

CAUCUSING:  
Creating a Space to  
Confront our Fears



Rebecca Giles & Shirley Rivers

# Background

- Rebecca Giles and Shirley Rivers
- Te Tiriti / Treaty of Waitangi and colonial history of Aotearoa/New Zealand
- Social Work programme development
- Community challenge to 'walk the talk' in 1987
- Beyond learning 'another culture'

# Caucusing



☞ `Caucusing involves students who begin learning as a whole group being separated for some teaching sessions of the topic into 2 caucii designated by the signatory that they represent. That is Māori students are in one caucus and Tauwiwi (people whos' families came to NZ at the time of the signing or anytime since) are in the other'. Giles and Rivers, 2008

# Teaching Learning process

---



- ❧ Students bring to the learning process their historical background and their processing of how society has viewed this topic
- ❧ This is disrupted further with the implementation of a caucusing environment
- ❧ Teaching practice must be mindful of the emotional relationships to the topic

# Research Journey



# Themes from student responses

---

1. strong negative responses by students when first experiencing caucusing
2. *similar* experiences noted *within* each group and a *difference* of experience *between* each group.
3. changes in consciousness noted as process continued
4. expectations regarding having learning needs met
5. false sense of community and norm governed interactions

# Theme Discussion



- ❧ Uncertainty created by separation
  - ❧ Non-Māori students stating concern that needs not being met in caucused classes *e.g. missing out, choice taken away.*
  - ❧ Māori students feeling concerned also however for different reasons *e.g. guilty for leaving the main group, anxious to be accepted by Māori*

# Theme Discussion



☞ Reflection on caucusing experience

☞ Non-Māori – good to process openly, supportive of Māori having a safe environment to process learning

☞ Māori – good to process openly, learnt to find my voice, enhanced my knowledge of the topic



# Literature Discussion



- ❧ Manglitz (2004) challenges educationalists to recognise the way the lives of students have been scripted by their membership in groups that differ in degrees of social dominance and marginality
- ❧ Also Howard (1999) theorises that being able to see oneself from a racial point of view is a necessary stage before people have the ability to see the privilege and dominance that is in existence.

# Literature Discussion



- ❧ Rossiter (2001) her concern that education programmes run the risk of perpetuating the very power imbalances that they champion against.
- ❧ False sense of community. Norm governed way of being. Important to disrupt before healing can occur (Rich and Cargile, 2004)

# Reflection on Research



- ❧ Caucusing is a disruption and generates a variety of feelings that prove challenging for both students and tutors
- ❧ The caucusing environment contributes to the development of critical awareness of cultural discourse within the topic of the Tiriti / Treaty of Waitangi for students
- ❧ *'underlying fears that caucusing has caused to surface were there all along and so now can be acknowledged.'*