



poutama pounamu equity, excellence and belonging

learning and achieving for the future

The moral imperative - a personal and professional responsibility

POUTAMA POUNAMU: **A TREATY OF WAITANGI PERSPECTIVE**

The mandate to use the Treaty of Waitangi as a founding document is clearly stated in a number of policy documents (such as Ka Hikitia, the NZ Curriculum), but few schools value the Treaty of Waitangi enough to be able to confidently 'teach' its value.

For me the moral imperative for this work is about recognising as individuals and as a collective of educators in Aotearoa, our responsibilities to uphold the principles inherent in the Treaty of Waitangi so that we can collectively create a more socially just country. It's about critically evaluating how partnership, participation and protection play out for Māori and non-Māori in our schools and in our communities and then activating our agency to disrupt discourses and practices that perpetuate disparities in education that lead to inequity in our wider society.

Disruption alone is not enough - we need to dismantle what is not working, learn new theories, discourses and practices to reform our mainstream schools so that they are places where both treaty partners can enjoy the benefits that success in education can incur.

Through Ka Hikitia all educators have a responsibility to contribute to accelerating success for Māori learners as a part of the Treaty of Waitangi. For me it goes deeper than that. The fabric of our society - of which our education system is just one aspect - has deeply embedded systems and processes that serve to perpetuate the disparities and inequities that emerge out of our shared histories. That's not what I want for the future.

I want a future where all our children are able to be successful, where anyone and everyone is able to access the benefits of our society. That means, as an adult I have a responsibility to be part of promoting that future using any ethical means at my disposal. Yes - because it's expected of me as a professional responsibility but not just because of that. It's also an expectation I have of myself as a person who has benefited from the privileges that this society has to offer.

Recognising and unlearning deficit discourses associated with the Treaty

My genealogy reflects the bicultural partnership represented in the Treaty of Waitangi.

As a child and young adult, negative media images of Māori radicals each Waitangi day strongly influenced my understanding of the Treaty. This portrayal of Māori radicals perpetuated a very deficit perception of my own people and of the Treaty of Waitangi itself. This imagery positioned Māori as aggressive and non-Māori as the receivers of this aggression, thus representing the antithesis of a respectful partnership. I believe that this entrenched stereotypical narrative has prevented many New Zealanders from exploring beyond the pervasive media view of Māori people and the Treaty.

cultural identity strong and secure

equity, excellence & belonging

Simultaneous Success Trajectories

**Recognising and
and unlearning
deficit discourses
associated with
the Treaty Cont'd**

There were a few points of disruption that prompted me to question the integrity of journalists and the mainstream discourse and thus seek a better understanding of the Treaty and my role and responsibility within this constitutional framework.

**Working within the
Treaty of Waitangi**

A really key point for me is that metaphor of partnership within the Treaty. As Pākehā, we are the other partner and yes we could talk about the Crown, and wait for the government to do something, but on a day-to-day level we can actually do something practical too.

I don't see it as a right of mine, being a middle-class Pākehā woman, to do this work, to stand on a marae and talk about the things I do in this work, but I do see it as a responsibility of mine to actually say 'we were part of creating this problem, in fact we were a very big part of creating this problem, so we also need to be part of the solution. And part of that solution is to shut up and listen because we've done all the talking since about 1840 in this country. Historically, we've done all the talking.'

When I hear Māori talk about what they want, I hear 'we want our kids to have access to the riches of the Pākehā world, the riches of the Māori world, the riches of the global world.' I'd like that for my daughter as well. I'd like her to be bilingual [Māori and English] and I'd like the school to support that. So it's not just about Māori doing it for Māori.

**A bi-cultural
contribution**

Every single person has a cultural toolkit. It's just that by and large us white people have used our cultural toolkit to metaphorically bash everybody else [brown people] over the head and say ours is better than yours. When I grew up, I missed out on the opportunity to not only learn from another world-view, another way of being that is right here in this space Aotearoa. I didn't even know it existed. And I feel saddened by that.

We don't want to continue the discourses of the dominant Pākehā culture, perpetuating a status quo for Māori as the disadvantaged 'other'. Within Kia Eke Panuku we have the opportunity to negotiate the Treaty of Waitangi everyday with our Treaty partners, be they Māori or non-Māori.

We are developing relationships of trust in our schools and emerging from these relationships are more respectful shared understandings of the current realities for many of our Māori students and their whānau.

What happens in schools affects what our mokopuna will and can become and this has been so for Māori since formal education began in this country.

Through the conversations I have at every level I maintain an explicit and unapologetic focus on Māori students and more specifically, evidence of outcomes for Māori students. This enables me to keep both Treaty partners metaphorically 'present' in the work and facilitates the critical evaluation of the Treaty principles and how they will play out in our respective schools. I model the concept of partnership by ensuring that I position myself as a 'co-learner' as opposed to external expert, with the teachers, school leaders, facilitators, and academic directors I engage with. I see this being modelled by the Kia Eke Panuku team as we work collaboratively with our schools and with each other to develop our collective expertise.

A bi-cultural contribution Cont'd

By optimising every opportunity for ako - our ongoing, spiralling critical learning conversations - strategic change leadership teams are able to keep mauri ora at the centre of their thinking, interrogate their own positioning and practice as well as the positioning and practice of their colleagues. As they develop their relationships with each other they can simultaneously develop shared understandings about culturally responsive and relational pedagogy. I anticipate that the connections will become clearer for them, and more importantly how they might activate their agency to accelerate the learning of Māori students, both individually and collectively, will also become clearer.

Together we are finding the solutions that lie within culturally responsive and relational pedagogies for the benefit of our future wellbeing in Aotearoa, and especially for my mokopuna and yours.

Together we can contribute to a better future for our tamariki/mokopuna but we can't do it on our own and under the Treaty we don't have to do it on our own. We each have a part to play.

Contributing to 'our' future

What do we want the Treaty of Waitangi to look like today and into the future?

One of the exciting possibilities for me is that we do have the potential here in New Zealand to change the course of the future. There's the saying "If we keep on doing what we've always done, we'll get what we've always got". There are enough warning signs that disparity is not reducing in our society and I believe we each need to take a long hard look at how we, as individuals and as educators, are contributing to the future.

We have to each ask ourselves - are we part of perpetuating the status quo or are we part of promoting a more equitable future? I believe we have a unique situation here in New Zealand. We are small enough and connected enough that if we truly make it a priority we can make a difference. We can create equitable futures for all our children.

If education's role is to help transform our society into a 'fair and just' society, then we all have a role in getting the basics about the foundation stone for our current society right. And 'getting the basics right' means developing a strategic vision in our schools that enables our teachers and children to use the Treaty as a powerful learning tool that cuts across all ages and all ethnic groups, and that helps build a shared view of a bicultural, bilingual nation based on the principles of partnership, protection and participation.

That means we all need to step up to that responsibility. It's not something that we can abrogate responsibility for and leave to the politicians, or to Māori, or to Pākehā, or to someone else. It's a responsibility we each have as citizens, as adults and as educators. It's urgent, it's important and it's exciting.