

## Special issue: Bi-culturalism

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## The Māori Creation Story and the Learning Child

My ears pricked up recently when I heard Carlos Santana, being interviewed on Seven Sharp, liken the production of his art to that of giving birth to a baby. The Seven Sharp presenter questioned that idea, presumably to acknowledge that nothing could compare to giving birth to a baby, but I understood Carlos Santana's sentiment - he meant to produce art, such as music, there was a struggle, a time of uncertainty and difficulty that needed to be persisted with over time and through many 'contractions' to eventually produce something quite beautiful.



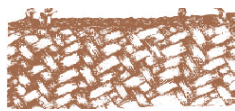
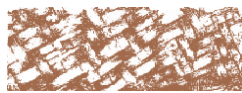
My ears had pricked up because this is what I understand the kaupapa or philosophy of *Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2009) to be, told through a familiar tauparapara which likens the birth of a child to the creation of the world and then to the learning child. It acknowledges the creation of the world and the birth of the baby and the learning experiences of a child all require times of uncertainty and difficulty, great struggle and persistence through many contractions to eventually reaching a point of realisation, clarification and enlightenment. This is a view of learning that we, in early childhood education, are also hearing from Carol Dweck, Margaret Carr, Guy Claxton and many others.

*Te Whatu Pōkeka* suggests that the Māori creation story offers us a metaphor for the learning child and offers the tauparapara to illustrate:

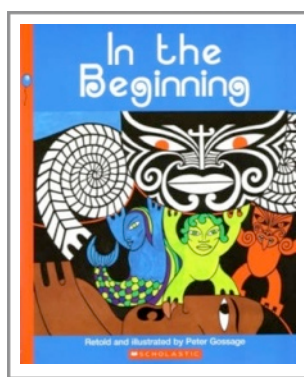
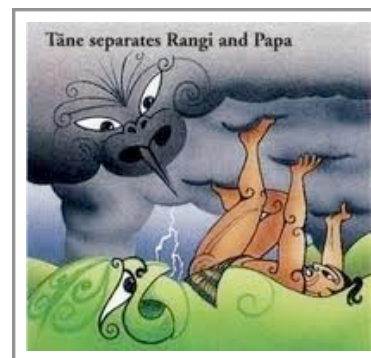
"I te tīmatanga, ko te kore  
Ko te pō  
Nā te pō  
Ka puta ko te Kukune  
Ko te Pupuke  
Ko te Hihiri  
Ko te Marhara  
Ko te Manako  
Ka puta I te whei ao  
  
Ki te ao mārama e  
Tihēi Mauri ora

In the beginning there was a void.  
Within the void was the night.  
From within the night, seeds were cultivated  
It was here that movement began - stretching.  
There the shoots enlarged and swelled.  
Then there was pure energy.  
Then there was the subconsciousness.  
Then the desire to know.  
Movement from darkness to light, from conception to birth  
From learning to knowing.  
I sneeze and there is life."

(Te Whatu Pōkeka, p.48)



Before the missionaries came to Aotearoa New Zealand to introduce Christianity, Māori had a multi-deity belief system - they believed in many gods. We are all familiar with some of these gods such as Tāne, god of the forest and Tangaroa, god of the sea. Though the creation story can be told differently, depending on the iwi, many tell of 72 gods who were produced within the embrace of Papatūānuku and Ranginui. This is a view of the world that we can embrace as we teach in Aotearoa New Zealand for many reasons, not least to honor our commitment to Article 4 of the Treaty of Waitangi that states that Māori customs and religion will be protected. The tauparapara suggests that in teaching and/or supporting the Māori creation story, we are weaving a rich whāriki for the understanding of the spiritual life of Māori while holding up a metaphor for Māori ways of knowing, being and doing.



Many teachers' understanding about the Māori Creation Story has been through reading, re-reading and exploring with the tamariki, the picture book *In the Beginning* by Peter Gossage (see also Kathryn's book review in this newsletter). He has also written and illustrated the stories of Maui, which are all accessible to young children and their teachers alike. Though simplified and shortened, Peter Gossage's *In the Beginning* remembers many of the elements of the story including the discussions and negotiations of the gods about whether or not to separate the parents.

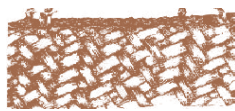
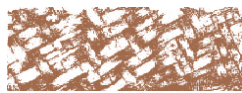
This is the beginning of the struggle, the contractions that *Te Whatu Pōkeka*'s tauparapara speaks of, first there was peace in the darkness, then the struggle began. The struggle or contractions took a long time and manifested in many ways - much like the process of giving birth. First there was the at times heated debate between the gods as to whether it was necessary to separate their parents, then there was the sheer effort to push them apart and once the parents were separated there was war between the gods. Peter Gossage's book does not include the war that followed the separation but it is an enthralling part of the story which explains many aspects of nature and is worth further reading - there are many beautifully produced anthologies of Māori stories.

The final phase of the story is the eventual peace, enlightenment and prosperity the struggle produces. Each god becomes responsible for an aspect of nature and with their special gifts go on to produce the female, 'Hine Ahu One' who originates the phrase 'Tihēi Mauri ora' when she sneezes as she comes to life. It is this production of the human female by the gods, all responsible for aspects of nature, that links Māori directly to the earth, Papatūānuku, both physically and spiritually through their whakapapa.

*Te Whatu Pōkeka* tells us that just as the creation story of Papatūānuku and Ranginui and the conception and birth of a baby have three distinct phases of (1) seedbed for new beginnings, (2) challenge and (3) enlightenment, so does the child in our care learn and grow through:

- (1) Mōhiotanga - What a child already knows and what they bring with them highlights new beginnings, new knowledge, new discoveries
- (2) Mātauranga - This is a time of growth for the child. It demotes a phase of increasing potential, negotiation, challenge, and apprehension when dealing with new ideas.
- (3) Māramatanga - This is when a child comes to understand new knowledge: a phase of enlightenment, realisation, and clarification." (*Te Whatu Pōkeka*, p. 49)

This is a view of the child that holds such richness. The child, seen as linked to Papatūānuku by right of their whakapapa, accompanied by their rōpū - their group of supporters, both seen and unseen; a child full of potential who can be encouraged to struggle and persist with difficulty through many challenges to a place of new knowledge and realisation.



So, dust off your copies of *In the Beginning* and dig out, borrow or purchase the many other tellings of that story and explore the narrative for yourself as much as for the tamariki. Better still, speak with the Māori families at your centre and in your community to hear, learn and honour their stories. You will find it enthralling and your enthusiasm will be contagious as you tell and retell, share and explore the very story that the Māori children in your centre connect with through their whakapapa and that we all benefit from through being citizens of Aotearoa New Zealand.

***“Puritia ngā taonga a ngā tūpuna mō ngā puāwai o te ora, ā mātou tamariki.  
Hold fast to the cultural treasures of our ancestors for the future benefit of our children.”  
(Te Whatu Pōkeka p. 51)***

### Reference:

Ministry of Education (2009). *Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Tania Bullick

## I have been reading....

Ruta McKenzie shared this important quote with us, “The culture of the child cannot enter the classroom until it has entered the consciousness of the teacher” (Samoan saying).

This quote makes me wonder: How does the culture of a child and their family and whānau enter my consciousness? I think people, books, reading and practicing new things have been a large part of my bi-cultural journey.

So... having put my hand up to review some books for this newsletter I was left thinking what books have been most important to me on my journey towards bi-culturalism?

And there are many. Both books for adults and children have been part of this journey for me. Thinking of the notion of this Early Childhood Education setting as being a place of learning and teaching I have taken many opportunities in reading books and using resources with children that have enhanced my use of Te reo Māori, nga Tikanga Māori and understanding of Te Ao Māori.

We have a list of great books on the ELP Website's resource section with small reviews and guidelines about each book's content (<http://elp.co.nz/EducationalLeadershipProjectResourcesBooksMaori.php>).

It was very hard to select one or two books but here goes:

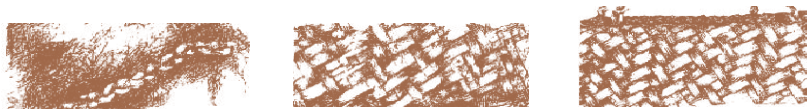


My favorite book and one that I consider essential to all teachers is *Te Wheke* by Dr Rangimarie Turuki Pere CBE. Dr Pere shares her wisdom and understanding in every word. It has been a read that supports the culture of the child to enter my consciousness. Even if you have read this book already I recommend keeping it at hand and dipping into occasionally.

This book is especially useful if you use the concepts (chapters) for pedagogical discussion topics to grow bi-cultural teaching and learning practices. Choose one concept (e.g. Aroha, Mauri etc.), read it as a team and then have a discussion framed up by “What are the implications for my/our practice here?”

Follow [this link](http://fishpond.co.nz) if you would like to purchase *Te Wheke* through fishpond.co.nz.





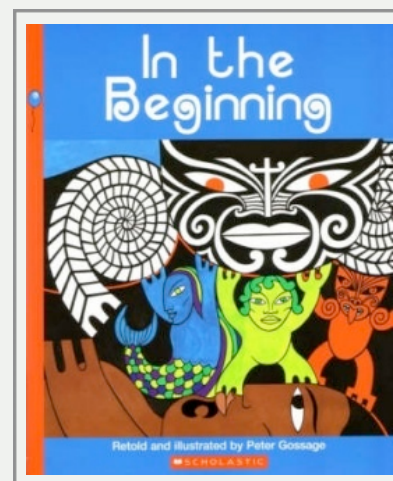
*In the Beginning* by Peter Gossage is my next choice. It offers learning opportunities to adults and children alike.

In this delightfully illustrated and written book Peter Gossage introduces us to the creation story. To Papatūānuku and Ranginui and their children. The illustrations are vivid and the text flowing and brief.

I hope you enjoy some rich exciting reading experiences that provokes and inspires us to support all children's whakapapa and funds of knowledge and to draw in to our consciousness their culture.

Follow [this link](http://fishpond.co.nz) if you would like to purchase *In the Beginning* through fishpond.co.nz

Kathryn Delany



## Chimamanda Adichie: The danger of a single story

I have used Chimamanda Adichie's [talk](#) on TED a number of times with teams that I work with, in particular when we are exploring the ideas of supporting language, culture and identity to flourish within early childhood centres. In this talk, Adichie talks about the danger of a single story. We can take this literally and look at the books we provide for children within our settings - do they depict one culture or are they representative of all cultures within your setting? We can also consider this on another, deeper level - consider the stories you have heard about different cultures, is this a single story? Chimamanda Adichie says, "If we hear only a single story about another person or country, we risk a critical misunderstanding."

This is a powerful story, one that has given me cause to reflect yet again on the stories of different cultures that I have heard throughout my life. I would encourage you to listen to this TED talk, it is inspirational, and potentially life changing for listeners.

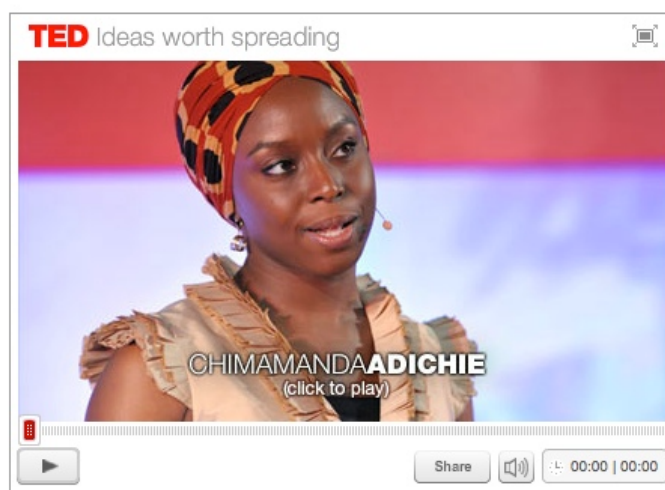
I will finish this small review with a few more quotes from her talk:

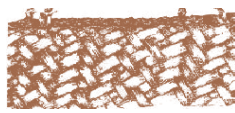
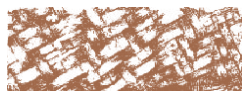
"The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."

"Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanise. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity."

"Show a people as one thing — as only one thing — over and over again, and that is what they become."

Jo Colbert





### UNPACKING MY KETE Ko Te Kore - the child has potential

I was fortunate to attend a workshop facilitated by Rita Walker & Jacqui Brouwer which unpacked the assessment framework *Te Whatu Pōkeka*. Some of you may be familiar with this kaupapa Māori assessment resource, however, many of you may not yet have had the chance to engage with it. This workshop was the catalyst for me to seek more knowledge with the aim of being able to truly value the language, culture and identity of tamariki. My hope is, that this article will make you curious and inspire you to want to investigate *Te Whatu Pōkeka* further, with the aim of incorporating its kaupapa into your teaching practice.

I'd like to start by sharing one of the issues that Rita raised: that te reo Māori is often translated but should in fact be interpreted. Māori language is a taonga because every word has a whakapapa, where it has come from, and different meanings.

For example when we *translate* **tamariki** it means 'child':

**tama** - sons  
**riki** - sons of chiefs  
**ariki** - tamaariki - chiefly knowledge  
**ariki** - the realms

However, the same word *interpreted* becomes 'precious little ones, loved'

**ta** - Blueprint, image, representation, impression - Whakapapa, Ruamoko - the trembles are Ruamoko (the unborn child) the deity of tamoko (patterning anywhere on your body). Ruamoko is the guardian of tamoko, who has the ability to change the landscape - children are powerful. Ruamoko is fickle - children fickle. Ruamoko is also the deity of eruptions - the child is a real Ruamoko. Tamoko - representing you, your stories, your history, your whakapapa.

**tama** - Derivative of tama-nui-te-ra (the sun), ana atua (spiritual guardian) depicted by the sun, which provides light and warmth which we can't live without - the same as our children.

**ama** - Balance, stability, consistency (ama - a specific type of waka, an outrigger providing balance) children bring balance to our lives.

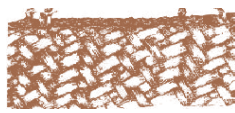
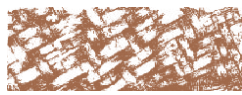
**ariki** - chiefly status, divine being  
**riki** - young shoot connected to a root system; a metaphor for whakapapa  
(riki - seed potatoes) they are rooted in their history.  
(all translations taken from Walker & Bouwer workshop notes)

You can see how different the translation and interpretation are from one another, how they can impact on your view of something. It's just a reminder to slow down and take time as a team, to unpack the whakapapa behind the words you use in your te ao Māori journey.



In *Te Whatu Pōkeka* there are three aspects to the framework. Walker writes: "[T]he first part of the assessment framework which argues that children come with **ways of knowing** the world (mohiotanga), that they learn (mātauranga) through experiences and challenges and that they seek and gain clarity (maramatanga) from the achievements, accomplishments and failures they encounter as they learn and grow.

The second part of the framework argues that Māori children possess a number of attributes derived from their history which spans back through time and space [wairua, mana, mauri] [...]. This means that the Māori child has a **way of being**, which in turn requires that adults working with and alongside these children must have an in-depth understanding of the children's contexts in order to plan culturally and socially responsive programmes.



Adult responsibilities is the third part of the framework which focuses on providing appropriate contexts of learning, drawing on knowledge relevant to the context, planning and implementing programmes and providing critique and analysis. This indicates **ways of doing**" (Walker, R. 2008, p.9, my emphasis and addition).

As teachers, getting to know each child, their whakapapa and their kōrero hitori is paramount, if we want to really discover who they are. For some time now, many centres have been asking their whānau to share their child's whakapapa or pepeha with them, as a way of building relationships with whānau, however, many of these taonga get filed away in the child's portfolio or on the walls of the centre, once the enrollment process is over and the only revisiting that occurs is by the child. I began thinking about how well we acknowledge, respect and value all that the children know and all that they bring with them, their whānau, their history, their whakapapa? We need to be thinking about how whānau know that we truly value what they have shared with us?

Teaching teams that have unpacked Te Whatu Pōkeka have begun to write bicultural assessment documentation that incorporates the concepts mohiotanga, matauranga, and maramatanga. They are helping to unpack the child's kete, their 'funds of knowledge' and they are using what they discover to help them create a learning environment that is supportive, not only of that child but of whānau, hapū and iwi also. Their Learning Stories are one of the ways they are letting whānau know that they value what has been shared with them. Their words have had the power to build learning partnerships. Teaching and assessment must be a collaborative activity where whānau and kaiako both have a valued contribution and we must be mindful to write Learning Stories that are thoughtful, meaningful, respectful and inclusive, remembering to interpret not translate te reo Māori.

I would like to finish by sharing a beautiful Learning Story titled *Water Baby* written by Danielle from My Treehut in Taupo. The My Treehut team began writing bicultural Learning Stories last year.

#### References:

Ministry of Education (2009). *Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Walker, R. (2008), The Philosophy of Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori assessment and learning exemplars. *The First Years. Ngā Tau Tuatahi* (10):2, pp. 5-10.

Gillian Fitzgerald



# WATER BABY

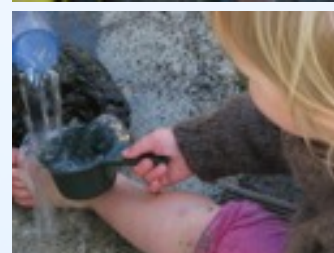


## “WATER COLD...” KATE EXPLAINS

Kate I noticed that you wanted to put bark into the river which was running full with water. I suggested to you to get one of the plastic lids at the carpentry table instead. Grace joined you and you both giggling and following the lids down the river, they were so much fun. Arrived in the sandpit you had a little play with your boat in the river before you found another big green metal lid. **“Look this one!”** you smiled at me, taking the big green lid to the hose to fill it with water then empty it into the sandpit and repeating that a few time. **“Water in sand”** you are expressing your discovery to me.

*“What have you found now Kate?”* I wonder. **“Bowl”** you explain. With your new discovery you repeated the action as above, filling and emptying the water into the sandpit.

While I was observing you Kate I could see you relaxing in your play. You seemed so calm and happy, smiling and jumping for joy up and down in the puddle. After your exploration you sat down by the hose and had a little play with the water, feeling the coolness of it on your hands and toes. It’s so nice to sit in the sun and see the magical splashes of water around you, how it flows calm and causing creation to dance while filling you face with happiness, joy and delight.





# NO RIGHT OR WRONG IN WATER PLAY





# I AM USING MY BICULTURAL LENS

## What learning can I see?

Kate it was so relaxing watching you explore and test your theories.

You love water and I found out today from Mum that you love the shower better than the bath at home. I wonder why? Is it the water drops coming down like rain, sparkling and magical? Mum is a water baby as well and she used to take you for walks along the lake when you were a baby. Your whole whanau grew up by the ocean or Lake moana. Mohiatanga, Kate you are who you are because of your family and their family before them, who was growing and living near water...



## Nga hononga ki te tauparapara: Ways of knowing:

Kate is faced with the joy of discovery. She brings her ideas and known strategies about how to test her own theories (finding new and other equipment) with her. These strategies are successful (Mōhiotanga). Through determination and persistence she succeeds in finding more lids in different shapes and sizes. (Mātauranga). Kate learns that through trying alternative strategies and giving it a go, it is possible to achieve her goals (Māramatanga).

## Ngā āhuatanga o te tamaiti: Ways of being

Kate has rangatiratanga traits - determination, problem-solving skills, persistence, courage, and assertiveness - they are evident. She has a positive attitude about her own abilities and is able to show that she is capable of taking responsibility for her own learning. Through her endeavours she is asserting her personal mana and energy, or mauri. Kate displays a great deal of persistence in achieving her goal, which results in her feeling good about her achievements. Her wairua is in a state of balance as she seeks more challenges.

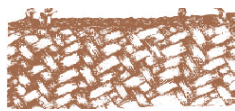
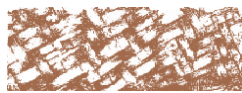
## Tikanga whakaako: Ways of doing

There is no attempt by me to interfere with Kate or to stop her endeavours. Rather I observe, acknowledge, and celebrate her achievements. This indicates to her that she is trusted to achieve her goal independently.

Whakatoiki means feeding down the generations of the love of water.

Kate this is my first attempt to write a story in such depth with a bicultural lens. I am courages like you and determined to achieve my goal. I am looking forward to learn along site you and to get to know you even better. Tino pai o mahi Kate - your work is great.





Upcoming Events	May - July 2013	more info: <a href="http://www.elp.co.nz">www.elp.co.nz</a>
<p><b>1.5.2013</b> Seminar Series, Hamilton Wendy Lee: Revisiting Learning Stories - <b>free of charge</b></p> <p><b>14.5.2013</b> Lecture Series, Hamilton Carol Marks: Snips and snails and puppy dogs' tails, that's what little boys are made of - Really?</p> <p><b>14.5.2013</b> Day Seminar, Ponsonby Alison Brierley: Making learning leap off the page. Expanding Learning Stories.</p> <p><b>14.5.2013</b> Evening Seminar, Ponsonby Alison Brierley: Natural Play-Spaces: Where has all the green grass gone?</p> <p><b>16.5.2013</b> Day Seminar, Kaukapakapa, Auckland Alison Brierley: Learning Heroes: Vivian Gussin Paley</p> <p><b>21.5.2013</b> Lecture Series, Auckland Carol Marks: Snips and snails and puppy dogs' tails, that's what little boys are made of - Really?</p>	<p><b>22.5.2013</b> Seminar Series, Te Awamutu Jo Colbert: The language of learning - <b>free of charge</b></p> <p><b>29.5.2013</b> Day Seminar, Kaukapakapa, Auckland Alison Brierley: Leadership belongs to everyone</p> <p><b>10.6.2013</b> Evening Seminar, Ponsonby Alison Brierley: Learning Stories part 1: Finding the story</p> <p><b>11.6.2013</b> Lecture Series, Hamilton Robyn Lawrence: In someone else's backyard - a sequel to 'Over the fence'</p> <p><b>13.6.2013</b> Evening Seminar, Papakura Alison Brierley: Learning Stories part 1: Finding the story</p> <p><b>17.6.2013</b> Evening Seminar, Ponsonby Alison Brierley: Learning Stories part 2: Building complexity and connections in Learning Stories</p> <p><b>18.6.2013</b> Lecture Series, Auckland Robyn Lawrence: In someone else's backyard - a sequel to 'Over the fence'</p>	<p><b>20.6.2013</b> Evening Seminar, Papakura Alison Brierley: Learning Stories part 2: Building complexity and connections in Learning Stories</p> <p><b>24.6.2013</b> Evening Seminar, Ponsonby Alison Brierley: Learning Stories part 3: The great escape: Breaking through the chains of planning</p> <p><b>27.6.2013</b> Evening Seminar, Papakura Alison Brierley: Learning Stories part 3: The great escape: Breaking through the chains of planning</p> <p><b>9.7.2013</b> Lecture Series, Hamilton Gillian Fitzgerald: 'Dispositions' isn't a dirty word - Strengthening learning partnerships</p> <p><b>16.7.2013</b> Lecture Series, Auckland Gillian Fitzgerald: 'Dispositions' isn't a dirty word - Strengthening learning partnerships</p>

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