

## MODERATOR'S MESSAGE

# MĀORI LANGUAGE WEEK 12 - 18 SEPT



This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Māori Language petition that was presented to Parliament in 1972, and since 1975 Māori Language Week has been celebrated in our country.

Language is a powerful component of cultural identity. Imposing limitations and restrictions on the use of first languages has long been a weapon of dominant cultures. This has come home to me in the last few days here at the WCC Assembly where many people from around the world have gathered.

I heard someone from Norway speak of a 300-year period when a dominant Danish culture repressed their language.

A native Welsh speaker talked about his school days and said a child that was overheard speaking Welsh had to wear a piece of wood around their neck. They then had the ability to pass that on to anyone they overheard speaking Welsh, and then at the end of the school day the child that was left wearing the wood got caned!

These stories made me think of elderly Māori friends and parishioners who have talked of schooling experiences where the use of te reo was discouraged, outlawed and punished. They talk of humiliation, guilt, anger and disadvantage at the hands of our education system.

Reflecting on this, I wonder if we in the Christian community can approach Te Wiki o te Reo Māori - Māori Language Week with elements of the Christian principles of repentance, reconciliation and renewal. That by embracing te reo in our PCANZ context we in part signal sorrow for the suppression of the language in times past? And that in the Presbyterian pakeha exploration of tikanga and te reo - listening, learning and incorporating - there is a growing, genuine and heart-felt desire for restoration and renewal of this language in our context. Certainly, as I move around our Church I observe increasing respect for Māori tikanga. In the growing natural incorporation of Māori language in our services of worship there is a clear and obvious embracing of the spirit of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in our context.

See our [Church website](#) for links to Te Wiki o te Reo Māori - Māori Language Week in-person and online events, training and resources.

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