



TE TIRITI FRAMEWORK FOR NEWS MEDIA





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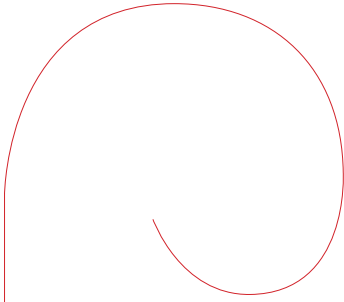
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INTRODUCTION



This document presents a te Tiriti framework for news media as a starting point for news producers to develop their own te Tiriti strategy in ways that suit their contexts.

While this framework is grounded in te Tiriti o Waitangi and mass media obligations to Māori as tangata whenua, it may be relevant for other groups who face racism in our society.

The framework is an overview with action areas and some critical questions that should be useful for the development of media strategies and practices.

Part one, **Te Tiriti o Waitangi news media framework**, includes a brief rationale and identifies four domains related to news organisations' commitment to te Tiriti, their societal accountabilities, their news practices, and questions for Māori-controlled news media. Accountability and responsibility are part of each domain. Mass news media organisations need to ask how they are operating within each domain, how this is evaluated, and what transformative actions they need to take.

Part two, **Evidence**, is available in a separate document. It provides a glossary, and additional background, research and analysis that supports the framework's domains, with more detailed examples of alternative practice.

PART 1: TE TIRITI O WAITANGI

NEWS MEDIA FRAMEWORK

Mass news media organisations need to consider, explore, build on and implement this framework in ways that show commitment to te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The framework is structured in five overlapping parts, beginning with a rationale. Its four domains highlight specific areas for consideration by mass media organisations in a colonial but decolonising context. The central ideas of the domains are summarised in a table on page 8. As the commitment of organisations to te Tiriti o Waitangi grows and their expertise develops, they will identify further areas for transformation.

Rationale

As tangata whenua o Aotearoa, Māori have never ceded sovereignty to Britain or any other State. He Whakaputanga/Declaration of Independence (1835) and te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840) asserted and continue to assert Māori sovereignty, and were signed by hapū and the Crown. Te Tiriti carries rights and obligations for both parties, with implications for social justice. Despite te Tiriti, colonial constitutional practices have entrenched Pākehā systems of governance that continue today. This means our society has a foundation of institutional racism, where organisations, agencies and institutions continue to benefit Pākehā, and routinely produce policies and practices that result in avoidable inequalities between Pākehā and Māori.

As a social institution, news media play a major role. News is much more than some truth out there waiting to be reported; news organisations often choose what counts as news and construct news through their cultural lenses of representations and silences. The results saturate our lives with messages and images on multiple platforms, shaping our day-to-day experiences. How news narratives and images are constructed influences the way we see ourselves and others, our place in society and social relations and norms more broadly. News narratives can perpetuate stereotypes and racism, or enhance mana, promoting positive societal relationships. The impacts on individuals and society cannot be underestimated.

Mass news media have a concerning history from the beginning of colonisation to the present, of reproducing and promoting negative media representations of Māori. Research over decades has identified the ways in which mass news media contribute to and help maintain the marginalisation of Māori, but such outcomes are not inevitable or wanted by most news media workers. On 30 November 2020, the national news organisation Stuff made a ground-breaking apology for its media constructions of Māori. It had evaluated its performance, referencing research on anti-Māori themes (see Evidence), found that it ranged from “blinkered to racist”, and acknowledged that Māori were not given an equitable voice. Stuff promised to improve its reporting on Māori and to make changes in the organisation that reflected a commitment to Māori audiences and te Tiriti o Waitangi.

News media organisations have an obligation to be accountable and responsible in the ways they represent Māori and decide what is newsworthy, as well as how they organise their own structures and processes to align with te Tiriti o Waitangi.

NEWS MEDIA SYSTEMS' COMMITMENT TO TE TIRITI O WAITANGI

Te Tiriti o Waitangi responsibilities and accountabilities apply across the news media sector and extend into the community.

Commitment to te Tiriti needs to be evident at the highest levels of an organisation, and in all areas of its activity.

Media systems include the structures, culture, leadership, policy, practices, relationships, employment and training that determine the environments within which news is produced.

Action area: Organisational policies and practices

- ▶ How does the organisation recognise and act on its responsibilities under He Whakaputanga and te Tiriti o Waitangi, for example with a te Tiriti plan? The preamble and all articles apply; see the Evidence document.
- ▶ Who in the organisation is leading this work?
- ▶ How is the organisation taking responsibility for its culture and environment?
- ▶ How do news practices need to change to reflect te Tiriti?
- ▶ How does the organisation embed autonomy for Māori news into its work?
- ▶ How does the organisation evaluate its reporting on Māori and te Tiriti issues?
- ▶ How does it assess what stories are newsworthy in light of te Tiriti?
- ▶ What are the values that result in inequitable reporting of Māori and Māori issues?
- ▶ How is the organisation recognising Māori expertise and practices at all levels?

Action area: Relationships with Māori

- ▶ Who are the mana whenua in the organisation's news areas?
- ▶ How does the organisation decide when mana whenua voices are required in news items, and when more general Māori expertise is appropriate?
- ▶ When is it appropriate to seek advice from, and quote, mana whenua for news stories?
- ▶ What other relationships ensure that Māori have an equitable voice?
- ▶ Who is talking with Māori in the organisation's community, to explore what stories they would like to be told and how to tell them?

Action area: Staff recruitment, training and support

- ▶ How does journalism training need to change to teach and reflect on te Tiriti-based journalism practice?
- ▶ How does the media organisation recruit, train, support and actively promote Māori journalists and staff, for example, into management and decision-making positions?
- ▶ How does the organisation mitigate unrealistic expectations placed on Māori issues journalists by tauwi staff, particularly Pākehā?
- ▶ How are non-Māori staff trained so they can cover Māori stories responsibly in their everyday work? This includes te Tiriti o Waitangi history and interpretation, te reo Māori pronunciation, tikanga and understanding colonial history.

SOCIETAL ACCOUNTABILITIES



As a result of colonisation, we live in a society that perpetuates racism and inequities. In response, many Māori organisations and networks are decolonising, and Pākehā-led non-government organisations are restructuring themselves according to te Tiriti o Waitangi. For news media, it is not simply a matter of reporting ‘fairly’, but of constructively contributing to te Tiriti relations and social justice.

Media organisations need to consider the colonial context of living in Aotearoa New Zealand, and identify structural causes – institutional racism, colonisation, inequities and Pākehā advantage – that influence their reporting, and the issues they report.

This domain focuses on how news media construct and present issues, particularly whether broader accountabilities and systems are considered, and how Māori are represented. Two pages of detailed examples of alternative practice are provided in the Evidence document.

Action area: Contributing to te Tiriti relations and social justice

- ▶ How does the organisation report mechanisms of redress such as the Waitangi Tribunal and its reports?
- ▶ How does the organisation cover the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and efforts to enact it such as *He Puapua*?
- ▶ How is the organisation providing context – whether about colonial history, te Tiriti articles, colonial confiscations, cultural destruction, structural causes of Māori social and health status, or institutional racism – related to the topic of the news item?
- ▶ How does the organisation move the focus from blaming Māori for such impacts?
- ▶ How does the organisation examine the news angle in stories through an understanding of colonisation?
- ▶ How does the organisation increase the proportion of debates around Māori issues where the “two sides” are expressed by Māori?
- ▶ How does the organisation explore nation-building nuances within te ao Māori rather than pitting Māori against non-Māori?
- ▶ How is the organisation transforming entrenched anti-Māori themes and narratives about Māori that perpetuate racism and cause harm?

NEWS MEDIA PRACTICES – WORLDVIEWS, VALUES AND NORMS

News organisations need to consider their practices when producing news. Despite the value that mass news media place on objectivity, the Evidence document shows that mass media stories predominantly reflect and promote the worldviews, values and language of the dominant Pākehā group. Using a standard practice in everyday Pākehā talk, Pākehā are routinely constructed as ordinary, the normal citizens and culture of New Zealand, and rarely named as a group. Māori and other racialised groups are often positioned outside the norm, and referred to as “they” and “them” rather than “we” or “us”. This is sometimes expressed by the use of Māori as an adjective, as in Māori activist and Māori MP. The use of such direct (and more subtle) labels position Māori as disrupting the norm, outside the central group, culture and experience. Three sets of alternative examples are provided in the Evidence document.



Action area: Changing news practices

- ▶ How does the organisation address the use of language and culture in news items? This could mean increasing everyday use of te reo Māori in news items; and including information about tikanga as context in news stories.
- ▶ How does the organisation question and broaden its interpretation of news values, by considering Māori-controlled news media interpretations, without putting an excess burden on Māori staff?
- ▶ What types of news stories does the organisation choose to tell, and how?
- ▶ Who do those stories benefit?
- ▶ Who does the organisation perceive as its audience and direct its news stories towards? How does it direct news stories to an inclusive audience?
- ▶ How does the organisation constructively report difficult news in ways that do not increase fear and distrust of Māori?
- ▶ How does the organisation include diverse sources equitably, for example by ethnicity and gender?
- ▶ Who does the organisation consider to be experts about Māori issues?
- ▶ How does the organisation decide whether and where Māori sources are quoted in news items?
- ▶ How does the organisation ensure that Māori are visible, not only as sources in news stories, but as tellers of news stories and commentators?
- ▶ How will mass news media organisations change the dominance of Pākehā male commentators and sources?
- ▶ What types of imagery are used in news items? Does imagery reinforce stereotypes and anti-Māori themes?
- ▶ How can imagery represent Māori equitably?
- ▶ How does the organisation find out / understand the correct ways to cover events at marae and tangihanga, and the use of whānau and tūpuna images?

CONSIDERATIONS FOR MĀORI-CONTROLLED MEDIA

This framework is fundamentally concerned with changing mass news media performance to better reflect te Tiriti. Māori news media provide important leadership in reporting Māori issues and broadening interpretations of news values. Specific considerations that Māori-controlled media may find useful include –

- ▶ How do media understand and represent the diversity of Māori identity, both in news items and staffing?
- ▶ Who do news media perceive as their audience for Māori news? Do media include marginalised Māori voices; for example, Māori with disabilities?
- ▶ What news content do news media provide for Māori who are not fluent speakers of te reo Māori but interested in Māori news nonetheless?
- ▶ How do news media manage important conversations about te ao Māori? For example; the nuance between mana whenua and hau kainga in land issues, or the political implications of increasing numbers of Pākehā te reo speakers.
- ▶ What topics might interest Māori audiences beyond customary interpretations of te ao Māori?

SUMMARY: Te Tiriti o Waitangi News Media Framework

Domain		Central ideas	Elements	Broad questions
Accountability and responsibility				
Rationale	Māori never ceded sovereignty Mass media play a critical role in power relations in our society	Te Tiriti o Waitangi Rights Obligations	How do mass news media avoid negative and racist representations of Māori? Is reporting equitable?	
Media systems	Mass media have responsibilities and accountabilities to Māori that apply across the sector	Policies, practices, systems, charters Leadership Monitoring Recruitment and training Relationships	How do organisations actively address their commitments and responsibilities to te Tiriti at all levels?	
Societal accountabilities	Reporting on Māori and Māori issues reflects the ongoing colonial constitution of society	Inequities, institutional racism, Pākehā privilege Do no more harm	How do mass media frame and present issues? Colonisation, structural racism, harm prevention and Māori advancement?	
Media practices	Mass media are not neutral. News stories reflect and promote the worldviews, values, stories and language of the dominant Pākehā group	Language, culture, Pākehā norms, practices, silences Construction of Māori and Māori stories	Whose language and culture is dominant? Whose voice is heard? Whose voice is central? What stories are told and how are they told?	
Māori-controlled media	Māori-controlled media have different Treaty accountabilities from mass media	Māori diversity Assumed audience Te reo fluency Nuance around te ao Māori	How are diverse audiences represented? What news content is provided for Māori not fluent in te reo? How is nuance managed in particular issues?	