

## Psychologists practising in the presence of history<sup>1</sup>

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Aroha is a clinical psychologist with iwi affiliations to Waikato-Maniapoto, Rongowhakaata, Ruapani and Ngati Porou. She has a number of areas of interest including working with children and women who experience mental health issues; child care and protection; custody and placement issues for Māori children and young people and professional supervision. Guided by an interest in bicultural practice Aroha has developed workshops focusing on the interplay between bicultural competence and bicultural practice.

Ingrid has recently completed a PhD in processes of Treaty- focused change in Aotearoa and works nationally as a Pakeha Treaty educator and consultant. Her background is in social and community psychology. She is co-author of a chapter in the NZPSS publication "Professional Practice of Psychology in Aotearoa New Zealand."

### Aroha Panapa

Ko Taupiri te maunga  
Ko Waikato te awa  
He piko, he taniwha, he piko, he taniwha  
Kei te taha o toku papa – No Waikato-Maniapoto ahau  
Kei te taha o toku mama  
Ko Manawaru te maunga  
Ko Te Arai-te-uru te awa  
Ko Manutuke to hau kainga  
Ko Rongowhakaata te iwi  
E tu au ko Aroha Waipara-Panapa

Many Māori have long considered psychology a dangerous profession. Dangerous for students, practitioners and recipients of its services and products.

As a Māori student of psychology, I learned that it was not okay to be Māori. I learned that while my unique perspective and insights were acknowledged, it was my ability to conform and articulate a non-Māori world view of psychology that was valued. I learned that even in my oppression – that somehow I was less than my Māori male colleagues. For I saw their views valued over mine – that they were somehow considered to be more of an authority on things Māori than I was. I was not unique in my observations – for other wāhine Māori had experienced the same.

And so, I passed on my 'words of wisdom' to the generation of wāhine who followed behind. I encouraged them to put their 'Māori ness' to the side – to do what they needed to do in order to get through. Like many others, I held the view that once we had graduated – we would be free to be Māori and that as *qualified Māori*, we would be able to make significant changes.

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Today, I heard from the same wāhine that they had also passed these words of wisdom on successive generations. I felt shame and guilt about the legacy I had passed on – that I had encouraged and condoned dangerous practice. I felt rage.

Rage that I had done this thing – that I had encouraged generations of wāhine Māori to do this thing. Rage that I had felt it necessary to deny who I was. Rage that this legacy continued. And I decided, 'No more'. I decided I could no longer allow us to live with the illusion, the lie of our success, the legacy of shame. I know as I share these words – the dirty little secret – that many of my Māori colleagues, friends and whanau also feel whakamā for what we have done.

It is time for us to expose this legacy for what is. For us all – Māori and non-Māori alike – to share and take responsibility for ensuring such a legacy does not continue. As we ponder how to achieve change, I ask the question – "If we are willing to allow this legacy to continue – what then are we willing to do to the more vulnerable who access our services?"

Over the years, I have had a number of Māori whanau say to me – "when a psychologist sees our kids – they give them back to us wrong". The children fit even less than they did and their whanau are unable to engage with them

1 The Psychological Society wishes to thank Aroha and Ingrid for preparing their keynote at very short notice, based upon positively received workshops held the previous day.

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in meaningful ways. I acknowledge, that often when Māori whanau engage with psychologists – it is typically due to a whole range of issues – however, that does not make their view of us as dangerous any less valid.

I acknowledge that there has been a gradual shift in clinical practice. As clinicians, many of us have come to add in some cultural practices (e.g. Karakia) when working with Māori whanau. There is a greater awareness and willingness to engage in *cultural* practices. That is a good thing. Yet, I am also aware that after the cultural aspects have been 'attended to,' clinicians often continue with the assessment or therapy *the same* as for any other non-Māori family. While some state that "any therapy is better than no therapy", I would argue that poor practice is *dangerous practice*.

I have also heard some clinicians express consternation when working with kaumatua. Some have espoused a sense of being unable to manage or control the *cultural* aspects. For others – a concern that kaumatua appear to place more significance on whanaungatanga, whakapapa and geographical location than on the *clinical* information gained during an assessment. Such views reinforce the notion of *culture* as additional and highlight a significant gap in understanding. Further, such views fail to recognise clinical practice *is* a cultural practice; that cultural practices are clinical practices.

It is important to recognise that it is not just clinical practice which should be considered dangerous. Dangerous practice extends to *all* aspects of psychological work. For example, at a recent workshop, a participant told me: "I just work with the brain and behaviour. There's nothing cultural about that." My response was, "That's a cultural view".

As psychologists, if we are to reduce the level of dangerousness in our practice – then we have to actively reflect on and examine the premises on which our psychological practices are built. I recognise that this is not an easy task. Yet this is something we must all do – not just Māori students or practitioners. All of us who engage in psychological work must examine and take responsibility for the work that we do, the ideas that we share. We can no longer be unaware.

So, as we practice – fully aware of our shared history and legacy – we must ask for ways to change. We must start with ourselves – with our beliefs about who we are and who we expect to be. We must challenge and develop our training programmes so that they do more than reflect an acknowledgement of things Māori. We must create an environment where Māori students no longer feel they have to put aside their Māori ness in order to succeed. We must actively create a legacy we are proud to pass on.

## Dr Ingrid Huygens

Aroha, you have done what many Māori keynote speakers have done before you – to present us with a wero about the pain of not being free or safe to be Māori in our contemporary world. Such a challenge as yours can be the beginning of a painful but fruitful conversation. I thank you, because it is a mark of trust in the relationship that you present the pain, and the ensuing challenge, to us. I will do my best, on behalf of non-Māori psychologists, to respond.

My parents, who were Dutch, migrated here believing that they were coming to a bilingual country of harmonious race relations. They found instead a country maintaining European and British mono-culturalism and racism. The indigenous people were treated negatively and their language seldom heard. I have held onto their dreams of a trustworthy relationship between Māori and settlers, and a bilingual future. Those beliefs are the source of my passion for my work as a Pakeha Treaty educator. I am a community psychologist who spends part of every week doing Treaty education for new migrants, Pakeha locals, and organisations.

Learning to "practise in the presence of history" (Nairn & NSCBI, 1997, p. 135) is a powerful notion for psychologists. It suggests that we must practise not only in the context of contemporary assessments, as we have been taught, but in the context of those looking over our shoulders. In the Māori metaphor, they would be those towards whom you face as you go into the future. A past Society president, Ray Nairn, together with the National Standing Committee on Bicultural Issues, developed the phrase from concepts used by Samoan family therapist Kiwi Tamasese and Māori psychologist Donna Awatere, in reference to Māori and Pacific clients:

To treat them in the absence of history would be to incriminate them, and exacerbate their self-blame...our continual endeavour to treat these problems in the context of history, of racism and sexism, makes the difference.

Taimalieutu Kiwi Tamasese (1993), p. 11, cited in Nairn & NSCBI (1997)

Kiwi is saying that unless we treat someone in the presence of history we may incriminate them. The concept 'incriminate' is important for those working closely with criminal justice, family court or social welfare systems. We know from the negative statistics that contemporary New Zealand society continues to be dangerous for Māori and continues to 'incriminate' them. It is in our efforts to treat people in the context of history that we can make a difference.

I want to encourage psychologists in our responses to the challenges that Aroha has made, and which indeed have been presented to us over the past 20 years by Māori keynote speakers. We have a number of encouraging foundations to support us in our response.

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For instance, although our discipline originally developed in North America and Britain, we have our own unique

political and social history to inform us. The growing wealth of research and practice by indigenous psychologists in Aotearoa is open for us all to learn from and draw upon. Our Psychological Society has a unique National Standing Committee on Bicultural Issues (NSCBI) which has influenced the Society's decisions and development. With the guidance of NSCBI, and drawing upon the Canadian code's emphasis on collective accountabilities and social justice, our Society created a unique Code of Ethics incorporating te Tiriti o Waitangi. Te Tiriti is applied not only in the section on Social Justice and Responsibility, but is woven through our code as a framework for the Dignity of Persons and Peoples, for Responsible Caring, and for Integrity in Relationships. Together, the ethical principle link easily with our country's founding agreement concerning the relationship between two peoples.

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If your response at this point is, "I don't actually know the Treaty or our Code very well", then that is a sign that you need to leave with some homework! Withdrawing to do further learning is in fact an appropriate response to painful challenges. It is seldom fruitful to respond with an instant "Will you forgive me?" It is generally more useful to do some homework, go on a journey of learning and understanding, and to ask oneself, Why has this challenge come now? What is the background to the challenge? What is its historical context? What might be a useful response? Such personal homework allows us to re-enter a dialogue with Māori colleagues and with our organisations wherein we are sincerely conversing "in the presence of history".

Considering the unique history of the psychological profession here, and our unique professional Society with its declared commitments, there are now a growing number of assumptions we can make about our collective knowledge base.

#### Key understandings for psychologists

Firstly, we are coming to appreciate the continuity of Te Ao Māori, historically and into the future. Given the stream of laws passed by settler governments over the past century and a half, aimed to dismantle the Māori world, this continuity is a triumph. We can be deeply grateful to the whanau and hapu who determined that their world would survive to issue the challenges made today.

Secondly, we can assume that psychologists in New Zealand understand the primacy of the Māori text (Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Feb, 1840), in contrast to the English one (The Treaty of Waitangi, April/May 1840). The English text first appeared in history several months after the signing at Waitangi. It says Māori will hand over their sovereignty to the British. I have recently been attending the Waitangi Tribunal hearings on Ngapuhi understandings of He Whakaputango and Te Tiriti. The oral history and tribal records held by Ngapuhi suggest that rangatira were certainly aware of the English draft, and had rejected it. In its place, Williams and Busby created the Māori text, in which Māori kept their sovereignty on their own

terms. To make arrangements for the British, they granted a more delegated function of kawanatanga, allowing the British to live here under their own laws and governance, rather like another hapu. Our Society is continuing to develop a greater understanding and stronger commitment to this Māori text, Te Tiriti o Waitangi. For instance, there is a growing appreciation of the fourth article of Te Tiriti as important in our work as psychologists. In the fourth article, or spoken promise, the Governor promises to protect ritenga Māori alongside European religions. International law says that anything agreed before signing is part of a treaty agreement. So the fourth article of Te Tiriti is yet another strengthening of the guarantee to Māori that they would receive institutional support for their own cultural forms and practices.

A third key understanding for New Zealand psychologists is that once a settler government was established, the Pakeha settlers passed laws and policies intended to replace Māori cultural and authority with those of Pakeha. These laws and institutional policies were in breach of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Their enactment created dispossession and loss - becoming the historical context that affects Māori lives today.

A fourth key understanding used in many psychology training programmes and workplaces is the 'three principles' of the Treaty. Such principles were originally developed by the Waitangi Tribunal to find middle ground between the opposing positions on sovereignty in the two texts. Three of these principles - 'partnership', 'protection' and 'participation' - were popularised by the 1988 Royal Commission on Social Policy, first in their briefing booklets, then in their final report, and thence into the health and social services sectors.

When we place together our key background understandings and our commitment to our Tiriti-based Code of Ethics, we can see that students having to "put their Māoriness to the side" when entering psychology training programmes, and of children "coming back wrong" when treated by psychologists are serious challenges indeed. Our practice still has a long way to go to live up to our aspirations.

#### Do the Treaty texts matter in practice?

I say yes, both because I am a Treaty educator, and because our Society says yes.

The Māori text is important because it clarifies that Māori will retain their own cultural institutions and their control over how those institutions will continue into the future.

The Māori text is important because it gives us clarity about the role of the settlers' institutions. Our institutions were not supposed to be imposed on the Māori world to the detriment of whanau and hapu.

The Māori text is important because it is the one that many non-government organisations (NGOs) have aspired to follow. Because they are not governed by statute, NGOs have been free to reshape their constitutions and structures to express Māori political power and authority at the highest decision making levels. It is worth noting that the Māori text is avoided by governments because it brings into question the constitutional foundation of a settler-established government. For them, adoption of the Māori text would require negotiation with Māori about constitutional arrangements. The only two political parties who include the Māori text in

their policies are the Māori Party and the Green Party. So in giving primacy to the Māori text, our Society, and many other NGOs, are ahead of our current government.

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I could also say "yes" and "no" about whether the texts of the Treaty matter in our current practice. Statutory organisations, set up by government statutes, follow the English text of the Treaty in assuming control over and responsibility for Māori. This means that those psychologists who work for government institutions in health, education, justice or social welfare, are often in a position of seeing their organisations claim the final say about Māori clients, Māori programmes and Māori authority in the organisation. Māori culture is given a small place within the institution, and ultimately held to be accountable to Pakeha decision-makers. Māori cultural consultation, cultural expertise and Māori models of healing are maintained with low or ambiguous authority. This contrast between our professional aspirations as psychologists, and our workplace constraints, creates tension. The institution says that Māori do not have decision-making authority about the place of their world and culture, whereas our professional commitments say that we support such authority and cultural justice for Māori.

To be pragmatic, the English text in Articles 2 and 3 also gives Māori very clear protections of their possessions and culture, as do the three principles of partnership, protection and participation. So if your institution shies away from the constitutional implications of the Māori text, you can nevertheless use either the Treaty or the three principles to assert your professional aspirations and ethics. As the Ngāpuhi kuia Dame Mira Szalay has said: "There is only one thing wrong with tokenism – there just isn't enough of it!"

*Therefore, as psychologists we are in a position to make change in New Zealand today. We can sit down, dialogue, plan and enact change in our organisations and training programmes, not because we are so radical, but because we are in the solid and secure position of drawing upon our Code of Ethics and our Society's professional commitments*

To conclude, practising in the presence of history puts us in a very strong position as psychologists. Professionally, we are concerned with human wellbeing, and social and cultural justice. We generally have high professional status and authority in our organisations, second only to the medical profession. Our Code of Ethics draws on Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a framework. Our professional association is an NGO that gives primacy to the Māori text.

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plan and enact change in our organisations and training programmes, not because we are so radical, but because we are in the solid and secure position of drawing upon our Code of Ethics and our Society's professional commitments. We can lead change by 'pulling' our institutions and workplaces towards political and cultural justice for Māori. From a history of colonisation and its legacy of pain and guilt described by Aroha, we can create a different future – a professional legacy we are indeed proud to pass on.

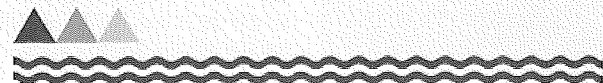
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- Nairn, R. & The National Standing Committee on Bicultural Issues (1997). Cultural justice and ethics in psychological practice. In H. Love & W. Whittaker (eds). *Practice issues for clinical and applied psychologists in New Zealand*. Wellington: The New Zealand Psychological Society, pp. 127-35.

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