and community. Contact between the two was driven by incidents where things were going wrong. Each side blamed the other for the behaviour difficulties the students were experiencing. Māori students from the immersion classes were also concerned about the negative outcomes they were experiencing from their behaviour at home and at school. They were keen to participate in finding solutions. Our local mainstream intermediate school seemed like the best place for us to start. A whānau member and educational researcher living in Dunedin at that time, Ted Glynn, was invited back to work with the whānau on this new behaviour initiative.

When it became clear that the researcher, teachers and students would again be working together on Hei Āwhina Mātua, students began a series of initiatives of their own. They claimed a share of responsibility and control over the project that profoundly influenced its

design, methodology and implementation. They decided that a pōwhiri should be held to bring Ted back "on board the waka". Here was a person from the tauwi (non-indigenous) academic world who was travelling a long distance to be with them. He was a person they knew about from the Tatarī Tautoko Tauawhi Māori language reading-tutoring programme that had been part of their previous year's class work. More importantly, he was their teachers' colleague and friend. They were confident he would become their friend too.

The students set out to assess the disposition and intentions of their visitor by seeking whānau support to hold a pōwhiri. Three young warriors began the proceedings by presenting a wero (formal challenge). During the pōwhiri, the students were very much the initiators of the process. They stood tall, backed by their kaumātua, kuia and teachers. Within this cultural context they were able to challenge the credibility of their visitor, his understanding of a Māori worldview, and his potential relationship with them. By the end of Ted's whaikōrero, given as a response to their whaikōrero, they were ready to accept him and work with him. As a non-Māori visitor, Ted took on a responsive rather than an initiating role, and behaved in ways that showed respect for the language, the culture, and for the particular occasion. This pōwhiri marked the beginning of the HeiĀwhina Mātua project.

Following the formal acceptance of the researcher and the research kaupapa (research question), the teachers, students and the Poutama Pounamu whānau undertook the first research task. This was to develop three behavioural checklists, designed to identify (a) the settings where students were getting into trouble, (b) what kinds of challenging behaviour were occurring and (c) what kinds of positive behaviour were important to acknowledge.

A hui (meeting) of students, whānau and teachers of the immersion classes was called. A full turn out of whānau members to that particular hui was ensured because time was also taken to farewell one of the Māori teaching staff and a brief kapa haka (cultural dance) performance was arranged for this purpose. Much larger numbers of parents, kaumātua, kuia, and other whānau members turned out than was usual for school-organised meetings. Ted soon learned that they had not arrived in such numbers to see him, but to see their children and grandchildren perform for the departing teacher! At this hui, Rangihakaehu introduced the Hei Āwhina Mātua project and then introduced Ted as a member of the research whānau. She urged parents to support the project and to complete the three behaviour checklists. Due to the leadership of our kuia and the high level of student

commitment, a very high proportion of checklists were completed. Indigenous people had begun to take ownership of the research process.

Working to construct the three behavioural checklists provided students with their first opportunity to engage in the research process. They noted commonalities and differences between the settings and behaviours identified as problematic by teachers, students and whānau members. They identified further problematic behaviour settings omitted from our checklist. We welcomed and adopted their suggestions. We soon came to appreciate that if we wanted to get accurate information on student behaviour, we had better continue listening to and learning from our students. These were the "experts" on their own behaviour. From this point on we acknowledged students as full participants in the research whānau. Indigenous people began to change the direction of the research process.

2. Resource Development

The completed checklists from students, teachers and parents generated valuable information for collation and analysis. Together with students, teachers, and our whaea we identified the top ten settings or situations in which problem behaviour occurred, the top ten challenging behaviours and the top ten positive behaviours as selected by teachers, parents and students. We presented these data back to the students, at a meeting with the research whānau, without their teachers being present. This took place in the students' own whare or meeting room, (actually a tin shed). Within their own cultural space they were able to speak as openly and frankly as they wished about their behaviour at school, at home and in the community. They did speak openly and frankly. For example, they volunteered one after-school setting (a shopping mall) as a context for problem behaviour that neither their parents nor their teachers were aware of. Together with the students, we determined which were the key settings, and which were the specific behaviours that needed to be included in the video.

Next, we devised ten skits to represent these behaviours and settings in the video. The skits were discussed with a wider group of students together with the teachers of the immersion classes. Teachers and whānau encouraged students to role-play various situations to show how the specific behaviours occurred at home, at school and in the community, and how teachers and parents and other adults responded to these behaviours.

Role-playing assisted us in gathering language appropriate to the people and to the situations in the scripts. A clear example of this occurred when a dangerous head-high tackle during rugby practice was identified as a setting event for trouble. Students identified swearing as an essential part of this scenario. They persuaded all of us that this language needed to appear in the video. The resulting skit shows a convincing outburst of language that has street credibility with many viewers. For the students who participated in this discussion, however, this was an important event in the research process. It affirmed for them that their views would be listened to and taken on board. For us, it was an invaluable lesson in the power of the reciprocal learning and teaching process if the learning contexts created are culturally valid and safe.

"We went through each script changing stuff we thought wasn't right. That was a good thing to do because some of the words ... used in the scripts would not have been used in real life. At least, not by most kids. So the skits we did in the holidays last year were based on what we thought about the problems we discussed. We were the bosses and directors."
(Bronwyn)

Next, we prepared draft video scripts. These were read and volunteer actors negotiated specific roles for themselves. Although it was in the school holidays there was an impressive voluntary attendance by students.

"It was our choice to decide to do this video because we held the meetings and did the acting during our holidays. And that was just hard luck giving that time up. But, I wanted to do the acting and all the hard work because I was excited about being a part of the skits."
(Tama)

We did not require students to memorise and rehearse specific dialogue. What was more important was to convey convincingly the message contained within each skit. Students were free to ad-lib.

"I was in a lot of the skits but my favourite one was the bus scene because I am a bus pupil and it felt real. It was also funny because it was like looking at ourselves through someone else's eyes and we could see how silly some of the bus behaviour is." (Danielle)

Our close collaboration with the students continued throughout the production of the skits. This ensured credible performances set in realistic scenarios. By now we really began to

understand the meaning of "participant driven" research! The "film week" ended with a shared meal to celebrate the outcome of months of successful collaboration.

Soon after this, we presented our first milestone report to the Ministry of Education Advisory Committee. Five students volunteered to write about specific aspects of the research project. All five agreed to present their reports in person at the Ministry Advisory Committee meeting. Their presentations were delivered so confidently and competently that the Ministry provided additional funding to allow them to travel to Dunedin with our kuia and kaumātua to help edit the video. There they viewed the many hours of videotape. They selected specific "takes" as their preferred choices for use in each skit. Their contribution was especially valuable in editing the video interviews as three of them were among those interviewed. While in Dunedin, they were interviewed by local newspapers and featured as a news item on Southern Television. On their return to Tauranga some of them were again interviewed by the local newspaper and on talk back radio. Students then helped to write and present information about Hei Āwhina Mātua at a national and then international education conference. They rose to the occasion every time, coming across as informed participants, capable of expressing their own views and knowledgeable about the research project.

The video was premiered one evening in the school library. All actors, as well as teachers, parents, whānau, kaumātua and kuia were present. The evening began and ended with karakia (prayer) given by the kaumātua. After only the briefest of introductions the video was shown in the darkened room. When the credits had run through at the conclusion, the lights were turned on. There was absolute silence. All eyes remained focused on the screen. It was as though words would break the wairua (spiritual quality) of the moment. Everyone seemed to be reflecting deeply on all they had learned. Soon after, the students' successes were warmly and enthusiastically acknowledged by their parents and elders, and by our research whānau. We believe that the process followed throughout this project dealt with all the critical issues raised by Russell Bishop concerning initiation, representation, benefits, legitimation and accountability in Maori research.

3. Professional Development

The next phase of our work involved assessing the effectiveness of Hei Āwhina Mātua within a professional development programme for teachers, parents and whānau member. This

programme comprised workshop activities based on exploring the data collected in the research phase and on understanding ten different strategies for changing behaviour evident within the various skits presented in the video. Four of these are “antecedent” strategies, which change behaviour through altering the settings and contexts in which it occurs. The remaining six are “consequent” strategies that change behaviour through altering the timing, frequency and positivity of its consequences. Workshop activities focus on matching behaviour strategies with particular skits, and inventing and presenting new skits to demonstrate how the strategies can be applied to new situations. The decision to match behaviour strategies to what was going on the skits, rather than constructing the skits to demonstrate specific behaviour strategies resulted from interaction and discussion with students. They convinced us that this approach would focus attention and learning on their actual behaviours in real life contexts. This was a decision to move from observation to theory, rather than the reverse.

We now needed to initiate relationships with Māori teachers, parents, and whānau in two further schools that were not involved in the programme development. We learned a major and fundamental lesson from this process. In the first school, a kura kaupapa Māori, we again chose to let the school whānau lead the process. We fell flat on our faces. We were rescued by our kuia, Rangiwakaehu. We began again, following her advice, and worked with staff and whānau from the two schools combined.

In the first school we assumed that the many whānau and collegial connections that existed between parents, students and teachers in this school and ourselves would be sufficient for us to start working collaboratively. We assumed that they would have sufficient understanding of appropriate cultural procedures and of the work of our whānau, for us to begin training. At the initial pōwhiri at this school for researchers and new whānau members, the teachers, students and whānau responded to the behaviour checklists. After reporting the checklist findings to the entire group, we then agreed to meet with teachers at the school and to meet with whānau members in their homes.

At this point, the historical protocols, procedures and the power bases embedded in the school context had begun to dominate. Although Māori protocols (such as karakia and mihimihi) were followed, we did not involve our kaumātua or kuia in supporting us throughout the entire process. Hence we had gone along with the separation of the home

and school community into two groups. This did not allow the time or space to acknowledge the mana of each group of participants (parents, teachers and students). Nor did it allow time to share information with and between the groups. When it became clear that the programme was not working in this school, we looked within our own processes to find the fault.

In hindsight, we realised that we had allied ourselves too readily with the people who held power in the school (senior staff and Board of Trustee members). We had then proceeded to negotiate with them, “on behalf of” their students and whānau in order to determine venues and the method of delivery of “their” professional development. We agreed to train teachers and parents separately, teachers at school and parents at home. In so doing we cut across the strong cultural relationships that connected these groups with each other and with their marae and their kaumātua and kuia. No wonder our professional training had little initial impact in this school. Here is where we turned to our kuia for advice.

Her advice was simple and effective. We returned to the pōwhiri analogy. Rangiwakaehu called a hui of teachers, parents, whānau and students from both schools. She called this hui on the marae whose kaumātua supported the initial development of the Hei Āwhina Mātua programme. The hui was preceded by a traditional pōwhiri, led by these kaumātua. The mana of all groups present was acknowledged and respected, as were their connections to this marae and to this programme. Kaumātua advice led to the workshop activities taking place in the wharenuī itself, where all concerns could be raised for discussion in a setting that was safe for all.

Inside the wharenuī, many generations were represented, grandparents, parents, children and grandchildren, as well as their tupuna (ancestors), who were represented in the carvings and photographs. Various distinct groupings participated in the workshop exercises. These included kaumātua and kuia, teachers, parents and whānau members, students, researchers and trainers. However, whānau and whanaunga ties reaching across these groups proved far stronger in this cultural context than occupational or generational ties within each group. These two factors, strong whānau links and the marae context, ensured that Māori language and cultural protocols prevailed, and provided the framework for all the learning and teaching that occurred.

In this context, kaumātua and kuia were able to assume their cultural leadership roles, and to assist anyone who needed cultural support or guidance – even the senior teachers present. Seeing a teacher being gently instructed by a kuia provided a powerful cultural statement for students, parents and researchers alike. Seeing teachers and parents inventing and acting in skits in which they portrayed themselves getting things hilariously wrong, and laughing at themselves, had a powerful and positive impact on the students. Students came to see their own behaviour in quite a different light, in terms of its impact on other people. This was truly a responsive, social context for learning. In contrast with our first approach, our second approach to delivering professional training had a far more pervasive impact.

We were fascinated to see just how much learning took place over several workshop sessions of two or three hours. All groups focussed their energy and knowledge onto improving the wellbeing of the students. There was learning by doing, learning by sitting and watching, learning by listening, and learning by laughing and crying. Learning was driven by the many intergenerational relationships opened up and validated in this indigenous cultural context. In its turn, learning served to extend and deepen those relationships.

Conclusion

It is indeed possible to work at repairing and restoring broken relationships between indigenous and majority-culture peoples. In our experience, this is best facilitated through working in cultural contexts that require behaviour change on the part of the majority-culture partner. The lessons that this partner needs to learn are *to be* found in these contexts because the identity of the indigenous partner is not under threat, and they can be fully themselves. These very same contexts can also facilitate learning on the part of the indigenous partner. They can provide the cultural safety and support many indigenous people need if they are to change their long-standing patterns of behaving and responding in the presence of majority-culture partners. When genuine reciprocal learning occurs between majority-culture and indigenous partners, these contexts have the power to extend and deepen intercultural relationships. However, as we all know from life experience, this depth of learning and behaviour change requires a long-term commitment of time and energy from both partners. We think our first ten years together is a good beginning.

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