

Alternatives to anti-Māori themes in news media

Theme 7 Ignorance and insensitivity

In this negative theme, Pākehā actions that offend Māori are portrayed as not their fault, and Māori are depicted as just over-reacting.

How this is being said in the news

I didn't know, Māori don't tell us, hyper-sensitive, unreasonable, take offence too easily, need to lighten up, get over it, no sense of humour, it's just PC.

Examples

- 'At the time [of the 1979 Haka Party incident], none of us kids thought we were disrespecting anyone's culture.' *NZ Herald*, May 2009.
- 'Don Brash has criticised the use of powhiri at official functions, saying a 'half-naked man poking his tongue out' is not a particularly civilised way to greet foreign dignitaries.' *NZ Herald*, Sep 4, 2005.

What does this assume?

- Māori culture, language and values are inferior; therefore Pākehā need not respect them.
- Pākehā culture and language is dominant and universal; therefore anything Māori must fit in or adjust.
- It's the responsibility of Māori to tell Pākehā about their culture.
- Māori are secretive about their culture; so it's their fault if Pākehā don't know what could cause offense.

What does this do?

- Blames Māori for Pākehā transgressions.
- Excuses persistent and deliberate breaches of commonly understood Māori values and practices, such as mispronouncing te reo Māori, or not bothering to learn appropriate protocols.
- Sidelines Māori cultural practices and maintains the dominance of Pākehā ones.
- Criticises respect for Māori language and culture.
- Portrays Māori cultural practices outside Māori environments, such as marae, as political impositions on others.
- Gives encouragement for telling people to stop speaking Māori or practising tikanga Māori in everyday situations.

Other ways to talk about this

- Māori culture, language and practices are extremely important to identity in Aotearoa and should be respected as such.
- Māori are unique to Aotearoa and contribute to New Zealand's distinctiveness internationally.
- Information is widely available, so Pākehā cannot plead ignorance about disrespect to Māori.
- New Zealand is one of the most monolingual countries in the world; in many countries being multilingual is ordinary.
- Learning te reo and developing cultural competence in tikanga Māori and other cultures enriches national life.

*Published in 2014 by
Kupū Taēa: Media and te
Tiriti Project, Te Rōpū
Whāriki, Massey University
PO Box 6137, Wellesley St
Auckland, Aotearoa/New
Zealand*

*See [www.trc.org.nz/
theme-7-ignorance-
and-insensitivity](http://www.trc.org.nz/theme-7-ignorance-and-insensitivity)*

Submit your own examples of this theme in the media and suggest your alternatives. Suggestions will be moderated and uploaded to the site.