

Alternatives to anti-Māori themes in news media

Theme 6 'Stirrers'

In this negative theme, anyone who challenges the status quo, whether Māori or non-Māori, is portrayed as a troublemaker who misleads others and causes tension for their own political ends. This particularly applies to coverage of protests.

How this is being said in the news

Stirrer, radical, activist, protestor, malcontents, terrorists, bleeding heart liberals, mountains out of molehills, haters and wreckers.

Examples

- 'The attendees included a fair number of crackpots and radicals, some of whom wanted to negotiate with Queen Elizabeth as Queen Victoria's heir rather than the present Government.' *Dominion Post*, Aug 4, 2002.
- 'Maori activists occupied the school's buildings on Tuesday, saying the Government had no right to sell the school because it was on confiscated Maori land.' Sale found to be a mistake, *Taranaki Daily News*, Mar 8, 2007.

What does this assume?

- Race relations are good and it's only stirrers who disturb things.
- Stirrers are a tiny minority whose opinions are not widely shared even among Māori.
- Stirrers are not really interested in the issues they raise but use them as vehicles for their own advancement.

What does this do?

- Deflects attention from the substance of the injustice by focusing on supposed disruption or aggression by the protestors.
- Portrays the issues being raised as extreme, unacceptable or trivial.
- Hides the support and respect Māori have for tino rangatiratanga (sovereignty) leadership.
- Attempts to divide Māori from each other.
- Ignores any Pākehā support for tino rangatiratanga.

Other ways to talk about this

- 'Stirrers' have been behind every advance in social justice, including the 40-hour week, the minimum wage, te reo Māori on TV and women's right to vote.
- Tino rangatiratanga and Treaty-based processes work in many organisations and are legitimate viewpoints.
- Acknowledge the stirring of those who use positions of power and media influence to openly advocate racism, such as talkback and TV shock jocks, politicians and others.
- Acknowledge the historical context and range of Māori voices on the issue or injustice.
- Explore the foundations and Māori history on the issue.

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See [www.trc.org.nz/
theme-6-stirrers](http://www.trc.org.nz/theme-6-stirrers)

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