



WORKING AS ALLIES

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Executive summary

A critical dimension of social justice struggles is the work of the people who support those more directly affected by a particular justice issue, the work of allies. This report documents learning from a visit, made possible with support from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, to North America in May 2010 to meet with people who are working as allies supporting the struggles of indigenous peoples and / or undertaking anti-racism work. In 15 separate meetings I met with 18 people who were working in a range of contexts that included Indigenous Studies programmes in universities, community organisations, church and human rights organisations. I also had email discussions with a number of people with whom it was not possible to meet face to face.

This report outlines the rationale for the project, my questions and the method for gathering the information. Key learnings are presented in relation to the term ally, the ally role, the qualities of an ally, and challenges and responses faced by those who work as allies. The ways in which this learning has, and will be, applied is discussed; and a comprehensive list of resources and links is provided.

Discussions with people working as allies in the United States and Canada provided valuable insights into this practice. It highlighted that while contexts might be different, there are many similarities in experiences. A central outcome of this project is the production and dissemination of the key learnings in the form of discussion prompts or thought pieces. These are intended to benefit people who work as allies in Aotearoa / New Zealand and other parts of the world. In this way this project will make a practical contribution to understanding of this important aspect of social justice practice.

Project background

Research topic – Working as allies

A critical aspect of social justice struggles is the work of the people who support those more directly affected by a particular justice issue, the work of allies. The purpose of this project was to learn about the experiences and practices of people who work as allies of indigenous peoples and other marginalised groups in Canada and the United States.

In Canada my focus was on non-indigenous people and organisations working to support the aspirations of indigenous peoples. In San Francisco I spoke with white anti-racism, anti-oppression activists. Through discussions with these people I was particularly interested in learning about the challenges people experienced in their role as allies and how they responded to these challenges. Use of the term allies, the role of an ally and personal qualities important to being an ally were also discussed. People also shared resources that they have found useful in this work.

My background

I am Pākehā, raised in a farming community where my ancestors settled as migrants from the United Kingdom in the 1850s. I first learned about the Treaty of Waitangi in a university post-graduate course in the mid-1990s and was outraged that I had never been taught about this critical piece of New Zealand history during my many years in formal education. This motivated me as an adult educator to begin facilitating Treaty education workshops. Since 2000 I have been active in local and national Treaty action networks. As Projects Manager for the AWEA I develop resources and processes to promote social change in relation to the Treaty of Waitangi and other social justice issues. I am also active in community and international development work.

Need and relevance

Through my studies and involvement in these fields I became aware of the lack of documentation of approaches to working as allies and convinced that resources on this topic would be of benefit. Many people are interested in this work but are uncertain about getting involved because they don't know how to act. For those who are already active in this work other approaches, or an affirmation of existing approaches, could be of value.

Peaceful and just relationships are critical to the health of communities, and knowledge of how to work as allies has the potential to contribute to positive relationships throughout New Zealand society. As the Treaty settlement process continues and some of the injustices of colonisation are addressed, people are beginning to turn their focus to the Treaty relationship itself. My intention is that the use of resources produced through this research will support an enhanced contribution to this relationship. Furthermore, the resources created are intended to support the practice of people who work as allies across a range of other social justice issues.

Why North America?

In my recently completed Master's thesis I considered the practice of Pākehā Treaty workers alongside ideas from international development practice. Both involve people who are not directly affected by a particular justice issue acting to address that concern. My thesis work, and my involvement in work with the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, examining how learning can be shared across different social change contexts, has underlined the importance of learning from people in similar situations.

As I already had connections with people involved in this work in Australia (Borderlands and The Change Agency) and South Africa (Community Development Resource Association), I felt that making connections in North America would extend my learning base. Learning from people in Canada and United States provided a valuable opportunity to reflect on practice here in New Zealand.

Method

Contacting participants

Through a Google search I found the names of two people who had led and been active in an initiative called the Aboriginal and Non-aboriginal Alliances and Coalitions Project. I emailed them and asked both whether they would be interested in being involved and if they could suggest others I should contact. I also made the same request of three people I knew through existing networks. The responses from all the people I contacted were enthusiastic and supportive. I am particularly grateful to Lynne Davis and Victoria Freeman for their suggestions of a number of other people to contact.

Setting up meetings

I established an itinerary based on where key people were located and the amount of time I thought would be needed to meet as many people as possible in one location. The size of both countries is vast and I decided early on to focus on Canada in particular and on visiting the major cities. I also met with people in the San Francisco area who have significant experience in working as allies. This approach meant that I was able to meet with many people in a relatively short amount of time; however, there were many others who are engaged in interesting work who I could not meet with on this trip.

I sent people an initial email with attached information introducing myself and the project (see Appendix One). The email asked if they would be willing / available to meet and suggested dates for meeting. Generally several emails were sent back and forth to confirm details. There were only two people whom I contacted before leaving Aotearoa who were not available to meet. In my fellowship proposal I had indicated that I would have nine meetings over a 25 day period. By the time I left Aotearoa this had increased to 13 meetings in six different cities. Once in Canada I took the opportunity to meet with others who were suggested to me through my existing contacts - in total I had 14 face to face meetings and one phone discussion within 21 days. I also had email contact with another four people who were interested in the project but could not meet due to time constraints.

I met with people who were undertaking work as allies in a range of contexts: in community organisations, church and social justice organisations and from within academic institutions. The majority of people I met with were of white settler identity; however, I also met with a smaller number of people from a range of other ethnic groups. Appendix Two provides a list of people I met with in each location.

Format of discussions

Once meetings were confirmed I emailed people an outline of the questions for discussion (see below and Appendix Three). I met with people in places that were suitable to them, generally their office or a nearby cafe. In most instances, the questions were addressed in informal discussion rather than a more formal interview approach. I took notes as people spoke and in some instances, with the agreement of the person I was talking with, I recorded the discussion as a back up to the notes. I processed my notes as I went by typing them up shortly after each meeting.

In some instances I encountered the issue of people expecting there to be formal ethics procedures for consent to involvement in the project and specific outputs from the project. Generally it was people who were familiar with working within an academic rather than a community research context who had these expectations. I managed this by explaining how the information I gathered would be non-attributable and also gave people the option to have their name included in the final report. On reflection, I felt it would have been useful if I had been clearer at the outset about the informal nature of the research and how it would be reported. In addition, letting people know that the project, while supported by my organisation and the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, was undertaken entirely in voluntary time may also have helped in managing expectations in terms of both process and outcomes.

Key questions

The research discussions were guided by the following questions:

1. Is *being an ally* the language you use?
2. What does the concept being an ally mean to you in the contexts that you work?
How do you characterise your role? the relationship?
3. What are some of the key challenges inherent in being an ally?
4. How do you respond to these challenges?
5. What qualities do you think are important to being an ally?

To open the discussion I asked people to share about their background in the work and the alliances they worked within. People were also asked to share any useful resources on the topic. Appendix Three contains the full list of questions.

Presentation of learning

In the discussions people honestly and generously talked about their work as allies, the relationships they were part of and the challenges involved. I was aware of the sensitivity of much of what was shared. In order to respect this, in presenting the learnings I have provided a synthesis of themes that came from the discussions. I am aware that some of the richness of specific stories is lost in this approach; however, some of these stories and case studies are documented elsewhere (see References and Links).

In presenting the information in this way it is important to note that what is documented does not represent a collective view of the people I met with, but rather my interpretation of the key points that were made by people.

As mentioned, my aim in this research has been to produce resources that would be of interest to people working as allies in a range of social justice areas. I am mindful that few people are likely to have the time to read this full report. For ease of use each of the learnings sections below has also been formatted as a separate document and is available in a dedicated section of the AWEA website (http://www.awea.org.nz/allies_resources). They are intended as discussion starters for groups or think pieces for individuals, and as such are accompanied by questions to guide people in considering the material. These questions are:

- What resonates with your experience?
- Which points do you not agree with? Why?
- Which points do not make sense to you?
- What is missing?

Given this use, they are written in a generic way with few references specific to the North American context. While the points made reflect the context of alliances between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples - and some are specific to this context - many are applicable across the diversity of ally relationships. In the key learnings section below I discuss my reflections on the overall learning gained through the interaction with people working in North America before presenting the generic resources related to working as allies.

Key Learnings

Context and Commonalities

The discussions with people in the United States and Canada highlighted that while there are differences in relation to the historical and current political context in Aotearoa, commonalities in experiences of working as allies is a distinguishing feature. Some people I spoke with were surprised to learn that there is one treaty in New Zealand as there are 11 numbered treaties and hundreds of sub-treaties in Canada. Some of these are historical and others have been developed in recent years. Differences such as these mean that the specifics of the issues that people are addressing vary in each location. What this project emphasised, however, was the commonalities in the experiences of working as allies in the different countries. The challenges that people discussed both in the United States and Canada were similar to experiences in Aotearoa (see Appendix Four for reflections on working as allies from Aotearoa). A central point that was emphasised was the importance of understanding the dominant / white / colonial mindset and the need for allies to engage in specific and separate work amongst their own people, as well as supporting the struggles of those they are in alliance with. The importance of alliances between people doing this work and the potential of learning from each other was also emphasised.

Issues not answers

We have learned that there is no simple recipe for respectful relationships, no 'best practices'. Relationship building is an on-going process that is fluid and unfolding. It requires commitment, attention, awareness and communication. There are 'ups' and 'downs' but through it all there are tremendous opportunities to work in solidarity and to make changes that will result in a more just world for present and future generations.

(Davis, L. & Shpuniarsky, H. 2010 p. 347)

This research reinforced that there are no simple answers to the challenges experienced when working as an ally. The practice of working as an ally is contextual and relational issues therefore need to be worked through with regard to the specific circumstances and relationship/s. There is not a simple checklist that allows you to 'be a good ally'. Ally relationships are generally complex and as allies we 'make the path by walking' (Horton and Freire, 1990).

The research also emphasised that our work can usefully be informed by learning from the experiences of others who have been / are involved in alliances, therefore it is valuable for people working as allies to create opportunities to share learning. The people I met with in California were active in explicit work to build white anti-racism leadership (the Catalyst Project's Anne-Braden Anti-Racist Organising Training Programme). In Canada those I met with discussed the importance of connections between people involved in this work; however, the strength of such networks and connections varied.

Alliances research

A highlight of my trip was walking with Lynne Davis from our initial meeting place to the offices of the University of Toronto Press to collect a copy of the book 'Alliances: Re/envisioning Indigenous-non-Indigenous relationships'. Edited by Lynne, the book is the result of a three year editing and publishing process. It was 'hot off the press' and was the first copy of the book that Lynne had seen. The book contains 24 chapters with people reflecting on working in alliances. It comes out of the Alliances Project research led by Lynne and a 2006 Re/Envisioning Conference, both of which explore indigenous / non-indigenous relationships. From this research three key themes or characteristics have emerged which resonate with allies relationships here in Aotearoa.

In summary, these themes are:

Coalition as a microcosm of colonial relationships – issues of power and control which are manifest in the broader context of colonial relationships are present and manifest within alliances.

Coalition as a site of learning and transformation – being part of alliances generates significant learning for those involved, particularly for non-indigenous people. 'Openness to embarking on a process of on-going learning is an important element in successful relationship-building.' (Davis and Shpuniarsky, 2010 p.343)

Coalition as a site of pain – working to address the impacts of colonisation can be a hurtful and difficult process for both indigenous and non-indigenous people. (Davis and Shpuniarsky, 2010).

These themes provide a useful base for understanding the dynamics at play in alliances. The Alliances Project research and the various contributions to the 'Alliances' book have made a

valuable and timely contribution to my theorising and reflection on the work of allies, and are a significant resource for people working in alliances.

The term ally

Value of using the term ally

- It gives people a powerful, positive, active role in things they think they do not have a role in or where they might be defined as a problem.
- It is concrete - you can discuss how to act like an ally in particular circumstances.
- It allows for connection with the history of allies and how allies work.
- It provides a positive way of inviting people into the struggle.
- It can be a way to consider how to have ethical, accountable, transparent ways of working with indigenous peoples / marginalised groups.
- It is used across a range of oppressions and is useful for connecting between oppressions.
- In Canada there is an ally tradition for First Nations people and indigenous metaphors - making it good language to use.
- It makes you consider who you are in alliance with.

Limitations of using the term ally

- The concept can become meaningless if its use is not aligned with action. What matters is practice. Practice is ongoing and evolving. You are only an ally for as long as you keep acting as an ally.
- The term can provide a way of talking without recognising and addressing privilege.
- Can you self-proclaim that you are an ally? Is it for you, or the people you're in an alliance with, to decide?
- What is the motivation for wanting to call yourself an ally? Is it about wanting approval or recognition from indigenous people, people of colour or other white people?
- The term has 'them' and 'us' connotations.
- It is based on a Western Christian model of individualism and interpersonal rather than organisational relationships. It creates a focus on heroes not movements.
- It places a focus on moral intentions rather than impact. It can be problematic in situations where people become involved from a place of guilt and want to restore themselves as a 'good person' through the work.
- It does not inherently deal with accountability.

Alternative terms for this work

- Solidarity / 'be in solidarity with' – this has traditionally been used for work in support of international rather than domestic struggles.
- 'In support of' / supporter
- 'Standing with'
- Accountable relationship/s

- 'Bystanders' - used mainly in anti-violence work (is about responding to situations not addressing systemic issues).

Key points: Being an ally is a practice and a process - not an identity. It is an on-going practice that is learned and developed through experience.

Any term that is used to describe this work will only uphold its integrity if those who use it act in alignment with the intended meaning of the term.

The ally role

Relationship based and contextual

- The ally role is negotiated in the context of the relationship / alliance.
- Political dynamics and contexts differ but the principles that underlie the relationships are the same. Ethical principals include respect, recognition (of indigenous peoples' rights and place etc.) and responsibility (in relation to your role as coloniser).
- Relationship-based work needs to respond to the changing situation of the party or parties on the other side of the relationship, particularly in relation to accountability.

Working with 'our own'¹ and with indigenous people

- Being an ally is not about helping or 'fixing' the 'other' party but about first considering and then undertaking our own work.
- We need to recognise that indigenous people are working on their own decolonisation and settlers need separate processes. These processes need to include the identification of responsibilities for addressing injustice and the need for non-indigenous people to work on changing our own systems.
- There needs to be a balance between working with our own people and working directly with indigenous peoples so that we do not lose connection with the issues and priorities of those we are in alliance with.
- Some people are positioned as bridge-builders working between indigenous and non-indigenous communities, some are working more in indigenous communities, and others with their own. For any one person the role may change over time.

Supporter, leader, potato peeler...

- The ally role varies and can require different actions to be undertaken at different times. It can help to state at the outset what you can contribute in any given context.
- Work on the aspect of the issue that is most appropriate in the context of the community you are supporting and the skills you / your organisation can offer to the alliance.
- Be useful and provide practical support, from speaking at public meetings to working in the kitchen.

Who leads?

- This can vary between and be a mix of following the leadership and direction of indigenous leaders / elders / scholars and taking our own lead. It depends on the context.

¹ The terms 'we' and 'our' are used throughout these learnings to refer to white settler allies.

- Determining when to step forward and when to step back is an ongoing process. In attempting not to dominate we can become too self-effacing and not be useful.
- The alliance is for the long run - good allies have to be free to take different positions, disagree or use different tactics on issues. It is not about uncritically following or falling into line with indigenous people's views.

Getting feedback

- The ally role requires on-going checking in with others, indigenous and non-indigenous people, and deep reflecting.
- Be open and confident about asking for feedback from the people you are working to support. Seek feedback from other non-indigenous allies and constantly critique your own practice.

Listen, respect, reflect

- Be open to hearing other voices. Listen intently as people are speaking from different worldviews.
- Do not speak for others.
- Enable indigenous voices to be heard.
- Work respectfully, acknowledging the gifts others have.
- Know and acknowledge your own history and the history of the land you are on.
- Be willing to go into emotionally difficult terrain and prepared to sit with the unsettling nature of work and with discomfort.
- Be self-aware and reflective.

Key points

- The ally role is relationship based and contextual - requiring flexibility and responsiveness to change.
- The role is learnt in action.

Qualities for being an ally

- Humility – *being passionately aware that you could be completely wrong.*
- Ability to listen carefully.
- Sense of humour – *not taking yourself too seriously.*
- Patience – *for the long haul of the struggle and for different ways of working.*
- Usefulness – *it's not about being right or good it's about being useful.*
- Knowing yourself – *your identity and history.*
- Knowing and acknowledging whose land you are on - *the history of people and place.*
- Groundedness – *inner strength and the ability to stay calm in challenging situations.*
- A thick skin – *the ability to hear criticism constructively. Understanding criticism within the broader context of colonial injustice rather than taking it personally. An understanding that you may be a safe target for understandable rage – develop the ability to hear that rage.*
- Endurance – *messing up, learning, picking up and keeping on.*
- Long-term commitment – *which includes a commitment to personal sustainability and sustainability of relationships.*
- Flexibility – *an ability to go with the flow.*
- Letting go of knowing, of being right, of having the answers – *always being aware of how much you do not know.*
- Being open to constant learning – *acting, making mistakes, getting feedback, reflecting, acting. Check your ideas with people who do not always agree with you.*
- Courage – *to act, to take a stand.*
- Critical awareness – *political awareness, strategic thinking.*
- Self-awareness – *knowing your skills and what you can offer, knowing your limits, awareness of not dominating, awareness of power, ability to reflect.*
- Honesty, humility, courage, wisdom, respect, generosity and love – *The Ojibwe Seven Grandfather Teachings.*

Note: This is not intended as a check list of abstract concepts - these qualities need to be demonstrated through on-going action in the context of alliances.

Working as allies - challenges and responses

Addressing power

Power imbalances exist in relationships between allies and those whose justice struggles they are supporting. Power issues cannot be overlooked.

- Recognise the complexity of power
 - It is seldom a simple powerful / powerless, coloniser / colonised dynamic. Both indigenous and non-indigenous people can carry / take victim and victimiser roles. Both parties hold different types of power, including moral, ethical, financial and decision-making power. Identify and acknowledge this.
 - Power dynamics change in different circumstances.
- Acknowledge privilege
 - Understand and recognise the benefits of your positioning / colonial inheritance and how that might manifest in your work as an ally.
 - Recognise the difficulty of acting outside of inherited roles. Addressing power and privilege is on-going, lifelong work.
- Be mindful of how power is operating in any given context and take conscious steps to mitigate power imbalances
 - In determining when to speak up and when to shut up – respond if requested by indigenous people to speak. If you have not been asked to, consider why you might want to speak and ask yourself if it is necessary. Give space to indigenous voices.
 - Organisations often address the imbalance of power by getting involved in issues only at the request of indigenous people. They may have explicit discussions about why their involvement has been requested, their organisational values / principles, and what they can offer.
 - Be aware of who is making decisions and how these decisions are being made.

In determining if and when to follow the direction given by indigenous people and when to take a lead, consider:

- the extent to which you should lead or follow depends on the situation and the relationship/s you are in.
- being an ally is clearly not about telling indigenous people what to do; however, taking a passive role does not create healthy relationships.
- to create change, work needs to be done with non-indigenous people. It is non-indigenous people's responsibility to undertake this work whilst remaining accountable to indigenous peoples for the outcomes of the work. Ways of maintaining accountability include:
 - requesting regular feedback on your work and responding to this feedback.

- making your work transparent to those with whom you are in alliance e.g. through distributing information, public meetings, informal and formal discussions.
- continually asking yourself 'Who are we in relationship with? Who are we accountable to? What are we doing to be accountable?'

While we may be able to walk away when it gets too hard, those with whom we are allies do not have this option - this creates imbalance.

- Sticking with the work gives you credibility - but only if you maintain your commitment.

The ignorance of the white settler population

Ignorance and collective denial of colonial violence, a lack of awareness of white privilege, and racism within the broader white settler population, are key challenges for white allies to address.

- Education is a key response to addressing these issues. In Canada unravelling the myth of settler benevolence is a key aspect of this work.
- A task central to the role of an ally is to speak up against racism whenever possible.
- White people need to turn the mirror on themselves and take responsibility for changing themselves rather than 'fixing the other'.
- It is necessary to move white people beyond a charity model of 'helping poor indigenous people' to seeing the struggle in terms of justice and rights.
- Treaties are generally regarded as being for indigenous peoples rather than being seen as a relationship that benefits non-indigenous peoples. This norm needs to be challenged.

Analysis paralysis

After becoming aware of injustice people can get caught up in feelings of guilt or denial. White people like to be comfortable and 'right' in their actions, and can become immobilised by these feelings and 'not knowing' what to do.

- If you are feeling uncomfortable it probably means that you are 'doing the work'.
- It is important to act and actions can be small; for example, sharing with other white people what you have learned about colonial history. Significant actions such as building alliances with indigenous peoples are best undertaken, initially at least, alongside other people / groups already active in this work, rather than being forged individually.

Working cross culturally

A challenge many people face is trying to determine the level of cultural competence needed to be a useful ally. It is critical to have an appropriate level of cultural knowledge to engage respectfully while not 'appropriating'.

- Knowledge and use of an indigenous language is a central issue.

- Be aware that your use of the language will be perceived differently by different people in different contexts. Understanding the context and implications of the use of language before using it may help in managing this.

Working cross-culturally is often uncomfortable, and misunderstandings are common. Therefore:

- be prepared to sit with the discomfort and learn from it.
- be prepared to engage with 'unlearning' of assumptions and behaviours.
- be open to feedback and challenge.

Some people of colonial heritage respond to learning about colonial violence by wanting to run away from their own culture and adopt another culture. This is not a useful response.

- Allies have a role in supporting members of their culture to consider their responsibilities and roles they can take up from within their own cultural context.

Building trust

Trust is important to strong relationships; however, given the history and enduring impact of colonisation there can be suspicion and a lack of trust of non-indigenous people who want to work as allies. Some organisations and groups for example, church based organisations, face particular challenges because of their previous active role in colonisation. Therefore it is important to:

- recognise that building trust can be slow and is an on-going process.
- be reliable over time - do what you say you are going to do.
- maintain continuity in relationships. When working in organisational or group contexts endeavour to build group relationships. This can be a challenge as there are often key individuals within organisations who establish and maintain the relationships.
- develop a collective approach as this assists in sustaining relationships.

Respecting different / conflicting expectations

Often we might encounter conflicting expectations from different members or sectors of the group/s we are working with.

- We should not expect unity. We need to be able to deal with working in environments where there are contradictions and complexity.
- Where possible / appropriate learn about the internal issues before getting too involved.
- It is important not to exacerbate internal divisions within groups or communities. It is not the ally's role to reconcile the differences. In some circumstances this may mean not acting on an issue.
- Be clear about your own organisational positioning and values, and your role in the alliance.
- Do not be afraid of the conflict - instead try to learn from it.

- People who request your support may not have a mandate from their broader community. In determining whether to engage, reflect on your own positioning, your values and the implications of supporting a particular person or sector of a community.
- Work at points of convergence; for example, a community might have different views about logging happening in their area; however, they may agree on the need for their informed consent for logging to proceed. In this instance provide support on the issue of informed consent rather than taking sides on whether logging should be carried out.

Juggling / balancing interests of indigenous communities and constituents

For people working within organisations with a predominantly non-indigenous membership it can be a challenge to balance the expectations of your membership and those of the indigenous people with whom you are working. Ensuring the support of membership is important to sustaining the work; however, this can mean that you are not seen as being bold enough by indigenous communities. Therefore:

- be clear about your purpose and accountabilities and try to find a position that both parties can live with.
- recognise that positioning may differ on different issues. Relationships with members and with indigenous people are for the long run so you need to consider the implications of actions and responses over time.

Balancing working with your own people with relationships as an ally

Allies may find it difficult to determine the balance between generating change within their own cultural group and the need to support the initiatives and struggles of indigenous people.

- Your work needs to be informed by those it is intended to support - seek their input on what is needed.
- You need to keep coming back to the needs of the group/s you are working to support and how you are contributing to the bigger picture of change.
- Relationships are maintained and strengthened through working together, so it is important to balance a focus on working with your own people with ensuring that you are maintaining relationships with those who you are working to support.

Allies judging each other

As allies our critique of our own culture can often be carried into our relationships with one another and can manifest as judgment and righteousness concerning approaches to the work.

- We need to allow for a diversity of approaches and recognise there are many different ways to do the work. This needs to be accompanied with mechanisms / space for providing constructive critical feedback on each other's practice.
- We need to support and nurture each other as allies. We should be hard on issues and soft on people.

Sustaining a lifetime commitment

There has been a long history of colonisation and dismantling it will take generations; the infinite horizon can be daunting. Long term struggles need long term allies. Therefore it is important to:

- nurture ourselves and others in the work to prevent burn out.
- develop and maintain networks and coalitions of allies.
- create spaces and processes for working through the challenges, for example, talking to others, spiritual practice etc.
- make space for reflection on practice.
- reflect on, and celebrate, positive change / successes.
- remember what you can, and are, contributing and value this contribution.

Application of this learning

The learnings outlined above have been made available for others to access, use and respond to via the AWEA website. A full copy of this report is also available on the website (http://www.awea.org.nz/allies_north_america). I will notify people in relevant networks here and internationally of the availability of these resources. Also, I have shared, and will continue to share, the learning from my time in North America in a number of ways:

- On 8 June 2010 (the day after I returned from North America), I presented my initial reflections on my learning at the 4th International Indigenous Conference on Traditional Knowledge in Auckland as part of a panel entitled: 'Building just relationships: Examples of indigenous and non-indigenous engagement'. My powerpoint presentation is available at http://www.awea.org.nz/allies_north_america. We received feedback from the conference organisers that having Pākehā speak on this topic was appreciated. Since the conference I have shared information with an indigenous Australian man who requested resources about working as allies to share with white Australians with whom he works.
- I presented at the Association of Non-governmental Organisations of Aotearoa (ANGOA) Research Forum in August 2010.
- Relevant learning has been shared in the context of mentoring conversations with others engaged in Treaty and social justice work.
- I have discussed my experiences with my colleagues in AWEA and with other members of the Treaty movement.
- I have already instigated discussions with colleagues in Australia on this topic and I will share learning from this project with them when I attend a conference in Melbourne in September 2010.
- I am happy to respond to requests to discuss this research with other groups and organisations.

The learning also makes a significant contribution to my own practice and understandings as I continue to undertake work as an ally.

Other useful connections

Many people who work as allies supporting indigenous struggles in Canada are also involved in popular education. An unanticipated outcome of discussions with these people was the

useful connections made in relation to other aspects of AWEA's work such as Structural / Conjunctural Analysis.

Conclusion

As this report attests, my discussions with people working as allies in North America was immensely valuable for affirming and expanding my understandings of the issues and gaining insights into people's responses to the challenges of this work. The project has allowed me to make connections with a number of people whose work is of relevance to people active in a range of social justice areas here in Aotearoa.

The resources on the topic of working as allies which are an outcome of this project are intended to be a useful means of opening up broader discussion on this topic here and elsewhere. Discussions and presentations since returning from North America have affirmed the value of this learning experience.

This project focused on the experiences of non-indigenous allies, particularly white settler allies. It would be useful in the future to explore the perspectives of the indigenous people with whom we are in alliance - as obviously this is a significant part of the picture which was not explored in this research.

In conclusion, I thank the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for their contribution to this project, and all those people who shared their experiences and learning with me, including other colleagues and friends who supported me in this project. I hope that the outcomes of this project will contribute to enhanced practice by people working as allies, and help strengthen relationships integral to social justice.

Appendices

Appendix One: Introductory email and project summary document

Email text format:

Hi [name]

My name is Jen Margaret. I am member of the non-indigenous (Pākehā) movement which supports Māori self-determination, in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I'm also involved in community development and education for social justice work.

I've been awarded a Winston Churchill Fellowship to visit Canada and the United States to meet with people who are developing resources / practice around working as allies. In Canada I will be meeting with non-indigenous people working in support of indigenous rights. I've attached a brief project summary from my fellowship application to give you some more background. I am keen to learn about how people / organisations work with the challenges of 'being an ally' – e.g. dealing with issues of power and privilege in these relationships, knowing the impact of our actions, hearing challenges but also maintaining a sense of our own positioning/identity etc. My intention is to be able to develop resources that could support the work I'm involved in here and to be able to share these with people working in similar situations in other parts of the world.

[name of contact] suggested you would be a good person to meet with so I'm writing to see if you would be available to meet at anytime on [proposed dates].

I'm wondering:

- 1) Are you available to meet with me on any of those days? If so,
- 2) How much time would you have available?
- 3) Where would it suit you best to meet?

I look forward to hearing from you about whether this suits.

Best wishes

Jen

Attached project summary:

Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship 2010 - Jennifer Margaret 'Working as allies' – Project summary

What do you propose to do?

I will meet with groups and individuals in Canada and the United States who are working as allies to support the issues and struggles of indigenous peoples and other marginalised groups. I intend to talk to these people in order to learn about their approaches and how they respond to the particular challenges inherent in this work. I will use this to inform the development of resources to support this work in Aotearoa.

In Canada my focus will be on visiting non-indigenous people who are working to support the aspirations of indigenous peoples. In these discussions I am interested in learning about how relationships with non-indigenous people have developed, how people define 'being an ally' and the challenges that this work presents; for example, dealing with issues of power

and privilege in these relationships, knowing the impact of our actions and responding to challenges while maintaining a sense of our own identity.

Why is this project necessary?

While people have been undertaking this work for many years there is little documentation of approaches and few written resources to support people who work as allies. Because this work is critical to positive social change, gathering information and resources which can be contextualised for people in Aotearoa will be invaluable. In my recently completed Master's thesis I considered the practice of Pākehā Treaty workers (non-indigenous people supporting indigenous rights) alongside ideas from international development practice. Both involve people who are not directly affected by a particular justice issue acting to address that concern. This research and my involvement in work with the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, examining how learning can be shared across different social change contexts, have highlighted the importance of learning from people in similar or parallel situations.

Learning about the work of people in Canada and United States will provide an opportunity to reflect on practice here in New Zealand and inform the continuing work of New Zealanders. Through my research and involvement in Treaty work, and community and international development, I am aware of the need for resources relating to the role of allies. Many people are interested in this work but are uncertain about getting involved because they don't know how to act. For those who are already active in this work, other approaches or affirmation of existing approaches would be of value.

While this project will clearly provide information of benefit to the communities I am active in in Aotearoa I intend my discussions with people I visit to be an exchange of ideas so that there can be mutual learning.

Jen Margaret

I am a community development practitioner active in non-indigenous networks supporting Māori sovereignty in Aotearoa / New Zealand. As Project Manager for the Auckland Workers' Educational Association (www.awea.org.nz), I develop resources and processes to promote social change in relation to the Treaty of Waitangi and other social justice issues. I have a keen interest in enhancing the efficacy of this work through learning and capacity development processes.

Appendix Two: Meeting schedule

Contact	Date	Meeting location
Paul Kivel Social justice educator, activist and writer	Mon 10 May	Oakland
Betty-Jeanne Rueters-Ward Catalyst Project	Wed 12 May	San Francisco
Paulette Regan Senior Programme Advisor Truth and Reconciliation Canada	Thurs 13 May	Vancouver
Mike Ma Board Member The Centre for Social Justice Toronto	Fri 14 May	Vancouver
Budd Hall Director Office for Community Based Research University of Victoria	Mon 17 May	Victoria
Denise Nadeau Interfaith Summer Institute for Justice, Peace and Social Movements Simon Fraser University Vancouver	Wed 19 May	From Montreal to Courtenay B.C. by phone
Aziz Choudry Assistant Professor Integrated Studies in Education McGill University	Thurs 20 May	Montreal
Gada Mahrouse Assistant Professor Simone de Beauvoir Institute Concordia University	Sat 22 May	Montreal
Ed Bianchi Co-ordinator Indigenous Rights Programme KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives	Tues 25 May	Ottawa
Craig Benjamin Campaigner Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples Amnesty International Canada	Wed 26 May	Ottawa
Dave Bleakney & Pei-Ju Wang Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Movement – Ottawa (IPSMO)	Wed 26 May	Ottawa
Victoria Freeman Co-ordinating Director Indigenous Governance Initiatives University of Toronto	Thurs 27 May	Toronto
Lynne Davis Indigenous Studies Trent University Peterborough	Fri 28 May	Toronto
Chris and J'net Cavanagh Catalyst Centre	Sat 29 May	Toronto
Rebecca Johnson & Robin Buyers Christian Peacemaker Teams, Canada	Mon 31 May	Toronto

Appendix Three

WORKING AS ALLIES – Questions for discussion and Background information Jen Margaret – Winston Churchill Fellow May 2010

Project aim: To meet with groups and individuals in Canada who are non-indigenous allies working to support the issues and struggles of indigenous peoples. To learn from them about their approaches and how they respond to the particular challenges inherent in this work. I will use this learning to inform the development of resources to support this work in Aotearoa / New Zealand.

Discussion questions:

1. Tell me a bit about the indigenous rights work you do.
 - How long have you been involved in this work?
2. Who are the people you are an ally to?
 - How did your relationships with these people develop?
 - How do these relationships work – e.g. are they with groups or individuals, personal or organisational, formal or informal?
3. Is 'being an ally' the language you use?
4. What does the concept 'being an ally' mean to you in the contexts that you work?
 - how do you characterise your role? the relationship?
5. What are some of the key challenges inherent in being an ally?
6. How do you respond to these challenges?
7. What qualities do you think are important to being an ally?
8. What advice would you give to a newcomer to this work?
9. Do you have written or other resources related to being an ally that you are happy to share?

During our discussion I will take notes and if you agree I will also do an audio recording for my reference.

Background to the Pākehā Treaty workers' movement

The Treaty of Waitangi was a voluntary agreement between hapū² and the British Crown in 1840. It allowed the British the right to govern their own people in New Zealand, and it affirmed hapū sovereignty. Subsequent to the signing, the colonial government's consistent violations of the Treaty have had major detrimental impacts on Māori³ people. Māori have consistently protested about how the Treaty has been violated and small numbers of Pākehā have always supported them.

The Pākehā Treaty workers' movement emerged in the early 1980's in response to calls from Māori for Pākehā to learn about their responsibilities under the Treaty; Pākehā were challenged to educate their own people about it. From this time a Pākehā movement developed alongside and in relationship to the Māori Tino Rangatiranga (absolute sovereignty) movement.

The Pākehā Treaty workers' movement focuses on shifting Pākehā society towards social justice for Māori and aims to neutralise resistance to Māori efforts for self-determination. Members share a broad political vision of tino rangatiranga and undertake a range of practices to achieve this, a key focus being adult education about the Treaty and the impact of colonisation on Māori.

Pākehā Treaty workers are allies to the struggle of Māori people. As such our position parallels that of people in countries with similar colonial histories and that of development practitioners who are supporting social change for marginalised groups but are not themselves members of the group. Central to our approach to social justice is a focus on change within our own, dominant culture.

I am Pākehā, raised in a farming community where my ancestors settled as migrants from the United Kingdom in the 1850s. I first learned about the Treaty of Waitangi in a university post-graduate course in the mid-1990s and was outraged that I had never been taught about this critical piece of New Zealand history during my many years in formal education. This motivated me as an adult educator to begin facilitating Treaty education workshops. Since 2000 I have been active in local and national Treaty action networks.

²Groups of related families; recognised by the British as sovereign bodies before signing of the Treaty.

³Traditionally meaning 'ordinary' or 'normal'; used by Europeans to refer to the people living in Aotearoa when Europeans arrived.

Appendix Four: Working as allies: elements of practice

In 2009 I completed a thesis on learning within the Pākehā Treaty workers' movement. While it was not the central focus, research participants reflected on their ideas about the practice of working with Māori activists in the Tino Rangatiratanga movement. The following ideas that recurred in the research interviews suggest an approach to practice, the specifics of which are negotiated in the context of the relationship.

- learning through listening
- respecting Māori (not about “helping” Māori)
- working with our own people, i.e. with Tangata Tiriti rather than with Māori
- working separately but alongside and towards a shared goal
- being responsible for own work
- working collectively as Pākehā
- acting as a go-between e.g. between Crown agencies and hapū
- resourcing Māori involvement / action
- contributing other resources that support the work
- the importance of knowing ourselves
- being aware of how Pākehā cultural identity impacts on ways of working and seeking to mitigate the negative effects of this when working with Māori
- learning to adapt cultural practices / work cross-culturally while being careful not to appropriate Māori culture

Qualities that were seen as important to undertaking this practice were:

- maintaining one's own integrity, not being subservient
- humility
- flexibility

References and links

Note: These references are to resources that the people I met with find useful in their work as allies. Not all the sources referenced discuss ally relationships directly.

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Catalyst Centre <http://www.catalystcentre.ca/>

Catalyst Project <http://www.collectiveliberation.org>

Christian Peacemakers Teams – Aboriginal Justice
http://www.cpt.org/work/aboriginal_justice

Friends of the Lubicon <http://tao.ca/~fol/>

Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Movement – Ottawa (IPSMO) <http://ipsom.wordpress.com>

KAIROS <http://www.kairoscanada.org/en/solidarity/indigenous-rights/>

Paul Kivel - Social justice educator, activist and writer - <http://www.paulkivel.com>

Project of Heart <http://projectofheart.ca>

Tools for change – resources for alliance building
<http://toolsforchange.org/resources/Alliance%20BuildingR.html>

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Toolkits

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