



Te Wiki o te Reo Māori

Maria Hayward © 6 Sept 2026

Today's service honours Te Wiki ō Te Reo Māori and it is guided by our values of inclusion, justice and, if any of you are changed at all by the service, then also transformation! The value of inclusion is for that of the first people of this land, and the justice value is regarding the human right to speak one's own language.

Introductory words

This week is Te Wiki ō Te Reo Māori and as an introduction to today's service dedicated to this theme, I want to share with you the story of Karangahape Rd, or K'Rd, as it is commonly known.

The Unitarian church is situated right next to a major historical road in Auckland city - Karangahape Road and today is the opening day of the new CRL, the City Rail Link, and a beautiful new railway station is just a few minutes' walk from our church. A couple of months ago, I noticed the name of this station is actually: **Karanga-ā-Hape Station**. This stirred my interest, so I decided to look up the meaning and derivation of the street name, and, as I thought might be the case, Karanga-a-Hape is the correct version. I had guessed, and some of you will too, that as a karanga is a call (like the karanga of the kuia calling visitors on to a marae); ā is a particle meaning 'of', so Hape, I figured must be the name of a person. The meaning therefore possibly being: The call of Hape. After a quick google, I found the following:

Hape was indeed a person. He was a tōhunga – an ancient healer.

*Here is the legend of **Te Karanga ā Hape** (read by Joel Hildebrand)*

There was once a revered tohunga (a spiritual leader or priest) called Hape, whose iwi wished to migrate to a new land. But as the great waka Tainui was about to set

sail, the iwi decided to leave Hape behind in Hawaiki because they felt he might not make the lengthy and arduous journey due to his disability – his club foot.

Refusing defeat, Hape chanted powerful prayers or karakia to the ocean gods and summoned a giant stingray named Kaiwhare as his guardian (his kaitiaki). By the power of his magic and his swift marine guide, he crossed the great waters faster than any wooden vessel.

He arrived safely on the shores of Aotearoa long before the Tainui canoe even reached land.

When the Tainui waka finally approached the Waitematā Harbour, the travellers were stunned to see a figure already standing tall upon an elevated ridge.

He lifted his voice in a powerful ceremonial welcome (a karanga), echoing across the land and water to welcome his kin.

It was Hape, waiting to greet them with open arms and no anger in his heart. He held no grudge.

That historic ridge was from then on, named Te Karanga ā Hape - the place of the calling of Hape – a legacy that lives on today through Auckland's famous [Karangahape Road](#).

And today, that ridge with its connection to the Waitematā harbour is being reconnected once again through the City Rail link which opens today.

*The station's name officially restores the grammatical correction from "Karangahape" back to **Karanga-ā-Hape**.*

*And the new **Karanga-ā-Hape Station** integrates the Māori ancestral legend directly into its name, architectural structure, and public art.*

Kōrero

When we visit the Auckland war memorial museum or attend Anzac services, these words are often seen or mentioned: **Let us never forget.**

Let us not forget war, but also, let us not forget other shameful actions of our past. A few weeks ago, I led a service on Colonisation and the massive losses and injustices to Māori. I've also talked previously about racism and its negative effects on everyone.

Let us not forget the punishment in schools of Te Reo use, and the shocking story of pacifist Te Whiti o Rongomai and the events at Parihaka. Let us not forget the individuals who are affected by this history. Let us use this memory to not only learn how to empathise with the 'mamae' (the hurt) caused, but also to move forward in more inclusive and more respectful ways.

For Māori Language week, let's recall these aspects of our country's history and ponder about what might be incumbent upon us, as Unitarians, if we want a society without racism, if, indeed, we want a kinder world. A world that **doesn't** forget the errors and atrocities of the past. A world that, unfortunately, right now actually **is** forgetting. Recent election results in Germany a testimony to that. The genocide in Palestine, of course a further example of history not teaching people anything.

How can we stop history from repeating itself? Catherine Delahunty mentioned before the West Papua movie a few weeks ago, the importance of **feeling** the pain, **the 'mamae'** of oppression, the pain of oppressed groups. This spurs us into action. It is our feelings that will carry us through the fight towards justice and fairness for all.

Right now, especially today, as we move into Te wiki o Te Reo Māori, I feel **deep concern**. I'm worried that the **decades of activism** by Māori for equality and respect are being eroded or lost. I wonder how you are feeling about legislation introduced over the last 24 months? The Te Reo names of government departments have changed back to their English names - this tiny concession for Māori - the Te Reo names, like Kainga Ora, Waka Kotahi and so on, was an acknowledgment of the first language of this country and was important in normalising Te Reo for everyone. We were all totally familiar with the names, in fact, many of us had forgotten the previous English (Te Reo Pakeha) names. And now the re-branding process will cost us millions. Additionally, Government Ministries have been instructed to stop using Te Reo in their briefing papers; funding for Te Reo courses for public servants and teachers has ceased; and Māori kupu in primary school readers banned. Then, in the social arena: the Māori Health Authority – so important for addressing inequality in the health system for Māori – has been disestablished; \$40 million was cut from Māori housing initiatives; Māori wards on councils are now subject to referenda; disaster relief funding for Marae has been significantly reduced (were you aware that marae all over the country have been accommodating and feeding hundreds or even thousands

of people after natural disasters?); references to Te Tiriti in 19 pieces of legislation have been removed – and more – but you get the gist. Minister Seymour vows to make everything in New Zealand “the same” – that is, “English”. He calls this “equal”. In fact, if Māori were given ‘equal’ amounts of funding for health and education – they’d be given a lot more than the small amount of money it cost to run the Māori health authority – because they use a lot less of the health dollar, having very much shorter lifespans than pakeha. Same with education.

But, with respect to Te Reo, I wonder if Seymour’s missed the boat. Has the boat of Te Reo lovers already sailed? There are queues for classes, teachers and kids in school are committed and connected to Te Reo. Universities and even churches too! And local councils sometimes. I was so pleased to see in the new CRL stations, that all the signage is in Te Reo (first), followed by English. But seeing our unique indigenous art, our unique history and first language in those spaces made me feel proud of this land – this special motu (land/island). Somebody (admiring the art alongside us) said: “These stations will be such a powerful tourist attraction for Auckland”.

So, where to from here? Perhaps we need to add to the voices of a marginalised group. Call out racism and don’t let **fear** dominate our feelings. Keep using Te Reo. Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Hawaii and many other colonised countries have engaged in the same battle for the retention and revival of their first languages. And nowhere is English, as the dominant language, threatened. Many countries have multiple languages. And we know that individuals who speak more than one language gain higher level thinking and problem-solving skills, both of which augment their success tertiary level.

My younger daughter feels her cultural identity strongly. Once at primary school, she was given a homework project which she took very seriously. She had a generic outline of a child which she had to divide into sections and colour in all the cultures that were in her. She pondered for a long time, which parts of her would represent her Dutch cultural background, which parts her Māori blood, and which parts would represent her Scottish heritage. She worked out a rationale for each – something like – my feet are on this whenua, so my legs will be Māori and so on.

Not that long ago, she was at my place and that programme about recent racism in Pukekohe was being broadcast on TV again. The programme title: ["No Māori Allowed"](#) was from signs seen in shops and other so-called 'public' places in Pukekohe till about 1970. Maybe this is the 'equality' David Seymour wants us to go back to. Wouldn't you love a sign that read: "No racists allowed", instead?

The 2022 TVNZ documentary ["No Māori Allowed"](#), directed by Corinna Hunziker and produced by Reikura Kahi, brings to light untold stories, featuring kaumātua and kuia who share their experiences of segregation for the first time. The documentary is based on [Robert Bartholomew's 2020 book](#), which used archival records and interviews to document the extent of racial intolerance in Pukekohe and across New Zealand.

The documentary, directed by Corinna Hunziker, was based on a book by Robert Bartholomew, which was published in 2020 (see reference below), and which explored the history of racial segregation and discrimination against Māori in the district of Pukekohe. I watched it for my second time; and was angry a second time. My daughter watching it with me (her first time) was angry too, but she also had an additional strong feeling. She was feeling the Māori part of her, she empathised, felt **pain** as she listened to the stories told by Māori who talked of beatings received in shops that they deigned to enter, and of segregated areas in the cemetery for Pākehā and Māori – horrifyingly Māori graves were unmarked. Māori were only allowed to use the public swimming pool on Friday evening just before it was cleaned on a Saturday morning, they sat in the downstairs area of the cinema only. Māori children were often educated in segregated schools with limited curricula, and Māori adults faced discrimination in employment, healthcare, and public services. They were barred from public toilets, refused services such as haircuts, alcohol, and taxi rides, and were denied access to bank loans. Māori workers and their families lived in substandard housing, which contributed to high rates of preventable diseases and child mortality. Segregation was reinforced by local authorities, businesses and organizations, including the Pukekohe Growers Association and town councils, which blocked public housing initiatives for Māori.

Don't forget this group in Pukekohe also had their land stolen from them decades earlier. And this discrimination continued till the 1960's – we didn't have a Human Rights Commission in Aotearoa till 1977.

My daughter cried during the programme. She felt the **mamae** in a personal way, as if the racist behaviour discussed on the programme – could have been inflicted on her. I didn't feel that till I watched her. Then I felt her pain. I can still feel it now. There was learning here for me – I felt the **mamae** too. I cried on that day.

I relate this story because it seems to me to be important for pakeha, as members of a power group, to make the effort to understand not only **why** an oppressed group might feel **so** strongly about their losses and the attacks against them, but we also need to make the effort to empathise. And we might just need to make that effort. As mentioned earlier, **feeling the pain** is important as it can lead us to action

But let's get back to the issue of language. Our language (whatever languages we speak) are not just a means of communication – they connect us not only to our **cultural identity**, but also to our past, to our predecessors and to our whanau. Language expresses our values, sometimes in whakatauki (proverbs), sometimes in the unique vocabulary, but also in the way it is structured and used. All of you with more than one language will know you can express yourself differently in each language.

We are emotionally connected to our language. And if we are punished for speaking it – even in private – it diminishes us and is an abuse of human rights. Then if your language is dying, as with Te Reo, it is not surprising that the call for it to be accepted as a language of Aotearoa was so passionate.

Te Reo will **never threaten** English in Aotearoa. The acknowledgement of Te Reo in this country is simply about acknowledging the first people, the first language and being grown up in our attitudes, knowing that we can live with two or indeed, with lots of languages. It's also about the huge joy in knowing an additional language. Human beings are capable of knowing more than one language without losing anything – in fact, the opposite is true.

I want to particularly acknowledge those of you who have taken Te Reo courses – especially those of you who are migrants. I know how hard it is to get the vowels right for some of you, but you are making the effort – and that matters.

“Nāku te rourou, nāu te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi” which can be broadly translated as: “With your efforts and mine, we'll get there!!”

Why are Māori are so upset about losing the Māori names of organisations? Waka Kōtahi, Kainga Ora, Te Whatu Ora, Ōranga Tamariki and so on. With these names, Māori felt recognised and that their language also held mana – just like Te Reo Pakeha, English does. Don't forget 98% of the language used in this country was, and still is, English!

This week is our opportunity to embrace our country's unique language and heritage and to add some kupu hou (new words) to our kete matauranga (our basket of knowledge).

Let's take a break now with a waiata and the extinguishing of the chalice, and then let's have some fun and see how many kupu Māori you know already or might even have learned this morning!

Concluding words

Let's embrace Te Reo – many of you already do. Let's learn new phrases every year – let's incorporate more and more kupu Māori into our everyday lives.

I'm going to help you check that you all understand the kupu that Joel mentioned in the story and also that I used in the kōrero.

What do these words mean?

karanga ā tohunga waka karakia kaitiaki (kaitiakitanga)

Kōrero kupu (so what are: kupu Māori; kupu pākeha; kupu hou?) kaupapa
mātauranga kete mamae whakatauki wiki manaakitanga

Te Āo Māori tangata whenua waiata kaiwhakaahaere

And do you still remember what these departments?:

Kainga Ora Oranga Tamariki Waka Kotahi Te Whatu Ora

And these are fun:

Hāhi is the transliterated Māori kupu (word) for church (there is no 'ch' sound in te reo, so 'h' is used. And there is no 'ur' sound. Also all nouns have to end in a vowel, hence the 'i' at the end)

So, hāhi = church; what do you think Hāhi Momona is:

Hāhi Katorika? And Hahi Perihipitiriana? (presbyterian) Hāhi ō te Karaiti? (Church of Christ) Who is Ihu Karaiti?

There is Hāhi Mihingare = missionary church = Anglican

I like this too: **kai**, as you know, means food or nourishment, but, when added to a verb, makes it the person who is the **agent** of the action

Mahi = work, so a kaimahi is a worker. If ako = to teach or to learn, what is a kaiako? (teacher). NB: in Māori, there is one verb for both teaching and learning. It shows the cultural value of teaching and learning being reciprocal actions, teachers are learners and learners become teachers. There is also a separate noun: akonga which means learners.

And if kōrero = talk/speak, what is a kaikōrero? (speaker). If tiaki means to look after (be the guardian of), then what is a kaitiaki? (guardian). And **kaitiakitanga** is the noun. This word was named the world's most beautiful word for 2026 by the language-learning platform Babbel. It means guardianship, stewardship, and the profound responsibility to protect and care for the natural world and future generations. The word was chosen from 223 words across 75 languages after an international jury of linguists, writers, and cultural experts reviewed online community discussions.

As noted by the [New Zealand Herald](#), *“Kaitiakitanga brings together everything that makes a word extraordinary: a distinctive sound, a profound meaning, and cultural significance.”*

One more word with ‘kai’: if haere = go; whakahaere = lead (make things move along), and a kaiwhakahaere is a leader. We use this sometimes in our service when we introduce ourselves as the service leader (kaiwhakahaere – the person who makes things move along) – mō tenei rā = for this day (for today).

And finally – from last year – don’t forget: the vowel ‘o’ in Te Reo, sounds like the English word “**or**”. So: koha (like core-ha); ko (like core) Maria ahau (ko Maria taku ingoa); No (like nor) Tamaki Makaurau ahau. (If it helps, whenever you see this vowel in a written word in Te Reo, say to yourself, “I have to pronounce this correctly **or** else! **Or** Maria will give me the evil eye!”

I’ll finish with a couple of **whakatauki**:

“Ko taku reo taku ohooho, ko taku reo taku māpihi maurea”

My language is my awakening, my language is the window to my soul.

“Toi tū te kupu, toi tū te mana, toi tū te whenua”

Uphold the language, hold fast to your mana (self-esteem, importance), hold fast to the land.

This proverb – whakatauki – emphasizes the inextricable link between language, self-esteem and land.

Discussion Question

- **Share your experience of learning a new language –**
- **What else did you learn besides new words?**