

10.

In the  
beginning

*by*

Warihi Campbell & Flora Tuhaka

171

Campbell, W., & Tuhaka, F. (2003). In the beginning. In C. Waldegrave, K. Tamasese, F. Tuhaka & W. Campbell (Eds.), *Just Therapy – a journey. A collection of papers the Just Therapy Team, New Zealand* (pp. 171-173). Dulwich Centre Publications.

The first Maori worker to be engaged as a cultural consultant and then Family Therapist was Warihi (Wally) Campbell. An Anglican priest, Wally had extensive experience working with Maori youth and gangs and was extremely knowledgeable about Maori affairs and culture. When his people first decided that it should be he who joined The Family Centre, Wally had no clear idea what the job was about. Wally was a gift from the local Maori people, binding them and the agency together as long as he was respected and well treated. They said if he was not, then they would take him back.

### **This is Wally's story of his first days at The Family Centre:**

*Charles had already been looking into the Maori people's world. His work as a priest had taken him into the Maori community to conduct services. He had observed how Maori people came together and wanted to change the Agency to make it more relevant to the Maori people. When I joined the Agency, it was a real Pakeha agency. When they first asked me to observe a family in therapy, I thought it was like Star Wars – a game of luck and win. It was so technological – one way screens, video cameras. I laughed, but I was pissed off, angry. They were only coping with their culture and Pakeha academic skills. I said to myself 'tomorrow I'm going to change this place. One of the things that struck me as so strange was that all the workers used to bring their own individual cut lunches. I decided I'd bring along my big pot of kai (food) and put it in the middle of the table, and if they didn't accept my pot of kai, I was going to take myself home. It was one way to test the Agency. I put my lovely pot of kai on the table and told them they could help themselves to it. It was to show my way of working with people – sharing, offering hospitality. After that the lunch habits changed, and we now have an account to pay for food when guests arrive, and we all eat communally. It's an important part of our sharing. It's good to have a nice building, but it's no good without people. I'm a priest, I know a lot of people, and they began to come to the Agency. But after some years, Kiwi and I were getting overloaded. There were issues – rape, violence – that need women's insight and leadership, so I gave them the challenge for a Maori woman to join me. So we found the funding and Flora came.*

Flora Tuhaka joined The Family Centre in 1986. She is a People's Warden of the Maori Pastorate, and a member of the Wainuiomata Marae Komiti (meeting house committee). She too has extensive experience of working with the Maori Community and works at the Agency as a Family Therapist and Community Worker. The following is her account of coming to work at the Centre:

*The Maori and the Pakeha approach differed very much in the way they greeted families. For the Maori what is crucial is that you find a connection. It is important first to talk about genealogy, because in the beginning our ancestors were all connected to each other. If you know their ancestors and they know yours, then you can find the thread which connects you to them. It is important to find that connection, because then you are not a stranger and people can talk. It is important too, when working with Europeans – find the connection, and then people can talk.*

*I work in the way that would be comfortable for my people. It helps them to unwind and tell their stories. It is the quality of the relationship between you and the family that is the most important – how well you have been able to link up with people. It is important for our people to keep our links together. When people have come for therapy, we believe that their troubles and problems are left here, so that when we meet them in the street they are greeted and acknowledged as friends. Early European contact indicated that in the old days, the Maori people didn't have any mental illness, but now they are over-represented in the prisons and mental hospitals. This is because doctors don't understand their problems. In Maori communities, if there were problems, the family would come together in the marae and talk it out – even if it took all day. Every person would stand up and let the offender know what they thought, and how that person's behaviour was affecting everyone else. By the end of the day, they would let you know what to do to make yourself acceptable again. They would never let you go away feeling bad. But once European life took over, these systems weakened.*

*In therapy at The Family Centre, the message we give must be about the pattern – how we can see that they can live again in harmony. It is a message about not being discouraged – how you can get up again when you fall. It must be a message of hope, because when you're down there can still be a lot of hope.*