Political Reviews

Micronesia in Review: Issues and Events, 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019

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The Contemporary Pacific, Volume 32, Number 1, 187–274
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Māori Issues

White supremacy first arrived in Aotearoa, the home of Māori for more than one and a half millennia, in 1769 when a group of Englishmen set foot on a beach at Tūranganui-ā-Kiwa on the East Coast and promptly shot the rangatira (leader) dead. The next day they shot fifteen more tangata whenua (people of the land). For these and many other Europeans, they wrongly believed that their whiteness and their Christianity authorized them to travel the world and exterminate, enslave, and dispossess nonwhite non-Christians (ECOSOC 2010). Whites renamed the country to New Zealand and redefined it for themselves. Two hundred fifty years later, white supremacy is the norm in New Zealand and continues to be used to terrorize Māori and other nonwhites. The victims of this ongoing terrorism were shocked but not surprised at the horrific mass murders that took place in Christchurch on 15 March 2019 (Burton 2019). A white supremacist went to two mosques and shot at hundreds of Muslims while they were at prayer, killing fifty-one and injuring forty-nine (RNZ 2019a; *New Zealand Herald* 2019a).

Muslims in particular had been warning of the likelihood of such an attack, but, like warnings and condemnations Māori have issued over the past 250 years, their cautions were ignored. Initial denials that this country could have been nurturing such behavior lost credibility as more and more nonwhites recounted their experiences of racism. The United Nations had repeatedly warned that racism is a serious problem in New Zealand and in more than one report had recommended constitutional transformation (Mutu 2019, 207). However, anything that could be perceived as a possible threat to the affluence, privilege, and power that whites enjoy (Borell, Barnes, and McCreanor 2018) is deemed politically unacceptable. Even a prime minister who is relatively sympathetic to Māori and has five Māori ministers in her cabinet has been unable to make any measurable change to that attitude. That has not stopped Māori from continuing to pursue our rights—with increasing support from the United Nations.

In this year's review, I will consider the ongoing battle between Māori and the government over our human rights in the areas of health; justice; our children; our lands, waters, and seas and the treaty claims settlements; protection of our Mother Earth, Papatūānuku; protection of our wāhi tapu (sacred sites); and our right to be free from discrimination. On the bright side, there was an encouraging appointment to the country's highest court. There were also ongoing sporting successes and awards in the world of performing arts. Before I consider these, I will acknowledge some of the leaders we lost in the past year.

The act of terrorism in Christchurch left the country stunned as Ngāi Tahu, the iwi (nation) of most of the South Island, assumed their responsibility to look after the bereaved and draw the Christchurch community together in its immediate aftermath. Māori communities have continued to acknowledge the pain and grief of the Muslim community

and to provide support for them in the full knowledge and understanding of the great spiritual and physical strength required to survive such devastation. Those of ours who passed away this year will accompany those who were taken in Christchurch as they make their way back to their ancestors.

Among them were a number of our leaders. Ruruarau Heitia Hīhā of Ngāti Kahungunu, a former Māori All Black and educationalist, left us in August 2018. He spent his life working for his people, including leading the claims to the Waitangi Tribunal for the Ahuriri lands in and around present-day Napier. Heitia gave evidence in five hearings between 1996 and 1998. As with the great majority of Tiriti o Waitangi claims, the government had still not addressed them when Heitia passed away twenty years later (Sharpe 2018; Waitangi Tribunal 2004).

In December, another Māori All Black and educationalist, former Race Relations Conciliator Hiwi Tauroa of Ngāti Kahu and Ngāpuhi, passed away. He was the headmaster at Wesley College and then at Tuakau College—the first Māori to head a secondary school. He was race relations conciliator during the 1981 Springbok Tour that split the country. Against the wishes of many, he accepted an all-expenses-paid trip to South Africa to see for himself the impact of the apartheid regime on the Indigenous people. He was appalled at what he saw and recommended that the tour not go ahead, joining those protesting against it. He went on to establish the New Zealand China Māori Friendship Charitable Trust that developed many relationships between iwi and Māori organizations and Chinese businesses. He also took a leadership role in his Ngāti Kahu-Ngāpuhi iwi of Whangaroa (Underhill 2017).

Tama Rēnata of Ngāti Porou, a member of the reggae band Herbs for more than twenty years, passed away in November 2018. He was a composer and guitar player extraordinaire with a long list of musical accomplishments. He was inducted into the New Zealand Music Hall of Fame in 2012 and was known as the "speed king of New Zealand guitar" (Reid 2018).

In April 2019, the Reverend Rua Rākena of Ngāpuhi and Ngāi Tahu left us. He was a very humble but hugely respected social activist who had extraordinary influence on Māori and Tiriti politics from the 1960s to the 1990s. As the moderator of the Methodist Church and tumuaki (head) of Te Taha Māori o Te Hāhi Weteriana (the Māori side of the Methodist Church), Rua challenged the colonial thinking, practices, and institutions and, with his wife, Joy, led the church on a bicultural journey. Under their guidance, many social justice activists, and not just those in the Methodist Church, learned to think and organize strategically for social change (Kelsey 2019).

Professor James Te Wharehuia Milroy of Tūhoe passed away in May 2019. He was widely acknowledged for his leadership in preserving and promoting the Māori language and tikanga (law). He headed Māori studies at the University of Waikato in the 1980s and was a member of

many government bodies, including the Waitangi Tribunal, the National Geographic Board, and the Kōhanga Reo National Trust (University of Waikato 2019).

These and many others of our leaders left us to join our ancestors in the past year. May their journey be gentle and peaceful.

Throughout the year, racism was highlighted many times and in many places before, during, and after the Christchurch shootings. A number of government reports have continued to highlight its effects on Māori, but there has still been no attempt to start a national conversation about what racism is, where it comes from, and how to rid the country of it. Māori organizations such as National Iwi Chairs Forum have sent clear messages to governments that racism is a Pākehā (European) cultural concept and only Pākehā can address their own cultural beliefs and practices. Māori leaders have always been well aware that the country's entire power structure was constructed illegitimately on racist assumptions and that these are maintained to this day. In defiance of that racism, Māori in many areas are moving to take back their right to self-determination, exercising their mana and tino rangatiratanga (absolute power and authority), regardless of what governments and Pākehā tell us. Ongoing reluctance and often refusal of governments and, in particular, government departments to implement recommendations from several United Nations (UN) bodies, from the Waitangi Tribunal, and from reports commissioned by the government itself only serve to support and strengthen Māori resolve to take actions that free us from white oppression. The United Nations issued a Universal Periodic Review and an Advisory Note; the Waitangi Tribunal issued a report on health services and outcomes; and reports from government inquiries included recommendations for mental health and addiction, the social welfare system, and Whānau Ora.

The 2019 Universal Periodic Review conducted by the UN Human Rights Council made 194 recommendations, of which 48 specifically referenced the human rights of Māori (UNGA 2019b). The government advised the United Nations that it accepted 39 of those recommendations, including all those relating to implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNGA 2019a). Almost all of the recommendations have appeared in a number of previous reports but have resulted in little or no improvement, despite the government saying it accepted them.

The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provided the Advisory Note from the United Nations (EMRIP 2019). It resulted from a visit in April 2019 requested by the Aotearoa Independent Monitoring Mechanism, a group established by National Iwi Chairs Forum in 2014 (Mutu 2019, 208). The Advisory Note provided detailed advice on how New Zealand should draft a National Plan of Action to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that would ensure that Māori human and treaty rights, and in particular self-determination, are recognized, provided for, and upheld. The minister of Māori development

has supported and led a significant change in the government's attitude toward the declaration, which allowed the visit to take place and the Advisory Note to be released. The Expert Mechanism noted at its 2019 meeting that providing such comprehensive advice was a world first for them and that other Indigenous peoples were looking to Māori for leadership on this issue.

In its *Report on Stage One of the Health Services and Outcomes Inquiry,* the Waitangi Tribunal found that Māori continue to experience the worst health outcomes of any population group in New Zealand. The New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 promised to deliver better outcomes, but that has not happened. The tribunal made a number of recommendations, including that the act be amended and that the Crown commit to exploring the concept of a stand-alone Māori Primary Health Authority with the stage-one claimants (Waitangi Tribunal 2019, xv).

Stand-alone Māori authorities are required in all areas to recognize Māori self-determination, mana, and tino rangatiratanga. While ministers recognize this persistent call from the tribunal and UN bodies, there remains ongoing reluctance to let Māori make our own decisions about our own lives. The 2018 *He Ara Oranga: Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction* was widely criticized by Māori leaders for not giving sufficient priority to addressing Māori mental health. The Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand supported a specific Māori-led authority to address Māori mental health (Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand 2018, 3), and it criticized ongoing government delays in addressing the considerable mental health inequities Māori face (Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand 2019).

The Welfare Expert Advisory Group's report made forty-two recommendations for fundamental changes to the welfare system that "is no longer fit for purpose" and "fails Māori," including that the government "works with Māori to consider other effective ways of delivering welfare services and funding" (Welfare Expert Advisory Group 2019, 5, 75, 77). There is disappointment and frustration that the government has delivered on only three of the recommendations, saying the major changes would take many years (Robson 2019).

The minister of justice publicly acknowledged that the justice system is broken. It is particularly hostile to Māori, who make up more than 50 percent of the prison population but only 15 percent of the general population. The minister convened a national hui (meeting) of Māori to discuss possible solutions. He received very forceful and blunt messages that "the intergenerational effects of the racism, bias, abuse and colonisation that the justice system has created, enabled and continues to deliver . . . must stop now" and that the Crown must "share power with Māori and for Māori-led responses to be central to reformation of the justice system" (Hui Māori 2019, 2). Three main recommendations covered "constitutional reform, a call for a plan to accelerate and understand the change needed, and to establish a Mana Ōrite [Equal Author-

ity] model of partnership" (Hui Māori 2019, 2).

The Ministry for Children came under sustained attack when its workers were filmed trying to force a young Māori mother to give up her newborn baby. The ministry is now being subjected to four different inquiries: one that is led by Māori, one by the children's commissioner, one by the ministry itself, and one by the ombudsman (Neilson 2019). A national hui called to discuss the crisis was clear that Māori-led solutions are required.

The Whānau Ora program is a potential exemplar of Māori-led and Māori-controlled services. The latest review reiterated previous reviews and reports, including one from the auditor-general (Provost 2015), which showed that the program has been very successful for many Māori whānau (extended families). It delivers wraparound social welfare services to whānau and is controlled by Māori commissioning agencies in which government bureaucrats have no say. Government departments were criticized yet again for trying to undermine Whānau Ora. The review team was told on numerous occasions that agencies are opting out of their responsibilities to whānau and expecting Whānau Ora to do their work for them (Independent Whānau Ora Review Panel 2018).

The government's treaty claims settlement process has continued to tear claimant communities apart. The ongoing divisions in Ngāpuhi, the country's largest iwi, continued to attract media attention (Mutu 2019, 206) until whānau and hapū (groupings of whānau) voted overwhelmingly in December to reject the mandate the government was trying to impose to extinguish their claims (Boynton 2018a). Whakatōhea's decision to proceed with a Waitangi Tribunal inquiry before reentering negotiations has been ignored as the government pushes ahead with negotiations (Hurihanganui 2019). Tauranga Moana iwi and Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei continued to battle against the Hauraki iwi (Mutu 2019, 206) as the government drove through a settlement vesting their lands in Hauraki (Boynton 2018b; Supreme Court of New Zealand 2018). The government also pushed through the Waitara Lands Act even though only one of the two hapū to whom the land belongs gave it support (Pihama 2019). Ngāti Paoa laid a formal complaint against the Crown's chief negotiator for bullying and acting in bad faith (RNZ 2018). Meanwhile, the government rebranded the Office of Treaty Settlements as a section within the newly formed Office of Māori-Crown Relations and gave it a Māori name. However, its task of manipulating claimants into extinguishing their claims and removing their legal rights remains unchanged (Mutu 2018). In the past year, they have legislated the extinguishment of the claims of three iwi: Ngāti Tamaoho in South Auckland, Te Wairoa in the northern Hawke's Bay, and Ngāti Tūwharetoa of the Taupō region (Te Kāhui Whakatau 2019).

The two hundred fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the first Englishmen to Aotearoa occurs in October 2019. When the government announced that it had allocated more than NZ$22.5 million toward celebrating the event, more than is allocated to

most treaty claims settlements (Fyers 2018), many Māori strongly objected. Their ancestors' experiences of these people were that they were murderous barbarians (Russell 2019). Rather than cancel the celebrations, the government simply rebranded them under the title "Encounters" and allowed traditional waka (canoes) to be included beside a replica of the ship *Endeavour.* One iwi took their objections to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and told them: "When somebody lands and then shoots the first person that they see, and then the next day shoots another 15, and then wants to get a closer look at a waka so they shoot everybody in the waka so they can get a closer look at it and everybody in that waka was unarmed, they were just fisher-people. You know, to call that an 'encounter' is egregious in the extreme and a complete purposeful minimisation" (Tina Ngata, quoted in McLachlan 2019).

Despite battling poverty and oppression, Māori continue to take our responsibilities to our environment and our wāhi tapu very seriously. There have been mixed outcomes over the past year. The High Court overturned consents for sand mining in south Taranaki that had been appealed by Ngāti Ruanui, Ngā Rauru, and various other groups (Young 2018). Predictably, the international mining company has appealed that decision. The members of a marae (communal meeting complex) in Northland won their fight to stop the largest poultry factory farm in the country from being built next to their cemetery. The Overseas Investment Office declined permission for the international poultry company, Tegel Foods, to purchase the land required for the farm (Corlett 2018). In Hawke's Bay, the local council apologized to the local iwi, Ngāti Kahungunu, for allowing the construction of a walking track that has scarred the face of the sacred mountain, Te Mata o Rongokako. The council then sought consent to remove the track (RNZ 2019b). Hapū members from Ihumātao near Auckland Airport lost their appeal to the Environment Court against a housing development on their wāhi tapu (Harrowell 2018). Several months later, the developers served trespass notices and sent in police to evict the hapū members. Calls put out on social media drew hundreds of supporters within hours (Haunui-Thompson 2019), with thousands more from around the country coming to offer support in the following days and weeks (Henry 2019).

On the bright side, we celebrated a number of Māori achievements. Mental health advocate Mike King of Māhurehure was named New Zealander of the Year. The television presenter and comedian has been highly critical of government inaction on mental health, particularly that of Māori. He has been conducting a campaign to end suicide for several years and has spoken to tens of thousands of children in schools throughout the country. New Zealand has the highest youth suicide rate in the developed world (OECD Family Database 2017). Māori music band Moana and the Moahunters received the Independent Music New Zealand Classic Record Award for their 1993 album *Tahi* at the 2019 Taite Music Prize awards. Their lead singer, Moana Maniapoto of Tūhourangi-Ngāti Wāhiao, Ngāti Pikiao, and Ngāti Te Rangiita, said

the songs were intended to "make Māori feel good about being Māori" (Gardiner 2019). The huge biennial Matatini festival, the pinnacle of Māori performing arts, took place in Wellington in February. In what is always a highlight in the Māori calendar, tens of thousands of performers, tutors, and composers, young and old, as well as volunteers and an enthralled audience, reveled in five days of outstanding performances (Māori Television 2019).

For the first time, we saw one of our own appointed to the Supreme Court, the country's highest court: Justice Joe Williams of Ngāi Pukenga, a past chairman of the Waitangi Tribunal and High Court judge. He is a fluent speaker of Māori and well versed in tikanga (Māori law).

On the sporting front, Michael Campbell, the Ngāti Ruanui and Ngā Rauru's golfer extraordinaire, was inducted into the Māori Golf Hall of Fame. He is best known for winning the US Open and the HSBC World Match Play Championship in 2005 (Black 2019). One of our standout Māori sportswomen, Lisa Carrington of Te Aitanga a Māhaki and Ngāti Porou, continued to dominate world canoeing, taking three gold medals in the International Canoe Federation Canoe Sprint World Cup (*New Zealand Herald* 2019b).

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Niue

It has been business as usual within Niue's governance and politics, with surprising events unfolding every now and then, providing exciting political items to discuss. Within this review period, we've seen Niue's application for membership in the Asian Development Bank (ADB) accepted; an apology from Radio New Zealand (RNZ) for unsubstantiated allegations made against Premier Sir Toke Talagi; opposition to and court injunctions filed against government-funded projects; and a member of Parliament (MP) who brought a packet of marijuana into an assembly sitting. Throughout this period, the premier also spent significant time in New Zealand for medical care. Despite ill health, the premier was said to have still undertaken work and carried out talks with prospective diplomatic and development partners.

Niue's application to become a member of the ADB was accepted, which was a historical decision for the island, as it had unsuccessfully applied twice before (BCN, 12 March 2019). This membership is also significant because it provides the island, the ADB's sixty-eighth member and the forty-ninth from the Asia-Pacific region, with an additional avenue of funding to help drive social and economic development (BCN, 12 March 2019).

It will be interesting to see just how the US$100,000 annual membership fee, which is quite high for a small state, will be fronted. The full cost and benefits of the membership will be determined in the long run; however, Niue will greatly benefit from the associated financial and technical assistance, including assistance with infrastructure development, financial management of the public sector and its projects, and capacity building. A focus on building the management capacity of Niue would be an especially valuable use of this