

# MĀORI TELEVISION: THE FIRST 10 YEARS ONSCREEN

## How has Māori Television contributed to the media cultures of Aotearoa / New Zealand in its first 10 years onscreen?

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### INTRODUCTION

This is the key question arising from the *Onscreen Indigeneity: the case of Māori Television* research project conducted between 2012-2015 which has currently led to journal articles (see back sheet) and a book provisionally entitled *Māori Television: the first 10 years onscreen*. The concept of “Onscreen Indigeneity” helped shape the research approach and assumes that all that is seen on Māori Television, is the result of a complex set of relations going on *behind* the screen and *in front* of the screen. These “behind the screen” factors include the history of media depictions of Māori and the role of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the Māori media sector. The legislation supporting Māori

Television, the wider New Zealand media environment, as well as shifts in the Māori language sector are other influencing factors. Those elements “in front” of the screen include the ways in which audiences, media commentators, politicians and other media providers engage with Māori Television.

This research privileges voices from the Māori media sector, as well as Māori commentators, academics and audiences who engage with Māori Television. Interview and focus group kōrero, as well as language revitalisation literature, policy documents, government legislation and existing media research revealed the multiple demands made of Māori Television.

Legislation expects Māori Television to help protect and promote te reo and tikanga Māori in a society pervasively English-speaking. Politicians and non-Māori media commentators see Māori Television as a public service media provider. Some Māori stakeholders expect a media organisation shaped by more explicitly Māori ways of thinking and doing. Yet, as one media practitioner has said, in light of Māori Television’s emergence, “it’s becoming more and more difficult to say what you mean by [Māori] now”. This project developed five interconnecting frameworks for understanding the dynamics behind, onscreen, and in front of, Māori Television in its first ten years.

### MĀORI TELEVISION TIMELINE 2004-2014

- Government
- Māori TV
- Wider Media Sector

#### 2004 ▶

**Māori Television (MTS) launches on 28 March**

**Incumbent Labour Government passes the Foreshore and Seabed Act**

**Tariana Turia establishes The Māori Party**

**New programming: *Kōrero Mai, Te Kāea, Te Heteri***

#### 2005 ▶

**Jim Mather becomes CEO of MTS (Feb 2005-October 2013)**

**New programming: *CODE, Ask Your Auntie and Hunting Aotearoa***

# FIVE FRAMEWORKS FOR UNDERSTANDING MĀORI TELEVISION

## 1. HISTORICAL

To understand Māori Television today, we need to understand the longer struggle for te reo and tikanga Māori. A historical framework examines: the role of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the Māori media sector; the broader non-Māori media environment and pervasive commercialism; television's role in language and cultural revitalisation.

*There is te reo which is the language, and te reo which is the voice*  
(H. ROYAL, 2013)

*If you look at TV ONE, TV2 and TV3 it's just a shambles what they deliver to New Zealand audiences. So what Māori Television delivers to Māori audiences and New Zealand audiences is interesting, exciting, innovative, informative entertainment and for that they deserve to be praised.*  
(E. HENRY, 2012)

## 2. TIKANGA

Māori Television is expected to be a Māori Television organisation, not simply offer television in Māori. A tikanga framework considers: Māori Television's governance structure; engagement with communities; te reo Māori in the workplace and tikanga-based production practices.

*They're a new Māori Business so I think they're still developing tikanga appropriate to those kinds of work situations. But still, for all of the ups and downs, they're working hard on it.*  
(H. HARAWIRA, 2013)

*[!]If you watch Māori Television in its current form, it is a western model that has had brown faces and te reo Māori laid over the top.*  
(Q. HITA, 2014)

## 2006 ▶

The tangi of Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu is broadcast across three networks with the presenting team chosen by TVNZ and Māori Television

**New programming: all-day Anzac Day coverage**

## 2007 ▶

So-called "Anti-Terror" Raids by the NZ police occur on 15 October in Rūātoki, Whakatāne and various city centres

The Freeview Service starts in May and TVNZ launch digital channel, TVNZ6

**New programming: Homai Te Pakipaki and Native Affairs**

## 2008 ▶

National Government comes to power in November

TVNZ launch second digital channel, TVNZ7

MTS launch digital channel, Te Reo at the inaugural conference for WITBN members

### 3. PROGRAMMING

Māori Television supports language and cultural learning at the same time as it offers content that appeals to a broad audience. A programming framework considers: Māori Television's target audience(s); shifts in strategies across the 10 years; and future strategies in an era of consumer choice.

*We need to get [rangatahi] excited about integrating the language with popular culture, because they largely see it as ceremonial and instructional.*

(H. MOHI, 2014)

*Kiwi and iwi - that's how I view the two channels - so Kiwi is Māori Television and iwi is Te Reo channel.*

(E. MORGAN, 2014)

### 4. AUDIENCES

Māori audiences use Māori Television as an aid for language and cultural learning. Māori Television is also a source of pride for some, while others wish more from this Indigenous media maker. An Audience framework considers: Māori Television's contribution to language and cultural learning; its enhancement of whanaungatanga and cultural wellbeing as well as the things Māori Television could do differently.

*I learnt a lot of things that our kaumātua hasn't got around to telling us all yet, and it's cool to have it recorded because sometimes when they tell us things you forget it.*

*I think that [Māori Television] challenges mainstream TV stations to up their game a bit when they do have Māori content. They can't just continue to present it from a Pākehā perspective now.*

*Are we making Māori TV from a Pākehā perspective or an interpretation of that, or are we actually using our beliefs and values in the way that we develop and provide the stories?*

### 5. A POLITICS OF CULTURE

Many hope for a form of Māori Television that affirms and asserts Indigenous perspectives and purposes. A Politics of Culture framework considers Māori Television's role in: enhancing Māori political and cultural representation; telling Indigenous stories; making visible Māori political and cultural agendas; developing flax-roots media practices.

*Māori Television normalises being Māori, and so it will give those who are perhaps a bit scared of going and finding out who they are and where they belong and all that sort of thing - hopefully it gives them the confidence to do so.*

(M. MUTU, 2012)

*I want to see a Māori channel that reflects things in our way. Something that doesn't just reproduce [existing] methods - it's the same thing for research. Use the same news gathering methods and then you reproduce that news and the opinions of the news of the mainstream media.*

(L.T. SMITH, 2013)

## 2009 ▶

**Te Kāhui o Te Mōhutonga Review of MTS completed**

**Māori Television bids for Rugby World Cup broadcast rights**

**Carol Hirschfeld takes up the position of head of programming.**

**Stan Walker wins *Australian Idol***

## 2010 ▶

**Boy (directed by Taika Waititi) is a box office hit**

**Te Pūni Kōkiri Impact Survey, "[...] shows a positive relationship between viewing Māori Television and learning the Māori language."**

**New programming: *Ako; Kōwhao Rau***

## 2011 ▶

**TVNZ6 changed to U**

**The TVNZ Charter is formally abolished**

**New programming: *Rise Up* Telethon for Christchurch Earthquake and Rugby World Cup coverage**

## KEY FINDINGS

Research findings suggest that Māori Television:

- needs to be understood within the longer history of language and cultural struggle, the wider media environment and established television practices, and in relation to the diverse political and cultural desires attached to Māori Television
- is a crucial actor in supporting language and cultural shifts and is often framed as an important vehicle for Māori development
- offers kaupapa-driven media within a competitive commercial media environment

- helps set Māori agendas within the public spaces of Aotearoa that privilege diverse Māori perspectives
- remains accountable to its many stakeholders, including the Crown and diverse Māori communities
- needs to continue to develop Māori-driven programming and practices
- encourages wider discussions about the state of New Zealand media more generally, as well as the politics of Indigenous television in Aotearoa and beyond.

In its first 10 years, Māori Television has laid the groundwork for imagining what State-funded New Zealand television

might look like, from the diverse perspectives of te ao Māori. In an era where media outlets compete for audience attention on multiple screens, Māori Television will continue to face the challenge of producing content that appeals to the large percentage of Māori who are rangatahi, as well as offering content for those generations who fought for the network. In such an era it is likely that challenges facing Māori Television will increase as audiences use emerging media forms to engage with media producers or to access media content on their own terms.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

*Māori Television: the first 10 years onscreen* offers preliminary frameworks for considering the contribution Māori Television has made to te reo and tikanga Māori as well as to the wider media landscape of Aotearoa / New Zealand. Future research could include:

- oral histories and biographies that describe the struggle for Māori language and broadcasting
- Māori television programming offered by other providers
- a tikanga-based analysis of other media institutions such as funding agency Te Māngai Pāho or the Broadcasting Standards Authority

- individual case studies of tikanga-based television production practices
- closer analysis of the hau ora benefits of Māori media
- more close textual analysis of Māori language and cultural programming
- the impact of online technologies on future Māori Television Audience research
- the digital challenges facing the Māori media sector in general.

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## CONTACT

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### 2012 ▶

**The government shuts down TVNZ7**

**NZoA Review of Māori Programming, Ngā Matakiirea**

**New strategic direction for Te Māngai Pāho with ZePA 'right-shifting' model**

### 2013 ▶

**Amendments made to the Māori Television Service Act of 2003**

**The Digital Switch Over is completed**

**Review of Māori Language Bill**

**New programming: Te Kāea begins broadcast on Australian Indigenous channel, NITV**

### 2014 ▶

**TVNZ outsources Māori and Pasifika programming**

**Paora Maxwell becomes CEO of MTS (March 2014-present)**

**New programming: Media Take and Swagger**