

## Opening Address to the National Māori Graduates of Psychology Symposium 2002: Making a difference

Linda Waimarie Nikora, Michelle Levy, Moana Waitoki,  
Bridgette Masters-Awatere, & Professor Ngahuia Te Awekotuku

*The Māori & Psychology Research Unit,  
Department of Psychology  
University of Waikato*

Tapiri atu ki nga mihi kua mihi, he mihi tenei ano kia koutou. This symposium has been organised around five themes. Each one of us here, Michelle, Bridgette, Moana, Ngahuia, and I will take a few moments to briefly introduce, and explain, a particular theme, and its purpose. You can then make an informed choice about which one to attend. Because so many exciting and varied papers have come in, we attempted to arrange them in congruent yet creative ways, beginning with ...

### **Kia Matāra: Negotiating Challenges in Māori Development**

The first is Kia Matāra: Negotiating the Challenges in Māori Development. Kia Matāra urges us to be watchful, to be alert, and for good reason. In many areas of our society, Māori live on the edge. On a daily basis, they negotiate the challenges of staying alive, keeping sheltered and warm, and of avoiding abuse and violence. For some, the challenge is as basic as having access to an unpolluted water supply. Kia Matāra is about our basic human rights to life, and to grow old with dignity. It is about survival.

But life is about more than survival. As Māori, it is about the right to share in the richness of our heritage and culture, to gain strength and assurance from those Māori identity groups that we are a part of. It is about wellbeing within the bonds of Whanaungatanga: confidence in the leadership of our hapu, and strength in the capacity and vision of our iwi (though it is acknowledged that for many Māori, the quest to find out such basics is in itself a survival process).

More importantly, Kia Matāra is about our responsibilities to those who come after us. It is about our responsibility to ensure

that our children and grandchildren inherit an environment and heritage that is better than that which we were born to. It is also our responsibility to ensure that those Māori psychologists that come after us have better resources to work with, within friendlier environments.

Kia Matāra is about addressing our survival needs, our rightful heritage, and our movement into the future. In short, it is about our self-determination, our rangatiratanga. Māori Psychologists can make a difference.

### **Kia mau: Recruitment and Retention**

Within Māoridom, our greatest resource is people. Within psychology at Waikato, we have 190 Māori students who have chosen psychology as a major: 154 undergraduates, and 36 graduates. This is the workforce of tomorrow. To ensure the capacity and potency of that workforce our institutions must respond on a number of levels. We must ensure that Māori continue to choose psychology as a vehicle through which change and better circumstances for Māori can occur. There is the requirement to ensure that Māori feel welcome, supported, productive and challenged rather than overwhelmed and confused. We must ensure that Māori make real choices about the specialty areas pursued within psychology and not be herded into any one area by default. We must ensure that the pursuit of higher degrees remains a real pathway, not simply for the privileged few. While we are about these activities, there is also the vital need to provide an academic context for Māori in which we can feel safe, and can adequately examine, explore, experiment with, and compose our rapidly evolving identities, cultural practices, and

---

realities – in short, what it means to be Māori.

With the right learning environment, the appropriate support, encouragement, and mentoring, the Māori psychology student of today will, as a graduate of psychology, help to make a difference.

### **Tuhia mai, whiua atu: Research and Methodology**

Kua mutu te wa kia a te Pēhi ma... seventy years ago, Apirana Ngata and Te Rangihiroa agreed that the time for research on Māori by non-Māori writers had to be met and surpassed by the published works and scholarship of Māori. The situation has not changed. Tuhia mai, the act of recording, inscribing, putting the words down, is an imperative for us all, as is whiua atu, the dissemination of the material compiled, appreciated, and discovered: and there is a whole world out there.

The Māori world is not averse to new ideas and technologies, new ways of behaviour, or new ways of conceiving of ourselves. The Māori world is one of ongoing changes, and challenges, too. But there are two types of change: the type where one makes a conscious choice to do something differently, and the more insidious type that is either inflicted upon, or after a time, suddenly realised. Research is an important and vibrant pathway. In the search and creation of knowledge, and the rediscovery and examination of taonga forgotten, discarded, or stolen. Good research opens up new pathways, and starts new journeys; it directs and influences policy, and it empowers and inspires the people. It provides a sound foundation upon which we can make a future, and a difference.

### **Tinia mai: Interventions and Treatment**

Tinia mai means change, positive change, putting on new garments, assuming new strengths, taking on new confidence to face the world. For many decades, Māori have been subjected to the medical procedures, psychological interventions, and monocultural therapies that may have worked in other countries and societies but were often inappropriate or sorely transplanted in this context and space: and

such practices do continue today. Within this theme, we consider those ways of dealing with and resolving issues and crises that occur in the Māori world, and can be confronted positively in a Māori, or collaborative and culturally balanced, way.

### **Taitaia i te ahi manuka: Pride Upon the Skin**

Taia o moko, hei hoa matenga mou... the words of Netana Rakuraku that describe marking on the skin, Ta Moko, as there forever, a statement of identity, purpose, and beauty. Tatu flourished throughout the Pacific, and reached new heights here in Aotearoa, as Ta Moko. Despite active missionary and settler condemnation, the patterned face survived well into last century; Ta moko never ever vanished; it has always been here, on the chins of kuia, on the limbs of mokopuna. In recent years, we have seen a dramatic resurgence in the art, and its popularity. It has become an emblem of identity, a symbol of political resistance, a glamorous fashion accessory, a feature of the global arts and performance scene. Although te ahi manuka, the blended soot of ancient pigment, has been replaced by designer inks, the desire comes from the same place. This theme explores parts of that place; Ta moko concerns people's perception of you, and your perception of yourself. Ta moko is about making a difference, beyond the surface, beneath the skin.

### **He kupu whakamutunga**

Over the last two centuries, Māori people have been deprived of agency, or as various writers say, we have been the victims of a colonial process, which has effectively, and invisibly, shaped how we see ourselves, how we see others, how we behave, and how they behave towards us. Where disaffection, alienation, and distress have occurred, where the realities of cultural change have seemed too severe, decisions have frequently been made for us. Supposedly, for our own good.

Over the last two decades, we have begun to make those decisions for ourselves; we have challenged not only the colonial process, but how it is effected in the clinical and community environments.

We have begun to assume some control of our own sector.

This symposium has been part of that claiming control, an endeavour, an exercise in tino rangatiratanga, to which you have all so generously contributed.

With our heritage we can move forward with pride. For our own good, hei oranga ngakau mo te iwi.

No reira, tena koutou katoa.