

Rehabilitative Approaches for Maori and Pacific Island Inmates

**Ko Tainui te waka
Ko Pirongia te maunga
Ko Kawhia te moana
Ko Waipapa te marae
Ko Ngati Te Umu ki Whakatane, Ko Ngati Pare nga hapu
Tihe Mauri Ora!**

Mihi

Heoi ano e mihi kau ana ki te tangata whenua o tenei waahi e tu nei tatou, te iwi Wiradjuri. Na ratou I whakamahana te whenua e ora ai te ao. Tuarua, ki a Ranganui raua ko Papatuanuku e takoto nei, ka mihi kau ki a korua. Huri nui ki te tangata kua tau mai ki te whakanui I nga kaupapa whakatu matauranga I roto I nga whare herehere, ka aroha tatou. Ko te mihi nui ki o tatou tuakana teina, tuahine tahi kua riro I roto I enei whare a te Pakeha. Ko te patai nui ma tatou - me pewhea ratou e whiwhi huarahi ai e puta ki te ao marama?

Introduction

Pacific Island people have been travelling across the Moana nui a Kiwa, the Pacific Ocean since they discovered and settled the area during the last two or three thousand years. For the purposes of this presentation I refer to our peoples as Tagata Moana, the people of the sea.

The indigenous people of the Pacific have been establishing relationships with NSW/Australia for centuries. As early as the 1790s Maori were venturing out of Aotearoa across to what was known as Poihakena, or Port Jackson, for exploration, trading and diplomatic reasons. Other Pacific peoples also ventured across the Moana Tapokopoko, the Tasman Sea following contact with non-Indigenous travellers.

Recent decades have seen increasing numbers of Tagata Moana arrive in NSW/Australia in search of economic opportunities. This has implications for the provision of health, education, justice and other service providers as they strive to improve services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. Tagata Moana communities have also begun to formalise relationships with government and non-government organisations as they address settlement issues and attempt to put in place strategies of cultural continuity for their communities.

Definitions

Who are we discussing when we use the term Tagata Moana, people who are commonly referred to as Pacific Islanders, or simply as Islanders? We are a diverse group of people from a range of nation states. Our cultures,

languages and nationalities include Fiji, Hawaii, Maori, Niue, Rarotonga, Samoa (which may or may not include American occupied Samoa) and Tonga. Our islands span the Moana Nui a Kiwa, the great ocean that covers 1/3 of the earth's surface. We speak languages that belong to the same language family, and we value our individual identities. I use the term Tagata Moana today because it encompasses the expanse of the ocean and for me it includes all of the indigenous peoples who populated this vast territory.

So Tangata Moana have a shared history that also encompasses a range of cultural and linguistic interpretations based on geography, distance and history. We have all been influenced during centuries of colonisation by European nations, including the introduction of diseases, attacks on our sovereignty including war, cultural, linguistic and spiritual dislocation, and the revival and resurgence of our peoples' spirit of independence. Indeed it was in the 1960s that the first of our nations celebrated independence. The Tagata Moana that still strive for independence in their own lands include the Kanaka of New Caledonia, the Maori of Aotearoa, the Kanaka Maoli of Hawaii, Rapanui/Easter Island and the first people of Tahiti, otherwise known as French Polynesia.

Cultural Dislocation in Australia

New South Wales has been a first port of call for growing numbers of Tagata Moana who migrate to Australia seeking a better way of life. Economic pressures in Aotearoa, or New Zealand in particular have led to the migration of 190,000 New Zealand citizens to Australia since December 1999 alone. This figure includes significant numbers of Tagata Moana. A number of pressures are faced that are experienced by many immigrant groups such as pressure to assimilate to a monolingual norm. A generation gap often develops between elders and younger members of our communities as younger people adopt the mores and values of dominant Australian culture. Lack of educational qualifications also creates pressures on families to compete economically.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that lack of culturally appropriate government and non-government services is creating problems for Tagata Moana communities.

There is a clearly different experience for our communities who are migrating from contexts where our languages and cultures are not only recognised but celebrated. Auckland, which is said to have the largest number of Tagata Moana in the world, hosts the Annual Auckland Secondary Schools Polynesian Festival which draws over one hundred thousand people and has representatives from the majority of secondary schools in the city. It is a forum where notions of excellence are nourished and diversity is encouraged. Each of the island groups has a dedicated section in the festival in which families and other networks are able to gather and support the performance of their team. The festival is an integral part of the Auckland calendar. Similarly, the Annual South Pacific Arts and Cultural Festival is another

opportunity for Tagata Moana to showcase the best of Pacific culture and knowledge.

The migration experience into multi ethnic NSW society poses its own challenges. Maintenance of family, culture, religious and linguistic heritage are often forced to compete with everyday issues of survival. These pressures on young people and their families manifest themselves in a number of ways.

Suspension and expulsion rates of our youth from schools is significantly higher than for other groups. Evidence suggests that our children are over represented in Department of Juvenile Justice Detention Centres. There are significant implications for providers of interventions and social services when dealing with NESB or youth from Pacific Island backgrounds. The role of family and language play a key role when developing frameworks for interventions that will enhance community well being.

A Mana Based Model for Programs in Tagata Moana Communities

“The Framework for the Reduction of Maori Offending (FReMo) enables any initiative that has implications for Maori to develop a rationale, methodology, implementation plan and evaluation from a pool drawn from the Western or mainstream literature, from Maori perspectives, and from Tikanga Maori (Maori beliefs).”

(Page 5, Framework for Reducing Maori Offending, Garry McFarlane-Nathan, NZ Department of Corrections)

This quote from the introduction to FReMo provides a useful basis for the development of a framework for working with Tagata Moana. It acknowledges that tikanga, or beliefs held by our peoples provide an excellent anchoring point around “the construction of positive familial and interpersonal relationships, personal and group accountability and responsible behaviour.”

Pacific Island peoples are at their best familiar contexts - Pacific norms and culture provide the most appropriate model for service provision in these communities.

Mana, or identity, plays a crucial role in the self identity of Tagata Moana. The basis for the development of programs aimed at reducing offending must take this factor into account. This is the case in the provision of educational services as diverse as literacy and numeracy programs to those that address anti violence strategies. Language and culture are not issues restricted to specialised classes.

Providing Educational Services Within Educational Contexts

Training programs within Correctional Centres can play a pivotal role in the rehabilitation of Tagata Moana. Using some of the foundations outlined above, providers can ask a number of questions when developing culture specific or generalised programs that Tagata Moana participate in.

Questions

What backgrounds do the inmates come from?

What people resources are required to develop this program (include local communities, elders, inmates themselves)?

What physical resources are required to implement this program (information resources, instruments etc)?

How can the community be involved in the development and implementation of these programs?

What networks can the Department link in to when ensuring appropriateness of delivery/content?

Case Studies in service provision for Tagata Moana communities in Sydney.

Chifley College Mount Druitt

This College has nine campuses in Mt Druitt. Mt Druitt also has a relatively high density of Samoan and other Pacific Island Communities. The College has established a Pacific Island Advisory Body to advise on educational and other issues effecting these communities. The College has employed Pacific Island Community Liaison Officers within campuses to assist and advise with young people and the schools.

Carving Programs, MRRC, Long Bay etc.

In the period 1990-2000 a number of cultural programs have been implemented covering a range of Tagata Moana knowledge and culture. The carving program involved the employment of a suitably qualified instructor and the purchase of tools and materials. The program successfully transmitted traditions and creative skills to inmates in a culturally relevant environment.

Summary

As indigenous peoples, Tagata Moana share some of the experiences and beliefs as Koori people in this country. Our experiences shape our outlook and are a valuable tool to be employed in designing programs aimed at rehabilitation and reducing offending.

The best approach when dealing with Tagata Moana and their families is centred around principles of self-determination. The models and frameworks for service provision already exist within a Pacific context - we encourage you to look beyond these shores in searching for a better way. We have treaties, we have unique approaches to programs, we have local experiences to contribute. As trainers and policy officers we have the ability to develop policies and programs that take into account the richness of our culturally and linguistically diverse partners. The solutions and answers are in the hands of Tagata Moana - the Pacific Island communities. As partners we encourage you to assist in the provision of space and resources so that our goals can be achieved.