

5TH INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS SOCIAL WORK CONFERENCE: HUALIEN, TAIWAN:

KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

THE WAIATA THAT ACCOMPANIED THE SLIDES SPEAKS ABOUT THE NECESSITY TO RECITE WHAKAPAPA SO THAT CONNECTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS ARE MAINTAINED NOT ONLY WITH GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES SUCH AS MOUNTAINS AND MARAE BUT AS WELL, WITH THE ANCESTORS AND ALTHOUGH THIS WAIATA WAS COMPOSED SPECIFICALLY FOR NGAI TUHOE, AN INLAND TRIBE IN THE EASTERN REGION OF THE NORTH ISLAND, THE MESSAGE IS NONETHELESS PERTINENT TO ALL THE TRIBES OF AOTEAROA.

WE ALL UNDERSTAND AND HAVE EXPERIENCED THE INDELIBLE MARK THAT COLONISATION HAS LEFT ON INDIGENOUS SPACES, LANGUAGES AND IDENTITIES, AS HAS BEEN SHOWN IN THE SLIDES. THE RUPTURE OF PAPTUANUKU, MOTHER EARTH, THROUGH MINING; THE INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION OF RANGINUI, THE SKY FATHER, WHICH HAS HAD AND CONTINUES TO HAVE A SEVERE EFFECT ON CLIMATE CHANGE, TO THE POINT WHERE THE MELTING OF THE POLAR CAPS WILL CAUSE THE OCEANS TO RISE AND POTENTIALLY COVER NATION ISLAND TERRITORIES.

THE DEFORESTATION OF THE CRITICALLY IMPORTANT AREAS AROUND THE EQUATOR NOT ONLY EFFECTS THE CONVERSION OF NITROGEN INTO OXYGEN BUT DENUDES THE PAKAINGA (HOMELANDS) OF INDIGENOUS AMAZONIAN TRIBES AND DECIMATES THE NATURAL HABITAT OF WILDLIFE.

RUBBISH IS NOW EVIDENT IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN, ARRIVING ASHORE AT ISLAND STATES AND REMAINS AS EVIDENCE OF PEOPLE WHO ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF 'CIVILISED' NATIONS. THE TREKKING ACROSS THE SACRED HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINS ALSO BEARS WITNESS TO RUBBISH AND

THE TRAFFIC JAMS OF PEOPLE CLIMBING THE ONCE SOLITARY BEAUTY OF MOUNT EVEREST, ARE NOW BECOMING A REGULAR OCCURRENCE.

THE LANGUAGE OF CHANGE IS NOW MORE THAN EVER PRESENTING THE BORDER WHERE COMPROMISE, CONFLICT AND RECOLONISATION ARE EVER PRESENT REALITIES TO THE ASSERTION OF INDIGENOUS SPACES, KNOWLEDGE, PRACTICES AND IDENTITIES.

THE LANGUAGE OF CHANGE IS NOT ONLY IN THE INTERPRETATION OF RELATIONSHIPS BUT IN THE VERY CHANGE ITSELF. PERSONAL POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS AND THE GENDERISATION OF WORDS ARE BECOMING MORE EVIDENT IN TE REO MAORI, THE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE OF AOTEAROA.

THE POSITION OF COMPROMISE IS SEEN IN EMPLOYMENT WHERE JOB DESCRIPTIONS HAVE CERTAIN CRITERIA THAT ARE DETERMINED BY QUALIFICATIONS, TO INDICATE THAT A PERSON HAS MET PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS. AS THE SLIDE INDICATES CODES OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS AND COMPETENCIES ESTABLISH PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS THAT GOVERN PRACTICE AND YET INDIGENOUS PRACTICES IN AOTEAROA WERE AND STILL ARE GOVERNED BY PRINCIPLES SUCH AS TIKA (RIGHT) AND PONO (TRUTH).

CONFLICT IS EVIDENT WHERE TWO SETS OF VALUES CLASH SUCH AS IS CURRENTLY BEING EXPERIENCED AT IHUMATAO, AN AREA OF SOUTH AUCKLAND NEAR THE AIRPORT, WHERE A COMPANY WANTS TO DEVELOP HOUSING ON LAND THAT IS DEEMED SACRED BY SOME OF THE TANGATA WHENUA.

RECOLONISATION, IT IS SUGGESTED, OCURS WHEN INDIGENOUS WORDS ARE SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE DOMINANT LANGUAGE, INDIGENOUS FRAME WORKS ARE USED BY ORGANISATIONS TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR SENSITIVITY TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND YET, THE

USE LACKS THE DEPTH OF MEANING INHERENT IN THE WORDS AND FRAMEWORKS. THE RHETORIC MAY SEVERELY UNDERMINE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE.

THE TANGATA WHENUA SOCIAL WORKER IS OFTEN FACED WITH THE DILEMMA AM I A TANGATA WHENUA SOCIAL WORKER OR A SOCIAL WORKER WHO IS TANGATA WHENUA. THE RESPONSE TO SUCH A DILEMMA WILL INFLUENCE THE INTENTION EMBEDDED IN THE RESULTING SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE. THE TENSION BETWEEN TANGATA WHENUA IDENTITY AND THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AS A SOCIAL WORKER THEN INFLUENCES HOW INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL IS ACCORDED VALUE.

BUT THE PURPOSE OF THIS KEYNOTE IS TO VOICE THAT THE IMPRINT OF THE TIPUNA (ANCESTORS) ARE NONETHELESS STILL PRESENT, BURIED PERHAPS UNDER THE LAYERS OF HISTORY BUT NOT LOST TO THE FUTURE AND GENERATIONS TO COME.