

UNESCO RILA: The Sounds of Integration

Episode : Everyday Peacebuilding in Refugee Resettlement: Supporting a More Peaceful Aotearoa New Zealand

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Speaker 1: Esa Aldegheri

أهلاً وسهلاً benvenuti, fàilte, titambire, welcome to the podcast series of the UNESCO Chair in Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts at the University of Glasgow. We bring you sounds about integration, languages, culture, society, and Identity.

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Speaker 2: Tawona Sitholé

I'm going to introduce Anna Burgin. She is based in Aotearoa New Zealand. She's going to share with us a presentation which is Everyday Peacebuilding in Refugee Resettlement: Supporting a More Peaceful Aotearoa New Zealand. Anna Burgin was born and raised in Aotearoa New Zealand, though her ancestors came from the British Isles, mostly from Scotland. She's a PhD candidate in Te Ao O Rongomaraeroa, the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Otago, and also works as a assistant research fellow at the university's College of Education. Anna, thank you so much for staying up late and, please, the floor is yours.

Speaker 3: Anna Burgin

Thank you. Thank you. It's brilliant to be able to join. I really appreciate the opportunity. I'm going to take you to peaceful Aotearoa New Zealand, all the way down at the bottom of the South Island. So, yes, as Tawona said, I'm from the University of Otago. I'm a PhD student. I'm just coming to the end, and I'm going to share a little bit from my PhD project. Just a small part of my findings that I found really hopeful. I think there's lots in the world to be a bit gloomy about, but this, what I'm going to share with you today is something a little bit more hopeful. It has promise, I think.

Firstly, I'm just going to share a little bit about the background of my project. New Zealand's been settling refugees from 1944, so we've got a bit of a history of doing so, but from 1944 until 1987, it was quite irregular and it was also quite racist. So, not so great, actually. It wasn't explicitly racist, it wasn't like a White Australia Policy, but there were clear preferences for countries for white English-speaking people, basically. So, this held right up until about 1987, so it was only recent that this changed, but in 1987 there was an immigration reset that removed racial preferences and instead used a point system, so it was sort of a wider set of market-led reforms across the whole government — which I think there was also something quite similar in Canada and also the UK. Probably quite a wide variety of contexts. So, in 1987, an annual refugee quota was introduced. In 1987, it was only around 700 people, and it stayed that way until just recently, until 2020. So, for refugees, there wasn't ever the race-based sort of — the same sort of discrimination as there was in the wider resettlement policy, but there was still some discrimination in New Zealand. It has been judged as quite a reluctant refuge for people, even though it's really controlled, and it's controlled because it's an island state. It can be controlled, I guess, quite easily. The annual quota, then, is the main way that people come to New Zealand as refugees, and it happens annually, and from 1944 pretty much all of the resettlement support was from volunteers, it was from community members. Mainly from the Church. And then in the 1990s [it was] decided to be professionalised by the government.

My interest was in my hometown of Ōtepoti, Dunedin. Dunedin resettled a few refugees from Southeast Asia in the 1980s, but from the 1980s to 2016, that wasn't a resettlement centre. We weren't having any refugees come here. In 2016 we became a resettlement centre again, and this is when I really wanted to look at the real enthusiasm in the community and what volunteers were doing. What happened, then, while Europe was having a lot of people come through from Syria in 2014, 2015 — the influence of the Refugees Welcome movement was also on the ground here in Dunedin, and there was a lot of people who were campaigning for the government to up the quota, saying that 700 people was nothing and New Zealand could clearly do more. There was a local campaign here in Dunedin, and there was a local petition and it got local support from the council, and it went to government and it was successful. Dunedin was then designated as a new resettlement centre and it was really exciting, actually. Everyone was really thrilled about this. This was just the biggest news that had happened for Dunedin for a long time, to be honest. Everyone was buzzing. It felt like everyone was buzzing. It was almost tangible. And my interest was in this helper-receiver tension. I think there's a lot of international literature on it, but there's nothing really in New Zealand, so this is where my research came in.

So, just a little bit about the small city in which I reside. It's also known as Ōtepoti, that's the Māori name. It was established in 1848 by Scottish settlers, and it's known to be more monocultural, more left-wing, a kind of old and conservative centre than other places on average in New Zealand.

New Zealand, of course, is known as one of the most peaceful countries in the world. We consistently rate in the top five peaceful countries according to the Institute for Economics & Peace. But it's a skewed peace. It really depends on your ethnic background, your income level, your health status, your language that you speak. New Zealand has a really unequal peace. So, life in New Zealand continues to be largely defined by settler-colonial characteristics in many ways. The political, economic and social system largely reflects the European demographic majority, so even while New Zealand is demographically changing, this is still very much the case.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed in 1840 between the British Crown and Māori leaders from all over the country and gives the façade of legitimacy for settler-colonial New Zealand, but for many in New Zealand, many Māori, many non-Māori, it has yet to be truly enacted as it was intended. And this lack of enactment of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* is forming the basis for ongoing protest, so I've included *Toitū Te Tiriti* (Honour the Treaty), which is something that's been happening here, particularly over the past few years with this current government. So, my data actually precedes this current government, but this current government at the moment has really caused quite an upstir. The government at the moment has really tried to dismantle a lot of the progress that has been made to see *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* more enacted, more as it was intended, and so there's been nation-wide protests. But coming back a bit, because my data precedes this somewhat. *Te Tiriti* can also be seen as New Zealand's first immigration policy.

So, Tahu Kukutai and Arama Rata, they're two folk that I will reference at the end in case anyone's interested in their paper. They see *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* as the first time that Māori had a meaningful say in immigration in New Zealand. It was the first and it was the last time for them. So, immigration is deeply, deeply connected with colonisation because *Te Tiriti* meant that my ancestors, my ancestors from the UK, could come and settle, but the Crown didn't uphold, obviously, its part of the agreement. So there was mass immigration of people from the UK mainly, and they continued to form the demographic majority, they swamped Māori. And so, for Māori, actually, immigration is of interest, it's really important, but they don't have any say in it. Any meaningful say. So, currently, when refugees enter New Zealand, the policies and support systems they encounter are still defined by settler-colonial norms. So even while they might see a façade of multipartnership through, for example, our Crown institutions having Māori names, it's very token. It's not enough. It's lacking. Actually, that's an important last point. New Zealand has significant levels of structural violence, so systemic racism, economic inequality. Actually in a paper that I've written with Rachel Rafferty and Vivienne Anderson, we argue that that affects Māori and refugee-background New Zealanders. There's some solidarities and similarities, even while they've got different experiences of that violence.

So, a little bit about refugee resettlement. The services for refugees are delivered through third-sector organisations contracted by the government, and the New Zealand

resettlement strategy guides all of the resettlement support, and it's a whole government approach. It was first introduced in 2012, refreshed in 2023. So, volunteers are still very much a critical part of refugee resettlement but they're not mentioned in the strategy and neither are Māori, neither is *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. The policy, it looks really good in some ways, you know, it's been judged quite well. This particular one for the 2023 version is still lacking detail, so there's a lot we can't say about it yet, but because it doesn't mention volunteers, doesn't mention *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, doesn't mention Māori, there's a lot that's lacking in it, unfortunately.

So, volunteer involvement in resettlement. They have three to six-month support roles alongside families in teams, where they do really instrumental and practical work like supporting refugees to connect to the local school, their local medical doctor, there's also English tutoring, and there's driving mentors. Volunteer role boundaries are less clear than the paid workers, so volunteers tend to interpret their roles a bit differently, and they can contest dominant power structures if they like, which is something that's come out in my research. But, at the same time, they're still indirectly representatives of the settler-colonial state because they do come under the Strategy, even though they're not mentioned by it, because they're within these organisations that are contracted by the government. So, there's still limits on the contracted organisations if they want to keep those contracts.

Some key concepts just for the framing of my study. I drew on a feminist peace approach, and this is how I framed care in everyday peacebuilding. So, I used care in everyday peacebuilding to understand volunteers' experiences, their motivations, their roles, their contributions, and how they responded to challenges. So, really briefly about feminist care ethics. It emphasises relationality and interdependence of all people, understanding that dependence is just a part of the human condition. We're all dependent on others at some point. And further, that feminist perspective of care in everyday peacebuilding recognises that everyday peace, the things that we do on an everyday basis to alleviate tensions or to work worth through them, it's messy and it's embodied and it's contested. It's not easy and it's not perfect, and it's always a continual journey. It's a space where unequal relationships can be contested and resisted, but it can also do the reverse. It can be contradictory. A feminist perspective recognises that peace and violence are intertwined, and they can be simultaneous rather than dichotomous. So, really, it muddies the water about peace in a way, and when we think about it in the everyday, it comes to volunteers.

Just briefly about the study, because this is not so exciting, but it was a constructivist, qualitative case study. I had 28 participants from three groups, so it was primarily volunteers. They were my main source of participant, and then I also spoke to some staff and also some people I defined as stakeholders who had a strategic role. The volunteers were all associated with organisations, and some had multiple roles, so they were all formal. None of them were informal in that they weren't associated with an organisation.

My research questions, they were centred on volunteers, specifically about their motivations, their roles and contributions, and the challenges they encountered, and their responses. Then I sought to understand their perspectives through the lens of care in everyday peacebuilding.

So, what did I find out? This just one part of my findings. It's kind of the more positive part, which was volunteers as bridgebuilders. Most of the volunteers were associated with the main service agency and their role was a three to six-month role, in which a team of volunteers would work with a family with practical aspects of resettlement. For the first couple of months, it's super intense. It's almost like a full-time job, even though they're in a team. This was the experience of volunteers. Dunedin is a small city. It doesn't have great public transport, so often they were driving people around to get to appointments. It was just very intensive work. In fact, it was very costly, I think, for some volunteers, and actually, interestingly, a lot of people didn't repeat the role, unfortunately, because it was just too intensive. But one important thing was that volunteers distinguished between their formal roles, what the organisation told them they were doing, and what they then felt was more important about their involvement. So, their role may have been teaching English but actually they felt that it was the fact that they were being a friend that was more important about their role. Hence the bridgebuilding.

I had four sub-themes for the bridgebuilding theme, which was supporting indigenous welcome, awareness raising and dispelling stereotypes, reciprocity as connection, and care trust in connection. So, I sort of interpreted these themes largely as volunteers' attempts to create less asymmetrical relationships between themselves and former refugees. This was reinforced by volunteers talking about the mutual benefits of their relationships, and some felt they really gained more from the experience than they were able to give. But this wasn't always straightforward, this reinterpretation, and what they felt they were able to give from the experience. So, sometimes when they felt they had become more like friends, this caused tension with the volunteer role because, as I said, they're indirectly representatives of the settler-colonial government, and they have obligations to the agency with which they're volunteering, so if they felt like they were a friend, that meant that if they saw something that they actually needed to report on to the agency, they felt quite mixed about that particularly if it concerned family violence, for example, which was not a common experience but certainly one that happened. But I'm not talking about those really gnarly things today, I'm talking about something a little bit more positive.

What was really, really interesting for me is that I wanted to look at how settler colonialism impacted the volunteer experiences, or how they connected that to their volunteer experience, which wasn't an obvious point of discussion in my interviews, actually. The people I spoke to who are volunteers, connecting the peace in New Zealand and settler colonialism wasn't something they'd bring up unless I prompted

them. Actually, there were two volunteers who did bring it up without me prompting, and in our discussion that was pretty much all they wanted to discuss. That was really exciting. These volunteers were non-Māori, so for them it wasn't their life. For Māori, it's a different experience. These people were New Zealand European like me, but for them they felt that supporting Māori indigenous welcome, as well as refugee resettlement, was almost inseparable, which is what I'm going to talk about more.

The sub-theme was largely driven with these two women called Alice and Marie. All the names I use are pseudonyms, just as an aside. So, Alice and Marie both have multiple roles in resettlement support, but they shared mostly about their roles supporting Māori-led welcome, indigenous welcome, for former refugees and migrants, and they shared it as a small way of unravelling settler-colonial domination. This was really broadly. Alice and Marie supported indigenous welcome, which is pōwhiri. I'm going to talk about that a little bit more soon. And it does seem like just a really tiny step in unravelling settler-colonial domination in New Zealand, but it's not insignificant in my context in that only four out of the fifteen volunteers I spoke to recognised Māori as the host to all non-Māori in New Zealand, and the need to support Māori aspirations in connecting that with refugee resettlement. It was a really small sample. I did prompt people, I prompted all my participants to tell me about what they thought of peace in New Zealand and if it was the same for everybody, but there were only four that really brought this up, and they raised the need to recognise Māori as host.

Two of these volunteers actually brought up that they felt that racism towards Māori was actually far more prevalent than it was for former refugees, which was interesting as well. One quote that I've shared here from Paul, where he says, "This is Māori land. It's Tangata Whenua Māori (Tangata Whenua means 'people of the land') who are actually inviting people into the country, even if it's a colonial state that has made the policy decisions. So, that resettlement relationship should always be held with Tangata Whenua, with Māori, ensuring that the people who are settling into the country are able to better connect with those communities that they may already have common interests with. It would be a better place to start instead of putting them with some well-meaning individuals who want to volunteer." So, Paul was actually questioning refugee resettlement volunteering itself and saying that Māori should be having more of a say, actually. He wondered whether they would be able to do this in a far better way than the current model, which has been going for a very long time.

Pōwhiri is the welcome that I'm referring to here. Just to give you a very brief explanation, because I'm not an expert. I'm not Māori myself, so this is what I will suggest if you're really interested in learning more about pōwhiri, is to read Rameka's paper. She has a really beautiful paper about pōwhiri with early childhood settings with new migrants to New Zealand. To give you an idea of what it is, it's a traditional Māori welcoming ceremony. It involves kaikōrero, which is speeches, it involves waiata (songs), and kai (food). So, those three elements are generally the same, but different areas will have

their own versions of pōwhiri. They'll have their own traditions. So, that's normal. The most important thing about pōwhiri is that it can be seen as a ritual that transitions people who are unknown and unconnected to people who are known and connected, and it's a process through which Māori exercise their rights and obligations as hosts and give the guests a sense of belonging. So, it's a really beautiful process, and the one I'm talking about in Ōtepoti became a regular occurrence for former refugees and migrants, and this was the idea of local Māori and also Muslim leaders after resettlement began in 2016. So, it was initiated by Māori and Muslim folk in Dunedin, and at the start it was just for former refugees and migrants but they actually opened it up to everybody, which is quite significant, actually, because you'll find a lot of people in New Zealand who were born and brought up there may not have ever had this opportunity. My cousin, for example, because I'm related to a lot of people in Dunedin, she went and she'd never been before and, while her kids were growing up bilingual, she had never had that opportunity. It was really special and I think that's probably the case for a lot of people. So, it's a real generosity thing by local Māori.

This particular pōwhiri is very multicultural, while it is grounded in Māori values. It is welcoming people to be authentically themselves. When they come, when they can share speeches, they can share it in their preferred language. It's all welcome. After the formal ritual, after the actual pōwhiri when food is shared, visitors are encouraged to bring and share aspects of their culture — music, dance, things that will reflect their diverse origins. That has become the normal thing, it's a really beautiful thing.

I'm just going to share a couple of quotes. The first is from Alice, one of these women that I spoke to. She was also a resettlement support volunteer, so she was a volunteer that was in a team, and she was doing that before she became a pōwhiri volunteer. "One of the first things that this family said to us was, 'Can you speak Te Reo, the Māori language?' and I said, 'No,' and they said, 'Why not?' It kind of puts it in place, doesn't it? I've attempted to learn Te Reo, and being with the people, Māori, has only come about because of my involvement with the resettlement thing as well. And what a privilege it is to have that highlighted for me, that what I need to learn and what I need to understand, it's kind of like it's almost inseparable. People have had their land taken away, people have had their culture taken away, but they are the ones leading the manaaki (which can be loosely translated as 'hospitality')." So, Alice and also Marie, this other woman that I spoke to, they spoke about how their support of pōwhiri was actually prompted by their support of refugee resettlement. Then the second part of Alice's quote here is really telling us how significant it is that it's Māori that are leading this hospitality given their own experience of displacement in their own land. The fact they're sharing this generosity is really powerful.

Actually, quite a number of volunteers observed that former refugees — so in Dunedin, former refugees were predominantly coming from Syria, Afghanistan and Palestine — that actually former refugees had far more in common with Māori than they did with New

Zealand Europeans or Pākehā, because they both have experiences of displacement and some colonial histories even though they're quite different. This is part of these similarities. Alice also shares how grateful she is that she's had this lesson. So, the pōwhiri, the way I've written about it, is that it can be seen as a way to address this interconnection between belonging based in relationship with Māori indigenous rites and unravelling settler colonialism in an increasingly multicultural country, because Aotearoa is changing, and it's changing fast. Volunteers also saw it as a way to encourage more respectful non-Māori relationships with Te Ao Māori, with the Māori world, as well as grounding that sense of belonging based in relationships with Māori.

So, I've got more quotes here, and I'm sorry about the heaviness of the quotes but I'm really into rich data. You might be able to tell. I struggle to cut them down. Marie talks about how when you start with the pōwhiri, you start in the kitchen and then you can help other people who don't know where the rubbish goes or where you find the new hand towels, and that's where I think we need to go, bringing in new volunteers who are from ethnic communities who have been through the pōwhiri, to make sure people feel a part of it and that it is a place that belongs to them now. Supporting migrants and refugees to be part of the pōwhiri will foster a much better relationship, because many Pākehā (New Zealand Europeans) are not taking on board *Te Tiriti* issues. Migrants and refugees are far more open because they understand inequality and persecution, they understand what it's like to have another language and culture. I don't really need to explain that so much, but I can definitely attest to the hard work. I actually started volunteering with the pōwhiri as well after I spoke with Marie and Alice because of how powerful I felt that this was and how the symbolism is just incredible. And, yeah, when you do volunteer, it's with people from all backgrounds. So the volunteering is really hard work. You set up the seating, the tables, it takes hours actually. It happens over two days. But doing these very mundane acts that you might otherwise do at home, when you're cleaning up after your family or whatnot, is actually quite essential in making you feel at home at the marae (the meeting house where pōwhiri happens). For a new volunteer, this is how you can cement your belonging, so what she's bringing up here is that taking part in the pōwhiri, being welcomed, is part of the fostering belonging but actually also then becoming a volunteer and welcoming others with Māori is also part of it. So, both Alice and Marie felt that their sense of belonging grew because they volunteered, even though their being born and brought up in New Zealand. It's based on their connection with the Māori world.

Supporting the pōwhiri is just the start, so I have used Pratt's contact zone, the social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in the context of highly asymmetrical relations of power, to think more about how resettlement volunteering can help us create more equal relationships. My studies showed that relationships and power dynamics are shifting, even if it's really, really slowly, which led me to understand resettlement as a contested process in New Zealand, in Ōtepoti. But

even though this is based on a really small sample of volunteers, it feels quite hopeful. I didn't interview heaps of people from this process, but actually there's a really wide contingent of volunteers that help with the pōwhiri. It's still going even though I spoke to people in 2020 and 2021.

The other thing that I felt was really pertinent about my project was that, while this immigration cemented settler colonialism in New Zealand with this mass immigration of people like my ancestors, actually immigration can also prompt its unravelling, particularly for New Zealand Europeans, because it sort of forces us to think about our colonising legacy when we think more deeply about immigration, more contemporary immigration. Also, the other promising thing, although I don't know so much detail about how this is working out, for the main resettlement role, the one that works alongside refugees in their everyday lives, the volunteer agency staff shared that volunteer training was going to be updated to include the colonisation of New Zealand and *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. That was back in 2021, so I expect that's fully implemented now. I'm still yet to hear about how that has been going. I've been in baby land since I did my data collection. I'll let the quote speak for itself, but, yeah, I'll leave it there. Thank you so much for listening, and I've got a list of references if anyone is interested in following up.

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Speaker 1: Esa Aldegheri

أشكر, grazie, tapadh leibh, totenda, thank you for listening to this episode. For the full show notes and for more information about our work, please visit bit.ly/UNESCO_RILA.

[Jingle]

Glossary:

Kai - food
Kaikōrero - skilled orator
Manaaki - hospitality
Māori - indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand
Pākehā - NZ European
Pōwhiri - a traditional Māori welcome ceremony
Ōtepoti - Dunedin
Tangata whenua - people of the land (Māori)
Te reo Māori - the Māori language

Te Tiriti o Waitangi – the *te reo Māori* version of the Treaty of Waitangi, with critical differences to the English version

Toitū te tiriti - honour the treaty (te Tiriti o Waitangi)

Waiata - songs

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