Editorial

Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata

Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata is from Ngati Raukawa, Ngarauru, Te Atihau-nui-a-Paparangi and Te Ati Awa. She is a lecturer in the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work as well as a kaiako at Te Wananga o Raukawa.

She maintains an active involvement in hapu, iwi and Maori community activities. She also provides supervision to a number of Maori kaimahi in various social service agencies and one of her interests in the area of practice is cultural supervision.

Tena koutou katoa. It has been a while since we produced our last Te Komako. This has partly been because people have been very busy, but also because Tu Mau—the first version of the Pacific Island journal was produced last summer.

Tracie Mafile’o and Christina Newport, as the editors of Tu Mau should be congratulated for producing such an excellent edition. It has been wonderful to see articles written exclusively by Pacific Island writers, and like Te Komako, we can see that Tu Mau is already offering a valuable contribution to Pacific Island workers in the social services as well as others who work with Pacific Island peoples. We look forward to Tu Mau also becoming a regular publication.

As you can see from this edition we have some writers who now make regular contributions to Te Komako. However, Rachael Selby and I never miss the opportunity to nurture new writers that we meet in the wider social services community, who are bravely prepared to put their thoughts down on paper and produce material that other practitioners can then critique and use in their practice. It is not always easy to expose yourself by writing down your ideas, but social and community work for Maori absolutely benefits from having articles, such as those produced in Te Komako, to enrich their practice. I came to realise this recently when I visited an Iwi Social Service. I knew no one except the person who was taking me, but when I was introduced they all said ‘Ahh Wheturangi, we have been reading your work’. I realised the power of the written word that enables thoughts and ideas to spread to a much wider audience. I can see that Te Komako is now becoming a critically important publication for the development of the social services in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It is obvious that the ANZASW also realise this, as they have recently asked if the first four Te Komako could be reprinted and bound into one book. As editors of Te Komako we are
delighted. It’s important that we also acknowledge the staff from the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work in Palmerston North who have continued to offer ongoing support to Rachael and me as the editors of this journal by reading, reviewing and offering suggestions on the articles.

You can see from the range of articles in this edition that we are drawing on yet another group of practitioners, a group of academics, others working in iwi social services and for the first time we also have a poem from a student who is currently studying at Te Wananga-o-Raukawa. We would like to encourage more students to contribute their work and wonder if there should be a permanent slot for them. So students, send us some of your work as we will work with you to bring it up to a publishable standard. Teachers, if you see work that you think your Maori students should be publishing, then encourage them to send it to us.

We now have a number of people who still have work in progress and if they don’t make it to one edition we know that we can still work with them to produce their work for publication at a later date.

In past editions we have commented on the need for the Association to consider developing an editorial group for Te Komako. We understand that there was some initial discussion on this but to date an editorial board for Te Komako has not yet occurred. We look forward to further discussion on this in the near future.

Current issues
Some of the current issues that I have been aware of in the social service community provide interesting discussion in this editorial. The first is cultural supervision. I have participated in the provision of supervision training in the last year where I have become conscious of the increasing importance and recognition of cultural supervision. Recently I was approached four times in one week by different people asking for cultural supervision. Some of this pressure may be a result of ACC accreditation which insists that cultural supervision is necessary for practitioners working with Maori, but the requests range from probation, to elderly services, to psychotherapists to iwi organisations. It is evident that many social service professions are now recognising the importance of supervision. There is also a developing recognition of appropriate remuneration by organisations for this area of practice, however, it will be an ongoing issue to ensure that Maori are being trained to be supervisors and particularly in the area of cultural supervision.

The registration issue is also one that many Iwi/Maori organisations are increasingly aware of. This may gradually result in an increasing number of Maori joining an association such as ANZASW, though I think that Leland Ruwhiu’s article, offers us other options as well. The opinions he offers in the article he suggests might be perceived as provocative, but I would suggest they are actually timely for this Association to consider.

Another issue that I want to comment on is the difficulty that social service organisations and educational institutions still face concerning contextualising the Treaty of Waitangi in practice. In my travels around the country this seems to be a consistent issue that comes up for discussion. While all educational providers see the importance of offering curriculum on the Treaty of Waitangi, there are as many interpretations of this as there are providers. It is not a document that just hangs on the wall, but something that we should be
consistently considering at all levels of an organisation. In addition I have seen some people who talk about the principles as being the modern day application of the Treaty and therefore do not see the need to address the articles. I’m not sure where that idea has come from, and I ask myself which principles, as there are more than just those stated by the Royal Commission on Social Policy. I would suggest that in fact the articles are incredibly easy to interpret and to apply in our daily practice if you sit down and discuss with your work colleagues what they mean and how it is that they are therefore reflected in your organisation—all four of them. I am therefore pleased with Peter Mataira’s contribution to this edition where he looks at the Treaty of Waitangi. I am also encouraging others to write in this field and hope that you will see their work in future editions. We have therefore chosen the Peter Mataira article on the Treaty as our feature article.

The contribution of articles which offer models of practice for different positions, different types of organisations and different areas of practice is expanding with each new edition of Te Komako. We are moving beyond the few models that we have been using for a while now and creating new models. While Te Whare Tapa Wha, the Powhiri model and other models still offer a valuable contribution to the everyday practice of social and community workers, the era has arrived where such models are being extended and new ones created. While some of these ideas are still in their infancy, the consistent theme that I see is the use of analogy to represent the models that they are writing about. In the case of Emma Weber-Dreadon and Mere Mollard it is the use of the paua and kina. With Anaru Eketone it is the waka and with Sharlene Davis it is the Poroporo and Dough Boys. All of these analogical examples derive from te ao Maori which suggests that there is real importance for us to look at the stories of our tipuna, to look at our own tikanga and at the richness of our own language in the development of uniquely Maori approaches to practice. And while this should be celebrated and not hindered, I also see the need for in-depth research into the theory behind the model, a more explicit description of the model, and a range of examples of the application and analysis of such models to certain practice contexts (okay, so I am an academic). This is what contributes to a unique Aotearoa/New Zealand social service provision. Some of these models might be particular to some iwi (I am not sure how many people outside of Taranaki eat poroporo) but there are also others that are applicable at a more general level.

As well as articles on models of practice there is also a series of articles that consider important topics such as leadership, identity and Maatua Whangai.

In our discussions with Leland Ruwhiu and in his role as Kaiwhakahaere for ANZASW it has been exciting to see the new tangata whenua branches that are forming. However, it is important to ensure that when you create a critical mass that your voices are heard. Therefore ensure that collectively you kōrero about the relevant issues for Maori practitioners and make your voices or opinions heard by the association. This means that as well as all the other things that you do, it is important to consider more active involvement at the executive level.

So once again a range of articles to stimulate the hinengaro, to enrich the wairua, to strengthen the tinana and to offer more positive solutions for the whanau that you work with. So read, enjoy and add new ideas to your kete of practice.
He mihi mahana tenei ki a koutou. Ehara i te toa takitahi, ko te toa takitini. Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

Wheturangi