

The State of the Pākēhā Nation

Treaty education group Network Waitangi Whangarei has commissioned annual reflections on the State of the Pakeha Nation since 2006. Founding member the Rev. Joan Cook passed in 2010 and the essays since that time commemorate her pioneering Treaty and anti-racism work. As an Australian she was so intrigued by the racial contradictions of her adopted country that she learned and then taught us our hidden history over several decades.

The speeches and essays are free to download from the NWW website nwwhangarei.wordpress.com, along with Treaty of Waitangi Questions & Answers. The group co-published with Te Kawariki an independent panel report on Stage I of the Ngapuhi claim, called Ngapuhi Speaks, available from meBooks.co.nz.

Dunedin-based Suzanne Menzies-Culling started her Treaty and anti-racism teaching in the 1980s while working for the international development agency Corso, and with others went on to develop decolonisation workshops for Pakeha and other Tauwi. She was involved with the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement and attributes much of her learning to the indigenous people she worked alongside.

She was a founding member of Te Whanau a Matariki and Freedom Roadworks, and now works with other facilitators in her own consultancy, Tauwi Solutions.

2018 Joan Cook Memorial Essay – The State of the Pākēhā Nation

by Suzanne-Menzies-Culling

Ko Wai Au

Who Am I?

Ko Te Taumata a Tāne me Te Taumata a Wāhine ōku maunga- The twin peaks of Mount Cargill are my mountain.

Ko Te Tai o Rabuvai tōku Whānga - Otago Harbour is my harbour.

I whānau mai au i Ōtepōti , kei kōnei tonu au e noho ana. I was born in Dunedin and live there still.

I haere ōku tipuna ki Ahitereiria mā runga ngā waka Marmion, ko Lady Nugent me Garland Grove - The Marmion, the Lady Nugent and the Garland Grove were the ships that took my ancestors to Australia.

I haere mai ōku tipuna ki Aotearoa mā runga waka hoki, ko Wild Deer, ko Peter Denny me James Nicol Fleming . The Wild Deer, the Peter Denny and the James Nicol Fleming were the ships that brought my ancestors to Aotearoa.

Ko Ingarangi, Airangi, Koterangi me Te Kariiana (i Te Tai Hauauru o Aferika) nga whenua o ōku Tupuna. My ancestors came from England, Ireland, Scotland and the Caribbean (taken from West Africa).

Ko Menzies, Chetwin, Cuff, Leonard, Mc Farlane, Sutherland, Power, Nolan, Lowe, Marshal, McCulloch, Nugent ōku whanau. My families are Menzies, Chetwin, Cuff, Leonard, McFarlane, Sutherland, Power, Nolan, Lowe, Marshal, McCulloch, and Nugent.

Ko Nugent Menzies tōku papa, ko Dorothy Chetwin tōku mama. - My father is Nugent Menzies, my mother is Dorothy Chetwin.

Ko Barbara rāua ko Miriam ōku teina. - My sisters are Barbara and Miriam.

Ko Michael rātou ko Paul, ko John, ko Christopher, ko Nicholas ōku tungāne. – My brothers are Michael, Paul, John, Christopher and Nicholas.

Ko Tony Culling tōku hoa rangatira – my husband is Tony Culling.

Ko Simon rātou ko Jared, ko David āku tama. My sons are Simon, Jared and David.

Ko Felix rātou ko, Riley, ko Alba, ko Clement āku mokopuna. My grandchildren are Felix, Riley, Alba and Clement.

Ko Suzanne Rita Menzies-Culling tāku ingoa.

WHAT IS THE STATE OF THE PĀKEHĀ NATION IN 2018?

The trouble I have when trying to talk about the Pākehā nation is how nebulous and undefined the Pākehā nation is. At the most basic level, 'Pākehā' refers to the descendants of the colonising settlers. However, when I think of Pākehā, I think of a person of European descent who has a relationship with this land and with both Te Tīriti o Waitangi and tāngata whenua. As for anyone else — to me, they are just New Zealand-born Europeans. Now that there are so many other peoples who have come to NZ for a better life what is the relevance of talking of a Pākehā Nation?

Does the Pākehā nation refer to the government of the day? If we are talking about the New Zealand government or the New Zealand parliament, that is quite a different question. When it comes to political representation at a national level, we are still looking at two mainstream parties where the rhetoric may differ, but the substance remains the same. We are still trapped within the neoliberal capitalist economic experiment where people's wellbeing comes second to maintaining the rights of shareholders and the owners of capital. This Labour-led government has promised to be transformational, and lord knows we need that. So far, though, it just looks like kindness and 'komitis'.

I was once told by a Kuia Māori that "in Aotearoa – there is tāngata whenua and everyone else". So, if we take this seriously, Pākehā are a part of 'everyone else'. This world view that Aotearoa is 'tāngata whenua and everyone else' differs from the accepted narrative. Our political system, our schooling and our institutions all tell us that because we are the majority, it's actually 'Pākehā and everyone else'.

Even the fact that we insist on a political system directly transferred from Westminster tells the world and ourselves that this is a nation *owned and run by Pākehā*. Because of the pervasiveness of the British Empire, we who are the descendants of those early settlers have not questioned those institutions and are largely unconscious of our culture. We believe our lived realities are a universal

norm. But if we look around the world, the descendants of settlers from Europe are a small but quirky minority of the world's population with a strong sense of entitlement and superiority.

Almost from the beginning of mass settlement to this country, the settlers saw Te Tīriti o Waitangi as something that could be disregarded, given the economic and military might of the British Empire. For the most part, they didn't question their rights and entitlements in this new land. In fact, in the *Wi Parata versus the Anglican Diocese* case in 1877, Judge Prendergast declared that Te Tīriti was a nullity. This is a very good example of the world view of the Pākehā nation of the day. A hundred and ten years later, a Court of Appeal judgment overturned that dismissive remark by agreeing that the Crown "had not treated its partner in good faith". The language of 'partnership' began to be used by central government and others, much to the chagrin of some New Zealanders, who still saw this country as a 'better Britain' and were comfortable with that world view. However, even though the Court of Appeal articulated the principles of the Treaty as a way forward for future interaction between the government and Māori, this is still a case of one party to Te Tīriti deciding what the picture was to look like in future.

In reality, if the nineteenth century settlers had understood the articles of Te Tīriti, they would have objected strongly, as they would have seen it as something that could restrict the impact of settlers on whanau and hapū. The British Crown's handing over the government of the colony to settlers in 1852, through the Constitution Act which established Provincial government in NZ, meant that the fox was now in the hen house, and whanau and hapū were then at the mercy of the rapacious colonisers whose main priority was accessing Māori land regardless of the impact this was to have on the indigenous population. This unfortunate development has been compounded over the years as successive central governments have devolved regulatory powers over natural resources to local territorial authorities. These bodies, who were not signatories to Te Tīriti, have no Tīriti obligation and have the power to decide whether they even establish a relationship with mana whenua.

Most of us would acknowledge colonisation has had physical impacts such as land loss, loss of language, high rates of mortality from introduced diseases, the exclusion of Iwi Māori from public life, apart from advisory or cultural roles. Until the 1970s, most of us believed colonisation to have been on the whole beneficial, but changes since then have brought the negative impacts of colonisation on Iwi Māori into sharp relief. This is something we have been forced to take seriously and is a shock for those of us who grew up with the myth of 'New Zealand race relations being second to none'. A less acknowledged impact of colonisation on both the descendants of settlers and of tāngata whenua is that it has distorted how we see ourselves in the world. Colonisation has also been about forgetting — we are encouraged to perceive only a small part of the picture we are in. This results in us not knowing who we are and not knowing what our culture is. Very rarely do we perceive ourselves as the descendants of the 'flotsam and jetsam' of the British Empire. We are sustained by the mythology that our ancestors were upright, noble pioneers and peaceful settlers. And if we have Māori ancestry we are, of course, descended from Māori princesses and chieftains.

In reality, most of us who are Pākehā are descended from those who fled from Britain or were excluded. They were unwanted. Most were peasants/ rural people or slum-dwellers who came from Ireland, Scotland, Wales or the large cities of England. Britain didn't want them, couldn't look after them and despised them for being poor.

Many settlers came out as assisted immigrants; they were people who understood they had no future 'back home'. They had experienced the violent disruption caused by the Industrial Revolution

and the enclosure of the commons which had forced them from the countryside into the factories and slums of Industrial England. The Scots, both Lowlanders and Highlanders, had been cleared off the land they farmed as tenant farmers and crofters. The Irish who had survived the 'Great Shame' (or the potato famine), the Cornish and Welsh miners – these were the foot soldiers of the New Zealand colonial adventure. In spite of having suffered this violence at home, they were largely unconscious of and insensitive to the violence of the colonisation process perpetuated on tāngata whenua here — compounding Britain's state and historical violence towards her own people. There is still an attitude around that 'We won, and you lost – suck it up.' Possibly this comes from the mistaken idea that the land was taken in a 'fair fight'.

Since the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s, our country has seen a huge growth in the gap between rich and poor, where often the undeserving have become rich by playing the money markets and being the beneficiaries of an economy built on Māori land. This has been accompanied by a belief articulated by certain Christian sects that good people prosper and bad people suffer. The invidious and imperilled positions that descendants of hapū and iwi and other individuals find themselves in is seen as a consequence of individual choice and bad decisions, supported by the belief that everyone has the same opportunities, and there is a level playing field.

We have been cowed by the neoliberal mantra of the 80s that there is no alternative. Most of us seem to be too intimidated to give ourselves permission to experiment with alternatives and listen to other wisdoms based on ancient knowledge from the world's many indigenous peoples. Overall, we have been blind and deaf to Māori. It doesn't seem to have occurred to us to turn to tāngata whenua to learn how to look after and care for people, how to live in harmony with the natural world, or how to be guided by our hearts.

We still see the failures in our society as resulting from individual choices/mistakes/shortcomings rather than understanding that our system has guaranteed this inequality of outcomes. We need to understand that not only are these outcomes caused by the decision-makers who have benefited from this economic system, they are inevitable because of the system we are part of.

The story above is a grim one, but it doesn't have to remain this way. Individually, most of us have good will. However, we often lack the moral courage needed to take back our personal and collective power to make things better for everyone. One of our challenges, if we are concerned about survival, is to find ways to come together, to listen to things that may be different or difficult, and to learn from them.

How do we begin to come together to work with each other? To listen to other voices who may be challenging our picture of reality? Are we prepared to be vulnerable, to be humble, to take risks, even if we are going to make mistakes?

Since the late twentieth century, both Māori and Pākehā visionaries in New Zealand have advocated for a balance of social, environmental and financial outcomes. However, the profit-driven world has prevailed and we have not asked the questions begging to be asked about the realities of power, or whose agenda is operating in this brave new neoliberal world. Many of us have no idea who controls and rewards our opinion makers, who owns the media and what their vested interest is in the outcomes we see. Do we know whether the people who control the international money markets are the same as those who control the media? Are they the same people and interests who fund the

political parties that are guaranteed to protect those same interests? In many ways, as a nation we are still very naïve.

Is it possible for those of us descended from those landless, homeless people who had the courage to leave Britain and Europe without any real guarantees of survival, to reclaim those stories and to use our empathy to insist on turning the ship of the nation around so that our first imperative is to look after the people and the land that sustains us all? These things are what hapū and iwi have had to teach us ever since we arrived here. The Rogernomics neoliberal agenda of the 1980s and 1990s meant the inevitable dismantling of the welfare state, where we were proud of looking after our people if they fell on hard times. We were told this made us lazy and careless and took away our incentive to better ourselves. It was a prime example of throwing the baby out with the bathwater, and our people have been suffering since.

Another of the outcomes of colonisation is that we fear change and we fear being different. We are also afraid of things or people who are different. So, suggesting we step out and carve a different path produces a certain anxiety for many of us.

We also need to understand that even though the process of colonisation and settlement has been very harmful for us all, our forebears weren't bad or evil people although they were part of that colonial process. One of the things I was told by an old friend many moons ago, is "If you don't love your people, don't do this work." This in itself is a journey — moving from pain and guilt to aroha for the people who came before me, acknowledging their struggles and sacrifices, whether they be convicts, ex-slaves or 'peaceful' settlers. They are the ones who were prepared to die by embarking on a perilous journey so their children and their children's children might live with dignity and hope.

Another part of this journey is to understand 'Who are my people?' Does this mean every Pākehā person, the whole of white New Zealand? The simple answer is that not everyone is 'your people'. We need to be able to name who are our people in our lives, our relationships, our workplace, our interest groups, our faith communities. Being able to identify our people builds the capacity to listen to the heart, rather than the head.

The jingoism that has developed around ANZAC Day, for example, initially filled me with exasperation, being a young feminist in the 60s and 70s and part of anti-war protests around the glorification of military adventures — where old men sent young men off to die. Today we are told the focus has changed to remembrance. I am not convinced when I see the control and overwhelming presence of the military at these commemorations. And when I see young people sporting military medals for battles their ancestors were involved in, it worries me. What I do recognise now is that ANZAC Day expresses our yearning to come together as a nation, to connect with each other, Māori, Pākehā and other Tauīwi peoples, even if the day is one of sadness and loss.

Aotearoa in 2018 is a very different place from the one envisaged in 1840 and 1918. We now have, as part of our nation, both old and new peoples who have not originated in Europe and do not whakapapa to hapū or iwi Māori. They have been given the right to settle here by successive New Zealand governments (without any consultation with tāngata whenua), and many are surprised when they come here to see how the indigenous people have been sidelined in many of the decisions concerning the future of Aotearoa/ New Zealand. They have been led to believe our race

relations are second to none, but quickly find that colonisation has largely relegated Māori to a ceremonial or advisory role, often with no meaningful place at the table.

In 1975, the Land March shook New Zealand out of complacency and some of us began to think all might not be as peaceful as we have always assumed. Following this, the Waitangi Tribunal was established to deal with the unlikely event that there could be breaches of the Treaty in the future. In 1985, the legislation was amended to deal with historical Treaty breaches, but the process has been totally controlled by the Crown, and politicians have been very sensitive to the impact at the polls of a Pākehā backlash. At the same time, the Waitangi Tribunal has been touted around the world by our governments as a great model of dealing with past injustices, of making restitution and apologising for the wrongs of the past. However, to date, Ngāpuhi, the largest iwi, have still not reached a settlement, mainly because the people refuse to be bullied by the Crown (the culprit/thief) into being constrained by a process that Ngāpuhi have had no control over, nor any input as to the settlement's design. This is despite the 2012 ruling by the Tribunal that Ngāpuhi did not cede their sovereignty when they signed Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840.

So now in the second decade of the third millennium CE, Aotearoa /New Zealand has a population of almost 5 million people (although we are still outnumbered by cows or sheep). We are no longer Māori and Pākehā only, in an Aotearoa/New Zealand that has become home to many diverse populations from the Pacific, from Asia, from Africa, other parts of Europe and from the Americas. These people have chosen this as their home for themselves and their descendants. So, the challenge of building a much better nation needs to ensure our future is premised on the notion that we are tāngata whenua and everyone else — a radical shift from the prevailing 'Pākehā and everyone else'. We are now many, many diverse people, with very different stories to tell and celebrate, lessons to teach, and energy and vibrancy to share. This has the potential to create something genuinely different and amazing — not just another white-dominated settler society that myopically perpetuates a mythological pioneering past.

So, the question is — what stops us from reaching this place, letting go of this position of power we occupy as descendants of settlers? What are we afraid of? A number of years ago, I asked this of workshop participants. One woman, who had recently arrived from Ireland, answered "Zimbabwe!"

Is it a fear of chaos, retribution, anarchy that is lurking in the back of our minds when we think about the possibility of Māori forcibly taking back control here? My response to her was that Zimbabwe had no Treaty with the British and had not invited white settlers to live on their land. Here, rangatira and hapū agreed to sign a treaty with the British Crown that gave British settlers the right to come here, contained in the Article 1. This invitation of the rangatira and their understanding of manākitanga and their commitment to looking after the people who live with them in their rohe has been what has kept us from the situation of Zimbabwe.

The fear of anarchy developing, the supposed upholding of law and order — basically the State's need to maintain and exercise control — has been nurtured by the rich and powerful for centuries. This is why Europe's colonising countries developed institutions designed to protect the wealthy and their assets. And we have been led to believe the removal of state constraints would result in rioting, theft of property and the loss of innocent lives. But anarchy is about communities being able to make their own decisions for their lives and futures, rather than be ruled by lawmakers in a centralised (if devolved) system. The opposite of chaos will come from the strength of the

relationships we build with each other across our differences, and using those differences to provide strength and resilience to the rope of humanity we are able to weave together.

For the British (both government and settlers), Te Tiriti was a piece of paper. For the rangatira who signed, it was a sacred undertaking, a Covenant, where the Atua was present as a third party. The words they spoke were sacred and their promise to share their land with the newcomers and live in peace was sealed by the placing of images of their tā moko on the document. The descendants of these rangatira women and men have kept those promises and have never resiled from what their ancestors agreed to. This is why I believe that Aotearoa will not become like Zimbabwe.

However this does not mean we can sit on our hands taking everything for granted. If we choose to do nothing and accept the status quo, we risk people becoming more desperate and believing they have nothing to lose. I see the older generation within the Pākehā nation as being fearful of engaging with our past and of facing some difficult choices. But I have great hope in the young people coming through our school system now. They are hungry to learn and they know bad things have happened in the past that need to be faced and dealt with honourably. They are not victims of the 'perfect race relations' mythology some of us grew up with, so they have less invested in maintaining that myth. Nor do they waste energy on mourning its passing.

So what is the State of the Pākehā nation in 2018? Well I think, in the words of the great Sam Cooke, "A Change Is Gonna Come". And in the immortal words of Rachel Hunter, "It may not happen overnight, but it will happen". My dream is that the day will come when we will all be able to come together every year, on 6th February, to really celebrate what Te Tiriti o Waitangi offers us. We will have been able to overcome the murky history of our past, and will have renegotiated a place at the table of the nation based on a new set of values. Shared values based on the worth and dignity of the person and the sacred duty we have to each other and to the land.