

SAL06426

**Cultural narratives and a self to teach by:
Co-constructing stories of diversity and co-existence**

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Abstract

Postmodern understandings of identity increasingly point to the narrative quality of people's lives, with the self 'storied' in a process that is actively rendered and culturally inscribed. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) tell us, "learners, teachers and researchers are storytellers and characters in their own and others' stories" (p.2). In cross-cultural identity work, personal stories can be a powerful force in recognizing the taken-for-granted arrangements of one's own culture while gaining insights into the culture of others. They can also provide members of marginalized groups a voice previously silenced by mainstream culture. This paper explores personal and collaborative stories generated within a culturally responsive narrative inquiry research project. This explored ways mature-aged Māori women teachers in mainstream primary schools negotiated their professional identities amidst the tensions and contradictions inherent in the simultaneous enactment of class, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, and other categories of membership and identity. A portion of the 'results' of the research is offered through a 'creative fiction' (Sparkes, 2002), illustrating a complex interplay of contextual, cultural and biographical factors as participants embraced or resisted the many and varied demands of school life. The culturally located prior experiences and beliefs that shaped their storylines were often at odds with articulations from within the dominant culture.

Introduction

This paper presents some findings of culturally responsive narrative inquiry research into the experiences of three mature-aged Māori women teachers, as they negotiate a professional identity during their early years teaching in mainstream primary schools. In New Zealand the curriculum, teaching methodologies and teacher education associated with schooling are predicated on the discourses of the dominant culture (MacFarlane, 2000; Vercoe, 1997). They are based on a particular worldview that does not always recognize or appreciate Māori concepts and values. Students and teachers from a lived Māori world are therefore likely to experience the many facets of schooling in different ways to both students and teachers whose beliefs and lived experiences are informed by the discourses of the majority culture. For Māori, the cultural resources available in making sense of their lives are inscribed in the beliefs, values and attitudes that arise in two different world-views – Māori and Pākehā (non-Māori, of European extraction). These also generate the cultural scripts

available to inform understandings of personal identity and self-worth. This not only has serious implications for how knowledge is transferred, reproduced, and transformed, but also generates particular tensions and contradictions for the research participants as they frame their Māori-woman-teacher identities.

The research participants were in their first few years of teaching, a period involving a “two-way struggle while teachers try to create their own social reality by attempting to make their work match their personal vision of how it should be, whilst at the same time being subjected to the powerful socializing forces of the school culture” (Day, 1999, p.59). Bullough (1997) argues that amongst the diversity of tales about becoming a teacher, two conclusions of paramount importance emerge: “prior experience and belief are central to shaping the (biographical) storyline, as is the context of becoming a teacher” (p. 95). Feiman-Nemser (2001) too suggests that teachers develop professional identities by “combining parts of their past, including their own experiences in school and in teacher preparation, with pieces of their present” (p.1029).

A great deal of research highlights the multi-dimensional, idiosyncratic and context-specific nature of the long and complex process of learning to become an effective teacher (Flores and Day, 2006). This entails interplay between different and often conflicting perspectives, beliefs and practices as individuals develop a professional identity. Sachs (2001) describes the (trans)formation of such a teacher identity as being open, negotiated and shifting, and as “mediated by their own experience in schools and outside of school as well as their own beliefs about what it means to be a teacher and the type of teacher they aspire to be” (p.6). Individuals come to the social context of the school with their own sets of beliefs, dispositions and ways of thinking and acting in the world, which have been formed through multiple other social and cultural contexts. Particular beliefs, dispositions and ways of thinking and acting that arise from within the discourses of a Māori worldview mediate the research participants’ conceptions of what it means to be a teacher in a mainstream school. Identity is multiple and fragmented, so that the research participants in this study are never just teachers, or just women, or just Māori – they are also mothers, daughters, wives, students, and so on.

This paper is thus framed by recognition of ontological and epistemological differences that are embedded in two distinctive worldviews, Māori and Pākehā. ‘Being Māori’ generates particular cultural resources that impact on and shape the sense the research participants make of lived experiences. The historical and cultural context of their lives informs what and how they learn and do, as they construct knowledge, articulate understanding and meaning, and ‘become teachers’ – in other words, as they engage in their personal quests for professional identity and a sense of self. Their ‘reflexive project of the self’ (Giddens, 1991) occurs against a backdrop of distinctive cultural identity, a changing national identity, and an aspiration shared by other indigenous people worldwide for the right to self-determination. The notion of multiplicity means that their sense of self is often characterised by conflict and contradiction, as they negotiate the differing subject positions and meanings available in any particular context – work, home, school or the university. They encounter dilemmas, conflicts, contradictions and uncertainties in their personal belief systems,

at moments that Bhahba (1997) describes as ‘un-homely’, when the familiar and the assumed become strange and terrifying.

In the following section I sketch some important elements of a Māori worldview, to illustrate the distinctive cultural resources available to the research participants in negotiating a sense of self.

What ‘being Māori’ might mean

<i>E kore ahau e ngaro, he kākano</i>	Lost or forgotten I shall never be, for I am
<i>i ruia mai i Rangīātea</i>	the seed which was sown in Rangīātea

This aphorism speaks to a sense of continuity that Māori feel in identifying not only with their ancestors from Polynesia who settled the land they called Aotearoa (New Zealand) around AD 900 (Walker, 1996), but also with the spiritual realm. Rangīātea is the sacred marae of Hawaiki, the spiritual homeland and point of origin of the Māori in mythology. Those ancestors lived and developed a distinctive way of life for several hundred years before the arrival of the Pākehā. While social scientists, politicians and the general public continue to debate the definition of ‘Māori’, Māori people determine the issue in their own way - they specify descent from a Māori ancestor or parent, and reject narrower definitions that might be framed in terms of linguistic or cultural competence (Metge, 1995).

As an ethnic group, Māori are distinguished by a number of characteristics that include genealogical descent dating from prior to European contact, distinctive physical features, distinctive values and ways of organising social life, shared history, and what Metge (1995) describes as “a we feeling” (p.18). Johansen (1954) argues that this feeling of collective consciousness involves more than just community and solidarity, since “[t]he common will which conditions the solidarity is rooted in something much deeper, an inner solidarity of the souls” (p.34). Kinship or collectivism rather than individuality is a major focus of both Māori cultural identity and of a Māori worldview.

While there are dialectical and historical differences between various tribal accounts and understandings there are also many similarities, particularly in the importance attached to cultural symbols, beliefs and values that are enacted on a daily basis. MacFarlane (2000) contends that Māori have sustained their unique worldview and knowledge systems to a marked degree, so that many core values, beliefs and practices survive today despite discontinuity caused through diaspora and other cultural disruptions. These are rooted in a Māori cosmology in which the physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual realms all interact simultaneously, and in a temporal world in which the past is always present (Harre, 1983).

Māori values and beliefs determine the relationships between people and with their physical and spiritual worlds. Customs and traditions are commonly referred to as ‘tikanga Māori’, literally translated as ‘the right Māori ways’, in that they are generally accepted rules and guidelines for living a life that is ‘tika’ (straight, just and

correct). Metge (1995) suggests that tikanga Māori “encompass and hold together ways of thinking (whakaaro nui) and ways of doing (mahinga), principles and practices” (p.21). They are symbols of identity that help instil notions of continuity and permanence that bind the present generation to the past and help link those to come (O’Regan, 2001). By definition, tikanga Māori are ‘tuko iho nō ngā tipuna’ (handed down from the ancestors), and although their principles are deeply entrenched this does not imply that their practices are static or unchanging. Tradition is ‘by no means pure and untainted by the hands and views of those who pass it on, but instead it goes through a process of selection, reformation and fashioning by each generation’ (O’Regan, 2001, p.71). While the ‘authenticity’ debate¹ is strong within Māoridom (who is more, or less, Māori than someone else), it is worth remembering Linnekin’s (1990) point that “the fact that this version [of a particular custom] does not correspond precisely to previous custom does not undermine its significance or its power as a symbol of collective identity” (p.161). In a way, tikanga Māori collectively continue to fulfill the function of ‘law and order’ in contemporary society, though their use extends much further than this and covers a range of human behaviour that also includes moral and spiritual aspects of daily life.

Both mana (status) and aroha (love) are regarded as having been passed down from the same ancestors, and both emphasise the importance of solidarity and mutual inter-dependence between whānau (family) members. Māori recognise ways of acting toward each other and outsiders that are motivated by mana and aroha, ways that are seen as values in their own right (Metge, 1995). They are described in Māori as kawenga (responsibilities), herenga (obligations) and mahi a ngākau (duty), and are instrumental in forging relationships within the whānau. First, there is the duty to support each other in good times and in bad, whether in the form of labour, goods, money or though physical presence in times of crisis. Second, there is the duty to care for each other, spiritually as well as emotionally and physically. It is seen as the responsibility of older generations to teach the young the tikanga, and to hand on the knowledge that would benefit the whānau as a whole. Third, there is the duty to protect each other against both physical and spiritual attack. This might involve countering attacks from others, avoiding upsetting others, being careful to avoid breaching tapu (restricted, sacred), and not breaking the law. Any of these actions could reflect adversely on the mana of the group and invite retribution in some form on the whole group rather than just on the offender. Fourth, there is the duty to work together for the common good, contributing one’s skills and material wealth wherever they are most needed.

All of these obligations and motivations emphasise the duty to value and cherish the tūpuna (ancestors) and the older people of the whānau, and the reciprocal duty to value and cherish the young, the tamariki (children) and the mokopuna (grandchildren). These are founding principles of family life for Māori. According to a Māori way of thinking, parents do not have an exclusive ‘natural’ right

¹ Redefinition of Māori customs under colonial imperatives has resulted in individuals or tribal groups being referred to by other Māori as ‘tūturu’ (permanent, authentic or genuine), or ‘not tūturu enough’ (see O’Regan, 2001).

to bring up their children themselves. In earlier times² the kaumātua (male elder) in the tribal group often made decisions about who would raise children, with no reference to the biological parents. Today, Māori parents are more likely to play the major role in decision-making, but continue to recognise the rights of grandparents regarding their mokopuna. Regardless of who the primary care-giver is, Māori who belong to functioning whānau expect members to act caringly towards children without waiting for permission from the biological parents. All adult relatives take responsibility for feeding them when they are hungry, comforting them when distressed, reprimanding them when they are naughty, and putting them to bed when they are tired. This pattern of shared care-giving is grounded in what Metge (1995) describes as:

...beliefs and values that stress the importance of descent and kinship connections as the basis for organising social life, value children as links in and between descent lines, and see them as belonging not to their parents but also to their parents' whānau. (p.157)

Males and females have their own special mana that entitles them to respect but at the same time places different expectations on them with regard to fulfilling particular roles. In traditional Māori society these roles were regarded as complementary, and derived from identification with (and often dedication to, at birth) distinctive and different atua (spirits of the gods). Males were guided by the more turbulent and warlike Tū-Mātauenga, the god of war, while females identified with qualities of nurturing, fertility and reproduction as personified by Rongo-ma-Tāne, the departmental god associated with agriculture and cultivated foods. Rongo-ma-Tāne is also described by Pere (1994) as the personification of peaceful pursuits and an open intuitive mind, including weaving, composing and singing waiata, poi (ball on a string) dances and hand games, all of which illustrate 'poise, grace, charm and rhythm' (p.52). Connecting such activities with the natural and peaceful world, Pere goes on to say of poi dances, "The movements that the women make with their bodies and the twirling of the pois are based on the movement of birds, the swaying of trees, the crashing and dancing of waves, [and] the flight and dance of insects" (p.52).

Specific features, activities and experiences are generally ascribed to or expected of Māori women in contemporary society; in the whānau, on the marae (tribal meeting house) or in their places of work. These derive from the attributes of both atua wāhine (goddesses) in the creation narratives, and also from stories of the heroic deeds of particular female ancestors. While Māori society was and is basically patriarchal, Te Awekotuko (1991) suggests that there are many examples of women in traditional times having defied or resisted male-prescribed conventions of behaviour³, and who subsequently became "legends or culture heroines" (p.45).

² Metge (1995, p.147) suggests this was common practice up until the 1950's, and even later in some communities. Māori parents found it difficult to stand against such decisions made by the kaumātua, since they were dependent on the support of older relatives for a living and the kaumātua had the support of the community.

³ Examples are Hinemoa, who swam Lake Rotorua to Mokoia Island to be with her low-born lover, Tūtanekai, and Wairaka, who saved the sacred Mataatua canoe with the strength of a man. Her cry 'Kia whakatāne au i au!' (I will make like a man) named the locality, Whakatāne in the Bay of Plenty.

Many of these stories position women as peace-makers in conflict situations, bringing flexible solutions to problems in ways that maintained the mana of all parties. A whakataui that represents this notion is “He whakahou rongo wāhine he tatau pounamu” (peace brought about by women is enduring”, Brougham and Read, 1999, p.106).

Women are regarded as ‘whare tangata’⁴ or ‘whare tapu’ because of their generative function, and based on the notion that the female realm (exemplified by Papa-Tū-ā-Nūku, the earth mother) is that of the physical and natural while the male realm (exemplified by Rangī-Nui, the sky father) is that of the spiritual. Barlow (1991), for example, asserts that a woman’s primary role is to nurture the child until it matures and becomes independent. He says, “She is responsible for the child’s physical growth and the husband or father is responsible for the child’s spiritual and moral upbringing” (p.147). Metge (1995) argues that clear-cut differentiation of male and female roles applies today only in limited areas of social life, principally those connected with child-rearing and with formal ceremonies on the marae. In many other contexts, little distinction is made, though Salmond (1991) points out that the contradiction between male-female equality and male dominance was and is worked out differently in different areas and different generations. She also suggests that the doctrine of male dominance evident amongst Māori today arose out of competitive striving in war and was reinforced in the 19th century by the attitudes and practices of the colonial settlers, especially the assignment of the domestic domain to women and their exclusion from property-holding and political decision-making. In contemporary times, the role of manaakitanga (hospitality) still falls predominantly to women, particularly on ceremonial occasions.

The concept of male and female as divergent but complementary is evident in Māori thinking and portrayed extensively through legends and songs. Authoritative female figures are publicly visible in Māori philosophical traditions, and everything in the physical and spiritual realms is credited with a male and female component, each with its strengths and weaknesses in various situations (Madden, 1997). The pervading principle is that of balance, where the tension between male and female is acknowledged and both elements are seen as complementary equals. Whether in raising children, caring for visitors, organising hui (ceremonial meetings) or showing hospitality to whānau members in contemporary Māori society, the most effective action seems to involve men and women respecting each other and working together, sometimes sharing the same tasks and at other times carrying out complementary ones (Metge, 1995).

Clearly the culturally inscribed narrative resources available to the research participants offer Māori-woman-teacher identities that are different, and often conflict with, those of their Pākehā colleagues. Cultural and biographical factors are particularly salient both in defining how they conceptualize and practice ‘effective

⁴ The female reproductive area, including the genitalia and womb, is commonly known as the ‘whare tangata’ (the house of humankind). The ‘whare tapu’ refers to menstruation being considered a tapu condition (Best, 1982), and also symbolically refers to the narrative regarding Hine-Nui-Te Pō’s termination of Maui’s quest for immortality (in this context, the reproductive area is sometimes referred to as the ‘whare aitūa’, or ‘house of misfortune’).

teaching', and in their organization and negotiation of identity narratives. They draw extensively from the cultural narratives of a lived Māori world as they strive for a measure of authenticity in the way they live their lives. While [the] notion of a pilgrim identity might apply to a Pākehā woman in the form of 'lady-missionary-teacher charged with the project of improving her indigenous students', a prominent theme [that emerged in the research] was that of 'Māori-woman-teacher bringing progress to her own people' (see Harper, 2002). Ware (1992) suggests the former is constructed when "notions of imperial destiny, class and racial superiority were grafted onto the traditional views of refined English motherhood to produce a concept of the English woman as an invincible global civilizing agent" (p.120). The latter speaks to a pastoral power and agency available to women in the name of service and the love of children (Schick, 2000), that are valued highly in a Māori world. (p.12)

Storying the self / stories of the self

In a post-modern social world identity is no longer an ascribed status or place in an established order. Rather, "identity is an ongoing project, most commonly referred to as an ongoing narrative project" (Goodson, 1998; p.26). We "story the self" (Bruner, 1986; Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992) as a means of making sense of new and evolving conditions of working and being. Our personal stories are disciplined by the diverse social circumstances and practices that produce them, so that the self is grounded in a multiplicity of sites and settings. According to Holstein and Gubrium (2000) this has "implications for the daily enactment of class, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, and a gamut of other categories of membership and identity" (p.233). Sparkes (1999) acknowledges the growing interest in personal narrative over recent years, both as a method of analysis of lived experiences told through stories and as an epistemological position on the nature of lives as 'storied' (see Berger, 1997; Denzin, 1989).

Stories are both personal and social at the same time; both life and story are connected in a complex manner. As Atkinson (1997) suggests, memory, experience, time, and biography are all constituted through conventional acts of narrating. Coffey & Atkinson (1996) tell us "storytelling is culturally situated and relies for its success on culturally shared conventions about language and the hearing of stories" (p.77). Narrative is a form of social practice in which individuals draw from a cultural repertoire of stories that they then synthesize into personal stories. These culturally embedded stories and the subsequent personal stories we construct from them are "important in terms of how we come to impose order on our ... experiences and make sense of events and actions in our lives" (Sparkes, 1999, p.18). As we construct and re-construct past events and actions in our personal narratives, we engage in a process of claiming identities and constructing lives.

A narrative inquiry approach was used in this research, both because there are strong cultural preferences amongst Māori people for narrative, and also because story-telling itself allows research participants to "select, recollect and reflect on stories within their own cultural context and language rather than in the cultural context and language of the researcher" (Bishop, 1996; p. 24). The research processes were embedded in Kaupapa Māori (literally, 'Māori agenda') protocols, so

that the power to define and control what counts as ‘knowledge’ or ‘truth’ resided with the research participants rather than with myself as ‘researcher’.

Rather than analysing the research participants’ personal narratives in what Troyna (1995) describes as the traditional qualitative researcher’s task of “describing ‘what’s going on’ and ‘why’” (p.398) in their lives, data analysis proceeded from what Scott (1991) describes as “the narratives of experience (p.777). This facilitated an exploration of the discourses that shaped their experiences and gave rise to the particular meanings they made of those experiences. This also applied to my self-reflection as researcher into my own narratives of experience, an important notion in light of Lather’s (1991) argument that “all researchers construct their objects of inquiry out of the materials their culture provides” (p.105). A portion of the ‘results’ of the research is offered below through a ‘creative fiction’ (Sparkes, 2002) or ‘literary tale’ (Van Maanen, 1988). This approach reflects my concern over the ethical implications inherent in telling ‘true’ tales of the research participants’ experiences, and enables me to maintain the research participants’ anonymity. It also allows me to respond constructively to problems associated with truth, researcher neutrality and objectivity.

As Haig-Brown (1992) argues, “stories convey knowledge within the complexity of human affairs, expanding an understanding of other people and our sense of community with them” (p.302). This complexity is a central theme of the story that follows, hopefully expanding the range of interpretation, knowledge and experiences available to the reader and allowing “diversities of truth to be heard, rather than one dominant version” (Bishop, 1996; p.24). Ngaroma’s experiences are a composite – with a deal of literary license applied - of the three research participants’ narratives. That this story was co-constructed allows power to reside with the research participants rather than with me alone as researcher, an important characteristic of culturally responsive research.

Ngaroma and the visit

The teacher education programme had been great – though a lot of hard work too, what with family and all of Ngāroma’s other commitments in the Māori community. Her son and daughter had been at high school when she started, and Dad (her husband, Te Ata) and her brothers or sisters had to get a lot more involved in the housework, shopping, gardening and the kids’ after-school arrangements, driving them to sport practices at night or to away games on the weekends. Never a problem - everyone had stepped up to help, supported her completely. They all wanted her to become a ‘real’ teacher, to go out there and make a difference for Māori kids. Now Ngāroma was a ‘real’ teacher, had been at the school for almost three years. She had been appointed just after the last Education Review Office report, which had identified a number of positive features of the school, such as the relationships between staff and the Board of Trustees, curriculum leadership in some areas, and the quantity and quality of school buildings, grounds and resources. The ERO report had been pretty scathing, however, about two things – the lack of coherence in the health and physical education program, and that only lip-service was being paid to including a Māori dimension in the school. When she applied for the position,

Ngāroma had thought the job description must have been written for her, highlighting all her strengths! She had lots of personal confidence, and extensive experience in competitive sport. She had majored in health and physical education at Teacher's College, and reckoned she could have recited the new HPE curriculum by heart. Ngāroma also had a wealth of knowledge about performing and teaching Kapahaka, that had given her what she thought of as a 'good old-fashioned, no-nonsense approach that Māori kids need', the sort of discipline that she herself had responded to when she was growing up. And she was fluent in te reo Māori, taught classes Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Yes, Ngāroma and this job were made for each other – nothing complicated here!

It was Ngāroma's first teaching position, though, and despite her confidence and enthusiasm she found there was a lot to learn about the day-to-day expectations of the school. There were also many tensions, things that frustrated her, things that confused her, and some things that made her downright angry. Not that she made a fuss, though, in the early stages – she was just trying to find her feet, get on with the job. She never had trouble with discipline, and soon earned a reputation for being able to handle the kids with problems. Particularly Māori kids. Since Ngāroma was related to half the kids in the school anyway – though many of them nowadays wouldn't have known that – she felt a responsibility for nurturing them, for helping them acquire skills to navigate through a schooling system that many of them found unfriendly - for helping them identify their own special talents. She never thought of teaching as work that finished at the afternoon school bell, or that was confined within the school gates – she was forever telephoning parents, dropping into their homes for a chat about how little Mārama or Wiremu were getting on at school. Probably spent as much time doing that as she did filling out those interminable reports and student profiles that the Principal was so keen on. This was, after all, what she had got herself qualified for, to 'make a difference' to Māori kids. What surprised Ngāroma was that she was expected by the principal and other colleagues to take these Māori kids under her wing, not out of deference to her counselling skills and her knack of getting them back on track, but because she too had a brown face. "It's a Māori problem – you're the best one to fix it", the DP had said to her in the first week.

Ngāroma's approach to teaching and learning could best be described as 'humanistic'. It was founded on her lived experiences, and these had later been supported and sharpened during her Teachers' College studies. She had ideas about helping students recognize and develop their own uniqueness, about teaching the 'whole child', and about encouraging them to take some responsibility for their own learning. Over her first three years teaching, she had become increasingly uneasy about what she thought of as the differences between 'schooling', involving the socialization of children into particular roles and expectations, and 'education', through which, she felt, they ought to actually learn meaningful things – stuff they could use in their daily lives. In many ways, teachers at this school seemed to be more concerned with 'schooling' than they were in the teaching of children – for example, ticking off curriculum achievement objectives they managed to meet, while the 'airy-fairy' stuff like humanism took a back seat in favour of producing kids with particular marketable skills. More so, after that ERO report ... Ngāroma, however, had continued to hold her tongue.

There were some problems for Ngāroma too in trying to get a Māori dimension into the health and physical education program. While the Principal, colleagues and members of the Board of Trustees ‘talked the bi-cultural talk’ and were pleased with the way she began to shape the Kapahaka (cultural performance) group, nobody wanted to actually be involved, to do anything. She had made class sets of poi (ball on a string) and tī rākau (wands), and had put together a pretty comprehensive package of video, music and other resources that she thought would reach teachers ‘where they were at’ - but they weren’t interested. She even arranged for the Te Ao Kori (literally, ‘world of Māori movement’) facilitator from Physical Education New Zealand to take a session for the staff, on the way back from running a workshop for teachers in Rotorua. Only a few parent helpers and the caretaker came – and she realized later that the caretaker was only waiting to lock up when they had finished.

Ngāroma’s colleagues offered ‘explanations’ like, “I wouldn’t want to make a mistake and cause cultural offence”, and “I never did it at school or Teachers’ College, so I don’t have any background in Māori movement”, and “I would, but I’m flat out teaching and assessing gymnastics right now, and I just haven’t got the time to fit it in”. One teacher in her syndicate even said, “Look, you do the Māori stuff and I’ll do all the Pākehā stuff, like ball activities and fitness”. Not quite racist, but not far from it, either. The Principal could have been more supportive, set an example, but after a while Ngāroma realized that he too seemed keen to have a Kapahaka group as a showpiece while not making Māori culture a priority across the school. “Strange”, she told the other three teachers in her syndicate, “considering that this school is right in the heart of the Te Arawa tribal area and over 50% of the kids here are Māori. We’re still only paying lip-service”, but they just shrugged it off.

Ngāroma herself was certainly running a sound physical education program by now – not just delivering the curriculum, but really getting the kids excited. It had taken a while to get the rest of the staff off their backsides though. Left to their own devices, they were still content to roll out the ball and let the kids play games, as long as they were busy, happy and well-behaved. The work she was doing with the other two Māori women as part of the research was really developing positive attitudes and values, and the kids worked together very co-operatively. She made sure that she taught in full view of the other classrooms, and so pretty soon kids across the school were asking their teachers, “Why can’t we do that?” Ngāroma got the other teachers in her own syndicate fired up, and gradually things began to look more organised school-wide – though she realised not everyone was going to shift much. It became clear that most of the staff needed a lot of work. They were keen on the fancy trust-building games, but not prepared to move away from a ‘stand and deliver’ approach - not interested in learning how to address learning across all four curriculum strands, but excited about being allowed to photocopy the profile sheets so they could count, measure and report on kids’ ‘achievement’.

Ngāroma found all this frustrating. Maybe it was partly because physical education wasn’t a high priority in the school, but she felt there was more to it. She was knowledgeable, confident and well organised, worked hard and led by example, but she knew the rest of the staff didn’t rate her, didn’t give her the respect she was due. Sure, there were a number who were older, who had been around the ‘old’

system for donkey's years and were just worn out with all the changes in education. But she also had the growing suspicion that they were never going to take her seriously. What did they think she was, just the Māori teacher who did the Kapahaka?

Ngāroma had made big shifts in her own thinking about Māori movement. Her background had been in Kapahaka and she had brought a lot of knowledge from that to her work in Te Reo Kori. But she had also revitalized the more traditional performances of the Kapahaka group by using Te Reo Kori (literally, 'language of Māori movement') strategies, letting the kids explore and develop their own sequences. She loved the power and authenticity of traditional Māori pedagogies too, the whānau (extended family) groupings and tuakana-teina (older-younger: a form of peer/reciprocal teaching) approaches in particular – amazing how she taught that way anyway, on 'automatic'. You'd almost think Muska Mosston must have spent some time among Māori people before he wrote his book about the spectrum of teaching styles! The way the kids had responded in the Te Reo Kori/ Sport Ed 'festival' last week, when the other two 'Aunties' had brought their classes over for the all-day hui on Ngāroma's school marae (meeting house), had been fantastic. Not just the way they all interacted and shared, but some of those performances had been really sharp too! Still, the Principal only looked in for a few minutes, didn't even take part in the powhiri (formal welcome). Probably he felt there were no political 'Brownie points' there for him, nobody important that he needed to impress. He and the staff had just left Ngāroma and the Aunties to work with the kids from all three schools, sharing movement ideas and practising some new routines - generally having wonderful learning experiences together on the marae.

Ngāroma had just had an experience that had not exactly shattered her sense of self, but really shocked her into looking at things in different ways. She had come face to face with the realisation that other people expected her to be certain things that she really wasn't – as if they had a 'cardboard cut-out' image of her, rather than the real thing, so that they really didn't see who she was. They looked right through her, she realized, and only saw what they expected or wanted to see. The experience that had given Ngāroma's sense of stability such a nudge was the row she had with her Principal. The day before the ERO visit, when everyone was understandably feeling pretty anxious, he had 'summoned' her to his office and asked whether she would need any extra time that day to work with the Kapahaka group - who would, of course, be expected to perform as part of the welcome. Ngāroma was already feeling that she should have been asked some time ago to get the group ready, as a courtesy, out of respect. Of course, she had already anticipated that the group would perform at the welcome, and that she would Karanga (call the visitors on to the marae). She had already made sure that the kaumatua (senior tribal elder) would be there on time for the ceremonies. She recognized these functions as an important symbol of the school's standing – not so much in the eyes of the visiting dignitaries, as in establishing mana (prestige) within the local Māori community. But, she should have been asked. The boss was surprised at Ngāroma's hostile response that 'of course' they were completely ready, and so were all the other preparations. When he looked puzzled and asked what her problem was, she got really angry and let him have it for the first time in their three years together. She finished her diatribe with

“You’re just using us – me and the tamariki (children). This is just a show for the Ministry, to make you look good. If you’d had any respect for cultural protocol, you would have asked me for my support, not demanded it. And you should have known whether the tamariki were ready, because you should have been at the festival last week, supporting them’. She stormed out of his office, and headed back to her classroom to carry on teaching. “About time he got to hear that”, she thought, “Too bad if I’ve shot myself in the foot”.

Ngāroma replayed their conversation over and over in her mind for the rest of the day, still fuming. Any way she looked at it, she had done the right thing – but what position had she left for the Principal to take? She had said that the Kapahaka group would perform, and would never go back on her word – that would diminish the mana of both the tamariki and herself. But what about the karanga? Traditionally, the formal call of welcome was Ngāroma’s function - she was the senior woman, and in terms of Māori protocol, the only person who could do it. Everybody in the community knew that she was tuakana (senior), that it was her right to call, and she recognised that in her anger she had left him with only one option – to apologise, and to ask for her support. “I’m not backing down”, she thought to herself, “Let him eat humble pie. He’s got to learn a lesson from this, and if he’s sweating over tomorrow’s ERO visit because he’s not sure whether the formal ceremony will come off, too bad!”

Ngāroma’s kuia visited her that night. She often felt that Nanny was there, especially when she was taking her early morning swim right alongside where her ancestors had beached the waka all that time ago. But every once in a while Ngāroma experienced a more physical presence, and it usually signalled something she ought to have done, or nudged her into thinking about her life in slightly different ways. This time, out of nowhere she felt Nanny’s warm breath on her neck and a smooth old hand gently pushing a strand of hair back from her forehead as she lay in bed, not quite asleep yet. Just like she had felt every night when she was a child. Ngāroma was not startled, just felt nicely warm and secure. Without opening her eyes she smiled and muttered “Pō mārie Nan, e aroha ana ahau ki a koe” (goodnight Nan, I love you), and dropped into a restful sleep.

Only a dream, of course, her dear old kuia had been dead for over 20 years – but in the morning Ngāroma found that Nan had hidden her shoes, her formal black ones that she wore for ceremonial occasions. She hunted everywhere, and then got the message – her resolve that she should let the Principal come to her to solve his problems hardened, and she eventually went off to school quite happy. In the school staffroom, the DP made a bee-line for Ngāroma as soon as she walked in the door. She said anxiously “Ngā – why are you wearing trousers and casual shoes – you can’t start proceedings dressed like that. You always get stuck into the rest of us for not wearing appropriate clothes, and now look at you!” Everyone else was listening as Ngā said, “I haven’t been asked to karanga – I’m just dressed ready for the Kapahaka group performance”. Amid mutterings and protestations from the staff in which she caught expressions that included “... shame ...” and “... culturally inappropriate ...” (Well! She must have been getting the message through to them after all) the Principal walked in to begin staff meeting. Before he could open his mouth, the DP demanded in a loud voice to know who was going to karanga for the

visitors, and who was going to make the official welcome speech in Māori. The principal waved his hand dismissively and said, “Don’t worry about it, it’s all taken care of – I’ve asked Mrs. Tamahere and her husband to come in. They’ll be here shortly to lead you across to the marae ... now, to the first item of business ...”

Ngāroma was stunned, incensed – Hiria Tamahere was 20 years younger than her, and not even from this tribal area. Her husband was a local, but about the same age as Hiria – an absolute junior in Māori terms, with no business standing on the paepae (courtyard of the marae, where ceremonial speeches are conducted) as the representative of the tangata whenua (local tribe). Worse, he was nowhere near fluent, had been learning Māori at Ngāroma’s own evening classes this year. Their only connection with the school was that their two young children attended, both in the Kapahaka group. Shameful, an absolute breach of cultural protocol – and one that meant Ngāroma could never again karanga on behalf of the school, her mana had been taken from her! Distraught, she slipped out of the staffroom and went to gather the tamariki for their performance. She walked right past the Tamahere’s with only a lifted eyebrow to acknowledge them – though they gave her a cheerful wave, clearly oblivious to the implications of the situation.

Ngāroma’s emotional intensity must have transferred to her tamariki, and they delivered an inspired performance – the long poi sequence was flawless and the haka was terrifying, passionate. “Suck on that, Mr. Principal”, she thought with pride, “My personal integrity is intact – what about yours?” Just after morning tea she received her first visit from the ERO inspector attached to her – much earlier than she had expected. The inspector was an older Māori woman, and Ngāroma intercepted her outside the door to ask if she would mind being welcomed to the class formally – she explained that they had been working on traditional Māori protocols, and this was a good opportunity for the tamariki to put their learning into practice. The welcome began with a karanga from Huia and a formal introduction from Arapeta, both aged 11. The inspector was delighted, and introduced herself to both Ngāroma and the class in Māori, complimented them on their knowledge of protocols. They concluded by singing a beautiful waiata that brought tears to the inspector’s eyes.

The inspector spent a very long time in Ngāroma’s room, shared some of her own stories and even took part in the Te Reo Kori lesson, embellished the children’s learning by explaining the whakapapa of the poi and the haka, where these had originated from in Māori legend. The tamariki loved her – it was just like having two Ngāroma’s in the class! The two women stayed in the classroom over lunchtime, chatting, exchanging ideas – and, of course, discovering how they were related! The inspector had been intrigued by Ngāroma’s knowledge and innovative uses of traditional Māori pedagogies in all the classroom activities, and was very interested in her approaches to incorporating a Māori dimension generally. And she wanted to hear about how the other teachers, the Principal and the community at large had been responding. Finally, she said, “I know who you are, Ngāroma, what you’ve done here, both at school and in the community. I also know about you as ‘Auntie Ngā the Māori warden’, over in Rotorua. You did something special for my own mokopuna (grandchild) one day, made a big difference to his life. I want to know why you didn’t

karanga this morning – I had been looking forward to it”. They spent a long, long time talking.

On the final day of the visit, the inspector spent the whole afternoon again in Ngāroma’s classroom – her official work was over, “but I like it here”, she explained. She also said that she had spent most of the morning with the Principal, “sorting a few things out” that might make life a little easier for Ngāroma, later on. She almost grinned, more like a slight lift at the corner of her mouth, but no further explanation was forthcoming. The two women embraced, and as she was about to leave the inspector turned back to Ngāroma and said, “There’s a nice little whakatauiki (proverb) that came to mind this morning, that might be comforting to you – you know, as a Māori wāhine (woman) doing battle every day in the Pākehā school ... ‘He nui maunga e kore e taea te whakaneke, he nui ngaru moana mā to ihu o te waka ē wahi’ - a great mountain cannot be moved, but a giant wave can be broken by the prow of the waka (canoe). You won’t overcome the whole Pākehā system, Ngā – all the prejudice, all the ignorance – but some things are possible, don’t give up too easily. You’ve made a huge difference, here and throughout your life. Think of that waka, breaking the giant wave, as a symbol of our own mana, our own Māori identity. Kia kaha, girl – be strong”.

Ngāroma was deeply moved, and surprised too. She was even more surprised when the Principal turned up a few minutes after the tamariki had left at the end of the day, knocked respectfully on the classroom door and asked if it was convenient for them to talk through some things. He had never requested before, Ngāroma thought, only ever demanded. He didn’t look so cock-sure of himself at the moment, looked as he’d been crying ... ah well, a lot of pollen about at the moment, probably hay fever. He coughed, and made a couple of attempts before he blurted out miserably, “Look, I’m deeply ashamed about what happened at the welcome ... I’m very, very sorry. I just haven’t made an effort to understand Māori culture, didn’t have a clue as to the depths or your commitment to the school, the community – to our tamariki in particular”. Ngāroma was very surprised at his use of the Māori word ‘tamariki’ – and ‘our’, too! He normally said “the pupils” or “the kids”. Something was obviously happening here, but she said nothing, waited quietly for him to continue. That hay fever seemed to be troubling him again too, his eyes were quite moist. He carried on, “Look, I’ve been talking with someone who thinks you’re very special – and convinced me too, made me understand things I just hadn’t appreciated. Can we make it work ... you tell me what to do and I’ll support you all the way – you know, like a partnership?”

Ngāroma stood up and gave him a hug, patted his shoulder comfortingly. The hay fever was really in full swing now, and both of them were having trouble with their eyes. “Well”, said Ngāroma, “Partnership’s good, I like partnership ... it’s a good starting point. But I’ll bet you and the inspectors have been talking about how we are supposed to address the Treaty of Waitangi here at the school. If I remember correctly, there are two other articles in the Treaty, too. Let me think now, something about protection and participation ...” “Not a bad start”, she thought, “Thanks Nan”.

Reflections: What to make of the story?

In telling this particular story, I have clearly made choices with regard to which voices I have listened to and 'allowed' to speak. Such a choice represents epistemological challenges, first with regard to Lincoln and Denzin's (2002) questions concerning issues of representation, "Who is the 'Other'? Can we ever hope to speak authentically of the experience of the Other, or an Other?" (p.1050). I have chosen to foreground voices of dissonance in my story, to show glimpses of how Māori women might feel uncomfortable about their lives as teachers. The story I told is not a conventional 'realist tale' (Van Maanen, 1998) it is a personal and collaborative narrative. As such, it is not meant to be read "as an exact record of what happened nor [as] a mirror of the world 'out there'" (Riessman, 1993, p.64). Rather, such stories should be seen as "fictions that never assert the truth but strive to be truthful ... imaginative constructions whose truth lies not in their facticity but in their evocative potential (Pelias, 1999, p. xiv). Bruner (1986) suggests this is a narrative mode of knowing that likely leads to "believable (though not necessarily 'true') historical accounts. It deals with human or human-like intention and action [and] strives to ... locate the experience in time and place" (p.13). Through this fictional tale I have not told literal truths, though in a metaphoric sense I would like to believe that it is 'true to life'.

So what does the story mean? According to what criteria is it to be judged? By whom? On the one hand I could argue that the story is 'valid' and 'authentic' if the research participants deem it to be so, since that is the only group with the power to endorse and sanction their Māori knowledge as told through the story. On the other hand, a paper of this sort must also comply with conventional standards of academic writing. Most Māori people value the teachings handed down to them by their ancestors as symbolic ways of making sense of the contemporary world, and have no difficulty integrating these with Christian teaching (Marsden, 1975). Spiritually, Māori generally accept three basic propositions: the existence of spiritual beings, including one supreme God; the existence of a spiritual realm which intersects with the world in which humans live; and the existence of a spiritual dimension to life in that world (Metge, 1995). I tried to thread these notions through the story. I also attempted to show how the intimately interwoven complexities and contradictions of the research participants' own lives mapped onto the gendered, dominant cultural discourses of teacher identity. They draw from a culturally located discursive framework in making sense of themselves and their work, and this is often in contradiction with articulations from within the dominant culture. The discursive framing as 'Māori-woman-mother-teacher bringing progress to my own people' is central in organizing and legitimating their own cultural and professional identities.

Barone (2000) suggests that educational storytelling should provoke the reader into engaging with the dilemmas and tensions of the story, rather than to "prompt a single, closed, convergent reading" (Sparkes, 2002, p.180), and to this end the tale has no sense of closure. I hope it is seen as 'authentic' in Lincoln's (1993) sense of conveying a 'feeling tone' of life lived, and that it is 'believable' in Rinehart's (1998) terms, that it is founded on "the kind of description that is accurate in a holistic, evocative, emotionally engaging sense ... [and] ... that relies on glimpses of telling

detail more than on total immersion in detail” (p.205). This was one of many stories that unfolded over time as part of our collaborative research, and I sent copies to each of the research participants in preparation for us getting together to work through them. I also shared them with Hinemoa, my wife, and our daughter Rachelle. I learned a great deal about myself in the process. The real ‘acid test’, of course, is ‘How did they respond to/judge it?’ ‘Did it represent their lives?’ Their affirmation was conveyed through a traditional whakatauiikī (proverb):

<i>He kōpū putu tahio,</i>	Issue of one womb, we are a rope
<i>he taura whiri tātou;</i>	woven of many strands;
<i>Whiringa a nuku, whiringa a rangi,</i>	Woven in heaven, woven on earth,
<i>te whatā e.</i>	it will not break.

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