

# Exploring common ground

The purpose of this activity is for participants to explore the similarities and differences between Māori experiences of colonisation in Aotearoa/New Zealand and migrants' experiences of colonisation in their countries of origin.

## Activity 18

**Time:** 30 – 45 minutes

**Materials:** One copy of the worksheet *Exploring common ground*, page 85, for each group. Pens.

1. Optional: review activities 16 and 17. Colonisation attacked Māori control over land, language, law and natural resources. Some participants may have similar stories, histories and experiences of colonisation in their own countries.
2. Break into small groups of people with similar backgrounds and give each group a copy of *Exploring common ground*.
3. Some of the experiences of Māori are listed in the left hand column. Each group should discuss their own experiences (either personal or historical) noting any similarities or differences in the column on the right.
4. Allow time for people to discuss the similarities and differences between their own and Māori experiences. They may want to add other points not mentioned here.
5. Optional: put people together in pairs with someone from another group to allow time for them to share the stories from their respective home countries.
6. Return to the large group. Ask each group to report back on their discussion.
7. Debrief: Allow time for people to express feelings of anger, frustration or pain that may arise in discussing their experiences as they think about their home countries and ancestors.

Some participants may have had the experience of being part of the colonising group either in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Pākehā) or elsewhere. Make it clear to those individuals that the injustices that took place during colonisation are historical realities and

they should not be made to feel guilty as they take part in this discussion.

## Notes

The experiences of migrant groups will vary in relation to other experiences such as colonisation and having their land taken by the government.

**Colonisation:** Experiences of colonisation may have been similar. For example, many cultures that were colonised were prevented or banned from using their own language. Colonial policies often aimed to destroy the culture, identity and intellect of indigenous peoples (Simpson, 2003).

**Land:** The taking of land has contributed to loss of culture in many ways including undermining language, rituals and religions in many parts of the world. The taking of land has also affected identity and economic independence (See, for example, McGill, 1982).

**Differences:** The facilitator needs to ensure that migrants' experiences are validated while also acknowledging that there may be some critical differences between their experiences and those of Māori.

Some examples of comments in relation to Māori that may occur (see page 121):

'In our country we were strong and kicked the colonisers out. Māori should have done the same.' (In many cases Māori refrained from attacking the British, firstly because of the Treaty agreement, and later because they became greatly outnumbered by Pākehā settlers.)

'Why couldn't Māori keep their language and culture alive like we have?' (This response does not acknowledge that Māori may have faced the pressures of assimilation for several generations longer than most migrants.)

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Māori experiences	Our experiences
We are the first peoples of our country.	
We were colonised by the British.	
The British recognised our independence.	
The British signed a treaty with us.	
We agreed to let people come and live in our country but we didn't realise so many would come.	
The government was set up by the new people who came.	
The government took our land using war and laws.	
We fought back against the government using peaceful ways and then went to war when they attacked us.	
It is difficult for us to maintain our culture in our home country.	
It is difficult for us to maintain our culture in Aotearoa/New Zealand today.	