

What is Culture? What is Pakeha Culture? What is Maori Culture?

Everyone has a culture. It is all around us it is the 'normal' way we do and see things. It is based on the past yet it is always changing to meet present and future needs. Culture is caught more than it is taught. We are born into rather than with it. It is something we always take for granted for it is the way we speak, the way we make decisions, the way we make and get along with our friends to the way we structure our society. It is the way we bring up our children to the way we look after and bury our dead. In short it is the way we do things. Often it is not until we come face to face with the essential differences of another culture or help someone come to understand our 'normal' way of doing things that we recognise and appreciate what makes us different. Certain universals are common to all cultures but the different ways of expressing and viewing that universal make up the unique character of each culture which is at the heart of its identity, its essence, its soul.

Cultures are often in conflict. People of one culture often generalise about another usually by picking on one particular characteristic and making a negative judgement from it on all who come or are of that culture. Often this conflict arises from our own insecurity about our own culture. Most of us need to first understand and affirm our own cultural base so as to then be able to appreciate and respect the culture of another.

When one culture dominates a particular setting or country other cultures are often seen as inferior to the 'normal' ways and if members of that minor culture are not strong in their own identity and culture they in turn tend to view themselves as inferior to others.

An Outline of My Week-Long Bicultural Courses

Mike Lander

Key note Address

1. What is Really happening in Our Schools Today - A Maori Perspective
2. A Historical Overview of Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand and a look at Post Pakeha - Maori Relations
3. A Closer look at 'Culture' including our thoughts on What is Pakeha Culture and Maori Culture?
4. Racism in Aotearoa/New Zealand  
What is Racism? - Prejudice? - Fence Sitting?  
Sharing our own upbringing and misconceptions.

5. A deeper look at the Culture of Te Tangata Whenua, Biculturalism and the importance of Te Reo.
6. Bilingualism in our communities and Schools.
7. The Waitangi Tribunal - the hope of true New Zealanders.
8. Proven strategies and answers for red-necked Staff and Parents.
9. Filling our own baskets with an Introduction to Te Reo Useful Classroom Practices and Resources.
10. A plan for the Future
  - (i) For each of us
  - (ii) For our school
  - (iii) For our Community
  - (iv) For our New Zealand

### Pakeha Culture

Pakeha culture is the dominant culture of Aotearoa New Zealand. It has many similarities to its heritage cultures in Western Europe but is distinctively peculiar to this land and its people. The majority of our Homes and /schools work vigourously to promote our dominant culture and hence advantage those of that culture often at the expense of those from other cultural backgrounds, especially those that are seen to have a lower status to the Pakeha culture.

Every New Zealander is expected to be able to walk and work comfortably in the Pakeha Culture, it is open to all because it is seen as The Culture.

### Maori Culture

Maori culture is the culture of the Tangata Whenua of Aotearoa - New Zealand, the first people to settle in this land. It is general to all Maori people yet is characterised by its tribal and regional differences.

In the main Maori culture is only superficially open to most Pakeha and non Maori but is expected by all to be caught by all Maori. Maori culture and history are all around us.

In recognising our dual heritage we need not only to recognise the Maori as the Tangata Whenua but also that Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the foundation of our nationhood together, equal in status, living, working and in the future walking together, in and out of both of our cultures.

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# An Outline of My Week-long Bicultural Courses Mike Landers

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- 9) Filling our own baskets with an Introduction to Te Reo Useful Classroom Practices - resource
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  - (iv) For our new Whanau.

## BICULTURALISM SHOULD BE OUR AIM

By establishing this as our goal we need to make it clear that we are not trying to undermine tri- or multicultural initiatives. New Zealanders from Asia, Europe, the Pacific Islands etc. must uphold their own heritage culture and we as individuals and as a Nation, need to recognise and honour this fact and this quality that other cultures bring to enrich our nationhood. In one respect those New Zealanders with another heritage culture are already bicultural, but often not in the way I wish to address this topic. They are bicultural in their own and in Pakeha culture which is absolutely necessary for them to exist and 'make it' in this land of Aotearoa.

The unfortunate thing is that these recent immigrants come to our shores ignorant of the fact that there is another culture indigenous to this land that is crying out for recognition and fulfilment. Unfortunately everything they see, every institution they come into contact with, our total New Zealand way of life gives them the distinct impression that Pakeha Culture is the only culture of New Zealand. It is not until they have been here for a while that their eyes are opened and by then they have often gained the biased, negative attitude, of the majority towards that culture.

Sir Paul Reeves at Waitangi '89 pleaded with all New Zealanders to become more fully aware of our post-1840 history. Much re-writing of the books has been done in recent years in the light of seeing our history through both eyes, researching factual documents and, with distance in time, being able to view things a little more objectively.

Rediscovering the truth of our history will make most of us angry, perhaps bitter at the half truths and outright lies forced upon us by the diet previously administered to us. We become defensive and cling to myths that may support our prejudice and ignorance. We cast the blame in other directions and for a start this is perfectly natural - its not until we think and start talking about these past events with others do we dog paddle through the murky waters and start to feel a collective responsibility to try and rectify and put right in our own mind our misconceptions and that's where we must start. Then we come to an understanding of why one people are so advantaged today at the expense of another, our indigenous race.

Some people indulge in a type of collective and personal guilt but this soon turns to owning the present not the past. What can we do today to try and swing the pendulum back to the centre?

The first thing is to deal with ourselves - not cast blame and accusations on our forebears, our earlier politicians and the Maori for letting it happen because all of this is unproductive. We cannot change the past - we can learn more about it but we cannot alter it.

History, however, is alive and happening now and what we can change is ourselves and perhaps influence those around us.

As teachers we are seen to be enlightened people. We are the professional ones, we know how kids learn and we know what's best for them. But how enlightened are we about our real history? Do we carry a baggage of half-truths and prejudice on our shoulders and does this baggage influence our teaching? Of course it must. Ask any child Pakeha or Maori how a particular person/teacher feels about Maori children - they know, it shows, we cannot help but show it. Some try to put on a mask, but kids, especially Polynesian children can read us often more clearly than we can read ourselves.

That's why I say we need to start with ourselves and we need to be honest and bounce ideas off others, share our feelings and be prepared to listen and change in the light of deeper thinking and a more correct, truthful account of our past and present.

In talking with a group of English immigrants about our schools and the 'real' problems regarding relationships, one asked 'did I find Maori children a problem. What would be your answer? How does that question strike you - where does the real problem lie?

I have been in that situation many times and all the rhetoric in the world may only gain a superficial understanding, but really, they don't understand. It's not until one can draw on an experience that is familiar to them, that draws on an emotional, heartfelt previous experience of theirs do they perhaps begin to understand the enormous problem we are faced with today.

I asked this parent and the others if they had an experience where they or their children felt discriminated against - put down and consequently expected little from. The examples came thick and fast - all they had to do in Kiwiland was open their mouths and out came our prejudice towards "poms". Their kids had been thumped, put down, run away from schools and home. Sure they had experienced it at first but in the main they had been able to rise above it as they 'proved' themselves, as they became more 'kiwi' in speech and interests, acceptance was not far away.

Let's focus on the time that they were being kicked and put down. How did they feel? - did they have a sense of worthlessness, were they depressed, lacking in spirit and self worth? How did they react and what did they have going for them that eventually helped them rise up from the ashes.

Suddenly what I had been saying before began to make real sense. Suddenly their understanding of the problem took on a richer glow. They had their white skin and their very similar but very high status culture - high status in other people's eyes as well as their own to bounce back quickly but what if they had been kept down for a few years - a decade - a generation.

What if they had been undermined and discriminated against for One Hundred and Fifty years and this in their own country! Perhaps armed with this knowledge we can see why the radicals are gathering in number, in outrageous statements and actions.

Perhaps armed with this understanding we can see why we have those who opt out of our society and form their own.

Maori people have great hope in the findings of the Waitangi Tribunal. As a New Zealand teacher - do you? What special efforts are you and your school going to make as a lead up to celebrating our One Hundred and Fifty years of nationhood?

~~Reasons of Policy of Pake Maori?~~

How about trying to find out why people are saying biculturalism before multiculturalism?

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