



AAPAE NEWSLETTER No 12  
20<sup>th</sup> May 2009

Kia-ora - Welcome

A special aspect of our gathering at TAMARIKI In Aotearoa/New Zealand, Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> – Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2009, was the significant place and integration of Maori values, language and culture which the Tamariki community shared with us, giving us insights into both the successes and struggles of living daily with the effects of colonisation, the spotlight on education.

Day 1 Wednesday 15th April began with a special Tamariki welcome from Di and Maori welcome from Paul and a welcoming song from all the Tamariki people

Te Aroha	Aroha
Te Whakapono	Faith
Te Rangimarie	Peace
Tatou tatou e	All of us together

He tangata ke koutou	You are different people
He tangata ke matou	We are different people
Engari I tenei wa	But at this time
Tatou tatou e	We are as one

The welcome had to be repeated as the Currambena Mob was late. They were lost, a recurring theme throughout the conference attributed to the much missed presence of Chris P!!! Each of the participants introduced themselves. The group fluctuated between 20 -30 people depending on the members of the Tamariki community who were present, the core group being Di, Steven, Bob, Ann, Raewin, Alison, Mary, Rose, Virginia, Paul, Michael, Wayne, Bob with Mathilda from Pine Community School Brisbane, Adrienne from Spearwood School and Ian from Wesley College in Perth, Greg, Breese and Catherine from Hurstbridge Learning Co-op, Mel and Mel and Christina from Kinma, Sydney, Julianna, Fran, Sue, Jo from Currambena, Sydney, Luuk and Willem from Currambena via Holland, Manu also from Sydney, Cecelia from Canberra, Gail and Eve from Timatanga Community School in Auckland, (hopefully a new member of AAPAE!) and Karyn from Arohanui Services.

We then experienced the first of the sumptuous morning and afternoon teas, scones and jam and cream and cakes and biscuits and fruit and and .... a foretaste of the wonderful meals which followed which Ann and her amazing team of workers from the Tamariki community provided for the whole 3 days....

special thanks again to all of you!

In the spirit of the theme of the meeting 'Insights from our Learning Places', we had the first of the sessions when each of the different schools or organisations spoke about their people and place, the positive aspects the common threads, the differences, identifying any concerns they were experiencing and expectations of the meeting. From this we compiled a full white board of topics which we proposed to return to discuss in more detail. We actually managed some of these topics and others we have proposed continuing on the elist if the interest is maintained.

The LIST of issues/topics - enough for the next 3 meetings????

Parents - internal PR, Reflection on Philosophy  
Bob's research Value of Play - Bob's paper is available on the Tamariki website  
Marketing/ Being Found  
Computer Use  
Karyn's Maori Arohanui Kia Kaha  
The word 'alternative'  
New Curriculum Australia/NZ  
Power in Meetings  
Finding Staff  
Competition  
Physical Education In Democratic Education  
How to increase the influence of AAPAE  
Retaining culture  
Government Regulations  
Guns, weapons/ violent play  
DVD of Art project of Hurstbridge combined with an Aboriginal school in the Kimberley and a school in India  
Songs  
Hut/Cubby Building

Adrienne led us in a session, Passion, the Window into Learning, encouraging us to reflect on the ways our own passions drive us to learn successfully and with immense enjoyment and to consider that if each learner was able to know and follow his or her passion this learning would be a natural consequence. Whether it is a fleeting passion of the moment or a life long love it can drive the learning in very positive ways. The group articulated some of the qualities which accompany the following of a passionate interest - playfulness, engrossing, inspiring, challenge, experimenting, enjoyment, passion is greater than frustration, reaching goals, mysterious, infectious, 'in the flow', greater freedom, space to laugh.... Finding mentor/s in likely and unlikely places who could enable the passion to develop and flourish is an important ingredient. Adrienne shared many examples of learners who had been labelled as having learning difficulties who were awakened to the power of finding and following their passion.

This was followed by the 2009 AAPAE AGM  
For Copies of the President's and Treasurer's reports contact Cec

Election of Committee for 2009 resulted in  
President: Cecelia  
Secretary: Sue  
Treasurer: Keith  
Committee members: Wendy, Chris P, Ian, Adrienne and Di as NZ rep

Agenda topics for discussion

1. Moving subscriptions to a calendar year - moved and passed / date set.
2. Appointment of roving ambassador for AAPAE - there was general support for this idea particularly to increase the face to face contact with potential new members...if and when finances permit...it was left for Cec to decide if and when she could manage this and if other people in AAPAE wished to do so they could apply to the committee.
3. Changing AAPAE's name. It was decided that this discussion would be held over to include the topic Mathilda's suggested discussion of 'alternative'. Will report on this later.
4. AAPAE support for AAPAE members affected by Victorian Bushfires. There was support for AAPAE to send donations to Fitzroy Community School for the rebuilding of the camp and cubby facilities on The LAND and the Hurstbridge community is considering ways that we may contribute. Tamariki Community have very generously started the ball rolling with a donation of \$NZ 500.00. Thank you for this practical support.
5. AAPAE representatives to IDEC2009 in Sth Korea. We had to conclude the meeting so this topic was not canvassed at the time.

The AGM was followed by the first session by one of the main guest speakers Shona Hickey on The Treaty of Waitangi. Shona led us through the history of pre treaty times, with the people of East Polynesia peopling Aotearoa from 600 up to the first contacts and the colonisation process which came in waves of discoverers, traders/whalers and sealers, missionaries trying to 'civilise the savages', entrepreneurs paving the way for the settlers. In 1832 James Busby began a process to protect the native peoples' interest, he talked to the chiefs, they aired concerns and in 1835 there was a Declaration of Independence seeing themselves as independent series of nations retaining rights over place setting up a congress to represent all the tribes. This was a foreign way for Maori to act but enabled them to act together they controlled the economy and were still in control of their affairs. On 6th February 1840 the Treaty of Waitangi written in Maori was signed. It was an International treaty between two countries which over time was largely ignored. There were 4 different needs expressed

1. Kaoanatanga - about government
2. Rangatiratanga - control over land resources and treasures such as language
3. Equity - expectation to share benefits of the new culture eg schooling, Maori

wanted access

#### 4. Retention of Spirituality - alongside new religion/s

The reality was that for a hundred years, approx 1870 to 1970 it was as though the treaty did not exist as the Maori experienced all the effects of colonisation, cultural clash and assimilationist policies of successive governments and bureaucracies. It was particularly significant that an underclass was created through a separate curriculum which emphasised speaking English, needlework, culinary arts, divinity for females and milking cows, shearing sheep and mending fences for males with minimal reading and writing. Generational problems, loss of language, disconnect from family, high levels of drug and alcohol use and imprisonment, urban drift were all obvious yet the people said " ..but we signed a treaty!" A small handful of 'raging radicals' and activists in the universities in the 70/80s began to challenge the status quo, using the media, lobbying, the government, despite the objections of the 'old people', and In 1975 The Treaty of Waitangi act was passed. It acknowledged the treaty

1. exists

2. has been breached

and a tribunal was set up to retrospectively examine those breaches.

We all shared a wonderful meal together with much conversation and chat and after dinner had the second session with Shona concentrating on the educational aspects related to the Treaty

Most of the tribunal deliberations have been related to the second aspect of the treaty, the loss of land but gradually the issues of language culture and education have been given more attention. Shona expressed the complexity of dealing with all these educational issues. Whose curriculum? Whether it is culturally appropriate to Maori life and history, needing to ensure that the older people who still had the language could help the young learn it. In 1989 there was an amendment to the act which allowed the establishment of Maori Immersion Language schools but they still had to teach a curriculum prescribed by the state. In recent times the number of bilingual units has reduced and lots of Maori kids are negative about their language and the politicisation of education. All ongoing issues. I can see that all the problems of ensuring that education empowers the young for full participation in their modern society while valuing and continuing their Maori culture are continuing. Recognising Maori language as equal status as a national language has had a real effect and it is striking to observe and experience the amount of integration of Maori language which exists among the people and the way NZ speakers integrated Maori words and phrases much more consciously something that does not happen with our aboriginal languages.

A very long, full day!!!!

DAY 2, Thursday 16th April

We all headed into the inner city of Christchurch to visit the two schools Discovery1 and Unlimited Paenga Tawhiti. Special thanks to Tracy at Discovery 1 ([www.discovery1.school.nz/Discovery\\_1\\_Website/](http://www.discovery1.school.nz/Discovery_1_Website/)) and Tanja at Unlimited (<http://www.unlimited.school.nz/experience/index.html>) for giving us their time to show us around and sharing their passions for their places. For those of us who enjoyed Vince Dobbs' session about Unlimited at the AAPAE 2005 Conference at Preshil and had heard about its workings from Juli G, it was a great opportunity to see the places for ourselves.

Both of these state schools of special character, one a primary, one a secondary school, are responding to the call for education to be more in the hands of the learner, an integral part of the city, accessible to all through public transport, grounded in the community, using the facilities of the community and the city in very positive ways. It seems that this works very effectively for the high school. There are a few more issues for the primary school where the logistics of moving smaller children around the city is more difficult. We were not able to see the kids in their spaces so it was harder to experience the spirit of the places. We were fortunate to have a brief meeting with some high school students and teacher who had come in during their holiday break to do some work on their chemistry curriculum for exams and they were very strongly supportive of the value of student and multiple choices across all fields and self direction of their learning. Unlimited seem to live up to its name, that there is no limit to what is possible and that given them by their local iwi - Ngai Tahu of Paenga tawhiti which reflects the concepts of endless horizons, borderless worlds and limitless possibilities. The designs of the buildings and spaces are very striking, colourful, modern, urban and multilayered and the NZ government/ City of Christchurch is obviously supporting them with 'state of the art design' and resources. Tracey and Tanja both spoke about the pressure to maintain numbers which have gone beyond what most of us consider realistic sizes to establish and build community. Discovery has 380 and Unlimited which began started with 40, has some lingering nostalgia for the smaller community. It has built to 400 and of course economics are largely driving this. For many of the AAPAE members the need for access to the natural environment and green spaces was a significant question.

Once back at Tamariki and full of lunch we embarked on a series of sessions tackling some of the topics on our list. This was punctuated by periodic calls to come outside and view the next stage in the preparation for the evening's hangi, the traditional Maori feast where food is cooked in the ground on hot stones which had been heated by a fire built earlier in the day and burning for several hours.

Bob Gibbons gave us an overview of his paper on his research on the Value of Play and I recommend you all to read the full text which is available on the Tamariki website (<http://www.tamarikichch.schoolzone.net.nz/docs/BobResearchPaperOnPlay.pdf>)

as it articulates many important issues for our kids and schools and provides an invaluable resource and support for the central place in which we all hold play. I love the articulation in Tamariki's Special Character Statement Paragraph 6 which says,

"Play is regarded as children's work. By playing with ideas and objects they develop functioning cognitions about their world. The children may and do use all the materials in the school for their own purposes. We require an environment in which unstructured play freely occurs, with access to trees, sand, water, mud and junk materials."

I admire the integrity with which all at Tamariki reflectively live and 'walk this talk' even when the pressure is on, as Bob notes, particularly from external sources such as the Ministry, to impose the adult view of 'learning' onto the play. There was much 'ohhing and ahhing!' about the Tamariki dirt mound and murmurs that 'we must get one.' It was significant that the hangi pit had been dug in the middle of the dirt mound. Play with dirt, holes, fire, stones, wood, food.....!

Mathilda Element led us in a wide ranging discussion about how we describe and define ourselves. Mathilda, who is a graduate from alternative schooling and is now teaching in one, (Pine Community School in Brisbane) is in a unique position to view some of these issues. She made the point that words are powerful and questioned whether the descriptor 'alternative' served us well in the 21st century. Do we want to be stuck in the hippie era? To what are we alternative? Do we want a title which has negative/anti aspects? She wants a descriptor which is more positive, inclusive and reflective of the whole of what we are on about. Catherine made the point that 'alternative' medicine has become 'complementary' because it wants to be seen as an additional, equal partner, included rather than separate and different. Adrienne reminded us that 'alternative' has been colonised by the mainstream as applying to kids who don't fit into 'normal' schooling paths. We also reminisced about Adrienne's paper which she gave at the very first ADSA/AAPAE meeting which examined the colonisation of alternative, progressive, democratic education ideas and language as they were taken up by the mainstream.

(See the papers and discussion of Currumbena conference 2001)

Mathilda's desire to open this topic coincided with some rumblings which made it on the AGM agenda via a previous discussion that Wendy P and Cec were having (over a glass or two of red at camp!) about the history of the name and whether its complexity also served us well, that AAPAE consider a name change so we attempted to combine the discussions. Some of the descriptors that were canvassed included 'democratic' (link with the choice of students at one of the early IDECS and originally the name we had) 'special character' (as in NZ) 'engaging' 'relationship', 'creative communities', 'hippie' 'play centres', 'child-initiated', 'self-directed', 'self-initiated learning', 'wholistic', 'feral' and most controversially after a person's name eg Montessori and Steiner!!!

Breeze and others gave a spirited defense of 'alternative' as a reality which we still experience and value.

I feel that I have not done justice to this discussion so if anyone wants to add anything please do. Even though I strongly support the experience of our school meetings where previously decided matters are canvassed again by each new 'generation', I have to admit to a feeling of déjà vu for those of us who were at the first AAPAE gathering. I think the problem for me is that we just don't seem to be able to find a clean clear concise descriptor with which everyone can identify and I also see this diversity as perhaps the greatest marker that we are on the right track? Just as in the original discussions we had great difficulty in reaching agreement and consensus as each descriptor held problems for someone in the group and we struggled to agree on a name which would include everyone's viewing point. So we did not make a decision!! Instead we decided to continue the discussion on the elist and those who have strong views to express can do so and see if there is any strong feeling to drive a name change. One piece of inclusivity that I want to ensure stays is that somewhere 'Australasian' remains so that our 'anz connection is obvious and valued.

Karen later played around with some of the descriptors.....

HIPPIE		FERAL
	WILD	
Happy		Frustrated
	Wonderful	
Independent		Education
	Individual	
Passionate		Rebels
	Loving	
People		Analysing
	Diversity	
Interested in Education		Laws

We were all called to come and view the setting up of the rocks in the fire pit and the arrangement of the food and the covering with hessian bags etc and finally with the earth returned on top and our dinner was set to cook while we had the next guest speakers who continued the Maori Education theme. The two speakers were, Raewin Tipene-Clarke from the Ministry of Education and Annie Bermingham from Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu ( [www.ngaitahu.iwi.nz](http://www.ngaitahu.iwi.nz)). They combined to speak about the partnerships that are happening between the bureaucracy and the community groups and organisations of the IWI of the Sth Island where there are 18 different groupings and particularly of the value of having experienced Maori people such as Raewin in the Ministry. They built on the Treaty work Shona had done with us. In 2001 the Ministry was acknowledged as a Treaty partner and work has continued to build a 25 year multigenerational plans and in 2008 a joint education plan which included

1. Reinvigoration of language which was/is in real danger of potential extinction
2. Integration of Culture, Maori Stories and histories. There is a recognition that culture counts that children of this generation can be bicultural

### 3. Educational achievement

### 4. Multilingual partnership with the Crown

The Programme for International assessment of Students (PISA of the OECD) has shown that NZ has high quality and low equity particularly for Maori, Pacifica and Special Needs students (Interestingly this is similar to Australia). This needs to change. More training in Maori perspectives to understand subtlety and nuances which are different, professional development, more funding, increase numbers of Maori working in the ministry at present 300 in 3000 workers. Minister has signed a Memorandum of Understanding and has a responsibility to ensure that there is both high quality education and equity for Maori and especially that they 'infuse the voice of Tamariki (the children). They recommended looking at the research of Russell Bishop. Their session provoked quite a bit of discussion. It was obvious that the partnerships and infusion of Maori voices was having positive effect but the drive to have all kids conform to higher standards was seen as the goal and some of us wonder what the goal would be if the voices of children and Maori really drove the learning?

The earth pit had fulfilled its task, and we watched as the delicate process of releasing the food from the pit was skillfully done by Paul, Wayne and their mates and we fell to a wonderful feast. Thank you again to all those who worked all day to provide us with this unique cultural sharing of the hangi. We had a great night together and shared more Maori songs led by Alison and Mary. Some were able to watch the Hurstbridge video which I will discuss in the next episode. Another full full day and night!

DAY 3 17th April 2009

Our third morning was focused on Learning Stories. We began the day with the third of our group of guest speakers, Beverley Smith from *Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/NZ Childcare Association(NZCA)*. Beverley introduced Te Whariki, the early childhood curriculum. It is based on the belief that the children are already competent and contributing to their society.

Its principles are

Whakamana - empowerment

kotahitanga - holistic development

whanau Tangata- Family and Community

Nga hononga - Relationships.

This was a very agreeable, positive start.

Beverley then introduced the word ASSESSMENT and I could feel an almost imperceptible intake of breath around the room. Views and opinions about assessment began to flow before she really had a chance to get into her talk. Whether this was fair to her or not is a debatable point but our group has a very twitchy antenna when that word appears! Beverley accepted and encouraged this discussion with grace and in fact continued to promote her view that



assessment can be a positive process if it is FOR learning and the feedback enhances the sense that learners have of themselves as capable, competent learners who CAN DO! Families should be part of the assessment and evaluation looking at what the child can and how do we go to the next step? Beverley gave a wonderful example of a learner's perspective in the following exchange.  
"I wonder where this is going?" What are you interested in?"  
"Well actually Mummy, I am interested in myself"

Some of her key points included  
Capture the transformation of learning not the end point  
Use Narrative/Story  
Notice Recognise and Respond.

The narrative is a story of children's learning which takes place over time and gives attention to context and background, Good stories not only describe action they make feelings and interpretations visible. Learning is generating not the storing of knowledge.

Learning Stories are linked to key competencies in the New Zealand Curriculum

Thinking  
Using Language symbols and texts  
Managing self  
Relating to others  
Participating and contributing

Directions for learning  
self-assessment - disposition- curiosity-investigating and exploring - ask

The work of Margaret Carr  
Guy Claxton (2008)  
Habits of Mind

Out of this discussion also came an interesting dilemma/question for alternative/ democratic education about the place and role of the current emphasis and push about meta-cognition especially for younger students. There is strong support for this in some quarters such as we saw in our visit to Discovery1 and others in our group expressed concerns that this may be stifling the spontaneity of natural learning in which kids engage.

After morning tea Alison Brizzell took us through the real world of learning stories as lived at Tamariki. Tamariki was the first primary school in New Zealand to use them as a way of recording learning. The kids had given their permission and Alison shared with us some of their Learning Stories. She described it as noticing the AH! HAA! moments in learning. This broader concept enabled some relief for those of us, relatively new to Learning Stories, who had not realised that they are

being promoted, as indicated by Beverley, as an assessment process. The prior requirements of the NZ Ministry of Education had been Primary Progress Record and Cumulative Record Summary. Tamariki people indicated to us that yes they needed to come up with something that would satisfy the Ministry yet was true to their Special Character. There were concerns that they were changing the school's culture and questioned whether it was something that the kids valued and wanted. Initially some negative responses to photographs being taken were changed to saying 'yes' and the kids have come to value the stories as records of achievement. Staff have often co-operated with each other to create the story and they have and are participating in professional development. They had to increase skills particularly their IT skills and this is slowly happening in some cases, to enable use of Publisher and importing of photos, creation and use of templates when appropriate. Many stories are still handwritten and this is fine.

The Revised New Zealand Curriculum came to the rescue. This document has been condensed from 7 into one and gives very broad guidelines within which the schools can work and formulate their curriculum. The key competencies to which the Learning Stories refer are mentioned above.

Tamariki is able to rebalance to a more holistic and strong emphasis on its Special Characteristic values, particularly that PLAY is Children's work!

Learning Stories do present a time management issue, they are both time consuming, and they are a joy to write. When the student's voice is clearly part of the story it adds authenticity and self-reflection and awareness. When the parents' voice is included it reflects the partnership between learner parent and teachers. All of these are central to the principles of the special character of Tamariki. Learning Stories seem to offer a process of 'assessment' which honours the learning of each individual and stays true to democratic education. As New Zealand faces the prospect of a mandatory standardised testing regime initiated by their recently elected government we have to hope that Tamariki and others can persuade the Ministry and the Government that Learning Stories can continue to be an authentic process of assessment and that maybe we can initiate this idea in Australia.

As many of you know my camera did not work while I was in NZ. This is the only photo I have salvaged. I am glad that it shows some of our key Tamariki friends!



### Hurstbridge Video

Breeze showed us the video of the project ROOTS and WINGS. Hurstbridge Learning Cooperative combined with Wulungarra School in the Kimberley and Greenwave School in Kolkata, India to create and hold an exhibition of art and dance and music etc. The connections which were forged almost jumped out of the film and the quality of the art stunning. There were many moving aspects to the film, the most powerful for me being the story of the indigenous kids from the Kimberley's reaction to the dance of the kids from the poorest circumstances in India who were dancing with their heads held high. They said with amazement "These are black fellas with no gubba.... with no shame."

We had a story reading session as Karyn shared with us the stories of Kapai's New Mates and other stories by Uncle Anzac. Kapai is a Kiwi who wants to know why he cannot fly....?

Members of Tamariki community had painted stones for each of the participants in the conference so to bring our gathering to a conclusion we each chose our stone and then formed small groups to reflect on the symbolism of the stone in relation to our three days together. As each person spoke the others in the group wrote or drew as they listened and then we shared together these thoughts and feelings. It was lovely to have many of the kids who had been in and out over the three days come and joined us quite spontaneously for this final session together and they added their unique views to those of the participants. These were some of those

Passion/ Pride/ Enjoyment

Alternative Yay!!

Adventure/escape

Growth Phase/ Hoping to Blossom

Want to know more

Diffintensity/Being Different/ but same/individual/respect/ok to be you/freedom to be who they are/diversity

Encircling different schools and personalities but all concerned for children

Community/Nature/animals

Kids being allowed to have a childhood

Sharing together/part of wider family/at home/warmth/ kindred  
spirits/Nuturing/Connecting /Understanding  
Sparkling Eyes  
Learning to Listen  
A million questions ?Answered as listened  
Order among chaos  
Innovative Creative ideas/Ripples outwards from Tamariki  
Awareness Maori Culture connection with Indigenous people in Australia/valuing  
cultures, land and language  
Colourful experiences  
Peace/harmony  
Meeting friends old and new  
Connections  
Loving feeling  
KAI  
PLAY  
FOOD/support/took up the slack

Next Conference

More movement, dancing, workshop choices, smaller groups, less sitting.....

If you have anything to add please do tell us.

In conclusion my deepest thanks again to all of you for coming and participating so joyfully in our meeting, the kids for permitting us to spend some time in their space and all at Tamariki who worked so hard pre, during and post the conference to enable us all to come together and connect with each other.

During my President's report at the 2009 AGM I made the following statement.

One of the people who made our connection with Tamariki special and vivid is Pat Edwards and I still value the moments of honesty, clarity and empathy she contributed to our early meetings and discussions. When she retired Pat said to me that it was time to go back to studying Greek and take a complete break from education and the schools and AAPAE, so what I am suggesting is probably a mixed blessing for her but I offer it as a symbol of our recognition and appreciation of the warm, wonderful, insightful person we know and love. AAPAE offers Pat life membership of AAPAE in recognition of her contribution to kids' lives and democratic education over so many decades.

There was general acclamation for this proposal.

For those who may not know, Pat suffered a debilitating stroke in 2006. On Friday evening I went with Di to visit Pat and though she struggles she still communicates with intensity and an esoteric turn of mind and phrase. I was able to tell her about this proposal and a wide smile lit up her face. Pat was pleased

that we acknowledge and remember her with great admiration and love. The following is a photo of Pat at the first AAPAE meeting at Currumbena in 2001. She was queen of the cubby!



My love and thanks to you all  
Cecelia