

## **Kaupapa Aukati Iwi: the language of motivation to inspire movement in the arena of racial inequity**

This article is a documented account of a small Māori business (Hauā Partnerships) who were invited to present a workshop at an international summit in Philadelphia, USA. The National Summit for Courageous Conversation (NSCC) serves as the essential strategy for school systems and other educational organisations to address racial disparities through safe, authentic, and effective cross-racial dialogue. ([www.courageousconversation.com](http://www.courageousconversation.com))

In October, 2018 Hauā Partnership took our unique experience in this field of work in Aotearoa New Zealand to Philadelphia to share with like-minded participants. One of the prominent themes we gained at the summit was the language that is used to inspire participants and motivate the collective activism against racial inequity. This will be the strand we pick up and weave through this article.

Pohatu (1996) introduced the term 'Hoa-haere' as a descriptor of the relationship required to progress a sense of partnership, mutual respect and reciprocity. *"Hoa haere - Companionship affirming the importance of the cultural grouping/s in any cultural context". (p.15)*

In the discourse of creating impact to interrupt and disable racial inequities, one of the strategies internationally is to build a consciousness and intelligence with populations of influence in order to strengthen the voice of intolerance and resistance. Our experience in Aotearoa has been a long, slow burn with many variations and catalysts for change to achieve in the first instance, a recognition for the status of Tangata Whenua as the partners in the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi. Racism came to our shores with the colonisers.

The notion of a Hoa-haere asserts - in order to address human conditions of wellness and balance at the highest level; healthy, strong, functional relationships are more achievable when the energy culminated through joining with constant cultural companions (Hoa-haere) is realised and acted upon. (Pohatu and Pohatu, 2004). How these alliances are formed has been the crux of the work we (Hauā Partnerships) are involved in and took to the Courageous Conversations National Summit (NSCC) in Philadelphia, October this year. Our abstract read.....

*Brave Conversations is a facilitation methodology formalised in New Zealand (Aotearoa) in 2011. Brave Conversations provide a liberating space for difficult conversations to occur and entail brokering, facilitation and training that is designed to bridge the intercultural divide where people continuously "talk past each other" (Metge & Kinloch, 1984). Combined experience in the fields of social work, community development, health, education and research inform our expertise in working to improve tolerance and understanding where the White majority population interface with Tangata Whenua (the indigenous people of Aotearoa), also known as Māori. Brave Conversation enables people to speak freely, ask questions and enter a discourse of inquiry and enlightenment. Drawing on traditional relationship values instilled in our upbringing and embedded in our worldview, our critical interpretation of NZ history combined with Brave Conversations provides a safe space conducive to the creation and strengthening of respectful relationships. Brave Conversation assisted and supported Courageous Conversations About Race (CCAR) in recognising the standing of First Nations people in the Aotearoa context. In this seminar participants will be encouraged to not make comparison between CCAR, its theoretical framework and Protocol, and Brave Conversation, but rather, to explore the Brave Conversation methodology and experience in Aotearoa as another mechanism to engage in difficult conversations where difference is restrictive.*

Courageous Conversations About Race (CCAR) is a movement designed to impact disparities in racial equity and has been active since 1992 in the education sector with educationalists across the USA. This year in Philadelphia Pacific Education Group (PEG) celebrated a 10 year milestone for hosting the National Summit for Courageous Conversations. PEG are the change agents responsible for developing a communication tool for having courageous conversations about race and training people to apply a set of protocols in their prospective work environs to challenge racism in the USA, Australia and now the NZ context. Founded by Glenn Singleton (Bachelor of Communications - University of Pennsylvania, and Masters in Higher Education Administration and Policy Analysis - Stanford University) CCAR first came to the shores of Aotearoa to Auckland in 2013 on the invitation of UNITEC's Diversity and Equity team. By 2016 Unitec invested in a partnership to enable CCAR to operate as the Institute of Courageous Conversations About Race (iCCAR) in NZ and a local PEG Team emerged, mentored by PEG USA home office and closely supported by Glenn Singleton. CCAR requires the induction of Summit participants to a set of conditions, agreements and a protocol, which is consciously applied in all dialogue throughout the conference.

In the early stages of this team establishing a profile for CCAR they engaged with ourselves (Hauā Partnerships) who were already active in the cross cultural communication space in New Zealand and utilising a pedagogy coined as Brave Conversations. An ongoing challenge for the team has been to critique the fit for CCAR to the bicultural foundations of Aotearoa New Zealand, the Treaty of Waitangi and the status of Tangata Whenua. This has been an evolving priority for CCAR facilitators over the past 6 years of development in the NZ context.

Brave Conversations is grounded in Tikanga, which guides strategies for facilitating intercultural exchanges and understanding through a Māori lens. We have maintained a close working relationship with Singleton who has been comfortable to be challenged and stretched when questioned how CCAR will include and proactively grow alliance with First Nations people of each continent that CCAR has reached.

In 2015 Hauā Partnership was invited to Baltimore, Maryland. In turn Hauā Partnership invited a NZ delegation of interested individuals. Of these additions four are currently employed or contracted to PEG. As a collective we delivered a two hour workshop highlighting the imperative that connections provide in the Aotearoa New Zealand context. This year Hauā Partnership was invited to return to the 10th National Summit of Courageous Conversations About Race where we presented our experience of what works with Brave Conversations in Aotearoa, to their participants.

Margaret (2013) advances the Hoa-haere dynamic through a study by her of people experienced in working as allies alongside Indigenous People's in Aotearoa and other communities globally. In this study she seeks the input of those who identify their role as the ally to indigenous social justice movements in NZ, North America and Australia. The commentary from allies gives insight to their individual experience including the term ally, the value of using the term, limitations in using the term, the ally role, qualities for being an ally, challenges and responses. Her findings conclude "Cooperative and consensual ways of working move us into different, respectful ways of being - ones that propel us forward while returning us to the original promise of a relationship of mutual benefit". (p.6). Margaret also makes a statement about the changing language being used to describe the support base required to activate the level of commitment and dedication to make a difference and work cooperatively across cultural divides, commenting;

*Being an ally is a practice and a process—not an identity. It is an ongoing practice that is learned and developed through experience. Any term that is used to describe this work will only uphold its integrity if those who use it act in alignment with the intended meaning of the term. (p.193)*

Through our workshop in Philadelphia this year we reiterated a priority to build deep, meaningful and sustainable relationships cross culturally. We examined the pōwhiri process (the formal welcoming ceremony that Māori practice when engaging visitors) and aligned the principles of each component of the pōwhiri relative to our application of Brave Conversations. We illustrated also the opportunity that this ritual of engagement presented from our experience, to change minds and attitudes and gain traction to collectively destabilise racism in Aotearoa. Feedback from participants in this dialogue was a huge appreciation for sharing another cultural perspective on broaching the conversation on racism respectfully. Participants were intellectually, emotionally and spiritually stimulated. They found connection with each other, with ourselves as facilitators and even more so, space to interrogate their own authenticity to go deeper in their personal journey as “conspirators” to Courageous Conversations About Race.

Our language, tikanga (approach), our expressions and our examples provided another dimension that offered a more holistic buy-in to the conversation...whether Brave or Courageous. We took the opportunity to also advocate the crucial positioning of the First Nations in the resistance movements against racism, as the longest serving recipients of racism in the historic and contemporary context of the United States of America. Mulholland (2006) reminds us in New Zealand, “If we are truly serious about rectifying the racial inequality that sees Pakeha exceed Māori in so many areas, then why not implement (at the top level), a proven formula that works for Māori? Namely, Māori doing it themselves” (p.14).

Our time at the NSCC exposed us to incredibly powerful key note speakers who were all activists who had found their preferred medium to interrupt whiteness through lecture, music, poetry, dance, journalism, song and research. We sat in multiple workshops that showcased equity work on the ground across USA and in Australia and NZ educational institutions, in community-based youth initiatives, performing arts programmes, urban settings and on the streets. The CCAR movement is loud, vocal and proud. The call to action around language also challenged the concept of “ally” and shifting to the notion of “co-conspirators” driven by a want to draw bystanders in and demand a more active participation in the kaupapa.

We spent the first two days in *Echoes of the Past, Voices of Today* which is the history of the First Nations people of the USA.

Professor Anton Treuer from the Ojibwe people took participants on a vital counter narrative of the history of USA through the eyes, and experience of the indigenous peoples and stories of their ancestors passed down through time. He punched home that the indigenous experience is “imagined a lot” and “experienced little” in the USA. As Māori participants we felt the grief, the anger, the revolution, the despair and the pride of a people battered by a colonised history not dissimilar to our own. Our presence attracted a lot of interest as exotic beings with different accents. We took advantage of this attention to reinforce the experience and messages of our fellow First Nations people; after all we are still battling with integrating all the voices of our own history into the education curriculum in NZ, despite a partnership agreement existing since 1840.

We felt extremely privileged to have had the opportunity to be emerged in this history as part of a conference on changing the landscape of racial equity for the USA. We left feeling the history of the First Nations people is essential to grounding everyone training to advance as facilitators in CCAR. Surely this needs to be part of the prerequisites to becoming qualified to educate and guide CCAR in any country, starting with the very beginnings of racism in its most raw state of discrimination, through its history of treatment towards the Indigenous population.

Another inspiring forum that has become the culture of the NSCC is the Affinity Group that provides space for racial groupings to caucus and deconstruct learnings in a safe environment; another

strategy employed to interrupt whiteness. Blackwell (2018) states, “ *the values of whiteness are the water in which we all swim. No one is immune. Those values dictate who speaks, how loud, when, the words we use, what we don’t say, what is ignored, who is validated and who is not. Unless we are actively and persistently dismantling these constructs, we are abiding by them*”. We sat in the Indigenous Affinity group where issues were raised openly about inclusion, power sharing and improvements to the CCAR experience as First Nations people. This was not just a talkfest, on invitation Singleton came directly to meet with the group, and hear the issues first hand. His closing address to the Summit consequently actioned the recommendations from the Indigenous Affinity Group, attending to a commitment to affirmative action, improvements in the curriculum beyond token references to First Nation’s models of practice, and staff professional development that would include the histories of First Nations.

In the same address Singleton highlighted his learning from sitting in our workshop on Brave Conversations; this being the essential place of whakawhauanga, and the need for people to find and understand their own aboriginality/indigeneity connection to land and a sense of belonging (he punctuated this with the statement “find your start before racism”).

“What grounds me in who I am? From where do you belong? How can you decolonize your personal life? How can you decolonize your work space?” Singleton went on to reiterate the only practical remedy that exists to address racial equity continues to be affirmative action. We left the closing ceremony heartened that our presence and our contribution on a global level from our tupuna continues to have an impact and change ways of thinking for the greater good of mankind.

Glenn Singleton also underscored in his closing address a deliberate change that PEG had made to their marketing of CCAR, another language contemplation....the banner now only reads Courageous Conversations. What happened to...About Race? To increase the uptake in the education sector such decisions have proven to remove any threat for the professional development of educationalists to participate in Summit. To access high end accommodation and venues Courageous Conversations works. To dispel negative attention and potential protest Courageous Conversations is acceptable.

Back in NZ, CCAR has already actively engaged with numerous organisations both NGOs and government agencies. The Ministry of Education was honoured with the International Racial Equity Leadership Award at the 2018 Summit for their inroads to dealing with racial inequities in education, and their openness to embrace CCAR as the most recent opportunity to lead systemic and attitudinal change in the education and government sectors. The wero for CCAR in the New Zealand Aotearoa context remains, that the race relations agreement known as the Treaty of Waitangi is not flouted or overshadowed by a generic drive for racial equity, that buries the partnership status and obligation for the NZ government to attend first and foremost to disparities for their partner - Tangata Whenua.

We close this article as we did in the workshop we hosted in Philadelphia; taking us back to our context in Ao Teāroa with a universal message captured by Mikaere, 2011;

*“We need to remind ourselves that dismantling racism is a complex task. Our overall strategy therefore requires that we work on many fronts and that we acknowledge the diverse strengths that different people bring to the struggle. We need those who are prepared to take to the streets in order to shake the Pakeha public out of its complacency. We need those who are willing to work for us on the international stage. We need those who are prepared to work inside the system, gnawing away at the intestines of the beast while others attack it from the outside. Most of all, we need to have respect for one another’s contributions to the struggle, and to stand united when tested”(p.95).*

Whether 'ally', 'hoa-haere', 'accomplice', 'co-conspirator' or 'partner', the sentiment underpinning all calls to action for justice require the coming together of people from across the spectrum on to the same waka in order to make progress. Kaupapa Aukati Iwi is the uniting of minds, consciousness, language, and drivers to enable us all to determine our unique contributions and chosen agent or means to make a difference.

Ki a koe tētehi kīwai, ki a au tētehi kīwai

*For you one handle of the basket and for me, the other. The work needs to be shared, it is a burden that is to be shared equally.*

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For further information about CCAR Aotearoa contact via this website  
<https://courageousconversation.com/iCCAR/>

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