

# KUA TAE MAI A TOKOTOKO – ME AHA AHAU? A PĀKEHĀ ON THE PAEPAE?

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## ABSTRACT

In this piece, I recount some events in which I was called upon to speak in te reo Māori on behalf of others in a variety of formal situations. I call this being 'on the paepae' but the paepae should be understood more properly as the paepae tapu. I will leave the further explanation of this for others who should rightly speak about such things. For my purposes here, the paepae is understood to be any situation in which one acts as a spokesperson for others and follows tikanga Māori in a contemporary context. I always feel like I am on the paepae when speaking te reo Māori in many situations. More often than not, this happens in schools. We are usually not on an actual marae but, nonetheless, a paepae is brought into existence. I have done this speaking (whaikōrero) with varying degrees of success and competence, and not a little anxiety. I have got it wrong sometimes and failed utterly in my responsibilities. A few times I have done well.

Recently, my father-in-law presented me with a tokotoko, a ceremonial 'walking' stick (or perhaps it should be talking stick), to be carried when doing whaikōrero. This was a surprise and has caused me to reflect on my position as a Pākehā on the paepae. Kua tae mai a tokotoko. Me aha ahau? The walking stick has arrived. What should I do?

E ngā iwi

E ngā reo

E ngā mana teitei o te motu

Tēna koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

Ki te hunga mate kua haere ki te pō

hei taurira mā tātou

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

Ki te hunga ora e whai tonu nei i ngā tikanga a kui mā, a koro mā

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

## Storied Experience

### HEI TĪMATANGA

I came to New Zealand from England in 1988 to teach secondary school mathematics and physics. I was completely green and needed some help to settle in to my new school and community. Everyone was very supportive, especially the te reo Māori teacher, Hemi. This was the era of taha Māori and Hemi was heavily involved in professional development for the other teachers who were all Pākehā. Like most new immigrants, Māori were obviously a vital and unique part of New Zealand and I wanted to know more. Hemi began to share some knowledge with me but he died of a heart attack a few months after my arrival. Going to his tangi was my first experience of being on a marae. A Pākehā colleague, fluent in te reo Māori, spoke for us during the pōhiri. When it was my turn to acknowledge Hemi, I said a few inadequate words in English and sat down beside the open coffin surrounded by his bereaved family. I did not have a clue what to do next, so I asked them what I should do. "You could give him a hongī", someone said. I do not know who said this to me, it could have been Hemi's wife or sister. So, I crouched over the coffin and Hemi and I did a hongī for the first and last time.

### KO TE MEA NUI KO TE AROHĀ

In another time and place not long after, I remember vividly the first time I was asked to sit on the paepae as a speaker for manuhiri visiting a marae. By this time, I had moved schools and was teaching information technology and mathematics. I was befriended by the part-time teacher of te reo Māori and cultural advisor at the school, Wiremu. I am not sure now how it happened but Wiremu became my mentor. He supplied me with the kōrero at the beginning of this article, neglecting to say that I would be sitting on the paepae a few days later delivering it. When we arrived at the marae and were waiting outside the gate for the karanga, Wiremu put his hand on my shoulder and told me I would be speaking. I am sure he had a huge grin on his face as he told me this, aware that an ordeal was in store for me. I am not naturally good in these situations, so he was right; it was

an ordeal, but it produced something that has stuck with me and maintained my courage ever since. I staggered through the whaikōrero. Short as it seems now, it lasted hours for me at the time. I made a mess of it of course. As we went through to hongī with the hau kāinga, I shuffled up to a koro, I am sad to say I do not know who, and I felt I had to apologise for making a mess of the whaikōrero. He put his hands on my shoulders, smiled and said, “If you stand to speak, we will love you”. We stayed on the marae for a few more days. I attempted to speak and accompany the waiata on guitar during the poroporoaki. I messed up both, but love, fortunately, is powerful and very patient.

### **HE ITI TE MATAKahi PAKARU RIKIRIKI TE TŌTARA**

I remember a school trip we did by canoe on the Whanganui River. We stopped at Tieke Marae which at the time was a site of occupation by Te Whānau o Tieke, descendants of Tamahaki, Ngā Rauru. Tieke used to be a Department of Conservation hut and camp site but was re-claimed and occupied by Te Whānau. Our first arrival there was shortly after the start of this occupation. During the pōhiri, I spoke the kōrero that Wiremu had given me and did a better job I am glad to say. We had two senior Māori boys with us and they also spoke for our group during the pōhiri. Their haka afterwards echoed around the cliffs and gorges of the river. As we left Tieke the next morning, floating gently with the current, a kuia of Te Whānau called out from the banks in farewell; we could still hear her calling several kilometres downstream from the marae.

### **HE ROIMATA UA, HE ROIMATA TANGATA**

About 10 years later, when he was still a young man, Wiremu died of a heart attack. I went to his tangi and spoke to him as he lay in the mahau of the whareniui of his marae. It was raining. This time I did a better job of the kōrero and hoped that Wiremu was pleased by my progress. Afterwards, a kuia told me that she could feel the arohā for Wiremu in what I was saying. Wiremu and I did a hongī for the last time.

### **He māunu kaukau wai noa iho**

Looking back on all the times I have ‘sat’ on the paepae, it seems to me that in most of them I bungled something and sometimes many things. The paepae can pop up out of nowhere. Quite a few times, I have arrived at school, with thoughts of what I would be teaching that day uppermost in my mind, to be called upon instead to welcome a visitor or speak in a pōhiri for a sports team or some such event. Maybe in the school hall, the principal’s office, the dining room, the paepae can appear anywhere and you have to speak when called upon.

Later, and in another school, the brand new school whareniui was being opened. The te reo Māori teacher, Rīhari, was supporting me in my efforts to learn te reo and be part of the kapa haka group. The new whareniui was to be opened with a dawn ceremony beginning at 5am. I made sure I got there early and met Rīhari and his wife, Ana, inside the whare as they were preparing for the ceremony. I think they were surprised to see me but carried on, and I helped with the preparations. As time progressed, the rest of the staff and many others gathered outside on the road. I should have been out on the road with them, not in the whareniui with Rīhari and Ana. I had wangled my way onto the tangata whenua side welcoming the rest of the staff as manuhiri. Rīhari and Ana did not say anything, and I sat with them through the whole ceremony. My colleagues did not comment either – perhaps they thought I was there because of my association with the kapa haka group. I should not have been there.

### **MAI I TE KĀHUI MAUNGA KI TANGAROA, KO AU KO TE AWA. KO TE AWA KO AU. KIA WHAIORA TONU TĀTOU KATOA!**

During this time, I think I developed a reputation for being ‘good’ with Māori students. My classes had a lot of them and I was happy about that. I got involved in the kapa haka group by accident. One day, some of the students in one of my classes asked me to come along to the kapa haka practice at lunch time. I did, thinking that I would be standing on the side-lines watching. Instead, the students pulled me into the middle of the group and made me practise alongside them. It was wonderful, and I carried on going to practices and performing with the group on stage at a few kapa haka competitions (in the entertainment section). I was still young enough then to pass for a senior student as long as I did not take my shirt off and stayed at the back. This was when I thought that I really ought to start learning te reo Māori properly. I owe a lot to those students; “You are our Matua now,” they told me.

It was an interesting time at this school. I became established as the Pākehā teacher who knew Māori but, in fact, did not have much te reo Māori and had limited knowledge of tikanga Māori. I enjoyed the celebrity this carried. The school was large with close to 2000 students and required two prize-giving ceremonies at the end of the year, each one beginning with a kōrero, karakia and waiata tautoko sung by the kapa haka group. Rīhari was ill at the time so I was asked to fill in for him much to my trepidation. The first ceremony went well, the second not. I was the only one there. I decided I would carry on and do everything myself – do the kōrero and the karakia and sing the waiata. I pulled it off, but it was a very strange experience standing alone on the stage

singing. My two sons were students at the time and in the audience. They told me that it made them squirm a bit, but that my singing was not too bad. I do not remember much fall-out about it but Rihari was very upset because the kapa haka group hadn't supported me – a mana issue. I never heard anything more about it.

### **TAKU WAIMĀRIE ANŌ HOKI**

I took two terms off from teaching to attend Whakapiki i te Reo at Te Kūpenga o te Mātauranga, Massey University College of Education. By this stage, I was quite good at reading and writing in te reo Māori but had very limited speaking ability. Whakapiki i te Reo enabled me to speak. Getting a place on this course was very fortunate. I believe it was intended for teachers of te reo Māori. I was just a maths teacher with an interest in te reo Māori, so I am not sure how I got in. I remember the first day very well. One of the Whakapiki teachers, Hone, came up to me and asked, “Ko wai tō ingoa?” I did not know what he was saying. Had he written it down I would have understood that he was just asking me what my name was. For much of my time on Whakapiki, I was embarrassed by my inability to have a fluent conversation in te reo Māori. Formal things, though, were different. One of the regular activities was for students to stand and do a practice formal kōrero in front of the whole class. I was able to prepare for this and I did a good job. I wrote the kōrero the night before, memorised it and delivered it fluently the next day.

### **PUTA NOA ATU NGĀ TANGATA ME Ā RĀTOU MAHI WHAKAOHOMAURI**

After Whakapiki i te Reo, I went back to regular teaching in my school. I did not last long because going back to being a maths teacher seemed like a waste of what I had learned and, in any case, my world had changed. It so happened that a kura Māori nearby was about to expand and establish its own wharekura. I applied and was appointed to teach maths and science there. We started up in a temporary classroom on the kura site. We spent the first year in this classroom, then moved to a disused primary school site on the other side of town which was subject to vandalism on a regular basis. A short while later, we moved again to a disused secondary school site in the most affluent suburb of town. I remember well the reaction of an older Pākehā lady to the presence of our kura Māori in her part of the world. All of us, teachers and students, were gathered outside the kura one morning before embarking on a bus trip to a marae. The old lady drove past us in her expensive-looking car and gave us a very demonstrative ‘two fingers’ and a clearly audible expletive. It all seemed laughable and bizarre at the time, this incongruous picture of a wealthy Pākehā lady giving us a very eloquent and rude gesture.

### **TAKU PŌHĒHĒ, TAKU RORO KAU**

These first few years at the wharekura were difficult and I did not do a good job, although I did not really know it at the time – I thought I was doing fine. As a teacher of maths, I was coming from a very knowledge-oriented position. I remember the tumuaki suggesting that I do some professional development. I did not think so at the time, but he was right of course. He died recently. He was only 52. In 2003, when he was my tumuaki, he was in his mid-thirties. I was about eight years older than him, but wisdom sometimes has nothing to do with age.

### **MĀ TE WHAKAMĀ E PATU MĀ TE WHAKAMĀ HOKI E AKO**

After three years at the wharekura, my colleagues and I were pretty much burned out. I took a position at another secondary school. Early in my time at my new school, I was involved in a pōhiri for new students. When it came time to organise people to come into the school hall for the pōhiri, the principal asked me to go outside and organise the manuhiri. A kuia told me to get the boys to go in first followed by the girls. I set about arranging this, but a young man stepped out of the crowd and stopped this from happening. He was quite angry and announced loudly that he would not have tikanga Māori trampled in this way. Girls were to go first followed by the boys and so that's what happened. I spoke during the pōhiri and spent the whole time apologising for this breach of tikanga.

### **ME HE KAURI WHAKARURUHĀU, KA TORO NGĀ PEKA HEI AWHI I TE WAO**

Later still, I became a school advisor at the Centre for Educational Development (CED) at Massey University, a return to Te Kūpenga o te Mātauranga where I did Whakapiki i te Reo with Hone. My job was to travel around the North Island visiting kura Māori to support teachers with their maths and science teaching. This was a time when I spoke often in pōhiri because I visited so many kura. I also supported the opening of several new whare at various kura and spoke during the ceremonies on behalf of Te Kūpenga. I think I did a reasonable job of this most of the time. I adopted Hirini Melbourne's waiata, 'Me he kauri hei whakaruruhau' and sometimes sang it myself to support my own kōrero. I also experienced from a different perspective the difficulties I had experienced as a wharekura teacher; this time I was trying to support teachers embedded in their own kura ethos to deal with the very knowledge-oriented maths and science curricula that I had previously been a proponent of.

I think I did all right on the paepae during my time at

CED with a few notable exceptions. There was one time when I spoke on behalf of new staff at a pōhiri at Te Kūpenga o te Mātauranga. We collected an envelope full of money for the kōhā and I put it in my pocket ready to lay down after my kōrero. All went well, but when it came time to place the kōhā, I completely forgot about it. Apparently, my hand twitched towards it but never got any further. During the kai, my hand finally found its target and I was flooded with embarrassment and other bad feelings about forgetting to lay down the kōhā. Fortunately, my Whakapiki teacher, Hone, was there representing the hau kāinga. He just re-opened proceedings and we finished the job properly. I gave a little kōrero, laid down the kōhā on the floor of the wharekai and it was accepted.

### **TĀTAI KŌRERO I NGARO, TĀTAI KŌRERO E RANGONA**

From 2011 to 2015, I worked on a PhD which investigated the struggle that is created when curriculum mathematics is implemented in kura Māori. I conceptualised it as a clash between a knowledge-orientation in which people are formed by the collection of knowledge and skills they possess and a knower-orientation in which people are accepted as unique human beings who are automatically valid. I began to see this clash playing out in a variety of forms and at many different levels in all of the institutions I have been involved with. I am still struggling with this clash as I write these words.

### **MAU TONU KI TŌ WHENUA, KITEA TONUTIA NGĀ WHETŪ**

After the PhD, I continued teaching in a kura Māori. Our celebration of Matariki a few years ago comes to mind now. We stayed overnight at one of our marae, and gathered early the next morning before dawn to witness the appearance of Matariki on the horizon. This time was for everyone to speak about someone close who had passed. I spoke about my parents, both long-dead, who, all of a sudden, were close and present once again. Tears flowed, not just my own. I lit a candle, attached it to a balloon filled with helium, and released it into the sky. We all watched as it gradually floated higher, a small light in the sky which eventually became a star, indistinguishable from the other stars glittering up above on this very clear and very cold morning.

My main task was to support the kura to gain approval from NZQA to assess NCEA achievement standards and we were successful. NZQA came to review our NCEA work a couple of years later, and concluded that we were doing an excellent job which

continues to be the case. This kura is very innovative with talented and dedicated kaiako embedded in their iwitanga and their whenua, but also very research-oriented and open to new ideas and developments.

### **EHARA KOE I TE TANGATA KOTAHĪ, KEI ROTO I A KOE KO TE TOKOMAHA**

As a maths teacher at the kura, I worked with senior students towards NCEA levels 1, 2 and 3. As time went by, we had students moving into studying maths at NCEA level 3. Waipuna was the first student to do this and she was very successful, achieving all of her standards with merits and excellences. When she came to leave the kura, I was asked to speak on behalf of the kura at the graduation ceremony to celebrate her achievements. This graduation ceremony is done every year at Matariki. Whānau, students and teachers gather at the kura for a pō hiri, hākari, presentation of gifts, and speeches of acknowledgement and celebration – it's a big deal. My kōrero for Waipuna went well, the audience laughed when I thought they would, until the last few words. I ended by exhorting her to venture out into the world and draw on her hapū and iwi to support her in her endeavours. Silence. Rookie mistake. I referred to the wrong hapū and iwi. I was saved by another kaiako who stepped in and made the appropriate references to Waipuna's whakapapa – the correct ones.

### **TAKU RĀKAU KA HĒ**

I also worked part-time at a Whare Wānanga. Early in my time there, I was asked by an iwi elder to go over with a group to celebrate the opening of a new sports complex at a kura Māori on the East Coast and speak on behalf of the wānanga. This elder called me Paraihana, a transliteration of Brian. A small group of us arrived in the early hours for the pōhiri. We were divided about whether we were hau kāinga or manuhiri because everyone, apart from me, had whakapapa links to the area. In the end, we all sat on the hau kāinga side and I did not speak at the main pōhiri. Later there was a separate 'mini-pō hiri' to welcome us onto another marae where the hākari was to be held. I sat on the paepae for this pō hiri and did the whai kōrero I had prepared for the main event. There were two other speakers lined up to speak after me, but they decided not to speak because the kai was waiting for everyone. A couple of years later, the elder died. He was 58, the same age as me.



### **NGĀ KARERE MAI A KAMA RĀUA KO OKIOKO**

For the past few years, I have given a guest lecture to students training to be teachers at a mainstream New Zealand university. In this lecture, I have adopted a strongly critical position in relation to non-Māori engagement with te ao Māori. I have challenged students about such things as their use of Māori contexts to teach items of curriculum knowledge, tokenism, appropriation and other forms of colonialism embedded in seemingly benign discourses. This lecture, and subsequent course work, often provokes defensive reactions from students as I caution them to be very careful with how they use Māori contexts in their teaching and engagement with te ao Māori. Sometimes students have pointed out that I embody the opposite of what I advise them to do.

### **PUTA MAI A TOKOTOKO, MAU ANA I TE KORERO**

My wife and I were married on her marae on the mahau of the wharenuī. My sister and brother-in-law travelled from England to be present at the wedding. An old school friend and his wife travelled from Sydney. Everyone had come a long way. During the pōhiri, I spoke and felt pretty good as I finished off after the waiata and sat down on the paepae again. Then I felt a nudge in the ribs from my new father-in-law. "Brian, you forgot to say anything about your sister," he said. "Not to worry, I'll say something". He completed his kōrero and sat down next to me. He also forgot to mention my sister. Okay, what should I do? When all the speakers had finished, I stood up for a second go and spoke about my sister and brother-in-law. No-one seemed to mind. Later on, my wife's uncle, who presided over the marriage ceremony, told me that my kōrero was quite good. Praise indeed from one of the few people left who still speaks the old reo. My father-in-law is one of those speakers of the old reo too. A few years later, a couple of weeks ago in fact, he gave me the tokotoko.

### **MĀ TE REKA KA KŌTITI**

In another recent event, my son asked my wife and me to support him and his boss, who runs a small building company, at a pōhiri in town. The kaupapa was to present a proposal for the establishment of a facility to build high specification eco-houses for iwi members. We arrived after dark and the tikanga was to move onto the marae without a karanga. The pōhiri went well and I carried my whaikōrero very successfully I thought. There was some surprise from tangata whenua when I stood to speak and did so fluently and with some humour. This was one of the few times that I sat down on the paepae after

speaking and felt that it had gone well. Afterwards, two older women sat next to me and congratulated me on being able to speak the way I did. They were quite excited and gave me hugs and more compliments – I felt like a bit of a celebrity and enjoyed it very much.

### **AHAKOA KEI TE NOHO PUKU TE TĪKERA, HE WERA TONU TE WAI?**

Currently, I am being a senior lecturer at the Institute of Education at Massey University. Naturally, I started my new position with a pōhiri. Students and staff from my kura travelled to Palmerston North to support me. During the pōhiri, I babbled on quite a bit and talked about a phrase I made up to describe myself during my time at Whakapiki i te Reo many years earlier: ahakoa kei te noho puku te tīkera, he wera tonu te wai – even though the tea kettle is silent, the water inside is still hot. My kōrero was notable by not adhering to this description very closely.

### **HEI MUTUNGA**

One of the factors in my favour when interviewed for my current position at the Institute of Education was my experience in te reo Māori and Māori educational institutions. Yet I cannot be Māori; I have not lived a Māori life. Sometimes, playfully I think, I argue that this means that I can't speak te reo Māori at all and can't ever know tikanga and mātauranga Māori.

I am now looking at the tokotoko grasped in my hands. What do I do with it? It's trying to tell me something ... I need to listen carefully. Kua tae mai a tokotoko. Me aha ahau?

## Glossary of Māori words

(I assume that some Māori words such as whare, waiata and karakia are already well-known)

Kupu Māori (Māori word)	English approximation
Paepae, paepae tapu	Orators bench in formal situations
Tangi, tangihanga	Funeral
Hau kāinga/Tangata whenua	People of the marae
Koro	Male elder, Grandfather
Kuia	Female elder, Grandmother
Tumuaki	Principal of a school
Kura	School
Wharekura	Secondary school
Kōhā	Gift
Manuhiri	Visitor
Whakatau	Semi-formal welcome
Karanga	Formal call by a female elder to begin a pōhiri
Whaikōrero	Formal speech
Poroporoaki	Leaving ceremony
Mahau	Porch of a wharenuī
Mātauranga	Knowledge
Tikanga	Correct cultural practices

## Ngā whakatauki/kiwaha/kupu hauraro – proverbs/sayings/sub-headings

Hei tīmatanga

*To begin*

Ko te mea nui ko te arohā

*Love is the most important thing*

He iti te matakahi pakaru rikiriki te tōtara

*A small wedge can split the tōtara tree*

He māunu kaukau wai noa iho

*Like a duckling swimming aimlessly on the water*

He roimata ua, he roimata tangata

*Tears from the sky, tears from the person*

Mai i te kāhui maunga ki Tangaroa, ko au ko te awa, ko te awa ko au. Kia whaiora tonu tātou katoa!

*From the mountains to the sea, I am the river, the river is me. Let us all have life!*

Taku waimarie anō hoki

*A stroke of luck for me*

Putā noa atu ngā tangata me ā rātou mahi whakaohomauri

*Everywhere there are people and their surprises*

Taku pōhēhē, taku roro kau  
*My mistaken ideas, my lack of wisdom*

Mā te whakamā e patu, mā te whakamā hoki e ako  
*Embarrassment will teach the lesson*

Me he kauri whakaruruhau, ka toro ngā peka hei awahi i te wao  
*If I was a kauri tree, I would stretch out my branches to embrace the forest*

Tātai kōrero i ngaro, tātai kōrero e rangona  
*Some ideas are currently lost, others heard (in time it may be otherwise)*

Mau tonu i tō whenua, kitea tonutia ngā whetū  
*You are bound to your land, but you can still see the stars*

Ehara koe i te tangata kotahi, kei roto i a koe ko te tokomaha  
*You are not a single person, there are many others within you*

Taku rākau ka hē!  
*I really chose the wrong thing there!*

Ngā karere mai a Kama rāua ko Okioki  
*The messages (contradiction) of Speed and Rest (action and inaction)*

Putā mai a tokotoko, mau mai i te kōrero  
*When you are given a tokotoko, you are committed to speaking*

Mā te reka ka kōtiti  
*Sweetness may attract you to the wrong path*

Ahakoā kei te noho puku te tīkera, he wera tonu te wai  
*Even though the jug is silent, the water is still hot inside*

Hei mutunga  
*To finish for now*

## AUTHOR PROFILE

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Originally from the UK, Brian has worked extensively as a teacher and advisor for mathematics, science and information technology in both English-medium and Māori-medium schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand for the past 30 years. He completed his doctorate at Victoria University in 2016 examining the struggle of Māori immersion schools with curriculum mathematics. He is currently senior lecturer in Te Kura o te Mātauranga/Institute of Education, Te Kūnenga ki Pūrehuroa/Massey University, Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Brian's research focusses on investigations of legitimisation clashes wherever they may emerge.

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