This essay has been prepared in response to the wero [challenge] that is at the intersection of the questions; Nō hea koe? Kei hea koe? Ka aha koe? These questions are a call for each individual pursuing a vocation in education, to respond with honesty, humility, openness, and acceptance to the challenges that lie ahead. “Partnership and Colonisation” and “Language as Identity and Assimilation” will be critically analysed, and the cultural competencies of “Whanaungatana” and Ako” presented as part of a vision that seeks success for Māori as Māori.

Nō hea koe? [Where are you from?]

In the opening of her thesis which examined the following hypothesis: “Whanau Identity and Whanau Development are Interdependent”, Kim Penetito quoted the following whakatauki [proverb]:

Mā te wā, ka tangi koe.
*The time will come when you will look back and cry for what you did not take the time to find out.*
(Penetito, 2008, p.iii, emphasis and italics added).

I begin this section with this proverb because looking “back” is not always easy but it is invariably valuable. The threads of my ancestry are threads that have been cherished and preserved in family history books. I am a Pākeha female, born and raised in Aotearoa, a descendant of colonial families whose roots lie in Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales (Daniell, 1979, Greenslade & Wheatley, 1998 & Downey, 1999 & 2004). I can imagine my Grandfather saying aloud his written foreword to “The Downey Family” (a book prepared for a family reunion): “We can all be justly proud of the pioneering spirit demonstrated by our forebears” (Downey, 2004, Downey, 1999 & Wilton, 2007).

The first Downey to arrive in Aotearoa New Zealand was Michael Downey. He was brought to New Zealand in response to a request issued by Governor Grey in 1863 for “extra forces”. “Extra forces” were “required” because plans
had been made “…to invade the Waikato, confiscate the rebels’ land and then sell it to new settlers.’ (Downey, 1999, p. 9). These words are not easily read, nor are easily reconcilable with my Grandfather’s sense of our being able to be “justly proud… of our forebears…” (Downey, 1999). My family all arrived as foreigners to a country that already had a tangata whenua [people of the land or home people] and while “pride” may well exist for certain actions or qualities seen in families or individuals – what is the cost of this “pride”? The actions and attitudes of my family “…effectively transformed Māori into a relatively powerless indigenous minority by virtue of territorial dispossession and the marginalisation of their local economies and socio-political ideas and practises”.

(My response is a commitment to engaging with the untold truths of the history of Aotearoa New Zealand, a commitment to the rejection of mistruths, and a commitment to taking part in the difficult conversations that arise from adopting a covenantal view of the Treaty of Waitangi (Reese, 2013). Through this approach, the place of tension can become a place from which I can serve my future students as well as the wider community.

Kei hea koe? [Where are you?]

This section presents a critical analysis of themes that lay the foundation for greater understanding of, and response to, the current context for Māori and education. Partnership and Colonisation encompasses the “…conviction that at least some mutual desires for educational engagement” predicated the establishment of the first school in Aotearoa New Zealand, in the Bay of Islands in 1816 (Jones & Jenkins, 2008, p.2). Jones et al. describe the
pioneering sense of Māori who left Aotearoa in search of new knowledge and relationships in order to advance Māori knowledge whilst retaining Māori identity and practise (Jones et al., 2011, p.14). Jones & Kuni describe the response of Māori people to the hearing of written words in Te Reo Māori as a response that was filled with a great desire for understanding (2011, p.10). The spoken words had power and the words themselves appeared to have been “captured and held by the strangers” (Jones & Kuni, 2011, p.10). This desire for knowledge was situated within a wider system of Māori beliefs which held that the “acquisition of knowledge was highly valued” and the desire was for instruction in Te Reo Māori (Jones & Kuni, 2011, p.10).

“Partnership” is coupled with “Colonisation” because the two cannot be separated. Despite the sense of mutuality within the “beginnings” of formal education, the process of colonisation led to the deconstruction of “…Māori into a relatively powerless indigenous minority by virtue of territorial dispossession and the marginalisation of their local economies and socio-political ideas and practices” (Liu et al., 2005 as cited in Reese, 2013 p. 8). The current disparity of educational outcomes has its “genesis in the colonial provision of education for Māori driven by a social policy of cultural assimilation and social stratification for over 100 years” (Hoskins & McKinley, 2015, p.7). This theme ought to lead to discussion that is based on making possible what Durie describes as education’s key goal: “…to enable Māori both to be citizens of the modern world and to live as Māori” (Durie as cited in Jones & Jenkins, 2008 p.9). With respect to the Treaty of Waitangi, partnership and colonisation is to be considered negotiated from the point of the Treaty. This view of education demands “…power sharing and involvement at all levels of policy development, application and evaluation (that is, to also reserve the right to determine what counts as success…” (Milne, 2009, p.7) Milne’s assertions are a call for education to return to the beginning, to partnership with, and for Māori – in order for Māori to be Māori.

In addition to “Partnership and Colonisation”, “Language is identity” and Assimilation is a secondary but equally significant theme. Durie recounts that “The Indigenous Māori language in Aotearoa/New Zealand has survived near
extinction after a history of repressive colonization that threatened not only the language but the unique identity of the Māori population and their culture (Berryman et al., 2010 p. 145). The “repressive colonization” regime included a whole raft of assimilative laws including the Native Trust Ordinance of 1844, Native Schools Act 1958, Native Schools Act 1867 and the Native Schools Code 1880 (Tawhai & Gray-Sharp, 2011). Corporal punishment was practised on children who spoke Te Reo Māori within the school grounds and the impact of this (beyond the initial pain experienced by every punished child) is acknowledged as having caused long-term, intergenerational psychological harm (Tawhai & Gray, 2011, p. 46). The Treaty of Waitangi awards Te Reo Māori protection under article 2 and 3, within the “tino rangatiratanga” [self determination] and “Māori hapū equality with British subjects” clauses respectively (Hoskins & McKinley, 2015, p.160). Yet, for many years the language was systematically outlawed. After a Waitangi Tribunal claim in 1985, Te Reo Māori was confirmed as a taonga [precious possession] – deserving of full protection by the government under the Treaty. “Ka Hikitia” (the Ministry of Education’s national Māori strategy) along with a recently passed Māori Language Bill, both seek to foster kaitiakitanga [stewardship or guardianship] of Te Reo Māori –for the building and celebrating of learning and success” for Māori. Firstly, both foster kaitiakitanga of Te Reo Māori by recognising that language is foundational for identity for Māori students, and secondly by promoting the involvement of key stakeholders in education for Māori students. A significant part of involving stakeholders is the process of refining the current responsibility and oversight of entities that act on behalf of iwi and Māori to provide leadership regarding the health and well-being of the Māori language (New Zealand Parliament, 2016). Both Ka Hikitia and the Māori Language Bill, recognise that restoring the status of the whānau [family] and iwi [tribes] as the “prime source” for Māori identity, language based and cultural knowledge (Hoskins & McKinley, 2015, p.161) is critical for Māori success in education (Ministry of Education [MoE], n.d. p. 17).

Ka aha koe? What will you do?
Complementary to “Ka Hikitia”, is “Tātaiako”. “Tātaiako” aims at “…shifting the emphasis away from Māori students being responsible for under-achieving in our compulsory education programmes, to look at how education can be delivered in the context of the vibrant contemporary Māori values and norms…” (MoE, 2011, p.3). “Tātaiako” offers five cultural competencies worthy of adoption by educators in all settings across Aotearoa New Zealand. The two cultural competencies that will inform my teaching practise significantly, are “Whanaungatanga” [relationships, with students and wider community] as a “primary concept” (Bishop et. al, 2007, p.22) and “Ako” [teaching and learning based on reciprocity] (MoE, 2009, p.28). These competencies reflect my desire to connect and model a particular view of all students, but specifically of Māori students and the Treaty of Waitangi –that view being, that the Treaty is a covenant (Reese, 2013, p.192). The view that the Treaty is a covenant calls for “…joint action or obligation to achieve defined ends (limited or comprehensive) under conditions of mutual respect…” (Reese, 2013, p.197). For me, this also includes recognising the harm that has been caused by colonial processes and seeking to never forget because it is “…part of the moral respect we own to human dignity; the task of remembrance is bound up with the very being of community…” (Professor Jeremy Waldron as cited in Reese, 2013 p.226).

Incorporating “Whanaungatanga” into this vision and teaching pedagogy is therefore a specific way of acknowledging and honouring the interconnectedness of Māori students –this being more than a feature of character but rather as a “way of being/seeing/acting” within particular environments (Penetito, 2008). This vision in action could include the teacher seeking to establish and maintain good relationships with the student’s whanau [family] and to be aware of their hapu [family sub-group], iwi, [tribe] and also of the tupuna [ancestors] that are recognised in a particular geographic setting in association with the local marae [meeting house]. The concept of “Ako” is closely related because it positions teacher and learner in a specific relationship that is premised on reciprocity and an awareness that knowledge is shared, and can grow when shared (Berryman et al., 2010, p. 193). Alongside the reciprocal relationship between teacher and student is a
posture for educators; that of being open to “possibilities” and adaptation in response to collaboration with students and colleagues as well as the latest research (MoE, 2009, p. 28).

In conclusion, this essay has taken up the wero [challenge] and responded to the questions posed with as much honesty, humility, openness, and acceptance as could be mustered. Threads of my own whakapapa [genealogy] have been analysed and I acknowledge the impact of processes of colonial settlement upon the cultural identity of Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly in relation to education and language. “Partnership and Colonisation” and “Language as Identity and Assimilation” have been presented (with reference to the Treaty of Waitangi) and “Whanaungatanga” and “Ako” were identified as being of particular significance to me. These competencies, informed by a view of the Treaty as a covenant, call for joint action and responsibility if we are to achieve, in partnership, success for Māori as Māori. This is the vision I vow to work towards, for education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

References:


