

Alternatives to anti-Māori themes in news media

Theme 10 'Māori inheritance'

This negative theme asserts that there are few 'real Māori' left because of intermarriage, so they are no longer a distinct people and should not claim any benefits.

How this is being said

Māori blood, blood fractions (half-Māori, quarter-Māori, half-caste, part-Māori), intermarriage, pure, genes, drop of Māori blood, born-again Māori, plastic Māori, fingernail of Māori blood, waka-blonde, biculturalism in the bedroom.

Examples

- 'Where could we be in 100 years' time when, because of further intermarriage, an ever larger share of the population, say 30 percent, has a drop of Maori blood.' Paul Goldsmith column, *NZ Herald*, April 2009.
- 'Everyone who was born here is a New Zealander... four of my eight grandparents were Irish so by this silly racist Maori identity yardstick I am still half Irish.' Frank Haden, *Dominion Post*, Sep 20, 1992.

What does this assume?

- A valid Māori identity is purely genetic or biological.
- Racial purity means a strong cultural identity, while mixed ancestry dilutes that identity.
- Fifty percent Māori 'blood' is a magical dividing line between authentic and fake.

- Māori and European are mutually exclusive categories.
- Māori identity is claimed falsely by individuals wanting 'special' benefits.
- Only Māori should prove their identity; Pākehā don't have to.

What does this do?

- Challenges Māori right to self-identify as Māori, continually requiring Māori to define who they are.
- Suggests assimilation of Māori is inevitable.
- Confuses race, ethnicity and culture.
- Downplays the size of the Māori population and hence claims on public resources, undermining legitimate claims by tangata whenua.
- Creates a fear that Māori identity fraud is rampant.
- Pākehā often get defensive about identifying as a group.
- Reinforces some indicators of Māori identity as more valid than others, writing off many people with Māori ancestry.

How else could this be said?

- Self-identification is valid.
- Whakapapa expresses an integrated relationship between Māori ancestry, ethnicity, culture and identity.
- Be clear about using ethnicity, culture and race appropriately.

Published in 2014 by
Kupu Taea: Media and te
Tiriti Project, Te Rōpū
Whāriki, Massey University
PO Box 6137, Wellesley St
Auckland, Aotearoa/New
Zealand

See [www.trc.org.nz/
theme-10-m%C4%81ori-
inheritance](http://www.trc.org.nz/theme-10-m%C4%81ori-inheritance)

Submit your own examples of this theme in the media and suggest your alternatives. Suggestions will be moderated and uploaded to the site.