Nga Haerenga o Le Laumei: Pathways to cultural protection through language preservation

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He toeaina i te mulivaka.
An elder to sit at the canoe's stern.

Abstract

The above group of ethnically diverse, third-year community development students from Massey University, Aotearoa New Zealand connected through a shared interest in the well-being of Maori and Pasifika peoples in Oceania. They identified the critical importance of preserving indigenous languages as a vehicle for maintaining cultural heritage and linguistic rights. Diasporic Pacific populations experience vulnerability in maintaining cultural heritage. One of the fundamental elements in retaining cultural heritage is the preservation of indigenous languages. This paper was presented at the Social Policy, Social Welfare Systems and Human Security in the Pacific Conference held at the University of South Pacific, 5th-7th October 2010. It explores a structural analysis and 'development from below' process which identified a unifying metaphor as a powerful tool to assist social change around the preservation of indigenous languages. Rather than employing a hegemonic view on the status of indigenous languages, this paper offers solutions from a Pasifika perspective formed within a post-modern New Zealand context. This framework and the process that the students undertook offer a valuable contribution to social and cultural protection and human security policy development as it pertains to language preservation within Oceania. Other social change groups may find this process and the tool/metaphor useful for their work.

Ko toku reo, toku ohooho
Ko toku reo, toku mapihi maurea.
My language is my awakening
My language is the window to my soul.

Introduction

This paper highlights a journey of a group of community development students who were part of a third-year social work programme at Massey University, Aotearoa New Zealand. Developed from a major assignment that the students completed together as part of their community development studies, the paper follows the process of structural analysis outlined by Munford & Walsh-Tapiata (2001). Examples highlight how the process of structural analysis informed the journey that this Maori and Pasifika community development group

took towards achieving social change in an important aspect of wellbeing for Maori and Pasifika peoples – namely the preservation of their indigenous languages. This article concludes by illustrating how 'Le Laumei' has and could be used as a tool to facilitate change around this and other community development issues.

Structural analysis

Structural analysis is a framework and process to achieve social change (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001). Brandt (1989) refers to it as a process of 'naming the moment' in identifying social, economic, political and cultural forces in order to develop strategies for change. The four stages of structural analysis are: Locating Ourselves; Naming the Issue; Analysing the Issue; and Strategies for Change (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001). In addition, structural analysis utilises key principles such as linking personal troubles with public issues; self determination; working collectively; and establishing a vision for change.

Identifying and acknowledging existing power relations and engaging in action-reflection are fundamental to the process of structural analysis (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001). In Aotearoa New Zealand, it is expected that the principles and spirit of the Treaty of Waitangi will also be reflected in the process and outcomes of the work undertaken (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001, p.12).

So how does a group of diverse individuals, from different disciplines of study, with a shared interest in the wellbeing of Maori and Pasifika peoples in Oceania work successfully together?

Group processes

The group process started with the establishment of ground rules for the group and discussions around conflict resolution (Community Resource Kit, 2006). The importance of forming a group contract and a strategy for dealing with group conflict is seen as essential to establishing a solid foundation for the journey ahead (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001). It was understood that conflict is inevitable given that members are from different cultures, backgrounds and disciplines (Kenny, 2006).

Two types of possible conflicts were identified. The first of these was personal conflict which could occur if personalities clashed and caused 'rifts' in the group, potentially 'stalling' progress. The second conflict was identified as a general conflict arising from disagreements over uncertainty about the direction and 'pace' of the group process. It was decided that time would be allocated at each group meeting to 'recap' and discuss any issues and reflections from previous meetings. This was also an attempt to further integrate the principle of 'action reflection' consistently throughout the group process considered by Munford & Walsh-Tapiata (2001) to be a fundamental aspect of the structural analysis process.

Utilising the work of Kenny (2006), the Community Resource Kit (2006) and Massey University Counselling Services MUCS (2010), the group decided to *collectively* resolve conflicts except for personal grievance, where the individuals concerned would meet outside group time to resolve the matter. It was agreed that non-resolution of personal grievance could be brought to the group.

The location of the venue for the conflict resolution meetings was considered significant in terms of power dynamics as it had to be a neutral venue where individuals would not feel pressured or disadvantaged when participating in the conflict resolution process (MUCS, 2010). Furthermore, the location had to encourage and not hinder the full attention of those involved in order for them to focus on resolving the conflict at hand (MUCS, 2010).

Following are some of the ground rules taken from MUCS (2010) and adopted by the Maori and Pasifika Focus Group specifically for conflict resolution:

1.   We agree on ground rules.
2.   I talk – you listen.
3.   You tell me what you heard.
4.   We agree about what I said.
5.   You talk – I listen.
6.   I tell you what I heard.
7.   We agree about what you said.
8.   We have identified the problem.
9.   We both suggest solutions.
10.   We agree on a solution.
(MUCS, 2010).

In addition, the group collectively developed ground rules based on the guidelines below which included but were not limited to:

• Use 'I' statements to warrant individual ownership and minimise feelings of blame.
• Respect different worldviews presented.
• Confidentiality is paramount.
• Equal regard and time given to all individuals to limit monopolising.
• Rotating the roles of facilitator, recorder and observer for each session.

These guidelines proved important in practice for our group, as they provided us with a tool to work through issues as they arose. Using these rules provided a strong foundation for building on because it enabled the group members to feel safe, and be open and honest about what was needed to be spoken about, while respecting those who were speaking. The group did not experience much conflict, and believe that this was due to putting time and effort into pre-empting this via the planning process (Community Resource Kit, 2006).

Through utilising the skills outlined in the process, the group was able to effectively avoid significant conflict, and felt safe in the knowledge that if something did arise, the tools and guidelines were in place to deal with it.

Group members agreed that the time dedicated to the establishment of trusting and respectful relationships (whakawhanaungatanga) significantly contributed to minimising personal issues and provided a 'sound' framework to resolve conflicts associated with the group process itself. This was achieved via social meetings at a café where members built a rapport and made connections with one another as individuals who were all interested in the wellbeing of Maori and Pasifika.

The Maori and Pasifika Group used 'Six Degrees of Separation' as a tool to identify the connections between the members. The six degrees of separation process involved identify-

ing commonalities between the members which enabled them to connect with one another. For instance, two members were born and raised in Christchurch, another two worked alongside people with disabilities and others attended the same high school. Identifying these commonalities established a connection between the members which was an important part in beginning the work together. This is a vital part of the 'locating ourselves' stage of the structural analysis process (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001).
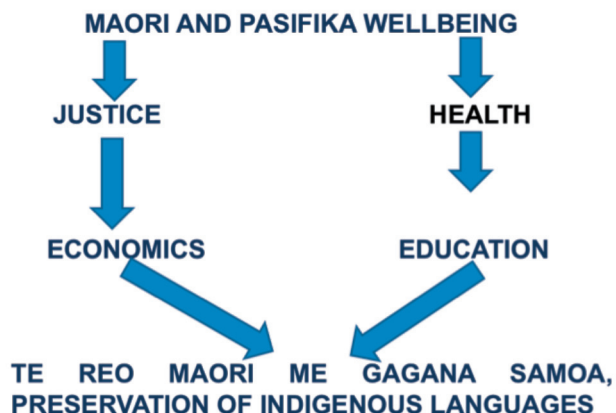
Figure one.

Locating ourselves

Following the process of six degrees of separation, the group had to locate themselves to the global issue of Maori and Pasifika wellbeing. Analyses of power relations are critical in structural analysis, beginning with an analysis of our own positionality (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001). Of Maori and Pasifika descent, four of the group had a personal attachment to Maori and Pasifika wellbeing, and were thus deemed to be 'of' the issue (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001). The indigenous Zambian group member was considered 'with' the issue in terms of experiencing indigenous issues in a colonised country. The two Pakeha members of the group had an interest in learning more about Maori and Pasifika wellbeing, and believed that getting involved in this project and seeing it as a global issue was a great place to start and learn.

In addition, the group decided to create a symbol that would represent the two cultures which were the main focus of this community development group whilst also incorporating the individual members. 'Le Laumei' was chosen as a symbol to represent the Maori/Pasifika group because of the significance of the turtle to indigenous communities in the Pacific, as an endangered species that requires protection. Hence, Le Laumei displayed in figure two. Le Laumei signified the group's own journey, coming together from different cultures and working on the global issue of Maori and Pasifika wellbeing. Collectively, the group felt very strong and proud to have this as their unifying symbol.

4. NAMING THE ISSUE

MAORI AND PASIFIKA WELLBEING

JUSTICE   **HEALTH**

ECONOMICS   **EDUCATION**

TE REO MAORI ME GAGANA SAMOA, PRESERVATION OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Naming the issue

After these connections and relationships were established, the Maori and Pasifika wellbeing group moved into the next phase of the structural analysis process – 'naming the issue', where the group spends time refining their focus (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001). Naming the issue started with a global concern around Maori and Pasifika wellbeing. A brainstorm-type web chart (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001, p.43) helped refine the project topic from general wellbeing topics such as justice and health, toward identifying the preservation of indigenous languages as the core focus issue for social change.

Furthermore, the group decided to narrow the issue further by focusing on Te Reo Maori/Maori language and Gagana Samoa/Samoan language in the Highbury community in Palmerston North in an attempt to identify the level where the focus for change would be pitched (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001, p.42). They chose this area, because members of the group and a large proportion of Maori and Pasifika people currently live in Highbury.

This process is highlighted in figure three.

Tools of the trade – consciousness raising

After the issue of indigenous language was chosen, the group utilised a 'clapping exercise' adapted from a standard Samoan cultural performance practice as a tool to highlight the importance of the issue of indigenous languages for the wellbeing of Maori and Pasifika peoples. A Samoan group member taught the group and then the class several forms of clapping used by Samoans in their cultural performances. The group learned the claps and were taught which ones correspond with certain instructions. The Samoan group member would call out the instructions in the Samoan language and the group would respond by

clapping their hands together once, twice or three times according to the instructions from the member. The claps produced a rhythm.

Figure three.

Le Laumei

Sea Turtle:
Symbolizing the voyager, is made of Maori and Samoan inspired motifs.

Inner Triple Twist Design:
Maori symbol that represents the meeting of two different cultures.

Stylized Shark Teeth:
Symbolize Strength and Adaptability.

Frangipanis:
Representing Shelter and Protection.

Everyone in the class was invited to stand and join the Maori/Pasifika group because they could observe and imitate the group members. The audience participated in the activity by watching and imitating the Maori/Pasifika members. The activity was repeated three times to enable participants to capture the vision (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001, p.14).

The audience were invited to share their feelings after participating in the 'clapping' activity. Most were confused because they could not understand the Samoan language even though they participated in the activity by observing and imitating the group members. Others felt quite powerless and lost despite being able to imitate the Maori/Pasifika group members.

The group used this exercise to demonstrate how Maori and some New Zealand-born Pasifika people feel within their own communities. These individuals may participate in cultural activities but are not able to fully engage and take ownership of their cultural identity if they cannot speak their mother tongue (Durie, 2003). They may imitate their family members and others in their communities but will feel confused, lost and powerless due to the language barrier. Durie (2003) attests to the importance of a positive self image and cultural identity for the wellbeing of indigenous peoples, specifically Maori.

Analysing the issue using role play, historical timeline and community profiling

Once the focus for change has been determined, 'analysing the issue' (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001) becomes the priority so that strategies for change can then be identified.

In this instance a role play performed by two members of the Maori/Pasifika group was used to analyse the preservation of Te Reo Maori and Gagana Samoa in Highbury. It was adapted from the Laughing Samoans highlighting the language barrier between a New Zealand-born Samoan boy and his Samoan-born cousin who had recently migrated to live in Aotearoa New Zealand (Laughing Samoans, 2008).

The role play allowed the group to see how easy it is for those who are not fluent in their native tongue to unintentionally marginalise or oppress those who do speak Te Reo Maori or Gagana Samoa. Just as there are Maori and Samoans who speak only English, and may become the oppressors toward their own people, the reverse can also be true, where those who speak Te Reo Maori or Gagana Samoa can also become the oppressors.

This role play also highlighted how the migration of Samoans to New Zealand, and the colonisation of Maori in New Zealand, has resulted, and is continuing to result, in a transformation from the importance of their own language, to the hegemonic view that the English language is superior.

Historical timeline

Historical timelines can be used as a tool in structural analysis to identify social, economic, political and cultural forces that may enable or constrain change.

Prior to European contact, Te Reo, the indigenous language of Aotearoa, was spoken by every-one. Following European settlement, law and order issues posed a threat to Maori. The British and French were keen to establish sovereignty in Aotearoa New Zealand (Walker, 1990).

In 1840, *The Treaty of Waitangi* was signed between some Maori chiefs and the British Crown. This promised, among other things, the protection of things sacred to Maori. For Maori this included their language (Orange, 2004).

Colonisation commenced as large volumes of European settlers arrived. Within 20 years of the Treaty of Waitangi being signed, the settler population outstripped that of Maori. In 1867, the Native Schools Act decreed that English should be the only language used in the education of Maori children (Orange, 2004).

Mass migration, urbanisation and assimilation
From the 1930s to 1970s, the traditional social democratic approach to social policy deliv-ered comprehensive welfare policies. These were focused on creating a utopian society through the provision of free education, health care, housing and universal family benefits. All of these could be seen as tools of hegemony (Cheyne, O'Brien & Belgrave, 2005). This is reflected through a number of different government initiatives. For example, during what's commonly referred to as the Nanny State era, the expansion of the Welfare State saw the large migration of Pacific peoples to New Zealand. This was at the request of the Government for semi and unskilled labourers to work the demands of the manufacturing industries. At the same time, there was mass urbanisation and assimilation of Maori. Both of these events reinforced the hegemonic view that indigenous language and culture had no place in modern New Zealand.

Advocacy groups

These years set the platform for the political awakening of Maori advocacy. Groups such as Nga Tamatoa, and Nga Whakapumau i te Reo Maori challenged the hegemonic consciousness experienced by Maori at the time.

Kohanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa

Two of the most significant events that emerged from this were the birth of Kohanga Reo in 1982, followed by Kura Kaupapa in 1987, Maori language pre-schools and schools. In 1987 Maori was declared an official language alongside English (Cheyne et al., 2005).

Language Nests

Among other things, Pasifika communities have traditionally shared with Maori: low socio-economic status, poor health outcomes and the threat of language loss. As such, government policies aimed at 'bridging the gap' between Maori and Palagi/kaivalagi included Pasifika populations in Aotearoa New Zealand as well. For instance, Pasifika communities across New Zealand took advantage of the success of the Kohanga Reo by adopting this framework and applying it in a way that was relevant and sustainable for them to develop Language Nests (Durie, 2003; Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001).

By Maori for Maori

These events coincided with the economic reforms of the 1980s and 1990s. Neo-liberal governments engaged in contractualism, and capitalised on Maori calls for a 'by Maori for Maori' approach to the policymaking process. Tino Rangatiratanga, or sovereignty had been guaranteed to Maori under the provisions of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840. Maori asked for more autonomy to define wellbeing and how to best achieve this for themselves. The National Government was only too happy to 'sit on its hands' because it reduced government spending in the public sector and generated competition among social services. This 'fitted' well with their market-based approach to social policy (Cheyne, et al., 2005).

Maori Television Act

A current policy area seen to be progressing language preservation and indigenous wellbeing is the implementation of the Maori Television Service Act 2003. This enabled Maori Television in 2004 which transmitted Te Reo Maori into the living rooms of the New Zealand public. This (to an extent) is enabling the naturalisation of Te Reo Maori into the everyday lives of all New Zealanders.

National Standards in Education

However, the current Government's imposition of national assessment standards in numeracy and literacy education has met with widespread opposition. These standards put children's needs to the periphery and foreground compartmentalised education over what is deemed best for children. National Standards do not reflect a Maori or Pasifika worldview and therefore are once again an 'assessment tool' that marginalises Maori and Pasifika learners within our education system (Standards 'will not drive Maori education', 2010; Onside National Standards, 2011)

21st Century

So what of the future of language development? Of the approximately 6,000 languages still remaining in the world, research shows that within 100 years more than 50% will have disappeared. 'Language is the cornerstone of culture. For us to hold onto our culture we need

to hold onto language as the centrepiece of that culture,' (Mataamua, 2010). If the culture and language is to survive, getting more people to speak Te Reo Maori and Gagana Samoa in the home is crucial.

The timeline helped to highlight the complexities associated with seeking to preserve indigenous language in Aotearoa New Zealand which was useful as we turned our focus to the Highbury community in Palmerston North.

Community profile as a structural analysis tool

Community profiles have an important use in structural analysis in providing valuable information as to the local context (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2006). Through community profiling (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001, p.49-52), we found that there were a number of established community development language initiatives within the Highbury community, e.g., services such as Wananga, Rumaki Reo, Kohanga Reo, Language Nests and Samoan Church initiatives. These are currently aiding the development of Te Reo Maori and Gagana Samoa.

However, as the role play demonstrated, it appears that current issues around language preservation may rest closer to home. Leonard (1977) and Lane (1999), cited in Munford & Walsh-Tapiata (2001, p.31) highlight how the points of resistance within communities need to be harnessed in order to become transformative. As the journey progressed, it was obvious that the group first has to overcome the politics of resistance in play within Maori and Pasifika communities and that strategies for change had to build on the transformation of existing power relations. This included, for instance, working alongside the opposing interests in Whakapiki te Reo Maori me Gagana Samoa ki Highbury, the people within the Maori and Samoan communities, and working with the existing structures that are already in place.

Strategies for change

Once the analysis is complete the task becomes one of identifying where to from here in regards to achieving the desired vision of the group (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001). Building alliances, identifying barriers to change and identifying free space (Barndt, 1989) are some of the possible tasks during this phase of the structural analysis. Members of the Maori and Pasifika wellbeing group discussed how they could achieve and maintain social change for their chosen issue within their own Maori and Samoan communities. They recognised the importance of using the knowledge, skills and resources they already had and thus decided to use their unifying symbol, Le Laumei, as the tool to bring about change for their issue at a local, national and international level.

In deciding to utilise Le Laumei as a tool to build strategies for change, the head of the turtle was chosen to represent the group vision, the shell of the turtle comprising 13 shell pieces symbolised short-term goals and the turtle's flippers signified long-term strategies.

Le Laumei as a tool for change

The *head of the turtle* represents the group's vision. Whilst constructing strategies for change, the head of the turtle or the vision, was significant in terms of refocusing, motivating and

inspiring the group when they were fatigued. The head of the turtle (or vision) informs the short-term goals which are represented by the 13 pieces of the turtle's shell.

The *shell of the turtle* also protects the body of the turtle and is very close to the turtle's head, symbolising the immediacy of short-term goals. The *skin on the shell* of the turtle peels as the turtle ages; this demonstrates the importance of adjusting and adapting short-term goals to address the changing social, cultural, economic and political dynamics within society. Out of the body and shell of the turtle emerge the *flippers* which represent the long-term strategies. The flippers/long-term strategies propel the turtle forward signifying progress and a 'future focus'. Moreover, the turtle *lives for an average of 130-150 years*. This symbolises sustainability and ongoing development, crucial for the preservation and maintenance of Te Reo and Gagana Samoa for the group and an essential aspect of community development (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001).

To date this presentation has been used with four groups: Maori and Pasifika wellbeing group, the 2010 Community Development class at Massey, staff from the School of Health and Social Services at Massey and by the participants of the Social Policy, Social Welfare and Human Security Conference. Each group came up with distinct yet similar goals. This comparison can be seen in the three examples below.

Le Laumei: Maori and Pasifika Community Development focus group

Figure four.
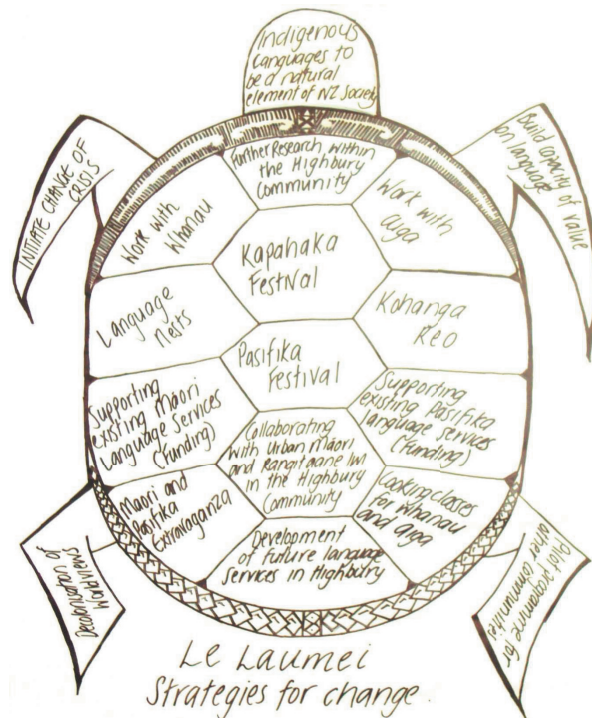
The Community Development class Laumei

Vision: Indigenous languages to be a natural element of New Society.

Short-term goals:
1. Maori and Pasifika language days in primary schools.
2. Creating more networks between organisations so they are working together around this issue.
3. Set up playgroups for mothers and young children, teaching basic Te Reo and Gagana Samoa for everyday use.
4. Advocating for and supporting Kapahaka and Samoan groups in schools to support culture and language.
5. Use music, songs, poems, and food, karakia/tatalo/blessing of the food and prayer during community gatherings to break down everyday barriers to the use of Te Reo Maori and Gagana Samoa.
6. A celebration of culture and language within the community to acknowledge diversity.
7. Adult language community classes.
8. Having all languages within the community accessible for learning to all members of the community including non-Maori and non-Samoans.
9. Community event held in Highbury to raise awareness of the different languages.
10. Involve parents and elders in local schools and clubs in initiatives observing role plays like the one shown in the workshop.
11. Organising coffee mornings where indigenous language is spoken.
12. Offer workshops to exchange students, showcasing common expressions and meanings of basic words.
13. Organise a Maori and Samoan language awareness day in the community.

Long-term strategies:
1. Youth development of language involving whanau.
2. Create understanding between New Zealand born and Samoan born to foster a combined awareness and vision for the issue.
3. Establish multi-cultural and language centre to provide classes run by kaumatua/elders who are experts in Te Reo and Gagana Samoa.
4. Building or converting community halls to be utilised as a place where Maori and Samoan communities can run programmes to maintain their languages and giving them the resources to do this for themselves.

The strategies suggested represented a response to the nuances that were apparent in our particular community. It was essential that these were understood as we embarked on the next chapter in our change journey.

Le Laumei as a tool used by attendees of the Social Policy, Social Welfare and Human Security Conference in Suva Fiji

Vision: Preservation and maintenance of indigenous languages.

Short-term goals:
1. All children to be given the opportunity to take language lessons/identify and establish facilities and run programmes.
2. Conduct competitions at various levels of education using indigenous Fijian dialects in

oratory contests, debates, drama, plays and essays.

3. Mindset change in the homes of Pasifika peoples combined with policies aimed at understanding the value of bilingualism within Pacific nations.
4. Essay competitions in primary schools/ singing competitions for string bands and promote the daily use of indigenous languages in the home.
5. Make indigenous language compulsory in every primary school in the Pasifika region.
6. Incorporate indigenous language into the syllabus at the early childhood education level.
7. Children to write essays at least twice a week in their indigenous language about any aspect of their indigenous culture; stick notes in indigenous language on fridges at home for family members.
8. Media exposure of indigenous languages both oral and written.
9. Promote and encourage the use of indigenous languages in social gatherings not just in traditional ceremonies.
10. Establish cultural centres to promote cultural and traditional exchange programmes in the Pacific.
11. More use of indigenous language on television such as in children's programmes and songs for both adults and children.
12. Build capacity of value on indigenous languages in primary schools.

Long-term strategies:
1. Include indigenous languages in the curriculum from pre-school and involve the elders in the design and teaching of lessons.
2. Include indigenous languages in NCEA levels.
3. That grandchildren and great-grandchildren will grow up in a Maori-speaking society.
4. All indigenous peoples will feel the need to speak their indigenous languages and be supported to do so.

Participants at the above conference were representatives of many diverse islands in the Pacific. Hence the wide-ranging short- and long-term strategies illustrated reflect the multiple issues surrounding the preservation of the indigenous language as seen by each of those participants.

Using Le Laumei – how it continues as a long-distance swimmer!!

An outline of Le Laumei is placed in front of the group with the agreed vision written in the turtle's head. Pieces of paper/ card that correspond with the shapes of the turtle's shell pieces and flippers are given out to the group participants for them to propose suggestions for the short- and long-term goals. These are then discussed, refined and prioritised to form the basis for group action.

While there may be considerable debate about which goals are long term and which are short term, Le Laumei proved to be a living metaphor to encourage all group participants to contribute and discuss their ideas to work for change.

As a community development tool Le Laumei encourages community workers to 'own' the issue and the steps taken to achieve sustainable change. Moreover, it allows for a 'bottom-up' community development approach because it provides the opportunity for com-

munity members to participate in the process of structural analysis. Communities have their own organic intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971) and their participation ensures that social change in any area is both achievable and sustainable (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001). It is our hope that Le Laumei will continue to swim and thrive in the islands and waters that make up Oceania and that others too will find it a useful tool to use with groups as they work for sustainable change within their communities.

Epilogue: The work, portfolio and presentation by the Maori and Pasifika wellbeing group was considered of such significance and calibre that it was believed it demanded a wider audience. Students had been challenged to develop indigenous tools to extend the repertoire and relevance of what was being offered in the course. This group of students responded to this challenge in their use of Le Laumei. When abstracts were called for the Social Policy, Social Welfare Systems and Human Security in the Pacific conference the students were encouraged to submit. The acceptance of their abstract brought with it the challenge of funding undergraduate students to attend an international conference. Scholarship funds from the Extramural Students Services, Highbury Community Scholarship Board, the Purehuroa Award and private funding enabled three of the students to attend and present. Immense gratitude is extended to the funders and all those who worked so hard to enable this opportunity to happen.

> Ehara taku toa, he taki tahi, he toa taki tini.
> Success should not be bestowed onto me alone, as it was not individual success but success of a collective.

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