

Some Thoughts About Maori Achievement

Joey Moncarz

Educators talk today about “increasing Maori achievement”. What that means is that they are trying to make Maori more Pakeha (European). They want them to get higher test scores in European schools. That would be the sign of success. But has anyone stopped to ask, “Is what they teach in Pakeha schools worth learning?” No. It’s taken for granted that whatever is taught is valuable.

For hundreds of years, indigenous peoples around the world have questioned the value of the Western way of thinking. Finally, a small but growing number of Pakeha are also beginning to question the Western cultural assumptions that lay at the heart of the Pakeha world. They are beginning to make the connections between the way in which Pakeha think and the way in which the world is currently being laid to waste and all life is threatened with extinction.

The Maori did not develop nuclear weapons and the capacity to destroy the world thousands of times over; the Maori did not cause climate change; the Maori did not put toxic chemicals in the water nor did they genetically-modify food; the Maori did not cut up the world into little pieces that could be bought and sold; the Maori did not create global inequality and suffering; the Maori did not create the cancer epidemic, the obesity epidemic, the diabetes epidemic, the mental illness epidemic, nor did they create the alcoholism epidemic. No, these are all gifts of the Pakeha. So now I ask, which culture is healthier for the people of Aotearoa? Which culture deserves to be taught?

The drive of educational initiatives such as *Te Kotahitanga* is to stress the importance of relationships between the teacher and Maori students in order that Maori may “achieve”. But this relationship comes at the expense of numerous other relationships: with “Maori achievement” comes the severing of the relationship with the ancestors, the weakening of the relationship with the land and ocean, the disappearance of the relationship with the *tohunga*, the wilting of the relationship with the next generations, and the end of the relationship with a way of thinking that once made the Maori strong and healthy.

So with the world on the brink of nuclear war, of nuclear meltdowns, of mass extinction, catastrophic climate change, growing inequality, increasing poverty and the corporate takeover of the world, maybe – just maybe – Pakeha should for once recognise their incredible arrogance, blindness and stupidity and instead of asking how they can make Maori more European, the real question we should be asking is, *How can we make Europeans more Maori?*

That would be a real achievement for everyone.

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