

0800Haumi: Allies in Action

Julia Whaipooti (Ngāti Porou) and Jen Margaret (Pākehā) discussed issues around being haumi/allies, as part of Te Tiriti Based Futures and Anti-Racism 2020. As a follow up to the [webinar](#) Jen and Julia committed to providing responses to the questions posed by participants during the webinar. Here they are.

Note: As this document may be shared more broadly, we've removed names of participants.

Julia how do you keep safe when faced with racist whakaaro trying to hide as inquisitive perspectives and how do your haumi support you in those situations?

Answered in the webinar

I am really interested in how you are using the term "white" to refer to pakeha and the word allies. These terms when used in mainstream evokes a pull back into a privileged position by many. Why is this so threatening?

Answered in the webinar. Afterthoughts below:

Jen Pākehā are not trained to see how we are consistently awarded unearned advantage (privilege) in this country. Part of that is about Pākehā culture being the default and “normal” not being named as something distinct (“we’re all kiwi’s right!”) so there’s a deep resistance from some to even naming ourselves as a distinct and specific and just one group of people here.

Julia These are definitely not my original thoughts, but don’t know the names to reference back to. But the discussion is about ‘sanctioned ignorance’ which Jen outlines above. That Pākehā culture is normal, to the point that it is ‘invisible’ privilege. Pākehā culture is the starting point, systems have been designed by Pākehā and by default cater, or aim to cater, to the needs of Pākehā. Because of the invisible privilege, Māori and other non-white ethnicities are named and pointed out. I have seen Pākehā finding it offensive to be called ‘white.’ In my experience it’s attached to natural human response to be defensive to challenges to one’s identity. Learning of privilege, or having layers revealed, it is hard to sit in the uncomfortable truth. It is natural to feel threatened. However, I don’t think it’s useful to respond from such a place, rather sit in the discomfort for a bit before acting.

Some white people reject more inclusive language. I'd rather be called Pākehā or Palagi but could be called white. I try to be Tangata Tiriti and that has overtones too.

Jen In response to that rejection, we can only model and name ourselves, and encourage and build understanding of these terms for others. In those ways we value the names gifted to us (tangata Tiriti) as a people by tangata whenua.

Do you react? I mean do you react with anger when those questions come through? How do you manage your internal stuff without doing something you'll regret? Or do your haumi's step in?

Answered in the webinar. Afterthoughts below:

Julia In the harder times (it might just be when I’m worn out and have less resilience) I have physical reactions that only myself or people close to me can pick up on that tell me when I am strongly affected, or feel the need to respond. My heart goes very fast, and I involuntarily start shaking (it usually passes quickly). It is when I feel very uncomfortable and my body tells me in real time that I ‘have to do something’. What I take seriously is my responsibility to use the platforms and places I exist in to voice the aspirations, needs, want of many of our people that never get asked or have the opportunity to be heard. I recognise that no matter what, when I speak, I often am in rooms as the only Māori, and whatever I say will be heard as ‘on behalf of all Māori’. So I carry the responsibility to respond in a way that is constructive always. This is not easy, I balance whether the person who asks the question is genuine in their ask and has capacity to learn, and who else is in the room and listening to both the question and my response. For example, I’ve been asked by Pākehā men, in very public forums, questions that actually they don’t care about the answer to and are overtly asking to express their racist beliefs/challenges etc. I will respond very directly and without filter in these occasions (well with some filter). But in summary, I’ve become accustomed to

responding, it's hard it hurts a lot sometimes but I'm 'used' to it and will be as constructive and educational as I can, whilst being pono and true in what I mean. I don't always get it right.

Tautoko the difficulty responding to racist comments especially when you know it is but don't feel confident articulating a reply about why it is. Quite often it is a knowing, feeling, not a conscious thought about why the comment is racist. If that makes sense.

Jen It does make sense. It might not be apparent what the problem is with what's being said in the moment (or even later). And that's one of the many reasons it can be hard to respond. Sometimes the clarity might not come to you till sometime later. If you don't feel right about it but don't have the words for why, I think it can be useful to say, "I have a different view/perspective", or "I don't share that perspective." Even that can be easier suggested than said! In making that suggestion, I recognise that power dynamics are at play in any conversation. I also think that Pākehā need to step up more in addressing racism.

In Te Tiriti workshops we do some work on "building our muscles" for responding to racist statements. If time allows in the coming months, we might work on making some of those resources more available.

Julia The greatest allyship I find is in these times when Pākehā challenge Pākehā directly when they're in the room and present when comments are made. Even when they don't have the words I am often empowered in those situations because an ally has felt that something was wrong and responded as if it personally affected them (which it should). In these (rare) occasions I often find myself playing 'good cop' and I'm grateful for these ally interventions – it's a reminder that there is care and we're not just lonely.

How do you intervene in meetings when all but one person is Non-Maori and the whole room turns on that one Maori person who basically expects a collaborative korero on a topic they have raised which the all the others perceive as an attack on their professional integrity.

Jen I'd suggest naming what you are seeing happening, in a way that checks if that is what the Māori person is experiencing and also provides space for them to respond if they wish. If the group has relevant protocols/groundrules about engaging then draw people back to that. If you don't then get some!

How do you respond when almost all the people at a meeting reduce a different point of view to 'oh well that's just a cultural perspective'?

Jen I'd see it being Pākehā responsibility to build understanding with Pākehā in the group that all Pākehā views are a "cultural perspective" and to highlight the total imbalance of perspectives being shared (I'm presuming a Pākehā dominated group in this scenario). So I'd be looking for Pākehā (inside or outside) the organisation to lead this conversation - unless other tangata Tiriti or tangata whenua members really want to.

I'd be advocating for Te Tiriti honouring ways of working that give shared/equivalent weight to tangata whenua and tangata Tiriti views/perspectives. [Ngā Rerenga o Te Tiriti](#): Community organisations engaging with Te Tiriti o Waitangi could be a useful resource for the group.

Julia Agree with Jen's comments. As 'that Māori' who gets called on or often responds, I can see when my views are dismissed as uncomfortable or as 'expected'. It makes a great difference when an ally speaks up in real time to support my view through their own experiences. Unfortunate but true, if an ally raises the view then it becomes more 'valid' in the eyes of decision makers. So speak up.

Joanna Kidman said in an earlier webinar on this notion: "People don't die from a moment of uncomfortable realisation (of how bad colonisation has been and the damage that it is still causing) but do die from the effect of structural racism".

Jen Koinā te kōrero!

Julia Everyday. I think of the police policy to recently set up 24/7 armed response teams in areas where there are high Māori and Pacific populations. That is a policy that designs into a structurally racist system the right for the state to have lethal weapons. And our people will die from this policy.

In our organisation we have potential haumis. Sometimes I don't think they know they are haumis too. Is there something we as Māori should do or is it a personal journey for haumis?

Jen Great pātai, haumi or ally is never a term Pākehā can apply to ourselves we can only ever be called it by tangata whenua. It's not a fixed state, it's entirely dependent on action. Some of the work to be effective as allies is work that non-indigenous people need to do themselves but if you see potential haumi in your organisation and want to work strategically with them, it's the working together that helps clarify the potential.

Julia Great patai, for me personally, I can see these haumi often, and I just simply give them my time and courage to keep going. Sometimes I see haumi who feel way too conscious to speak in front of me or other Māori and so can get scared into inaction. I just try to encourage them. Also, fundamentally it's about relationships, I grab a coffee and build relationships so we are strong enough that we can challenge each other.

I don't think Pākehā realise how much Māori feel uncomfortable and unfortunately most Pākehā are not willing to feel uncomfortable to in order to meet Māori in the middle.

Jen Yep, most Pākehā have no idea.

Julia I am made aware often when I've made Pākehā feel uncomfortable. And it's what I see as the manifestation of racism - when Pākehā discomfort is projected back onto me as my fault or responsibility. It's a challenge for a) to shift Pākehā to be aware of uncomfortable truths and b) to sit there in non-defensive ways.

That's why its SO incumbent on us Pakeha/tauiwi to be alert and willing to call it like we observe it - create discomfort!!

Jen I think we need to do that and also have compassion. In work talking with other people doing this work internationally and here one of the challenges that was identified is **Allies judging each other** this is a summary of what people said:

As allies our critique of our own culture can often be carried into our relationships with one another and can manifest as judgment and righteousness concerning approaches to the work.

- *We need to allow for a diversity of approaches and recognize there are many different ways to do the work. This needs to be accompanied with mechanisms / space for providing constructive critical feedback on each other's practice.*

- *We need to support and nurture each other as allies. We should be hard on issues and soft on people.*

"Comfortable being uncomfortable" - reminds me of Sara Ahmed's writing on 'being a killjoy'

Here are links to Sara's work <https://feministkilljoys.com/>
<https://www.guernicamag.com/sara-ahmed-the-personal-is-institutional/>

Kia ora, how do you view using te reo Maori as being a pakeha haumi?

Answered in webinar discussion

Kia ora, thank you kōrua for your kōrero. Just wanted to add that I think the term white is still useful and sometime more relevant than the term Pākehā because it refers to the global nature of colonisation and white supremacy. Pākehā people have privilege, even when they leave the country, because they are white

Jen Yes, however it is a term/concept that is often misunderstood as being solely about skin colour and not systemic power. I find it more straight forward to talk about Pākehā being privileged by colonisation and that British colonisation is premised on white supremacy – and that's about ways of working, beliefs, power, etc and skin colour. Pākehā carry that privilege wherever we are in the world.

Tēnā rawa atu kōrua, great kōrero. I am often messaged by those who I may not have spoken to for years to ask for translations, or opinions as their "dial a Māori". I struggle with this because on one hand I want to encourage engaging with te ao Māori, but on the other I feel frustrated sometimes by the fact reo/tikanga advice isn't respected as a commodity, like advice about other things may be (such as if you were a doctor or lawyer)?

Answered in the webinar. Additions below:

Julia To reiterate the response in webinar, tauiwi and Pākehā must recognise the expertise/experience of Māori and pay for it. You would if you ask an accountant or lawyer for advice. Māori are often expected to respond in aroha (which we do) but valuing Māori perspectives at a minimum is important.

Jen It's super hard to say to those people thanks for your pātai, great that you want that information, I will respond to it and invoice you at \$*** an hour. Particularly if it is individuals asking. Organisations should be paying though so start there? Also, I think bringing this issue to the fore is important – so it's a role of haumi in organisations to be advocating / ensuring that Māori get paid properly for this work and also to let our mates know not to be taxing Māori in this way.

I agree - we need to be respectful... I am willing and trying to get a deeper understanding because it is vital I need to be aware - Asking for huge understanding in this process. Underneath it all is intent. It is also about strong trusting relationships.. All about being, belonging. Thank you this has been invaluable... I will continue to do my very best... but I am only human:) Forgive me - if I get it wrong.... Thank You

Jen Thanks for your comment, it makes me think of a couple of things.

The first is that while intent is important, in relationships it is the impact of our actions on others that is critical. In the context of colonisation, there's a lot of well-intentioned action that has caused immense harm. There's a need for Pākehā to consider the impact of their action (or inaction) more than the intention.

A second is thoughts shared by Lorelle Savage, a white Australian, in Working as Allies when I asked her if she had a key piece of advice for someone new to allies' work. Here's her response:

I think you've got to be in it for the long haul. There could well be Aboriginal organisations that might disagree with me but, for example, in a remote community that I've visited a few times they were saying to me that the kids at the primary school in this little community learn nothing for the first twelve months when a new teacher comes. It takes that long for the kids to feel a level of comfort and trust—that this person's not going to disappear, and for there to be some gelling. I think there's a really important message in that—that perhaps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people can only put up with our mistakes if in fact we will move through them and become effective allies. But if they have to constantly put up with us being bad allies in short bursts and then disappearing then what's the point. So I think it is important to think about the long haul.

I think it is really important to get your own support structure. Don't expect that to come from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their organisations, don't expect them to look after you when it all gets a bit challenging or when someone's had a bit of a go at you.

And be prepared to put some real effort into learning the protocols and getting some cultural awareness so you don't offend. A lot of the big mistakes can be avoided by you just putting in some of the hard yards in terms of making sure you are aware of, and are prepared to be understanding of, protocols and ways of working that are appropriate.

You're going to make mistakes and some of that is avoidable so maybe be hard on yourself when you make mistakes that are avoidable. There'll also be mistakes that will be made because of 220 plus years of colonisation and don't be too hard on yourself as a result of those mistakes. Don't let them send you scurrying out the door—look at them for the learning opportunity. Be up for it. Also be clear about your investment in the work and not dependent on Aboriginal people and their organisations to affirm and nurture you.

Kia ora e hoa mā, my aunt was asking if there would be visibility on what the responses to the questions are. As in a look at what has been asked in a forum context, that may be an awesome resource or whakahua of this mahi

We hope to have done this.

For more information and resources see: www.groundwork.org.nz/resources