

# Pūao-te-Ata-tū and Dissenting Voices of Change at New Zealand's Oldest School of Social Work

Tāmami Cairns and Leon Fulcher

## ABSTRACT

**INTRODUCTION:** The Ministerial Advisory Committee Report on a Māori Perspective for the New Zealand Department of Social Welfare (1986) offers an historic reference point from which to examine education and training reforms initiated at Aotearoa New Zealand's oldest school of social work and designed to better address the needs and aspirations of Māori and those working with Māori. Pūao-te-Ata-tū is an internationally unique example of social research facilitated by distinguished Māori leaders and senior government officials using indigenous methods. The Vice Chancellor of Victoria University was approached in 1986 along with its new Professor of Social Work about becoming drivers of Pūao-te-Ata-tū Recommendation 10(c) to "assess the extent to which tertiary social work courses are meeting cultural needs for those public servants seconded as students to the courses". The early passing of alumnus-Elder John Rangihau, shortly after Pūao-te-Ata-tū was published, left a legacy—acknowledged posthumously by the Council of Victoria University in 1989—when a senior Te Rangihau Scholar teaching and research position was established with Ngāi Tūhoe. A decade of reform in social work education and research at Victoria University saw important movement towards supporting and promoting Māori perspectives in the delivery of community social services in three New Zealand regions.

**IMPLICATIONS:** Five lessons learned about partnerships from the Victoria University experience are highlighted as issues that promote cultural responsiveness in support of Māori whānau, tamariki and rangatahi. The Wellington programme closed at the start of the new millennium without addressing the VUW Council relationship with Ngāi Tūhoe, highlighting broken promises.

**KEYWORDS:** Bi-cultural social work; ethnocentric practices; cultural racism; institutional racism, Pūao-te-Ata-tū

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NEW ZEALAND SOCIAL  
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CORRESPONDENCE TO:  
Tāmami Cairns

*Tukuna ahau kia korero ki taku Koroua  
Tui noa, tui noa nga maunga whakahi ki te riu  
o te whenua, ki a koutou ra ka ngaro ki te Ao.  
Nga manu whitua ka wehe i roto o nga iwi,  
nga Pou Tokomanawa o nga Whare Maire o nga  
matua tipuna.  
Nga Marae Kura, nga Whare Kura,  
te Puao aitanga o te ata huakirangi,*

*i huakina ai nga tatau maha o Tikitiki o Rangi,  
I unuhia atu ai ra koutou, te hunga mate ki te  
hunga mate,  
te Tapu o Tuawhakarere.  
No reira taiahaha! Taiahaha!  
Te tai e pari nei ketekete mai ketekete atu.  
Te tai e pari ki whea,  
e pari ana ki Tawhiti nui ki Tawhiti roa ki  
Tawhiti pamamao.*

*E pari ana ki te awa o te aake aake,  
ki te hau purongo o te kauheke kaumatua, he  
Tipua, he Atua.  
E pari ana ki Hawaiiki nui, ki te hunanga atu ra o  
te tangata hokinga kore ki muri,  
Tihei Mauri Ora!  
E Koro ee, e Koro ee!  
E te Tumu Whakarae o te iwi, te whakaruruhau o  
te Hapu, te toka tu moana o te whānau.  
Te manu tioriori, te korokoro Tui, te taumata o  
te whakaaro nui, te Tohunga o te whakaniko i te  
takoto o te kupu i rangona ai te wairua o te tangi  
a te ngakau.*

*Kai te rongō tonu taku ngakau, taku hinengaro,  
aku taringa I te tangi a o kupu tohutohu i te  
huarahi anga whakamua, e puta ai te tangata ki te  
whai ao ki te ao marama, Tuatahi, ko te whakaiti,  
Tuarua, ko te whakaiti, Tuatoru ko te whakaiti*

*I roto i nga tohe ki te Karauna, i roto tonu hoki,  
i nga nohanga a whānau, kua marama haere ake  
te tino hohonutanga o te whakaaro kai roto i enei  
kupu iti, ahakoa iti, he pounama. Kua e noho  
i roto i te wairua whakahihi, e noho i roto i te  
wairua mahakimanaki i te tangata.*

*E Kakati tonu ana nga paparinga o te kanohi i  
te rere o nga roimata hokinga mahara, hokinga  
whakaaro mou, mo o mahi ma te iwi e eke ai te  
korero a te toa o te iwi a Te Whenuanui “E kore  
au e hoki i te waewae tutuki engari ma te upoko  
pakaru ra ano.*

*E Koro, he hokinga mahara ki te kohinga kaupapa,  
ki te whakatakatoranga whakaaro a te Ao Maori, i  
taria ai te pukapuka hopu i nga korero, ka huaina  
tona ingoa ko “Puao o te Atatu”, hai pupuri,  
hai Pou here i te Mauri pupuri i te wairua o  
nga korero, a nga whānau a nga hapu a nga  
iwi huri noa i te mote, e rangona nei nga pari  
karangaranga o Puao o te Ata tu.*

*I tapaina ai e koe te ingoa, a “Puao o te Atatu,”  
kupu whakaari, whakatauaki, enei kupu whakato  
mauri, paihere kaupapa ki te ao turoa, ki a  
Ranginui e tu iho nei, ki a Papatuanuku e takoto  
nei. E kore hoki te tangata e ora tonu mena kaare  
e “Puao te tu mai a te Ata,” e wehe ai te po, e  
ao ake ai te awatea, ia ra, ia ra. E ora tonu ai te  
tangata.*

*Katahi te mea ataahua rawa atu ko tena. Ahakoa  
pehea te roa ka mana tonu nga korero, I herea  
hoki ki a Ranginui e tu iho nei, I tuia ki a  
Papatuanuku e takoto nei. Taria te wa e tinana ai  
te mauri o te tumanako.*

*E koro, i roto i nga tumanako whakatinana ake  
i nga kaupapa whakatika i nga nawe, tekau  
ma toru nga Pou Tikanga i whakaturia hai  
whakairitanga i nga kaupapa.*

*Ko te Pou Tikanga nui rawa i manakohia e korua,  
ko te Minita o te Tari Toko i te Ora, ko te Pou  
Tikanga Tuangahuru. (tekau) Ko tera, ko te  
whakato, whakatu, whakamaranga ake i a Puao o  
te Atatu i roto i te Tari Toko i te Ora o te Whare  
Wananga o Wikitoria ki Poneke. Nau e koro, a, na  
te Rangatira o te Tari Toko i te Ora John Grant, na  
te Minita o te Kawana na Anne Hercus, na te Vice  
Chancellor o te Whare Wananga na Les Holborow,  
a na te rangatira o te Tari Toko i te Ora o te Whare  
Wananga o Wikitoria, na Professor Leon Fulcher  
i whiriwhiri, ka tu te kaupapa. Ko te kauru ko te  
Pou herenga kaupapa ako I nga purongo toko i te  
ora i taua Tari, ko Puao o te Ata tu.*

*Tino, ko te Tari Toko i te Ora i te Whare  
Wananga o Wikitoria anake, te kaupapa ako Toko  
i te Ora i Aotearoa nei mai I nga tau rima tekau o  
tera rau tau. Ko Professor John McCreary tetahi o  
nga rangatira i tera wa.*

*Ko koutou ma nga akonga o tera wa, i puta, ko  
Anne Delamere, ko Nevelle Baker, ko Wishie  
Jaram, he maha koutou. I ora ai te Ao Maori i a  
koutou te arahi i nga kaupapa huhua o roto I nga  
Tari taka rawa mai ki tenei wa.*

*E Koro, ka tohua e koe maku hai arahi nga  
kaupapa maori i roto i te tari Toko i te Ora i Te  
Whare Wananga, engari, ko ta koutou whakatau,  
me matua haere rawa ki te iwi o Ngāi Tūhoe ma  
ratau marika e whakatau, e whakaae, e whakau te  
kaupapa.*

*Ka haere ngatahi nga tira haere kawē i te kaupapa  
ki a Ngāi Tūhoe.*

*Ko te tira o te Whare Wananga, ko tona kaiarahi  
ko te Vice Chancellor, ko Les Holborow me nga  
apiha tokorima o te Whare Wananga.*

*Ko te tira tuarua, ko te Hekeretari General o te Tari Toko i Te Ora, ko John Grant me tona tira tokowha.*

*Ko te tira tuatoru ko nga kaimahi me nga rangatira o te tari maori.*

*Ko te tira tuawha ko nga kaimahi katoa, me nga rangatira o te Tari Toko I te Ora.*

*Ka haere ngatahi nga Tira nei, ka timata ki Waikaremoana, ka oti, ka haere ki Ruatahuna, ka oti ka haere ki te Waimana, ka oti, ka tatu ki Ruatoki.*

*I Ngahina Marae ki Ruatoki te hui whakamutunga te hui whakatatu, te hui whakapumau i te kaupapa, mena e whakaae ana a Tūhoe, ki tonu te Whare nui. Nau i arahi te kaupapa e koro, mai i tona timatanga ki te mutunga e matau ana koe, e mohio ana koe e Koro ki nga whakaritenga.*

*Na te Rangatira tonu, o Ngahina Marae, na Tekari Waaka i whakatau, i whakatatu, i whakapumau te kaupapa whakaae a Ngāi Tūhoe, ko ahau te tangata hai kawe i te turanga. Ka kawe nga karakia whakapumau, ka oti. E wha nga ra e hikoitia ana e nga tira mai i tona timatanga, ka tatu*

*Ka hopu ake a maumahara i nga korero whakamutunga a tenei o aku koroua, i muri tata o tana korero whakatau whakau, whakapumau i te kaupapa.*

*“E tama, kaua e wareware ki te hokihoki mai ki te wa kainga”*

### **Pūao-te-Ata-tū and Aotearoa New Zealand social work education reform**

Two decades after closure of the social work programme at Victoria University, two key leadership figures at the time—Tāmami Cairns and Leon Fulcher—recall and reflect on their perceptions of the Pūao-te-Ata-tū era of social work education in Aotearoa New Zealand. While the two of us, previous senior Victoria University

and State Services administrations, as well as many former students understood and valued the increased Māori content, it is clear that others felt the course overall failed to adequately prepare social workers for professional roles in the Aotearoa New Zealand context. Furthermore, the Māori content was not considered important enough to invigorate the aims and content of the social work programme. We do not seek to use this article as a base from which to contest decisions recommended by the review team. Rather, our intent is to describe—from our points of view—some of the features of New Zealand’s oldest social work programme, in the event that others might consider some learnings may be of use for the future. In light of the continuing and never-ending pleas from Māori—as expressed during their time at Victoria University and for decades before and since—we share memories of how we interpreted this once exhilarating period of our professional lives and how it came to an end. We have sought to maintain a positive approach to this paper, focusing specifically on the role played by Māori—in the hope that our failure to ensure the course survived might provide grounds for others to thrive.

A dissenting voice of change in Aotearoa New Zealand social work education and research was promoted at Victoria University of Wellington from 1986, when agreement was given to implement a Pūao-te-Ata-tū (Daybreak) informed curriculum for mature students seconded by government departments (Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Maori Perspective for the Department of Social Welfare, 1986). Important changes were made to the curriculum to create a more culturally responsive professional qualification in social work with active hapū and iwi-Māori support. Pūao-te-Ata-tū—The Daybreak Report—was an internationally unique example of social research resulting from a systematic consultative process guided by indigenous research methods and facilitated by

distinguished Māori leaders. In addition to community meetings at Department of Social Welfare offices and institutions throughout the country, a sample of iwi and hapū-Māori participants was engaged by the Pūao-te-Ata-tū research team, and oral contributions were collected from 34 Whare Tipuna strategically located throughout the country.

Indigenous sampling methods—with recorded narratives and transcripts—were created for this oral archive (Te Whāiti et al., 1997), much of which focused on the extent to which institutional racism was operating to the disadvantage of Māori children and young people. Reform of child protection and youth justice legislation and services was highlighted as a priority after the release of Pūao-te-Ata-tū and new legislation was passed 2 years later with the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act (1989) heralding the introduction of Family Group Conferences aimed at family participation in decision-making about the care and supervision of children and young people. The Pūao-te-Ata-tū Report found, “At the heart of the issue is a profound misunderstanding or ignorance of the place of the child in Māori society and its relationship with whānau, hapū, iwi structures” (Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Maori Perspective, 1986, p. 7). Pūao-te-Ata-tū Recommendation 1 sought: “to attack all forms of cultural racism in New Zealand that result in the values and lifestyle of the dominant group being regarded as superior to those of other groups, especially Māori” (p. 9). For reasons unknown to these authors, a 10-year embargo was imposed on the Pūao-te-Ata-tū Archive until 1996, thereby ensuring that the evidential voices and knowledge base of two generations of Tipuna Māori (elders) about the care, protection and supervision of Māori children and young people across 34 hapu and iwi-specific communities throughout Aotearoa were not heard.

### **Pūao-te-Ata-tū and Victoria University of Wellington**

In 1986, Social Welfare Chief Executive John Grant and Pūao-te-Ata-tū Chairperson John Rangihau identified Victoria University with its recently appointed New Zealand-born Vice Chancellor, Les Holborow, and the anticipated appointment of a new Professor of Social Work as potential drivers of Pūao-te-Ata-tū Recommendation 10(c): “assess the extent to which tertiary social work courses are meeting cultural needs for those public servants seconded as students to the courses” (Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Maori Perspective, 1986). During the second year of the Pūao-te-Ata-tū consultation, Vice-Chancellor Holborow and his Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Tim Beaglehole, recommended the appointment of Leon Fulcher to the Chair of Social Work at Victoria University bringing more than a decade of social work practice, teaching, administration, and research experience from Scotland/UK, the USA and Canada.

Within days of taking up his post in August 1986, Professor Fulcher was invited by the Chief Executive of the Department of Social Welfare, John Grant, to meet Pūao-te-Ata-tū Review Chairperson, John Rangihau, known in the wider Māori world as Te Rangihau. A rigorous 2-hour *viva voce* examination with Te Rangihau followed, highlighting Māori and Departmental expectations and wishes. A verbal commitment was made at the end of that meeting to support a Pūao-te-Ata-tū Māori curriculum at Victoria University, offering 2-year professional Diploma and MA (Applied) degree pathways towards a professional qualification in social work for mature entrants with life and work experience. Such an expectation was consistent with New Zealand university regulations that provide access to postgraduate studies for mature entrants in selected subjects, a norm also for accredited UK social work programmes.

Historically, professional programmes of study for social work in Europe have

Figure 1: Times Higher Education Supplement Don's Diary Column, 5 May 1989



### Power play in the eternal triangle

Charles Maisels continues the debate over politics and the law

The reflections of Philip Allott in *The Times* recently on the evolution of the rule of law in Britain represents a nice excursion, so it's a shame there's no occasion. Instead he concludes that the current episode in law reform characteristic of the long struggle of the king, the people, and the law... What that characteristic set represents, of course, is politics. This is implicit in what Allott, and most everyone writes, but mechanism is too idiosyncratic. The central paradox in the concept of the rule of law, that it is precisely the existence and adherence to rules, that provide distance from and thus defence against political intervention in judicial process and yet societies where the rule of law obtains are precisely the ones where participant political activity is the most widespread, such that in the United States, for instance, members of the legal apparatus are even directly elected. How can those paradoxes be conceptualized?

As before, the director general introduces the kaupapa. I speak second and the vice-chancellor speaks third. Questions are raised. Answers are given. Back and forth the korero moves, with speaker after speaker endorsing the kaupapa. Finally, all of the elders have given their endorsement, including the Chief. Then without warning, the elders begin to debate what we become the inaugural holder of the position of Te Rangihau Scholar at Victoria University. We congratulate the winner, who is then asked to give a speech. This is more good and speeches in the inaugural (teaching) house. Then we say our goodbyes and start on our homeward journey.

**Leon Fulcher**  
*The author is professional social work at the Victoria University of Wellington.*

te-Ata-tū transcripts. Te Rangihau nominated Te Whāngai o Tūhoe, Tāmāti Cairns, as the Pae Ārahi of Māori Social Work at Victoria University with a reconfigured Diploma in Social Work programme for mature entrants. Te Rangihau had been amongst the first Māori to complete the VUW Diploma in Social Sciences (later Social Work) on secondment as a Trainee Social Worker from the Department of Māori Affairs, so was familiar with the existing programme. In 1986-1987, Te Rangihau engaged kaumātua in Ruatāhuna, Waikaremoana, Waimana and Rūatoki to support and hold Te Mauri of the Pūao-te-Ata-tū Kaupapa and guide the Pae Ārahi working alongside Professor Fulcher and the Victoria University Social Work Programme to make the curriculum more culturally responsive to all New Zealanders.

### A Te Rangihau Scholar at Victoria University

The early passing of Te Rangihau left a legacy formally acknowledged posthumously by the Council of Victoria University in 1989. A senior social work post was created on the recommendation of Vice-Chancellor Holborow and Director-General of Social Welfare, John Grant, after kanohi-ki-te-kanohi consultations with elders in Waikaremoana, Ruatāhuna, Waimana and Rūatoki. Ngāi Tūhoe endorsed a Te Rangihau Scholar Kaupapa and Tāmāti Cairns, whāngai of Tata Hoata Marae, Ruatāhuna, was put forward as the inaugural appointment. DSW Director-General Grant and Vice-Chancellor Holborow's consultations with Tūhoe elders ensured that Wellington-based powers-that-be deliberately and actively demonstrated their respect for Māori elders by leaving their capital city offices and making the effort to meet Māori on their own whenua. It was a rare event for a New Zealand University Vice-Chancellor and Departmental CEO to have made such personal and institutional commitments to supporting Iwi Māori and social work and details of that occasion were documented in the *Times Higher Education*

*Supplement*, Don's Diary narrative published in May 1989, shown below.

A Wāhine Māori Lectureship was subsequently established to support the Te Rangihau Scholar, with first Te Ripowai Higgins and then Waereti Tait-Rolleston of Ngāi Tūhoe appointed to support the Pūao-te-Ata-tū kaupapa. Parallel Tāne and Wāhine Māori Lectureships were later established with the appointment of Harry Walker and Riripeti Reedy of Ngāti Porou. Because of the high level of demand from Māori, State Services and NGO managers and staff for inclusion in the VUW course, invitations to offer the Pūao-te-Ata-tū Curriculum in the top of the South Island with Nelson Polytechnic and in the Bay of Plenty with Waiariki Polytechnic were endorsed by Deans Beaglehole and Hamer and approved by Vice-Chancellor Holborow and the Senior Management Group of Victoria University through 1998. Social work was offered through distance education between 1993 and 1999, in the top of the South Island and in the Tairāwhiti and Bay of Plenty regions. Strategic partnerships were quickly endorsed by these two partner institutions and both courses filled rapidly.

### **A Decade of Pūao-te-Ata-tū Social Work Curriculum at Victoria**

A decade of social work education and research reforms at Victoria University saw important movement towards taking real account of Māori perspectives in the delivery of community social services. In drawing comparisons between social work education in Aotearoa New Zealand and developments in Canada, the United States, Australia, or the United Kingdom, it is worth noting that in 1986 fewer than one in five Aotearoa New Zealand social workers held a professional qualification (K. Mason, 1992). Between 1950 and the mid-1970s, roughly two dozen qualified social workers graduated each year from Aotearoa New Zealand's only qualifying course for mature entrants with work experience as unqualified social workers. Post-graduate education in

social work was introduced in the mid-1970s, and from 1988 both first-degree holders with limited experience and non-graduate entrants with experience as unqualified social workers were taught together. Academic work was assessed to separate standards (degree holders were expected to address essays with enhanced academic rigour), expectations concerning practice competencies were the same for both groups. The modular teaching format, introduced in 1993, took account of teaching and learning themes required for professional accreditation and made the programme portable.

In a modular programme designed specifically for adult learners, candidates engaged in an intensive 27 to 30-hour module offering wananga and activity-based learning opportunities around core knowledge and practice themes. Each block of classroom teaching was followed by a supervised practicum or research fieldwork in which mature students practised learning and completed assignments relating to specific modules. With a modular curriculum, the timetables for a traditional 'school week' and 'academic year' were changed from 1-hour and 3-hour teaching sessions each week of the university semester to a pattern in which adult learners were immersed for an entire week in studies relating to one particular theme. Learners were introduced to new theoretical and research content, explored the significance of this material for social work practice through structured learning exercises, then developed personal learning plans to complete assigned work after each module. With Aotearoa New Zealand accreditation standards inactive at the time, UK accreditation standards were used for the award of a professional qualification in social work. Candidates were required to satisfactorily complete the equivalent of 2 years' full-time study (each involving 220 classroom contact hours), plus 2 periods of supervised practice (each lasting 70 days), and a research project or thesis which integrated learning from across the combined programme of studies (Fulcher, 1988).

Three of 16 modules in the Victoria University Social Work programme were taught in partnership with Māori hapū in indigenous learning environments. Between 1987 and 1998, three Ngāi Tūhoe kaumātua attended and participated in the marae-based learning modules: Koroua Whitu Waiariki and Koroua Joe Takuta—who, along with Te Rangihau—were Māori Battalion veterans. Working together with Hohepa Kereopa (Moon, 2003), these Tohunga held Te Mauri of the Pūao-te-Ata-tū Kaupapa and associated tikanga. Students were offered marae-based teaching and learning opportunities in hapū ‘classroom learning environments’ in which Māori cultural practices, tikanga and language were routines of daily life. Students reviewed prior learning about Māori perspectives and aspirations, and practised rituals of encounter between Māori and others who came to New Zealand during 19th- and 20th-century migrations (Year 1, Module 2). At the end of Year 1, students extended their learning about rituals of bi-cultural engagement in social work practice and research (Year 1, Module 8). Then, by the end of their second year, graduates were expected to demonstrate minimum competency to practise cultural safety, knowledge and skills in a Māori setting, as required of any Aotearoa New Zealand social worker (Year 2, Module 8) (Tait-Rolleston et al., 1997).

In her follow-up study with 47 rehabilitation case managers who shared some modular

teaching and learning with students in social work modules, Leberman found that “the key factor facilitating the transfer of learning from the classroom to the workplace for adult learners is a course design that employs experiential and activity-based learning which incorporates both personal and professional development opportunities” (2006, p. 63). One participant said:

The Marae stay had the most effect on me personally. It developed my self-awareness and that of other people. It made me think a lot about me, where I am at, where I am going and gave me a working definition of cultural safety, which starts with me! (Leberman, 2006, p. 63)

Between 1986 and 1997, almost two out of five of the 499 graduates of Victoria University’s Social Work programmes were Māori, while about one in ten were of Pasifika ancestry. A total of 53% of social work students during that decade identified as European/Pākehā, 37% Māori, 8% Pasifika, and 2% Asian. Graduates ranged in age from 23 to 60, with most aged between 28 and 35. Roughly two-thirds of candidates had 2 or more years of work experience as unqualified social workers, gaining admission to advanced professional studies through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the delivery of social work services. It is worth noting that Victoria University Social Work programmes had the highest proportion of Māori graduates anywhere in

Table 1. Ethnic Composition of 1997 Social Work Students Compared with all Victoria University Enrolments

Ethnic Group	Across University	Social Work
Pākehā/European	70%	36%
Māori	9%	54% <sup>1</sup>
Pacific Island	3%	8% <sup>2</sup>
Asian	11%	0%
Other	3%	0%
Uncoded	4%	2%

the university, except for the School of Māori Studies, as shown in the Table below.

Māori enrolments in Victoria University Social Work programmes started to increase following publication of *Pūao-te-Ata-tū* in 1986 when only 10% of graduates were Māori and 80% identified as Pākehā-European. By 1997, each group comprised over 40% percent of graduates. It was not simply a matter of increasing the number of Māori students enrolling in university courses. Reform involved establishing a new curriculum, developing new teaching material for adult learners, and recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced faculty. Curriculum reforms sought to create learning environments in which prospective social workers could learn what cultural safety means in practice with clients on a day-to-day basis, and in working with colleagues as members of professional teams. Through exploring the meaning of cultural safety (Ramsden, 1997) and rituals of encounter between Māori and other New Zealanders as fellow students in a professional course of study, students said this helped them to explore what is required of social work exchanges across other cultural boundaries (Leigh, 1998). Our learning for cross-cultural social work practice highlights the importance of both personal and bi-cultural learning. Learners are invited to explore opportunity moments and differences of experience that may exist between our cultural practices and those of another.

### **The End of a Pūao-te-Ata-tū focus at Victoria University**

In 1998, a recruitment agency played a key role in the appointment of a new Australian Vice-Chancellor from the Sunshine Coast with little experience of working with Māori peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand. A new Dean of the Arts Faculty was also appointed after the untimely death of Dean David Hamer in the post. The new Dean had minimal involvement with the Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Māori Perspective Review or the *Pūao-te-Ata-tū* Social Work

curriculum. Endorsed by the new Vice-Chancellor, the new Dean initiated a formal Review of Social Work to be carried out in 1999 with a Review Panel that included a Professor of Māori Studies from Auckland University, an experienced New Zealand social work educator from Auckland, and an Australian social work professor. No formal report or summary of this formal review of the department and its programmes nor the review methodology was ever released by Victoria University, nor was it ever shared with the authors of this statement.

It is unknown which Wellington-based students and placement supervisors the Review Panel met during their review, but neither students nor placement supervisors were included from the top of the South Island or the Bay of Plenty programmes offering VUW Social Work courses. Without reference to the history of social work at Victoria University of Wellington and the *Pūao-te-Ata-tū* curriculum and its Māori orientation at Victoria University, the new Vice-Chancellor and Dean used the Review to announce closure of the VUW Social Work programme. Within two years, the Victoria University Social Work programme and its *Pūao-te-Ata-tū* curriculum was shut down after 50 years of professional education and growing demand for places on its courses.

We seek to highlight the effect that decision had on listening to, respecting, and supporting Māori social workers to provide higher quality care and supervision services for Māori during the first two decades of the 21st century. It is true that the VUW curriculum contained differences in content and methods to other tertiary education courses in New Zealand, but those differences reflected the age, maturity, and prior experience of VUW students and a deliberate focus on the needs of indigenous people in Aotearoa. It would appear that the formal position and status of the Te Rangihau Scholar and the VUW relationship with Ngāi Tūhoe have never been addressed by the Council of Victoria University.



### Learning Partnerships for Cultural Responsiveness

Five types of educational partnership became apparent in promoting a more culturally responsive education and training programme for Aotearoa New Zealand social workers, in keeping with Pūao-te-Ata-tū Recommendation 10. A challenge throughout was to maintain learning environments characterised by cultural safety while ensuring that professional rigour was applied to all supervised social work practice learning.

#### Complementary Tāne and Wāhine roles:

The first type of partnership involved the complementary Tāne and Wāhine roles within traditional Māori culture performed by male and female educators connected by whakapapa. This helped maintain cultural safety as a principle of adult learning (Ramsden, 1997) giving much-needed support for indigenous faculty as new entrants to university teaching. It is not simply a matter of making appointments with brown-faced men and women to university teaching positions with a recognised higher degree. Such mistakes have been commonly made by white administrators throughout the colonised world. Indigenous language and fluency with regional cultural practices are rarely considered by university committees recommending appointments. Indigenous faculty are sometimes expected to perform like Euro-American teachers. University administrators need to acknowledge that, in order to remain effective, indigenous faculty must continue playing an active role in their own tribal affairs, including social work practice with their own people. This takes time and frequently involves travel away from their place of employment. Advances in virtual technology as a bi-product of the Covid-19 pandemic have gone some way towards making it possible to attend 'Zui' sessions or hui using Zoom or Teams technology. Indigenous faculty are also expected to participate in numerous university committees to help give a

'culturally responsive face' to monocultural institutions. Promotional prospects rarely take account of these wider pressures when institutional criteria normally applied involve a hierarchy of institutional performance expectations around research and publication, teaching, administration, and community service. Indigenous knowledge is commonly dismissed or minimised in the face of colonial, Western, and Global North expectations around merit, teaching and learning epistemologies, and cultural obligations (Moon, 2003).

**Intergenerational relationships:** A second, and related, type of partnership involved intergenerational relationships that linked children, through parents, uncles and aunts, to the elders who carry the traditions of tribal peoples. Māori teaching staff at Victoria were supported and nurtured by their old people (Rangihau, 1981), the very Tohunga (elders with specialist traditional knowledge) that the Tohunga Suppression Act of 1907 sought to destroy. These are the keepers of knowledge to whom indigenous people commonly turn for advice, guidance, and counsel, linking each teacher to sources of traditional knowledge and providing guardianship for such knowledge passed down through generations (Pere, 1992, 1993; Rangihau, 1981). Partnerships such as these require that universities remain open to scrutiny as host environments. This is vital for indigenous social workers seeking to gain access to Western knowledge while living with the risks of accommodation at the expense of indigenous concepts, beliefs, and worldview (J. Bradley, 1997; R. Bradley, 1997; Tapiata & Ruwhiu, 1995; Walker, 1995). Indigenous knowledge requires acknowledgement within university settings. Change initiatives all too easily fail because of scholarly arrogance around higher degrees, expectations that indigenous staff will implement a monocultural curriculum, or misappropriation of traditional knowledge by others in publish or perish university environments.

**Whānau participation:** A third type of partnership was highlighted in the way

that students frequently brought young children and teenagers to class or attended complete modules. Such practices influenced the attitudes that whānau had about their family member engaged in university study. Partners, siblings, cousins, and others also stopped in to ‘check out’ what their family member was up to at ‘school’, since it did not sound much like the schooling that they themselves had experienced. Very special occasions occurred when students brought a parent or elder to class as a source of support or as a means of introducing that person to the material they were addressing during the course of their studies. This third type of partnership was influential in increasing the number of Māori students enrolling in Victoria University Social Work programmes through support of whānau, hapū, and iwi.

**Tribally based teaching and learning opportunities in rural areas:** Educational partnerships between Māori and tertiary institutions can provide tribally based teaching and learning opportunities for students in different parts of the country. This fourth type of partnership resulted in programmes of professional education for social work being made more readily available and more culturally responsive to the needs and aspirations of social workers practising in Aotearoa New Zealand’s rural areas on the East Cape with support from Ngāti Porou, and in the Central North Island supported by Ngāi Tūhoe, Te Arawa, Ngāti Tuwharetoa, Te Whānau-a-Apanui, and other iwi in that region. Not surprisingly, many social workers operating in rural areas of the North Island are Māori. Important lessons were learned in a classroom of adults when the ratio of indigenous people to students of immigrant ancestry changes. When three out of four students in a learning group are of indigenous ancestry, several traditional assumptions about tertiary education need reviewing. Previously, teaching staff rarely acknowledged how threatened Māori students felt about being in a university classroom, especially mature students once punished for using their own language in the native school playground.

In this new situation, there were times when white teachers or students felt threatened—a new situation for them and a new learning opportunity. Team teaching that included both indigenous and non-indigenous teachers went some way towards addressing this issue.

*Come-from-away educators:* In Canada’s Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the local people use the term ‘come-from-away’ for anyone who does not come from their Island. That term helps to describe a fifth type of partnership between ‘come-from-away’ educators and particular indigenous peoples. If one accepts Freire’s (1970) notion that information is power and that knowledge of the tertiary education system is critical to the successful introduction of change in any social work curriculum, then it follows that white educators and administrators often have enormous influence over decisions about appointments, allocation of resources and teaching duties, as well as curriculum design in university programmes. Unless ‘come-from-away’ faculty and teaching staff support cultural responsiveness in the education and training of indigenous social workers working with their own people, then university education offers little more than intellectual colonisation and marginalisation for a people whose culture is already endangered.

### **Institutional Racism Silences Pūao-te-Ata-tū**

Like many before them, New Zealand Commissioner for Children, Andrew Becroft, and his successor, Judge Francis Elvers, have called for care and protection for Māori children by Māori. “Pūao-te-Ata-tū invited radical change of our care and protection system”, Commissioner Becroft has said, “but successive governments have resisted transformation, instituting only incremental change. Sadly, that has ended up serving the protection of the system rather than the needs of children and young people – especially mokopuna Māori”

(Becroft, 2021, n.p.). These calls echo the *kōrero* of Te Rangihau and efforts made with Pūao-te-Ata-tū towards bi-cultural social work education and training with Victoria University over 3 decades earlier.

In the late 1990s, dissenting voices within Aotearoa New Zealand's oldest School of Social Work and others supporting the school, were silenced through a rejection of indigenous social work knowledge and practices. Dissenting voices about gender and race are prominent themes in contemporary social work discourses everywhere (Crenshaw, 2019; Davis, 1983). The same was true in the VUW Social Work programme where feminist challenges and indigenous challenges were ever-present. As elsewhere within human service agencies, it is not uncommon in such debates to hear women of colour challenge arguments made by white women claiming to speak for them (Cairns et al., 1998; Moretown-Robinson, 2002).

Pūao-te-Ata-tū and the five-volume Report of the New Zealand Royal Commission on Social Policy published in 1988 were quickly made redundant by a new Director General of Social Welfare whose mission was to break the department into disconnected business units. A new 15-page, *Te Punga* (Department of Social Welfare, 1994) publication reframed statutory social work values into management output classes. The new General Manager of a renamed NZ Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service was a former engineer at the Port of Wellington who was joined by a former General Manager of Subaru NZ and a former Policy Manager of Internal Affairs heading up the Community Funding Agency. Under a new Minister of Social Welfare, corporatisation of the state began in earnest (personal communication, Bradley, 2022). Ethnocentrism enabled the Finance Minister's (Richardson, 1991) 'Mother of All Budgets' to strip funding from the newly introduced Family Group Conferences, a prominent feature of the

Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 (Fulcher & Ainsworth, 1994). State bureaucracy stripped funding with nuclear family justifications that silenced the voices of wider *whānau* networks whose involvement is critical to good decisions with, and for, Māori children and young people. *Whānau* participation in decision-making is undermined when nuclear family perspectives are used to determine the care and protection, or supervision of Māori children and young people.

### **What was Ignored During the 1999 VUW Review of Social Work?**

Challenges facing the Department of Social Welfare in 1986 are alive and not-so-well with Oranga Tamariki in recent years (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2020a, 2020b; Office of the Ombudsman, 2020; *Whānau Ora* Commissioning Agency, 2020). Challenges laid before the VUW Social Work programme in 1986 were considerable, but directions taken were responsive to, and supported by, both the Department of Social Welfare and the university administrators at the time. The need to listen and respond to Māori was central to the programme but took the professional education programme away from tertiary education curricula and timetables found elsewhere in New Zealand. Decades later, that need to listen and respond to Māori voices and new leadership remains. Calls intensify for the state to provide different Child Welfare and Youth Justice services (Cheng, 2020; Moxon, 2020; Radio New Zealand, 2021; Television New Zealand, 2019). With its limited history of professional education, the impact of institutional racism in New Zealand universities was particularly challenging at Victoria University. The Review of Social Work was never released to those who were most impacted by its conclusions and recommendations for social work teaching, administration, and research at Victoria University. The VUW Social Work programme was closed, and faculty posts terminated.

The Te Rangihau Scholar position was established by the Council of Victoria University in 1989 after VUW Vice-Chancellor Holborow met with Ngāi Tūhoe people in all four valleys of their rohe. This senior Māori teaching and research position, focusing on Māori child welfare, remains unfinished business with Ngāi Tūhoe and Te Rangihau's whānau who once endorsed recognition of their father's legacy as an outstanding alumnus of Victoria University. A 40-minute documentary produced by Jonathan Mason *Towards a Culturally Responsive Social Work Practice for Aotearoa*, 1999 (available via this YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/ZLQ7Y3m7QfI>) included strong support from Canadian Social Work educators with experience of working with indigenous social workers, and who were familiar with the Victoria course. The video also included feedback from students and former students from the Wellington programme, the top of the South Island and the Bay of Plenty about their learning and preparation for professional careers in social work in New Zealand.

## Conclusion

To conclude, we acknowledge collective responsibility for failing to sustain dissenting efforts that sought to re-shape and sustain a Pūao-te-Ata-tū curriculum for mature entrants, especially Māori, at Victoria University. Our view is that intellectual colonisation has operated in the Aotearoa New Zealand educational curriculum—including tertiary education—since 1840. Intellectual colonisation has been especially important for tribal peoples now living amongst 'come-from-away' New Zealanders who brought their own world histories to Aotearoa and enshrined these in the nation's curriculum. We argue that intellectual colonisation played a part in the way that Victoria University managed the Review of the Pūao-te-Ata-tū curriculum for social work practice in Aotearoa New Zealand: (i) through a 20th century determination that Māori Studies and Social Work were distinctly

separate disciplines; (ii) through a rejection of indigenous knowledge and the keepers of indigenous knowledge about adult learning for social work practice with Māori; and (iii) through a failure to listen to Māori and Pacific graduates and iwi about their experiences of personal and professional learning for social work practice with the Victoria University programme. We find it ironic that Pūao-te-Ata-tū, the shortest Ministerial Review Report in New Zealand history, focused attention ever so briefly on cultural racism in the care and supervision of Māori children and young people. Some 36 years later, the statistics for Māori children and young people in Oranga Tamariki care and in New Zealand young offenders' institutions are worse than ever before. Cultural racism identified in the Pūao-te-Ata-tū archive has arguably evolved into more sophisticated forms of institutional racism operating in the state bureaucracy. Sealed away in the national archives of time, Pūao-te-Ata-tū still draws attention to a legacy of dissenting voices about the care, protection, and supervision of tamariki and rangatahi Māori. The Pūao-te-Ata-tū voices now represent little more than a footnote in the contemporary education and training of Aotearoa New Zealand social workers and do not feature in applications for recognition of international social work qualifications for practice in contemporary multi-cultural Aotearoa New Zealand.

It is a source of great sadness for many that a social work course—established and supported by the most senior members of the Department of Social Welfare, with Iwi support, while being promoted, applauded, and monitored for many years by some of the most senior members of Victoria University—should have been shut down abruptly with little transparency for the decision taken. It is a source of even greater sadness that both Māori and non-Māori social work students were deprived of opportunities to learn more about, and be better prepared to, work in te Ao Māori. The greatest sadness of all will be felt by whānau whose tamariki and rangatahi have been

deprived of supports that could have been available to them by mature social workers working with better understanding and with greater capacity to proactively assist them.

*He tukuna roimata e Koro, he hokinga mahara.  
Okioki mai, i roto i nga manakitanga a te wahi  
ngaro i roto hoki i nga kupu a to tatau Atua.*

*“He honore, he kororia, he maungarongo ki  
runga i te whenua, he whakaaro pai ki nga  
tangata katoa”*

### Notes

- 1 Social Work enrolled six times the VUW average number of Māori enrolments with enhanced EFTS funding.
- 2 Social Work enrolled nearly three times the VUW average number of Pasifika enrolments.

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