



ECOLOGY, JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION

Te Kōmihana Whakatairanga Mātai Hauropi, Tika me te Rangimārie

BICULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS COMMITTEE

31 May 2021

**SUBMISSION TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
on the
CONSULTATION: AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND'S HISTORIES CURRICULUM CONTENT IN
NATIONAL CURRICULUM**

Nowadays it is easy to be tempted to turn the page, to say that all these things happened long ago and we should look to the future. For God's sake, no! We can never move forward without remembering the past; we do not progress without an honest and unclouded memory.

Pope Francis: *Fratelli Tutti* (paragraph 249), 2020

Introduction

1. We support the general direction of the proposed curriculum, while understanding that further work by educators and others with appropriate qualifications may develop the draft further.
2. In broad terms, we agree with the principle that the histories of our country should be a feature of the curriculum at all levels, and that an understanding of history is essential to a society in which all are informed and able to participate in political, social, and cultural affairs.

Catholic social teaching

3. Our views as part of the Wellington Catholic Archdiocesan Commission for Ecology, Justice and Peace are shaped by the social teaching of the church. Almost 60 years ago the Second Vatican Council declared the Catholic Church's support for democratic institutions in these words:
All citizens... should be mindful of the right and also the duty to use their free vote to further the common good. The Church praises and esteems the work of those who for the good of the people devote themselves to the service of the state and take on the burdens of this office.
Vatican II: *Gaudium et Spes* (paragraph 75)

As importantly, the Council recognised the legitimacy of different opinions about the means of furthering the common good. Political participation on this basis can only be facilitated by a general understanding of history.

4. At the last Synod held in our Archdiocese of Wellington in 2017, comprising several hundred representatives of parishes and other communities within the Archdiocese, produced several resolutions on ‘deepening our bicultural relationship’. These included:
 - The Archdiocese is a voice seeking ‘tika me pono’ (truth and justice) to right wrongs in the history of Aotearoa.
 - The Archdiocese captures the shared story of our history
 - The Archdiocese continues to provide education about our history, including challenging racism in attitude and practice, and developing understanding of mana whenua and its implications.
5. While these resolutions were directed at the Archdiocese itself, they are worthwhile for the wider society. We commend the proposed curriculum as reflecting these intentions. Education in history is important for the whole country – for tamariki Māori, so that they may see themselves in the stories of the past, and for others so that they may understand some of the wrongs, and some of the rights, of the past. The curriculum will assist Tauīwi students to deepen their ‘understanding of Te Ao Māori and embrace biculturalism’ as their contexts suggest.

Three big ideas of the new Histories Curriculum

6. We agree that the ‘three big ideas’ at the core of the curriculum are essential, and that the contexts and practices which follow are fundamental.
7. We agree that Māori history is the foundational and continuous history of Aotearoa New Zealand; we think that to not recognise this fact is a serious and continuing injustice to Māori and a distortion of the understanding of others. As Pope John Paul II recognized when he visited in 1986:
The Māori people have maintained their identity in this land. The peoples coming from Europe, and more recently from Asia, have not come to a desert. They have come to a land already marked by a rich and ancient heritage, as a unique and essential element of the identity of this country.
Pope John Paul II: *Homily in Christchurch, 1986*
8. Colonisation and its consequences have been central to the history of Aotearoa New Zealand and continue to influence all aspects of New Zealand society. Māori continue to deal with the consequences, and others in New Zealand need and will continue to need to understand this, particularly in light of the likely future composition of our population. As the Bishops of Oceania acknowledged 20 years ago:

The past cannot be undone, but honest recognition of past injustices can lead to measures and attitudes which will help to rectify the damaging effects for both the indigenous community and the wider society.

Pope John Paul II: *Ecclesia in Oceania* (paragraph 28), 2001

9. We agree that the course of this country's histories have been shaped by the exercise and effects of power. This is not only in the contexts of colonisation referred to above, but in many other contexts as well: the struggles of women for political rights, of working people for decent and safe working conditions, of those concerned with the protection and sustainable use of our natural environment, of those working for peace, and of different communities working against discrimination and for full participation. Understanding power and gaining the ability to identify and sequence; to critique sources and perspectives, and to interpret past decisions and actions, are important skills for students to gain. This is especially essential in the current global context where people are being misled by false information and manipulated by narrow political interests.

If someone tells young people to ignore their history, to reject the experience of their elders, to look down on the past, and to look only to a future that he himself holds out, doesn't it then become easy to draw them along so they only do what he tells them?.. They need young people who have no use for history.

Pope Francis: *Fratelli Tutti* (paragraph 13), 2020

10. Pope Francis has most recently recognized the importance of historical knowledge, in remembering and acknowledging both injustices and acts of goodness of the past. In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* he speaks of such understanding of history as being essential to enable reconciliation, particularly when the impacts of historical injustices are still being experienced.

We need to keep alive the flame of collective conscience, bearing witness to succeeding generations to the horror of what happened... I think not only of the need to remember atrocities, but also all those who, amid such great inhumanity and corruption, retained their dignity and, with gestures small or large, chose the part of solidarity, forgiveness and fraternity. To remember goodness is also a healthy thing.

Pope Francis: *Fratelli Tutti* (paragraph 249), 2020