

A conversation with Pākehā and tauīwi evaluators reflecting on their journeys and hopes for social equity- and Tiriti-based practice in Aotearoa

Lauren Sweetman Babbington, Meenakshi Sankar, Paula White, and Jeph Mathias, with Kate McKegg

Starting the conversation

At the October 2022 ANZEA Conference a panel of Pākehā and tauīwi evaluators reflected on their practice journeys. The abstract for their panel read:

How are Pākehā and Tauīwi evaluators reflecting on their identity, values and professional journeys so far? What are the most important lessons they have learned along the way? What are their hopes for social equity and te Tiriti-based practice and outcomes in future?

These are not new questions. Rather, this is a conversation that has underpinned ANZEA from its inception. It is woven through its constitution and is reflected in the current Evaluator Competencies (2011) and Professional Standards (2015) frameworks. In 2018, a position statement was drafted as a touchstone for discussions among ANZEA members about how we understand ourselves as Pākehā

and tauīwi evaluators as well as our responsibilities for working with Māori communities and peers, and within a diverse and multicultural society. The conversation is continuing.

For this session, practitioners who identify as Pākehā and tauīwi evaluators have engaged in deep reflection about their “whys” and what it means to them to be members of our evaluation professional community. They will share unique perspectives on their:

- journeys so far and how they have felt about milestones along the way
- real-world stories and their most important lessons learnt
- hopes for the future of social equity- and Tiriti-based practice in Aotearoa.

We have the privilege of written reflections from the four presenters who were on this panel: Dr Lauren Sweetman Babbington, Meenakshi Sankar, Paula White, and Jeph Mathias.

Lauren Sweetman Babbington is a Canadian researcher, activist, musician, and evaluator, with a background in medical ethnomusicology, anthropology, and social justice. She has held a range of roles in the nonprofit, academic, and public sectors, and currently works at Manatū Taonga, the Ministry for Culture and Heritage.

Meenakshi Sankar is an experienced research and evaluation practitioner who arrived in New Zealand 25 years ago. She is of Indian origin and undertakes evaluation work for the New Zealand public sector and internationally for various multilateral agencies.

Paula White is an independent researcher and evaluator and art enthusiast who has 20 years’ experience working across a range of government policy and programme settings. She is Pākehā, identifies as a tangata Tiriti, and lives on the Kāpiti Coast.

Jeph Mathias is an Indian New Zealander. As well as place, landscapes (wilderness and mountains), culture, values and domains of

work (evaluation in complexity fits better than complicated medicine) locate his connections. Jeph lives in Ōtautahi and works in Aotearoa and internationally.

Dr Lauren Sweetman Babbington: Towards a more responsive, relational community of practice

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini.

My strength is not the strength of one, it is the strength of many.

Beginnings

I have opened this paragraph with so many different lines, pausing, backtracking. When giving this talk at the ANZEA conference last year, *kanohi ki te kanohi*, the temporality of voice seemed easier somehow, a moment in time transpiring in the shared focus of togetherness. What better forum than that to speak to relationship building and collective practice? Writing is harder—with print comes permanence, and the burden of individuality. Who am I to share this *whakaaro*, and how will you respond to it? Where is our dialogue?

I share this dilemma because it is at once cathartic and also a query into the nature of traditional ways of working in Western contexts. How can we bridge the distance between the acts required of us as thought leaders and practitioners with the collective vision that, I believe, is a prerequisite to a more relationship-based and ethical community of practice? To address this question, reflecting the key messages of my ANZEA talk, here I offer some lessons which I hope will continue the conversation, albeit somewhat one-sidedly for now.

First, however, I would like to offer my gratitude to my esteemed colleagues who co-presented at ANZEA last year, for inviting me on this journey and for their endless understanding and patience while

I committed these words down. I acknowledge the mana whenua of Te Whanganui-a-Tara, on whose land I stay, and those who hosted us at the conference. I remember all those who have come before, and those who have shared their whakaaro with me. My understanding is but a composite of your generosity and wisdom, and for that my work is also yours. Finally, I acknowledge you, dear reader, for your time today. I look forward to meeting you again.

Ko wai au? Who am I?

My mother is first-generation Canadian, an accident of history really, only living there for 3 years before moving back to Hong Kong, where my grandmother was born; my mother's diversity—a mix of Siberian, Ukrainian, Chinese, Iranian, and British—the result of two generations of migration, trade, war, and colonialism. My father, may he rest in peace, was third-generation Canadian, his namesake migrating from Ireland in the mid-1800s from Tullamore, a Gaelic territory colonised by the English in the mid-1500s for its fertile land, more recently known for its whiskey and tidiness.

I was born in Toronto, a region that comprises the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, Anishnabeg, Chippewa, Haudenosaunee, and Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, as well as a global migrant population that comprises almost half of the city.

I first came to Aotearoa New Zealand in 2008 to do fieldwork for my Master's degree in ethnomusicology, spending most of my time in West Auckland. This was followed by increasingly longer trips for doctoral research between 2010 and 2014, after which (fulfilling somewhat an anthropological cliché), I permanently migrated here to be with my husband Tiipene and raise our whānau. We now have three sons, Kiwa, Moanapapaku, and Te Kahuratai, he uri rātou nō Ngāti Tūwharetoa me Ngāti Porou.

Professionally, my background is in the arts, music specifically, and I have a strong interest in social justice and research methodologies, which has permeated my learning and continues to inform my work. This includes a focus on research ethics and how to work alongside Indigenous peoples as “allies” or, as was suggested by an audience member in our panel session, as “*hoa haere*”. In New Zealand, this has meant working towards a more collaborative, Tiriti based, and culturally responsive practice that supports the aspirations of *tangata whenua*. It is in this respect that I hope this writing will be of value. As the basis for this discussion, I return to the opening *whakataukī*: *Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini*.

There are various translations of this well-known *whakataukī* circulating, as a quick Google search will reveal:

My strength is not the strength of one, it is the strength of many.

My success is not the success of an individual, it is the success of the collective.

I come not with my own strengths but bring with me the gifts, talents and strengths of my family, tribe and ancestors.

Or, as Dr Hinemoa Elder (2020, p. 145) writes, “no one gets there alone”.

My relationship with this *whakataukī* began a decade ago, when it was chosen by the *kaumātua* at the site of my doctoral research, a kaupapa Māori forensic mental health unit, to represent our mahi together and to be included in my presentations and writing related to that research. At the time, I took it as an acknowledgement of all those who shared their knowledge with me, who invested in our work together. Over time, however, I’ve come to a set of realisations which now form the basis of my practice. These are not ground-breaking things—the key message here, the importance of thinking collectively and building relationships, has been discussed consistently in

Indigenous and Māori literature for over 20 years (see for example Cram et al., 2015; Davis, 2010; Denzin et al., 2008; Smith, 1999), and indeed was a key theme at the conference.

Here, I hope to amplify this message, particularly for those readers looking to strengthen their cultural capability. At the conference and in other recent professional interactions, I've often heard that there is a strong desire to shift our ways of working to be better *hoā haere*, to become more responsive practitioners under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. However, the lack of knowing how to do so is a barrier. The most common pathway, then, is for organisations and practitioners to rely—often too heavily—upon the advice of Māori colleagues, who may (or may not) have chosen to take on the role of cultural adviser. While such input is invaluable to learning and development, here I suggest that part of the work to better ourselves as *hoā haere* is to take back the burden of being better. So, how do we do this?

Realisation one: We must decentre ourselves, and relocate ourselves as a part of something else

In the whakataukī above, “toa” is most often interpreted as strength or success. However, *toa* also means to be skilful, competent, capable, an expert (*Te Aka Māori Dictionary*). This raises the question: What happens to our practice, as researchers and evaluators, when we conceptualise our expertise as constructed by and representative of a collective vision?

To do this requires decentring ourselves and moving away from the notion of individualism that permeates the Western worldview. Indeed, our systems and structures are designed to prioritise and place value in individual learning, achievement, and ownership, and this is reflected in everything from educational testing to performance reviews to intellectual property law. Individualism is so ingrained in our consciousness that it is the default, and suggesting we think

differently often invokes fear—fear of losing power, authority, legitimacy. We need look no further than the recent backlash against co-governance permeating public discourse to see evidence of this.

In the words of my sister Rebecca, “Individualism sets a structural barrier to building relationships; to knowing how to be in relation, equitably and with reciprocity, with others. Individualism says relationships are extractive, for individual gain or utility, not for collective or even another’s good” (Personal communication, August 2023).

Therefore, I argue that to displace ourselves, to remove ourselves as the centre from which things flow—ideas, ambitions, achievement, benefits—means we can then relocate ourselves as part of something else—a community—a continuum in which we each make a unique contribution, but are not the central focus. This creates space to then enact a shared, collective vision, leveraging resources and increasing our responsiveness to each other. Ultimately, in real terms, this means we can work better as *hoa haere* by sharing decision making and embracing the valued contributions of others at every stage of the *mahi*. Doing so becomes an intuitive foundation to dialogic action, as opposed to “engagement” or “consultation” that is bounded in time and, often, resource.

Realisation two: To be a part of a community requires building and honouring connections as our whole selves

But how, you may be asking, do we relocate ourselves in that “something else”? And how do we do so in an appropriate and sustainable way? I suggest that to move towards a model of collective practice, we must build meaningful, lasting connections with those around us. Here, I turn to the concept of *whanaungatanga*. In one interpretation, it is described as:

relationship, kinship, sense of family connection—a relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides

people with a sense of belonging. It develops as a result of kinship rights and obligations, which also serve to strengthen each member of the kin group. It also extends to others to whom one develops a close familial friendship or reciprocal relationship. (Te Aka Māori Dictionary)

In another interpretation:

Whanaungatanga embraces whakapapa and focuses upon relationships. Individuals expect to be supported by their relatives near and distant, but the collective group also expects the support and help of its individuals. This is a fundamental principle. ... Many tikanga prescribe ways of restoring a balance in relationships because it is recognised that relationships are fragile and need to be nurtured. (Mead, 2003, pp. 28–29)

These descriptions offer several insights for our practice. By way of interpretation, I offer below four thoughts for your consideration.

First, building connections requires the time and space for dialogue. Often, when “whanaungatanga” is employed in professional contexts, it is limited by the structures of our work environments. Whanaungatanga becomes a short agenda item, a means to briefly identify yourself, one at a time, before the “important” work is undertaken. Rather than a dynamic process in which connections are identified and solidified, whanaungatanga becomes a means of introduction. This, I have come to realise, is not the same thing as building relationships—it lacks the time and space for people to reciprocate, to make the connection of “oh, I have an aunty from ...”, or “my kids go to school in ...”. These connections are important—they help us to identify the shared experiences which facilitate belonging.

Second, building connections means approaching professional relationships not just as the “evaluator,” “contractor” or “expert,” but as whole people bringing our whakapapa, experiences, and ideas to

a shared table. In this vein, in including the whakataukī above in a chapter on whanaungatanga, Dr Elder (2020, p. 146) explains: “This is a very well-known saying which continues to have lessons for us in the way we manage our private and public lives and, most crucially, how we remember who we are as we navigate these two worlds. Let’s face it—the divide between public and private is getting really blurred.”

Third, relationship building is not a single moment in time, but a process over many moments and places. It cannot be accomplished in one meeting alone. We must take this into account when we set expectations, design project timeframes, and allocate resources. We must give greater energy to our relationships throughout and beyond the task at hand. We must also consider the obligations we are committing to and their implications over time—including after project completion—and be honest, transparent and realistic about the scope and duration of our contribution as it has been mutually agreed by those involved. To me, these are prerequisites to ensuring our relationships are meaningful, reciprocal, sustainable, and enduring.

Lastly, to pose that often-used evaluator question, how will we know when we have succeeded? Measures of success in/of relational practice need to be agile and build accountability into the process. We cannot assess this alone. Guidance is available from kaupapa Māori researchers and evaluators—and for those of us in government, Te Arawhiti the Office of Māori Crown Relations—about how to plan and evaluate engagement. At its most basic level, accountability requires feedback mechanisms be put in place not just about what is being achieved but also how we are doing as *hoa haere*. Taking on board this feedback is not always easy—but if we want to continue to develop as responsive practitioners under *te Tiriti*, this is a necessary step.

Final thoughts

In closing, I encourage you to reflect upon where you have come from, your way of being in the world, and the type of practitioner you'd like to be. Understand what your unique contribution is and how it has been shaped by others and consider how you will make this contribution as part of and to benefit a wider collective. Find your points of connection with others in your everyday and professional lives and nurture those connections. Consider how, as a part of a collective, you can shoulder some of the burden felt by so many others who are asking the hard questions in the room, and take responsibility to actively unpack, challenge, dismantle, and re-envision how we engage with others. Be bold in your honesty and vision. Only then we can shift towards a community of practice defined by its responsiveness, compassion, and connection with those who have come before, with each other, and with our shared environment.

Ngā mihi nui.

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Meenakshi Sankar: Learning and growing as an evaluator

New Zealand is a bicultural nation

Let me begin with a provocative/impactful question: *NZ is a bicultural nation ...but what about me? Aren't we fast becoming a multicultural society?*

This is a question I have wrestled with ever since I moved to New Zealand 24 years ago. And I have used census data about the changing demographic profile and growing diversity of New Zealand to lend some credibility to my question. For instance, ethnic communities make up about a fifth of our population, representing over 200 ethnicities, and speaking over 170 languages.

The little voice in my head said: Isn't it time to move on? Isn't multiculturalism a more accurate reflection of the nation today?

I want to use the platform given to me today to share my honest, challenging, and often deeply confronting personal journey as I tried to make sense of these questions in my head. I offer it to you in good faith and hope it helps you in your own journey and quest.

When I arrived on these shores, I had a binary view of biculturalism that included Pākehā and Māori. And since I am not Pākehā I struggled to see a place for me in this context.

But over the years of working in public policy settings, particularly social policy settings, learning about te Tiriti, my growing networks and deep, meaningful, authentic conversations with people from across the board helped me understand the discourse around biculturalism.

I developed a more nuanced understanding of the principles of te Tiriti, the rights of tangata whenua, the impacts of colonisation on the people of this land and realised that the world was a lot more complex. I began to see my world view against this backdrop. I realised that until the status and rights of tangata whenua were acknowledged we could not move forward as a nation. I started to shift my world view and began to see myself as an ally of te Tiriti.

So how has this journey impacted me?

At a personal level, I have been inspired by the revitalisation of te reo, and it has caused me to reflect and value my own language and culture.

At a professional level, ensuring outcomes for Māori and advocating for kaupapa Māori approaches has been at the centre of my own evaluation practice. I have also found that kaupapa Māori approaches are equally inclusive of different ethnic communities and central to how we work with communities all over the world.

For example, the government's Care in the Community welfare response during COVID-19 touched every New Zealander. People from all walks of life and different ethnic groups needed to follow isolation requirements and needed support during their isolation. It was uplifting to see the care and respect shown by Māori community organisations in their engagement with refugee and migrant communities. They adapted their kai parcels to cater to the diverse needs of their community (e.g., halal meat, or vegetarian meals).

I am reminded of a quote by Fu (2013) where he asserts:

Often migrant knowledge of these issues or culture have been mediated by racist stereotypes in the Pākehā media then translated and filtered through in our languages. We have rarely had opportunities to build links and alliances with each other without people mediating these spaces.

Organisations such as Multicultural NZ or the Ministry of Ethnic Communities and professional associations such as ANZEA have an important role to play in driving this discourse. And yesterday's tauiwi forum, the first one by ANZEA, reemphasised the importance of this step.

So where has my journey taken me?

I have been reflecting on how we can continue to raise consciousness about the needs and aspirations of Māori and the special status and rights of Māori as tangata whenua, while we simultaneously find a way to clarify our own relationship vis-à-vis te Tiriti and think about how we uphold it in our work.

I am keen to respond to Dr Amohia Boulton's presentation yesterday and set up a platform for making our collective knowledge and experience available to the next generation of evaluators. Maybe a Practice-Based Evaluation Community that mentors and guides emerging evaluators through an informal network of practitioners?

Most importantly, I realise now that yes, we are a multicultural society but as tauiwi, we must commit to te Tiriti and uphold it in our own work and develop our own relationship to its values. As without it, multiculturalism is empty.

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Paula White: Staying curious to be a better “hoa haere” in Aotearoa evaluation

Nō Airani, me Kōterana, me
Ingarangi ōku tūpuna.

My ancestors came to Aotearoa from
Ireland, Scotland, and England.

I tipu ake ahau i Papaioea, me Te
Tihi-o-Marū i te Wai Pounamu.

I grew up in Palmerston North,
Manawatū and in Timaru, South
Canterbury.

Kei Paraparaumu ki Kāpiti e noho
ana au inaianei

I currently live in Paraparaumu
Beach, on the Kāpiti Coast

Ngā mihi aroha ki ngā mana
whenua o te rohe nei—Te Ātiawa
ki Whakarongotai, me Ngāti Toa
Rangatira.

I acknowledge the original inhabi-
tants of the area I live in—Te Ātiawa
ki Whakarongotai and Ngāti Toa
Rangatira.

Ko Paula White tōku ingoa
He Pākehā, he tangata Tiriti¹ ahau.

My name is Paula White.

I’m a Pākehā New Zealander, and
active citizen under te Tiriti.

My ancestors are that common mix of Irish, Scottish, and English heritage. Early family members arrived from Birmingham in the 1860s in Ōtautahi Christchurch, others arrived later via Melbourne Australia and others from the UK settled in the Tirau, Waikato area. Because my forbears were early immigrant settlers from the UK, I identify as a Pākehā New Zealander, and as tangata Tiriti. In other words, I consider myself an active citizen—a person in a relationship with Aotearoa, and the constitutional agreement made between the Crown and some iwi in 1840. By identifying as Pākehā, I’m acknowledging that I am a beneficiary of a colonisation process in this country that has caused harm to Māori, and to all of us actually. This harm has been a state-sanctioned process seeking elimination

of Māori people and culture (at times by force) by destroying what it means to be Māori (literally “to be normal”) and causing disconnection between tangata, and whenua (Sankar et al., 2022). The legacy of colonisation lives and breathes in the persistent social and economic inequities we see around us in Aotearoa today.

I have the privilege of living near a beautiful landmark, Kāpiti Island, and between the sea and the Kāpiti Coast Airport. The issues around loss of land and inequity are very much playing out in my own backyard. I want to acknowledge the grievances of te hapū Ngāti Puketapu Ki Paraparaumu, descendants of the mana whenua (original landowners) of the land that was taken by the government under the Public Works Act in 1939 for an airport. The land included an urupā, a Māori burial site. When the land was no longer required by government it wasn't given back. Instead, it was privatised in 1995, sold by the then government for \$1.5m to private owners, who then on-sold it for a reported \$150m. Subsequent owners have made substantial profits selling off parts of the land as commercial and residential sections. The people of Ngāti Puketapu ki Paraparaumu are still waiting to get their land back, even after a Waitangi Tribunal finding that the government got it wrong.

What values guide me as a citizen and as an evaluator?

As an active citizen, a social scientist, and evaluator, core values guiding my career and work have included curiosity, fairness, and social justice. As a university student I explored history, politics, and society and was struck by the inequitable distribution of wealth and the unfair barriers to wealth and wellbeing faced by some communities in Aotearoa. I noticed that in addition to historical Treaty breaches, Māori are currently not well served by our system. This motivates me to be a better tangata Tiriti, as part of my work to make a difference for all people who are marginalised in our system. The same values

pulled me sideways from social research to evaluation. Evaluation work offers the potential to address persistent social and economic disadvantage and influence better government decision making (Te Kōmihana Whai Hua o Aotearoa New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2023).²

While working as an evaluator I've observed several contextual developments that have given me hope for a better Tiriti-based future. Our professional community is guided by ANZEA, a body that has a strong bicultural and cultural equity foundation woven through its constitution, Professional Standards for Evaluation and Evaluator Competencies. More recently Māori evaluators have mobilised to support iwi and Māori evaluators who are doing evaluation to progress Māori development and wellbeing. In 2015 Mā Te Rae (the Māori Evaluation Association) was established. Around the world, evaluators and Indigenous communities are recognising and being inspired by the excellence and impact of kaupapa Māori evaluation and its practitioners.

For the last 30 years there has been significant government investment in evaluation as part of wider government activity. Increasingly this is underpinned by articulated policy commitments to te Tiriti and Māori wellbeing. What is clear, however, is that much of our public sector investment is still failing to make a difference for Māori. What is behind this failure, and as evaluators, what is our role in this? These seem to be important questions for all evaluation practitioners to be asking. Indeed, I am hearing the voices of fellow Pākehā and tauīwi evaluators who are asking, "What should we, and what can we, do to make a difference for Māori?"

Circles of learning on a journey of self-discovery

Working through these questions myself has taken time and exploration. I've been on a journey of self-discovery and it's fair to say it

hasn't been easy or straightforward. I've gone down interesting side-roads, and I've arrived at dead ends. I've even arrived at the same dead ends more than once. Despite good intentions, I have made mistakes and, like all good evaluators, I have taken the opportunity to reflect and learn.

The best learning I've had on this journey has not been from university studies, professional training, or from books. Rather, it has been from working alongside peers who bring different perspectives to our work, being a participant in cross-cultural contexts, and being in the everyday practice of evaluation. Having said this, I have recently discovered Ingrid Huygens's (2011) theoretical model of Pākehā decolonisation practice. This model describes the specific features of the author's own decolonisation process that spans (i) revisiting history, (ii) responding emotionally, (iii) undertaking collective cultural work, and (iv) working towards mutually agreed working relationships with Māori. Huygens frames each of these as types of decolonisation "work"—ideological, emotional, cultural, and constitutional work. I find this a useful model for reflecting on my learning journey—a series of curious moments, tensions and aha (or uh-oh) moments.

Cultural and ideological learning

My curiosity about te ao Māori coincided with serendipitous opportunities in my early career. As an emerging evaluator, bursting fresh out of Robin Peace's postgraduate diploma evaluation course, I was hungry to get evaluating. I was fortunate to land internal evaluation roles at several government agencies, including Te Puni Kōkiri / Ministry for Māori Development, where I got to work closely with Māori evaluators (and their Pākehā collaborators) doing innovative developmental evaluation work. These projects afforded me a steep learning curve in both te ao Māori and Māori-led evaluation practice.

I realise now how fortunate I was to be invited into Māori spaces, even if at times I felt quite out of place. I got to sit with the discomfort of being the only the Pākehā in the room and being the least knowledgeable about topics under discussion. Despite my knowledge gaps, I know my Māori colleagues were always keeping me safe. These moments provided me with opportunities to observe, to listen, to feel, and to learn. I noticed the way Māori evaluators were operating, and the cultural values and tikanga practices that underpinned their work. For example, seeing in practice that reciprocal relationships and trust are the foundation and currency of kaupapa Māori evaluation. I began to get a sense of the deep roots of cultural knowledge that are timeless beyond the branches of “Western” evaluation methods and models that come and go.

I began to see that alongside the Pākehā world I know and am comfortable in, te ao Māori is operating in parallel with its own ways of being, knowing, and valuing. Even as my awareness of multiple dimensions came into view, I continued to privilege my own ideological standpoint by default. This led to some awkward moments. On one occasion I was working alongside a respected kaupapa Māori evaluator providing services to my organisation. It was my job to review their outcomes framework for a Māori wellbeing initiative. It wasn't what I had expected to see and I thought I was being helpful when I suggested they might want to improve their framework by shaping it into a snazzy rubric. What I now understand is that the framework wasn't speaking to me at the time because I didn't understand it. My cultural blind spots and obsession with methods undermined our trust and got in the way of a great opportunity for cultural partnership and learning.

Increasingly I have come to know there is a lot about te ao Māori and kaupapa Māori evaluation that I just don't understand. More importantly perhaps, I've had to ponder questions such as, What *can*

I know about the Māori world? and What, actually, do I *need* to know?

Emotional and constitutional learning

Being invited to participate in evaluation happening in Māori community contexts helped me to connect with people and understand their values and dreams. At the same time, hearing about the multiple barriers they are navigating in the system has been an important part of my learning journey. At times I have felt huge empathy for people. At times I have felt tearful or ashamed. Even as I started seeing the impacts of structural and institutional racism, I had more learning to do.

One year I was hired to develop a strategic measurement framework for a “transformational” government programme. I knew that this policy area has a long history of negative impacts on whānau Māori, and is one where the system is still doing damage. So I was more than a little surprised to discover that Māori voices on better outcomes weren’t in the frame. I asked the organisation to bring in a Māori evaluation expert to work with me on this. However they wouldn’t find the budget. I continued on with the work, and inferred some outcomes based on what I’d heard from Māori stakeholders. Finally I approached a Māori academic to review my work. Some may not be surprised to hear this expert was not especially interested in my diagram, they were more interested in why I thought I should be identifying outcomes *for* Māori? “Where was my Māori evaluator to do this work *with*?” they asked. Another tough conversation.

The problem I faced that day is well articulated by Nan Wehipeihana’s (2019) model that depicts a continuum of approaches to Indigenous evaluation. Reflecting on this model, I was the Pākehā evaluator “doing to”—an approach that is unhelpful and does harm. The insight is this: as much as I might have the privilege to ask

important questions around system impacts on Māori, *me* identifying outcomes *for* Māori is not the answer. Instead, I can realise the power I have to advocate for Māori experts to lead this work and to ensure its valid and useful for Māori.

More recently I have partnered on projects and with organisations only to discover that they were not on a journey of learning. They were talking the Treaty talk but not walking the Tiriti walk and some were working in ways that just felt culturally unsafe. More awkward work stories. I've reflected on my responsibility to do my homework when looking to work with others. Now I know what my bottom line is. I need to ask good questions upfront to explore value alignment: How are they operating as good Tiriti partners? How do they know they are working in ways that are safe for Māori? Are they checking in with Māori colleagues and organisations they work with and asking for feedback?

Circling back to look forward

As evaluators we often ask “what does good look like”? It has taken me many years to get to a point where I can confidently define for myself what it looks like to be a good Treaty partner in my evaluation practice. The way I describe this now is: being a better *hoa haere*³ (friend on the journey) for Māori research and evaluation colleagues and those doing the mahi in support of decolonisation, Māori self-determination, and wellbeing.

This process of staying curious and doing the self-work is “tough, scary and not for the faint-hearted” (McKegg, 2019). At times, it has felt like going around in circles as I loop back to my default thinking. Which is easy for me to do in a system that privileges Pākehā worldviews and ways. Yet I can look at this another way and see that on this journey I've also been on an upward spiral of learning. I *am* getting clearer on how I can be a better *hoa haere*.

Staying curious and nurturing important relationships.

Knowing what I don't know and cannot know.

Seeing and calling out the inequities, and the structural and institutional racism in the system.

Using the power of privilege to advocate for Māori-led policy and evaluation work.

Refusing work that we shouldn't be doing.

Having courageous conversations with bosses, clients—and Pākehā and tauwiwi mates.

As evaluators in Aotearoa asking questions about we can do better for Māori, perhaps we can sit with the question, “How will we stay curious and do the self-work?” Zooming out, I wonder if engaging in this kind of inquiry is the “self-evaluation” that those North American blokes Michael Quinn Patton and Michael Scriven have said it's important for evaluators to do? I think so, yes.

Acknowledgements

I wish to extend a heartfelt thank you to my Aotearoa evaluation whanau—kaupapa Māori evaluators, Pacific and tauwiwi evaluators, and Pākehā mates on the journey, who have taught me, invited me into sacred spaces, put down the wero, and shown me how it is done. Nan, Kataraina, Fiona, Debbie, Lou, Amohia, Pale, Raewyn, Kate, Jane, and too many others to list. Ka nui te aroha ki a koutou katoa.

Notes

1. For a great discussion of what tangata Tiriti means to two non-Māori New Zealanders, see Te Kuru o te Marama Dewes (2022).
2. <https://www.productivity.govt.nz/publications/final-report-a-fair-chance-for-all/#:~:text=The%20final%20report%20on%20the,government%20agencies%20and%20short%2Dtermism>

3. Thanks to evaluation colleagues at ANZEA Conference 2022 for suggesting ‘hoa haere’ (literally, ‘a friend on the journey’) as a homegrown way to express the idea of “ally”.

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Jeph Mathias: Why be an evaluator? Identity in evaluation

“Why are you a doctor?” asked the guerilla leader.

He was bearded, in camos. The AK-47 idling on his knees had surely taken many lives.

Back then, I was a doctor, young and starry eyed. Inspired by Schweitzer and Paul Brand, to me delivering medicine with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) was an antidote to inequality and injustice. Idealism took me from a NZ emergency room, made me apply to MSF, and had me sent into Colombia’s guerilla war. Now I’d been kidnapped. A kid with a gun abducted me from a medical camp in an Indigenous village in the jungle to their guerilla camp. They forced me to repair a kid’s hand. Pablo was raping an Indigenous woman when a man walked in and swung his machete. Pablo shot him and continued raping her beside the body, severed tendon and all. When I’d finished the repair their leader “Che” summoned me. Now on plastic chairs in a jungle clearing with bats slicing silky moonlight into silvery strips around us I readied myself for the terms of my kidnap. Life, in a surreal twist, put cold beers in our hands. Che confirmed I was a doctor “*¿Es medico, verdad?*”. In Pākehā culture, identity may start and finish with “what do you do?” “I’m an emergency doctor.” “Cool”. Some want more. On discovering you’re a doctor they ask for exciting medical stories, what it’s like in ED or what you get paid. Nobody asks why you spent your one precious life to become one. Che did. For him what we do was the third link in a chain. *Who are you? What do you believe in? What do you do? Why?*

Today, it’s standard, *de rigeur* almost, to start any kōrero, particularly at a conference with at least a few words of te reo Māori. I love this, acknowledging place and the identity of the people where we stand. It is also so good because te ao Māori with te reo naturally

connects who we are, what we do, where we stand now, to where we've come from, how we got here and with whom. European culture maybe lacks that tradition. English language never developed the words. My metaphor for where we come from, which so defines where we are going, is being on a small craft in a huge river. The shape and altitude of a river's headwater hills drive it onwards to its outpouring; so too, our lives' direction is shaped by our place and our past. The country we live in, privileges we did nothing to earn, history (often unjust), our families and people we're blessed to be with mostly determine our destiny. Te reo and te ao Māori get that. Western culture focuses on what we do in our proximate zone of control and attributes everything to that. As a paddler swerves around rocks, paddles from this eddy to that flow, or bursts through a hole we *are* in control of our immediate surroundings. Career choices, investment decisions, or moving from Auckland to Wellington don't define our destiny but do shape our lives. Also in our proximate sphere are our actions, choosing to live in line with values and picking who we share our journeys with. This story is about choices in the proximate zones of our lives. Choices that shape our experience, our integrity and our contribution to this precious planet.

Che didn't tell me the terms of my kidnap. He talked to me, asked me who I was. He wanted to know everything, not just my life story (Indian kid in New Zealand gets a scholarship to Cambridge, chooses teaching in Apartheid South Africa over job in London, volunteers with Mother Teresa, returns to Auckland Medical School) but also who I was and what I believed in. He was interested in me, the school boy in Auckland streets, protesting against the 1981 Springboks ("why?" he asked) and the teacher in an illegal multiracial school in South Africa ("why?" again). He probed what was behind leaving Auckland Medical School, insanely walking through the guerilla infested Darien gap, trapping crocodiles in the Amazon and living

in a Brazilian favela. He asked why I went back to medical school.

Then he told me about himself—village kid gets scholarship to Bogota University, acs an MA in history, is offered a scholarship in USA. His girlfriend Fabi too.

“*Esta puta Colombia* (this whore of a country),” he explained. “Beautiful and immoral. Inequality everywhere. How could I leave my village only to become rich in USA?”...*pause*...

“so I joined *la guerilla*”... *pause* ... “but Fabi went” ... *aching pause*... “Fabi went.”

Night swallowed our evening. We’d argued over Pele or Maradona as greater footballers. Recited a Neruda love poem. He’d told me about beaches with Fabi. I told him about mountains with Kaaren. Then, warm dregs in our cans and night creatures shrieking weirdly from the blackness, Che abruptly broke into:

So here’s Che. A man who dreams of peace yet leads kids to kill and rape. Yearning of integrity he’s embedded with fucken FARC, soulless and evil. Lives violence and hate while tenderly loving his old university flame Fabi who’s surfing in California. She’s forgotten him. But I’m so far into this river of blood I can’t turn back. If I leave they will capture me, torture me, kill me. So I fight this bloody war, forgotten and hopeless on and on and on until jungle mud swallows me. All for *nada* [nothing].

That “*nada*” is as bleak and black as the “nothing” in Macbeth’s haunting soliloquy.

Che and I were there for the same reason that night in Colombia: we dreamt of a world different from what we saw, were doing what we could, using what we had. For Che, that was an AK-47. It’s all the Fates offered him. His brief candle is surely out now: a gun, a knife, maybe capture and torture in government hands, maybe untreated leismaniasis. He’d be dead. His question though has eddied on and on inside me, asking and reasking itself for 30 years.

The Fates offered me more. Here, in this rambling story, is one of life's great injustices. Those whose rivers flow out from privilege laden headwaters, find ourselves sauntering lazily through sunlit lowlands and seldom ask "why?" "How and where is justice found?" "Who's "in", who's excluded?" "Are our planet's resources shared or corraled by the wealthy?" These are not urgent questions for us. Those born where those questions bite are born without options to answer them. A boy from a Colombian village who magically became a MA in history, saw only an AK-47. Bravely he took it. Inevitably he failed.

Suddenly Che said "It's late. Come, I'll walk you back". So we walked together in silvery light, the AK-47 on his shoulder bobbing along as our third companion and stopped metres from our camp. Alexandra our nurse was singing softly, face glowing in the firelight.

"Our ways part now," Che whispered.

"May your dawn be bright and clear," I offered

"Shelling at midnight more likely."

"Ah but one day your dreams will come to pass."

"My dreams drowned long ago in mud and blood."

Countered every upbeat subjunctive with a black riposte left me only with "*Adios*."

"*Adios*" he replied "*amigo*" (friend), which he modified to "*hermano*" (brother).

We embraced. I walked into the light without turning back.

In "*hermano*" Che said, "We're born to the same path, you and I. I failed, me and my gun. You go, take your stethoscope, bring justice to the world. For us both."

Twisted into his parting exhortation was "does doctoring align with who you are, what you believe, what you want to contribute to this planet?"

I can't honestly remember what I said to Che's "Why" that night long ago, but to me carrying on down the river of my life, action-filled

emergency doctoring increasingly felt frothy, an eddy disconnected from my main flow. Brand and Schweitzer then, and me with MSF in 1996, were only treating disease not inequality. I evaluate now. Next month I'll evaluate a mental-health project in Afghanistan. Sticking to principles I insisted on the impossible: women, Taliban, mullahs, NGO, and community all together as a participatory evaluation team. Unbelievably we got a dispensation for this to happen! The world changed! Including women in shaping a project in Afghanistan is who I am and what I believe in more than helicopter rescues in my (well paid) New Zealand emergency medical career, more even than spinal anaesthetics and heroic surgery as a (voluntary) doctor in Himalayan villages. These days evaluation aligns who I am, what I believe in, and what I do. I dedicate my upcoming evaluation to you, Che.

I invite you to turn Che's question around. Answer for yourself as evaluator, as Māori, tauīwi, parent, partner... human being:

Why are you an evaluator? Are you asking and answering questions for those who can't? In ways that honour them? Does who you are, what you do and what you believe align?

Kate McKegg: Reflecting on the conversation

Ko wai au?

I'm Kate McKegg, I'm descended from Irish, Scottish, and English settlers to Aotearoa in the 19th century. Professionally, I've called myself an evaluator for more than 30 years, and I'm still trying to embody and live my beliefs and values through evaluation mahi, among other things.

My reflections

I remember being in the room when these four evaluators shared their

stories and reflections on what it means to be tauwiwi and Pākehā, working in evaluation in Aotearoa and beyond.

I was moved, and so were many others. The strength of feeling in the room was palpable. These stories touched us and spoke to many of us about our own thoughts, feelings, histories, entanglements, dilemmas, and choices. I remember some of the conversations with others afterwards, and it seemed we felt connected in some way to each of these people through the telling of these stories, even those we didn't know personally.

A story can be powerful, and these are powerful stories. Their storylines are those of Aotearoa, of whakapapa, tangata whenua, colonisation, immigration, identity, loss, grievance, love, learning, relationships, whānau, land, injustice, solidarity, partnership, hope, and connection.

They offer a window into the possibilities and potential of evaluation practice as tauwiwi, as Pākehā, to uphold te Tiriti, to be better *hoa haere*, and to curiously and collectively reflect on who we are, and how we can be in equitable and just relations with those who surround us, and the wider rhythms of the world as they unfold.