Early Years Research Centre submission on draft Aotearoa New Zealand Histories in the New Zealand Curriculum

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This submission is a response to the draft *Aotearoa New Zealand Histories in the New Zealand Curriculum*, and is prepared by members of the Early Years Research Centre. The Early Years Research Centre at the University of Waikato is part of the Wilf Malcolm Institute of Education Research in the Division of Education. It includes scholars who have an active interest in one or more of three areas of research, with a focus on the early years. The ‘early years’ are defined as children aged 0 to 8 years, so the research is in early childhood centres and schools. The three research themes are pedagogy, policy and community connections.

Overall, we welcome the new direction that the draft curriculum intends, one that is grounded in the history of Aotearoa New Zealand. Our purpose in this submission is to focus on the relationship of early childhood education to the draft curriculum. We wish to raise four main points in relation to this:

- Ensuring there is a continuity of learning, regarding history, from early childhood education through to school.
- Identifying how early childhood settings, as well as school settings, can be supported to develop relationships with iwi and hapū.
- Identifying how professional development and support for this new teaching direction will be supported by Ministry of Education, including an increased emphasis on inviting history into early childhood contexts.
- Focusing on history that is both local and global.

**Ensuring there is a continuity of learning, regarding history, from early childhood education through to school**

The early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017, pp. 51–58) discusses the importance of continuity from early childhood to school and kura, and describes connections between *Te Whāriki, The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* in their vision, principles and approaches to learning. Specific links are made between the strands of *Te Whāriki* and associated learning outcomes, the key competencies of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and learning areas, and the values of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* and learning areas (Ministry of Education, pp. 53–57). Links to the learning area of Social Studies are made here for both the Wellbeing strand, and the Belonging strand.
Making clear linkages between *Te Whāriki* and the draft history curriculum, including providing examples and ideas of how such learning can take place, and addressing the transition between the curricula, would further support continuity of learning.

Some research has already highlighted valuable examples of such learning. For example, the recently published report *Strengthening belonging and identity of refugee and immigrant children through early childhood education* (Mitchell et al., 2020) gives examples of how Social Sciences learning can be incorporated into *Te Whāriki*. These examples include:

- using drawing and storytelling to foster discussion about events, people and places that are significant to the child;
- using cultural artefacts and art works to intentionally facilitate cultural discussions and understandings;
- walking the land itself, and sharing stories about the land, to enable children to position themselves within the cultural stories of a place, including drawing comparisons with children’s homelands, where those homelands differ from Aotearoa New Zealand.

**Identifying how early childhood settings, as well as school settings, can be supported to develop relationships with iwi and hapū**

While local histories and place-based historical learning are promoted for the teaching of history, access to local knowledge, particularly the knowledge held by iwi and hapū, can be challenging. While early childhood settings are generally good at building positive reciprocal relationships with whānau/families, relationships with local iwi and hapū can be more challenging. This is particularly true when early childhood settings and schools within an iwi area are seeking the expertise of the same people. Those who hold these cultural knowledges are in demand, and may find themselves positioned as a resource to be accessed, rather than as people with whom to develop reciprocal relationships.

Greater facilitation and support from the Ministry of Education would assist educational settings across sectors to form and sustain respectful, reciprocal relationships with those who hold cultural knowledge.

**Identifying how professional development and support for this new teaching direction will be supported by Ministry of Education, including an increased emphasis on inviting history into early childhood contexts**

We add our support to others who have likewise called for resources, in the form of professional development and support, for the teaching direction envisaged by the draft history curriculum. We recommend that this include professional development for early childhood teachers to gain understanding of local histories and use these in early years learning. This kind of professional development would ensure that young children have early exposure and experiences with historical inquiry, thereby supporting a smooth transition into the school curriculum, which would continue with a similar approach.

**Focusing on history that is both local and global**

The draft curriculum currently shows little attention to looking further than Aotearoa New Zealand. Our place in the Pacific region, the histories of our Pacific neighbours, and global histories remain of...
relevance. Further clarification of how and where these histories would be addressed within the draft curriculum is important.

We would want every child and student to be able to connect to their past within the history curriculum. We think there are possibilities in the draft for the multiple cultural identities of students to be unpacked, and think this could be a valuable outcome of the draft curriculum. More discussion or explanation around this aspect of the curriculum would be valuable.

We also support the use of critical frames in the teaching of history, particularly where that history is contentious. A critical approach would ensure historical matters are examined and interrogated with regards to context and perspective, not simply presented as uncontested facts.

References
