## Narratives from Culture Speaks [Resource 5]

Narratives from whānau contained within Culture Speaks (Bishop & Berryman, 2006) provide some valuable insights into Māori parent’s experiences of engagement or lack of engagement with schools. Use these five extracts and discussion frameworks across your team. Compare and contrast the findings from each one and consider what you have learned about connecting with Māori communities: whānau, hapū and iwi.

***Extract 1:***

*It is about respect and relationships. Respect and relationships between the staff of the school and the families whose children come here. At some primary schools, the Pākehā teachers have had to make space for Māori kids and their parents because we need to rely on each other in these small places. We need to know each other well and that means at school as well.*

*Secondary schools have hardly done anything to involve parents, even Pākehā parents because secondary school think they know what is best for the education of the children there. They don’t want parents to be part of it really. They don’t want to be accountable to us. They want the kids there from 9 to 3.30 and if the kids don’t learn then it’s everyone else’s fault but the school’s. Like ‘they come from low socio-economic homes’, ‘the parents can’t control the kids’, ‘they aren’t fed right’, ‘drugs’, ‘wagging’, ‘their friends’, ‘no gear’, etc. Anything else but the relationship and respect between the school and the students and the school and the parents (Parent, School 2).*

**Key questions:**

1. What barriers for home-school connections has this parent identified?
2. How can these barriers be addressed and overcome?
3. How is a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations relevant/not relevant to the situation described above?

***Extract 2:***

*The Europeans, when they came to New Zealand, were of British stock. The British Empire was expanding across the globe, and we soon understood that they thought of us as ignorant, that we were savages, and that we were arrogant. The world-view of the British at that time was that they were superior.*

*They were arrogant you know, it was kind of white supremacy in a sense at that time. So that was their prevailing point of view at the time and – so how did that affect us? Well, by the way they interacted with us at the very beginning. They tried to sow the seeds of a sense of unworthiness in us, in our very foundations, you know in our interactions, and in our relationships. We had to deal with the repercussions of being told that we are unworthy to the roots of our whole system, our society.*

*And that’s what we are still trying to do today with the Treaty of Waitangi and all that. That’s how it all still impacts on our kids. It’s all these things. It’s kind of why it’s still happening in our society. That’s what I believe. We are trying to talk about the kid’s education, but actually, to me, the issues are a lot deeper or bigger, yeah.*

*It’s really the value system. I think the question we should ask them is not what we have to give up to get ahead for him or her. You know, what is our desire, what is our greatest desire, together with education? You know, what is going to drive us and motivate us to be there? (Whānau member, School 5).*

**Key questions:**

1. What things would have to be evident in your school to convince whānau, hapū or iwi that you understood this position and were committed to ensuring their tamariki could enjoy educational success as Māori?
2. How could this narrative be used as a resource and incorporated into student learning, from staff and leadership professional development?

***Extract 3:***

*They fail academically, and then schools give the message that Māori only do well in kapahaka [performing group] and some sports. You know, if you are Māori, you can sing and play the guitar, that kind of mentality.*

*Some other examples of this mentality are that the kapahaka group is good enough to be pulled out for visitors, for prize-giving but not good enough to be part of the curriculum. The school says when and where they want the kapahaka group to perform. The kapahaka tutors aren’t paid, and the girls have to practise mainly out of class time. What does that say about the importance of Māori?*

*What are the real signs that being Māori matters at this college? Is it that we have a kapahaka group? Is it that parents, we have to resurrect our own whānau support group to support our daughters, or is it that the school runs a Māori Achiever’s group that supports the Māori students who are already achieving? Who does that work for? (Parent, School 3).*

**Key questions:**

1. What are the real signs that being Māori matter in your school?
2. What is culturally appropriate about this situation and what would be more culturally responsive?

***Extract 4:***

*Things Māori are not much in the syllabus. I mean they aren’t valued as much as western stuff is. Māori stuff is studied as something separate. It’s not part of everyday school. Simple things like how kids move on mats. Sitting on tables.*

*I guess some of the teachers need to have a greater experience of things Māori. Not just one night staying on a marae [cultural meeting space] because they have to. What would be of more use would be some longer time on a marae with the parents for exchange of ideas. I guess teachers need to experience our discomfort so that they will become more aware of how monocultural the education at this school is. Not a ‘them and us’, but I think, first time, I’d like to be in a place where I’m comfortable [laughter]. It needs to be where we can have our kids as well.*

*A place where our kuia and kuamatua [Māori elders] could guide us, and we could eat and work as partners (Parent, School 2).*

**Key questions:**

1. How does your school currently meet the aspirations of this parent?

* In the classroom:
* In the wider school context:

1. What do you need to do in order to meet the aspirations of this parent?

***Extract 5:***

Whānau expressed a desire for school to be more accessible:

*It’s only this year that I have actually felt that I could walk into a school ground, be in the midst of teachers and actually feel they’re just like me. You know I’m 35, and it’s only this year! I’ve got nine children counting the one at college now. Six of them have been to college, and three are still at primary school, and it’s only now, this year, that I felt that the teachers were – just people. There doesn’t seem to be a wall there anymore!*

***What made the difference?***

*I’m respected for who I am (Parent, School 1).*

***If you received a letter saying you could visit the college next week to see your children’s classes, would you come?***

*I don’t have a problem with that.*

*Neither do I.*

*I’d probably be a bit shy.*

*It’s impersonal when you get a bit of paper. No, I don’t think I’d come ­(Parents, School 1).*

***What might help you to come to school?***

*Last year the Parent’s Support group came to our door. They were starting a whānau group. We had a chat. We knew them, but apart from that, they told us what they’d like to do and what they were about. It wasn’t just once, you know it was several times. They’d pop in or ring up and come and have a chat. ‘Do you want to come to a meeting?’ It was making the school more accessible. We went together. They told me that hopefully, one of the outcomes from this study will be to make the school more accessible for whānau so that we have some say in our child’s education (Parent, School 1).*

**Key questions:**

1. What options are available for parents access your school?
2. What other options have/would you consider?

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