

TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE RELATIONSHIP

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Ko te kairapu, ko ia te kite

S/he who seeks will find

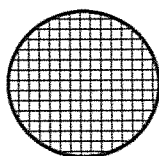
This essay is a summary of my current thinking about working as a Pakeha with Tangata Whenua. Although Te Tiriti o Waitangi provides the foundation for my own work, I have based this essay on a broader premise - that however our concepts of Te Tiriti may vary, we all agree that a sustainable relationship between Tangata Whenua and Pakeha is desirable.¹ It is written primarily for those Pakeha who share my concerns about the status of Tangata Whenua; therefore, it does not include the argument as to why this issue is important.

The concept of "sustainable relationship" is derived from current emphasis on sustainable management of resources, which has been prompted by the Resource Management Act. Unfortunately, the Act specifically restricts itself to consideration of "natural and physical resources"; I would suggest that one of the most important resources in this country is the Tangata Whenua:Pakeha relationship. Since 1840, the government has not managed this resource in a sustainable way; the belated recognition that resources are exhaustible must be applied urgently to the social environment as well.

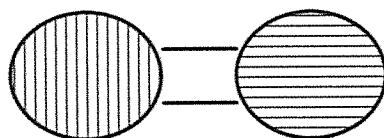
POSSIBLE MODELS

The following diagram is a simplistic representation of some possible relationships between Pakeha and Tangata Whenua in the institutions of our society. The models most frequently are considered in terms of culture, but they apply equally in relation to power². Although there is considerable overlap between the power and the culture components in a relationship, the models are not necessarily the same in both areas (examples below).

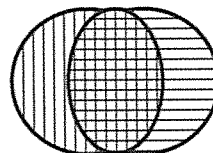
POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIPS



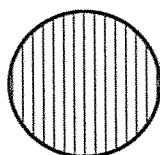
integration



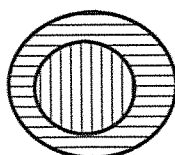
self determination



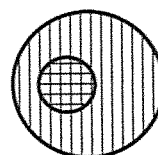
partnership



sovereignty:
assimilation/
domination



sovereignty
with sub-autonomy



sovereignty
with some hybrid

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Integration is when two distinct components are brought together to create a different whole. In terms of power, it means both parties are involved in all aspects of institutional decision-making. In terms of the cultures, the outcome is mono-cultural, but the underlying value base is a hybrid of the two different groups' cultures - it has aspects of each but is not the same as either. This option would reduce the stress that often arises from working cross-culturally but would not allow for much diversity. In theory, it is appealing to all those who feel that we are "one people" first and that the cultural differences are relatively minor. In my experience, though, the proponents are those who expect others to become more like themselves but are not willing to share power or fundamentally change their own ways of doing things in order to create a hybrid (i.e., they really want assimilation with their own group dominant).

Self-determination, sometimes referred to as separatism,³ is when each group has authority over its own group, but not over any other group. It is possible for a group which is dominant politically to leave space for at least some cultural self-determination for other groups, but for a group to be fully self-determining culturally it must have political self-determination as well. Some people consider political and cultural self-determination to have been the expectation of Tangata Whenua who signed Te Tiriti, but many Pakeha are uncomfortable with the notion that Tangata Whenua would want to be separate.

Partnership is a combination of some integration and some self-determination; for many people, this model seems to capture the best of both worlds. Negotiation is usually involved in deciding which aspects of the relationship will be integrated and which autonomous. Partnership may apply in the political and/or cultural arenas. When it includes sharing power, it is usually assumed to be in the ratio of 50:50, but this isn't inherent in the definition. Te Tiriti is often described as a contract for partnership, though no comparable word is in the document. In many respects, there are parallels with business and domestic partnerships.

Sovereignty, in this essay, means having ultimate power in relation to other groups.⁴ Its exercise may or may not accommodate difference; the latter includes domination and/or assimilation. Domination is when the dominant group holds power over another group. Assimilation is the mono-cultural outcome when one group's culture disappears as its members adopt the culture of the dominant group; this may occur voluntarily (e.g., with some immigrant groups) or be imposed by the dominant group (as in the case of educational policy in New Zealand - see below). In both domination and assimilation, the value base underlying institutional decision-making is that of the dominant group.

Where difference is tolerated by the group with sovereignty, there may be areas of sub-autonomy by the other group and/or hybrid situations. Sub-autonomy is delegation of specified power and/or allocation of space within which another culture may operate. Hybrid situations are comparable to having integration on a small scale. Neither situation alters the fundamental structure of power in which the dominant group is still in control of deciding what and how much to do and can rescind its decisions. Tangata Whenua sovereignty is a total reversal of the current situation, but it can be read as the literal interpretation of Article Two of the Maori Text of Te Tiriti.

Of course, there are several models which I haven't included and even more variations on the ones I have. For example, in partnership, the area of overlap could be substantially larger or smaller. In self-determination, there could be a third circle for those who don't choose to affiliate with either Tangata Whenua or Pakeha. The integration model could have two small circles within it in which each group could retain some of its distinctive character.

¹ I have restricted myself to the Pakeha:Tangata Whenua relationship because of the shortness of the essay and because this is the basis of most of my experience. I do feel, however, that other tauwiwi will need to explore their own relationships with Tangata Whenua; hopefully, some points in this essay will be useful.

² By "power", I mean "control of choices" - in one's own life and in the lives of others.

³ Some people mistakenly confuse this with apartheid, but, in that situation, the dominant group retains power and imposes cultural separation.

⁴ I am using the term "self-determination" for the situation where a group has ultimate authority over itself only; sometimes "sovereignty" is used by others to refer to what I have called "self-determination".