



National Council of
Women of New Zealand
Te Kaunihera Wahine o Aotearoa

**GENDER
EQUAL** NZ
MAKING EQUALITY REALITY

Level 4, Central House
26 Brandon Street
PO Box 25 498
Wellington 6146

+ 64 4 473 7623
office@ncwnz.org.nz
www.ncwnz.org.nz



**Graduate
Women**
New Zealand

Graduate Women New Zealand
PO Box 2006
Wellington 6140

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Submission to the Ministry of Education on the Aotearoa NZ's Histories in our National Curriculum – consultation

Introduction

1. The National Council of Women of New Zealand, Te Kaunihera Wahine o Aotearoa (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing over 200 organisations affiliated at either national level or to one of our 14 branches. In addition, about 450 people are individual members. Collectively our reach is over 450,000 with many of our membership organisations representing all genders. NCWNZ's vision is a gender equal New Zealand and research shows we will be better off socially and economically if we are gender equal. Through research, discussion and action, NCWNZ in partnership with others, seeks to realise its vision of gender equality because it is a basic human right.
2. Graduate Women New Zealand (GWNZ) is a non-government, not-for-profit, charitable organisation. Our global body, Graduate Women International (GWI) was founded in 1919 and carries Special Consultative Status to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. As a national federation of GWI we are part of a network of similar federations and associations in 61 countries, with several branches of Graduate Women within NZ. GWNZ believes in empowering women through education, advocacy, and community. GWNZ aims to create positive differences in education and employment outcomes for girls and women both in New Zealand and globally. As part of our support of education in New Zealand we provide scholarships, grants, debates, seminars, conferences, and publications. We advocate for girls and women at the local, national, and also the international level by making submissions on bills and policy and initiating or supporting campaigns on specific issues. We also create spaces for women to flourish, to connect, and to support each other.

3. This submission has been written by NCWNZ with reference to the education resolutions¹² set over the years by the NCWNZ membership and in collaboration with the GWNZ Public Affairs Convener.
4. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the History curriculum refresh. Graduate women New Zealand and the National Council of Women are supportive of the refresh, however we have some concerns about areas of New Zealand's history that we feel are not adequately covered, in particular the importance of rediscovering women's histories. We discuss these areas in more detail below.

Executive Summary

5. The big ideas and themes will give the ākonga (students) throughout the majority of their school years a broader, more beneficial understanding of the history of Aotearoa.
6. To allow ākonga the ability to research and seek out local history stories from knowledgeable people in their communities teaches and helps engender respect for and analysis of other people's opinions and life stories.
7. Gender equality and the sustainability development goals are integral to our world's future survival. The voices and the input of all genders are essential to ensuring a more balanced and fair structure for all humans to achieve a sustainable future.

NCWNZ and GWNZ members' response

Representation of Women and the Importance of Applying a Gendered Lens

8. There is little mention of women and women's history in the draft curriculum document. Women's histories have long been invisible, this curriculum refresh provides the perfect opportunity to ensure that women's voices and their contribution to New Zealand's rich history are not ignored.
9. We recommend weaving the experiences of wāhine Māori and tauwi women throughout all areas of the curriculum. There are many areas of women's history that should be included including but not limited to:
 - Sexual and reproductive health
 - Colonisation
 - The Suffrage movement
 - Migration and mobility and the experiences of wāhine Māori on the voyage to Aotearoa
 - The role of women in times of crisis e.g., world wars and pandemics
 - Women in parliament
 - Women in leadership

¹ NCWNZ. 2012. *115 years of resolution*. <http://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/115-years-Register-everything-2.pdf>

² NCWNZ. 2019. *Appendix "D": Resolutions of National Meetings 2011-2019*. <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Appendix-D-Resolutions-2011-2019.pdf>

History Specific to Local Areas

10. Throughout New Zealand there are many important historical events and movements specific to different localities. Teacher engagement within their communities will be vital to ensuring it is possible to explore fully the history specific to local areas.
11. These differing histories could be captured by teachers and ākonga speaking to kaumatua and local iwi as well as other members of the community. This will also assist in ensuring Māori history – which is often oral and not written – is captured and preserved for future generations.

Sustainable Development Goals

12. NCWNZ and GWNZ are active supporters of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)³ and urge the government to integrate them within the development of the History Curriculum.
13. While the SDGs should be considered as an integrated framework, we wish to draw particular to the following goals and targets:
 - **SDG4 (Education):** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. We note in particular the following target:
 - By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.
 - **SDG5 (Gender Equality):** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. We note in particular the following targets:
 - End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
 - Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment if all women and girls at all levels.
 - **SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life below Water) & SDG 15 (Life on Land):** Learning about Māori approaches to land, resources, conservation, kaitiakitanga would relate to these.

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women

14. The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)⁴ was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. The convention and the committee that monitors its implementation has been instrumental in bringing to light all the areas where women are denied equality with men.

³ United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Sustainable Development. 2015. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

⁴ United Nations. 1979. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>

15. It is unclear whether the 2007 Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to which Aotearoa is now a signatory, is to be included. There is value in including discussion on the document as an example of how progress on acknowledging the rights of indigenous peoples, including their right to self-determination, across the world has now been formally documented through the United Nations.
16. The SDG's, CEDAW and the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples have great historical importance for all New Zealanders and as such should be recognised and New Zealand ākonga taught about the great work undertaken by the United Nations and NGOs.

Learnings and encouragement of Critical Thinking

17. We feel that it is vital that the curriculum is delivered in a way that ensures critical thinking.
18. The terms critical thinking and critical questions are often misused. Multiple perspectives must be considered when teaching, discussing, and addressing any social issue.
19. The challenge will be in maintaining ākonga interest with these same recurring themes over a ten-year period and in creating effective assessments which exemplify that progression.

Importance of Multicultural Perspectives and History

20. Learning the country's history fosters an appreciation for the cultural traditions, religions, arts, and history of the people associated with it. Greater understanding, in turn, promotes greater tolerance, empathy, and acceptance of others, which is vital for the ever-increasing multicultural NZ society.
21. GWNZ and NCWNZ are both concerned that whilst important that Māori history is first and foremost recognised as the foundational and continuous history of New Zealand, the draft curriculum lacks a focus on including other cultures. For example: Chinese, English, Scottish, Dutch, Pasifika, South East Asian and Middle Eastern refugees, and other waves of migration over the centuries. Note that this is different from studying the history of the English in England.

Colonisation and recognition of the reasons for this

22. Whilst we recognise the far-reaching impacts of colonisation on Māori, multiple perspectives should be examined at all levels and in all aspects of this learning. We feel that balance is needed in terms of the negative and positive consequences of colonisation so that it does not become a 'blame game' between ākonga. There should also be awareness that many New Zealanders have mixed Māori and Pākehā ancestry, and this also complicates perspectives.
23. There needs to be acknowledgement that the actions of Pākehā ancestors occurred to provide their descendants a better life, and that many were in fact unaware of the situation in New Zealand and the fact that actions of entities such as the New Zealand company were in fact not buying land but taking it unlawfully.

Conclusion

24. A school curriculum whereby the ākonga can learn and grow an understanding of Aotearoa's history and the importance of relationships between tangata whenua pre and post European settlers, their governance practices as well as the influence of other diverse histories of refugees and migrants over the centuries is required. Hopefully, a new history curriculum will allow greater understanding and appreciation of all ethnic groups that now call Aotearoa home.



Rae Duff
Member, NCWNZ Parliamentary Watch Committee

Karen Richardson
GWNZ Advocacy Convener



Suzanne Manning
NCWNZ Board