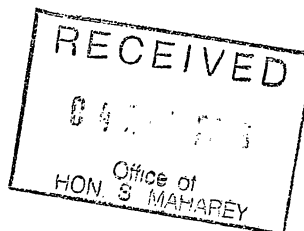


14 DEC 2006

Curriculum Project



47 Wairere Rd  
Wanganui.

27 November 2006

Minister of Education.

As a New Zealander I find the proposal to remove Treaty of Waitangi reference from official education curriculum policy documents very disturbing.

This proposal is just another expression of that huge ground swell in our society motivated to deny the essential taha Maori dimension in our identities as New Zealanders.

I have presented my submission in the form of an open letter, from one individual to another, because the proposal is a symptom that can only be addressed by considering the totality of who we are being as New Zealanders.

I am interested that you read the letter as an individual and not through the listening of your official position.

I am also interested that the observations and conversational thoughts in the letter stand alone and are not accepted or dismissed simply on the basis of the personal authority of their source.

Kia ora

Howard C.W. Taylor

Howard Taylor

sfd. Civic.

FROM: OFFICE OF HON. S. MAHAREY
TO: MBE
DATE RECEIVED
WORKING DAYS
WORKING DAYS
(SPECIFIED DATE)
DIRECT REPLY / REPORT
DIRECT REPLY / APPROPRIATE ACTION
RECORD

Ka tangi te titi

Ka tangi te kaka

Ka tangi hoki ko au

An open letter on being a New Zealander:

A SUBMISSION in response to the denigration of the essential taha Maori component in our identity as New Zealanders including the proposal to remove Treaty of Waitangi reference from official education curriculum policy documents.

The basic ingredient in our identity as New Zealanders is our connection to Aotearoa-New Zealand the place; the land, the mountains, the rivers, the seas, and the winds and rains that define it. And for those of us choosing this *place* to be our home the Tangata Whenua come as part of the package. The Tangata Whenua are just as much part of the 'place' as the mountains and rivers and axiomatically qualify as 'New Zealanders'. Unless our intention is simply to exploit the resources of our new home, unless we are unashameably or unwittingly assuming our New Zealand identity through right of conquest, right of superiority, then part of the deal in choosing to become a New Zealander is to accept and respect the world view and values of the Tangata Whenua as the Tangata Whenua express and manifest them. Part of the implicit promise made by each of us in accepting the invitation to become a New Zealander is to accept the fact that the Tangata Whenua are the indigenous people and have control over the working of their own destiny in their own land. Some of us descendent of family several generations resident in New Zealand are still struggling to acknowledge the implicit promise made to fully accept and respect the people amongst whom we have chosen to live. All this is just a fact of our particular Aotearoa-New Zealand history.

The instant we find a way of listening so we feel we are 'on their side' as well, the instant we begin listening to the Tangata Whenua as the first people, the people of the land, we begin realising and encompassing the 'us' quality that makes us uniquely New Zealanders. We become Tangata-Tiriti with acceptance and belongingness and a place to realise and express our own individual uniqueness within the 'us' amalgam of the Tangata Whenua-Tangata Tiriti iwi. Our listening literally gives who we are being and the world we live in.

A while back in a paper on post traumatic stress syndrome, delivered by a Tangata Whenua speaker to a professional group, the 1881 Parihaka persecution was referred to as '...this is our holocaust'. For some of us the most significant thing coming out of that seminar and the use of that metaphor '...this is our holocaust...' was the unforgivable insult directed toward the Jewish people. Some of us publicly voiced the opinion that the speaker was 'well intentioned but lacked integrity'. Sensationalised in the media our reaction was passionate, apologies were demanded, heads were to roll. This was our listening; this was our world.

For many of us listening as 'us New Zealanders' the metaphor '...this is our holocaust...' gave us a measure of the enormity of the injustice and the depth of hurt experienced by the Taranaki peoples in the Parihaka affair and the depth of hurt that still remains. Our listening also gave us an intimation of the significance of the 'apology' component in the way we redress historical wrongs. This was our listening; this was our world.

Those of us who are sick to death of The Treaty of Waitangi, see Treaty settlements as a 'gravy train industry', wish to remove Treaty references from all official policy documents, are opposed to Tangata Whenua having automatic representation in national and regional government, see Maori simply as another ethnic group, use the word 'race' when specifically alluding to Maori, use the term 'most New Zealanders' when specifically excluding Tangata Whenua, take a stand on the Tangata Whenua no longer existing as a 'pure indigenous race' ... are polarising, divisive and denying our history. In fact all of us who voice that 'Maori' (whatever we mean by that term) are an obstacle in some way to our fully realising our own life chances in this land are assuming our New Zealand identity and belongingness through right of conquest, right of superiority, right of arrogance. Those of us who are aggressively 'anti-Maori' are still in the position of being rootless global villagers or dislocated 'other nationalities' resident in New Zealand. This is also just a fact of our particular historical situation ... and it is all good.

In our ongoing conversation, 'what makes a New Zealander', a switched on contributor has recently noted, '... There is no other western country as committed as us to owning up to our history and attempting in very practical ways to redress its wrongs. It takes a *big people* to attempt that...'. We are all surviving the best way we can in the only terms we know how and we are doing very well at it. Some of us through our European culture have been

imprinted with quite defined schema for classifying and labelling people and are intuitively compelled to rank everyone qualitatively somewhere in these schema. In the recent 'come home Kiwi' kaupapa some of the successful young New Zealanders working overseas attributed the essence of their success to the fact they couldn't be slotted into whatever social structure existed there. We all have values of which we are not conscious that determine how we think and behave. Some of us even have values we deny. We are all to various degrees trapped within the 'square' of our particular world view and the many frustrating 'talking past each other' experiences we have stem from the fact that our world views differ in essential ways.

The Tangata Whenua have, to give it a label, a what-is-best-for-us world view/way of being usually described in such terms as whanaungatanga (family, accepting the 'us' quality in everyone, respecting basic human dignity, listening for the greatness in others, awhi, caring, affection, responsibility, laughter ...), manaakitanga (caring, laughter, kindness, blessing, humility, courtesy, respect, obligation, self sacrifice, ...), kaitiakitanga (guardianship, protection, responsibility, stewardship, a seamless spiritual connection to the land and its flora and fauna...) and aroha (listening, affectionate regard, humour, caring, unconditional acceptance, nurturing, empathy, respect, sensitivity, a seamless spiritual connection with the essential humanity in all others ...). These concepts exist in the 'being' and in metaphor and are inclusive of all individuals and groups in our society, including even enemies, nga hoariri (angry friend).

Those of us enrolled in the what-is-best-for-us way of being, already regard all people who have made this country their home as **one** people and seem to relate to each other as special individuals rather than through 'labels' roles or positions. In public debate we tend to be just who we are in our daily lives; 'being our word' and not posing a 'must look good' persona specifically worn for a particular purpose or role. We focus on the issues and find it unnecessary to make personal criticism part of our persuasion. And we seem to comfortably encompass differing and dissonant views or moral stances within the working of our daily lives. We can happily encompass and share in differing religions. We have no difficulty in granting compassionate parole to a person convicted of a serious crime who is dying of cancer and wishes to spend his last days amongst his family. We have no difficulty in rewarding an employee for good service even though the same employee has purportedly embezzled money from us. The essence of the what-is-best-for-us way of being seems to be what ever it is we

touch on when we are thinking and feeling in terms of 'caring' (in the manakitanga whanautanga sense).

A while back a kaumatua of a west Auckland teaching marae was asked on National Radio why so many Maori students were being expelled from school.. His reply was 'perhaps schools should be more caring' Like trying to translate manaakitanga as political party policy into practical legislation legislating caring seems nigh impossible and yet in terms of affecting human behaviour, facilitating success in education and industry, facilitating success in any group where people meet for a purpose 'caring' seems to be the prerequisite, the life force almost.

In any practice-theory research on leadership, motivation or creating successful pleasant profitable work places you care to hunt out you will find that in the formulae for success there are two prerequisites. Top of the list is simply to be appreciated for who you are as a person. You are motivated, energised, life is suddenly good, when another person through a touch, a smile, their tone of voice, a word congruent with their body language, acknowledges you or compliments you simply because you are who you are. You sense they enjoy your company. You sense they are listening to you. You are valued. *You belong*. Secondly, you feel competent, you feel valued, you are energised, when another person acknowledges some particular quality or skill you have and your particular contribution to the activities of the group in which you are involved. The what-is-best-world-view is more a state of 'being' than a professed stand.

It is difficult to describe a particular world view through the language of another and the language of the what-is-best-for-us world view does not easily translate into the language of the rights-based world view through which the majority of us are living our lives.

A rights-based world view champions a multitude of often hard won human rights. In a parental sort of way we want what is best for people and we are fairly knowledgeable and authoritative about the best way to make them do it. We like to be rationally fair, just and understanding. The rights-based world view focuses on individual achievement, individual success, individual status. Our sense of belongingness, our value as a person, depends upon our achievements, our successes, our rating in relation to others and our perception of how we think others perceive us. We have a way of subconsciously and compulsively slotting everyone into a hierarchy, better than – less than, and where we fit into that hierarchy. We are

concerned with looking good, being right, justifying ourselves and avoiding being dominated by others. In the political field we often have to play the role of being right, looking good or voicing policy we are personally uncomfortable with. We have to watch our every word and when we are prevented from being our word, being honest with ourselves, our integrity is absent at that point. Some of us find that inheritably stressful. As a natural expression of rights-based being we tend to use reward-praise and personal criticism as a means of affirming our authority and personal status. It might be observed that every utterance of those of us coming from a rights-based world view is first to establish our own status within our immediate social group.

Some while back in an address to the nation the speaker had cause to criticise the Tangata Whenua because women seemingly do not have speaking rights in a marae situation. On a subsequent occasions where a marae situation has been incorporated into certain official government ceremonies some of the participants had cause to make the same criticism. All of these very strong characters were firstly establishing their own personal image, status and identity within the society they were dependent upon for recognition. Secondly their stand against sexism and the stand for the rights of women, from a rights-based world view, was admirable. However for those of us coming from a what-is-best-for-us world view this criticism was certainly not in our best interests. For the Tangata Whenua, especially in the case of powhiri, the ethos of the marae situation in the Tangata Whenua 'way of being' is of more importance to the group than an individual publicly taking stand against some aspect of meeting protocol. The Tangata Whenua are constantly questioning, debating and challenging, often quite bitterly, marae kawa and other traditional customs and this is done within an appropriate 'marae' situation where the outcomes are within the bounds of what is best for all of us New Zealanders. Public criticism of the Tangata Whenua, here, remains within the context of the meeting itself.

Criticism is enervating. This is just a fact of our human condition. Indirect criticism, where family, friends, people you closely identify with are criticised, is subtly more hurtful than direct criticism. As a people the Tangata Whenua, through the media, suffer continuous 'rights-based' criticism. It is almost as if some of us are waiting in ambush for a chance to criticise Maori. Mismanagement of Treaty settlement money; mismanagement and failure of business ventures; taniwha holding up roadworks; tapu holding up land development; spinning the term 'Maori' as a causal factor in crime, health system and benefit dependency statistics; money spent on the rituals of relocating native birds and frogs; resisting

government closure of certain schools; problems with Iwi radio and Maori TV; inter and intra iwi dissention over Treaty settlement compensation anomalies; Treaty settlements and the definition of 'iwi' and 'urban Maori'; criticism of Te Wananga o Aotearoa; highlighting the misdemeanours and dysfunction of individuals as a Maori problem; marae kawa in government institutions; singing our national anthem in Maori; too much Maori culture ... are a few of the opportunities some of us have taken to point out the 'wrongs' and justify our (probably quite subconscious) Maori-as-an-obstacle listening. The springs of this listening, I suspect, also had a major coming out in the surge of support for the now notable policies-not-based-on-race Orewa speech. And again it is all good.

So many of our young people (and not so young people) are now discovering the 'taha Maori' voice in their 'us New Zealanders' identity and in fact many more of us are now listening to and comfortably using aspects of Te Reo in our daily living. Most significant of all perhaps is that many of us are now being enrolled in taking ownership of our shared Aotearoa-New Zealand history and restorying its facts within the framework of what-is-best-for(all of)-us' New Zealanders. Amazingly, I-can't-believe-our-lucky-stars amazingly, the guidelines for storying and restorying our shared history were given to us right at the beginning with the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. This was the genesis of the remarkable nation of 'big people' we are becoming today.

More a convention than a 'treaty' as such The Treaty of Waitangi is our founding document, our most valuable taonga, and an ongoing spiritual experience (spiritual in the sense of realising what is essential in our relationship to one another, to our natural environment and to the cosmos). The Treaty is a reminder and safeguard against the Tangata Whenua being completely demeaned and diminished as (lets say) all other colonised indigenous peoples round the world. For those of us, who, irrespective of a treaty, would have accepted and respected the Tangata Whenua and their culture, the Treaty is an assurance and for those of us struggling with out belongingness, we are no longer our 'home country' and yet we do not feel we belong as New Zealanders, the Treaty is a beacon. And that indefinable 'uniqueness' other peoples see in us; perhaps our open, cheerful, friendliness; accepting others at their face value; being able to get along with any nationality, ethnic group or religion; the pride we acknowledge in being demonstrably accepted by the Tangata Whenua themselves, aspects of our creative inventiveness ... is gifted to us directly through the ethos of the Tangata Whenua and the working of The Treaty. We are becoming one

people without subjugating or sacrificing our individual uniqueness. In fact the working of the Treaty enables us to give expression to our individual creativity and uniqueness. The concept of 'partnership' is not longer adequate in describing the 'us New Zealanders' evolving through the working of The Treaty.

Waitangi the place and Waitangi Day are also *our* taonga. Waitangi Day, fully supported by the Tangata Whenua, is New Zealand Day and increasing numbers of us are being enrolled in this good natured 'grass roots' celebration of our Tangata Whenua-Tangata-Tiriti oneness.

If need be Waitangi is also a legitimate forum for protest. The marae is a unique forum for protest. The korero on a marae can be humorous, considered, passionate, aggressive, but is 'in committee' as it were and continues until the kaupapa, the business of the meeting, reaches some sort of closure. Often the simple voicing of a conflict or perceived injustice is its solution. We need our rebels and protesters to ensure we don't become too complacent or too well adjusted to dysfunctional aspects of our society and to insist we keep listening for the quiet voices being drowned out in the championing of rational justice, democracy and the right of majority. We need our rebels' dissonant energy.

It is a shame that for many of us the only experience of the Treaty of Waitangi kaupapa and the 'taha Maori' ingredient of our identities as New Zealanders is through sensationalising, polarising, celebrity-driven information-spin media programmes. The first aim of these programmes is to maintain their entertainment poll ratings and the celebrity status of those fronting the programmes. We soak up the scandal and criticisms generated by these programmes to feed our need to justify ourselves, to be right, to satisfy our need for that 'we' feeling and belongingness we get through in-group sharing of habitually reiterated modes of complaining. Luckily however there is an increasing number of television and radio programmes taking a solution thinking conversational approach to information presentation, interviews and discussions. Here the presenter and the mode of presentation are not steering the outcome of the discourse or pushing to make somebody wrong. The presenter and participants are given the space to articulate and explore feelings and ideas, to acknowledge prejudice and misconception that may arise, and, without the threat of losing face, accept or be enrolled in another's world view.



The world view labels rights-based and what-is-best-for-us are a best fit for the simplistic observations I have summarised but they can only be metaphors and are not absolute or true in themselves. Like the blind men describing an elephant the metaphors rights-based and what-is-best-for-us, rational and emotional, scientific and spiritual, Confucianism and Taoism, the political and the personal, justice and compassion ... all seem to touch on seemingly related aspects of an essential dichotomy in the human condition. I suspect we all manifest to some degree bits of that essential human condition depending on the situation in which we are trying to survive. I suspect also that those predominantly what-is-best-for-us are best able to encompass both world views while those of us stuck with the imprinted belief of having to 'get it right' and 'looking good' are trapped in the rights-based view and will passionately defend our rightness for being there. The essential reality of these metaphors is ultimately unknowable to us behind the senses and the best we can do is model what we imagine or feel the 'thing' is in language. Society takes place in the medium of this language and the 'realness' of what we create is simply determined by the number of people who agree that it is real. The trouble is as people and society change some of the language models we live our lives through lose their best fit.

The word 'Maori' is of mixed usefulness. 'Maori' is useful at the moment when referring to Maori culture; those symbols, language, mores, values, world view ... that the various Tangata Whenua iwi seem to have in common. 'Maori' labels the language the Tangata Whenua speak. The Maori Party represent those Tangata Whenua and others who want to be represented. If you hear the word "Maori" rising to your lips and you know its in the context of praise or affirmation of Maori (what ever you mean by 'Maori') then spread it around. If Maori are complimented by an outsider, just as when any of our own are successful or complimented, we all feel good. In most situations 'Maori' is used affirmatively and mostly by Tangata Whenua themselves.

However when we use 'Maori' in the context of criticism we are merely indicating our position in the 'us and them' 'Pakeha and Maori' polarised view of the world. No matter how well intentioned we are or how intelligently we voice our stand we are forever trapped in the polarising 'A versus B' model of being. In this style of relating the medium, in the end, is really the only message.

'Maori' used critically is an emotional stance and has no relationship to the hugely diverse range of individuals who are the Tangata Whenua. If you hear yourself using 'Maori' in the context of 'us and them' or as criticism or if you are not really sure because that's the

word you use all the time then use 'Tangata Whenua' (People of the Land). If there is a temptation to just transpose 'Tangata Whenua' for 'Maori' then use the English 'People of the Land'. And People of the Land is just that; every single person with any degree of Tangata Whenua ancestry. To begin with, as an exercise to remind us of who is included in the term 'People of the land', run through the back of your mind your imagined awareness of: the huge number of Tangata Whenua you have no possible way of knowing who are quietly (or noisily), creatively, productively contributing to the richness of our society; the huge number of Tangata Whenua who are proud also of their other-nationalities ancestry; the considerable numbers of Tangata Whenua scattered round the world successful in their various callings; all your Tangata Whenua acquaintances, friends and colleagues; the names and faces of those humble Tangata Whenua giants who might be opera singers, spiritual leaders, writers, poets, film makers, creative and performance artists, soldiers, sports people, academics, leaders ... and all those humble giants you haven't heard off. If we are being critical in some way (and it is important we confidently voice our criticisms because once they are out in words you can get hold of them and see them for what they are) thinking 'People of the Land' might just guide us to specify exactly, who is threatening us, in what way is the threat personal to us, and what practical 'face to face' steps we might take to remove the threat (if the threat turns out to be real that is and we are not just scapegoating some of the other worries in our lives).

Interestingly enough removing the word 'Maori' from our vocabulary might help us reframe our Maori-as-an-obstacle listening. Just say you were watching that programme on youth crime in one of our popular mid-North Island cities and one of the programme presenters has just pointed up his intelligent, insightful, journalist research skills clarifying that by sampling all young people from the same (apparent) socio-economic level 95% of youth crime in that city is caused by Maori. '... Get rid of Maori and you get rid of youth crime in that city... '.

Now take out 'Maori' and what do we have? 95% of youth crime in that city is caused by ...? We can't say 'Tangata Whenua' because we now know they are such a hugely diverse complex lot they could not possibly be collectively responsible for crime in that city. We are left with the insightful discovery that 95% of youth crime is caused by young people... possibly. For any solution to the problem we are now obliged to consider the nature of young people, as young people: the nature of each individual's life story in that particular social situation we as a society have created.

This also might be our focus if we remove the word 'Maori' from our thinking about child abuse. The seeds of these child abuse tragedies lie in the stories of the lives of the

individuals concerned, whatever their ancestral origins, and for 'us New Zealanders' they are our tragedies.

And 'Pakeha'. Pakeha are all the rest of us complex lot who are not Maori. The only thing that defines us a group is our 'not-Maoriness'; a difficult position from which to find ones belongingness as a New Zealander. Using the word 'Pakeha' also traps us in the going-nowhere thinking of the 'us and them' 'Pakeha and Maori' story many of us are currently living.

For those of us identifying as 'us New Zealanders' 'Tangata Tiriti' is a far more useful term. That is who we are; People of The Treaty. As with Tangata Whenua we can all happily identify with our own particular iwi, however we perceive them, within the Tangata Whenua-Tangata Tiriti amalgam. If we fight a bit it will always be within the boundaries of the intentions of The Treaty and what-is-best-for(all of)-us. Even those apposed to the Treaty, nga hoariri, are regarded by the Tangata Whenua as Tangata Tiriti whether they like it or not. Perhaps the term 'Pakeha' could be used for those of us in that particular iwi. Accepting the invitation of The Treaty literally gives us a 'place to stand' a place to call home without denying our ancestral origins. The working intention enshrined in The Treaty gathers together all the threads of all our individual histories.

Being Tangata Tiriti and living the intentions of The Treaty enables us to acknowledge and accept as our own Aotearoa-New Zealand history from its beginnings to present day. Each of us Tangata Tiriti are a bit like a colourful-as-you-like thread, perhaps part of a bundle of threads, joining at some stage a growing colourful loosely woven rope that had its beginnings with the first people arriving in Aotearoa-New Zealand. Just by joining we contribute our own richness and diversity and at the same time the meaning of our being is completely dependent on when and where we fit into the weave, texture, colour and the history of intertwinings that have created the rope so far. We can take pride in the achievements of our forebears and we do not have to take responsibility for them or feel we have to justify ourselves for any of their actions. There is no place for us to brand any of our contemporaries with the actions of their forebears no matter how sensational, gruesome or unjust those actions might appear to us today. All our forebears were surviving the best way they could in the terms they understood at the time. As it turned out some of their actions

were not nurturing for themselves or others around them and some of the injustices and wrongs have followed us down through the generations.

Anecdotally and from a very small sample, but anybody can check, I have noticed that it is those of us in the older age groups who are struggling to accept the simple historical fact that the Tangata Whenua are axiomatically New Zealanders in their own land and that the rest of us are given the opportunity to stand alongside and with them as New Zealanders through the working of The Treaty. We are nice people. We are grateful New Zealand is not beset by 'race/colour' problems although some of us, escaping from 'race/colour' problems in our home country, are fearful these problems are already happening in New Zealand. A few of us, in the way we voice our fears, seem to have brought these problems with us. We are very good organisers, we are good at coming to grips with social dysfunction and posing authoritative solutions, we are very good at lobbying and expressing our opinions and we accept the fact that we are all responsible beings and it is our own fault if we can't overcome the disadvantages of being in a particular so called racial or socio-economic group. The fact that at the moment so many of us are in positions of influence is a bit of a worry.

The best any of us can do is check the facts of our Aotearoa-New Zealand history. This should be required reading ( watching or listening) for all new immigrants with emphasis on the importance of our founding document. There are many very good Aotearoa-New Zealand history references around depending on where and how deep you wish to go. Some of the most recent references are clear, concise, comprehensive, balanced, very well researched and entertaining to read. Some of these references however, written from a rights-based world view and being read through rights-based world view listening, probably only shadow the Tangata Whenua story as the Tangata Whenua know it to be... A challenge would be, as a balance, to check out our current writers, poets, dramatists, film makers, sculptors and artists who express and explore the nature of being for Tangata Whenua in our society and the enriching subtleties of being Tangata Whenua-Tangata Tiriti New Zealanders. Also there are now a number of opportunities (Te Wananga o Aotearoa for one) for anybody to connect or reconnect with the language and customs of the changing Tangata Whenua world and be enrolled first hand in this essential dimension in our Aotearoa-New Zealand identity.

If there is a tipping point in our conversation realising 'who I am as a New Zealander' its precondition will be the critical number of us who are conscious of who we are being in our

conversations in this particular kaupapa. For ourselves, friends, colleagues and especially political spokespeople we just need to note at the time: whether we are using the word 'Maori' negatively or affirmatively and as an emotional stance or an objective reference; whether we are taking our belongingness for granted within the Tangata Whenua-Tangata Tiriti us-New Zealanders iwi or whether we are assuming our identity as a New Zealander through some sort of 'right of superiority'; whether we appear to be coming from a rights-based or a what-is-best-for-us world view; whether we are just considering the issues or using personal criticism to affirm our own status or belongingness;

There is no need to say anything or be critical in anyway. All approaches are right. That's who we are. Being critical, thinking critical, just puts us back in the rights-based, ping pong, 'A versus B' paradigm. Anyway who you are being is far more enrolling, far more contagious, than any subtle or pointedly persuasive language you might employ. As that famous fond-of-animals Italian saint said 'Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary use words'. Many of us, especially our young people, are already doing this, just getting on with the job of being enthusiastic Tangata Whenua-Tangata Tiriti New Zealanders.

So there you go. Simplistic. Naïve. Quite a few seemingly surmises to kick around in conversation and the rest just observations you can check out in your own world-view language. As the young designer of the New Zealand exhibit in the last Chelsea Flower Show (on being queried about the stiff competition and the challenge of 'getting it right') said, with a brilliant smile, "We are what we are and that's wonderful".

Noreira

I tangi hoki ko au

He Tangata

No Whanganui.