

Style Guide suggestions for Inclusive Māori and Indigenous Peoples Language



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Date: May 13 2021

Introduction

Language is enormously powerful and politically charged. We use inclusive language not because we're politically correct, but because it's accurate, fair, respectful and necessary.

Inclusive language simply means language that avoids marginalising people who are already marginalised. It's language that is accessible and meaningful to a wide audience.

Policies, literature, brochures, signs, web site and documents within the University often contain misleading, unfair, derogatory, politically charged and grammatically incorrect usage of the words "Indigenous Peoples", "Indigenous", "Treaty/Tiriti" and "Māori". It is important to note this is not only restricted to the Christchurch campus, but more wide spread.

Māori

The word Māori is capitalised because in English grammar it is referred to as proper noun, or "nouns that are used to denote a particular person, place, or thing."

In addition to English grammar rules: Under the Māori Language Act 1987 the Māori language was made an official language of New Zealand and a Māori Language Commission was established called Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori. They have produced orthographic conventions to assist government, academia and other consumers of te reo Māori to correctly spell Māori words ¹.

¹ <https://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Corporate-docs/Orthographic-conventions/58e52e80e9/Guidelines-for-Maori-Language-Orthography.pdf>

Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori Guidelines for Māori Language Orthography make several statements that the University should follow:

1. The word Māori should be spelt with a capital M.
2. The use of a macron on all Māori words that are sounded longer should be identified with a macron. Noting that there are the German umlauts, double vowels and sometimes no distinction at all within the campus.

Wānaka/Wānanga

There is a mixture of southern and northern dialectal spelling on the word “wānaka” in University policies, literature, brochures, signs, web site, and documents. The word is randomly interchanged with the northern spelling “wānanga” and on occasion spelt with no macron or an umlaut, in direct contradiction of Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori Guidelines for Māori Language Orthography.

Otago

Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori Guidelines for Māori Language Orthography states that the use of a macron on all Māori words that are sounded longer should be identified with a macron.

There are multiple spellings of the word on University literature, policies, signage, website, banners etc.

The word Otago is correctly spelt “Ōtāgo” as it is the written form of the southern dialect for the word Ōtākou. There is a lot of explanation about Southern dialect and the ‘g’ and I am not an expert in that area. But consistent spelling should be applied.

Treaty of Waitangi and Te Tiriti o Waitangi

The term “Treaty of Waitangi” refers to a translation of “Te Tiriti”. The Māori signatories did not debate nor sign the document “The Treaty of Waitangi”. The Waitangi Tribunal have recognised this and therefore recognise Te Tiriti as the authoritative constitutional document of New Zealand.

The University should consider replacing all references to the “Treaty of Waitangi” with “Te Tiriti”.

Indigenous Peoples

The United Nations has developed an understanding of the term “Indigenous” based on self-identification, historical continuity to pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies, links to territories and resources, distinct social, economic and political systems and possession of distinct languages, cultures and beliefs.

The word Indigenous is capitalised because in English grammar it is referred to as proper noun, or “nouns that are used to denote a particular person, place, or thing.” It is globally accepted by Indigenous Peoples that using a small ‘i’ demeans the Indigenous Peoples being referred to.

The Oxford Style Manual states a proper name for a people, or any aspect of their culture, the term is capitalized (e.g., Indigenous medicines); otherwise, it is lowercase (Ritter, 2003).

There is a myriad of published literature in style guides that state this. A simple Google search also reveals a myriad of results.

Secondly, the usage a small “p” for Peoples. Again, this is misleading, unfair, derogatory, politically charged and grammatically incorrect usage of the word. The word “Peoples” with a capital ‘P’ recognises Indigenous Peoples in International Law as having the right to self-determination whereas ‘people’ are just humans.