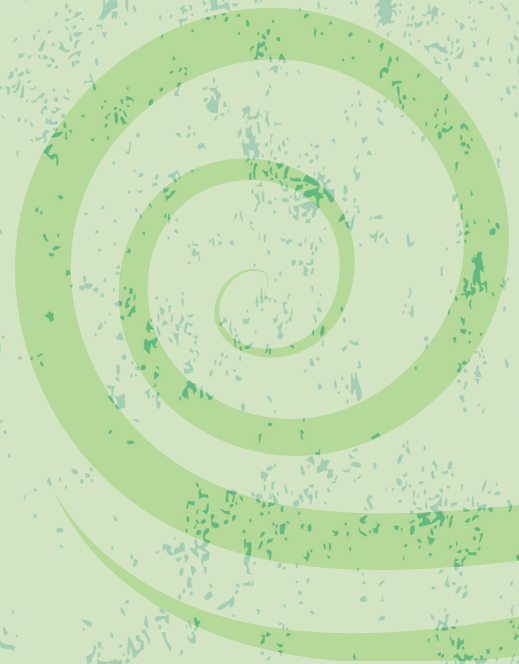




TOITŪ TE TIRITI

Staying the course
of Te Tiriti honouring



Toitū Te Tiriti: Staying the Course of Te Tiriti Honouring

Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) is the basis for governance, rangatiratanga of Māori collectives, and equity for Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand. Establishing an enduring relationship between tangata whenua (Māori people) and tangata tiriti (non-Māori people). Embedding Te Tiriti in organisational and societal practices is critical to creating an inclusive and thriving future. Insights into applying Te Tiriti highlight the transformative potential of mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge systems), strategic allyship, and tangible community-led initiatives.

This discussion was enriched by the expertise and lived experiences of two inspiring special guests.

Dr Kathie Irwin

Dr Kathie Irwin is a renowned scholar and leader dedicated to kaupapa Māori, advancing Māori aspirations, and championing the integration of Te Tiriti o Waitangi values into policies and practices. With expertise in education, research, and tikanga Māori, Dr Irwin brings a wealth of experience to discussions about creating equitable, sustainable systems rooted in mātauranga Māori. In this session, she provided profound insights into the historical and cultural foundations of Te Tiriti and shared practical strategies for embedding Māori knowledge and leadership into organisational frameworks.

For more information visit kathieirwin.com.

Jen Margaret (Pākehā)

Jen Margaret, founder of Groundwork, has worked with thousands of people across all sectors of New Zealand society to build understanding and action to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Groundwork provides accessible Te Tiriti workshops and resources, along with strategic guidance to organisations and mentoring to tangata Tiriti leaders.

During the discussion, Jen offered valuable perspectives on allyship, emphasising the importance of relational and action-based approaches for tangata Tiriti to support Māori self-determination and systemic transformation.

For more information visit groundwork.org.nz.



KATHIE IRWIN
LAWSON



Groundwork
Facilitating Change



ALLEN + CLARKE

Historical and Cultural Context

E kore au e ngaro, he kakano I ruia mai I a Rangiatea.

I shall never be lost, I am a seed from Rangiatea.

Te Tirohanga Māori, the Māori worldview, is the worldview which existed in Aotearoa before the arrival of the first settlers. To understand the significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the subsequent nation building project, the storytelling needs to start at the beginning, in Te Tirohanga Māori, including mātauranga Māori, te reo rangatira me ona tikanga. Te Orokohanga is the Māori concept for Māori creation narratives which describe the relationships between humanity and the natural world. 1840, and the signing of te Tiriti o Waitangi, is not where the story starts – Aotearoa New Zealand was well on its way as a nation by that milestone.

The creation story

Māori Epistemology, knowledge system

Case Study:
Te Wānanga o Raukawa

The opening slide starts the storytelling in Te Orokotanga – the creation – and opens with an exploration on Māori epistemology – the Māori knowledge system itself. The characteristics of mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) are important to examine before we recognise the impact of humanity on this knowledge system. Justice Joe Williams calls this Kupe’s Law, the first law of Aotearoa New Zealand. Through colonisation Cook’s Law was introduced and a ‘clash of the codes’ ensued between the two knowledge systems¹. A clash Justice Williams argues which we are still working to resolve as today.

Māori leadership has championed Māori resilience through successive waves of change and colonialism by holding fast to Kupe’s Law – Te Tirohanga Māori, the Māori Worldview – and our traditional Māori cultural Infrastructure. Initiatives like Kohanga Reo² are examples of Māori determination to uphold Kupe’s Law in modern contexts. They exemplify the power of Māori-led models for education, language revitalisation, and whānau development. These centres not only produce fluent te reo speakers but also function as independent enterprises, demonstrating the alignment of cultural and economic growth through the model of whānau development.

Colonial policies have historically undermined Māori. Examples include the 1847 Education Ordinance, which made instruction in English a condition of funding, and the 1904 Midwives Act, which outlawed traditional Māori birthing practices. Despite these systemic efforts to subjugate mātauranga Māori, whānau, hapū and iwi have adapted and thrived by exercising rangatiratanga and mana motuhake.

¹ Williams, J. (2017) [Justice Joe Williams, Te Ritorito 2017: 'The Treaty of Waitangi and whānau, hapū and iwi wellbeing'](#)

² See www.kohanga.ac.nz

MOG – Machinery of Government	Rights	Tangata Whenua	Level of Analysis	Tangata Tiriti	Needs
Policy Legislation # 1847 Education Ordinance #1904 Midwives Act 2020 Public Service Act	↑	Iwi	Structural, Macro	Machinery of Govt	↓
Regulation (Graphic: after Irwin, 2002)	↑	Hapū, Marae	Institutional	Govt Dept's, Crown Entities	↓
	↑	Citizens	Personal / Inter-personal	Citizens	↓

The work of building Aotearoa tangata is located in a socio-historical context which needs to be part of any organisational transformation journey so that its role in structural racism is laid bare. The monolingual and monocultural basis of the public sector in this country is no historical accident: it was carefully built through government policy, legislation and regulation. The introduction of Cooks Law, to quote Williams again, was not accidental. It was the result of a careful, deliberate programme of discrimination. The Machinery of Government itself is the biggest vehicle of colonisation in this country, to this day.

Recommendations + Tips:

- Develop a Māori Strategy for your organisation.
- Elevate mātauranga Māori in all levels of decision-making.
- Study and apply successful Māori-led frameworks like Kohanga Reo.
- Leverage Māori initiatives as templates for Aotearoa tangata, nation building.



Integrating Te Tiriti into Policy and Organisations

Honouring Te Tiriti requires embedding at every organisational level. This involves weaving mātauranga Māori into strategies while addressing systemic disparities. Models like 'He Awa Whiria' (the braided river approach)³ and 'E tipu, e rea' (Sir Apirana Ngata) enable the integration of Māori and Western knowledge systems, fostering innovative solutions.

Organisations benefit from aligning strategies both horizontally (across teams) and vertically (from governance, to management, structure, culture and operations). Tailored implementation, as exemplified by ACC's Māori strategy roadmap, ensures all business units contribute meaningfully to overarching goals. In large organisations like ACC each business unit can develop their own specific implementation response. A mana-enhancing approach to partnerships fosters equitable relationships with Māori communities.

Recommendations + Tips:

Develop comprehensive strategies with Te Tiriti honouring actions through the organisation from governance to operations, including implementing power-sharing models that reflect dual- worldview approaches.

- Honour Te Tiriti - Offer Tiriti Training in your organisation to all staff.
- Promote Māori Leadership: recognise and value Māori as Mātauranga Māori Subject Matter Experts (MMSME).
- 'Mind the Gap' in your organisation⁴, promote gender and ethnic pay equity in your organisation so that you can track your organisational development journey with precision. Create a way to track the organisational opportunities for all staff, including Māori women as Tiriti partners.
- Use the whole organisation as the unit for change – leave no business unit untouched!
- Tailor plans for individual units to meet both organisational and community needs.
- Build authentic partnerships with Māori by prioritising mutual respect and mana.

³ MacFarlane, A., Derby, M. and Macfarlane, S. (2024) *He Awa Whiria: Braiding the knowledge streams in research, policy and practice*. Christchurch: The University of Canterbury. Available at: [He Awa Whiria: Braiding the knowledge streams | University of Canterbury](#)

⁴ See [mindthegap.nz](#)

Tangata Tiriti Allyship and Responsibilities

"Allyship is not a badge; it is earned through action and accountability to tangata whenua."

Tangata Tiriti have a crucial role in upholding Te Tiriti, requiring both humility and sustained action. Allyship requires accountability and challenging entrenched colonial systems. Education on He Whakaputanga (the Declaration of Independence) Te Tiriti, and colonisation and its impacts is foundational for organisations and individuals, enabling them to take informed, meaningful action.

This visual highlights the spheres of influence agreed to in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The relational sphere represents the shared space of collaboration, recognising the coexistence of Tino Rangatiratanga (absolute sovereignty or self-determination for hapū) and the establishment of Kāwanatanga (governance or authority of the Crown) in Te Tiriti. Effective allyship resides in creating change in the kāwanatanga sphere to ensure the ability to be in this relationship, to work effectively on issues of shared interested

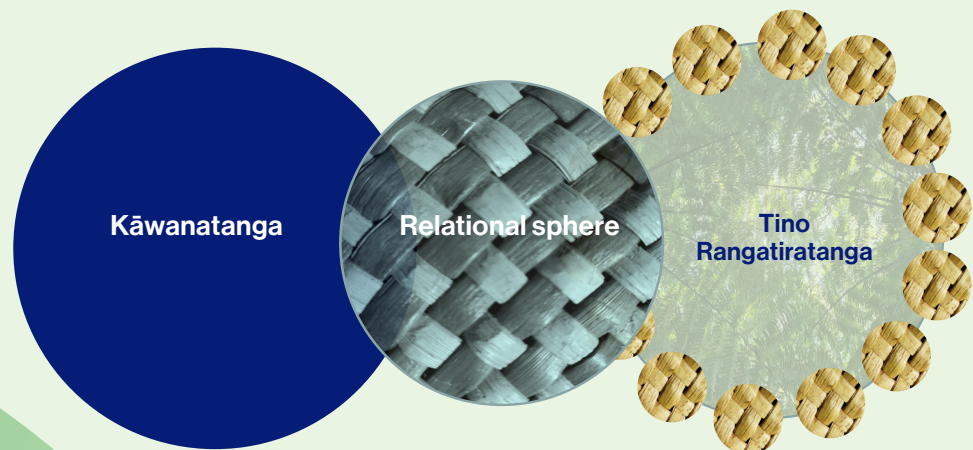
in the relational sphere and to support the flourishing of the tino rangatiratanga sphere.

Effective allyship includes creating change in the kāwanatanga sphere, advocating for power-sharing and tino rangatiratanga for hapū/iwi/Māori. Allies work focuses on dismantling monocultural, colonising practices and prioritising initiatives that directly benefit Māori. Supporting kaupapa Māori, projects within communities, as well as addressing interpersonal and structural racism, are key actions.

Recommendations + Tips:

- Invest in targeted education on He Whakaputanga, Te Tiriti, colonisation and its impacts and Te Tiriti honouring today.
- Create/advocate for structural change to support organisational power-sharing.
- Undertake collective action as tangata Tiriti to complement and support tangata whenua leadership.
- Use structured resources, such as conversation guides, to navigate allyship challenges.

TE TIRITI HONOURING: Spheres of influence



Navigating Systemic and Political Challenges

"Change begins with what we do at the organisational level, despite external resistance."

Systemic barriers and political resistance challenge efforts to honour Te Tiriti. However, organisations and communities can still drive meaningful change through grassroots initiatives and advocacy. Constitutional transformation, which centres He Whakaputanga (the Declaration of Independence) and Te Tiriti, remains a critical step .

Organisational actions can focus on addressing internal practices to ensure they align with Te Tiriti . Supporting Māori-led initiatives is a practical way to navigate resistance. Community-driven projects, demonstrate how collaboration can lead to positive outcomes, for example in environmental restoration and protection.



Recommendations + Tips:

- Align organisational actions with Te Tiriti honouring strategy.
- Build resilience by focusing on community-led solutions.
- Advocate for policies that strengthen Te Tiriti relationships.
- Focus on small, actionable steps to build long-term momentum.



Conclusion

Te Tiriti is the foundation for a uniquely Aotearoa future, grounded in respect, equity, and mutual commitment. Embedding Te Tiriti into strategies, education, and governance ensures a flourishing, inclusive society. By fostering relationships and taking deliberate actions, organisations can contribute to honouring Te Tiriti and creating lasting change.



Key Tips Summary

1

Prioritise mātauranga Māori as a central framework for decision-making.

2

Align strategies across all levels to reflect Te Tiriti.

3

Invest in ongoing Te Tiriti education for all staff.

4

Adopt dual-worldview models like the braided river approach.

5

Support Māori-led initiatives through resourcing.

6

Advocate for constitutional transformation reflecting Te Tiriti and He Whakaputanga.

7

Focus on grassroots and community-driven solutions to drive change.

