

# 2019 Joan Cook Memorial State of the Pākehā Nation Essay

*Treaty education group Network Waitangi Whangārei has commissioned annual reflections on the State of the Pākehā Nation since 2006. Founding member the Rev. Joan Cook passed in 2010 and the essays since that time commemorate her pioneering Treaty and anti-racism work. As an Australian she was so intrigued by the racial and cultural contradictions of her adopted country that she learned and then taught us our hidden history over several decades.*

*The speeches and essays are free to download from the NWW website [nwwhangarei.wordpress.com](http://nwwhangarei.wordpress.com), along with Treaty of Waitangi Questions & Answers. The group co-published with Te Kawariki an independent panel report on Stage I of the Ngāpuhi claim (WAI 1040), called Ngāpuhi Speaks, available from [meBooks.co.nz](http://meBooks.co.nz).*

## ***About the author***

**Raymond Nairn** is a Pākehā New Zealander of Scots and English descent who, with his partner Mitzi, has been active in community education and protest about Te Tiriti o Waitangi and institutional racism in Aotearoa. That work shaped his critical relationship to psychology and its practices. He is a social psychologist whose research explores ways in which language in use – vocabulary, images and narrative fragments – constructs people's social world, the topic of his PhD (2004). Currently working as a members of Kupu Taea in Whariki Research Group (Massey University, Auckland) on analyses of how New Zealand's English-language media tell stories of Māori and the impact those stories have on the wellbeing of Māori and Pākehā. As a registered psychologist and Fellow of the New Zealand Psychological Society he serves on the Society's National Standing Committee on Bicultural Issues (NSCBI), and was President of the Society (2006-2008).

## **The Pākehā Nation is cocooned in colonising talk**

***He tao rakau karohia atu, ka hemo***

***He tao ki werohia mai, tu tonu***

***A wooden spear is parried and flies wide***

***A spoken spear strikes home and stands***

As the title I chose indicates I am arguing that Pākehā New Zealand is disastrously tangled up in New Zealand English and that there must be a change in that state of affairs. First, I need to explain how people's thinking and talking are simultaneously enabled and constrained by whatever language they use. That explanation is followed by a more detailed account of the content and impacts of Pākehā race-talk including an outline of

how some of those ways of talking privilege settler ideas, practices, and institutions making them seem natural rather than cultural. Those rather abstract ideas are illustrated by two instances of official talk before I finish with an outline of how Aotearoa could break the shackles of the colonising race-talk so pervasive in New Zealand English.

### **Language in use – social effects and limitations**

To convince you that talk or language in use is a form of social action I must first tackle the idea that talk is just ‘hot air’. New Zealand is not the only society in which talk is widely regarded as a cheap alternative to doing, fixing, developing, and other valued actions. Whenever someone says: ‘he should put his money where his mouth is’ or ‘she should walk the talk’ they criticise the particular ‘he’ or ‘she’ while reiterating and reaffirming the commonplace that action is preferable to talk. That prejudice ignores what talk does and causes most of us to seriously underestimate the impact of talking, thinking, and writing. I can’t prove language in use is a potent form of social action, the body of evidence would take too long to convey and when I’d laid it all out you could put me and my argument aside with a terse ‘that’s just words’. Were you to do that, you would have talked yourself out of accepting or even engaging with my argument, a classic instance of the power of talk. Responding to information or an argument with ‘that’s just PC’ or dismissing a speaker as ‘an ivory tower academic’ are other examples of people harnessing the power of language in use to fend off challenges to their understanding of the world.

Obviously language in use is not only for defending the way we understand the world we live in. Most importantly, the language we speak is what structures what and how we know about our world. Through using language people give meaning to experiences, interpreting or making sense of events, people, and situations. To be able to interpret or give meaning to an event or situation, a person must have the tools or materials needed to perform those tasks and the same applies for other tasks such as judging or justifying, explaining or arguing. Those required tools or materials are provided by a language. Each language was developed by people who lived in a particular area, who had similar experiences. Making sense of and learning from those experiences the group, technically a speech community, developed a shared language that enhanced their ability to interpret experiences and understand their world.

Building a language that works for the people using it requires a vocabulary that fits with their experiences and aiding the group to grow their knowledge of their world. Members of the group will experiment with ways to communicate better as when they employ images such as metaphors or similes. Over time speakers of a language, mostly through its use, keep it fresh so it works for describing, understanding, and knowing their world in ways that make sense to everybody in the speech community. Playing back that last sentence you might begin to see why anyone using the language of their group will be both empowered and limited by it. Doing the tasks for which the people developed their language a person is empowered, however, that original focus means the language and its speech community lack the means required to interpret or understand their world in different ways. Without new tools – words or images - the people cannot know their world in new ways.

### **Enabling language and speakers to develop**

The processes I have described assume each speech community is isolated, is not being confronted by people or languages that understand the world differently. Pre-contact Māori people were in just such a situation that, as historian Professor Te Maire Tau explains, meant that their speakers (and thinkers) had nowhere to stand outside of the world their language enabled them to construct, no place from which to see it differently. Although such geographic isolation is now extremely rare on planet earth it is possible for a people to be so wrapped up in the world they understand, so convinced that theirs is the correct or only possible understanding that they do or will not accept the world could be understood in any other way. The first three chapters of *Listening to the People of the Land* (Susan Healy, Ed., 2019) provide numerous instances of the missionaries, confronted by Māori knowledge and beliefs, doing exactly what I have just described. A visit to comment streams online reveals there are New Zealanders, so sure they have the dinkum oil, that they revel in behaving like those missionaries.

Nowadays, we live and work alongside many people whose language and experiences of the world differ in various ways from our own. That could mean being routinely encouraged to extend our language and/or accept other ways of knowing our world. In the 1960s that was what happened in numerous women's consciousness-raising groups. Meeting regularly to talk and listen to each other, these groups helped women discover

ways in which the English language masked and trivialised their experiences. That is not all that happened in those groups but it is what I wish to focus on. Those groups enabled women to judge the standard versions of sexual relationships, to find those versions wanting, and to name their own experiences. Women's insights led to research and associated militant action that stripped English of its apparent neutrality and naturalness which had ensured the world was mostly understood in ways that privileged men.

Women added to English by naming: sexism (systematic treatment of women as marginal and inferior) and sexual harassment (men coercing women for sexual or other favours). They also named the ways in which English had masked or naturalised common practices that marginalised and exploited women as sexist language. Those efforts enabled new ways of seeing and being in the world of women and men and they continue as we speak. Naming, in and of itself, did not and does not eliminate sexism, sexual harassment, or sexist language. However, naming does create new images and tales so it offers people (women and men) new possibilities for thinking and talking about their world. Concurrently, those developments have ensured that sexist practices and behaviours can no longer be considered natural - as how the world is or was meant to be.

### **Race-talk – colonising language in use**

This is my area of expertise as Tim McCreanor and I have been studying Pākehā race-talk, the local variant – since the late 1980s. We began by studying how Pākehā spoke about race, focusing on how speakers named events, described people, and argued for particular understandings of New Zealand society. In those studies we identified families of tools and materials speakers were drawing on to construct their accounts and arguments. Each family was given a descriptive name so we could easily refer to that particular cluster of vocabulary, images (figures of speech), and what I call narrative fragments - phrases or brief sentences cueing a story thought to be so well-known that hearers can tell themselves the rest of it. In New Zealand 'We are one people' is a very familiar instance of such narrative fragment. In our writing we have mostly called the clusters themes, referring to the words, images and narrative fragments as the content.

In the identified themes we distinguished two groups listed in Tables 1 and 2. Each entry in those Tables includes our name for the theme (bold), the gist of the theme's content, and [in brackets] an outline of what using its contents enables speakers to achieve. Themes in Table 1

are used to differentiate Māori people and culture from what is often called ‘mainstream society’. Those in Table 2 enable pro-settler representations of the context within which Pākehā and Māori are relating, foregrounding features many New Zealanders consider unfair or otherwise noteworthy. Tim and I observed that speakers employed the first group of themes, individually or collectively constructed Māori as a primitive, violent, opportunistic, people on the margins of life in New Zealand. Subsequently, while reviewing international research on media representations of indigenous peoples we came to see that ‘Maori’ constructed using Table 1 resources played the same role as ‘Aboriginal’ in Australia and ‘Indian’, or ‘native’ in Canada and USA.

All those are terms created and used by the colonisers and settlers to marginalise the indigenous peoples in the newcomers’ settler state. Across New Zealand’s early history the term for the indigenous peoples was ‘native’ and it took sustained pressure from indigenous leaders to replace it with the word Māori. As the indigenous peoples also speak of Māori, usually without deploying Table 1 themes, it is necessary to distinguish settler portrayals from indigenous ones. I have chosen to distinguish settler representations by writing ‘Maori’ while pro-indigenous constructions are written Māori with the macron. The quotes on the former are intended to mark it as a constructed label rather than a neutral name for those it categorises. The pro-indigenous term Māori is also not a neutral name.

**Table 1: Themes relating to Māori**

<b>Māori culture:</b> inferior, stone-age, inadequate/dying language, needs Pākehā support to survive in modern world. (Freezes Māori culture at time of contact and denies it can change.)
<b>Good Māori/Bad Māori:</b> Pākehā differentiate Māori who fit into Pākehā society without any fuss (passive, polite, dignified) from those who defy assimilation. (Implies protesters lack support and most Māori like things the way they are).
<b>Māori violence:</b> Asserting Māori are a violent people who seek and enjoy it. (Making Māori savage and untrustworthy – masks Pākehā violence to Māori).
<b>Māori inheritance:</b> asserts – using bloodstock language – that many Māori have only a fraction of Māori blood and hence are not ‘really’ Māori. (Used with privilege, questions size of Māori population and sincerity of those identifying as Māori.)

Settler terms share three characteristics. Firstly, they lump the indigenous peoples together erasing differences in their cultures, practices, and histories. As diversity is a primary value of

Māori peoples, being treated as indistinguishable from each other denies ngā hapū their mana. Secondly, settler terms position indigenous peoples in the past as if they, their culture and practices were unchanging. Freezing indigenous societies in that way creates a further difference between settler and indigenous peoples, it also provides an opportunity for settlers to judge who are or are not authentic indigenous persons, a task for which resources of the **Maori inheritance** theme are often utilised. Finally, a speaker's use of the settler 'Maori' prioritises particular characteristics that a majority of settlers assume apply to those included under the label. Across materials we have studied those presumed characteristics are assembled from anti-Māori themes (Table 1) and what settlers know or believe they know about the people, culture, practices, and institutions of ngā hapū me ngā iwi. As is to be expected, given their settler origins, terms like 'Maori' serve colonising ends being most effective when speakers and hearers consider the terms to be everyday labels merely naming what is widely considered self-evident. The apparent ordinariness of these terms is an achievement that can be undone by describing them, explaining how they work, and by always naming them as categories naturalised by race-talk in use.

**Table 2: Race relations themes**

**Privilege:** special treatment not accorded everyone else, Maori seats in parliament, their own department, etc cast as racist, separate treatment. [Denies the oppressive effects of ongoing colonisation, especially majority-rule democracy]

**One people:** we must forget our differences and unite as Kiwis to prevent racial tension growing. [Denies there is a settler culture and that it dominates.]

**Stirrers:** those said to make trouble where none exists, stir up discontent, most are (Bad) 'Maori' though some are Pākehā 'do-gooders'. [Trivialises challenges to settler practices and institutions and, as with **Bad Māori**, minimises the level of support for Māori protest.]

**Rights:** equal rights for all individuals, 'one law for all' is a cornerstone of NZ society, my rights end where yours begin. [Condemns '(Maori) **Privilege**' as infringing others' rights - a claim that underpins opposition to Treaty settlements, affirmative action, etc.]

**Sensitivity:** Maori are over-sensitive about their culture and position in society they can't take a joke and are too ready to take offence. [Casts Māori working for recognition and justice as humourless, racist, extremists.]

**Ignorance:** Pākehā do not intend to offend Maori they are simply ignorant of Maori priorities and practices. [Maori are blamed for not informing Pākehā about their protocols and practices while Pākehā excuse their insensitive behaviour by implying they would have acted differently had they been informed.]

The themes in Table 1, as just discussed, provide vocabulary, images and narrative fragments for representing Māori in disparaging ways while those in Table 2 are not as clearly focused. A closer look reveals a number of ways in which these themes dovetail both with each other and with the overtly anti-Māori themes of Table 1.

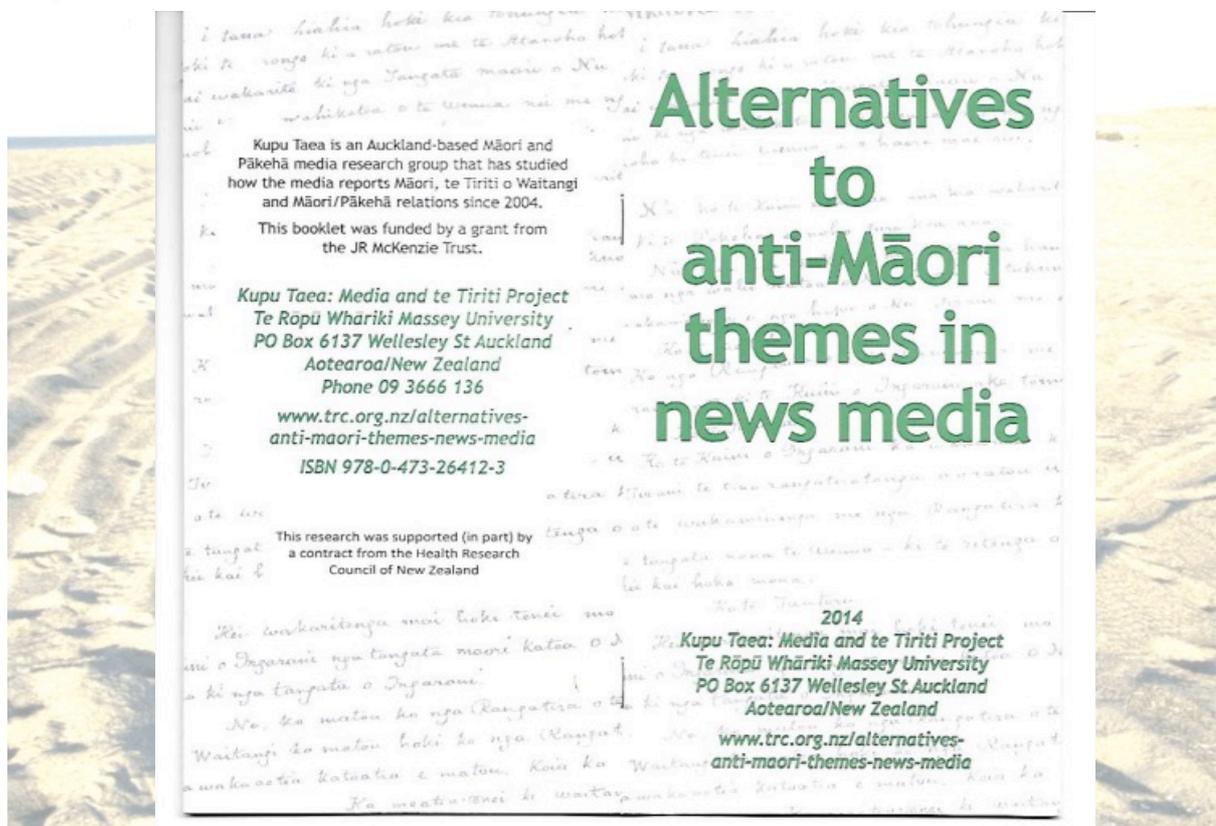
Start with **One people**, the resources it provides enable representations of assimilation or integration in which diverse peoples are blended into the dominant, colonist-created society. Aspects of that society can be represented using **Rights** resources that prioritise treating everyone the same and **Privilege** resources that readily enable allegations of ‘Maori’ violations of the obvious fairness of treating everyone the same. While the word **Stirrers** is currently being replaced by ‘radicals’ and ‘activists’ (see Phelan, 2009) the theme continues to provide resources for those who wish to deny the colonising character of New Zealand society. Resources of the last two themes enable anyone who tramples mana Māori to avoid accepting responsibility for their actions. The **Ignorance** theme resources support the excuse ‘I (or we) did not know’ and to blame ‘Maori’ by claiming that, had the perpetrators been informed, they would have done otherwise. At the same time resources of the **Sensitivity** theme allow perpetrators to accuse ‘Maori’ of being overly sensitive about their culture, language and practices.

Although the race relations themes have only been briefly described, there are indications of how speakers might utilise resources of several themes to construct portrayals of events and situations consistent with their understanding of and beliefs about the world. Even the sparse descriptions provided in the Tables hint at synergies between particular themes for instance: **Stirrers** and **Bad Maori**; **Maori inheritance** and **Privilege**; and **Privilege** and **One people**. Researchers have shown that media workers make heavy use of both groups of themes a heavy use of settler talk that can be understood in two ways. Either media workers believe that descriptions and accounts constructed utilising these resources are widely accepted as intelligible and credible, or they simply do not have vocabulary, images or narrative fragments that would enable them to represent people, events, and situations convincingly in any other way. The latter interpretation has media workers finding it impossible to stand outside the colonising text. There is evidence supporting both interpretations and, most importantly, both possibilities point to the Pākehā nation being so bubble-wrapped in its colonising talk it can neither imagine ways in which this society could be different nor recognise that some of those different ways would be better for all of us.

## Language in use – naturalising colonisation

English speakers position anything not created by humans within the natural world and a widespread effect of that usage is encouraging speakers who wish to promote or defend an idea, practice, or institution to represent it as natural rather than resulting from human efforts. Much colonising language uses this strategy but it has been absent from my account so far simply because I was slow to recognise how important such naturalising talk was. When the Kupu Taea team was preparing the publication ‘*Alternatives to anti-Māori themes in news media*’ (2014) (Figure 3) members spoke of Pākehā dominance being legitimated by portraying it as natural and unexceptionable, describing how that depiction synergised with the overtly racial talk. I was stunned, I had failed to see what had been right in front of me all the time and recognised that failure was evidence of the effectiveness of the naturalising strategy.

**Figure 3: *Alternatives to anti-Māori themes in news media***



We began the booklet by identifying and explaining this naturalising language that “...help[ed] make Pākehā control over institutions, resources, society and culture seem right and natural.” Whereas anti-Māori talk brings particular individuals and peoples to our attention, Pākehā dominance is more effectively legitimated by not naming or identifying Pākehā as a people. For that reason we introduced a new theme, **Pākehā as the norm** that, we explained, enabled Pākehā to be routinely represented as the nation. The outcome of speaking, writing, and thinking in these ways is that Pākehā, whether individuals or collectives, are not acknowledged as a people rather they become the normal, ordinary New Zealanders, the standard against which everyone else is measured. Research by Kupu Taea and others has shown that Pākehā are almost never named as such. Media and those speaking there prefer terms like ‘Kiwis’, ‘the public’, ‘taxpayers’, and often ‘we’ and ‘us’. These usages effectively deny there is a colonising people which, in turn, implies there is no-one imposing their culture, beliefs and practices on people living here. As noted previously, that constructed absence is needed for the dominating culture, practices, and beliefs to be represented as natural rather than the outcomes of processes particular people directed.

### **Language in use – affirming, challenging the status quo**

At the core of New Zealand society are the institutions, practices, and beliefs the colonists imposed, and naturalising talk assists in maintaining that dominance. However such dominance, or hegemony, is never permanent, it must be constantly sustained and defended from challenges. Dominance can be maintained by force however the world-wide preference in social democracies is to emphasise choices available to individuals within structures, institutions, and practices considered to be fair, effective, or necessary. Structures and institutions portrayed as having developed through historical or other natural processes are more readily seen as neutral and legitimate. To ensure residents of a settler state accept the structures, institutions, and practices of the state as legitimate requires they must be constantly exposed to talk that naturalises and legitimates.

Because the dominant understanding of our world or society is constructed and sustained through talk it is open to challenges which is one reason why there must be a continuous flow of legitimacy affirming representations. Any challenge to that legitimacy must make itself heard amid the ongoing flow of status quo affirming comments, items and thoughts to which we are exposed. To gain credibility and the necessary hearing, it must undermine the standard portrayal

of society in ways hearers can understand. Effective challenges to the legitimacy of the status quo explain who brought the state into being and how they did so, expose the state's injustices and inequities and who benefit, and offer an alternative vision of the state in which it more fairly serves all its members. Consequently, pro status quo speakers can often be seen to be anticipating and pre-empting elements of those challenges.

### **Officials affirming the status quo**

For this section I wanted to analyse a Ministerial statement that provided a strong affirmation of the status quo while talking about something else. Such an example would, ideally, include naturalising talk and assumptions working in concert with various Race talk themes. Searching for a suitable text I re-read the Hui Whakaoranga report (1984) and lit upon a section of the opening address given by Hon A.G Malcolm, Associate Minister of Health (Tuesday, 20 March, 1984). Before moving to that excerpt from the address it needs to be placed in context. The Hui Whakaoranga was the first conference on Māori health to be organised by Māori groups - the Māori Womens Welfare League and the Māori Council – in concert with the Department of Health. The ground-breaking event was hosted on Hoani Waititi marae in West Auckland. Given that the event was unique, participants would have expected the opening speaker to acknowledge those who worked with his department to organise the event.

The following seven sentences followed a brief introduction in which the Minister responded to his welcome, and expressed his pleasure at being able to attend the event. (... indicates text has been omitted):

“[1] Ever since I have been minister, I have had a particular interest in Maori health, because the statistics tell us it is not as good as it could be. [2] We have always known about the problems of Maori health and we applied a great amount of resources over many years towards bringing about improvements. [3] What has been missing until lately however, has been the attitudes that would finally help us to close the gap. [4] A very important step was the development of Tu Tangata because that has encouraged the Maori people to take greater responsibility for identifying their own health problems. [5] As Maori people were seen to stand tall, the Pakeha became more inclined to pay attention and the result is that we have seen great improvements over the last few years both by Maori people and the health system. ... [6] This year my department is identifying Maori health as a priority area. [7] This means that the full

resources of the Department of Health will be aimed at promoting a greater understanding of social, cultural, behavioural and traditional ways of the Maori people in the minds of all health workers and those involved in health services.” [195 words]

Mentioning he is a minister [1] positions Mr Malcolm within the structures and procedures of a Westminster parliament, while, concurrently instantiating those structures and procedures for the listeners. This encourages listeners to hear the ‘we’ in sentence [2] as the government and the later reference to ‘my department’ [6] reminds them of that machinery. Such passing allusions to power and control effectively affirm the power while directing people’s attention elsewhere. Across the excerpt ‘Maori’ are distinguished from ‘I’ [1], ‘we’ [2], ‘us’ [3], ‘Pakeha’ [5], and health workers in the Department of Health [7]. As ‘Maori’ have been consistently marginalised by speakers employing the anti-Māori themes, invocation of the power structures intensifies the distinction being made. This rather commonplace instance of **Pakeha as the norm** encourages listeners to hear ‘we’ as nation or government.

Irrespective of whether Mr Malcolm meant ‘we’ [2] to mean nation or government he is clear, ‘we’ “have always known about ‘Maori’ health problems” [2] and tried to make improvements. This contrasts with the ‘Maori’ whose health “is not as good as it could be” [1]. Reportedly great improvements in ‘Maori’ health have occurred recently [5] because ‘Maori’ were seen to stand tall inclining ‘Pakeha’ to pay attention. This clarifies the missing attitudes [3] that nullified the “great amount of resources” [2]; ‘Maori’ had not been taking sufficient responsibility for their health [4]. In the Minister’s tale that hurdle was cleared by the introduction of Tu Tangata (Department of ‘Maori’ Affairs programme), that pushed ‘Maori’ to begin taking responsibility for their health problems [4]. As the Minister’s government had endorsed Tu Tangata claiming it as the keystone of their relations with ‘Maori’ he has told the hui that recent improvements in ‘Maori’ health have come about through non-‘Maori’ initiatives and efforts. A particular instance of a frequently repeated colonising message that ‘Maori’ cannot survive in the modern world without Pākehā life support.

The notion that ‘Maori’ cannot survive as ‘Maori’ in today’s world draws primarily on tools and materials provided by the **Maori culture** and **Maori inheritance** themes. The other part of the tale, the Pākehā life support, draws on settler resources that enable them to represent themselves as an advanced people who get things done and whose goodwill extends to helping primitive people in need. Here the help took the form of “great amount of resources” and Tu Tangata which, the Minister claims, stirred ‘Maori’ to begin taking

responsibility. I also see that ‘Maori’ need Pakeha support to survive message in his sketch of what ‘Maori’ health being a priority area [6] means. According to the Minister health workers will be educated about ‘Maori’ as a people [7], implying that such training will enable them to work even better with ‘Maori’. In effect Malcolm has said that, apart from some education about culture, the health services need not and will not change. He presents the ‘no change’ message despite knowing the current outcome for ‘Maori’, “statistics tell us it is not as good as it could be” [1] as if he considers the services are doing a good job.

Lurking between the lines of the Minister’s address and his self-serving representation of changes in ‘Maori’ health are the familiar portrayals of ‘Maori’ as of the past, as violent, lazy, and greedy. That is a characterisation which both depersonalises and politicises them. It depersonalises by including all Māori and by denying them any qualities apart from those characteristics. Malcolm’s implication that, ‘Maori attitudes hindered attempts to improve ‘Maori’ health gains credibility from those representations that the story appears to confirm. Simultaneously the representations politicise because they position Māori as a people apart, different from members of the dominant nation (**One people**) and therefore always partisan. Anything they say should be heard as self-interested, as seeking benefits for themselves or their people.

Listeners unversed in the history of settler-government dealings with ‘Maori’ and ‘Maori’ health lack the requisite tools and materials to interrogate the Minister’s presentation of an all too familiar story. ‘Maori’ are a burden on our publicly-funded health services that should be helping everyone but are struggling to do so because ‘Maori’ do too little to help themselves. The Minister disrupted that familiar story with his assertion that Tu Tangata made some ‘Maori’ begin to take responsibility for identifying their health problems [4]. As he tells it, this tale of ‘Maori’ inadequacy foregrounds government and settler agency, ‘we’ act to help those who do not help themselves and ‘we’ naturally do things ‘our’ way. Without relevant knowledge and experience a listener would struggle to hear the Minister’s words in any other way.

In stark contrast to attendees from the Department of Health, local health boards, or the health professions, many Māori in the audience had knowledge and experiences that support and would encourage negotiated or oppositional readings. For instance, most

Māori knew Tu Tangata was developed by Māori in and with the Department of 'Maori' Affairs under the directorship of Kara Puketapu. They also knew that the government had adopted elements of the 'Stand tall' components of the programme because its emphasis on self-reliance was deemed likely to reduce welfare spending on 'Maori'. Those whose whānau had struggled with negative experiences in the health services as so many had, would engage critically with the Minister's story of progress and improvement and his sub-text celebrating the rightness of the colonial status quo.

Malcolm's address is typical of Pākehā talk, as its support for the colonising status quo and its denigrating of 'Maori' occurs while, apparently, not talking about either. In other circumstances one or both of those topics will be tackled directly and, on such occasions, the speaker will be relying on the naturalising effects of prior talk and actions. For an example of such talk look at the Treaty Settlements Minister Hon. Chris Finlayson's response to the Waitangi Tribunal finding that rangatira signing te Tiriti o Waitangi did not cede their sovereignty (report on stage one of Te Paparahi o te Raki, WAI 1040). His response was a bald assertion that the Crown is in charge: "There is no question that the Crown has sovereignty in New Zealand. This report doesn't change that fact." (New Zealand Herald 14/11/14). He went on to imply the Crown was (the only body) responsible for developing and maintaining Crown-'Maori' relationships, further reinforcing the asserted dominance.

As reported, the Minister's claim was a debater's riposte. Finlayson and his officials knew the Tribunal finding raised far-reaching questions about Crown sovereignty and New Zealand's constitutional arrangements and chose to sweep them from the public agenda. His emphasis on de facto Crown sovereignty enabled him to ignore the possibility of such questions while sending both his audience and the Tribunal a simple message – we are in charge and will choose whether or not to take your findings seriously. The impression he is locking horns with the Tribunal would cheer many settlers who want it gone, however his primary reason for the blunt statement was to misdirect, to deny everything else the oxygen of public attention. His ploy worked well because, for most Pākehā, 'the Crown has sovereignty' is a truism about political life here and the emphatic statement closes off any questions as to how that came about. Certainly the few reports I heard or read about the Tribunal's finding were not critical of the Minister and the few people who were even slightly critical of his response were presented as being partisan, as having an axe to grind. That there was no widespread unease about the finding

and little criticism of the Minister's response is further evidence of the extent to which the Pākehā Nation is cocooned in its own colonising talk.

### **Decolonising language in use**

I identify myself as one among many desiring a different future for Aotearoa New Zealand. Specifically, we are looking for a society grounded in our founding documents, He Wakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirenī (Declaration of Independence, 1835) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi, 1840). In our imaginings, that society prioritises a form of democracy that is culturally just and genuinely inclusive while acknowledging the rights of the natural world. This essay has shown how Pākehā race-talk naturalises the current colonising society, affirming its legitimacy while denigrating and marginalising Māori. It has also spoken of the ways in which such talk constrains people's ability to imagine how this society might change to become better for everybody. Talk that binds us into a colonising society while stunting our ability to imagine how our society could be better organised must change and how that can happen is the burden of this final section.

Woven into what I have said are approaches to countering Pākehā race-talk. The approaches are distinguishable though concentrating on only one of them is unlikely to be effective as each has the potential to enhance the others. It is also vital we work on them collectively. So for all persons and peoples of goodwill who wish to live in a society that is more vibrant, just and accepting of the rights of the natural world, I outline each of these approaches. The first requires us to expose whatever is being constructed or naturalised by Pākehā race-talk. The second is for us to develop and consistently employ new ways of talking that seek to be more open, more precise, and respectful of te tangata whenua. The third approach is to whakanui te mana o te reo. This requires us to support te reo by improving our ability to speak and respond respectfully to te reo whenever and wherever we can.

### ***Exposing Pākehā race-talk***

There are resources such as *Alternatives to anti-Māori themes in news media* (see Further reading, Table 3) that offer considerable detail about Pākehā race-talk but those of us who seeking to bring about change need more. All of us need to be enhancing our ability to recognise Pākehā race-talk, developing and practising ways to challenge or at least expose its use, and

sharing with like-minded friends, family, and colleagues what worked. I think we need to follow the feminist lead creating consciousness raising groups in which we help each other become more skilled at recognising Pākehā race-talk, quicker at analysing what it is doing, and more effective at responding to what was said. The more colonising race-talk is exposed, the more it is deprived of its constructed neutrality and obviousness making it easier for more people to recognise such talk as colonising. Concurrently, we need strategies for drawing in those who are just listening. It would be great if we all became familiar with ways of talking that encouraged those listeners to hear with critical ears what speakers of Pākehā race-talk are saying. I know people who put a great deal of energy into challenging such talk but we must not leave the task to them. So, while we are learning to recognise, analyse, and respond effectively, we need to share our learnings. Share what we find works, share our appraisals of responses that didn't seem to work, and share encouragement because we must be able to continue making these challenges for as long as they are needed. While we are doing this exposing and challenging, Pākehā race-talk will change so we need to be alert to such changes, able to share them with colleagues and allies, all while working out ways to challenge the colonising that the changed race-talk would enable.

### *New ways of talking*

Our need for new ways of talking is implicit in the exposing Pākehā race-talk approach. All of us who desire a Tiriti-grounded, culturally-just future for this country need to work on developing and employing new ways of talking about and representing people, events, situations, and hopes. Such new ways need to be grounded in respect for the mana of persons and peoples rather than continuing to denigrate and marginalise those who have been targeted by the Pākehā cultural project. Our new talk must acknowledge the rights of nature assisting people to be part of the natural world rather than portraying them as its controllers and exploiters. There is also a grunt work reason for developing new language to use and that is to render race-talk obsolete and archaic. Undesirable forms of language in use; profanities, sexist language, hate speech, and Pākehā race-talk cannot be expunged from people's vocabularies and use. No society has found a way to unmake words or outlaw particular ways of talking. So, if we want to push Pākehā race-talk into the footnotes of history, we must develop and utilise a language that works better for more of us. People will use a language that others around them are using that enables them to express themselves clearly, creates possibilities in their thinking and social life, and is widely used and understood. Developing new ways of talking is a collective task because there must be

listeners and speakers and because the new ways of talking need to become heard in public spaces and conversations. We must become a new speech community speaking, thinking, and writing about various ways in which society could be, and indeed is becoming, different. We are not claiming or imagining that our new ways of talking are neutral, after all they will be imbued with our hopes and desires for a new society. Rather these new ways of talking are essential if we (as a society) are to move away from the effects of Pākehā race-talk and the colonising history to which it is integral.

### ***Supporting te reo the language of this land***

It is not my place to provide a detailed white-print of how this should be done. Rather, as good allies we should be supporting, when and where we can, the implementation of plans and practices tangata whenua have already provided. For me and others who identify as Pākehā or Tauīwi supporting te reo requires us to become more proficient in pronouncing, speaking, and being able to suss whether it is appropriate to korero atu in social situations. For anyone who is not Māori one of the strongest reasons for supporting te reo is that, through te reo, we relate to this land and its peoples in ways that differ markedly from those afforded by New Zealand English. I am not saying we should regard te reo as neutral or promote it as the correct way of imagining ourselves and our society here, no language can be neutral because all are developed and utilised by interested people. However, as the whakatauki for this essay makes very clear, tangata Māori are more aware of what talk can do, of its power, than those who are swaddled in New Zealand English and its Pākehā race-talk.

**He tao rakau karohia atu, ka hemo**

**He tao ki werohia mai, tu tonu**

## **Further reading**

### **Language in use**

Healy, S. (Ed.) (2019) *Listening to the People of the Land: Christianity, Colonisation & the Path to Redemption*. Auckland, NZ: Pax Christi [www.paxchristiaotearoa.nz](http://www.paxchristiaotearoa.nz)

- Miller, C. & Swift, K. (1995), *The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing: For writers, editors, and speakers*, (Revised edn). New York: Harper & Row.
- Potter, J & Wetherell, M (1987). *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*. London: Sage.
- Spender, D. (1985). *Man Made Language*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

### **Colonising language**

- McCreanor, Tim (1989). Talking about race. In H. Yensen, K. Hague & T. McCreanor (Eds.), *Honouring the treaty: An introduction for Pākehā to the Treaty of Waitangi*, (pp. 90-112). Auckland, NZ: Penguin Books.
- Nairn, R., McCreanor, T., Moewaka Barnes, A., Borell, B., Rankine, J., Gregory, A. (2012). "Māori news is bad news": that's certainly so on television. *MAI Journal*, 1(1), 38-49.
- Nairn, R., McCreanor, T. & Moewaka Barnes, A. (2017). *Mass media representations of indigenous peoples*. MURF Report. Auckland, NZ: SHORE & Whariki Research Centre. Downloaded 23 January 2018 from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59152c88b8a79bdb0c644f2a/t/5a29b30308522909807832f1/1512682251416/Monograph+December+FINAL.pdf>
- Phelan, S. (2009). The newspaper as political antagonist: Editorial discourse and the othering of Māori perspectives on the foreshore and seabed conflict. *Journalism*, 10(2), 217-237.
- Wetherell, M. & Potter, J. (1992). *Mapping the language of racism: Discourse and the legitimization of exploitation*. New York: Columbia University Press.

### **He Wakaputanga, Te Tiriti o Waitangi**

- Healy, S., Huygens, I. & Murphy, T. (Eds.) (2012). *Ngāpuhi Speaks: He Wakaputanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. Independent Report on Ngāpuhi Nui Tonu Claim. Whangārei, NZ: Te Kawariki & Network Waitangi Whangārei.