

# Activism for Social, Cultural and Ecological Justice

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Presentation to  
Institute of Early Childhood Studies Seminar  
Victoria University of Wellington  
May 11, 2015

# Justice

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr

“The future depends on what you do today.”

- Mahatma Gandhi

“In a gentle way, you can shake the world.”

- Mahatma Gandhi

# Why do we need to be active in advocating for social, cultural and ecological justice?

- Because merely professing our love for children, for humanity, for nature, and for the planet, without also applying this love through critically reflective and collaborative action is insufficient (Boutte, 2008)
- Because we as advocates, as teachers, as well-educated professionals have an ethical responsibility to apply our knowledge and skills in support of social, cultural and ecological justice?
- Because we are in positions of influence
- Because we see the 'big picture', and can envision a world where there is a collective sense of ethical responsibility
- Because we need to equip forthcoming generations with the dispositions, knowledge, skills, and commitment to advocate for social, cultural and ecological justice

# Social justice issues

- Diversity in a context of increasing super-diversity (Royal-Society, 2013)
- Racism
- Gender discrimination
- Heteronormativity
- Poverty
- Ageism
- Individualism
- Consumerism
- Neoliberalism

# Cultural justice

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations
  - Tino rangatiratanga over whenua (lands), kainga (villages), and taonga katoa (everything of value to Māori, e.g., te reo Māori)

- Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples

- *Article 15.1*

Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.

- *Article 13.1*

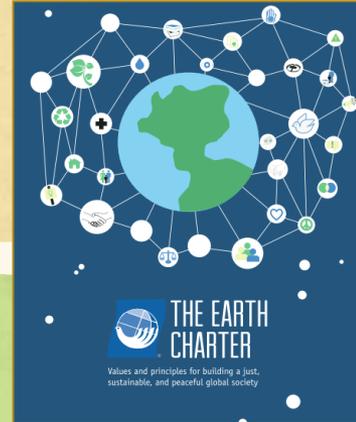
Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

## Ecological Justice

“Climate change is an issue of justice. Climate change mostly affects those who contributed least to the problem, and it undermines human rights including the right to food, to health, and to development.” (Cameron, Shine & Bevins, 2013, p. 20)

# Earth Charter - Preamble

- We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future.
- As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise.
- To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny.
- We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace.
- Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations. (United Nations, 2007)





*"All I'm saying is now is the time to develop the technology to deflect an asteroid."*

Source: *New Yorker Collection*, 1998, cartoonist Frank Cotham.

# Crisis? What crisis?



# Welcome to the Anthropocene

- <https://vimeo.com/79771046>
- <http://www.stockholmresilience.org/21/research/research-news/2-19-2015-time-to-reconnect-to-the-biosphere.html>
- International biodiversity
- New Zealand biodiversity
- NZ sea level rising (PCE)

# Sea level rising



In January 2011 Auckland's Northwestern Motorway flooded in a storm surge. This type of flooding is set to become more common this century. (Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. Te Kaitiaki Taiao a Te Whare Pāremata, 2014, p. 45)

# Repeated flooding in Northland



Floodwaters at Otiria marae and surrounds on Friday, 11 July 2014.

Source: <http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/249494/northland-bracing-for-more-flooding>

# Climate change threatens ecosystems & biodiversity



Tuatara - a highly specialised native species vulnerable to climate change

Source: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/threats-and-impacts/climate-change-and-biodiversity/impacts-on-native-biodiversity/>

# So many endangered species



Eastern rockhopper penguin - nationally critical



Orange-fronted parakeet - nationally endangered



Pied shag - nationally vulnerable

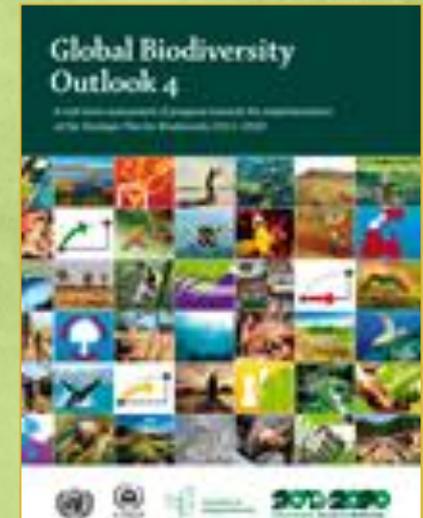
Source: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/threats-and-impacts/difference-between-endangered-and-threatened/threatened-birds/>

# Sustainability definitions:

- The “classic” definition of sustainable development:
  - “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (1987, World Commission on Environment and Development, also known as the Brundtland report, as cited in Drexhage & Murphy, 2010, p. 2)
- UN Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992)
  - Principle 25: Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), 1992)
- Doc’s Save the Kiwi campaign – children’s views
  - <http://blog.doc.govt.nz/tag/awareness/>

# An urgent need for change

- Plausible pathways exist for achieving the 2050 vision for an end to biodiversity loss, in conjunction with key human development goals, limiting climate change to two degrees Celsius warming and combating desertification and land degradation.
- However, reaching these joint objectives requires changes in society including much more efficient use of land, water, energy and materials, rethinking our consumption habits and in particular major transformations of food systems (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2014, p. 10)



# Biodiversity loss parallels cultural and linguistic diversity loss

- 'Although different processes may have given rise to the diversification of languages, cultures, and species in different areas, similar forces currently appear to be driving biological extinctions and cultural/linguistic homogenization.
- 'Broad changes in the form of habitat loss because of large-scale human impacts from an expanding industrialized global economy also represent potential risks to languages and their associated cultures. (Gorenflo et al., 2012, p. 8037)

## Cultural/linguistic & biodiversity loss/sustainability

'Adopting a shared framework for integrating biological and linguistic conservation goals will facilitate monitoring the status of species and languages at the same time as it may lead to better understanding of how humans interact with ecosystems. Indeed, it may be impossible to achieve large-scale conservation of species and the ecosystems that contain them without incorporating resident languages and the cultures they represent into biodiversity conservation strategies' (Gorenflo et al, 2012, p.8037



Te Pou-o-Mangatāwhiri - Te Matangirua

Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.599754406828111.1073741976.133906693412887&type=1>

# Climate change and ethics

'Climate change provides us with an opportunity to rethink:

- issues of responsibility and accountability;
- human dignity – including the dignity of indigenous peoples (living, for example in the Arctic region, small islands, or in arid or semi-arid regions);
- national interests and identity;
- international cooperation and decision-making;
- current views of minorities;
- current views of resilience and vulnerability;
- how to handle differences of opinions in the international arena;
- the ownership of scientific knowledge and the sharing of scientific data'

(World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST), 2010, p. 24)

How might teachers respond to the challenges of the Anthropocene?

# Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2002)

Seeking sustainable development through education requires educators to:

- place an ethic for living sustainably, based upon principles of social justice, democracy, peace and ecological integrity, at the centre of society's concerns
- encourage a meeting of disciplines, a linking of knowledge and of expertise, to create understandings that are more integrated and contextualized
- encourage lifelong learning, starting at the beginning of life and grounded in life — one based on a passion for a radical transformation of the moral character of society
- develop to the maximum the potential of all human beings throughout their lives so that they can achieve self-fulfilment and full self-expression with the collective achievement of a viable future
- value aesthetics, the creative use of the imagination, an openness to risk and flexibility, and a willingness to explore new options
- encourage new alliances between the State and civil society in promoting citizens' emancipation and the practice of democratic principles
- mobilize society in a concerted effort so as to eliminate poverty and all forms of violence and injustice
- encourage a commitment to the values for peace in such a way as to promote the creation of new lifestyles and living patterns
- identify and pursue new human projects in the context of local sustainability within a planetary consciousness and a personal and communal awareness of global responsibility
- create realistic hope in which the possibility of change and the real desire for change are accompanied by a concerted, active participation in change, at the appropriate time, in favour of a sustainable future for all. UNESCO, 2002, p.10 -11)

# UNESCO programmes and resources (just a few examples)

- Peace:
  - <http://en.unesco.org/cultureofpeace/>
- Climate Change:
  - [www.unep.org/pdf/climate\\_211136E2.pdf](http://www.unep.org/pdf/climate_211136E2.pdf)
- Earth Charter:
  - <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/>
- 'Tomorrow Today':
  - <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001898/189880e.pdf>
- United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability Traditional Knowledge Initiative:
  - <http://www.unutki.org/>



# Themes of the Earth Charter

- 1. Critical global challenges and choices.
- 2. The interdependence of social, economic and environmental concerns..
- 3. A definition of sustainable development and guide to sustainable living.
- 4. Universal rights and universal responsibilities.
- 5. The greater community of life.
- 6. Global ethics
- 7. Ecological integrity..
- 8. Social, economic, and environmental justice.
- 9. Democracy, nonviolence, and peace.
- 10. Partnerships, collaboration and global governance. (Earth Charter International, 2009, p. 4-5)

Titiro Whakamuri, Hoki Whakamua. We are the future, the present and the past: caring for self, others and the environment in early years' teaching and learning (Ritchie, Duhn, Rau, & Craw, 2010).

## Research Questions

- What **philosophies and policies** guide teachers/whānau in their efforts to integrate issues of ecological sustainability into their current practices?
- How are **Māori ecological principles** informing and enhancing a kaupapa of ecological sustainability, as articulated by teachers, tamariki and whānau?
- In what ways do teachers/whānau articulate and/or work with **pedagogies** that emphasise the interrelationships between an **ethic of care for self, others and the environment** in local contexts?
- How do/can centres work with their **local community** in the process of producing ecologically sustainable practices?

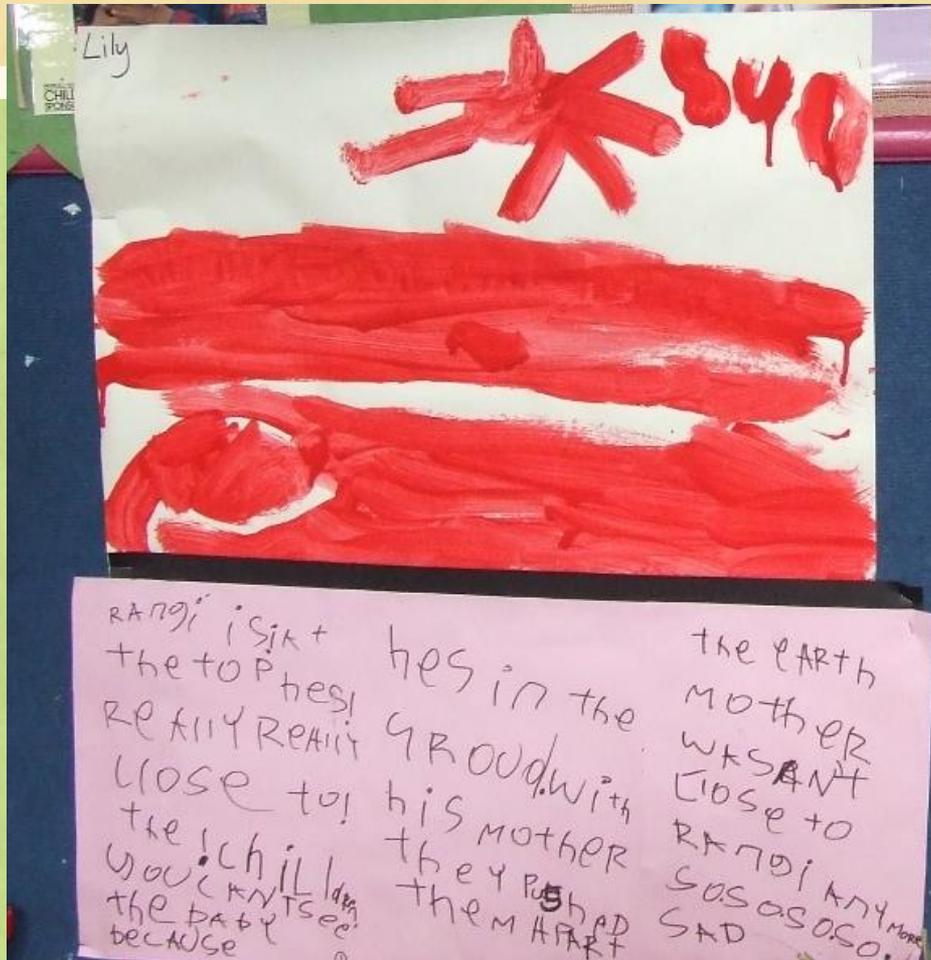
## Some findings...

- Teachers who were committed to programmes which deeply reflected the te ao Māori aspirations of *Te Whāriki*, were able to apply concepts such as *manaakitanga* [caring] and *kaitiakitanga* [guardianship of the earth] within their practice, and these programmes had great resonance for both children and families;
- Activities and philosophies of caring for self, others and the planet conducted within the early childhood settings enhanced relationships between teachers, children, families and had a 'ripple effect' out into the wider community;
- The research kaupapa also enabled teachers to enhance aspects of their programmes that enabled children to engage deeply in the natural world, and through practices such as gardening, cooking, serving and sharing their produce demonstrate a wide range of understandings from both Māori and western perspectives (e.g, of the seasons, of plant life cycles, the science of preserving jams, composting, recycling, caring for centre pets, and so on);
- Employing a lens of 'pedagogies of place' created an awareness of the significance of local Māori knowledges, as well as a sensitivity towards and respect for kaupapa Māori [Māori philosophy];
- .....

- Activities such as fundraising for and visiting the SPCA, performing for residents at a nearby home for the elderly, doing beach and park clean-ups, etc, were described by one teacher as enhancing within their early childhood centre's children, teachers and families, a sense of 'community empathy;
- *Kaupapa* Maori constructs such as *kaitiakitanga* [guardianship], *wairuatanga* [spiritual interconnectedness] and *manaakitanga* [care], as seen in framings such as 'caring for Papatūānuku' [Earth Mother] had great resonance for teachers, children and families. Pedagogies reflective of these notions (e.g, children actively engaged in reducing waste, gardening, composting and so forth) demonstrated effective application of complex knowledges and skills to address global issues in local contexts
- These philosophies of an ethic of care for self, others, and the environment, informed by Māori conceptualisations such as *manaakitanga* and *kaitiakitanga*, and concomitant practices have great relevance in our current era of increasing climate change impacts. The attitudes and dispositions generated through the approaches employed by the teachers offer great hope that future generations will be committed to caring for Papatūānuku, their planet.

# Wide-ranging community-building wellbeing practices...

- Cultural sustainability through use of traditional cosmological narratives.
- Teachers generating a sense of healing and sanctuary within their early childhood centre spaces.
- Gardening, recycling, and food preparation as part of the daily and seasonal shared rituals of caring for each other and the planet.
- The sharing of excess food produce in reciprocal cycles within the centre communities.
- All these practices being underpinned by a sense of wairuatanga, or spirituality.
- Children advocating within their communities.



'Rangi is at the top. He is really, really close to the children. You can't see the baby because he's in the ground with his mother. They pushed them apart. The earth mother wasn't close to Rangi anymore. So. So. So. Sad.'

[Lily, Richard Hudson Kindergarten].

Papatūānuku had too much rubbish on her, because someone had dropped too much rubbish on her. I didn't know who dropped it on her. Rangi actually saved her, because he threw all the rubbish away in the rubbish bin. It was a really naughty person that dropped the rubbish on Papatūānuku—they didn't have a rubbish bin. The naughty person is in jail now. [P-C., Richard Hudson Kindergarten]



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9 September 2008 by Pappi

# Teachers applying *te ao* Māori conceptualisations

Papamoa Kindergarten:

'The research is about Māori ecological principles, how they're informing and enhancing a *kaupapa* [philosophy] of ecological sustainability ... The Māori worldview is holistic and cyclic, one in which every person is linked to every living thing and to the *Atua*, which is the Gods. Māori customary concepts are interconnected through our *whakapapa*, which is your genealogy that links to *te taha wairua*, which is your spiritual element, and *te taha kikokiko*, which is your intellect or your body and your whole spirit' (as cited in Ritchie et al, 2010, p. 13).



# Kaitiakitanga & Manaakitanga

Children in many of the centres took active responsibility for gardening, harvesting and preparing and sharing their produce



“T. by his actions of watering, watching and investigating changes over time, is linking food from our plants and care and respect for Papatuanuku [Earth Mother]” [Penelope, Raglan Childcare and Education Centre]

# Mana Atua, Wairuatanga - Spiritual wellbeing

- *'Papatuanuku (Earth Mother) and Ranginui (Sky Father) look after all of us. The sun, wind, rain and air look after the plants that look after us. We are nurturing our tamariki (children) to look after their environment.*
- *In caring for our natural environment, the tamariki are developing respectful relationships with nature whilst nurturing their health, wellbeing and wairua (spirituality/soul) within. The children freely interact with our garden to express their inner thoughts and emotions'. [Hawera Kindergarten]*



‘Our little pot plants had finished flowering so we recycled them by transplanting succulents in the pots. First we had *karakia* [spiritual incantation] to acknowledge Tāne Mahuta, then broke off pieces of the succulent plants, sat them in the pots and watered them. The children carried river stones from the gravel pit and poured them into the planter boxes. We talked about gardening, looking after the plants, where the stones came from and experienced the *mauri* [life force] in the plants and stones. It was a good team effort. When we had finished, the children admired their work. When one works with Papatūānuku, one can find it relaxing and peaceful. It teaches patience and nurtures the soul’ [Hawera Kindergarten]



# Manaakitanga: Reciprocity, Sharing

*Our OOOBY (Out of Our Own Back Yards) bowl at Raglan Childcare is overflowing! We have harvested our tomatoes as they come ripe and parents and teachers are bringing in fruit and vegetables from their own back yards. Today we enjoyed sweet-corn from E's garden. C left an enormous watermelon on the kitchen bench— much too big for the OOOBY bowl, but big enough to share half upstairs with the under two's and half down stairs—delicious! [Penelope, Raglan Childcare and Education Centre]*



## 'Community empathy'

*'Our kindergarten is genuinely focussed on community empathy. The children had their termly visit to St Andrews Rest Home, in line with caring for others. It is a good chance to associate with the elderly in our community, and is within walking distance through Kew Park'*

[Richard Hudson Kindergarten, Dunedin]



## Mana Tangata – Children’s advocacy within their Communities

- The children took responsibility for caring for their environment
- They came to expect that recycling would be offered, and this led to teachers at one kindergarten liaising with local schools around this expectation
- Children at one childcare centre wrote a letter to their local store, asking for the door to be widened to enable the twin push-chair to fit through the door

10/6/8  
The other day we were a bit late for school, Petra wanted to pick up the rubbish around the neighbourhood. She said there was rubbish on The Earth Mother's Body (Papatuanuku) She is quite concerned about smoke going into Rangī the Sky Father's lungs + it would be hard for him to breathe! We want to do a beach clean up too.

Note from Petra’s mother,  
Richard Hudson Kindergarten

# Mana Tangata - Contributing to International Community

## *Our Visitor from Kenya*

*Margaret Ouku-Mowbray came to talk to the children about Kenya. The children made up a range of questions to ask her:*

- *Where is Kenya?*
- *How do you get from Kenya to NZ?*
- *What do the people eat?*
- *What animals are there?*

*Margaret told them about all the different wild animals to be found in Kenya, then S. asked "Are the children scared?" Margaret said they are not because the wild animals do not live in the town.*

*Margaret sang a song to us in Swahili and we sang back to her. M., S. and K. did a haka for her.*

*We learnt that people in Kenya are just like us - they eat the same sorts of food, their bodies are like ours but their skin is darker. They are poorer than us so we are going to collect our old shoes, clothes and books to send to the Kenyan children.*

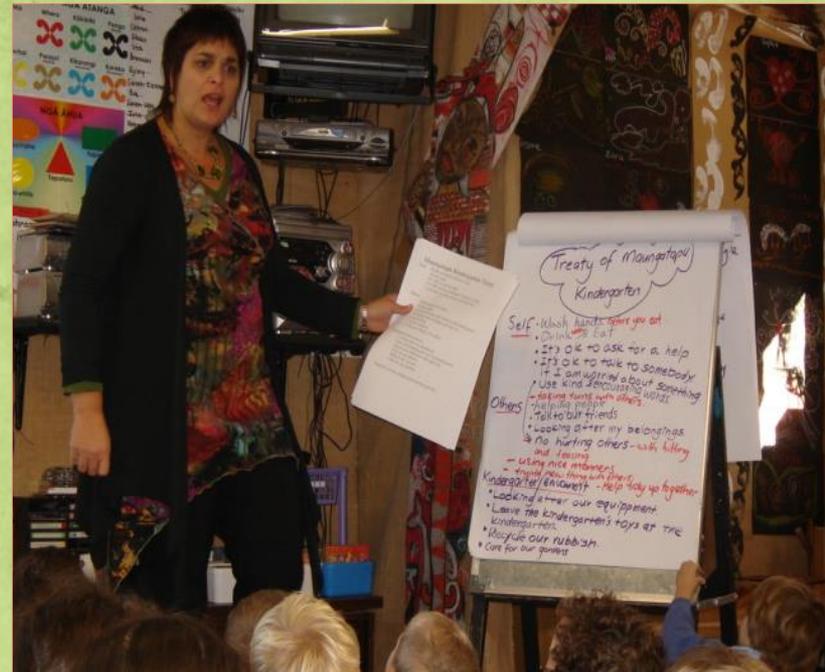
*[Raglan Childcare and Education Centre]*



*During mat-time today we talked with the children about creating a Treaty which we could all contribute to sharing our thoughts and ideas about how to care for our selves, our friends, our kindergarten and our environment.*

*We talked with the children about how this treaty was a document which would help to create rules that would remind us about how we wanted to be treated and what was important to us so that we could help remind each other.*

## Applying Te Tiriti based practices at Maungatapu Kindergarten, Tauranga



**Treaty of Maungatapu Kindergarten**

**Self** - whakāwhiri i te ariā ki te auau  
• Drink with care  
• It's OK to ask for a help  
• It's OK to ask to somebody if I am worried about something  
• Use kind words to the people  
• Taking turns with others  
• Talking to people  
• Talking to friends  
• Looking after my belongings  
• No hurting others - whāki, hiri, and teasing  
• Using nice manners  
• Enjoy the things with others

**Others**  
Kindergarten/whānau - help to help up together  
• Looking after our equipment  
• Leave the kindergarten's toys at the kindergarten  
• Recycle our rubbish  
• Care for our planet

# Enacting care and respect

Rather than directly being taught 'about' sustainability, which has the potential to alarm young children about the urgency and severity of climate disruption, children are supported to be receptive to understandings and daily practices which position them as '*kaitiaki*', as guardians, caregivers of the natural world.

In this way, early childhood care and education services can become 'communities of care' (Sobel 2008, p. 18), that is, sites of respectful shared optimism and endeavour, honouring of local Indigenous pedagogies of place.

# Knowing to care

Teacher Adele from Richard Hudson Kindergarten,  
Dunedin:

“Knowledge of Rakinui/Ranginui and Papatūānuku gives our tamariki a seed of knowledge and concern about the vulnerability of our world. We must all do what we can to look after [her]. By giving the young learners of our society ecological strategies in a realistic context, we are laying the foundations for a generation of earth users who know to care” (as cited in Ritchie et al, 2010, p. 59)



## Nestings of Community building - centre, local, national, international networking

- Everyday community building through rituals of relational, cultural and ecological wellbeing sustainability
- Wider transformational effects into the wider community through children and parent/whānau advocacy

# Moving away from 'vulnerability' discourses

- Climate change, poverty, and child abuse can be constructed and treated as narratives of vulnerability and protection
- Our challenge is to shift this focus towards “children’s active participation and agency in efforts to prevent, prepare for, cope with, and adapt to climate change and extreme events... facilitated through child-centred programmes, child rights-based approaches, children’s engagement in related policy spaces” (Tanner, 2010, p. 340)

# Preparing children for sustainable Futures

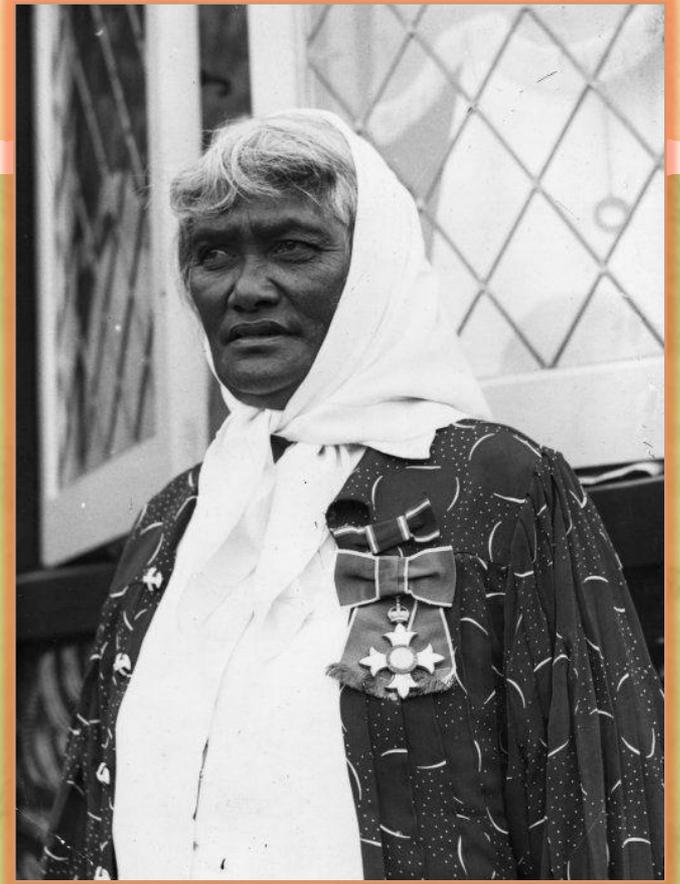
- Children's "lives today, and the lives of future generations of children and young people, are and will be affected by the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and increasing global inequality.
- However, today's children and young people are also the decision-makers of the future, and those decisions will be based on learning, experiences and values gained during their childhoods.
- They also have an active role to play in our efforts to live more sustainably now" (Renton & Butcher, 2010, p. 161)

How can we be proactive in the light of these issues?

# Te Puea Herangi

*“Mehemea ka moemoea ahau,  
ko ahau anake.  
Mehemea ka moemoea a tatou,  
ka taea tatou.”*

*Together, great things are possible.*



Source: National Library

<http://mp.natlib.govt.nz/image/?imageld=images-9050&profile=access>

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