

**A commentary on Ngā Pou Here, ERO's framework for reviewing early childhood services
(Dr Lesley Rameka)**

In the first part of this paper Rameka asks two pairs of questions from a tamariki perspective: Do you know me? How do you represent me? Do you know who I come from? How do you represent who I come from? Using these questions as prompts, the author makes extensive use of research literature to explore a range of concepts and themes that are crucial for tamariki wellbeing and identity: culture, identity, language, children and childhoods, knowledges, whānau, hapū and iwi, land, contemporary Māori identities, and early childhood education.

The author then discusses how tamariki were cared for and educated in the past, highlighting communal caregiving practices, learning by imitation and play, and intentional instruction. These practices embedded whakapapa and tangata whenua connections to the land, developing in the child a strong sense of relationship to people and places past and present, and therefore, a strong sense of identity. Land alienation and urbanisation have had a devastating impact on identity and sense of belonging.

Early childhood services can play a crucial role in reversing this impact by adopting culturally responsive – and Māori responsive – pedagogy. This will involve: normalising Māori culture and cultural knowledge, values, practices and beliefs; strengthening connections with families, whānau, iwi, hapū and mana whenua; and supporting tamariki to develop a strong sense of who they are, where they are from, and where they belong. Responsive pedagogy is grounded in kaiako–student dialogue, without which kaiako will continue to draw on essentialised ideas of learners derived from their own cultural backgrounds. By specifying the learning outcomes in Māori as well as English, *Te Whāriki* (2017) supports – and challenges – kaiako to broaden their conception of valued learning.

The final sections of the paper explore how ERO can encourage culturally responsive practice through the selection and wording of its evaluation indicators, particularly those that come under te pou Mātauranga and te pou Tikanga Whakaako.