



Kura Taylor (seated middle) posing with overseas delegates.

Underlining ideals

I referred to the universals in educational philosophy and practices coming through all the papers and statements presented by participants as underlining New Zealand's educational expectations and ideas.

After working day and night all week, on Friday afternoon the 60 page draft document of our deliberations in both French and English appeared before us for approval. We had completed the task we had been asked to do — UNESCO would have its publication. The emphasis — Educate the Educators!

The report of the Consultation which has not yet been released by UNESCO will contain a summary of the Plenary Discussions, the Group discussions and the recommendations to UNESCO.

"Kia tau te Rangimarie, waiho ake ki te taha te ngakau pouri" "Cast anger aside and let reason prevail" — very aptly sums up the spirit of the Consultation.

Personal touches

Now for some of the personal touches — the human responses that reached us all: Being something of a curiosity as a New Zealand Maori; the sincere physical greetings each morning; having to say my name only once and everybody extending the courtesy of listening and pronouncing it correctly the first time; opening each day's proceedings with greetings in French, Japanese, Russian, English, and Maori; remembering the discreet little nudge that I had forgotten the German and Dutch-speaking participants, so from then on it was greetings in French, Japanese, German, Russian, Dutch, English and Maori — quite a marathon (off the cuff) for someone who knows no other language but English; remembering to use my headphones and making sure the interpreters

were given time to finish their translations before I bumbled happily on; starting one day with everybody singing Happy Birthday in English to the Russian Kabatchenko; the delightful assertiveness of the men who decided what I would wear for the group photograph; being sent off for "la plume" for the photograph; seeing Abiboulaye Sy from Senegal and Olu Obolawe from Nigeria very proudly wearing their national dress each day; seeing the disbelief when I announced I was just going to get on a train and go around Europe; feeling the stress of trying to make myself understood and trying to understand other people who were not English-speaking; feeling sadness for someone afraid of not being understood travelling alone in a strange place after the consultation; feeling frustration for someone needing a visa for every country travelled through; the humour we enjoyed together regardless of language; the beauty of Mont Blanc when it finally appeared for us; the marvellous patience and courtesy with which I was treated — in all the six weeks there is not a single time when I can honestly say someone deliberately set out to make me feel uncomfortable; the incredibly warm people I met everywhere I went; the friends I made and the generosity that I will never ever be able to repay!

Cooks tour

And after the Consultation? Three weeks with a Eurail pass and an itinerary spontaneously planned by two of the WCOTP secretariat. Across Switzerland, Berne, Interlaken, Lucerne, Zurich, St Gallen, Troges and the Kinderlorf Pestalozzi, the International Children's Village set up for war orphans in 1946 and now taking in children recommended by organisations. From St Gallen to Munchen, on to Salzburg, Wein, Venezia, Milano and then hosted for 6 days

in Paris including a half-day visit to UNESCO Paris, back to Geneva (a half-day visit to UNESCO Geneva), off to London, then Singapore and straight off the plane in Auckland into the classroom.

When I look back having had so much that was positive, I think probably my greatest disappointment was that I am mono-lingual in English only — fluency in Maori may possibly have helped me to tune into the nuances of other languages; fluency in French would have given me an added communication tool for the consultation; fluency in German would have taken me round Europe much more easily. People communicating with other people are the most fortunate people in the world. I really envied the communication experiences of those whom I met who slipped in and out of languages but the one I could understand!

Ours alone

My Tupuna went with me and brought me back the stronger for having had international experience, with a much deeper appreciation of the Mana of the New Zealand Teacher and the freedoms I enjoy as a Teacher and as a person; immeasurable intangibles; some disconnected ideas swimming about like silver fish in my mind and needing some thinking through and the firm conviction that we as a People and those of us who are in education in particular, must continue to influence Education with the injection of that special richness and spiritual strength which is ours alone.

While I accept that other peoples have much in their countries of which they are justifiably proud, I also can afford the great pride I have in being who and what I am — A Maori woman teacher and a person in my own right!

Kura Marie Taylor.