

State of the Pakeha Nation 2007

Catherine Delahunty

Mihi to tangata whenua and to elders of the Tangata Tiriti movement
Personal introduction

My greetings to the poet doctor, the man of law and lore, the woman who has been a visionary teacher and is a Te Tiriti based gardener.

I am proud to stand here with these leaders of the best of Pakeha culture. They give me hope.

But the past and present state of the majority of the Pakeha nation is one of denial. Denial that we even exist as a nation, which uses democratheid (apartheid by majority) in maintaining control of Aotearoa. Democratheid is by no means a complete system or we would not be finding growing numbers of Pakeha supporting Te Tiriti events such as this one, but a powerful systemic injustice remains.

3 current political examples symbolise the underlying racism of the Pakeha nation

1. The current Prime Minister preferred to meet with a celebrity sheep named after a Hollywood cartoon than 25,000 or more tangata whenua
2. The High Schools Curriculum Review has been preparing to remove Te Tiriti from the syllabus
3. The New Zealand Govt representatives at the United Nations voted against the recognition of the collective rights of indigenous peoples

Then there's the flag on the Harbour Bridge debacle. How can we trust Transit to build bridges when they can't even fly our two nations' flags together?

This might sound unduly negative to a mainly Pakeha audience who are here because they are willing to focus on Te Tiriti, but it is my belief that wider changes will only come when we face the truth about ourselves as a culture. As film director Ken Loach recently said "If we can tell the truth about the past then maybe we can face the truth about the present".

It is impossible to talk about the Pakeha Nation 2007 without facing our history. Our history is built on a deep contradiction and an ongoing commitment to state sanctioned violence, not by the people in this meeting, but by the powerbrokers and passive racists who maintain control. I am talking about a belief in equality for the assimilated and fairplay for everyone who acts like a Pakeha and I am generalising wildly to make a point, but living in Te Tairāwhiti has only strengthened my view that we have a long way to go. 50% of the population is tangata whenua and the level of poverty and discrimination resembles the north. We have plenty of beaten women; gutted communities and whanau living in state housing that have never had proper electricity or water supplies. But lots of Pakeha are drinking wine and surfing, and they say so loudly without saying a word, would you please shut up about the connection between racism and poverty?

The Pakeha contradiction comes from our origins, so many of us being the descendants of families starved out of Ireland, burnt out of the Highlands of Scotland and made surplus people in the English class system. We, the children of cannon fodder and global capitalism can barely acknowledge the loss of bones and sacred places left on the other side of the world. The severing from ancestors and from the land has brought us material advantage and spiritual emptiness. The denial of this condition assists us in our denial of the tangata whenua indigenous reality and justifies our control of resources. But it has required a weird forgetfulness.

Thus when it comes to the redress of colonisation and facing up to the huge environmental crisis coming our way, Pakeha are not collectively well equipped. We are comfortably happy to be Kiwis, to co-opt everything from haka to ta moko, and to describe Kiwi culture as one of ANZACS, gumboots and "do it yourself". Just don't ask some of us the meaning of Po Kare Kare Ana or the indigenous name of that creek behind our suburb.

There are honourable exceptions to all these statements and they include Taiwiwi including Pakeha individuals and groups who have dedicated themselves to change. These voices are growing and even if the media ignores them there are Pakeha who stand up and speak out positively on Te Tiriti in every community in Aotearoa. I met these people on the Foreshore hikoī as they came to join us all the way from Gisborne to Napier to Dannevirke and Waipukarau and Masterton. They are small in number but we all know that small numbers of committed people change the world.

For the last 20 years I have been involved in a number of land struggles in defense of the environment and against foreign control. The most powerful metaphor of colonisation to me is to do with a deeply glamorous topic, sewage. It is remarkable how many public toilets and landfills have been built on waahi tapu and food gathering areas. It's almost as if the city fathers (and I use the word advisedly) wanted to send a message that "we shit on your culture".

All over the country from the bay opposite Te Tii marae at Waitangi, to the kaimoana beds at Turanga nui a Kiwa, from the sewage ponds at Whaingaroa to the pipi of Whangamata, from Moerewa waterfalls to Whangarei harbour, human waste is being dumped on traditional food sources.

In the numerous local campaigns to clean up this habit the enduring leadership has come from tangata whenua and those environmentalists willing to be aligned with them.

But Pakeha environmentalists often struggle with a very basic issue, for example, Tikapa Moana, the Hauraki Gulf, is it worth protecting as a Marine Park for recreation and biodiversity, or as a pataka kai, a storehouse of food and mana? If we acknowledge the pataka kai we have to acknowledge the rangatiratanga and kaitiakitanga of Hauraki and share power. We have to recognise that not all food comes from the supermarket and that Marine Parks can exclude the food gatherers and breach their traditional rights. This is not to say we don't need to protect biodiversity, we must, but who decides the means?

When it comes to foreign control and subdivision of the coast nothing is sacred. Even that that supposedly holy "birth of a nation site" Te Kuri o Paoa (Young Nicks Head) was abandoned by the local Pakeha historians enamoured of Captain Cook. Very few stood alongside Ngai Tamanuhiri on that maunga, because a New York stockbroker

has every right to buy a historic site and decide whether the manawhenua can get to their fishing grounds.

Today at Mahia some Rongomawahine are protesting against subdivision of their coast and at the roads through their urupa. But again Pakeha who love the outdoors and say they are passionate about Mahia Peninsula are very thin on the ground. What is the meaning of our professed love of this country and if we want to be here, why can't we support the manawhenua in their acts of love? Some Pakeha do give meaning to this love when they fight alongside tangata whenua to protect Ngunguru Sandspit or hold hands with them on the foreshore at Ahipara.

In 2005 some of us toured the country with the "Sawmill Workers Against Poisons" and the Vietnam Veterans: a motley crew of environmentalists, young tangata whenua activists and people who had been poisoned by dioxin. We traveled together with respect for the leadership of the tangata whenua and with awareness of Te Tiriti as our driving force. For me it was a model of collaborative supportive political action that enhanced the dignity of both cultures. Those people still inspire me.

But in 2007 we still cannot look to the majority of Pakeha to fight the ongoing corporate globalisation of Aotearoa, not if it means publicly standing alongside Maori. Our roots are still too deeply embedded in the privileges of colonisation. It is like a tapeworm in our guts, which causes us to hunger for capitalist consumption and dominance even though it's killing the planet, our well being and our humanity. The corporations are keen that the next generation of tangata whenua swallows the tapeworm, then no one will be shamed by tangata whenua collectivism, Maori will be a successful and marketable global brand, not a threat to globalisation's damaging individualism

It is not rocket science that Pakeha may be a minority by the late 21st century. It is to be hoped that tangata whenua will be the largest cultural grouping in their own country again. However all the demographic changes will be a change for the worst if Pakeha cannot come to terms with being a minority culture. Our attachment to Westminster democracy has been based on our majority status. Will we find to our horror that minorities in such a system are overruled and undermined? Will we react by supporting more truly equitable and culturally diverse methods of decisionmaking, based upon Te Tiriti, or will we build a fortress, clinging to wealth and power behind barbed wire and guard dogs?

Jane Kelsey stood at Waitangi last year and said that Pakeha were not ready for constitutional change and she's right. All it would take would be few more Orewa speeches written for either major political party by genocidal spindoctors, and Te Tiriti would be legally reduced to an anachronism, a so called nullity yet again.

So we take the slow road and our hope is in young people, the next generation of Tangata Tiriti who have the courage to face our history and our present. Our hope is in the role models, the Tangata Tiriti all over this country who are living Te Tiriti the best they can, the elders we rely on as all cultures rely on their elders. Our hope is also in the awe inspiring manaaki that tangata whenua continue to extend to us, but for just how long?

It is our job as Pakeha Te Tiriti activists to kill the tapeworm in the guts of our culture. We have to awaken in Tauwiwi and especially Pakeha the recognition of the

common ground that is staring us in the face. The effects of greed and the gross concentrations of wealth threaten the survival of humans on the planet as the environment collapses around us. It's not an accident or a matter of "the environment" in isolation; it's grounded in our financial systems. Pakeha have a choice, obsess about getting on the Rich List or take the opportunity to stand behind the indigenous protectors of planet earth.

Pakeha culture has the potential to recover from our shared amnesia and remember who we are, it is happening in many corners, in the shared gardens, the books being written, the films being made, and truths being told by Pakeha who carry respect for Te Tiriti in their hearts. In social change education work we are encouraged by the numbers of Pakeha community workers who are questioning their own practices and privileges and who are committed to supporting haputanga at a community level. Sure the institutions and the Government are way behind, but as always true leadership comes not from the celebrity sheep fanciers, but from people like Network Waitangi Whangarei hosting this event and being visible at Waitangi year after year, like the Sisters of St Joseph in Wanganui returning Maori land to its owners, like the Treaty Resource Centre in Manukau City, the Peace Movement Aotearoa., the Anti Racism Crew, to name a few. We need to acknowledge the many, mainly Pakeha women who have given utter commitment to Te Tiriti education across the board in Aotearoa. I have to acknowledge the radical church people, who stood at the Foreshore and Seabed Select Committee and were mocked for their support for tangata whenua customary rights. These people are in this work for life and not for status or reward. We should all celebrate the completion of the Treaty information kit for migrants which came from Pakeha community educators; it's as useful to us 5th generation migrants as to those who arrived this week,

If these individuals and groups can grasp the obligations of the Te Tiriti then so too can their cousins and children. It won't be achieved by beating our own over the head with the stick of righteousness, (a method I have personally attempted many times), but by walking with them to that place where our story started as migrants and settlers who are here by rights of Te Tiriti not by dominance and denial.

There is hope in Charmaine's garden and all the teachers she has inspired, in Glenn's poetry and in David's commitment to good law. There is even hope in the sewage campaign, where slowly but surely Pakeha are refusing to flush and forget.

We who have woken up have to show our own people that Pakeha have something huge to gain from letting go control, that is to be fully human, culturally and collectively, Te Tiriti as it ever was, is our opportunity.