



Mercy ministries looking back to go forward

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Gracing a wall in the largest gathering space at Te Waipuna Puawai, the Mercy community development centre in Ellerslie, is this display of *ngā kete mātauranga*, the three baskets of knowledge, believed in Māori tradition to have been brought to humanity by Tāne from the highest heavens.

Created by a young Māori artist, the piece reminds all who use the facility of Mercy's commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the recognition which this implies of what living in a single nation of different cultures may mean.

It was the Treaty's promoter Governor William Hobson who used the phrase "he iwi tahi tātou" to tell the original Māori signatories that "we are now one people." But anthropologist the late Dame Joan Metge insisted that the more correct translation of the phrase is that "we two people together make a nation." Or, in today's context, that honouring Te Tiriti means seeing that our one nation comprises many peoples together.

The three baskets of knowledge at Te Waipuna Puawai are a reminder that every culture has its own insights and traditions, even its own creation stories to explain the origins of life. And a healthy society will see that partnership is achieved when people are able to make common cause, despite their differences, or even because of them. Committing ourselves to equality does not mean insisting that we are all the same. And working to achieve equity may mean that some in the partnership require an unequal sharing of resources to achieve equality of outcome.

The fine details of how the Treaty principles of partnership, participation and protection are to be applied pose an ongoing challenge. This is why Tiaki Manatū, the Trust

which has governance of Mercy's healthcare, education and community development ministries, adopted a document, *Mercy in Aotearoa 2022-2024*, which focuses on how the vision of partnership might be embedded in its structures. Tiaki Manatū understands that the work is a gradual process but an important one in which everyone within its ministries is engaged.

Commitment to Te Tiriti is a central part of the legacy of Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand. It was Māori who issued the original karanga that first brought the Sisters to this land. And honouring their

bicultural commitment will remain an important challenge for any Mercy ministry worthy of the name. Among the practical steps recommended in the Tiaki Manatū document are the appointment of two Māori directors to Mercy health and community boards, and at least one on each board of trustees at Mercy schools.

A major focus is on the establishment of a mihi whakatau process in every Mercy ministry, ensuring that new staff, directors, volunteers and guests are welcomed appropriately. Supervision and support for teachers of te reo Māori in Mercy schools is proposed, aimed at seeing that tikanga Māori, language and knowledge are strengthened. The document includes a check-list to help boards develop practical actions towards inclusivity and equity for Māori in service provision, employment and to equip them with a voice in governance.

'Ka mua ka muri – looking back to go forward' is the inspiration behind this initiative; a lasting partnership between Māori and Mercy's ministries is the goal.

Deciding on how we can best support this process is a question for everyone in whānau Mercy today.



KETE MĀTAURANGA: These three baskets of knowledge were created by Angel, a young wahine Māori supported by Te Waipuna Puawai to study weaving at Unitec. The work was commissioned by TWP and hung with a special ceremony in 2004. The whāriki (mat) has stairs depicting the pathways offered by TWP for women to value themselves and grow in wisdom, knowledge and light. Graphic by Cheryl Connelly rsm.