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‘The Treaty in the Trenches - Treaty Education in Practice’ Robert Consedine Waitangi Associates Ltd www.waitangi.co.nz

Introduction

On 9 July 1981 I was one of four anti-springbok tour protestors jailed for two weeks after two days of peaceful, non violent civil disobedience designed to stop the racially selected all-white South African Springbok rugby tour of Aotearoa. The imprisonment was the culmination of a carefully orchestrated plan to use the prison to dramatize opposition to the tour.

For me though, the impact of being in jail was unexpected, as the jail was overcrowded with Maori prisoners. It dawned on me dramatically, that here I was protesting against racial oppression in South Africa, while being confronted with the consequences of the system of colonisation at home in New Zealand. This experience sowed the seeds of a transformational process which shaped my entire view of New Zealand.

Political struggle was not new to me. I had had considerable personal exposure to political and social justice actions all my life. These experiences included, in the 1960s, the civil rights and anti-Vietnam movements in the United States and contact with liberation movements in Europe; in the 1970s working in New Zealand’s international aid programmes during the Vietnam war and the India/Pakistan conflict.

When I left jail in 1981, the shocking impact of meeting so many Maori in prison stayed in my mind. The experience had opened my eyes to a different reality. I was appalled. While Maori protest had begun to impact on my consciousness, it wasn’t until Pakeha New Zealanders, including myself, were challenged by Maori activists that we began to take some responsibility for our colonial history.

The challenge was three fold:

- learn your own history, cultural identity and cultural values;
- take responsibility for your own lack of awareness of New Zealand colonial history, particularly the implications of the Treaty of Waitangi
- create a process that begins to challenge the majority culture of which you are a member.

The message was clear. Start by educating yourself and your own people. If Maori were going to receive justice, the dominant culture had to change. A number of Pakeha took this challenge seriously. We began by educating ourselves.

Becoming a Treaty educator

As I became more involved I listened more closely to Maori activists. I spent hours at night poring over books - a practice I continue today - trying to cram in years of colonial history that I had not been taught. I became increasingly aware of the information gap that existed between the academic discourse and books available to read on New Zealand’s colonial history and the abysmal knowledge of the general population about indigenous and Treaty rights.

Most New Zealanders, like myself, were taught little - if anything - at school about New Zealand colonial history - and what was taught was often from the colonizer’s viewpoint. I knew if this information gap was to change, an effective education process needed to be created.

As a result of a continuing discernment between Maori and Pakeha in the early 1980s, *Project Waitangi* emerged – a network of Pakeha people including myself - who, with strong accountability to Maori began to experiment by trial and error with a variety of education programmes. We focused on the majority Pakeha population, and, simultaneously, we continued to educate ourselves.

By the late 1980s the process had been developed into a highly interactive two-day workshop. This programme, which continues to be refined, forms the basis of Treaty workshops today.

I am aware that while a healthy minority of the dominant culture in New Zealand are better informed, most still live in the “wonderland” of colonial propaganda. As recently as April 2005 District Court and Waitangi Tribunal Judge Richard Kearney was reported as saying:

“...New Zealanders generally had a staggering, almost criminal, lack of understanding of Treaty issues.”¹

For me this means the continuation of this work is crucial. Having now delivered these workshops to tens of thousands of New Zealanders I would like to share with you a brief summary of the content, philosophy and process behind why I believe this has become a widely supported public Treaty of Waitangi Education programme. In doing this there are five principles I would like to illustrate as to why I believe these workshops work. I would also like to share how this education programme has been adapted in Canada and to encourage you to think about how it could be adapted in other countries with a similar history to Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Table One: Treaty of Waitangi workshop content

The content of the workshop explores most or all of these themes:

- Political build-up to the contemporary Treaty debate in Aotearoa
- Warm-up to any particular questions and/or issues the group has
- The global nature of colonialism: The age of empire: The British Empire
- The Polynesian journey to the Pacific and Aotearoa/New Zealand
- The policy of assimilation – comparisons with Australia and Canada
- The 1840 Treaty of Waitangi between the British Crown and Maori – before, during and after.
- Aboriginal Common Law Rights/Native Title. Australia/Mabo. Canada/ Delgamuuku. The Foreshore and Seabed case
- Post Treaty legislation. The land wars of sovereignty and the imposition of the Nation State
- The Sovereignty/Governance/Tino Rangatiratanga debate
- Contemporary legislative changes and the role of the courts
- Consequences of colonialism. Economic poverty and the social statistics
- White Privilege: The hidden benefits
- Maori access to political power
- The role of the Waitangi Tribunal/claims/settlements
- The emergence of parallel systems/self determination
- Success stories/models for the future/professional implications
- Specialist questions/implications for a particular group such as: scientists, teachers, police, health and conservation.
- The New Zealand economy and the impact of globalisation

Table Two: The five principles which describe the philosophy and process

- Treaty education had to be ‘twice as good’ as any other educational process
- Honouring our stories - removing perceived threats and nurturing openness
- Activating attitudinal change – relevance to integration to transformation
- Providing respectful workshop leadership
- A parallel workshop’s process: making the workshops culturally safe

1. Treaty education had to be ‘twice as good’ as any other educational process

The 1970s women’s movement influenced my thinking here. I recalled women saying that in order to succeed at the same job as men, they had to be twice as good as men. Early on I knew that if Treaty of Waitangi education was to be successful then I would have to offer a process that was better than any other educational experience. I realized that because of the level of resistance to the topic of the Treaty, the workshops had to be dynamic, credible, informative, interesting and fun. That was – and remains – my goal.

¹ The Christchurch Press, Christchurch, New Zealand, 23 April 2005, D19

2. Honouring our stories - removing perceived threats and nurturing openness

In trying to empower people to be confident and full participants in a society confronting its colonial history and changing the traditional relationship between the colonizers and the colonized, I realized it was not up to me to give participants the answers. My role was to give them the tools to find their own answers. The life experience of each person needed to be central to the task and process of the workshop.

I came to this conclusion by reflecting more closely on my own cultural identity as a fourth generation Irish Catholic Pakeha New Zealander. I drew parallels to my ancestors story and the Maori struggle. My family started in New Zealand in the 1860s after my great-great grandfather had been sentenced to hang in Tipperary in 1823 as a politically active member of an illegal Irish political movement. He was then given a choice between hanging OR transportation. Transportation was a marginally better option and he consequently completed twelve years as a convict in New South Wales before being given a 'ticket of leave.' His daughter and her Irish husband came to New Zealand.

Through a growing awareness of the reasons why my family left Ireland – colonisation by the English and poverty (both political, economic, cultural and spiritual) I came to understand my own story in the context of colonial history and in relation to the Maori journey

The importance of personal journey – our own individual stories, contemporary and ancestral - cannot be underestimated and is given strong emphasis in the workshops. This encourages participants to make more meaning of their own experience: Where were they born? Where have they been? Where do they feel connected or grounded? Irish poet and scholar John O'Donohue captures the centrality of this theme:

'There is so much that needs to be integrated within each person... to visit the temple of memory is not merely to journey back to the past; it rather to awaken and integrate everything that happens to you. It is part of the process of reflection which gives depth to experience...Everything that happen to you is an act of sowing a seed of experience. It is equally important to be able to harvest that experience.'²

Therefore the information introduced during the workshop process can be discussed in a way that enables each person in the group to feel connected to the issues and part of the process of addressing them. It also helps remove perceived threats and create an open environment. The result is expressed in this comment: 'This workshop has helped me connect my own family story with what happened to Maori.'

3. Activating attitudinal change – relevance to integration to transformation

In assisting participants integrate the information that they are learning in the Treaty workshop, the information is connected into their life journey and experience. Alongside grounding participants in their own story, hearing their questions and facilitating how they can get answers to them is crucial. Each profession has its own question about relevance. Real life examples include:

- A Police Officer: "What has knowing about the Treaty got to do with catching crooks?"
- A health-professional: "What has the Treaty to do with being a doctor? Surely I should treat all my patients the same?"
- A teacher: "What is the relevance of the Treaty to teaching children?"
- A scientist: "What has the Treaty to do with scientific research?"

By making the workshop content and process relevant, integration and transformation of attitudes can begin. I am reminded daily that facts – no matter how empirically proven – do not change people. How people *feel* about the facts and their ability to integrate the facts will determine their response. For this reason a Treaty of Waitangi workshop is not primarily an academic exercise. In fact, a relatively small amount of information is transmitted in the workshop process because the purpose is to stimulate interest in the vast amount of information available for post workshop study.

The information is presented in the workshop utilizing a range learning styles to engage all participants. It has been said that we learn 10 percent of what we read, 15 per cent of what we hear, and 80 per cent of what

² John O'Donohue, Anam Cara: Spiritual Wisdom from the Celtic World, Bantam Press, Transworld Publishers Ltd, London, 1997 pp222/3

we experience.³ Teaching methods used include: action methods, socio-drama, role-play, Socratic dialogue, small groups, video and audio clips. In this way participants are able to integrate and interconnect the themes, content and threads of the workshop into their own life journey. These distinct themes create the shift for different people at different parts of the process. Allowing time for reflection and silence is, therefore, critical.

The challenge posed by this work cannot be underrated. Classroom researchers Alton-Lee and Nuthall in their seminal research on 'How Pupils Learn,' (1994) conclude that:

'what pupils learn from their classroom experience is determined by their prior knowledge. Where this prior knowledge contains significant misconception or misunderstanding, then the learning that would normally take place from class experience is subverted....

....if the pupil is to learn and remember the idea or concept, then there has to be four different occasions when the pupil engages with that idea or concept in some way...each of these occasions should not be separated by more than two days.'⁴

This goes to the heart of the reason why I usually do not offer less than two days per workshop. When one considers that most participants bring a lifetime of colonial conditioning into the workshop, even a two day accelerated process is only one small step in the journey. Hopefully however, it helps them to make meaning of the issues and reflect on their attitudes, thinking and behaviors, making changes where necessary.

Where attitudinal change does not occur, the workshop process, in that moment, may have failed. Alternatively, denial or evasion may be the response. I have met people who have read the texts of the Treaty of Waitangi, who can recite the articles, know something of our colonial history and yet are still locked into a colonial mindset. They appear to have made no meaning of what they have learnt and the new information appears to have made little impact on their attitudes or behavior. In the 1980s *Project Waitangi*, which was both educational and activist, called these people 'well informed racists.'

4. Providing respectful workshop leadership

When I think about the challenge to creatively educate the majority culture about the issues surrounding indigenous rights and the Treaty of Waitangi, I have often reflected with gratitude that poets and artists can say in a few words what we, as yet, have not been able to grasp. In the words of poet Mary Oliver:

'And now I understand something so frightening, and wonderful – how the mind clings to the road it knows, rushing through crossroads, sticking like lint to the familiar.'⁵

The enormity of the tasks to help people embrace new knowledge and ways of thinking about the Treaty and colonialism could overwhelm, except for my profound belief – shared by many others – that in honouring these commitments, we will all benefit – humanity will benefit.

For many participants their world-view is turned upside down. For some it is profoundly troubling, for others it is the beginning of transformation. For this reason the workshop leader has a serious responsibility to manage the group process in such a way that is caring and deeply respectful of the humanity of each person. The ability of the workshop leader to develop that relationship is pivotal to the success of the workshop. One way of describing the Treaty workshop process is to see it as a series of profound unfolding moments when something shifts for some participants in the group. A workshop leader, therefore, has to have an acute sense of timing and an ability to read the moment for reflection. Holding the silence and not allowing the space to be filled can be critical.

For a workshop to succeed on its own terms, guidelines between the group leader and the group need to be agreed on and strictly adhered to. Typical guidelines include confidentiality, respecting and appropriately challenging others' views, agreeing to disagree, caring for yourself and having fun. Fundamental to the learning is the issue of cultural safety for all participants.

³ Gordon and Lynette Vos, *The Learning Revolution*, The learning Web Ltd, Auckland, 1997 p100

⁴ Graham Nuthall and Adrienne Alton-Lee: *How Pupils Learn*, Research Information for Teachers, Number two, The understanding Learning and Teaching Programme, Education Department, University of Canterbury. 1994

⁵ Mary Oliver, Robert Schumann, *Dreamwork*, The Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 1986

5. A parallel workshop's process: making the workshops culturally safe

Twenty years ago it became clear, through trial and error that Maori and non-Maori could not do *initial* work successfully together. The needs of each were radically different. Both cultures needed a culturally safe, non-confrontational environment in which to explore their diverse realities.

My task as a Pakeha workshop leader has been to work primarily with non-indigenous New Zealanders. Critical issues supporting this approach included dealing with fear, embarrassment, anger, pain, grief, self-censorship, credibility, shame, intimidation and assumptions about expertise. The parallel process acknowledges that Pakeha and Maori have different experiences of colonization. Experience would demonstrate that each needs the leadership of a person from their own culture to start this journey successfully. More integrated workshops can follow.

Anti racism workers in Canada expressed intense interest in this unique approach. Those of you who are Australians may wish to comment on this in the light of your experience.

Transporting the workshop Model to Canada

In 1996 I extended my work by becoming an international trainer of trainers in anti-racism/Treaty education. I was invited to Victoria, British Columbia by a group of European Canadians engaged in anti-racism work to share the New Zealand Treaty education workshop model. Along the way I also met groups in Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Winnipeg and Ottawa. I introduced the model to trade unions, secondary school teachers, local Police in Vancouver, RCMP Federal Police in Ottawa, First Nations Groups, non-government organizations and university students.

The challenge that faced all people and groups in the field was how to develop a holistic, engaging and popular anti-racism/Treaty learning process. I discovered that personal experiences were often not incorporated into the teaching of history, but the feedback I received about our New Zealand workshop process was that integrating the personal and political worked well. The positive reception of a number of groups in Canada convinced me that this experiential learning process was transportable to other countries dealing with the outcomes of colonial history, provided it was adapted to be well grounded in the local history, culture and political struggles confronting that particular region or country.

Conclusion

Constant attention to reflecting on, and refining, the philosophy, content and process has served the workshop process well. A comment from a primary school principal in 2004 captures the essence of typical workshop feedback I receive: 'As a school principal I have always looked forward, not behind [and therefore] looking back did not interest me. I was concerned that the [Treaty workshop] course would amount to Pakeha bashing...my fears were misplaced. This course was objective, full of humour and wisdom....'

The New Zealand Government has given token financial support to Treaty education process and delivery. Recently it developed an information programme, under the auspices of the State Services Commission which has developed a website, brochures and a bus promoting information about the Treaty.

However, the big public question remains - who is responsible for the education of majority populations who hold the political power? All the evidence from Canada, Australia and New Zealand would point to a staggering ignorance of any history, let alone colonial history and the rights of indigenous people. Public ignorance can defeat the most progressive policies.

This is a prescription for civil war which, in many colonial societies, is currently being waged. The gap in understanding between majority cultures and indigenous cultures in the 'white dominions' – Canada, Australia and New Zealand could have long-term catastrophic consequences.

My passion for the work remains unabated. The primary method I use to expand the work is to seize every opportunity to obtain support from recognized and influential people. I have now been on the road for 18 years and currently have more than 150 institutions and organisations as clients, covering most sectors of Aotearoa/New Zealand. My clients are spread throughout the entire length of New Zealand. Despite significant progress, anti-racism and Treaty workers are still working 'from the trenches' in the face of the ruthlessness and racism of the dominant culture.

Over the last 20 years I have had the privilege of - in the words of American film-maker Michael Moore - slipping under the radar and into the heart of the system, with this process. It is an immensely rich journey of challenge, insight and transformation as we continue to penetrate the colonial rigidity, which has marginalized the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Despite the resistance of the dominant culture, an immense amount of progress has been made and the momentum for self-determination emanating from the Maori communities is, I believe, unstoppable.

In July 2005 I was asked by the newly formed Maori Party Caucus, led by Tariana Turia, Pita Sharples and Whatarangi Winiata, to stand as a candidate and was put at number six on the Maori Party list. The formation of the Party was triggered by the confiscation of Maori property rights to the foreshore and seabed. For me this was a serious challenge as a Pakeha – non-Maori. Under pressure I ultimately accepted the challenge and actively campaigned for the Party during the month prior to the election. However, the experience raised a new set of political questions for me, on the role of non-indigenous person in indigenous politics.

It is also important that we keep our politicians informed and challenged. In 2001, Prime Minister Helen Clark launched my book, co-authored with my daughter Joanna, which expanded the content, philosophy and process of this workshop system. It explores in depth the issues covered in this paper. This book *Healing Our History–The Challenge of the Treaty of Waitangi updated in 2005*, is now a New Zealand best seller. I would encourage you to read it and invite you to think about how these workshops could be adapted in your home countries.

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The primary source book for this paper is:

Healing Our History – The Challenge of the Treaty of Waitangi
Robert Consedine and Joanna Consedine
Penguin 2001/Updated 2005

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