

Alternatives to anti-Māori themes in news media

Theme 9 'Māori culture'

In this negative theme, Māori culture and language are presented as primitive, irrelevant and inadequate for the modern world.

On the other hand, Pākehā will often use non-threatening aspects of Māori culture to mark their own identity as New Zealanders.

How this is being said

Time-wasting, PC, sexist, without Pākehā Māori wouldn't have..., property values will dip because of Māori

Examples

- 'Dannemora property investor Sherrie Jacobs said she was worried that had the area [Howick] been [re] named Te Irirangi, house prices could dip.' *NZ Herald*, Sep 14, 2010.
- 'Education Minister Trevor Mallard has sparked a race relations row by suggesting Maori culture sometimes cuts across the tradition of equality in schools.' *NZPA*, Sep 25, 2004.
- 'Josie Bullock described Department of Corrections Maori ceremonies as 'sexist''. *NZPA*, Sep 25, 2004.

What does this assume?

- Some cultures are simply superior.
- There is a progression in cultures from backward and primitive (tribal) to sophisticated (industrial).

- For Māori culture to be authentic, it has to remain as it was at the time of colonisation.
- Māori culture and Māori people are either authentic or lost.
- All Māori are experts about customary Māori culture.
- Pākehā culture is modern and universal.
- Pākehā have a right to make judgements about Māori culture regardless of their knowledge.
- Māori culture is being imposed on non-Māori.

What does this do?

- Justifies Pākehā dominance and ongoing colonisation.
- Undercuts Treaty rights for Māori taonga.
- Constructs Māori culture as decorative or purely ceremonial.
- Supports ongoing assimilation of Māori.
- Encourages Māori to believe their culture is inferior.
- Divides Māori culture into either 'authentic' or 'fake'.
- Makes it more difficult for Māori to value their own cultural diversity and innovation.

How else could this be said?

- Pākehā engagement with Māori culture is a privilege; Māori engagement with Māori culture is a right.
- Māori culture is expansive and cannot be explained simply by its differences from Pākehā culture.

- Māori cultural concepts are legitimate and complex; e.g. pōwhiri embrace the Māori concept of manākitanga - welcoming and hosting other people - as tangata whenua.
- Pākehā culture is influenced by Māori culture; e.g. kaitiakitanga (guardianship and environmental protection); tangihanga (mourning and funeral processes).
- All cultures are diverse and fluid and have their own measures of what is valuable.

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*See [www.trc.org.nz/
theme-9-māori-
culture](http://www.trc.org.nz/theme-9-māori-culture)*

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