

Sabbatical Report

2019

**Working with two cultures, working with many
cultures**

**The place of bicultural practices in a multi cultural
school**

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Focus of Reflections

The focus of my sabbatical reflections was two fold:

1. **gain** greater understanding of our bicultural responsibilities growing from the Treaty
2. **engage** with and understand more deeply parents of the school from multiple overseas destinations

Intent

This paper is not written as an academic paper and therefore lacks the expected rigour of such a work. This paper simply captures my thoughts and reflections from the work I have done around the topic and is intended as a discussion document of the schools leadership and governance levels. It is intended to help guide our next steps as a school community as we consider our bicultural responsibilities and our multicultural flavour.

In a recent NZPF email, Whetu Cormick recorded the following illustration and I find it to be useful in helping to frame a journey that we need to be on. He said, imagine a river. On the left bank is Te Ao Māori and on the right bank is Te Ao Pākehā. Spanning the river is a bridge called Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Mostly it is Māori on the left bank who are walking across to the right bank, but not so many on the right bank walking to the left. The question is, where do you see yourself, as a school principal, on the bridge? Are you well across the bridge? Are you a short way onto the bridge? Or are you still on the bank?

Aidanfield Christian School Context

A growing roll: Aidanfield Christian School has changed significantly since I became principal. The school has had significant growth and change in all areas. We are roll capped by the MOE as a Special Character school. Our roll has grown as fast as the MOE roll increases have been approved mostly as a result of significant population growth within our enrolment scheme zone.

A changing dynamic: As the school has grown it has changed. One area of change has been composition of our community. The changes are reflected in two different Charters 10 years apart and summarised below:

2008: Roll: 150. European 69% Maori 5% Polynesian 13% Asian 7% African 7%
2018: Roll: 320. European 52% Maori 4% Pasifika 2% Asian 32% Other 8%

Just 10 years ago the school was mostly mono cultural. Since the earthquakes the South West of Christchurch has had a population explosion and with that our school has changed. Close to 50% of our school pupils now do not come from New Zealand. From this group a significant number are ESOL pupils funded by the MOE and another large group have English as their second language but are unsupported. These are the domestic student numbers, not influenced by the fee paying international student population within the school.

Our Maori profile: Our population of Maori pupils has declined slightly over the years as a percentage (increased in real numbers but lower as a percentage of overall roll.) A further dynamic

is reflected in our journey to connecting with a local marae. Our school has recently been directed towards, Taumutu Marae by Ngai Tahu after a number of years growing a relationship with another Ngai Tahu marae in the absence of direction from Ngai Tahu in the first instance. With this new structure we need to build new relationships and links. Our whanau at ACS are interested for us to grow in our links and practices in association with a marae. They are also low key in terms of expectations on the school in relation to things Maori. The overriding comment is that they just want their children to succeed along with everyone else. Most of our whanau who identify as Maori have limited if any connection to their own marae and are early on in their own journey's of identity discovery in relation to things Maori.

With the changing dynamic our school is growing in a desire to honour the Treaty as a treaty partner and we have a responsibility and a desire to serve our families from all over the world and for whom the Treaty is possibly of limited interest. How do we, as a school, balance these two dynamics? How do we determine a curriculum and programme that honours our treaty commitment (a desire of our BOT) as well as preparing our pupils for life in a global village? How do we provide a deep New Zealand curriculum that builds an authentic bicultural understanding and confidence in our pupils, parents and staff while at the same time balance the desire of our parent community for future focused learning that prepares pupils to live and work in a global village? Are these two desires mutually exclusive or interdependent?

The schools vision is to work "in partnership with parents...." The annual plan and strategic plan both call for the school to work with parents and to engage with our ethnic communities. The school has always acknowledged and sought to work with parents and to involve them.

The impact of our demographic change is interesting and not yet fully understood. There are a number of assumptions that I have made. We are seeing a change in the way parents interact with and engage with the school. My assumption is that, as well as an increasing need for two parents to be working (where there are two parents), another aspect could be due to the expectations and school experiences that parents who were schooled in other countries bring to their involvement with our school.

Where my mind has landed after the sabbatical reflections

The following reflections relate more towards schools with low Maori populations in their community. Our school has 4% Maori so a very low pressure to do things Maori from our treaty partner within our community. My reflections are related to schools of similar type. There is no intent to cause offense with these observation, they simply record my journey of trying to understand what it means to be an authentic treaty partner so that we can do it well at Aidanfield Christian School.

The place of faith and culture

One of the biggest discussions that we face as a school and within our community is that of individual identity. Every person is searching for and nurturing a sense of who they are and what they contribute. Identity is a fundamental discussion point for our pupils year in and year out. Part of our identity is found in our cultural expression but this is not the place to start, it comes in second or third. A strong sense of identity and therefore a key driver in self advocacy is understanding the foundations of who we are.

Our schools Special Character is built on a biblical Christian world view. This view maintains that first and foremost, all people are created in God's image, irrespective of gender, culture, age, faith etc. This truth sits above any other expression of identity and is the deepest reason that every person no matter who they are, has inherent value and worth. Every persons worth is found in their

origin as a person created and fashioned by a loving, ever present God who created all things and sustains all things. This is unequivocal. Our cultural expression is a gift from him and one to be celebrated but not at the expense of ensuring our understanding of who we are is first and foremost based on being created beings, gifted life and with a call back to him. On this strong foundation all cultures can then be welcomed and celebrated. On this aspect we do well at ACS.

The nature and the heart of ‘man/people’.

Any discussion about prejudice or imbalance or domination or colonisation must define a basic understanding of the human heart. My observation of human nature is that no matter who or where people are there are always those that want to dominate others. I have seen this in multiple countries and in every population group I have interacted with. I have seen racism in white toward white, white towards black, black towards black, black to yellow, yellow to black, yellow to yellow, and discrimination male to female, old to young and so on. I would go so far as to say that, no matter where people are found someone will always seek to dominate, in some way, another. Obviously not every individual in a community is involved but every community struggles with those within it whose desire to dominate another is exhibited in some way. I have seen amazing people doing amazing things for others. But equally I have seen the reverse. The heart of mankind is essentially corrupt and world history from when the human story began exhibits this.

World view impact

All people hold to a developed world view. Some are able to articulate their understanding of the world and others haven't acknowledged any need to. Every person's world view impacts on their ability and willingness to relate to others. A personal example is reflected in my own travel a couple of years ago when I found myself surprised at how pleasant, welcoming and enjoyable a particular people group in Asia where. As I reflected on why I was surprised I had to acknowledge that, from somewhere, I had developed an idea that this people group perhaps were different to what my actual experience showed me. I had arrived with a concept shaped by my world view. We all act out of our understanding about the world and events that take place in it. This is a key dynamic in the interaction between Maori and Pakeha as well as Pakeha and many other immigrant populations.

Genuine interaction and engagement

I perceive a genuine difference between doing the mandatory MOE requirements of consulting our whanau and actually engaging with our whanau and embracing a Maori view of the world. Certainly the MOE documents provided to help to do this well are useful but the underlying prejudices that influence everyone one of us involved in implementing any ‘programme’ lead to varied results across the schools. To be clear, this is an assumption not a researched thesis on my part.

I suspect that we have many schools that are looking to implement Maori practices but do not have an understanding of a Maori way of doing things. It is easy to ‘do’ a mihi whakatau or to have Te Reo on each door or to name the buildings after birds. These are surface level issues and, while moving in the right direction, are limited in terms of their real engagement with understanding and inclusion. This point has been recently highlighted when I joined a meeting a couple of minutes late and missed the introductions. A visitor who could whakapapa to iwi had been invited to the meeting and when I began to ask questions he needed to ask who I was. I commented later that if we were truly seeking to reflect a bi cultural approach then there should have been a chance to mihi at the start of the meeting. I was rebuked by the Chair who said it had been done. Our Maori visitor later confirmed that there had been no more than brief introductions. This examples two different understandings of how to start a gathering of those that do not know each other. The mihi approach is time consuming and doesn't fit an time constrained agenda so well – but it gives depth

of connection and understanding. This same process was challenged at our school Board meeting recently and the outcome of allowing time for a proper mihi brought a depth to our gathering at the expense of an earlier finish to the meeting. I wonder why, where the dominant culture is non-Maori treaty partners, Maori are the ones who need to forgo their understanding of process? A further example is the use of karakia and whakatoki. How many groups will now offer karakia but would argue strongly against any form of Christian prayer. This, in my mind represents a truly shallow hat tipping to things Maori and lacks any form of authenticity. Similar is in the use of whakatoki. How often has a Google search been done to find an apparently suitable Maori phrase to affix to a document or insert into a presentation? Whakatoki, as I understand them are wise sayings passed through generations and shared as a natural part of conversation and discussion and seek to capture a deep wisdom to guide the listener and this done out of the wealth of knowledge of the thoughts that reverberate in the Maori world. Our challenge is to go beyond a token application and to work authentically towards ever deepening understanding of things Maori. Small steps in the journey are good – as long as they continue ever forward and not circling around the same mountain, concept or custom!

So, how do we bring balance to highlight the non-dominant but equal treaty partner?

With the above discussion in mind, the following are the steps I believe our school needs to take to continue along the journey of becoming a contributing partner to the Treaty in our context.

1. Treaty obligations – a growing practical understanding

As a starting place our staff need to have a deep and shared understanding of the Treaty and its implications. The Treaty is a covenant that binds two people together for the good of both and reflects a biblical understanding of covenant. To work with integrity as a Crown entity, we need to seek a greater understanding than we currently hold. To do this means we need to develop a PD programme that helps all our staff engage with the Treaty in both an academic sense but also at a personal and emotional level. We need our staff to know the issues, understand the issues and be a part of helping our community to grow into a deeper place of unity – for the good of all of us.

2. Marae connection – knowing our marae, involved with our marae

We need to continue to develop relationships. We need to keep developing a connection with the marae that we have been directed towards. We need to:

- Have an ongoing dialogue and involvement with our marae
- Where possible attend marae based events to show our support and commitment
- Confirm our cultural narrative to reflect Maori history of our local area while sitting that alongside the colonisation history of the same area. This to be done in respect of all parties involved.
- Have groups of pupils interacting with marae through each year where possible
- Seek a marae gifted name for the school
- Incorporate Maori values as expressed by our marae to sit alongside our Special Character values which take precedence but clearly showing the links between the two
- Consult on tekunga and invite representatives to school events

3. Te Reo and Tikanga – knowing the language, knowing the culture

Language captures culture and fosters understanding. It cannot be taught well without teaching the culture that the language is a part of. We need to put more resource into the teaching of both at ACS. Ideally we need a two fold approach whereby:

- the classroom teachers are integrating Maori language into the everyday classroom environment at ever increasing levels of complexity.

- at the same time we need to specifically teach the language and culture to all levels following a curriculum that is progressive and cyclic. This is likely to look like at least one specific Maori language lesson a week but ideally two from a teacher with Maori language expertise.
- Practically this will require a specialist language teacher to teach from year 1 to at least year 6 if not year 8 depending on the funding available. The structure would be the equivalent of 50 minutes per week in each class but taught in two lots of 25 minutes in each week.

A challenge in learning the language and the cultural aspects that support things Maori is to begin to appreciate the way the Maori world thinks. A simple example is in the use of language. Metaphor is a powerful tool in speaking and used to great effect in the Maori world. As our pupils learn to wield a new language they can be invited into a greater understanding of their own world and expression and this can be a powerful learning tool and a possible fringe benefit.

4. NZ history

We need to develop a balanced narrative that unfolds what happened in our history as a nation. In so doing we need to avoid a polished, politicised or biased view. Dr Wayne Ngata, Ruakura Chief Advisor Te Ao Maori recently said, we need to retell our history as "...if we don't provide a space to do that, then we lose the opportunity to grow, if we want to mature as a nation, then we have to own our history and not be selective or one sided about the stories we tell." (Education Gazette, 17 June, 2019). From this place we need to formally educate our pupils about the story that has made the New Zealand they currently live in and from that, nurture a hope for the nation that they can grow into.

We need to improve our teaching of things Maori such that we do not focus on traditional Maori any more than we focus on early Europeans. There is a need to highlight the place of modern Maori in New Zealand. The Maori economy is increasingly influential in the NZ economic future and our pupils need to know how to operate with a Maori business world if they are to have as many options as possible after leaving school.

Jay Ruka makes a point that is well worth pondering. He says, "It's time to become educated in proper history and become carriers of the story of two cultures coming together to offer balanced ways to run our country. We need to shape the narrative of the country to celebrate the treaty as our national story. Our schools can influence the view of future leaders to see the true history of the treaty."

5. Finding God in other cultural spaces

Our special character means that we hold that God is the source of all life, creator of all things including cultures. As creator he has revealed himself in every culture with clarity. In exploring the Maori world we are inviting our pupils to understand that God is not a white, male from the West. He exists in every culture and every culture is formed in his image. If we explore God in the Maori world without leaving the sure foundation of scriptural truth we invite a much more expansive and awe inspiring understanding of who he is. Such a journey will take time and much wisdom but is needed within our school context.

6. Finally - Knowing our identity

All of the above helps us to form, know and understand our identity and this is foundational. Our identity sits in who we are created to be, the culture that we are gifted, our conceptual and emotive grasp of the reality of scripture on our lives individually, corporately and as a nation and in the experiences that we have as we walk our life journey. As a school we can speak into each of these areas and gift to our pupils the opportunity of understanding their identity in a well informed and

positive manner. This is a powerful gift in a place of learning. Because of this, we need to do this journey well.

To give the journey some energy I believe we need to add to the strategic direction below the establishment of a Maori initiatives leadership team of interested staff from the start of 2020 whose function should be to:

- Strengthen the whanau hui discussions and connections
- Strengthen the links to Taumutu marae
- Develop and guide the implementation of 1 to 6 above
- And foster a biblically informed outworking of bi cultural covenantal relationship within the school

As a multi-cultural school, we are called to be authentic Treaty partners. When we do bi-cultural well we will do multi-cultural well and all are invited to engage with the learning and grow.

To facilitate a development the following development is suggested after discussion with school staff, the leadership team and Board of Trustees.

Strategic Goal 3 Deepen understandings of bicultural teaching and learning through a biblical lens (Biblical / Relational: Culturally Competent)			
To develop the depth of bi cultural teaching and learning at Aidanfield, the following direction is proposed			
2019	2020	2021	2022
Rn Sabbatical work on defining authentic bicultural practice in multicultural setting - through a biblical lens	Define 'NZ' culture as distinct from traditional Maori culture and propagate a deep understanding of both.	Implement whole staff experiential Treaty education module developed by ACS staff for ACS staff through a biblical lens.	Intertwined/authentic Treaty implication implemented into classroom programmes.
Staff confidence in mihi grows.	Staff involvement in Waitangi Day celebrations in some form	Staff Marae overnight start of year	
School mihi whakatau confirmed	Resourcing development of pupil focused Treaty material for classroom use.	Budget to reflect commitment to Waitangi	
Unfold links with Taumutu	SCT focused on biblical lens and bicultural practice	SCT focused on biblical lens and bicultural practice	
Yr 4 to marae each year			
Kapa haka evolutions - cultural festival			
Film cultural narrative			

Collate all fragments of scheme work into one document	Cultural narrative embedded into teaching programmes Implement classroom based scheme through all classes.		
Weekly classroom based language progression for teachers in mornings. Support model of termly hui with shared leadership			