

Guide and Glossary of Commonly Used Words in Te Reo Māori (the Māori language)





Tēnā koutou katoa

Nau mai, haere mai. Welcome to this brief glossary describing some of the Māori words commonly used in College documents. Referring to this guide will give you a basic understanding of Māori words when reading communications from Aotearoa /New Zealand or working with the New Zealand National Office. The Māori words listed in this guide should be used to clarify the word's usage in this context e.g. within the College's work. Kindly note this guide does not serve as a dictionary or a definitive guide on the use of the Māori language (also referred to as 'Te Reo', which translates as 'the language').

The resources section of this document provides links to Māori dictionaries and other resources. These resources will help you to understand the full meaning of the kupu/word as often in Te Reo there are multiple meanings or a broader cultural context behind the meaning. The key point here is *if you don't know, please ask* and get advice from the New Zealand National Office.

It is important to note that words in Te Reo can have different meanings based on context and the use of macrons - ā, ē, ī, ō, ū. Placing a macron over a letter can alter its meaning. For example, wānanga means a learning opportunity while wananga means to threaten someone.

Increasingly, Te Reo is used in Aotearoa/New Zealand in Government departments, NGOs and private companies. Most organisations are moving to have their branding in both English and Te Reo. Māori is an official language in New Zealand and is one of the taonga (treasures) protected under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi).

The College is starting to include more Māori words and concepts in their communications and documents, and it is likely that this guide will be revised and updated as usage increases.

Ākina te reo – Give te reo Māori a go! But check with the New Zealand National Office first to ensure it is 'tika' – right.

Dr Mark Lawrence
Board member
Past Chair – Tu Te Akaaka Roa

Dr Claire Paterson
Chair – Te Kaunihera

He Whakamārama – An Explanation

Historical context

Te Reo Māori (the Māori language) was the first spoken language in Aotearoa for over 800 years prior to colonisation. Following the signing of the Declaration of Independence (He Whakaputanga) in 1835 and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi)ⁱ in 1840, Te Reo Māori was used in everyday communications. Unfortunately, colonial processes and policies (including assimilation and language suppression policies in schools) over the last 160 years has led to loss of language, identity, customs, knowledge systems and way of life. Since the mid 1970's there has been a slow but steady revival of Māori culture, including language revival. The last decade has seen a significant growth in the use of Māori lexicon in education, health, business and media. The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (the College or RANZCP), via the New Zealand National Office, needs to evolve and adapt to the advancing expectations of our nation or we will be left behind.

For Māori, Te Tiriti is a fundamental binding agreement between the Crown (the Queen of England) and the representative Māori chiefs (rangatira) of Aotearoa in order to retain their independence and to allow Māori to work inter-dependently with others if they so wished.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi – Lost in translation

Although there was only one Te Tiriti, there were two written versions. One in Te Reo Māori, and one in English. Most Māori signed the Reo Māori version (over 500 compared with 39 who signed the English version). In the Reo Māori version, the Crown agreed to protect Māori Tino Rangatiratanga (autonomy / self-determination) over their 'whenua' (lands), 'kāinga' (villages) and 'taonga' (treasures) and only 'Kāwanatanga' (governorship) was ceded to the Crown, but in the English version, Māori ceded 'sovereignty' to the Crown.ⁱⁱ In simple terms the English believed Māori were ceding their sovereignty as a nation (which they did not) to an English woman they had never met and Māori believed they were signing the tikanga (the foundation on how we should relate, interact and respect each other) between two peoples. The important message here is when the College engages in Te Reo Māori during its communications or use of imaging, it is very important to authenticate this through the New Zealand National Office via our cultural experts. In this way, concepts or words will not be lost in translation and people will not get offended.

Te Reo Māori - Current context

Today, Te Reo Māori is a living language, interwoven across all forms of media, so it is useful to have greater insights into a few key words and concepts. The Government, including most health sector organisations, are increasingly using Te Reo throughout their communications. The College as a health sector organisation has an obligation to uphold the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, which guarantee that Māori tikanga (customs) are respected, including the use of Te Reo Māori which is considered a taonga.

Using Te Reo In College Documents

The College is committed to Te Tiriti, therefore, our communications should aim to include Māori kupu (words), peha (phrases) and kīwaha (idioms) and pūrākau (stories). By doing this, we are effectively sharing knowledge and mana (power/authority) of both people.

This glossary is designed to provide some understanding of the commonly used Māori words or concepts seen in communications from the New Zealand-based Committees or organisations.

Please note:

Some of the words have no parallel meaning in English, therefore cannot be aptly translated. The full meaning and context is lost in translation.

The translations used in the glossary have other meanings and/or a wider context. Words in Māori may have literal or spiritual meanings, therefore any wording in Te Reo should be directed to the kaumatua (via the New Zealand National Office) to ensure the translation is correct. This will avoid any potential pitfalls or transgressions.

If you want to hear how the words are pronounced in Te Reo, go to the Māori [dictionary](#) where you are able to listen to the kupu.

The Concept of Tino Rangatiratanga / Mana Motuhake (self-determination)

It is important that the College members and staff understand and implement the concept of Tino rangatiratanga - meaning self-determination, sovereignty, autonomy and self-government (control by Māori for Māori) – as it underpins the Crown's relationship with Māori. When translated into everyday policy in New Zealand it means working alongside Māori in every instance, working collaboratively and respectfully in partnership. It is about having equal power and authority to make decisions on issues that involve Māori. Mana Motuhake is also a term used to mean self-determination, although some may interpret it as having a slightly different meaning to tino rangatiratanga. Mana in this context means *power* or *authority* and motuhake means *independent*, so independent authority or, loosely, Māori self-determination.

Within the College context this means all communications, including images relating to Māori culture or impacting on Māori, need to be referred to the kaumatua via the New Zealand National Office for consideration so the appropriate expertise and knowledge can be sought. In this way the College is actively engaging in practical terms in tino rangatiratanga / mana motuhake.

Aotearoa New Zealand

The accepted Māori name for New Zealand is Aotearoa. There are several stories about how the name came about but generally it is thought to mean long white cloud.ⁱⁱⁱ Many organisations now refer to New Zealand by the Māori name and a good number now use both names, e.g. 'Aotearoa New Zealand'. You will note that New Zealand-based Committees use both names within a submission or letter.

Tu Te Akaaka Roa – New Zealand National Committee

Tu Te Akaaka Roa is the Māori name for the New Zealand National Committee and the New Zealand National Office. The name's spiritual meaning is living vine – manifested as reverent and radiant heart, spirit of life and wellbeing. If you want to know more about the meaning of Tu Te Akaaka Roa go to the College's [Māori mental health section on the website](#).

Ngā kupu Māori - Commonly Used Words in Te Reo

To hear the kupu or word in Te Reo or to practice saying the kupu, visit the [Māori dictionary](#).

Greetings

Kupu / Word	Description ^{iv} and use by the RANZCP
Kia ora	This literally means “be well”. We would normally use this greeting in an email or at a College meeting (hui). It can mean <i>Hi, Hello, Giddy</i> and also <i>Thank You</i> . The greeting is generally used if you know the person/people and if the person is not an important official. Note: not for use when addressing officials.
Ngā mihi Ngā mihi nui	When closing an email or a letter it is acceptable to use Ngā mihi. It means acknowledgements, but in an email context, roughly translates as ‘kind regards’. It would normally be used in everyday communications. Ngā mihi nui is used to thank a person for something when signing off an email. Someone may have sent one a report which is useful so the thanking email could be ended with Ngā mihi nui.
Tēnā koe	If one is writing to one individual, for example a Government official or the Minister of Health, you would use this greeting. Note: If writing to two people = Tēnā kōrua . Addressing three or more people = Tēnā koutou or Tēnā koutou katoa (hello to you all).
Nāku, nā Nāku noa, nā	When closing a letter to an official such as a Minister or Governor General. These people have mana therefore a more formal closing is required than Ngā mihi. It normally means yours faithfully. Yours sincerely.
Mā te wā	See you later or bye for now (it is informal). Might use this ending when finishing an email to a person you see often or say at the end of a meeting when you are likely to see the Committee members again.

Other Commonly Used Words in Te Reo

Kupu / Word	Description ^v and use by the RANZCP
hauora oranga hauora hinengaro hauora wairua rata hauora hinengaro rata / tākuta	Be fit, well, healthy, vigorous, in good spirits (can be stative verb or a noun). <i>This report from Statistics New Zealand describes Māori hauora in 2021.</i> Health / welfare / living Mental health Spiritual health Psychiatrist Doctor

<p>hui</p>	<p>To gather, congregate, assemble, meet.</p> <p>It can refer to Committee meeting, a meeting with some external stakeholders or a large conference.</p> <p><i>Tu Te Akaaka Roa held a hui last week.</i></p> <p>With a conference one might use the term hui taumata (symposium, summit, congress).</p>
<p>iwi</p>	<p>An extended kinship group, normally descended from one ancestor and associated with a particular area of Aotearoa. Some iwi (kinship group or tribe) trace their whakapapa (genealogy) back to the waka (canoes) that arrived in the great migration from Hawaiki.</p> <p><i>We note that iwi have been consulted on the proposed primary mental health care services in the Waikato.</i></p>
<p>kanohi ki te kanohi</p>	<p>Face-to-face or in-person.</p> <p><i>The Committee's next hui is kanohi ki te kanohi in the Sir Mason Durie Room.</i></p>
<p>kaumātua</p>	<p>An elder, elderly man, elderly woman, old man - a person of status within the whānau. Male elders are also known as koroua (or koro for short), and female elders as kuia.</p> <p>Whether a person can be considered a kaumātua depends on age, knowledge of tribal history and traditions, and understanding of tikanga^{vi}.</p> <p><i>The College has two kaumātua who should be consulted on all things Māori to ensure the College follows appropriate tikanga.</i></p>
<p>kaupapa</p>	<p>Plan, purpose, scheme, proposal, agenda, subject, programme, theme, issue, initiative, Māori approaches, Māori principles, Māori philosophies.</p> <p>Kaupapa has a number of uses and meanings as illustrated below: <i>The Government's kaupapa is to progress this new policy on mental health.</i> In the above case kaupapa refers to a proposal or scheme.</p> <p><i>The RANZCP's supports this action plan as it is aligned with our kaupapa.</i> In the above case kaupapa refers to an agenda/programme.</p> <p><i>By working with iwi, the researchers have incorporated Kaupapa Māori approaches.</i> In the above case kaupapa refers to Māori principles.</p>
<p>kōrero</p>	<p>Literal meaning is to speak/ to tell. When it is used by RANZCP it usually means speech, narrative, story, account, discussion, discourse, statement, information.</p> <p><i>In your kōrero you outlined your plan to develop new services for rangatahi.</i></p>

<p>mana mana-enhancing</p>	<p>Prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma – is a supernatural force in a person, place or object.</p> <p><i>The Governor-General is a person with mana. Because of their mana they command a certain level of respect and generally that respect is earned by the individual. It is bestowed on the individual by Māori. Someone with mana is treated with the upmost respect and certain protocols must be followed especially in ceremonial occasions.</i></p> <p>The concept of mana cannot be fully described in English. The concept of mana has broad meaning and is often context specific.</p>
<p>mahi</p>	<p>Work.</p> <p><i>The Committee's mahi is focused on developing mental health policy.</i></p>
<p>mātauranga mātauranga Māori</p>	<p>Knowledge.</p> <p>Knowledge derived from Māori ancestors but can also mean a dynamic knowledge system developed from research grounded in Māori philosophy.</p> <p><i>It is important to recognise the value of mātauranga Māori as well as western science.</i></p>
<p>rangatahi</p>	<p>Younger generation, youth.</p> <p><i>Many rangatahi are using e-health services on their phones.</i></p>
<p>tangata tangata whenua mana whenua</p>	<p>People or in broader terms humans.</p> <p>Loosely translates as people of the land, local people, people born of the land, people living on their ancestors' land, Indigenous people.</p> <p>Māori are known as the tangata whenua in Aotearoa. We may use this term to refer to Māori in a general/ inclusive way. For example, if we wanted to know if Māori had been consulted on an issue, we may say: <i>have the tangata whenua been consulted on the new hospital?</i></p> <p>Related to tangata whenua is the term 'mana whenua', which is used to refer to whichever iwi or hapū have authority over the local area. When we hold a College event in New Zealand there will be a welcome ceremony with an official speech welcoming and acknowledging those present (mihi whakatau). The mana whenua will meet with the manuhiri (visitors), who would be College officials. The purpose of this interaction is for the mana whenua to welcome the visitors to stand on their land. Māori protocols are carefully observed at these events.</p>
<p>tamariki</p>	<p>Children - normally used only in the plural.</p> <p><i>Child and adolescent psychiatrists are developing policies to improve outcomes for tamariki.</i></p>
<p>tautoko</p>	<p>Support, advocate, accept and agree.</p>

	<p>We tautoko your policy reforms on forensic services.</p>
Te Ao Māori	<p>The Māori world / worldview. It has a broad meaning but in the way it is used by RANZCP it refers to having regard for Te Tiriti o Waitangi, tikanga and Te Reo.</p> <p><i>Our concern is this action plan does not include a Te Ao Māori perspective, therefore, we suggest meeting with whānau to discuss services.</i></p>
tikanga	<p>Customs and protocol. Tikanga Māori means how things are done in Te Ao Māori (the Māori world).</p> <p>When using images, Māori words on external documents, when opening and closing hui/conferences (note this list is not exclusive) reference must be made to tikanga Māori. If tikanga is not followed, then cultural transgressions can occur.</p> <p>Examples of important principles/ tikanga</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • never sit on desks or tables in Aotearoa New Zealand. • If attending a Tu Te Akaaka Roa hui, please wait until a karakia is said prior to eating food placed on a table. <p><i>The Tu Te Akaaka Roa hui started with a karakia (prayer/ incantation) as this approach is aligned with tikanga Māori.</i></p>
taonga	<p>Treasure or something prized. Can have value socially or culturally or be a valued object. It has quite a broad application and can also mean goods and possessions, therefore, context is important.</p> <p>When used by the College it normally refers a prized object.</p> <p>The New Zealand National Office has on display a large wooden carved taonga which symbolised Tu Te Akaaka Roa. A picture of the taonga is displayed on the cover of this guide.</p> <p><i>Tu Te Akaaka Roa – the New Zealand National Committee - has their own taonga in the National Office.</i></p> <p>A person of greater mana may be described as a taonga e.g. a painter, a writer or a leader.</p>
wairua	<p>Spirit, soul - spirit of a person which exists beyond death.</p> <p>Wairua is the non-physical spirit, distinct from the body and the <i>mauri</i>. To some, the <i>wairua</i> resides in the heart or mind of someone while others believe it is part of the whole person and is not located at any particular part of the body. The concept of wairua cannot be fully described in English.</p> <p><i>It is important that new mental health facilities support a person's wairua so they can progress on their journey to recovery.</i></p>
wānanga	<p>A seminar, forum, educational seminar.</p>

	<p><i>Te Kaunihera will hold a wānanga for Māori students and members.</i></p> <p>Note: Note the macron - ā. When there is no macron the meaning changes e.g. wananga = threat. So it is important to put the macron on this word to ensure the correct meaning.</p>
whaiora	<p>In literal terms it means in search of wellbeing.</p> <p>It is used in College documents to refer to a person living with mental health issues e.g. tangata whaiora.</p> <p><i>Psychiatrists partner with tangata whaiora and their whānau to provide timely support and services.</i></p>
whakaaro	<p>To think, to plan, idea or thought.</p> <p><i>During the hui, Dr Smith’s whakaaro on the new policy was noted.</i></p>
whakatauākī or whakataukī	<p>Proverb, significant saying, formulaic saying.</p> <p>When Tu Te Akaaka Roa - New Zealand National Committee makes a submission or writes a letter to a Government organisation or submission, they often open or close the communication with a relevant Māori proverb, a whakatauākī.</p> <p>The whakatauākī must be relevant to the discussion in the letter/ submission. One would normally check with a person who speaks Te Reo to ensure the whakatauākī is appropriate to the circumstances.</p> <p>For example, if the submission is about working more closely with Oranga Tamariki, then the letter might start with this whakatauākī:</p> <p><i>‘Mā whero mā pango ka oti ai te mahi.’</i></p> <p>This proverb is about co-operation and weaving of the red and black flax leaves together to make the walls of the wharenuī (meeting house).</p>
whānau	<p>In very broad terms it could mean extended family. But in Te Ao Māori it has a wider spiritual and emotional meaning that binds an individual to their marae and to the tīpuna (ancestors) through their whakapapa (lineage/genealogy).</p> <p>The RANZCP has defined whānau as ‘a Māori word used to describe an extended family group spanning three to four generations. The whānau continues to form the basic unit of Māori society’^{vii}.</p> <p>It often has wider meaning to mean Māori as a group.</p> <p><i>Whānau have difficulty accessing telehealth services as there is no Wi-Fi in the district.</i></p> <p>In the modern context, whānau is sometimes used to include friends who may not have any kinship ties to other members (e.g. people who are ‘like’ family), or to refer to a broader community – e.g. <i>it is important that we support our rainbow whānau</i> (referring to the rainbow community).</p>

<p>whanaungatanga</p>	<p>Relationship, kinship, sense of family connection - a relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging. It can also refer to the practice of building relationships. For example, time might be set aside at the beginning of a hui for 'whanaungatanga', where people share who they are and where they're from (see more about whanaungatanga at https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/blog/whanaungatanga-is-for-everyone/).</p> <p><i>It is important for practitioners to acknowledge and practice whanaungatanga when working with Māori whānau.</i></p>
<p>Addressing or referring to members and New Zealand Fellows.</p> <p>These examples may assist with the correct use of honorifics in meeting minutes, agendas, letters, emails and other written and verbal communications.</p>	
<p>Kupu / Word</p>	<p>Description^v and use by the RANZCP</p>
<p>kaumātua</p>	<p>Pronounced: co marr too-a (long aaa sound, as indicated by its macron)</p> <p>Respected community and family leader, most usually over the age of 60.</p> <p>Example: <i>RANZCP has two kaumātua roles, which are currently held by Whaea Moe Milne and Matua Ron Baker.</i></p>
<p>kuia</p>	<p>Pronounced: coo wee-a</p> <p>Female elder.</p> <p>Example: <i>Whaea Moe Milne is a respected kuia who has worked to improve Māori mental health for decades.</i></p>
<p>koro</p>	<p>Pronounced: cou row (cou sound as in cough)</p> <p>Male elder.</p>

matua	Pronounced: ma too-a Uncle. Example: Matua Ron asked that the committee consider the minutes of the meeting.
whaea	Pronounced: fire Aunt. Example: Whaea Moe spoke about her experiences at Congress.

Resources

The [Māori dictionary](#) is a good resource and it can be assessed online.

This website also provides a list of additional resources if you wish to find out more about Te Reo Māori, including free podcasts.

This link provides a [list of online resources and courses](#).

This document was developed by Dr Mark Lawrence and Dr Claire Paterson with assistance from Rose Matthews, National Manager, New Zealand National Office in 2021. It will be reviewed on a regular basis to include additional kupu/ words. It is not intended to be a definitive dictionary but provide guidance to RANZCP staff and members.

The latest review was conducted in 2023 with the assistance of Monique Devereux, Executive Manager, Bi-national Offices and Partnerships at the request of Dr Hiran Thabrew, Chair Tu Te Akaaka Roa with the addition of appropriate terms when addressing or referring to members and NZ Fellows either in writing or verbally to show respect.

Disclaimer: The RANZCP endeavors to ensure that information is accurate and current at the time of preparation, but takes no responsibility for matters arising from changed circumstances, information or material that may have become subsequently available.

ⁱ As articulated in the Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal's report Hauora Report:

https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/WT/reports/reportSummary.html?reportId=wt_DOC_152801817

ⁱⁱ The full text of both versions and a brief history can be found on the [Archives website](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ [Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#) provides more background around the history of the name.

^{iv} Most of the definitions come from the Maori dictionary: <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/>

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^{vi} Te Ara provides background information on this role: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/kaumatua-maori-elders/page-1>

^{vii} The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists' Position Statement on Consumer, family/whānau and carer engagement: <https://www.ranzcp.org/news-policy/policy-and-advocacy/position-statements/consumer-family-whanau-and-carer-engagement>