



Ko Whaea Kēkē te Haumi | Aunty Ally

“A Pedagogy and Praxis of Hope”

I recently connected with a fellow ally who sent me a Spinoff article in which Ngāi Tahu kaumatua Tā Tipene O'Regan shares his hopes and fears about the implementation of the Aotearoa New Zealand Histories (ANZH) curriculum. Tā Tipene was on the advisory panel to the Ministry of Education during the writing of the ANZH, and when it was announced that its implementation would be

delayed until 2023, Tā Tipene said the “fact that it’s being debated is wonderful, but I’m anxious about how it will emerge”. He was concerned that the curriculum change would replace “one unsatisfactory narrative with another” about “goodies and baddies and Māori victim, Pākehā oppressor”.

Having stepped out of the classroom in 2023 to support the rollout of the ANZH – first at a national level with ASSEN (the social studies teachers’ association), and then at a regional level with Kōia te Mātauraka – these words from Tā Tipene seem almost prophetic. Over the last three years I’ve spoken with kaiako Pākehā around the country about teaching ANZH, and while I haven’t had the language to articulate it until now, I believe that the baddies-oppressor narrative is alive and kicking in our schools.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that some Pākehā teachers view themselves as the oppressor. This can lead to what is now referred to as Pākehā Paralysis – akin to the “freeze” in “flight, fight or freeze” – which results in little to no action. Some extend the oppressor identity to the tamariki they teach, worrying that their Pākehā students will feel guilty learning about the colonisation of Aotearoa. This could lead to students internalising the oppressor narrative, in turn influencing their self-perception and openness to thinking critically about the past. Some kaiako Pākehā resist the oppressor label but express uncertainty about how to act. This can present in “fight” mode, manifesting as fear of engaging with ANZH. With 73% of our teacher workforce from Pākehā backgrounds (ERO, 2021), I think it’s crucial that we challenge the baddies-oppressor trope: how can we whakamana (uplift) hapū and iwi histories when many of us are stuck in this binary?

Associate Professor Nēpia Mahuika (Ngāti Porou), who was on the writing and advisory team for the history curricula review, invites teachers and historians to disrupt, rethink and re-imagine New Zealand political and cultural identities as a decolonial act (Mahuika, 2023, p.26). So how do we go about putting this into practice? Tā Tipene gives us a clue when he says, “The interrelationship of Māori and Pākehā is much more nuanced than this standard division that we have... [it] is conventional to talk and blame everything on colonialism.”



In conversations about curriculum design, our kaihautū Liz often highlights Pākehā settler families who worked alongside whānau Ngāi Tahu in mutually beneficial relationships and, oftentimes, for the betterment of their shared communities. Sources which speak to such examples are found throughout Aotearoa New Zealand’s history, if we are intent on finding them. By weaving these stories into classroom discussions, in the words of Nepia Mahuika, we may find the pathway to “a pedagogy and praxis of hope” and follow in the footsteps of Robert and Joanna Consedine who began this important work over 20 years ago (Mahuika, 2023, p.24).

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Sources:

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Consedine, R. & J. (2001). *Healing Our History: The Challenge of the Treaty of Waitangi*. Penguin Books, Australia.

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