

Maori and Pakeha World Views: A Report from the IASWECE Council's diversity study

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In the recent IASWECE Council study of diversity, I shared some aspects of the differences between Maori and Pakeha (European) world views in New Zealand. These differences can lead to misunderstandings, especially in education.

The Maori are the indigenous people of Aotearoa (New Zealand) and make up 17% of the population. Their spirituality lies deep in their ancient ancestral heritage. Religion is implicit and permeates the whole culture. They see the sacred in everyday life. Their spiritual understandings are subconscious and show themselves in imaginations and mythologies that created metaphors to represent the world.

Before they introduce themselves, they always give a full background picture - ancestors, landscape, physical characteristics of the land. The land, the ancestors, and the "we" are more important than the individual. There is no sense of wholeness without the group. Collectivism, relationship, and connectivity and their primary values. They have a deep belief in Divine rights of people. Process is more important than solutions. Their sense of time (Kiros) is determined by events and not the clock.

70% of the population in New Zealand is of European descent, called Pakeha. For them, individuality, self-interest, and competition are all important. The thinking human being is very important: "I think, therefore I am." They promote individualism, individual freedom, and competition.

Their religion is separate from their everyday life, and they have a conscious, philosophical heritage. Equality is more important than Divine right. Their sense of time, Chronos, is dictated by the clock, and they are analytical and solution-oriented, rather than process-oriented.

These different world views have resulted in a sense of mistrust and frequent conflicts between Maori communities and local authorities. In education, problems have included different approaches to the timing of parent/teacher meetings, expectations for behavior, individual student expectations, and views on equality and rights.

This Butterflies story by Patricia Grace beautifully illustrates the different world views.

With thanks,

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