



Titiro Whakamuri, Hoki Whakamua.

We are the future, the present and the past: caring for self, others and the environment in early years' teaching and learning

OVERVIEW



- Building sustainable communities in early childhood education in Aotearoa
- Some illustrations of early childhood praxis from a recent NZ Teaching and Learning Research Initiative funded study (full report available at:

<http://www.tlri.org.nz/sites/default/files/a-project-pdfs/9260-Ritchie/9260-finalreport.pdf>.

NOTIONS OF 'COMMUNITY' IN EARLY EDUCATION

- Grounded in a range of interconnected discourses, various underpinning values and goals (social, emotional, political)
- All underpinned by relationality - respect and connection
- Participatory democracy (Dewey in Cuffaro, 1995)
- Discourses of care (Noddings, 2005)
- Communities of practice (Edwards, 2006); communities of learners, valuing belonging and contribution
- Discourses of inclusion, valuing diversity and difference (Wisneski & Goldstein, 2004)
- Whanaungatanga (Ritchie & Rau, 2006a, 2006b)

SUSTAINABILITY AS AN ETHIC

- Relational, cultural, linguistic, economic and ecological sustainabilities
- Communities in transition beyond historic patterns of colonisation and inequity towards respectful relationalities (Haig-Brown & Dannenmann, 2002)
- Ecological imperative for sustainability - climate crisis, resource depletion and inequitable distribution, species extinction, deterioration of natural spaces, wars, nuclear armaments ...

THE EARTH CHARTER...

RESPECT AND CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY OF LIFE

- Respect Earth and life and all its diversity
- Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love
- Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful
- Secure Earth's bounty for present and future generations
- (cited in Greenwood, Manteaw & Smith, 2009, p. 96)



BEING IN COMMUNITY WITH NATURE

- Children (three to eight years old) often included the natural world in their illustrations of what they valued and wished for.
- There were often images of the outside worlds in which there were birds in the sky, flowers blooming, and trees and grass growing.
- These children's enjoyment of animals was also apparent (Mac Naughton, Smith, & Lawrence, 2003, p. 51)

T. gently holds a butterfly on his hand telling us "Don't touch it's wings or it will die".
(Raglan Childcare and Education Centre)



EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRES AS MODELS OF ETHICAL COMMUNITY

- “The early childhood setting is often their first experience of community outside their home” (Elliot, 2010, p. 12)
- How are early childhood educators proactively shaping the kinds of communities they are offering?
- What ethics or values underpin these shapings?

BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

- Children, teachers, and families see themselves as active participatory members of their community, who seek to create a cohesive, just, sustainable society.
 - A communitarian approach nurtures the consideration of others, where the collective entity is the main focus.
 - Support for communitarianism in education is embraced in transformative education where responsive and considerate interactions flourish amidst individuals of a community.
- (Phillips, 2010, p. 366)

COMMUNITY AND CITIZENSHIP

- Children need opportunities to demonstrate their capacity as participatory citizens, but adults are also required to transform the way they relate to children in acknowledging their citizenship identities, so that children's participation can be accommodated.
- Children need to be engaged with *as citizens* so they can actively participate as citizens.
(Phillips, 2010, p. 366)

TE WHĀRIKI AND SUSTAINABILITIES

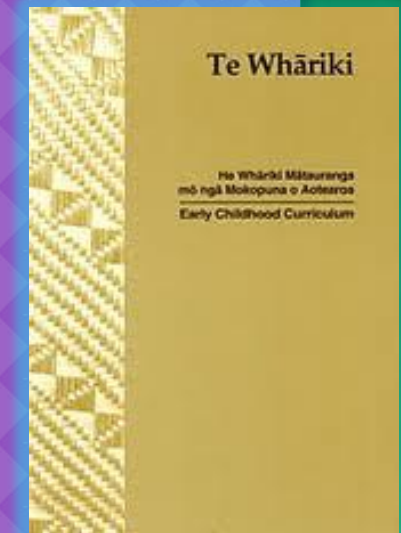
- ◉ Social - equity, justice, fairness, being in community
 - [Te Whāriki - Mana Whenua Belonging]
- ◉ Economic - employment, meaningful contribution, poverty, responsibility
 - [Te Whāriki - Mana Tangata Contribution]
- ◉ Relational - kindness, nonviolence, peaceful relationships, emotional and spiritual wellbeing, intra and inter-personal connectedness
 - [Te Whāriki - Mana Atua Wellbeing]
- ◉ Cultural and linguistic (especially Indigenous cultures and languages such as Māori)
 - [Te Whāriki - Mana Reo]
- ◉ Environmental/ecological
 - [Te Whāriki - Mana Aotūroa] (Ministry of Education, 1996)

TE WHĀRIKI

- Children should be supported to attain “a recognition of Māori ways of knowing and making sense of the world and of respecting and appreciating the natural environment” (p. 82)
- Children should be supported in developing a relationship with the natural environment and a knowledge of their own place in the environment; respect and a developing sense of responsibility for the well-being of both the living and the non-living environment; working theories about the living world and knowledge of how to care for it (p. 90)

TE WHĀRIKI...

- The sense of connectedness to the environment should be fostered by practices such as ensuring that
“Infants have opportunities to experience patterns and sounds in the natural environment, such as leaves in sunlight or the sound of rain” (p. 81).
- And that through “working and playing together, children develop a sense of responsibility for the well-being of others and the environment” (p. 98)



PRACTICES FOR “KNOWING NATURE” FROM DEEP ECOLOGY

- 1. Wondering and Questioning
- 2. Knowing Local History
- 3. Observing Seasonal Changes
- 4. Listening Intently
- 5. Counting and Measuring (within natural world)
- 6. Empathizing with and Personifying Nature
- 7. Connecting Elements in Cycles
- 8. Finding Beauty
- 9. Seeking Solitude for Reflection
- 10. Improving Land Health (from the thought of Aldo Leopold, in Knapp, 2005)

METHODOLOGIES OF COMMUNITY

- ◉ Methodological paradigm:
 - narrative research methodologies (Clandinin, 2007); kaupapa Māori (Bishop, 2005); ethnographic modes (Aubrey, David, Godfrey, & Thompson, 2000)
- ◉ Data gathering:
 - audio and video-taped interviews; discussions with teachers, parents & children; field notes by researchers; photographs; examples of children's art and stories; centre pedagogical documentation
- ◉ Analysis and co-theorizing :
 - dialogical negotiation of meaning (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 1997); collaborative storying (Bishop, 1996, 1997).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ◉ What philosophies and policies guide teachers/whānau in their efforts to integrate issues of ecological sustainability into their current practices?
- ◉ How are Māori ecological principles informing and enhancing a kaupapa of ecological sustainability, as articulated by teachers, tamariki and whānau?
- ◉ In what ways do teachers/whānau articulate and/or work with pedagogies that emphasise the interrelationships between an ethic of care for self, others and the environment in local contexts?
- ◉ How do/can centres work with their local community in the process of producing ecologically sustainable practices?

RESEARCHING SUSTAINABILITY 'COMMUNITIES' IN ECCE

- To investigate how early childhood centres work with the local community in the process of producing sustainable practices, based on an ethic of care for the self, others and the environment.
 - To co-explore with teachers how their sustainable practices relate to those valued and practiced in their local community.
 - To articulate how these practices, discourses and/or resources are responsive to an ethic of care for self, others and the environment.

WIDE-RANGING COMMUNITY-BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES...

- Cultural sustainability through use of traditional cosmological narratives.
- Teachers generating a sense of healing and sanctuary within their early childhood centre spaces.
- Gardening, recycling, and food preparation as part of the daily and seasonal shared rituals of caring for each other and the planet.
- The sharing of excess food produce in reciprocal cycles within the centre communities.
- All these practices being underpinned by a sense of wairuatanga, or spirituality (Bone, 2005; 2008).
- Children advocating within their communities.
- Some teachers coined the term “community empathy” to describe what they felt was occurring within their centre practice.

CULTURALLY SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY

- Underpinning all cultures' narratives are our creation stories, which provide paradigms for either hierarchical dominance as in the Genesis narrative, or cooperation as seen in some indigenous creation stories (King, 2005).
- As Thomas King has pointed out, if we want to promote a different ethic, we need to tell a different story (2005, p. 164).

WHAT STORIES DO WE TELL?

- “Through story telling, we can acknowledge indigenous knowledges, histories and stories, reconnect with indigenous agency and resistance in community activities, and focus upon cultural vitalization and self-determination” (Iseke-Barnes, 2009, p. 78, in M.C. Rowan, 2010, p. 139).
- Māori creation stories identify people, plants and other living creatures to be fellow descendents of Papatuanuku, the Earth Mother and Ranginui, the Sky Father. Some of the data gathered so far has demonstrated ways that these indigenous narratives have resonated for young children in their early childhood education experiences.

TRADITIONAL COSMOLOGICAL NARRATIVES

- Children demonstrating their fascination with the Māori cosmology and their empathy and concern for Papatuanuku, the Earth Mother & Ranginui, Sky Father (Richard Hudson Kindergarten, Dunedin)
- The use of the traditional Māori maramataka (seasonal calendar) as a framework for seasonal activities such as gardening, cooking and harvesting (Hawera Kindergarten)

CENTRES OF HEALING, SANCTUARY, NURTURE & WELLBEING

Sitting in the sun

What do we do when the sunshine comes out in winter?

- *We follow it! It was such a beautiful day we decided we wanted to eat our lunch outside. The teachers moved the big kai table out and it felt like a party. The sparrows enjoyed our crumbs afterwards and the teachers didn't have to mop the floor! We wanted to have a really long lunch outside and eat all our food. Then it was back inside for a lie down on our beds, then outside for more playing in the sun!*
- *We discuss the weather and how sunshine makes you feel. We discuss how living things need sun to grow. We discuss eating healthy food and resting to help look after ourselves so we don't get sick. The children cope with a degree of change in the daily routine.*

(Raglan Childcare and Education Centre)



GARDENING, RECYCLING, AND FOOD PREPARATION AS PART OF THE DAILY AND SEASONAL SHARED RITUALS OF CARING FOR EACH OTHER AND THE PLANET.

- Children in many of the centres took active responsibility for gardening, harvesting and preparing and sharing their produce



“T. by his actions of watering, watching and investigating changes over time, is linking food from our plants and care and respect for Papatuanuku [Earth Mother]” (Penelope, Raglan Childcare and Education Centre)

RECIPROCAL SHARING - MANAAKITANGA

- Our OOOBY (Out of Our Own Back Yards) bowl at Raglan Childcare is overflowing! We have harvested our tomatoes as they come ripe and parents and teachers are bringing in fruit and vegetables from their own back yards. Today we enjoyed sweet-corn from E's garden. C left an enormous watermelon on the kitchen bench— much too big for the OOOBY bowl, but big enough to share half upstairs with the under two's and half down stairs—delicious! [Penelope, Raglan Childcare and Education Centre]



SPIRITUALITY - WAIRUATANGA

- *Papatuanuku (Earth Mother) and Ranginui (Sky Father) look after all of us. The sun, wind, rain and air look after the plants that look after us. We are nurturing our tamariki (children) to look after their environment.*
- *In caring for our natural environment, the tamariki are developing respectful relationships with nature whilst nurturing their health, well-being and wairua (spirituality/soul) within. The children freely interact with our garden to express their inner thoughts and emotions. [Hawera Kindergarten]*



CHILDREN AS ADVOCATES WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITIES

- The children took responsibility for caring for their environment.
- They came to expect that recycling would be offered, and this led teachers at one kindergarten liaising with local schools around this expectation
- Children at one childcare centre wrote a letter to their local store, asking for wheel-chair access to be provided.

10/6/8
The other day we were a bit late for school, Petra wanted to pick up the rubbish around the neighbourhood. She said there was rubbish on The Earth Mother's Body (Papatuanuku) She is quite concerned about smoke going into Rangī the Sky Father's lungs + it would be hard for him to breathe! We want to do a beach clean up too.

Note from
Petra's mother,
Richard Hudson
Kindergarten

‘COMMUNITY EMPATHY’

- “Our kindergarten is genuinely focussed on community empathy. The children had their termly visit to St Andrews Rest Home, in line with caring for others. It is a good chance to associate with the elderly in our community, and is within walking distance through Kew Park”
(Richard Hudson Kindergarten)



CONTRIBUTING TO OUR INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Our Visitor from Kenya 2008

Margaret Ouku-Mowbray came to talk to the children about Kenya. The children made up a range of questions to ask her.

- *Where is Kenya?*
- *How do you get from Kenya to NZ?*
- *What do the people eat?*
- *What animals are there?*

Margaret told them about all the different wild animals to be found in Kenya, then S. asked "Are the children scared?" Margaret said they are not because the wild animals do not live in the town.

Margaret sang a song to us in Swahili and we sang back to her. M., S. and K. did a haka for her.

We learnt that people in Kenya are just like us - they eat the same sorts of food, their bodies are like ours but their skin is darker. They are poorer than us so we are going to collect our old shoes, clothes and books to send to the Kenyan children.

(Raglan Childcare and Education Centre)



NESTINGS OF COMMUNITY BUILDING - CENTRE, LOCAL, NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING

- Everyday community building through rituals of relational, cultural and ecological sustainability
- Wider transformational effects into the wider community through children and parent/whānau advocacy

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