

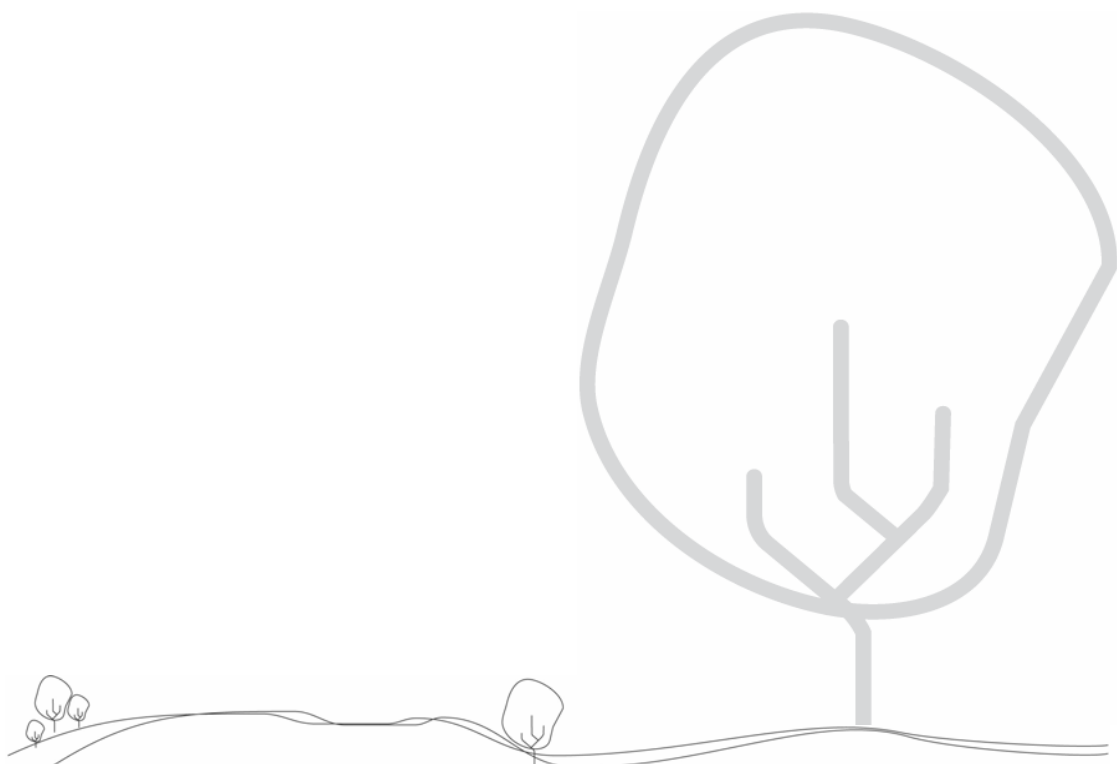


Whakawhanaungatanga

Partnerships in bicultural development in early childhood care and education

Jenny Ritchie and Cheryl Rau

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1. Aims, objectives, and research questions

Introduction

This project aimed to build on the theoretical and methodological foundations established in a doctoral research project recently completed by Jenny Ritchie (2002). The intention was to utilise collaborative partnerships between teacher educators, professional development providers, and early childhood educators, in order to identify effective strategies for building and strengthening relationships between early childhood educators and whānau/hapū/iwi Māori within early childhood care and education settings. The research was premised on findings of Ritchie (2002): that strengthening provision of the bicultural aspirations of the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996b), within mainstream early childhood education and care settings is a central professional responsibility for educators; and that a key strategy for achieving this objective is for educators to build relationships with the whānau Māori of children in their settings (whakawhanaungatanga). This greater participation by whānau Māori in mainstream early childhood settings is facilitated through educator attitudes that maintain a climate and environment that are respectful and reflect Te Reo me ōna Tikanga. In centres that reflect a whakawhanaungatanga approach, whānau are welcomed and invited into the early childhood centre, eventually working in partnership with the professional educators to contribute to programme design, implementation, and assessment. These partnerships between whānau and educators can enhance the provision of programmes that are both culturally responsive and culturally validating for Māori children and their whānau. A further context for this study was the master's research of Cheryl Rau (2002) that identified and employed key concepts in Kaupapa Māori education and research theories, focusing on intergenerational transmission of Māori values through whānau relationships and practices. Rau's research also identified whanaungatanga as a Māori-preferred pedagogy that empowers Māori through collaborative learning processes.

Māori participation in early childhood education still lags behind that of non-Māori (45 percent as opposed to 68 percent—Ministry of Education, 2004). In recent years, Māori children's share of enrolments in Kōhanga Reo has declined, while the proportion who participate in education and care centres has increased. In July 2002, enrolments of Māori children in Kōhanga Reo were only 32 percent of all Māori enrolments in early childhood education (Ministry of Social Development, 2003). This compares to figures from 1996, when Kōhanga Reo were the largest providers of early childhood education for Māori (46.3 percent of Māori children; Statistics New Zealand/Tatauranga Aotearoa, 2004). This trend has major implications, for both the majority of Māori children who are participating in early childhood education and care settings other than Kōhanga Reo, and the providers of these services. Whakawhanaungatanga approaches for involving whānau Māori within early childhood centres have the potential to increase Māori participation in early childhood education, since Māori seek educational experiences that validate their identity as Māori, and offer Te Reo and tikanga, including key Māori values such as a sense of whanaungatanga (Hirini, 1997; Pere, 1982; G. H. Smith, 1995, 1997). Surveys of Māori families have indicated that even those who send their children to conventional early childhood centres and schools, rather than to kōhanga reo and Kura Kaupapa, still want their children to learn their language and expect that this aspiration will be supported within this regular educational provision (AGB/McNair, 1992; M. Durie, 2001; Else, 1997; Te Puni Kōkiri/Ministry of Māori Development, 1998a, 1998b).

An example of a whanaungatanga approach from the previous research (Ritchie, 2002) was that of a kindergarten teacher, who related how she built a relationship with a Māori child's grandmother that led to this kuia providing traditional stories and local Māori knowledge to include in the kindergarten's programme. Wally Penetito (1998) has written that "Reclaiming whānau/hapū/iwi histories must be an important element in the knowledge-to-identity equation and one everybody can get involved in" (p. 105). Positive identity is an important aspect of educational success for Māori children (A. Durie, 1997). Following the previous research, the current project intended to explore ways in which employing a

whanaungatanga approach in mainstream early childhood settings might contribute to enhanced educational experiences and hence positive outcomes for Māori children.

This research project also aimed to address the problem, identified previously by Ritchie (2002), that mainstream educators and teacher educators lack confidence and competence in delivering education programmes that are bicultural in content and process, in line with the expectations of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996b). The research kaupapa was also consistent with Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations to protect and sustain taonga¹ Māori and enable Māori to exercise tino rangatiratanga² over their taonga.

The preamble of Te Tiriti, the version that was signed by over 500 Māori chiefs (Orange, 1987; Walker, 2004), clearly states the intention of the Crown to preserve for Māori their tino rangatiratanga and their land, in order that they might continue to live in peace and quiet. The preamble also introduces the Articles of Te Tiriti as “laws” by which settlers are invited to coexist in this country under the governance of the Crown, ceded in Article 1 (Way, 2000, p. 19). Article 2 of the Māori version of Te Tiriti guaranteed to Māori their tino rangatiratanga, which has been explained as “full authority, status, and prestige with regard to their (Māori) possessions and interests” (Waitangi Tribunal, cited in Brookfield, 1989, p. 5). This can also be interpreted as self-determination (Irwin, 1993; G. H. Smith, 1997). Tino rangatiratanga included Māori control over lands, villages, and homes, and everything else of value—“te tino rangatiratanga o o ratou wenua o ratou kainga me o ratou taonga katoa”, as stated in Article 2 of the Māori version of Te Tiriti (Kawharu, 1989, p. 317; Sharp, 2001, p.38). Article 3 of Te Tiriti reinforces the intention of the Crown to protect Māori interests and extends to them the same rights and privileges as enjoyed by British subjects (Sharp, 2001), while retaining “their own sovereignty of Indigenous citizenship” (Moon, 2002, p. 130). A verbal protocol, read to the assembled chiefs at the Waitangi signing, and considered by many to be the fourth article, affirmed that Māori beliefs and customs (ritenga) had equal standing with those of the Christian faiths represented by the missionaries present (Colenso, 1890; Moon & Biggs, 2004; Orange, 1987, 2004).

The whanaungatanga approach that is the focus of this project satisfies both the tino rangatiratanga aspiration for Māori control over mātauranga Māori, and the Tiriti-based notion of “partnership”. The Waitangi Tribunal believes that partnership means that the Crown is required to assume responsibility for:

- enabling the Māori voice to be heard;
- allowing Māori perspectives to influence the type of provision delivered to Māori and the form of its delivery;
- empowering Māori to design and provide services for Māori; and
- presenting a coherent and accountable face in order to sustain a high-quality relationship with its Treaty partner (Waitangi Tribunal, 2001, p. xxvi).

A whanaungatanga approach is also consistent with *Te Whāriki*'s ‘principle’ of Whānau Tangata-Family and Community, and ‘strand’ of Mana Whenua-Belonging (Ministry of Education, 1996b, pp. 14–15). The Family and Community principle is that “The wider world of the family and community is part of the early childhood curriculum” (p. 14). In the section “Ngā Taumata Whakahirahira”, *Te Whāriki* states that one of the key values within te ao Māori is that children are supported in knowing whanaungatanga: “Ko tetahi o ngā tino uara o te ao Māori kia mōhio ngā mokopuna ki te whanaungatanga” (p. 33). The Belonging strand requires that “Children and their families feel a sense of belonging”, so that both children and their families experience an environment in which “connecting links with the family and the wider world are affirmed and extended”, and “where they know they have a place” (p. 15).

In this project, the term ‘early childhood educators’ is used for the following range of professionals, all of whom work within the field of early childhood education and care: teachers within early childhood settings

¹ Taonga are things which are highly prized, including both tangibles such as children and land, and intangibles such as Te Reo Māori.

² Tino rangatiratanga is literally, the highest chieftainship or authority, also translated as self-determination.

other than Kōhanga Reo; teacher educators; professional development providers; specialist educators; and educators working under the maru³ of an Iwi Education Initiative. Within this research, we are designating programmes that are founded in and reflect an intention to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi as “Tiriti-based programmes”.

Aims of the project

The research questions/aims of project were to:

- articulate ways that early childhood educators in settings other than Kōhanga Reo encourage the participation of whānau Māori within early childhood education settings; and
- identify the strategies by which early childhood educators implement their understandings of commitments derived from Te Tiriti o Waitangi and expressed in the bicultural early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, through the delivery of Tiriti-based programmes.

³ Maru is power, authority, or shelter.

2. Research design and methodology

Introduction

The New Zealand Ministry of Education's (2002) strategic plan for early childhood contains "a focus on collaborative relationships for Māori" that seeks to "create an environment where the wider needs of Māori children, their parents, and whānau (families) are recognised and acknowledged" (p. 16), opportunities are generated for whānau, hapū and iwi (tribes) to work with early childhood services, and early childhood services are encouraged to become more responsive to the needs of Māori children. Mason Durie (2001) has endorsed the need for collaborative relationships within education in Aotearoa/New Zealand such as partnerships between iwi and mainstream education services.

The philosophy and methodologies utilised in this project aimed to reflect this commitment to collaboration as an integral process. Drawing upon a kaupapa Māori framework, whilst simultaneously informed by an eclectic and emergent paradigm drawing from Western collaborative and narrative early childhood research models, our research collaboration represents a convergence of methodological pathways. Just as Tilly and Tamati Reedy worked alongside Margaret Carr and Helen May in a parallel process to write *Te Whāriki*, we aimed to honour the complexities of multiple paradigms, through enacting a restorying process that enabled convergence to emerge from a willingness to engage with divergence.

Our commitment to collaboration and inclusion, and the resulting emergent paradigm, has allowed for flexibility and variety dependent on and responsive to the expressed preferences of different participant groupings. Data were drawn from the narratives of teachers, Playcentre educators, professional development providers, an Iwi Education Authority, and specialist and teacher educators, as they chose to share them. These co-researchers also participated in individual and collective co-theorising hui. Over 30 initial and co-theorising individual and group interviews were conducted and transcribed. Written contributions were also received by email and through the project's interactive website, which was designed to open the project to interested early childhood educators nationwide.

Kaupapa Māori

Amid the shifting tides that are moving towards an increasing recognition and validation of Māori paradigms, it is timely for Western thinking to reposition its narratives alongside those of Māori and other Indigenous peoples (Colbung, Glover, Rau, & Ritchie, in press; Ritchie & Rau, 2004). In recent years Māori have increasingly asserted self-determining processes within educational research. Both Russell Bishop's *Collaborative Research Stories: Whakawhanaungatanga* (1996) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonising Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999) have inspired and affirmed a kaupapa Māori research paradigm, which was carried forward within this TLRI project. In kaupapa Māori research, Māori exert their agency and take charge of their own processes. Kaupapa Māori research applies inbuilt accountability mechanisms that actively moderate processes and outcomes, ensuring that Māori cultural practices and meanings are intact and the mana of the collective is upheld (Bevan-Brown, 1998). Kaupapa Māori research is about empowerment. The way in which knowledge is conceptualised, recorded and validated is critical to whānau, hapū and iwi. Researchers and partners are part of a larger collective that acts collaboratively as the authority for authenticating the research.

When reflecting on our role within the multiple tiers of research partnerships that formed the project, we were reminded of the concept of aroha—an overarching framework that encompasses reciprocal obligation between people related through common ancestry; loyalty; obligation; commitment; an inbuilt support system; stability; self-sufficiency; and spiritual protection (Patterson, 1992; Pere, 1982; Reedy, 1995). Lynley Head (2001) has reported that in the early days of Māori/Pākehā relations, Māori sought, inclusively, to embrace the Pākehā newcomers into this paradigm:

The tie that bound them into political kinship was aroha, ‘love’ in the sense of the warmth and duty of care owed to family. ‘Ka nui toku aroha ki a koe’, ‘great is my love for you’ was the commonest opening salutation in letters, whether to officials or family members. (p. 111)

We came to see our research as following in a historical tradition of Tiriti-based relationships, and our methodology as located in a Tiriti-based positioning. Our aim has been to honour both Māori and Western methodologies, and the inherent ethical codes within each, in order to ensure that they both are positioned at the centre, the heart of the research, through ongoing mutual dialogue and respectful engagement with our divergences.

Collaborative methodologies

Collaborative approaches to research are founded in a recognition of our interconnectedness and common experiences as humans, parents, whānau/hapū/iwi members, educators, children, researchers, and global citizens. With Schensul and Schensul (1992) we share an ecological perspective in collaborative research that recognises the complexities of the environments in which we live, work, and research, that our “ways of operating are inextricably bound up with those of others”, since we “are linked by economic, political, biophysical, social, religious, emotional, and ideological principles and practices, which constitute the context in which we live and wish to change” (p. 197). They also remind us that our research areas are multidimensional and can only be addressed in collaborative contexts. Collaborative research is not just eliciting data through the co-operation of research participants. In collaborative research, the focus is on collective processes of theorising the research, whereby participants not only participate in data gathering, but are also involved in research design, data analysis and interpretation (Aubrey, David, Godfrey, & Thompson. 2000). This process has been variously referred to as “co-exploration” (Diller, cited in Noddings, 1995, p. 93), “whitiwhiti kōrero”⁴ (Holmes, cited in Bishop, 1996, p. 104), “collaborative storytelling” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 336), and “spiral discourse” (Bishop & Glynn, 1999, p. 119).

In any research enterprise, issues of embedded power effects can be either ignored or critiqued. The Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) projects are required to “involve partnership between researchers and practitioners, from the design and conduct of the research, to communicating the results to teachers and other educators who can use them to make a difference to practice”—giving practice value, ngā hua ritenga (Teaching and Learning Research Initiative/Nāu i whatu te kākahu, 2006). This requirement necessitates collaborative relationships between researchers and educator partners, and an emergent, reflexive methodological paradigm. The emergent collaborative narrative methodology which we employed in this study required that we, as project leaders, applied a commitment to continually critique power effects within our reflection and collaborative processes.

Collaborative research methodologies can seek to expose and struggle with the ways power/knowledge is enacted through competing discourses (Foucault, 1980). This is a multifaceted and challenging process, as subjectivities and understandings are complex and shifting. Power effects permeate not only the multiple and often competing discourses, but also each individual’s positionings and conscious and subconscious manoeuvrings, as located within the wider social, cultural, and historical context (Jones & Brown, 2001). As collaborative narratives emerge, an important part of this process of knowledge construction is to reflect upon whose knowledges are being privileged (Canella, 1999). The methodological processes that we have been implementing go some way towards addressing concerns regarding legitimation and representation (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999), since collaborative narratives and co-theorising privilege the participants’ authentic voices (Ritchie, 2002; Swadener & Marsh, 1995).

⁴ Whitiwhiti is an exchange or crossing over, kōrero is discussion, talk, conversation.

Narrative methodologies

Stories are integral to human existence. They form the basis of how we understand ourselves, communicate with others, and understand the external world. Native scholars have used the metaphor of ‘the story’ to describe the basic building blocks of human understanding (Davis, 2004). Narrative methodologies privilege the actual voices of research participants. As Bishop (1996) has written, “Stories allow power and control to reside within the domain of the research participant. Māori lawyer Moana Jackson identifies this control as ‘the power to define’ what knowledge is created and how it is created/defined” (p. 24).

It is recognised, however, that there are pitfalls in the use of narrative methodologies that are inherent in the restorying quality of narrative as the research process moves from the participants’ telling of their lived stories to collaboratively theorising and delivering the academic research story (Swadener & Marsh, 1995). As Māori researcher and academic Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has written:

academic writing is a form of selecting, arranging and presenting knowledge. It privileges sets of texts, views about the history of an idea, what issues count as significant; and, by engaging in the same process uncritically, we too can render Indigenous writers invisible or unimportant while reinforcing the validity of other writers. If we write without thinking critically about our writing, it can be dangerous. Writing can also be dangerous because we reinforce and maintain a style of discourse which is never innocent. (p. 36)

As leaders of the project, we acknowledged the need to maintain ongoing critique of reflexive practice (Jones & Brown, 2001), by scrutinising the power dynamics within our relationships as co-researchers and those embedded in our relationships with co-researchers (L. T. Smith, 1999). We worked at making both our espoused and covert theoretical assumptions transparent, recognising that as researchers we “have the power to distort, to make invisible, to overlook, to exaggerate and to draw conclusions, based not on factual data, but on assumptions, hidden value judgments, and often downright misunderstandings” (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 176).

We were aware of the political nature of research in validating and privileging selected discourses, and aim to utilise this reality to make it possible for other educators to apply knowledge gained from the narratives that we are able to share through these projects (McLaren, 1991). As project leaders, we were constantly mindful that when stories are shared we, as listeners and as researchers, filtered them through our own cultural and historical contexts, and continual vigilance was needed to ensure that genuine co-construction of meanings took place.

Relationships

Respectful relationships, including our relationships with people, places, time, and things, were the foundation of our methodology. These unique contexts guided our processes and interactions. The strength of collaborative narrative research lies in the relationships that underpin and guide the entire research process. Narrative research relies on the quality of these relationships, as well as factors such as mutual regard and trust, honesty, and a sense of caring for and about people that is similar to friendship (Schulz, Schroeder, & Brody, 1997). In the research context, an ethic of care (Daloz, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1995) means that the researchers honour their relationships with participants and know that misrepresenting their meanings would damage the integrity of both the data and the relationships (Ritchie, 2001a, 2002). We consider ourselves privileged to have been part of a generous storying community of voices. As leaders of the project, we feel a strong need to acknowledge the contribution of the understandings and wisdom that were shared.

Leading Māori education academic Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has emphasised the centrality of respect to Indigenous world views:

The term ‘respect’ is consistently used by Indigenous peoples to underscore the significance of our relationships and humanity. Through respect the place of everyone and everything in the universe is

kept in balance and harmony. Respect is a reciprocal, shared, constantly interchanging principle which is expressed through all aspects of social conduct. (p. 120)

Marcelle Townsend-Cross (2004), who is of Biripi (Manning River, New South Wales, Australia) and Worimi (Karuah River, Hunter region, New South Wales,) descent, explains that respect is grounded in connectivity: “True respect cannot occur between strangers. True respect is a deep and emotional relationship developed through understanding and connectivity” (p. 5). We already had long-standing relationships with all the co-researchers we invited to participate in this research. Their willingness to take part in the project was also connected to their trust in our integrity as colleagues and researchers. Riana,⁵ a kindergarten head teacher, explained to Cheryl the reasons for her willingness to join the project:

I don't often become involved in research projects, I'm very particular about who I choose to research with and for. I've really got to believe in the kaupapa of the research and know that the input that I can have, coming from our centre is going to be put to really good use. I'm not just in there as the token Māori—quite often that's why we get offered to go into research projects ... probably one reason is because you and Jenny are both doing it. I think one of the other reasons is that I really believe in the kaupapa and I see huge gaps in terms of how our Māori tamariki and their whānau, but I have concerns about how *Te Whāriki* is actually delivered for the tamariki and for those whānau.

Strategies

Our methodological pathway has sought to uphold integrity by valuing our relationships within the collective of co-researchers. In practice this has meant:

- applying a fundamental commitment to being respectful in our relationships with partner researchers;
- being open and responsive to dialogue;
- acknowledging emergent tensions and finding ways of resolution through *kōrero* (talking); and
- demonstrating a willingness to renegotiate pathways.

We were guided by Ngahuia Te Awekotuku's (1991) discussion of some ethical considerations in Māori research methodology. While respectful relationships are built over time, we needed to be mindful of the whānau/hapū/iwi context and its protocols: that a face seen is a face known; to know and enact ways of looking, listening, and speaking; to care for and support others; to tread carefully; to respect the prestige of people; and not to parade one's own knowledge:

- Aroha ki te tangata (a respect for people)
- Kanohi kitea (the face seen; that is, present yourself to people face to face)
- Titiro, whakarongo ... *kōrero* (look, listen ... speak)
- Manaaki ki te tangata (share and host people, be generous)
- Kia tupato (be cautious)
- Kaua e takahi te mana o te tangata (do not trample over the *mana* of people)
- Kaua e mahaki (don't flaunt your knowledge). (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 120)

As lead researchers, one Māori and the other Pākehā, we also maintained an ongoing dialogue, reflection, and critique of our process and learnings that embodied the trust, respect, honesty, and challenge that underpinned our relationship as co-directors. This dialogue, based on an openness to understandings from the other's cultural paradigm, meant that we frequently reconsidered and reconceptualised our perspectives.

⁵ All the names of our co-researchers in this project have been changed.

Barriers

We were disappointed that the website did not get more use. The ethical requirements that had to be completed in order to gain access to the interactive forum were time consuming, which may have discouraged some potential participants. In addition, many of the people who did complete the ethics process and gained access to the site chose not to contribute their thoughts to the discussions. Dr Pak Yoong (2005) has highlighted the need to find ways of generating a sense of online community that encourages more active participation.

Data-gathering models

In partnership research such as the TLRI model, there are inherent tensions in the dynamics between lead researchers and co-researchers. We did not wish to place unrealistic expectations and workload burdens on our co-researchers, but wanted to ensure enough flexibility for co-researchers to deliver data in ways that suited them, rather than impose our model into settings in which we were not the experts. Once identified, these kinds of tensions can be worked through, as long as there is honest and open communication that allows such clarification. Many of our co-researchers chose to provide their data through audiotaped conversations with us. Others preferred to write for us, sometimes in response to a framework of topics and questions that we provided on request. One organisation conducted two different audiotaped focus-group discussions, using their own framework. This diversity of data-gathering models provided a wide range and depth of data through self-determining processes that eliminated many potential barriers.

Ethical issues

Our commitment to being responsive to the needs of our co-researchers meant that we attended to ethical issues as they arose. The ethical issues we encountered during the research were:

- **Identifiability:** Co-researchers could choose whether or not to be identified in the research. When an individual or organisation chooses to be named, other individuals or organisations may become identifiable in a domino effect. Acknowledging individuals as co-researchers without attributing specific data within published material can protect anonymity. In the case of an organisation, this can be achieved by not acknowledging the provenance of particular data. Instead, we genericised data excerpts within an overarching category. The spread among our co-researchers, encompassing teacher educators, specialist educators, and professional development providers from a range of institutional settings beyond the listed “Partner” organisations, made this feasible.
- **Website access:** Ethical procedures for gaining access to the website delayed immediate access and removed spontaneity. When we heard of difficulties, we responded immediately. Website design was important in making the site user friendly.
- **Timeframes:** Tight timeframes for conference presentations meant that we weren’t always able to provide drafts of our papers to co-researchers in advance, so that they could check how we had interpreted and positioned their data. Those whose data was included can still check material before publication.
- **Transcription:** Feedback from co-researchers indicated that on one occasion our written rendering of spoken Te Reo had not been accurate. Extra care is required in checking the transcription of data contributed orally in Te Reo, and also to ensure that it is vetted before being included in any presentations or written articles.

3. Findings

The two broad areas of findings discussed in this section are:

- how early childhood educators in settings other than Kōhanga Reo are encouraging the participation of whānau Māori within early childhood education settings; and
- what strategies early childhood educators are employing to implement their understandings of commitments derived from Te Tiriti o Waitangi and expressed in the bicultural early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, through the delivery of Tiriti-based programmes.

Encouraging the participation of whānau Māori within early childhood education settings

This segment of the report gives voice to the findings of our research partners, highlighting the ideas, actions and processes they regard as critical in contributing towards the participation of whānau Māori within the early childhood community. The following sections will cover:

- rights and ethics;
- ongoing welcoming as a key strategy; and
- the issue of sustaining commitment (including ways of overcoming setbacks, leadership roles, and the importance of a shared philosophy).

We begin with an overview of the rationale provided by co researchers of the rights and ethics that underpin their commitment to practices that engage the participation of whānau Māori within early childhood services other than Kōhanga Reo. We continue with a section focusing on “ongoing welcoming” as a key strategy for encouraging the involvement of whānau Māori within early childhood education services. Lastly, we cover some issues around sustaining commitment to the kaupapa of Tiriti-based early childhood education, including stories of overcoming setbacks, assuming leadership, and the importance of having a shared commitment within the teaching team.

Recognition of rights as an ethical foundation of practice

The early childhood community in Aotearoa can be seen to have been progressive in its positioning of a commitment to ethics and rights within its philosophy and practice (May, 2001). The recognition of children’s rights to voice, to being heard in social policies and programmes, has recently become more prominent in education, research, and policy making (Ministry of Social Development, 2004; A. B. Smith, Taylor, & Gollop, 2000). A second aspect of rights that has received attention is the contemporary recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples (including Māori in Aotearoa), which can only be fully understood in the context of the historical background of colonisation (Colbung et al., in press; M. Durie, 2003; Kaomea, 2003). These rights include not only the right to be heard—often denied to both Māori women and children (H. Mead, 1996)—but also to grow up imbued with a sense of knowing who they are as cultural beings (Freire & Macedo, 1995), fluent in the languages and knowledges of their local community. The final focus here is that of a Māori perspective of mana whenua, recognising within the Māori world view the rights of the local people to their unique spiritual connection to their positionality: their local knowledges, songs, and stories, located within their traditional territory.

Internationally as well as in Aotearoa, we are faced with the challenge of addressing the historical impact of colonisation, which has had an ongoing negative legacy on the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples. Jeannette Rhedding-Jones (2001), writing of the Norwegian context in which she is an “outsider”, wonders whose voices are heard within early childhood settings when the programmes are determined by members of the dominant culture. She asks: “What kinds of constructions are the monocultural professionals creating for cross-cultural meetings and mergings?” (p. 139). Rhedding-Jones expresses her concern that discourses of

“multiculturalism” obscure recognition of indigeneity, and allow the perpetuation of colonialist positionings, leaving Indigenous children, their families, and cultures marginalised. “The taken-for-grantedness of whiteness thus allows for continuing tyranny and privilege not seen and heard by those doing the tyrannising and getting the privilege” (Rhedding-Jones, 2001, p. 145). Similarly, Indigenous Hawaiian academic Julie Kaomea (2004) has described the discourses reinforcing the historical and contemporary impact of colonisation as rhizomatic, operating dynamically, laterally, and intermittently through “an invisible network of filiative connections, psychological internalizations and unconsciously complicit associations” (p. 22).

Globally, there is increasing recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples to equitable access and opportunities, particularly for education. The United Nations *Convention (No. 169) Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries* (1989a) requires that governments prioritise education for Indigenous peoples “at all levels on at least an equal footing with the rest of the national community”. Article 27 states that:

Education programmes and services for the peoples concerned shall be developed and implemented in co-operation with them to address their special needs, and shall incorporate their histories, their knowledge and technologies, their value systems and their further social, economic and cultural aspirations. They shall participate in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of plans and programmes for national and regional development which may affect them directly. (United Nations, 1989a)

Article 30 of the same convention states that:

Governments shall adopt measures appropriate to the traditions and cultures of the peoples concerned, to make known to them their rights and duties, especially in regard to labour, economic opportunities, education and health matters, social welfare and their rights deriving from this Convention.

Similarly, Article 30 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child* (1989b) requires that:

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of Indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is Indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

In order to move beyond colonising models (Colbung et al., in press) this international recognition of these rights now requires to be translated into the transformation of educational and other institutions at the national and local levels. Intrinsic to this process is the need to generate both understandings of the insidious legacy of the colonial era and strategies to develop new tools and pathways beyond these limitations (Kaomea, 2003, 2004).

Viewed in the global context, *Te Whāriki* is groundbreaking in its recognition of indigeneity and its validation of Māori knowledges and cultures alongside those of the Western paradigm. *Te Whāriki* provides a way forward for the early childhood community of Aotearoa to transform its practice in enactment of an ethical stance, one that honours the languages and cultures of the tangata whenua, the original people of this land. Recognising children’s rights to their identities as cultural beings (Freire & Macedo, 1995), located in the cultural world of their Indigenous community, is a key concern of educators committed to Tiriti-based early childhood education, and one shared by co-researchers within this project.

Karina, a Māori co-researcher, articulated her conception of an ethical society, founded in respectful relationships:

Some years ago I had a discussion about Inuits having an ethical society and this goal of striving towards having an ethical society had an impact on me in terms of people supporting people and having touchstones, or foundations of what we believed as a nation, coupled with that idea of citizenship and rights, of what do we want for ourselves as a people? So we start to articulate our values as a nation in terms of being an ethical society, determining or identifying some strategies and

some goals and some behaviours that can be transferred into policy. Policies for how we might arrive there. So it's about rights and children in particular being involved, and I had thought that the idea of people behaving in an ethical way, or ethics, was a way of describing what would have been our collective and collaborative way of articulating our aspirations for ourselves in terms of behaviour. How do we want to behave with each other as people in this country? And how could we move there so that the people in our country are well behaved to each other, in a sense, respectful?

Karina voices the importance of the dialogue being a collective and collaborative process, highlighting a sense of nation building through a shared vision of an ethical society that honours individuals' rights, including those of young children. *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996b) echoes Karina's concern for "the nation's beliefs about the value of early childhood care and education and about the rights and responsibilities of children" (p. 19). In the following *kōrero* Karina and another Māori co-researcher, Tia, raise issues pertinent to building our nation:

Karina: Nationhood, it's coming to grips through the Tiriti so we have a bicultural view of what an ethical society looks like rather than a monocultural or multicultural. It's about Māori and the 'others'.

Tia: It's balancing our own personal ethics with societal ethics because they don't always mesh.

Karina: A balance of power, meaning rights. All of the people's rights come through and are met, so children, people, everybody's rights are met. In the main Māori children/whānau have rights and they're respected, recognised and supported, their aspirations are supported and achieved. It's about policies, practices, children's and whānau rights enacted.

Karina and Tia see the relationship between both partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a critical foundation for establishing an ethical society that is cognisant of the cultural contexts of both partners (M. Durie, 2003). Tia's comment highlights a space that is being constantly negotiated, that of being Māori and/or Pākehā within a dominant Western construct. The idea of collaborative space is expressed by a Playcentre-based Māori co-researcher who, in fulfilling her role within the wider Playcentre collective, reinforces to whānau Māori their right to presence within that early childhood service:

So I'm in my area when I work in Playcentre and I feel that I have certain rights because this is my area and then I'd go down to [another town] and work with Māori families -some of them are from other places. It's more than encouragement, that as Māori women they have rights in Playcentre. (Miria)

Miria also alludes to the respect that Māori accord to their connection with a particular area (*mana whenua*). *Mana whenua*, as translated into Belonging, a strand of *Te Whāriki*, is considered by Tilly Reedy (1995) to be "the development of a sense of sovereignty, of identity and a sense of belonging" (p. 21). Respecting *mana whenua* implies a recognition of the intrinsic power of land to sustain life and contribute to people's wellbeing and security (Hemara, 2000, p. 78). Another co-researcher, Riana, spoke of sensitivities around the *mana whenua* of the local hapū/iwi when she was working in their community:

And it's like, because I'm not from here, I respect the *kawa*⁶ of the iwi, so I know that and I absolutely respect that and know that when it comes in terms of knowledge and that they have the knowledge within this iwi and I don't, so I respect that and appreciate that. And the whole humbleness of, you know, they're good for me, they make me slow down.

Riana demonstrates a positioning of humility, in accord with her respect for the rights of the *mana whenua*. This recognition of *mana whenua* rights is an important paradigm for all early childhood educators, both Māori and non-Māori, as is Riana's modelling of a stance of humility.

⁶ Kawa are tribal protocols.

Ongoing welcoming

The importance of welcoming families into early childhood centres is being highlighted in the work of several contemporary early childhood researchers and theorists (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005), and is a particular feature of the Reggio Emilia approach (New, 1999). Previous research in Aotearoa has identified the need for early childhood centres to provide a physical environment that is welcoming to whānau Māori (Ritchie, 2002; Shivnan, 1999). In her 1999 study Shivnan co-researched with the whānau Māori of an early childhood centre to identify the factors that engendered for them a sense of empowerment. She relates the views of a kuia for whom the maihi-shaped⁷ entrance gate was a powerful symbol of Tikanga Māori, fostering for her and her whānau a sense of belonging:

It sort of reminded me of a marae gate ... without even the karanga.⁸ I always found, with my own children, when you actually stand at the gate of a marae, you can feel excitement, or you can feel ...there's a lot of things you might feel, grief and things like that. I have found the gate here was a very welcoming one, and before I even got to the door, before I met any staff at all, or knew the programme, there was a real enticement. And it does ... I had my granddaughter here the next day to actually enrol. (Shivnan, 1999, p. 88)

An emphasis on the importance of welcoming also features strongly in the current research. In their kindergarten, Penny and her colleague Linda apply their philosophy of “whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and rangimarie”⁹ by prioritising time spent with new families/whānau. They also run an informal playgroup outside session times to support this welcoming process:

It's about just spending time with people. It's all very well to have the words on the wall, but whakapiripiri mai,¹⁰ manaakitanga, is about actually face-to-face and having the time to spend with people. So I think right from the beginning, we have time when anybody comes, at any time in the session, to talk to them, to fill out an enrolment form. And when they start we encourage them to come to the playgroup to go through all the papers and stuff we do, but if it can't happen we do it during the session time and there's no big deal and we don't get all huffy about it and give them the third degree. And it's about our behaviour and how we talk to the parents to me is where the modelling comes from. So a child would come, the enrolment form would be filled out, we encourage them to come to the playgroup, we spend a lot of time at playgroup chatting to the parents who come, and this is for all families. (Penny)

Penny was very clear about her central philosophical commitment to valuing and nurturing relationships with families/whānau:

To me it's about, people are the most important things, not the material things around us. And if we are all kind and respectful of all people then everything else just falls into place. And for the kindergarten, I've always wanted it to be a place where people felt welcome. It's not about judging people, just accepting people, it's an unconditional thing. And that's been gradually growing as I mature, that whole feeling of wanting just to be totally accepting of people has become very, very important to me.

At this kindergarten, welcoming is emphasised, enacted through greeting rituals during a morning mat-time that begins with karakia¹¹ and waiata.¹²

⁷ Maihi are the carved facing boards on the gable of a Māori whare (house).

⁸ Karanga is a call, in this case summoning entry to the marae.

⁹ Manaakitanga is act of showing respect, kindness, hospitality, and generosity to guests. Rangimarie is peace.

¹⁰ Whakapiripiri mai means “Gather closely together”.

¹¹ Karakia are ritual incantations.

¹² Waiata are songs.

And everybody gets greeted, every child, every little toddler, every parent, they get greeted. And when we have our karakia in the morning, everyone is acknowledged, so we say, 'Kia ora' to all the mums. I haven't quite got my language right yet, but everyone's acknowledged. Even the latest baby who joins us, we say 'Hello' to, 'Kia ora' to everybody. It's about including everybody. (Penny)

Co-researchers were critical of practices they had experienced that they considered were not welcoming of whānau Māori. Anne, a Pākehā kindergarten head teacher, considered that it was a key professional responsibility for teachers to prioritise the welcoming of new families on their first approach to her centre:

This is why I am not in agreement with non-teaching staff making the first contact and making these first contacts in the office. It is not very welcoming to have a form thrust into your hand and being told to fill it in. It can be very intimidating.

Similarly, Anahera, a Māori teacher educator with previous experience in the kindergarten sector, shared her concerns about practices she had observed that barred families who arrived outside of session times:

And also the classic one for me is people arriving early, and [teachers] saying; 'We can't see your child till quarter to nine or half past eight, we don't open', and not having the foresight or just the awhi¹³ to be able to know someone's out there, and does it have to be all set up? And can't we have the whānau helping us set up? And how come the cup of tea can't go the whole time and have one of those things that are hot water all the time? And there's a lovely couch for whānau right by the learning story thing, or the documentation, the portfolios. So there's a welcoming, you know, belonging.

Ariel, a childcare educator, spoke of her centre's open-door practices, which were enabling off valuable interactions with whānau/families. She acknowledged, however, that this commitment needed to be supported through adequate provision in terms of staffing ratios:

I've found a couple of things like having a kitchen available, just saying to them if we're in there making a cup of tea, 'Would you like a cup of tea?' ... Pretty informal, like just when they're sitting down with their children or when they're dropping them off, if they've got time in the mornings, just going and sitting and talking, and bringing those links in too, so you find out what's happening at home, like lifestyles at home. And I think it works in a very casual way if you can actually take the time and make the time. If you've got quality in the centre where you've got enough staffing, that you can actually take that time to sit down and talk with your parents and tell them what you're doing in the programme.

Daisy, a kindergarten teacher, shared a similar approach, emphasising both the interpersonal welcoming and the messages given by environmental symbols:

Do you welcome the families in? Do you allow them to go into the kitchen, make a coffee, whatever? It's not about locking the door until the session's ready to start. These are the little things that make that difference about whether someone feels welcome in your centre or not. Do you have visual posters, tititoria, poi,¹⁴ do you have those around the centre so that you can walk in and straight away see that Māori is valued here? Is there kōwhaiwhai¹⁵ around your noticeboards, is there little signs with kupu¹⁶ on it, Māori words, just little things that will say to a Māori whānau that, 'Yes, our culture is valued here'.

¹³ Awahi is to embrace, foster, cherish.

¹⁴ Tititoria are short sticks used rhythmically in action songs. Poi are light balls with string attached, swung rhythmically to accompany song.

¹⁵ Kōwhaiwhai are painted patterns with symbolic meanings.

¹⁶ Kupu are words.

In her role as an adult educator within the Playcentre context, Miria highlighted the importance of welcoming Māori families who might be visiting for the first time:

I try to tell the people in Playcentre to say 'hello' and to offer a cup of tea, because if our people don't feel welcome you don't get a second chance. If they don't feel comfortable coming through that door the first time—otherwise they're gone. And that's a real problem with Playcentre because it is a Pākehā organisation, and it is the way of Pākehā people to not be brave.

Teacher education institutions were also emphasising welcoming as a strategy for increasing the involvement of whānau Māori in early childhood settings. A Māori teacher educator considered it important that students were supported to reconsider their beliefs about Māori whānau:

So that they learn not to assume things about Māori parents. And we're giving them strategies for working with Māori parents too, not to assume that all Māori people are going to [behave] in the same stereotypical, generalised [way]. We're giving them strategies and that's how I see we are helping indirectly to empower Māori families. It's that we are giving students an awareness of their issues that then make them feel more confident to even approach Māori parents. (Rona)

In a separate conversation, a student of Rona's confirmed the effectiveness of the strategies employed by Rona and her colleagues:

I remember something Rona told us in year one or something, it was just that when she enrolled, when she started taking her son to Kōhanga Reo and they would offer her a cup of tea. It's just not something I had ever thought of doing because being in a kindergarten they drop their children off and they go and everything. Yeah, I just offered them a cup of tea, and my supervisor at first was really, 'Is that tea for us? Don't give it to the parent!' And I talked to her about it and she really understood in the end and it really opened up the relationship I think. Yeah, it really did. (Kathy)

Further strategies employed by co-researchers went beyond provision of cups of tea and Māori symbolism in the environment to include awareness of the subtle messages in their own body language, and how that transmitted affirming messages. Daisy described her first teaching job in a kindergarten in a small rural town:

My first job was in a community of high percentage Māori, so a lot of the whānau I was dealing with were living the Tikanga. The reo was for some of them the first language, so it was really, really important for me to be able to be up with the play, I guess, and be able to provide appropriate and relevant, just in your whole—your mannerisms, the way of understanding the whānau and where they were coming from and what to provide, what their interests were, and the thing that I really notice is just the basic, making them feel welcome, just a simple 'Kia ora', just automatically they know they are valued for Māori, for who they are. I think we've got to be aware of body language too, that's really important, the non-verbal, quite often just the raise of eyelids or the eyes or something to say, 'Hi, I know you're there, I acknowledge you'. It's not always through the words, and just your smile, you know, just a smile. It's hard to explain it but you know it if you see it.

Daisy, a Pākehā, has since adopted the Māori practice of greeting whānau with an embrace:

If a whānau Māori has gone on a holiday for instance, and they've left the centre for a couple of weeks in a term, or whatever, then they come back—I'll often go up and give them a kiss: 'Welcome back', if I haven't seen them for a little while. It's just that would mean a lot to Māori whānau, I guess, it just seems the thing to do for me ... I think it has to be natural and genuine though, I don't think you can do that if you really feel uncomfortable about it, because I think that will be picked up.

Katerina, a Māori teacher educator, explained her perceptions from the point of view of a shy Māori "Mama" approaching a centre for the first time, giving insight into the underlying power dynamics, an awareness of which are a key professional responsibility for educators who seek to establish a genuine connection with whānau new to the centre:

Well, if you sit behind the desk, I'm not going to feel comfortable. If you're teaching my babies and you have the privilege of hanging out with my babies, I need you to get away from that desk and come out in front of the desk and sit down with me and just talk as two Mamas, or two women who are having a cup of tea, and like real cups of tea too! Not when you sit there and it's so stiff and formal that nobody wants to talk. It's all very polite and you walk away, and the whānau walk away feeling like they've got nothing out of it, no real connection. I need to connect with you. Because you are in that position of power, they're my babies, but you're the teacher—you need to connect with me because I see you with the power.

For Katerina, the powerfully positioned Pākehā teacher has the responsibility to move out of her comfort zone in order to fully welcome Māori into the centre:

It's actually inviting the Other in, to be able to do that. So you put on your approachable, friendly—in a sense it's a mask, but after a while—at first it can be a mask, because you're not comfortable and you feel a little alien with it, but you're actually inviting the Other in and crossing those cultural divides in a sense.

Katerina's analysis is consistent with the current theorising of Gunilla Dahlberg and her colleagues (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Dahlberg et al., 1999). Dahlberg (2000) considers the art of really listening and hearing what the Other is saying to be central to what she describes as “the ethics of encounter” (, p. 23). Tui, a Māori teacher educator, expressed her strategy of trying to equalise inequalities in hidden power dynamics between whānau and teachers:

I think it also does come down to being approachable, if you're not approachable then they're not going to see you as being someone they want to engage with, someone they want to talk to, someone they want to see as equal, giving them that validation.

Tui had previously worked in a kindergarten in a community where she considered many of the Māori parents to be shy. Her sense of aroha towards other Māori meant that she developed an awareness in creating opportunities to bridge the gap of their hesitancy over communicating with the teachers. She observed that, as the parents became more comfortable in the centre:

They would be there, they would stop just shoving their kids in the gate, they would come up, they would hang the bags up, they would hang round. There's a little space of time where they were just hovering. It's like a moment to capture. They want you to engage, but they're not necessarily ready to engage with you, it's almost like you've got to take that responsibility. Once you've done that then that hovering space becomes more frequent. I think in terms of the parents coming in and feeling that connectedness, it was about watching their body language, seeing them hover just a little bit, the gestures, the smiles, in that space of time where they want you to engage. I think it's really important to look at the way you respond too. I think it's so important to not take perhaps such an official kind of approach. Whereas if you're a lot more relaxed, if you're kind of mirroring them a little bit, then they seem to respond. (Tui)

Lisa Delpit (1995) quotes a Native Alaskan educator who said, “In order to teach you, I must know you” (p. 182). Delpit suggests that it is only through building relationships with parents/whānau that educators will be in a position to really hear what it is that those parents want them to know about their children, and how to relate to them in order to walk alongside them on their learning journeys. As Delpit (1988) has evocatively written:

To do so takes a very special kind of listening, listening that requires not only open eyes and ears, but open hearts and minds. We do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs. To put our beliefs on hold is to cease to exist as ourselves for a moment - and that is not easy. It is painful as well, because it means turning yourself inside out, giving up your own sense of who you are, and being willing to see yourself in the unflattering light of another's angry gaze. It is not easy, but it is the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start the dialogue. (p. 297)

A teacher from the Reggio Emilia-informed Huggins Center in California how central listening is to her process of learning—in particular, listening to children and their families in order to strengthen a sense of community within her centre:

As a teacher, I need to be listening more, be observant. There are many forms of listening. We don't just listen with our ears but with many other senses. We listen by observing. Just by listening to the children and parents, we can find out more about them. And then with their experiences, we can all build together this collective knowledge of culture and individual differences. I feel that as a teacher I need to do more observations of children, of parents, of other staff so that we can work together and be as one community in the classroom. (Abramson & Atwal, 2004, p. 95)

Riana, a Māori kindergarten head teacher, monitors how recently she has spent time chatting with a particular family, prioritising time before and after kindergarten sessions:

So it's just talking to them, I think is a huge thing, just going out there and standing at the gate and talking to them at the end of the day, or at the beginning of the day, just sharing with them little bits and pieces of what their tamariki did during the day, 'Oh, so-and-so did such-and-such and it was really cool' and I think that's just so important, I really monitor that and really look at myself and I think, 'Oh, I haven't talked to that parent for ages, or that Nanny for a long time'. I will go up and talk to them, I'll let them know how their child's settling in, that's with all the tamariki, regardless of Māori, Pākehā, or whatever, it's just everyone, I just think it's just so important. The door's open, always open, come in to the office or come in outside, we talk anywhere. It means taking time out, not being with the tamariki quite often, but I think that during session time we can more than make up for that, because I think it's so important at the beginning and at the end of the session to find the time to talk to the whānau while they're here. We've got their tamariki when they're not here, but when the whānau are here, it means that's my time to go and talk to them.

Anne, a Pākehā kindergarten head teacher, wrote of her response to a keynote address (entitled "Policy, Practice and Politics") by Linda Tuhiwai Smith to a conference of New Zealand Educational Institute in 2000.

Listening to Tuhiwai Smith's speech I realised our attitude was: 'Here we are, these trained experienced teachers who are offering you this great educational service, based on good values, a sound philosophy and good pedagogy, and we want you to benefit from it. Come and get it.' What we weren't considering was whether this was an environment in which Māori children and whānau felt comfortable.

In response to Smith's challenge to the teachers present at that conference, that they should assume responsibility to create change, Anne considered that until then "I wasn't really making changes. I was doing what I was told and what was considered culturally correct". Her reflection on the call to "Be innovative and think outside the norm, outside your comfort zone" was to recognise that in her previous teaching approach, she "was innovative but ... was staying within my comfort zone when implementing a bicultural environment". During the course of this research project Anne continued to reflect upon how her thinking had shifted over her years of teaching, towards prioritising the quality of her interactions with whānau/families:

Two workshops I attended brought me back to the realisation that kōwhaiwhai patterns, Māori legends etc., while being important, are not as important as relationships. From the moment any family comes through the gate the relationship is starting to be built ... So now I spend time beginning to build that relationship, talking with the family in a quiet, friendly, natural way, listening, making connections, and not doing too much talking myself. I've become more relaxed and have less guilt about my lack of knowledge. I need to be secure in my own culture and values while appreciating and valuing those of others.

Through her ongoing commitment to reflecting on her practice Anne recognised that, although her own values were precious to her, they could sit alongside her validation of Māori and other cultural values

within her centre's programme and interactions. However, she also considered that as teachers we need to reflect upon and be open to changing our own attitudes, "to change ourselves" in order to change our practice and ultimately "close the gaps" by increasing Māori educational achievement. This realisation that "the process for real change and transformation begins with self" (Miller & Shoptaugh, 2004, p. 255) seems absolutely fundamental to the enactment of Tiriti-based practice.

Anne's commitment to change includes a sense of responsibility to "work with other professionals to change their attitudes and practices" and "challenge the structure of the system and its operation". She values the role of organisations such as the New Zealand Educational Institute in supporting teachers, recognising that journeys of change can be challenging. She wrote: "You need to be able to parry the blows and to be strong in your beliefs to do this. It's often more comfortable to take the easy road." As a result of her ongoing commitment to professional development opportunities, Anne's team of kindergarten teachers had initiated a hui for Māori whānau of their centre. This process was similar to the "co-enquiry" meetings practised in centres committed to a Reggio Emilia-derived philosophy of collaboration between teachers, children, families, and community, which enacts the principles of "listening" and "dialogue" (Abramson & Atwal, 2004, p. 87). After consultation with the Māori whānau of the kindergarten, the centre had devised and sustained a welcoming ritual that included a waiata composed by the children at the suggestion of the whānau.

The welcoming song or waiata which we introduced, we retained that and it stuck. Having a very definite structure to the beginning of the session was a really important thing that Māori families could relate to, because it was something that they were used to. Really welcoming and talking about their family, whakapapa,¹⁷ so that they were really welcomed and that made a big difference to the way that people saw us. (Anne)

Ariel's philosophy of reflecting Māori values of whanaungatanga extended beyond relationships with individual whānau/families to encompass building a sense of community within her childcare centre:

I think that's what it comes down to, is that relationship, because the Māori world, from what I observe, is so much about the family and about closeness and there's a lot of bonding there and it's a good lesson that we as Pākehā can learn actually, is to see that and to use that, and really have that love and that compassion with our children, and with the families, actually creating communities within the centres.

Dahlberg and Moss (2005) have highlighted the role of the early childhood service as one of being open and responsive to the community, reflecting welcoming and hospitality. Strong community involvement in the early childhood centre is a core feature of the early childhood centres of Reggio Emilia (Gandini, 2004). Riana also placed a strong emphasis on her centre being a focal point for the community:

It's about whānau really, your whānau whānui,¹⁸ it's huge, it's me and my whānau, the tamariki and their whānau and the relationships they have with their whānau, and the relationships I have with the tamariki, and with the tamariki's whānau and the community ... In terms of the centre, it means that I want the whānau to come in here knowing that this centre belongs to them. This is their centre, it's in their community, so I want them to take ownership of what happens in here and to utilise the centre however they please to, as long as it's in a positive way. So they do. They come in here and they're on the computer, and they're in the kitchen, and they're in the store-room, and they're all over the place. And I want them to feel that that's how it should be, because if they feel like that then they'll keep bringing their tamariki, and if they don't then they won't. They'll drop them at the gate and run, kind of thing, or they don't bring them at all.

¹⁷ Whakapapa is genealogy.

¹⁸ Whānau whānui is the wider extended whānau.

For Penny, the Pākehā head teacher, her commitment to enacting a Māori philosophy within her kindergarten meant that she had changed her practice from what she saw as a “clinical Pākehā model” to one which reflected “the Māori way of supporting each other”:

It does work here, and it only works because we treat everybody the same, as far as everybody gets welcomed, everybody is greeted in a Māori way regardless of whether they’re Pākehā or not, whether they like it or not.

At first reading, this statement may seem to be a simplistic inversion of the status quo. However, when placed in the historical context, in which state education provision has normalised Western values and practices, marginalising the tangata whenua and making them the “Other”, Penny’s stance of respectful reinstatement of Tikanga (what is right for Māori) can be seen as a “re-normalisation” of things Māori. When Penny says she is “greeting everyone in a Māori way”, she is prioritising Māori ways of being and knowing. An ethic of respect is enacted when humility is embodied in the ahuā, the ways of being, and the mahi, the daily work of the co-researchers. Here is Penny again:

I have no expectations of what a family should or should not give us because they have gifts and taonga¹⁹ that are not mine, and there’s no ways that I can make them give them to us, so all we can do is make this place as warm a place as possible where they would like to spend time and if anything comes because they’re here, then that’s an absolute blessing and a real treasure that they’ve shared. So we share what we have with them. Our joy is just that their children are here and that they’re prepared to share their greatest treasure with us, and we want to show them how marvellous their children are. So I’m very wary of being pushy about ‘Can you come and do waiata with us?’, ‘Can you come and do that?’ ... To me, that’s the Pākehā grasping and I’m very, very conscious of that. We’re trying to do it the other way, ‘What can we give to people?’

Dahlberg and Moss have referred to the work of French/Jewish philosopher Levinas (1989 cited in Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 76-81). They employ his “metaphor of grasping” to explore ways in which dominant contemporary early childhood discourses reflect Western valuing of the “will to know”, to explain how members of a dominant group seek to assimilate and control the knowledges of the Other (p. 77). They write that “Through grasping, the stranger is made intimate and the same” and the unknown is controlled (p. 78). Cannella & Viruru (2004) challenge us to reconsider “the position of privilege that is created by our unconscious ways of functioning” of our ingrained dominant Western discourses (p. 149). Penny’s approach has inverted the colonialistic model of appropriation and assimilation, generating the paradoxical situation in which a seemingly Western model of early childhood provision, led by Pākehā teachers, is modelling Māori values of manaakitanga.

As we have seen in this section, our co-researchers’ commitment to core Māori values of whanaungatanga and manaakitanga means that they are enacted through ritual processes such as welcoming and hui. Rose Pere (1982) has written that “The mana of a tribal group is not only judged by the way they welcome and honour their guests formally onto a marae, but also by the way they house and feed them” (p. 65). The emphasis of our co-researchers on these welcoming encounters, and the subsequent manaakitanga through provision of cups of tea and kai, shows an ongoing enactment of their commitment to Tiriti-based practice that affirms and reflects a Māori world view, in which the requirement of manaakitanga extends well beyond an initial welcoming. In this view, welcoming is ongoing.

Sustaining commitment

The overwhelming impression given by our co-researchers was that they shared an enduring, absolute, ethical and ideological commitment to recognising that social justice for Māori in Aotearoa was of paramount concern and that respect for the obligations contained within Te Tiriti o Waitangi was fundamental to their political and education focus. Acting on this commitment was a long-standing

19 Taonga are treasures, both tangible and intangible, that are highly valued by Māori.

obligation that they chose to honour on an ongoing basis. For Anne, this long-term process had required her to grapple with situations in which she had experienced profound discomfort and which at times felt quite disempowering:

Later, working in the hospital playgroup, I started to appreciate the differences between my world and the Māori world. I realised that my values and attitudes could sometimes cause hurt and discomfort. I looked at my behaviour in relation to other people. Now it was my turn to feel uncomfortable. I was being told that we ‘colonials’ were to blame for the plight of the Māori people. We had inflicted our culture on them and had almost extinguished their culture. I went about feeling very guilty. Relating to Māori families became fraught with danger. I was scared of some Māori parents. I didn’t know what to say in case I said the wrong thing, in case I was culturally insensitive. It seemed that however much I learned about Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Māori culture, language and values, I could easily do or say the wrong thing and upset somebody. Instead of being able to relate in a natural way with Māori families I felt shy and awkward. Sometimes Māori people would tell me where I had gone wrong in no uncertain terms. My only solution was to try to learn as much as possible about Māori culture and Tikanga ... If I mistakenly speak Te Reo Māori to a non Māori-speaking parent I can make them feel inadequate and uncomfortable. They might not return to the centre. If I say a word even slightly incorrectly I can be corrected and made to feel embarrassed. We are caught between a rock and a hard place.

Anne expressed some very real concerns (which may well be shared by other non-Māori educators and researchers) that contribute to a paralysis (Tolich, 2002) whereby early childhood educators are fearful of moving forward in terms of Tiriti-based commitments, despite the expectations of *Te Whāriki* and their own personal convictions about social justice and equity. She continues to struggle with these tensions. After a co-theorising hui for the project Anne wrote:

I have given a lot of thought to my analogy of becoming bicultural as similar to climbing a mountain. It’s a mountain where the summit is shrouded in mist so you can’t see the top. You climb very slowly, sometimes you can plan the route because you have read and thought about it, sometimes you need somebody who is familiar with it to show you the way. You have to be prepared to be a follower and be lead by somebody who knows the route better than you do. You have to respect and trust other people’s views and leadership. All the time you need encouragement. You also need your team to come with you. You are roped together so that you can help each other. Sometimes you will need to be the leader.

Sometimes you get knocked back and discouraged. Your travel is very slow because you are carrying so much baggage with you that needs to be discarded on the way and because in order to be safe you can’t hurry. When somebody stands on the ledge you are aiming for and stamps on your fingers as you put them over the ledge, or throws a rock at you as you ascend, you could fall and never have the courage to attempt the climb again. You also take the rest of the team down with you. You will need support to keep going and to have another try.

We all make mistakes. Unfortunately these small incidents can have wide repercussions. A little push can mean the whole team landing in a heap at the bottom of the cliff and losing their confidence to attempt the climb again. It also affects their behaviour and attitude towards Māori people. Fortunately also, some people try, and succeed in getting a long way up the mountain.

In a previous ‘verbal outpouring’ I mentioned that we need to be humble and ask for help. The trouble is that some people find it very hard to get rid of the baggage from past hurts that weighs them down and affects their attitude and behaviour. I would love to help to resolve this but don’t have the skills. Is it our collective responsibility?

Anne articulates the pain involved in persevering with a commitment to social justice and Tiriti-based programmes. She further recognises that this is a shared journey, in which Māori and non-Māori can collaborate through honest dialogue, reflection, and compassion.

Leadership

Daisy, a Pākehā kindergarten teacher, related how over time she had made the shift from a lack of confidence and knowledge in her implementation of Tiriti-based programmes towards a role of support and mentoring. She also stressed the need for support within the teaching team:

Daisy: It has, it's been quite a huge shift, because I was the less experienced, I was going to say 'unknowledgeable', but it's not a word! Because I've been in centres where I did some relieving and I'm the only one using any Reo or practising any Tikanga or introducing any Māori concepts, whether they be through the stories of Maui, pulling out the poi, doing a Māori waiata, using natural resources, just little things, I was quite often the only person doing it, and I feel, definitely if you've got support it's a lot easier, I think. Because I was so strong in my beliefs in how important it was for me to do, I wasn't really fazed that I was the only person and I just was strong with it and carried on. I could imagine for someone that perhaps was a little less confident maybe, or apprehensive about it, that could be a little bit off-putting, not having that support. But anyway, I felt quite comfortable that I would just carry it on. Now all the teachers I work with are using reo, they're learning about Tikanga, and they're practising what they know.

Jenny: And is that through your inspiration, your gentle mentoring of them?

Daisy: Yeah, well, I've just basically done my thing, and perhaps they saw me doing it, they thought, 'Well, I can do this', and when they did make an attempt at something, I always acknowledged that and said, 'That was really cool that you brought the poi out', or 'That was just really cool you saying "Morena" to the children today.' Simple things, but acknowledging that. And that acknowledgement empowers them to try again, and in turn is building up their confidence.

Daisy offers the encouragement that in her experience:

... quietly doing my thing, it obviously has rubbed off onto the others. So I think, even if you're going into a team where you are the only one using the reo, stick with it, be strong, and you may find and I would almost guarantee your colleagues will tune in and they will follow.

Riana, a Māori kindergarten head teacher, valued the support of colleagues and actively sought it, both through union (NZEI) and other professional development opportunities, and these networks in turn sustained her strength to enable her to provide ongoing support for whānau Māori:

I've gone searching for that support. I know I've got the whānau here and the support from them, but I feel I can't give them that support unless I myself have got that as well, so the political side of things, being heavily involved with policies and issues and things that happen within our Association and making sure that they're appropriate. There's the union side of things as well, heavily involved with the union, the Māori component of our union, and it's actually a really good place to be very outspoken because that's what unions are all about, you can do it without getting into trouble! So that's been really supportive. I think the professional development over the years which I've chosen to take on board, and I really value my time so I pick and choose very carefully which professional development...Just knowing that [a Māori professional development provider] is always there, for a shoulder to cry on, sort of thing...because every day something comes up and I've got to be a Māori professional person and it takes its toll.

Both Māori and Pākehā colleagues valued the networks that provided them with both a forum to express their concerns and support in moving onward. Ongoing professional development provides sustenance on their journey.

Team commitment

Co-researchers felt that the implementation of Tiriti-based programmes was more effective when the teaching team held a shared philosophy and commitment. They found this much harder to sustain when there were staffing changes:

I think the important thing was to have that team, everybody had to be thinking the same way and to be supportive of it.... After Meg left, well, we still did most of the things and I continued to do the sort of things that I felt were important, but it was hard to, actually. (Anne)

For Linda, the philosophy already articulated at the kindergarten when she joined the team had been a comfortable fit:

Because, like I say, it was like coming home and you see up there the ‘whakapiripiri mai’ and the ‘manaakitanga’ and the ‘rangimarie’ and it’s sometimes hard to put things into words, but it was like having things in my heart already expressed it up there. And I think, like I’ve said before, the reason it works for me personally here, is that we’re both on the same wavelength. We’re both working towards the same thing, neither of us are intimidated by the other, in terms of our skills, and we’re not intimidated by things which are foreign to us, which I think is a really huge barrier for some teachers.

Riana also valued the shared commitment to and understanding of valuing whānau Māori within her kindergarten team:

I think what’s worked really well is the other staff members that are here. I need to be working with someone who thinks very similarly to me and has a similar philosophy in terms of working with whānau. I think if you don’t get that then you can get clashes, and the whānau pick it up, they know who it is that they can come to and who they don’t want to go to. So that’s worked well, knowing to choose the right staff. I think just bringing the whānau together for whānau nights and things like that’s been really good. The numbers might not be huge, but those that turn up really enjoy it and there’s no pressure for them to feel they have to come in for stuff like that. So that works really well.

A professional development provider had a strong focus on ensuring that her whole team had opportunities to enhance their individual and collective understandings of key commitments, through specific learning occasions:

Our training of/for ourselves. We have had whole days together when Māori team members have led training sessions on our individual and joint world views, on the meaning of Tino Rangitiratanga for us personally as well as a group. Pākehā team members have also run team workshops on Te Tiriti o Waitangi with Māori team members there to ‘monitor’ and assist in the process, and we all work individually on Treaty of Waitangi issues in our work with services. (Pearl)

Co-researchers in this project valued the opportunities to work with colleagues who shared a similar commitment and philosophy. They also embraced opportunities for ongoing professional development support that would enhance their understandings of how to support the participation of whānau Māori in their early childhood settings.

Tiriti-based programmes

In this section we report on data that illuminate co-researchers’ understandings of the qualities needed for programmes that reflect a commitment to Indigenous rights for Māori as expressed in Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Colbung et al., in press; Ritchie, 2001b, 2002, 2003).

Te Tiriti o Waitangi can be read as a statement of the Crown’s honour and good faith, of ethical intent towards Māori as tangata whenua, Indigenous people of this land. By guaranteeing tino rangatiratanga, or self-determination, within Article 2, Te Tiriti affirmed Māori rights as autonomous hapū/iwi. As a Ngāti Kāhungunu tūpuna (ancestor) stated in 1886: “Ko te pūtake o o tatou tikanga, penei tonu ite rākau kauri. I whānau tatou i konei, i tipu ake tatou i konei, ko tatou te tangata whenua. E matou ana tātou, kei te mōhiotia e te Tiriti o Waitangi, tenei kaupapa, hei kawenata mo aua tikanga”—“The source of our rights is that, like the kauri, we are grounded here, we were nurtured here, we are the people of this land ... and we know that the Treaty protected our rights, covenanted our place” (Jackson, 1992, p. 9). During his term as Race Relations Conciliator Rajen Prasad (1996) reminded us that Te Tiriti not only deals with recognition of Māori rights but is also the means by which those of us who are not Māori have gained the privilege to

be in Aotearoa. Acknowledgment of the legacy left by the Crown's historical and ongoing dishonouring of Te Tiriti through the dominant colonialist paradigm (Ballard, 2000; Head, 2001; Jackson, 1992; McGeorge, 1993; Orange, 1987; Pihama, 1997; L. T. Smith, 1995, 1999; Spoonley, 1995; Walker, 2004) has finally culminated in a new era of Tiriti settlements and a move to redress the injustices of the past. Within early childhood education, this recognition of the Crown's responsibility and responsiveness to Tiriti obligations to Māori as Tiriti partners is reflected within the curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996b). In addition, the various key sectors within the early childhood education community in Aotearoa/New Zealand have made policy statements recognising the Treaty of Waitangi and biculturalism (Cooper & Tangaere, 1994; Cubey, 1992). The kindergarten, Playcentre, and childcare communities have all stated their commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi, and to the bicultural development that honouring the Treaty requires (Cooper & Tangaere, 1994; Cubey, 1992; Hawira, Mitchell, & Baxter, 1990; Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/New Zealand Childcare Association, 1992; Working Party on Cultural Issues/Rōpū Hanga Tikanga, 1990). Both Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa and the New Zealand Playcentre Federation have worked to develop partnership models in their decision-making structures and processes (Cubey, 1992). In 1990 the Playcentre Federation of New Zealand published a report detailing ways in which to translate this commitment into Playcentre settings (Working Party on Cultural Issues/Rōpū Hanga Tikanga, 1990).

Perceptions of current programme delivery

In this research project, our choice of “purposive sampling” (Aubrey et al., 2000, p. 57) of the collective of co-researchers resulted from our intention of working with colleagues committed to and experienced in thinking and practice around Tiriti-based programmes. We were seeking examples of data that would provide inspiration to others in their journey towards enhancing their own philosophy and programme delivery. From this vantage point, many co-researchers expressed concern about the limited extent to which current practice implemented the bicultural aspirations contained within both the early childhood curriculum and the *Revised Statement of Desirable Practices and Objectives*, mandated by the Ministry of Education (1996a). Anahera, a Māori teacher educator, expressed her concern about a lack of progress since *Te Whāriki* was promulgated in 1996:

I mean, we all must be a bit disappointed in the lack of progress in bicultural practices. It hasn't really gone that fast, has it? [Reflecting on the 10 years since *Te Whāriki* was published] I could ask this question to you: 'In honesty, did we think that in 10 years' time we'd be up to this stage or a whole lot further along the track?'

Several colleagues considered that while centres might have implemented some well-intentioned practices, these remained at a fairly surface level—environmental embellishments or token use of kupu Māori—rather than emanating from a philosophical base that reflected a deep knowledge of and commitment to Māori values. A Pākehā childcare educator, who also contracts as a visiting lecturer to supervise students through their practicum experiences, reflected that:

Just recently I've been going out [visiting students on practicum] and I still see it as being quite superficial in a lot of areas. Like they're putting in the 'right words' and things like that in, but it's not actually being integrated as part of what happens within a centre. (Ariel)

Anne, the very experienced Pākehā kindergarten head teacher, held a similar view. She considered that in many centres educators' attempts remained at the level of environmental add-ons:

This often amounts to a veneer of biculturalism. It's an outward appearance only. There is often nothing more. I suppose that's called tokenism.

Patricia Clark (1995) has made a distinction between employing superficial cultural icons (such as songs or dress-up clothing) within the early childhood programme and moving much further to include deeper signifiers such as culturally-specific patterns of interaction and emotion, philosophical conceptions, and childrearing practices (pp. 155–156). When Māori content remains marginalised within an educational

setting, this perpetuates a perception of a devaluing of Te Ao Māori²⁰ that has been a cornerstone of the colonisation experience. Irihapeti Ramsden (1994) considers that “Colonisation is continued by the selective co-option of Māori ideas and rituals which become redefined, stereotyped and rigidified” (p. 21). Pākehā educators who do not have close links with Māori colleagues and friends or whānau Māori within their community may feel they lack the support to move beyond this form of programme enactment.

Māori aspirations for quality programmes

Enactment of the bicultural curriculum *Te Whāriki* is only a decade old. Even as the early childhood profession struggles to enhance its knowledge and skills in order to meet its professional responsibilities in this area, this research identified that many Māori parents/whānau themselves may not be in a position to articulate their expectations for a bicultural focus within their children’s early childhood setting. A Māori co-researcher reported that she had been taken aback at the findings from some of her previous research into aspirations of Māori whānau for their children in kindergartens:

The part that was the most surprising for me was probably that the parents didn’t have huge expectations of the service and of the teachers, or didn’t think they had a right to it, or even perceive themselves as a group of people having particular needs - I’m going to use the word ‘rights’, but that’s probably my take on it—as having rights as the first nation’s people, as the Indigenous people. (Karina)

This signals a need for awareness of the diversity of expectations within Māori communities. As early childhood education professionals, it is our role to take the lead in implementing our mandated curriculum, rather than assume that if Māori families are not overtly demanding Māori content within the programme, this is because they would not value it if it were to be provided. Another Māori colleague, a teacher educator, commented on her experience in a small rural community where 98 percent of the families attended a local kindergarten in which the teachers were Pākehā. She noted the courage it took for a Māori mother to approach the head teacher about her child:

Katerina: Oh, she was terrified, she was afraid, and so for her to approach the head teacher was huge. It was really huge for her and I seriously admire her courage because she felt so strongly about [her concerns].

Cheryl: It’s about passion and justice ...

Katerina: And courage in a world where all the tamariki are Māori, but the power is Pākehā, so there’s courage to go over to the power and say, ‘You know what, I’m not happy with this.’

Another Māori teacher educator had made similar observations of whānau Māori in her previous role as a kindergarten teacher:

When I first arrived, it was really strange, they’d come in and kind of shove their kids through the gate and take off! And then [after she had been teaching there for a while], they’d actually come up and they’d read the notice board, or they would come and approach you, they’d just slowly get really more confident. It took a lot of courage for them to come up to you and say something, but then again it also took us to initiate it without necessarily wanting something of them. So you weren’t running up with them with a board saying: ‘Please sign this.’ (Tui)

Clearly, it can take some time, even for early childhood teachers who are Māori, to build relationships with the whānau of tamariki attending their centres, and to arrive at the point where these parents feel confident enough to articulate their aspirations for their children within their early childhood education experiences. Tui has highlighted here the depth of sensitivity required to overcome the whakamā²¹ that many Māori parents may feel when approaching educational settings (Metge, 1986). Aware that this is a key

²⁰ Te Ao Māori is the Māori world.

²¹ Whakamā is a sense of shyness, shame, or embarrassment.

professional responsibility, Tui carefully negotiates her relationship building with these whānau. She treads carefully, to avoid burdening these parents with expectations and demands.

Hei Ara Kōkiri Tuwaretoa Education Initiative, partners in this research project, reported on findings from their consultations seeking to identify the reasons for Māori non-participation in early childhood education. In addition to the prohibitive cost of some early childhood services, they noted the following were key concerns:

- only English being spoken in centres;
- educators unable to speak Te Reo fluently; and
- limited exposure to Te Reo for children.

This is particularly worrying since, as already stated, a wide range of previous research with whānau Māori has confirmed that even those who choose to bring their tamariki to centres other than Kōhanga Reo want their children to develop a facility in the language that is their birthright as Māori, and would like this to be supported within mainstream educational settings (AGB/McNair, 1992; M. Durie, 2001; Else, 1997; Te Puni Kōkiri/Ministry of Māori Development, 1998a, 1998b). Hei Ara Kōkiri Tuwaretoa Education Initiative's data support these previous findings. Aspirations from their surveys of educators and whānau included the following: "I would like to see our tamariki being bilingual and being completely comfortable in either Māori or Pākehā settings—having an understanding of the protocols or expected behaviour in these i.e. bicultural."

Strategies for strengthening the delivery of Te Reo me ōna Tikanga identified during their consultations included provision for:

- educators who are fluent in and able to model Te Reo, waiata, and pakiwaitara, familiar with local iwi Tikanga and kawa, and able to involve the centre in wider iwi community activities (such as kapa haka festivals);
- support for educators to enhance their competence in the above areas; and
- ongoing whānau involvement, including that of kuia and kaumātua,²² in centre Te Reo and Tikanga development.

An example, provided from one educator of their centre practice demonstrates integral whānau involvement in the early childhood centre programming: "In partnership with whānau we introduce new waiata each term, and Tikanga experiences, i.e., hāngi, pōwhiri, harakeke, [and] legends of the whānau, hapū, and iwi attending the service." These consultations also revealed the desire, expressed by many educators, to strengthen relationships between their early childhood education services and Kōhanga Reo.

Other Māori co-researchers within the Whakawhanaungatanga research project also identified aspects of Te Ao Māori that they would like to see reflected within early childhood education and care settings. These included:

- a match between the values of Māori homes and those of educational settings;
- feeling welcomed to participate and learn as parents alongside their children;
- a sense of whanaungatanga;
- being part of a caring collective with common aspirations and values;
- a willingness to identify and support the needs of all members of that collective;
- shared responsibility;
- the inclusion of kuia and kaumātua;
- inclusiveness for children who need extra learning support;

²² Kaumātua are elders.

- tuakana/teina²³ attending together;
- Te Reo to be modelled throughout the programme, with support for adults to increase their own facility with the language alongside their children; and
- enactment of Tikanga such as: rituals of welcoming and farewell; sharing of kai; a value of inclusiveness; and reference to Te Ao Wairua²⁴ and Ngā Atua.²⁵

Māori co-researchers from within Playcentres articulated their aspirations for Māori early childhood experiences for their tamariki particularly clearly within this project. A sense of continuity between home and centre was a valued aspect of Hariata's experience within a Playcentre committed to Te Reo me ōna Tikanga:

And so for [my three children], when they walk in to [our Playcentre], it is not just some building. This is their place and to them it was almost just another room in their house. And it certainly felt that way to me, too.

Moana, whose whānau attend the same centre, immediately recognised shared values:

The reason why I got involved in [our Playcentre] started right from when I first walked in the gates, and the feeling that I perceived and I felt from the whānau and tamariki that were there ... there was just a lot of the same goals that I wanted for my tamariki.

As time progressed, Moana and her whānau experienced a sense of whanaungatanga:

I feel that [the Playcentre] has allowed, like, whanaungatanga, and it's going to be a lifelong whānau, I expect personally for myself and my tamariki. Yesterday we just had a clean-up session at [Playcentre] and my son said, 'They're our cousins, aren't they?' And we're not related to X and her family, but yes, we're all [connected through] whanaungatanga and that's how we perceive all the children, and I like it, because you feel comfortable with who your children are with, and all sharing the same goals.

A Māori value of collective responsibility, and tuakana/teina roles were also important to Miria:

It's like on marae—you just say to your friend, 'Well, would you watch them? You watch them—I'm off to do some work in the kitchen or whatever.' Same at Playcentre, I take most of my older children to Playcentre for the day and they go off with the kids and take care of them. That sort of thing's important to me.

A salient feature of these aspirations was the affirmation and valuing of traditional models of intergeneration transmission of language and culture. Playcentre co-researchers spoke of the important role of kaumātua, both within the daily activities and as repositories of Te Reo and traditional knowledge they could share with tamariki and whānau:

I love seeing Nannies in the Playcentres, it's very few in Playcentres, but I really like to see that, to see them involved with the grandchildren. (Miria)

Another Playcentre co-researcher explained how she saw the role of kuia within her centre:

I think our Nannies brought richness to our centre. They just provided such awesome examples of Tikanga and I knew that if I was unsure about something, I could just ask, and even at times they would predict and tell. And you need to be a humble person, but that was a really good experience for me to be able to step back and say; 'Okay, no, I wasn't right, and this is a really good thing to be learning'. [I really appreciated] their humour, even if the children weren't directly interacting with

²³ Tuakana are the older children within a whānau. Teina are the younger children.

²⁴ Te Ao Wairua is the spiritual dimension.

²⁵ Ngā Atua are supernatural beings, or gods.

them, they could hear them nattering away [in Te Reo], laughing and that's just great because I can't provide that for my children and I really want that role model in my children's lives, having it within their early childhood [centre] whenever we attended was just so precious. (Sue)

Children being able to participate alongside adults in activities that reflected Te Ao Māori was another aspect that was valued. For Miria, this meant frequent visits to provide tamariki/whānau with experiences in the natural world, generating feelings of spiritual connectness with the whenua:

Oh, I think my ideal of a fully bicultural Playcentre is that a lot of the time it wouldn't be at the centre. We'd be out, we'd be out at the beach and sit in the rivers, doing the real stuff: eeling, cooking what you catch, looking after wherever you are. And I talk about as a child growing up and spending a lot of time at the beach and picking pipis and how we could ride our bikes around the streets. And, as long as you turned up for your kai, life was sweet. So what do you want for your children? It's so much the same. I want my children to swim and dive and ride kayaks and ride their bikes and play on the farms and get out and about and get out and about and learn all these things. So I think fully bicultural means there has to be a huge connection to this land. And looking after what we've got.

Similarly, for Ana, opportunities for working with natural materials, such as flax, provided a source of learning of traditional knowledge:

Harakeke²⁶ became a vehicle to disseminate education about Māori values about our Atua Māori, about a way to behave, Tikanga, ae, everything. And our tamariki learned alongside of us, we just provided opportunity for them too, they could do it just like us.

This is an example of guided participation as described in the sociocultural theory of Barbara Rogoff (Rogoff, 1990, 1995, 1998, 2003), whereby children collaborate with others in the culturally valued activities of their community, and in so doing are prepared for contributions and roles in later life (Rogoff, 1995). In this view,:

[C]hildren's participation in sociocultural activities is complexly and multidimensionally structured, with important contributions from individuals, their social partners of varying status and expertise, and the structure of the cultural/historical activities in which they participate and which they contribute to shaping further. (Rogoff, 1998, p. 715)

For Rogoff (2003), self-knowledge (in terms of awareness of one's own cultural values) is linked to an appreciation of the perspectives of those from a different cultural milieu. One of the implications of Rogoff's theory for educators is that we need to be aware of the complex ways in which "cultural practices fit together and are connected" (p. 11), within our own cultural milieu and also within the cultures of the children and families with whom we are working. Rogoff asks us to consider how we might increase our understanding of the various cultural communities with which we have professional connections, and also the ways in which each of these are changing.

Enacting Māori values in centre practice

The project delivered a richness of data on the enactment of Māori values within early childhood education settings. Educators articulated their views on key elements of Tiriti-based programmes. These included:

- a commitment to a bicultural philosophy, in terms of Māori and Pākehā partnership in programme delivery;
- everyday integrated use of Te Reo; and
- Enactment of Māori values such as wairua,²⁷ mauri,²⁸ whanaungatanga, tūrangawaewae,²⁹ whakapapa, manaakitanga, rangimarie, and aroha.

²⁶ Harakeke is flax.

²⁷ Wairua is the spiritual dimension.

²⁸ Mauri is the life principle, the life force intrinsic to both animate and inanimate objects.

The kinds of enactment of Māori values described in the project were intrinsic to a philosophy or world view that derived from Te Ao Māori and were embedded into ways of interacting, as opposed to being superficial embellishments to a programme grounded in Western values and priorities. Māori values included those that operate at an intangible, metaphysical level, such as wairua and mauri. Anahera, a Māori teacher educator, considered it important that programmes reflect:

... that big concept of wairua—nurturing, caring and waiora³⁰—and of course, that huge one for me where I see tamariki embedded is mauri ... So I think it's once again that connected[ness] with the whenua, and for children, for us to have that important role of nurturing and connecting children to whenua and those bigger concepts.

Kaupapa Māori pedagogical processes emphasise the importance of fostering and promoting children's spiritual wellbeing, as in the requirement to “whangai te wairua Māori o te tamaiti” (nurture the Māori spirit of the child) fostered and promoted within Kōhanga Reo (Nepe, 1991). The early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, provides an explanation of four dimensions of the child, from a Māori perspective: tinana (body), hinengaro (mind), wairua (spirit), and whatumanawa (emotions). The concept of wairua is explained by Tilly Reedy, one of the principle writers of *Te Whāriki*, as follows:

This dimension deals with power and a sense of oneness with the Universe. The student learns that all things are part of the Universe; that all matter is made up of the same forces. The past, present and future are sources of trust, confidence and self-esteem; that internal questions about atua/gods and their place in the Universe are challenges for the mind to explore; that tradition, religious beliefs, philosophy, and modern science are not necessarily incompatible. (pp. 19–20)

For Māori, “Wairua is implicit in all aspects of life, both the seen and the unseen” (Goulton, 1998, p. 115). Māori and other Indigenous peoples' worldviews are imbued with a pervasive awareness of the spiritual relationships connecting the natural world and the universe (Knutson & Suzuki, 1992; Metge, 1976). This is a reality that is “difficult for Western systems of knowledge to deal with or accept” (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 74), creating a barrier for some non-Māori in terms of understanding “the unique, primordial and spiritual relation of Māori with their land” (Sharp, 1995, p. 129).

One of the ways to learn about these deeper Māori values is to read accounts by Māori of their values in action, such as Rangimarie Rose Pere's work, *Ako* (1982) and also *Te Wheke* (1991). Co-researchers emphasised the importance of embedding Tikanga Māori, and wairua Māori through daily ritual practices, such as starting and ending with karakia. Two Pākehā kindergarten teachers related that Māori families in their centre commented in parent surveys on the sense of wairua they experienced within that programme. Over a period of time this kindergarten has developed a clearly articulated and enacted Māori philosophy, with core values of whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and rangimarie. These teachers shared how they had come to introduce a morning ritual that included karakia and waiata, despite initial reservations regarding their valuing of children's time for free play:

The karakia only started because we had a kuia who came once, twice a week, and helped us with waiata, and she would start with a little karakia. And when she did that, I thought to myself, ‘Why aren't we doing this on other days? Why do we only do it on the days she comes?’ And so I've questioned my practices here, and one of my things was that I'm dead against early morning mat-times—it impinges on children's precious, precious time and then you have one at the end. So my concession was that the morning mat-time would be a Māori mat-time. We had to start the day with karakia, it's really important and learn just a couple of simple waiata appropriate to children and [their Māori mentors] were very helpful in what was appropriate as far as karakia went. (Penny)

²⁹ Tūrangawaewae is literally a place to stand, or one's home ground.

³⁰ Waiora is health or wellbeing.

Penny exercised caution in her willingness to compromise her Western early childhood philosophy of child centredness in favour of recognising the spiritual significance of karakia for establishing a sense of wairua. She took advice from Māori mentors to ensure that the karakia chosen would be meaningful. This takes implementation of Māori values beyond a well-intentioned but ineffective token gesture. This is an important distinction, which is consistent with the thinking of the Tohunga, Hohepa Kereopa (in Moon, 2003), who explains that mauri (life force) is of paramount importance within a Māori world view. Kereopa states that “What matters is the mauri ... Without that mauri there is nothing ... It is all about mauri. That is what people have forgotten” (p. 92). He explains that “Everything has mauri ... Water has its mauri. The forest has its own special mauri. It is a force that is inside everything” (p. 92). “So even a building can have mauri, but it has to be connected to someone, somewhere along the line. So for example, the mauri for your home, you hold it. You hold the life force that affects what happens in your home. So you are the mauri holder ...” (p. 90). Mauri is central also to relationships, our interconnectedness: “Anything personal that affects someone is a mauri issue (p. 90). Mauri is also what gives karakia their impact:

Because if I just say the words of a karakia without any mauri, then it has no impact. It’s just words, nothing else. The whole community needs to feel what the mauri of a karakia is. It’s not just about knowing about karakia, it’s knowing about the force, the life-force of karakia that makes it happen. If you just learn a karakia, maybe because someone has asked you to, and you have no feeling for it, then that karakia has no value. It’s just words. (Hohepa Kereopa in Moon, 2003, p. 93)

Learning within the meaningful context of everyday cultural rituals is also appropriate within early childhood teacher education. The significance of including Māori rituals within her delivery of teacher education experiences was of central importance to Rona, who relayed the advice of a Māori mentor, that:

the only way that Pākehā are going to be able to participate in Māori things is to get involved, that is the only way they are going to deepen their understandings. They will never be able to understand where we’re coming from until they get involved in our ceremonies, in our rituals, in our tangi,³¹ in our kai, in our hākari,³² just become physically involved ... And that’s why I try my best to have as many opportunities in our programme for rituals to occur. And the tuakana/teina ceremony is something we could have in here as well. Those sorts of ceremonies, the pōwhiri³³ at the beginning of the year, the tuakan/teina halfway through the year, the poroporoaki³⁴ right at the end. (Rona)

Rona had worked alongside colleagues within this teacher education programme to incorporate a number of rituals within the daily routines, and course programme generally:

The mihi³⁵ and pepeha³⁶ before portfolio conversations, and the kete³⁷ course, and the structure of our day; the karakia and the waiata, those are the things that I think we do well that we should keep doing well, that are supporting the students.

For Puti, a Māori kindergarten head teacher, whakapapa provided the connecting thread that integrated her teaching practice:

I believe it’s all about whakapapa and where we come from and who we are and how we can become a greater family, including every child and every family that is associated with our kindergarten. And that is the base that I teach my teachings on, it’s all about turangawaewae and whakapapa ... I look at the Reo, especially the Tikanga because that keeps me grounded, because of lessons that we have been

³¹ Tangi are funeral ritual ceremonies.

³² Hākari are feasts, celebratory meals.

³³ Pōwhiri are formal rituals of greeting.

³⁴ Poroporoaki are farewell speeches or rituals to the dead or departing.

³⁵ Mihi are greetings.

³⁶ Pēpeha are similar to proverbs.

³⁷ Kete are woven flax baskets.

gifted and we are here to do a job at the end of the day, not for ourselves, but for our rangatira,³⁸ our Tūpuna,³⁹ but for our families that have gone before us. They have led the way for us. It is up to us to carry the rākau⁴⁰ through for them, and how I do it is through love, with lots of loving to awhiawhi⁴¹ our tamariki.

Puti's sense of whakapapa and whanaungatanga meant that she nurtured all the tamariki in her kindergarten as if they were her own grandchildren:

These tamariki are like my mokopuna.⁴² These are my taonga that I want to nurture, they're the kākano,⁴³ like I said, I'm watching them do the puawai⁴⁴ and I water them every day with lots of love, lots of Te Reo, lots of Tikanga for them to go home to take a piece each of that back to their families.

A similar orientation was shared by Penny, a Pākehā kindergarten head teacher, who also considered the tamariki in her centre as her mokopuna:

My personal attitude is that it's a privilege to have any child come here, or any parent to allow us to care for their child. I pretend they're all my mokopuna, because I don't have any of my own and I ask myself, 'If this was my grandchild, how would I like my family to be treated?', and I act accordingly. It's not because I don't have any. It's just because I care about them.

Many co-researchers considered a sense of aroha to underpin their practice and expectations for early childhood provision. As mentioned earlier in this report, aroha has a wider and deeper meaning than its common translation as "love" in a romantic sense. For Māori, aroha is the sense of reciprocal obligation, loyalty, and commitment shared between kin, incorporating also the realm of spiritual protection, which underpins the provision of a stable social support system, of whanaungatanga (Patterson, 1992; Pere, 1982; Reedy, 1995). Several co-researchers emphasised that their value of aroha meant ensuring whānau were included, despite their inability to meet the costs or attendance requirements set by management decisions. Miria encouraged centres that she was involved in to recognise koha⁴⁵ rather than insisting on set fees:

Some of the things that I see reflected in Playcentre, is that in the centres in [her region] you'll find that a lot of them don't charge fees. Because if we're truly bicultural then our people have a right to koha and whatever that koha is, is up to our people. If it's biscuits or if it's their time or whatever, and that's actually spread, that Pākehā are using that system too. And I've really taught a lot of centres to not chase up if people haven't paid their fees. If they haven't paid it, there's usually a reason. They're bringing in funding just by being there, do you really need to harass people for money? Because that's so wrong. That's not the Māori way. Little things like that are sort of filtering through.

Riana, a Māori kindergarten head teacher, actively encouraged the whānau to return with children whom she suspected weren't attending because of an inability to pay fees:

And if I don't see a child for about a week I'm on the phone, 'Where's this child?', or knocking at the door, 'Bring that kid back to kindergarten, they need to be at kindy, no use leaving them at home' and I'll tell them off, and they've got so I can talk to them like that, eh? 'Where's so-and-so?', 'Oh, I'll bring her back', and they come back the next day, so that I know that the kids are coming, children that need to be here are here, that to me is what it's all about, that's what I'm here for is that the children are coming. And when quite often new whānau, they come in and 'How much is it?' and 'I

³⁸ Rangatira are chiefs.

³⁹ Tūpuna are elders, ancestors.

⁴⁰ Rākau are trees or sticks.

⁴¹ Awhiawhi is to embrace, foster, cherish.

⁴² Mokopuna are grandchildren.

⁴³ Kākano are seeds.

⁴⁴ Puawai is to blossom.

⁴⁵ Koha is to gift.

haven't got much money', 'Oh, never mind about the money. You don't worry about the money, I get paid, you bring those kids in that gate', 'You mean it?', 'Yeah, yeah', and then, 'Oh, I want to pay something', 'Give a koha', you know.

"All tikanga are underpinned by the high value placed upon manaakitanga—nurturing relationships, looking after people, and being very careful about how others are treated", according to Hirini Moko Mead (2003, p. 29). Demonstration of manaakitanga, through hospitality and generosity, enhances the mana (prestige) of the provider. The provision and sharing of kai within their centre practice was highly valued by our co-researchers, with many instances of hāngi, and other traditional kai Māori being shared as part of centre practice. Riana described how kai featured in her kindergarten:

Cooking is also an important part of our programme and especially some wonderful delicacies such as boil-up—pork bones and pūhā⁴⁶ from the garden, fish heads, fried bread, kai moana⁴⁷ galore, etc., etc. We grow lots of vegies in our gardens and the whānau and community are welcome to help themselves to this kai.

In this kindergarten, the teachers modelled their manaakitanga, whereby one is obligated to provide hospitality and sustenance to visitors, and this was reciprocated in kind by the centre whānau, who also provided kai that was shared by the collective. The preparation and serving of traditional kai affirms and nurtures the tamariki and whānau present, providing a tangible link to their culture, as well as the physical and spiritual sustenance. Eating together is a celebration of the collective sustenance of life, providing affirmation of whanaungatanga.

Integrating Te Reo me ona Tikanga

Te Whāriki is clear on the expectation for inclusion of Māori language and culture within early childhood programmes:

[Since] New Zealand is the home of Māori language and culture ... the curriculum in early childhood settings should promote te reo and ngā tikanga Māori, making them visible and affirming their value for children from all cultural backgrounds. (Ministry of Education, 1996b, p. 42)

In the "Communication" strand, one learning outcome is that children develop "an appreciation of Te Reo as a living and relevant language" (p. 76). More specifically, "The curriculum should include Māori people, places, and artifacts, and opportunities to learn and use the Māori language through social interaction" (p. 43). Teachers are required to ensure that "Māori phrases and sentences are included as a natural part of the programme" (p. 77). Languages are integral to cultures. Te Reo Māori, therefore, is the medium of intrinsic expression of Te Ao Māori, Māori values and world views. *Te Whāriki* affirms that early childhood programmes should demonstrate "a recognition of Māori ways of knowing and making sense of the world and of respecting and appreciating the natural environment" (p. 82). To this end, "Activities, stories, and events that have connections with Māori children's lives are an essential and enriching part of the curriculum for all children in early childhood settings" (p. 41).

Co-researchers in this project demonstrated a commitment to integrating Te Reo and Tikanga within their centre practice, in ways that were meaningful and contextual for children and families. Ariel holistically integrated Te Reo and Tikanga within her childcare programme through the media of storytelling, art, and drama:

We start off with reading the stories and getting the children familiar with the stories, [for example], 'How Maui Fished up Aotearoa'. The language just comes out through doing it, like 'waka',⁴⁸ 'ika',⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Pūhā is a green leafy vegetable.

⁴⁷ Kai moana is seafood.

⁴⁸ Waka are canoes.

⁴⁹ Ika are fish.

and we have a few songs in there—the waka songs, waiata waka, so the language comes through, but then there's also art in it, like they create all their props, we do big backdrops and the children do it themselves. A big cardboard box for the waka and they paint on it and then we look at the different art designs that are in books in the stories, and get the children doing their own interpretations of those ... And then we bring in things like making piupiu,⁵⁰ the costumes, having oars. And the children are all part of that as we're making it and then actually getting them to act it out and we read the story and just allow them to free flow, and the play's actually coming through. And it's a very holistic programme, way of planning—although you might have that one theme, there's so many aspects of it that come in. And it's raising that awareness that it's just part of our centre and it's not separated. So it's all one thing.

Ariel had also developed strategies for integrating Te Reo into children's everyday experiences, through literacy:

The children would write a story about what work they did in a big cleanup out here in [our town]. So you learn all those phrases, so that was another way that we did it. Making books using a certain phrase and then letting the children own it. Like 'He aha tau mahi hei whakatika i te wāhi nei?—What was the work that you did to clean up the place?', 'Ko tēnei taku mahi - Oh, this is the work that I did' and then drawing, doing the artwork for it, so—ownership of that too. And they learn that phrase ... For me, it's actually a very bicultural thing, because it's just a natural encompassment of it, if it's just used naturally.

Daisy, a Pākehā kindergarten teacher, researched aspects of Tikanga that she was interested in integrating into her teaching:

I wrote a story and what I wanted to do was encompass the Tikanga aspects on collecting kai moana. I wanted it to be something Pākehā could grasp, something simple, that was really clear and conveying the Tikanga aspects because it's not just about going down to the beach and picking up a few pipis, its deeper than that, there's a lot of kaupapa⁵¹ behind it. How did I know about all the Tikanga?—I've never gone out collecting kai moana in my life? Research, kōrero with others more knowledgeable. As far as getting it to children it needs to be simple and straight-forward. The pipi story is focused on Tangaroa,⁵² the protocols around that. The tamariki seem to enjoy it, but in order to deepen their understanding, and extend the story, I set up the pipi hunt in the sandpit. So the story was a visual and a listening experience, whereas the pipi hunt was a tactile experience, so that then I think I would have managed to tap into every child's way of learning.

Daisy also involved whānau Māori of her centre in her planning, although she took primary responsibility for researching the Reo and Tikanga that was to be incorporated. She was careful to check the appropriateness of materials that she intended to incorporate:

Generally I will go to whānau. I'm doing a Te Ara Reo course. I always go to my tutor, or the dictionary. I'm careful of who I ask. I don't want to come across as "I want want want", so I approach whānau that trust me and know my intentions are good. They are only going to give me that what they want to give. Going to the whānau brings them into the planning - it's empowering, their input. I go to whānau that I have earned their respect, their trust.

During her time as a kindergarten teacher, Tui made a point of facilitating mat-times in Te Reo:

I made a point to do most of my mat-time in Te Reo Māori, so that's what I was wanting to do. I made a point of doing my planning in Te Reo Māori and had it up on the board. That was more for myself really, that planning part, because that's what I wanted to focus on, but in terms of mat-time I wanted

⁵⁰ Piupiu are traditional garments made of flax, worn in ceremonies and kapa haka (cultural dance) performances.

⁵¹ Kaupapa is philosophy.

⁵² Tangaroa is the Atua, supernatural being, or God, of the sea.

to be able to show that even though it is in a different language, all children can follow, it's not necessarily about what's coming out, it's how you deliver it, and that you can still get everyone on board, and it's still okay.

Data gathered from other centres indicated that incorporating Te Reo and Tikanga was more effective when educators were committed both individually and collectively to integrating Te Reo me ōna Tikanga within planning, teaching interactions, programme evaluation, and centre review. Other strategies included supporting whānau at home with Te Reo by sending home tapes of waiata that were sung in the centre and inviting whānau to centre occasions such as hāngi.

Many of the Pākehā co-researchers have worked hard over the years to increase their competence in Te Reo, and continue to do so, by taking courses such as Te Ara Reo. At Ariel's childcare centre, all the teachers had attended an Ara Reo course in their local community. Penny was also studying Te Reo through the Ara Reo programme. She explained that as her own confidence grew, and supported by her co-teacher, the quality of Te Reo within the centre programme continued to strengthen, as "the reo is fed in gently and quietly". Penny described how her openness to ongoing growth and learning was applied within her teaching:

Everything in the Māori world has a beginning and an end that follows in a cycle and that's kind of where we went from. So it's been a gradual process questioning why we do things and then coming across some readings or Māori students coming. Just learning bits, more from them, as they question or want explanations, 'How do you do things?' or 'why do you do things?' and having to explain and then thinking, 'Is that right? Should we be doing it a different way?' It's about learning from other people, being open to learn from other people.

Conclusion: journeys of change

Te Whāriki can be seen as a map for a Tiriti-based journey of change for all of us who work in the early childhood education sector (Ritchie & Rau, 2005). The bicultural nature of *Te Whāriki*, valuing the cultures of both the tangata whenua and those on the Crown side of the Tiriti relationship, needs to be understood within the historical context of colonisation, which has resulted in a situation where only 6.9 percent of early childhood educators, outside of Kōhanga Reo, are Māori (Ministry of Education, 2004). The sociocultural approach to curriculum adopted by *Te Whāriki* can be seen as socially, culturally, and politically ground breaking in its affirmation of Māori indigeneity and the centrality of whānau/families, relationships, and culture in early childhood education. Over the past decade since the promulgation of *Te Whāriki*, many within the early childhood education profession in Aotearoa have worked not only to recognise but to *enact* principles and processes that move beyond colonised models of education and interaction. As a profession, we continue to demonstrate the ongoing commitment of our intent to honour ethics of social justice, situated in a general recognition of human rights to languages and cultures, but more particularly with a focus on implementing this as a professional responsibility within a context whereby colonisation has resulted in the need for processes of reprioritising Indigenous rights (Colbung *et al.*, in press; M. Durie, 2001).

Lilian Katz (2004) reminds us that "Change is a journey, not a blueprint" (p. 66). *Te Whāriki*, as a non-prescriptive socioculturally framed document, enables each centre to weave its own whāriki (May, 2001) of programme components, organic to the particular community context in which it is located (Ritchie, 2002). Crucial to the change process is the recognition that, as educators, we are in positions of power and influence, responsible for initiating change towards more democratic, culturally inclusive practices in keeping with our curriculum expectations. The Tuhoe tōhunga Hohepa Kereopa has said that:

I believe that each person who takes out a leaf of knowledge opens themselves up to receive more knowledge, and so the thing that keeps the tohunga going in the end is that the knowledge survives, even though it is not passed on the way it used to be... And so you really need to want to learn these things, this knowledge, if you want to receive it. It's no good just saying that it's interesting, or

something fun to do. It is serious and you have to be serious when you deal with it. (Kereopa, in Moon, 2003, p. 105)

This requires a mindfulness, as outsiders who are not experts in other people's cultures (Delpit, 1995). In order to know what others value, and in particular to honour the rights of Māori and the Tiriti-based expectations of *Te Whāriki*, our journey of change becomes a journey of self-change (Miller & Shoptaugh, 2004), of exploration, of building relationships, of facing the uncertainties of both knowing and unknowing (Ritchie, 2005), as we seek to find ways to learn from Māori whānau what is important to them and respond accordingly. Building bridges that strengthen these relationships involves deliberately engineering strategies, opening up spaces, changing our emphasis, fostering skills in listening and dialogue (Abramson & Atwal, 2004), and being genuinely open to what we may hear. As Paulo Freire (1972) wrote, "Founding itself upon love, humility and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the participants is the logical consequence" (p. 64). The notion of humility as intrinsic to this respectful process of dialogue is also characteristic of Māori roles within relationships (L. Mead, 1996, pp. 12–13). This focus on respectful, responsive, reciprocal relationships has resonance with Nel Noddings' (1995) notion of an "ethic of care": "When we care, we receive the other in an open and genuine way. As dialogue unfolds, we participate in a mutual construction of the frame of reference, but this is always a sensitive task that involves total receptivity, reflection, invitation, assessment, revision, and further exploration" (p. 191).

Intrinsic to this transformation of early childhood practice towards Tiriti-based models is a reconceptualising by teachers of their roles from that of the traditional view of teacher as 'expert' to a notion of their professionalism embodying a sense of humility (Ritchie, 2002), whereby they reposition themselves as collaborators moving beyond the domain of co-constructing knowledge alongside children (Jordan, 2004). In this paradigm, collaboration with whānau/parents extends throughout the entire early childhood programme, including planning, interpersonal interactions, individual assessment, programme evaluation, and centre review. Educators as collaborators are respectfully open to different world views and able to demonstrate through their words and actions a willingness to responsively incorporate these into the everyday knowledges and practices within the educational setting (Ritchie, 2002). Through their participation in this project, our co-researchers have demonstrated this willingness to share narratives of their journeys of change. We are in awe of the generosity of the co-researchers, and wish to acknowledge once again their readiness to share and reflect upon these insights.

4. Limitations of the project

The qualitative research model employed in this project did not purport to deliver conclusive findings or provide tidy recipes that may be easily emulated. Every centre and community consists of its own unique mosaic of social, historical, cultural, and individual complexities. Through the sharing of snippets from the narratives of the co-researchers this report may provide some insights and inspiration to other educators that may encourage them further on their own journeys.

This report has focused on findings pertaining to the work of early childhood educators in centres. Further publications are planned, which will focus on implications for teacher education and professional development.

5. Contribution to capability and capacity

The project team

Co-directors: Cheryl Rau and Dr Jenny Ritchie

Partners: Hei Ara Kōkiri Tuwaretoa Education Initiative, Unitec NZ, Waikato Kindergarten Association, The University of Waikato.

Individual co-researchers came from a range of different early childhood settings, including: kindergarten, Playcentre, and childcare settings; specialist education; teacher education institutions; an iwi education initiative; and professional development organisations.

How the project addressed the principles of the TLRI

TLRI Principle Six emphasises the partnerships between researchers and practitioners, while Practice Value/Ngā Hua Ritenga states that the research needs to contribute to practice, be relevant to practitioners, and transfer to the learning environment in order to benefit children, whānau, educators, and communities.

We were honoured to have been invited to deliver keynote presentations at the following professional conferences, for which the audiences were primarily early years educators:

Partnership in practice. Collaborative research in early childhood education in Aotearoa/NewZealand: Two projects. Keynote presentation (Jenny Ritchie and Cheryl Rau) to “The Politics of Early Childhood Education”, the 4th Annual professional development symposium of the Auckland College of Education Early Childhood Professional Support Programmes. He Kaupapa Tautoko Nga Kaiako Puhou, 22 September, 2004.

How warm is your welcome, how open are your doors? (Cheryl Rau and Jenny Ritchie). Keynote presentation to “Hei Whakatipua Whanaungatanga ki te Oranga—A Primary and Early Childhood Education Conference 0–8 Years”, NZEI Te Riu Roa, 22–24 April, 2005.

Voices from a way-finding journey: sharing some landmarks from the Whakawhanaungatanga project (Jenny Ritchie and Cheryl Rau). Keynote presentation to “The Politics of Early Childhood Education”, the 5th annual professional development symposium of The University of Auckland’s Early Childhood Professional Support Programmes. He Kaupapa Tautoko Nga Kaiako Puhou, 27–28 September, 2005.

Seminars and workshops presenting material from the project were another medium for providing educators with access to the project’s kaupapa and preliminary findings. These workshops had the advantage of being informal and allowed for a great deal of interaction among participants and presenters.

“Whakawhanaungatanga and pathways to building bicultural capacity in ECE”: a seminar presented to “The Politics of Early Childhood Education”, the 4th annual professional development symposium of the Auckland College of Education Early Childhood Professional Support Programmes. He Kaupapa Tautoko Nga Kaiako Puhou, 22 September, 2004.

“Whakawhanaungatanga: open doors and warm welcomes”. Workshop presented at “Hei Whakatipua Whanaungatanga ki te Oranga—A Primary and Early Childhood Education Conference 0–8 Years”, NZEI Te Riu Roa, 22–24 April, 2005.

“Whakawhanaungatanga: sharing some landmarks from bicultural journeys”. Workshop presented at “The Politics of Early Childhood Education”, the 5th annual professional development symposium of The University of Auckland’s Early Childhood Professional Support Programmes. He Kaupapa Tautoko Nga Kaiako Puhou, 27–28 September, 2005.

“Whakawhanaungatanga”. Presentation to Tauranga Kindergarten Teachers, Ngāhihi Professional Development Seminar, Papamoa, 1 July, 2005.

“Whakawhanaungatanga”. Presentation to Waikato Kindergarten Teachers, Waikato Kindergarten Association, Hamilton, 11 July, 2005.

“Strategies for Whakawhanaungatanga”. Ngāhihi Professional Development Seminar presented to King Country Playcentres, November, 2005.

Ngāhihi Professional Development Seminar for Childcare Educators, November, 2005.

“He Kōrero”. Presentation to Dunedin Kindergarten Association/Mana Manāki Puawai o Otepoti, Dunedin, 5 December, 2005.

Presentations were also made at the following academic conferences, both here in Aotearoa and internationally, where the audiences were primarily early childhood teacher educators and academics involved in early childhood education studies. Several of these papers focused on our methodology, since we considered this to be of relevance to other early childhood education researchers.

- *Partnership in practice. Collaborative research in early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Two projects* (Cheryl Rau and Jenny Ritchie). Paper presented at “Identities & Innovations: Shaping Better Worlds through Early Childhood Education”, the 5th conference of the Pacific Early Childhood Research Association, 16–19 July, 2004. University of Melbourne, Australia.
- *From the margins to the centre: Repositioning Māori at the centre of early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand* (Jenny Ritchie and Cheryl Rau). Paper presented at “Pushing the Boundaries for Change, Honouring the Child, Honouring Equity”, the Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood Conference, 11–14 November, 2004. University of Melbourne, Australia.
- *Ka hikoi tahi tātou* (Huata Holmes, Lee Blackie, Cheryl Rau, and Jenny Ritchie). Paper presented to the Early Childhood Symposium, 5 December, 2005. Dunedin College of Education.
- “Emergence, convergence and divergence in collaborative narrative methodology” (Jenny Ritchie and Cheryl Rau). Research seminar presented at NZARE, 7 December, 2005. University of Otago.
- *Mixing our metaphors* (Jenny Ritchie). Paper presented by video link as part of a panel presentation, “Counterstories and Reconstructed Metaphors: Indigenous/Pacific Perspectives on Language, Discourse and Power in the Pacific” to Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Conference, 19 October, 2005. Madison, Wisconsin.
- *Indigenous metaphors of the heart: Transformative praxis in early childhood education in Aotearoa. Privileging Māori women educators’ voices* (Cheryl Rau). Paper presented by video link as part of a panel presentation, “Counterstories and Reconstructed Metaphors: Indigenous/Pacific Perspectives on Language, Discourse and Power in the Pacific” to Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Conference, 19 October, 2005. Madison, Wisconsin.

Publications from the project as at January, 2006

Rau, C., & Ritchie, J. (2005). From the margins to the centre: Repositioning Māori at the centre of early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *International Journal of Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood*, 3(1), 50–60.

A number of other resources and publications are planned that will focus on specific areas of early childhood practice such as teacher education and professional development.

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