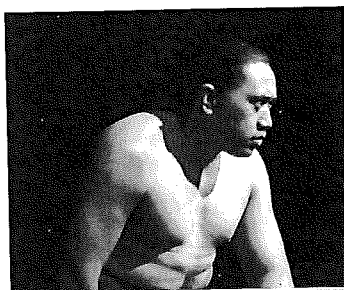


PRIORITISING INDIGENOUS AND CULTURAL WORLDVIEWS: REFLECTIONS ON THE 2006 JOINT CONFERENCE OF THE APS AND NZPS

By Michelle Levy, Bicultural Director, NZPsS Executive & co-chair NSCBI

Delegates of the Australian and New Zealand Psychological Societies were welcomed on 26 September 2006 to the city of Auckland by Ngati Whatua. Following the powhiri, the Conference was opened by Dr Pita Sharples, a Member of Parliament and co-leader of the Māori Party. Dr Sharples reminded us of the opportunity provided by the Conference to learn from each other, to have conversations about cultural and spiritual wellbeing, and to share indigenous ways of cultural expression. The powhiri and words from Dr Sharples set a solid platform for the next few days in which the Conference theme of *Psychology Bridging the Tasman: Science, Culture and Practice* was explored; culture firmly placed at the forefront as indigenous perspectives permeated keynote addresses, symposia and presentations.



Keynote speaker Dr Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal explored a modern approach to Mana, and Dr Tracy Westerman describing the value of unique service provision for Aboriginal Australians. Symposia, too, were infused with indigenous and Pacific

worldviews. Julie Wharewera-Mika, Erana Cooper and Melissa Taitimu presented a symposium in which they shared the struggles and rewards inherent in their work supporting Māori and Pacific students through their psychology training at Auckland University. Pasifika wellbeing was the focus of a symposium presented by Siautu Alefaio, Dr Monique Faleafa, Denise Kingi, Tansy Brown, and Dr Siale Foliaki. Combining a variety of different perspectives, these practitioners aimed to facilitate deeper understandings enabling more effective engagement, assessment and therapeutic practices when working with Pasifika peoples'.

NSCBI members, Moana Waitoki, Dr Neville Robertson and Michelle Levy, along with counterparts from the APS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Psychology Interest Group combined to present a symposium exploring trans-Tasman experiences of decolonising the psychology curriculum and the teaching of cultural competency. Consistent with the keynotes and symposia, indigenous voices also featured throughout the individual paper presentation streams. Once again, students from the Māori and Psychology Unit from the University of Waikato, under the leadership of Unit Director Linda Waimarie Nikora, rose to the challenge and were active participants in the Conference.

Another notable event was the presentation of the Henry Rongomau Bennett Memorial Scholarships. This programme, established by the Henry Rongomau Bennett Memorial Scholarship Board with funding from the Ministry of Health, supports leadership in Maori

mental health, competence in te ao Māori, and clinical excellence in mental health. It was fitting that the 2006 Conference was the location for the presentation of three awards to emerging psychologists, Julie Wharewera-Mika, Rosina Patterson, and Tracey Haitana

As with all Conferences, opportunities to socialise, renew old acquaintances and make new ones are important. On Wednesday night a dinner was held for indigenous presenters, members of NSCBI, the APS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Psychology Interest Group, and others supporting the kaupapa. With over 40 people attending, other diners were no doubt left very perplexed by our very loud rendition of *Waltzing Matilda!*

Keynote addresses, symposia and paper presentations focused on a variety of topic areas, reflecting the diverse interests of the psychology discipline. However, common to all was the prioritising of indigenous and cultural world views. That indigenous and cultural perspectives permeated this joint Conference was a fitting farewell to our outgoing President, Keriata Paterson. Keriata has given over eight years of dedicated service to the Society, having as her priority during that time the enhancement of the profession to better serve the aspirations of Maori. In her 2006 Presidential Address, Keriata spoke of resistance in this profession being a continuing reality, emphasising the collective responsibility of the profession to better support those who are the pioneers and future leaders.

Editors of the 2005 special issue of the *New Zealand Journal of Psychology: Maori Psychological Theory, Practice and Research*, Dr Marewa Glover and Dr Paul Hirini, though acknowledging an emerging process of blended knowledge and practice, identified that Maori knowledge bases continued to be obscured within psychology. Keriata reminded us of the long hikoi (*journey*) we are on, recalling that when she joined the Society there were not many brown faces at Conference. The 2006 Joint Conference of the APS and NZPsS provided a sense of reassurance that although the journey may be a long one, we are indeed progressing. Here in Aotearoa we have the opportunity and potential to be pioneers in the development of psychologies applicable and relevant to Maori and peoples of the Pacific; to better understand what science, culture and practice means when indigenous and cultural worldviews are prioritised.

