

Backing into the Future: Motatau Bilingual School

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This article tells a story of struggles and triumphs experienced by the Motatau Maori community located in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand, as they took local control of their school. The impact of educational reforms, government policies, responsibilities of the Board of Trustees, and curriculum innovation are examined through participant observation, interviews, and critical reflection. Successive governments have placed Maori people in difficult situations where they have had to take on responsibility for administering their school with insufficient financial resources while the government maintains real power over the curriculum and policies. The researcher and community realize the importance of fully understanding one's history through examining power relations and then using the power of culture and community commitment to their children to provide quality education.

Introduction

He mea hanga
Ko Ranginui te tuanui
Ko Papatuanuku te paparahi
Ko nga maunga ki nga poupou
Te Ramaroa titiro ki
Whiria, te paiaka o te riri ki te kawa o Rahiri
Whiria titiro ki Panguru-Papata
E tu rakau ki te hauauru ki Panguru-Papata
Panguru-Papata titiro ki Maungataniwha
Maungataniwha titiro ki Tokerau
Tokerau titiro ki Rakaumangamanga
Rakaumangamanga titiro ki Manaia
Manaia titiro ki Manganui
Manganui titiro ki Tutamoe
Tutamoe titiro ki Puhanga-tohora
Ko te whare tapu tenei o Ngapuhi
(*Eru Moka Pou*)

The above story brings together the mountains that form the boundaries of Ngapuhi, the tribe to which I belong. These mountains—Te Ramaroa, Whiria, Panguru-Papata, Maungataniwha, Tokerau, Rakaumangamanga, Manaia, Manganui, Tutamoe, and Puhanga-tohora—are the pillars of the ancestral house of Ngapuhi, with the Sky-father being the roof and the Earth-mother the floor. The mountains speak to each other during their eternal sentinel duties, and if you listen carefully you can hear their voices

murmuring in the silence. Being our *poupou*/support, our mountains carry the wisdom of the ages.

I would like to acknowledge the tangata whenua Musqueam family, their mountain and river, and the First Nations Longhouse, University of British Columbia. As a member of the *whanau*/family of the ancestral house Tane-Nui-A-Rangi for Te Waananga O Waipapa/the University of Auckland, I stand to greet all who are gathered here today. I also acknowledge the people who have made it possible for me to be here telling a personal story of the journey I have made, as we have all heard many stories that weave a rich tapestry to our own family histories. I would like to center first on my family and the environment in which I was brought up. My father was Roman Catholic and my mother was Anglican. Their parents and grandparents were leaders in their respective communities of that time. My father lived with his grandparents and spent his earlier years in the Hokianga region and later on worked in the Waipoua forest and Dargaville areas not far from the settlement of Whirinaki, which was where the family home was located. When World War II started he enlisted in the army at a young age and served in the 28th Maori Battalion, seeing action in the Middle East and Italian campaigns. On his return he was apprenticed as a carpenter and worked in the Bay of Islands region until he retired.

My mother was adopted from birth by her aunty and uncle and lived in the small settlement of Te Ahuahu in the Taumarere region until she was of secondary school age. She was then given back to her parents and sent to a Maori boarding school for girls in Auckland. This form of adoption was accepted practice in Maori society and is called *whangai*, "to feed or nurture." In this case her aunty and uncle were not able to have children of their own and so were able to *whangai*, to nurture, children from within the extended family as their own, and in time the children were returned to their respective parents. This practice was also used sometimes to appease families that had suffered past grievances as a way of settling conflicts.

A New Beginning

As number six of nine children, I was brought up in an environment that comprised many uncles, aunties, cousins, and other members of the extended *whanau*/family. Brothers and sisters were christened Roman Catholic or Anglican depending on the denomination of the people after whom they were named (namesakes). The namesakes would then take be responsible for making sure each child was nurtured in that respective denomination. Our parents encouraged us to attend both churches and learn from both denominations so that we would be able to participate as and when required. This environment and *whanau*/family support gave me the courage to make my decisions from an early age about seeking employment. As children we never went without anything and learned to appreciate everything our parents provided. When the elder members of

the family left home to seek employment elsewhere, they sent money home to assist the younger members of the family. This practice continues in our generation, and I would expect it to continue in the generations to follow.

I admit that the only reason I decided to enter teachers' training college was because they paid students a salary to attend. It meant that I did not have to seek family financial support to complete the three-year course of training. This was the start of a 25-year career in the education profession at all levels of responsibility as an administrator, manager, teacher, and more recently as a parent. I spent time in various positions of responsibility as a principal of a bilingual school—which I highlight in this article—a classroom teacher, an executive officer in the primary teachers' union, a senior official in the Ministry of Education and in the Department of Labour, and an academic administrator, which is my present position. An integral part of this work has been maintaining of contacts with my *iwi*/tribal affiliations and other local and national organizations that affect my personal and professional situation every day.

With these factors in mind I expand on the work I undertook as the principal of Motatau Bilingual School, which is located in a rural community in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand. This article describes the impact of government policies and educational reforms on Maori involved in the decision-making process of a rural community school. Their aim was to provide a secure learning environment for their children based on *te reo Maori*/Maori language unique to, and for, their *hapu*/subtribe. The impact of information communication technology on this Maori community is also discussed in the context of creating space and the use of different tools used to achieve their Indigenous goals. This study comprises participant observations and interviews in the rural community. The community used the Treaty of Waitangi as the basis for the development of their school's policies and strategic plans, alongside the recognition of their rights under Article Two of the Treaty of Waitangi (Kawharu, 1989).

Researching the Researcher

Justification of research undertaken by the Indigenous researcher is probably the most difficult challenge that one has to face. Things taken for granted such as oral or inherited rights to *whakapapa*/genealogy and in some cases *tapu*/sacred elements for *whanau*/family take on another shape or form. In this context the researcher must seek appropriate guidance in accessing these elements. This process takes on a different agenda and takes time and particular scrutiny, which is not evident to research participants due to their respective culture or *whakapapa*/genealogy to the people involved. The key to this type of research is to be sure that one has the right links to the community or individual involved or has developed appropriate and effective links. I was the school principal involved

in collaborative research at Motatau School, and 10 years later I am describing that enterprise using documents and records I kept from that time.

As a Maori researcher it was important for me to create the space for Maori to understand that the research being undertaken had value. This led naturally to the empowerment of the Motatau community to own and participate in the research with full knowledge that they controlled the process from beginning to end. The research process adopted whanau/family principles and focused on shared decision-making. It is not until one has to sit down and work alongside one's own whanau/family that one understands the enormity of the task set by *Kaupapa Maori*/Maori philosophies and practices. Collecting and collating research data is not easy. Working collaboratively with key people from the community is difficult and allows for opportunities to be created; however, it does not necessarily guarantee open and full decision-making.

The process of implementing the policies relating to governance and management for the school had been discussed at meetings on the *marae*, which is the center point of the community. The complex itself is made up of the ancestral house of learning where all observances of Maori culture are practiced, and other buildings such as the dining room, which are named after an ancestor. Major decisions concerning the community are made at the *marae*. Interviews, meetings, and reviews of documentation relating to the school and the community from the first arrival of *Pakeha* (non-Maori) in the valley were part of my methodology. The process was inclusive and agreed to by the *marae* trustees and the Maori committee members of whanau/family represented, thereby confirming their stake in the process. The presentation of the research initiative at the first meeting centered on whakapapa/genealogy between all parties. It was noted that whanau/family members were representative of iwi/tribes from throughout the country with one whanau/family from Holland.

The main focus of the research was on the immediate whanau/family group. It was their perception that other iwi/tribes added to the wonderful tapestry of the present makeup of their community. As a part of this process it was agreed that the teachers at the school would share the responsibility of teaching in both te reo Maori/Maori language and te reo Pakeha/English language with members of the community. This would allow the children enrolled in the school to be taught in their first language. It was also agreed that both languages would be of the highest standard. The aim of the school was to have children leave the school fluent in both te reo Maori and te reo Pakeha.

This meant that the whanau/family had to own and retain the educational process from start to finish. They have long memories and relate their stories in their own unique style. The focus of all activity reported here took place in the school and *marae* in the immediate vicinity. Bring-

ing together resources of all parties for the benefit of the community is the unspoken message and is an integral part of the reporting to be completed for the community. Kaupapa Maori/Maori philosophy and practices are discussed in the context of critical theory, taking into account the notions of critique, resistance, struggle, and emancipation. It is a theory and an analysis of the context of research, which involves Maori, and of the approaches to research with, by, and/or for Maori (Smith, 1997). Maori need to seek and find ways to tell their stories in their own way (Halkyard-Harawira, 1999). This statement is more than a reference to how Maori should approach research. Maori need to tell their own stories without the fear of being marginalized, dissected, or criticized in an academic arena that does not include shared forms of academic knowledge.

In giving Indigenous research the leading edge, there must be a vision, and that vision must be attained without compromise. The research does not have to have an immediate effect as long as the outcome is positive. An example of a positive outcome is being able to maintain control of the research from start to finish, which can be considered a key element in Indigenous research. Freedom to tell the story without fear of condemnation is the vision, along with the assumption and expectation that the story will also be scrutinized and eventually validated. The challenge of exploring issues such as being politically correct, leadership, discussing research parameters to suit all parties, the struggle of protesting, and the cost of bringing people home to provide vital services and expertise are all cost factors of some shape or form.

The Historical Context of Schooling at Motatau

Motatau is a small rural community located 35 km from the township of Kawakawa in the Bay of Islands. The area supports a farming industry base of diary, sheep, and beef, and more recently forestry. The school was established in 1914 and now has a roll of some 53 students and caters for new entrants (5 years) to Form 2 children (12-13 years). A *kohanga reo*/Maori language nest is located at the local marae: Manukoroki. The iwi/tribe is Ngapuhi Nui Tonu, the hapu/subtribe is Ngati Hine, and the whanau/family is Ngati Te Tarawa. The *maunga*/mountain is Motatau, and the *awa*/river, is Te Ramarama. In the past the people preserved their stories in *koreo*/oral tradition. The stories have been told many times by their *tupuna*/ancestors and their ancestors before them. Oral history of the hapu/extended families has been the main form of communicating these histories. However, the community has now moved to record their histories in the form of *pakiwaitara*/stories using computers and audio and video methods. The focus of the community of Motatau is the marae/meeting house, and it is here that the major decisions of the people of Motatau have taken place over the years. From here this story of using new tools for old needs takes the lead: a story of "Making Changes."

Examples of these changes are illustrated by the changes in status for the school.

1914 to 1951	Motatau Native School (<i>Maori School—N/E to Form VI, Year 1 to year 10</i>)
1951 to 1974	Motatau District High School (<i>Primary and Secondary School—N/E to Form VI, Year 1 to year 12</i>)
1974 to 1988	Motatau Primary School (<i>Full Primary School—N/E to Form II, Year 1 to Year 8</i>)
1989 to present	Motatau Bilingual School (<i>Te Kura Reo Rua O Motatau</i>)

In 1974 the late Sir James Henare, chair of the school committee, led the community fight against the government decision to close the district high school. The school committee petitioned Parliament on this issue, and the government turned down the petition. The children of that time are now parents of the children attending the school today, and they are fighting to have their voices heard. The school has been fortunate in hosting a number of groups and individuals from political and social circles who have supported the school and community. These people served their country in war and peace and have maintained their integrity in working for the people, and in particular Maori.

From 1986 the downturn of the economy in the rural sector saw dramatic changes in income for this farming community, and within two years dairy income(s) halved, and the sheep and beef markets slumped to such an extent that the community as a whole suffered. The timing of the education changes could not have come at a more crucial time for the rural sector, as farming communities were being forced to adapt to projected smaller incomes and to cope with significant changes in the education sector. However, it is significant that in 1986 te reo Maori was the first language spoken in 85% of the households in the Motatau community. Families took the responsibility of ensuring that te reo Maori was maintained in the home.

The government report *Review of Educational Administration* (1988) signalled to the community that they would have to take on increased responsibility for providing schooling for their children through to the 21st century. A fair amount of skepticism was voiced at numerous hui held in the Ngati Hine/subtribe community. The people believed that the government was divesting itself of its social responsibility to Maori by devolving the education administration to the community. This view was represented to government officials on a number of occasions nationally, regionally, and locally, as were a number of economic factors—reduction in the dairy payout and sheep and beef schedules that affected the Motatau community. The history of the school confirms considerable change in the community since the opening of the school in 1914. There appears to have been of little benefit to the community.

A meeting held at Motatau marae to address educational issues in 1987 confirmed a request from the community to change the status of Motatau Primary School to Te Kura Reo Rua O Motatau/Motatau Bilingual School. Reasons for this change included the desire of the people to have te reo Maori and English given equal status, working together as an integral part of the curriculum. The staff at the school was encouraged to teach in either te reo Maori or English as long as the standard of teaching was of the highest order. The key to this approach was the child, and support from the home was excellent. Children enrolled at school were taught in their first language, Maori or English.

The school committee were responsible for reviewing the organization and management of the school in order to comply with the community request. At this point a number of reforms in national education had a further impact on the community. The reforms could enhance or undermine these goals.

The Reforms of 1989

In 1988 the Task Force to Review Education Administration found that the administration of New Zealand's school system was overcentralized, overly complex, and in need of extensive reform. It was perceived that all decision-making came from the top and that few decisions were made at the local level where the immediate impact of rules and procedures was felt.

Effective management practices are lacking and the information needed by people in all parts of the system to make informed choices is seldom available. The result is that almost everyone feels powerless to change things they see need change. To make progress, change is required now. (Department of Education, 1988b, p. xi)

Administrative changes for schools set out in the document *Tomorrow's Schools* (Lange, 1988) were designed to give more resources to schools and to provide more parent and community involvement, more responsibility to teachers, and greater accountability. Recommendations from this report were incorporated in major revisions of the Education Act in 1989 and the Education Amendment Act of 1990. The outcome was a new focus on self-governance and management, balanced with an emphasis on national curriculum and national standards. The main aim of the reform was to improve the standard of education for all New Zealanders. The task force, therefore, recommended that any new administration for education should be based on choice, giving a wide range of options to consumers and individual learning institutions. The needs of the parents and the community, cultural sensitivity, equity, and good management practices were also recommended. This would allow those working in the system to have detailed and clear objectives, control over resources, no overlapping lines of responsibility, and accountability for their decisions.

The implementation of this policy direction was coordinated by the Department of Education. A number of initiatives included briefing school

committees and school principals. It was expected that this type of consultation and professional development would motivate schools to be more aware of and better positioned to handle the changes being forecasted for the administration of schools. As a result of these courses and workshops, a strategic plan and an implementation plan were developed for Motatau Primary school that would enable its change of status to Te Kura Reo Rua O Motatau/Motatau Bilingual School. The plans included a time frame with phases of development such as the appointment of an interim Board of Trustees and finally the election of a Board of Trustees for the school. The phases and steps incorporated a flat rather than hierarchical level of management with specific roles defined for each person—staff, board trustee, parent, and student.

The Impact

The school installed an interim Board of Trustees. This step proved to be the key factor in positioning the school to take advantage of the new reforms. The people were being given the opportunity for the first time in the history of the school to have hands-on experience in the decision-making for their school, which crossed the boundaries of teaching and planning in all curriculum to be delivered. This led to the election of a Board of Trustees who were accountable for meeting the objectives set out in their charter (an agreement between the school and the Minister of Education) and for expenditures made from grants received from government to administer local schools. The board was to report to the Education Review Office on how they were meeting their charter objectives. The Education Review Office reported directly to the Minister of Education.

Each board of trustees had a large measure of autonomy in controlling the management of their school, but they had to ensure that a written charter of school aims, purposes, and objectives was approved by the Minister of Education. The school charter included the National education guidelines and local goals and objectives, which reflected the particular aspirations of individual schools and their communities. In meeting the respective requirements of the charter much time was spent meeting education officials.

The Ministry of Education had an office in Whangarei, which was seen by all to be an acknowledgment by government of the importance of giving people access to the developers of the policy. The Ministry of Education was responsible for providing policy advice to the Minister of Education on all aspects of education—early childhood, compulsory, and post-compulsory—and advising on the optimum use of resources allocated to education. The Ministry also administered funding to schools and made sure the money was distributed according to government policy and approved charters. In administering legislation and managing school property, the Ministry was also responsible for developing national guidelines on all aspects of education, including national curriculum ob-

jectives and the collection, analysis, and dissemination of education statistical data. The Ministry ensured the delivery of education advisory services, special education services, curriculum, and early childhood development through contractual arrangements with other agencies and providers. These costs of these support services were charged to schools. The Ministry of Education decided the scope of the curriculum; it was responsible for setting national curriculum objectives within the national guidelines. Schools and teachers made the decisions as to what would be learned and taught in order to meet the curriculum objectives. In 1987, when the strategic plan was in place, the people believed that it would lead the school toward the 21st century. Its adoption gave the children attending the Motatau School the opportunity of having educational exchanges (i.e., school visits to Auckland and other regions), and it was agreed that more exposure to other experiences outside their immediate locality was a priority to the Board of Trustees.

The initial workload for the staff was mainly determined by the calendar presented by the education board of the time. With the devolvement of the boards and emergence of the Board of Trustees came a period of uncertainty, and staff were placed under undue pressure from all circles to maintain the integrity of the education system, which aimed to deliver quality education, and also by the community to maintain social and professional contact within the respective circles of their networks. Other community groups included Maori trustees, marae committee, kohanga reo, ladies' committee, runanga, and iwi organizations. However, the approach taken by the Motatau community over the ensuing period 1987 to 1989 seemed to be right for that time.

Legislation boards further stressed the liability of trustees on the board, which made serving on the board an unattractive proposition. In the Motatau community there were few eligible people to canvass for board membership. Most chose to support the school on Calf Club days or fundraising activities rather than serve on the board.

Curriculum Technology

For the first Maori principal appointed to Motatau Primary school it was an opportune time to provide leadership for the implementation of initiatives such as computer technology aimed at enhancing the organization and management of the school. The goal was to achieve all the objectives required by the Department of Education, which would in time provide further avenues of resource development such as the collation of oral histories for the community. This approach to the organization and management of the school enabled the community to adjust to the next phase of the implementation of government policy under the *Tomorrow's Schools* (Lange, 1988) initiative. This phase included the election of a new Board of Trustees and the further development of the administrative base for the school. The new board was regarded as one of the key tools in the reor-

ganization of the administrative structures of the education system and the school.

The role of the Board of Trustees included the opportunity for it to develop and implement programs that would lead to a more responsive environment for learning. Developing a strategic plan to identify the specific priorities of the community within a specified time frame took courage, as the environment was new to the community. During the transition to the new regime, the Board sought advice as required from the old agencies. The community of Motatau, and the school whanau/family in particular, also used networks and technology available at the time to develop new resources for the children. The network was used to channel contributions from former students and teachers of the school. One such was a former teacher who had arrived in the Motatau valley in 1961 to begin his teaching career in the secondary department of the then Motatau District High school. The story of Richard Benton, an acknowledged scholar in the area of Maori language research, and his research at Motatau has been told by the people on the marae ever since. The rapport and the high esteem in which the people held him led him to consider giving back to the people of Motatau.

In 1986 Benton and I undertook the creation of an iwi initiative to link new technology: computer and telecommunication with whanau/family networks. This initiative involved the exchange of information and ideas between a number of parties nationally and internationally. At that time computers and modems were expensive. The school committee raised funds to purchase a computer and software for the school. Fortunately, I had bought the same software and hardware to assist me in the administration of the school. The freedom, space, and opportunity the computer(s) brought to the school within a short time were evident. The Board of Trustees was able to access information and have clear, concise reports generated. Having well-presented reports—which in the past would have taken days or weeks to prepare—that provided informed responses to government agencies and others was the first step toward efficiency in the administration of the school. One of the points taken into consideration for the purchase of the computer was the organization and management of the 75th Jubilee of the school. The drafting of the booklet, advertising, and other such information also saved costs. A key part of the information-gathering was to employ someone from the community who was skilled and experienced in data entry using the software purchased. This person has since gained further employment in the health services area and uses computer technology to give informed advice on the type of care and services available.

To enable a large amount of the information to be accessed and collated a number of parties became involved. We borrowed a telephone modem from one of the farmers in the next valley in order to establish a communi-

cation link from the computer to the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) bilingual network *Te Wahapu*, where Richard Benton worked. The main purpose was to bring to the Board of Trustees, and in particular the community, an example of how their children could benefit from access to other forms of knowledge using information communication technology. As a result of this initiative, Motatau Primary School became the first primary school to communicate with the first bilingual computer network for te reo Maori in New Zealand. Students' stories collated by Benton in 1961 and included in the 75th Jubilee booklet of the school were downloaded from a remote location to Motatau. The community and children were surprised to find that a number of the stories downloaded from 1961 had been written by members of the Board of Trustees.

The ongoing development of new initiatives that encompassed the new status of the school was the signing of the 1988 Matawaia Declaration (Benton, 1988) adopted at Te Hui Reo Rua o Aotearoa ki Matawaia. Two versions of the declaration were adopted: the full text signed at the hui/meeting and that presented to the Minister of Maori Affairs, the Maori Language Commission, and other bodies for their support. Motatau was represented at these hui and played an integral part in bringing the declaration to its present form in the history of Maori education. The declaration focuses on the administration of Maori education and calls for the establishment of an independent Maori education authority as a fully autonomous statutory authority, to establish Maori control and autonomy of Kaupapa Maori/Maori philosophy and education practices from preschool to adult education. This was seen as a priority in addressing the people's dissatisfaction with the lack of commitment and planning by the then Department of Education. In bringing *Tomorrow's Schools* and the Matawaia Declaration together, Benton (1988) noted a number of recommendations that converged. He saw this as an initiative that emerged from the people and as a way for them to take a stand to reconfirm their control of education for their children.

The most significant change in the delivery and administration of primary education involved parents and the community running schools in partnership with teachers. The model presented by Caldwell and Spinks (1988) influenced the change of management style for the school. They claimed that decentralization was administrative rather than political, with decisions at the school level being made within a framework of local, state, or national policies. Resources to schools were defined in broad areas: technology, power, material, people, time, and finance. Responsibility for the administration of primary and secondary schools previously controlled by education boards and the regional offices of the Department of Education were devolved to the boards of trustees of individual schools.

The Constraints and Conditions

The initiatives described above were constrained by other conditions. One such condition was that of communication to the teachers, students, parents and communities. Communication was by meetings held at different locations other than on the community marae. An integral part of circulating the information to the community was to present it in a format and style that they would be able to understand. Much of the information was drafted by government in legislative language and was not user-friendly. As a result, the information was misinterpreted and at times ignored. Also, the quantity of information was at saturation point for the school and the community. For example, newsletters that were circulated were full of jargon that was not easily understood or interpreted by the reader.

The locations where the meetings were held involved traveling long distances, with some being held on days when people were working or during the evenings or weekends, which conflicted with other meetings or hui. Maoridom was involved in a number of other hui that affected availability of time and personnel. These hui revolved around the instigation of the concept of *runanga*, the devolution of the Department of Maori Affairs, the fisheries debate, and Treaty of Waitangi claims. The coordination of these meetings and other demands were not taken into account by the implementers of the new policy.

A further constraint on devolution of responsibility to boards of trustees resulted in increased workloads for teachers and the boards. Moreover, the government devolved the responsibility, but not the power, to the Board of Trustees and the people in general. Devolution has made it difficult for schools to make their way in a climate of economic decline. The workload for teachers and the boards of trustees has increased to such an extent that teaching is no longer regarded as an attractive profession. Government agencies have had to recruit teachers from overseas as the profession does not hold the same attraction as a form of employment or the market position it held in the past.

The government has published curriculum statements for Maori *Putaiiao*/Science, Te Reo Pakeha/English, and other curriculum documents that require large amounts of resourcing to implement, without providing sufficient funds to assist small schools such as Motatau. These documents are only guidelines, not policy documents. This means that the government does not have to provide appropriate resources to ensure implementation of the guidelines. The irony of this is that the Education Review Office is required to assess the Board of Trustees in meeting the National Education Guidelines (NEGs) and National Administrative Guidelines (NAGs). However, within these guidelines are statements that refer to all curriculum statements. Because the guidelines have been pub-

lished officially by the Ministry of Education, all schools are required to include them in the curriculum.

The provision of staffing support continues to be a large financial burden on the school. Professional development courses are run on a regular basis at a cost to the board. This is compounded by the fact that there are no substitutes for the teachers who undertake this professional development. Advisory services are now a cost-related item for the board to facilitate and again, due to insufficient funding support and long distances to travel, can only be undertaken when all other support services to the school are in place.

Time and money spent on attending and hosting hui for the community is a large burden on the community, financially and timewise. Funding for this initiative was not available to the school, which proved to be an inhibiting factor for the community to participate in informed debate on the issue of educational change. They were totally reliant on feedback or reports from the principal, staff, and other members of the community who were able to attend meetings. This matter, along with the identification of key personnel to take up the increased workload, the overall professional development of the staff and board members, were heavy commitments for the community.

Motatau School in the Beginning of the 21st Century

When I revisited this community in 1999, I noted a number of other changes. A total of three principals and upwards of eight teachers had left the area for a number of reasons: retirement, promotion, and natural attrition. However, the problem is not retention, but replacement. The role of the principal and the Board of Trustees, although clearer over the last five years, has not been as effective as described by the Ministry of Education. Insufficient funds and changes to policies such as transport and advisory services again serve to lessen the viability of smaller schools in rural areas. The school has become a focal point of the community, and if it becomes uneconomical, the government policy would be to close it or amalgamate it with other area schools. This would only serve to disempower the people again, which was not the intention of *Tomorrow's Schools*.

In aligning themselves with new technology, the community were open to acquiring it to create a database for recording their histories. The technology has provided a forum for the school to link with schools in the same situation around the world using the Internet and e-mail. The school continues to lead in providing information pertaining to the revitalization of Maori arts and crafts for their tribe. When I was appointed principal of the school, I relied on the advice and support of the school committee and other *kaumatua* and *kuia*/elders to develop initiatives. These initiatives allowed for the ongoing development and implementation of policies created for the school with the specific aim of providing education unique to and for the people of Motatau.

It was evident from the outset of my time in the community that the policy direction of the government did not provide sufficient financial and personnel resources to allow a small rural school to purchase technology needed for the school and its students. Limited resourcing is a key concern to what governments have done to schools and their communities. They have changed the legislation (Education Act, 1989) to devolve the responsibility of governance and management of the schools with a minimum of financial resources, relying on the goodwill of the community to take on what the government had been doing for many years.

An innovative learning environment and a well-rounded type of education unique to and for the children of Motatau has been maintained, but not without a struggle. The school's approach allowed the children to recognize and maintain their *mana tangata*/personal well-being and to know where they were from and whom they represented. Their Maori pride and responsibility to represent Maori language has long historical ties. From Motatau, Tau Henare, the first elected Northern Maori representative for the northern region, confirmed his commitment to his people and their commitment to te reo Maori in his opening address to parliament in 1916:

I may be able to express my ideas in English as well, perhaps, as some members who have spoken on this important bill, but I think it is my duty to recognize that I am a Maori representative, and as such, therefore, I will call for the services of an interpreter. (Henare, 1916)

Ten years on, the hardship for rural schools has not abated. My interviews with members of the community coincided with the Board of Trustees' review of the school's strategic plan. It has been drafted and is being circulated in the community for comment. The issues are still the same and not likely to change.

Administrative issues should be placed in their correct context, which is achievement—a goal for the community. The school is charged with providing the appropriate learning environment for children to succeed. Benton points out that the Picot Report (Department of Education, 1988a) comments on the “aspirations of Maori people” are cause for concern among some parents, teachers, and community members who have been working to revitalize te reo through bilingual and Maori-medium kaupapa Maori education: “It is clear that the revival of the Maori language and culture is seen not as an end in itself, but as the key of lifting the educational performance of Maori children” (pp. 65-67).

There is no evidence that Maori people would wish “educational performance” to be lowered, but neither is there any compelling evidence that the revival of Maori language and culture is seen by Maori people as having anything directly to do with educational performance. Motatau in following the strategic plan is correct in maintaining their dream by implementing the process of changing the status of the school. Initially, this

application was seen by some to be the first of a series of thrusts that the community would put in place to test the parameters suggested by *Tomorrow's Schools*. The process was found to be suspect in that there appeared to be no transparent protocol from a national perspective to implement a change of status for Motatau School. In 1988 Prime Minister David Lange confirmed the change in status. The protocol has since been changed, and boards of trustees can apply to the Ministry of Education using an agreed on set of negotiated guidelines appropriate to their individual situation.

E haere ana tatou kei hea?/Where do we go from here?

Strategies must be developed that will give boards of trustees and principals access to information, training, and networks that will help to develop educational management skills and improve their schools' efficiency and educational processes. This can be done only with further funding support for resources—material and personnel. New technology will assist to a certain extent, but the financial outlay for the school will mean that priorities for the school need to be revisited. In rural communities such as Motatau the financial restraints are more difficult. They do not have the numbers of people in their immediate or extended community to generate the additional funding needed to supplement the operational budget of the school. This is the disadvantage that exists for schools and communities, and the government must be held accountable for it.

Backing into the future is a concept of thinking ahead with the full understanding of the historical journeys we have taken to be where we are now. The struggle is always going to be there for Indigenous people, so let us continue to look toward the future for the next generation and seize it in both arms. The opportunities are unique to the individual and must be nurtured and developed with the intention of creating an environment where people can take matters into their own hands, make their own decisions, and keep moving forward. The Motatau community gave me their trust and support, and this has enabled me to be a part of their creation, which they now own.

"Ko Motatau te maunga, tu te Ao, tu te Po"

"The mountain of Motatau stands in the world of the living and in the world of those who have passed beyond."

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