

Apology to Māori for Racism and Monoculturalism in Psychology

New Zealand Psychological Society

New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists

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Pipitea Marae, Te Whanganui-a-Tara

New Zealand
Psychological Society
Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa



New Zealand College
of Clinical Psychologists



Visual Art: David Horne. The manaia represents those who have come to speak, listen and learn. The clusters of fern fronds represent the piki me ngā heke of the kōrero over many decades. The piko and long lines represent the pathway towards anti-racism and honouring te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Preamble



In 2018, following receipt of Dr Michelle Levy's WAI 2725 claim, discussions began among the leadership of the New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPsS) and the New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists (NZCCP) regarding an appropriate response to the concerns raised in the claim. The issue was subsequently raised with the Psychology Profession Advisory Forum (PPAF) and the New Zealand Psychologists Board, where it was agreed that a formal apology to Māori for psychology's breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the harms arising from those breaches was both appropriate and overdue.

We were also aware that psychology professional bodies in other countries had made formal apologies to Indigenous Peoples, and those documents helped inform the development of this apology. However, this apology is grounded in the unique context of Aotearoa New Zealand and the responsibilities of the psychology profession under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

In response to these discussions, an apology working group was established in 2022 to develop an apology on behalf of the profession. The group included representatives from the New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPsS), the New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists (NZCCP), the New Zealand Psychologists Board and psychologists who brought their experience and guidance to the process. The group was tasked with considering the concerns raised in the WAI 2725 claim, engaging with key stakeholders, reviewing relevant national and international precedents, and developing an apology that reflected both the responsibilities of the profession and the aspirations of those seeking change. The original 2018 claim was amended in 2024 and includes Dr Catherine Love, Lisa Cherrington, and Dr Keri Lawson Te-Aho.

We recognise that this apology arises because Māori have, for many years, identified concerns about psychology's breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the marginalisation of Māori knowledge and approaches, and the harms experienced by Māori individuals, whānau, hapū, iwi, students, practitioners, and communities. We are deeply grateful to those who have shared their experiences, challenged the profession, and advocated for change.

Although the Psychologists Board has worked on, and supported this apology process, as an agent of the Crown named in the Wai 2725 claim, it will therefore apologise alongside the Crown when this is permitted.

As we undertook this work, we remained mindful of the responsibility to offer an apology that was meaningful, authentic, and accountable, while seeking to avoid causing further harm or retraumatisation. We sincerely hope this apology honours both the experiences of those harmed and the efforts of those who have worked tirelessly to bring psychology to this point.



**New Zealand College
of Clinical Psychologists**



Introduction



This statement is written to Māori by the New Zealand Psychological Society and the New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists as leaders of the psychology profession in Aotearoa.

Aroha mai, aroha atu. We are sorry, we apologise.

We apologise without reservation for the harms done to Māori by the profession as well as our failure to prevent these, as described below, and we commit to meaningful change moving forward. We hope that this is the beginning of a journey of healing and true partnership.

For too long we have minimised and ignored the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a living document and its place in the development of psychology in Aotearoa. Through tertiary institutions psychologists are trained with settler-colonial world views, and as a profession have undiscerningly adopted beliefs and values that perpetuate monocultural psychology in Aotearoa. We have not acted within the spirit and intent of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and have colonised Māori of their space, leadership and empowerment in their journey of wellbeing.

Apology



We have used the articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi to examine our breaches of this important constitutional document and make apologies in regards to specific breaches.

Article 1 – Kawanatanga

We apologise that we have not worked in partnership with Māori in the development of psychology in Aotearoa, that we have delegitimised Māori in decision making, and not engaged with Māori expertise.

We acknowledge that psychology within Aotearoa/ New Zealand is built on a systemically racist structure. We have witnessed the pain, harm and trauma this has caused and continues to cause Māori. We recognise the importance of addressing the systemic, structural and interpersonal racisms that impact on Māori. We also recognise that white privilege and advantage are products of this racist structure, and this needs to be addressed.

We recognise that in continuing to practice monoculturalism in psychology we have created barriers to diverse worldviews in psychology and have divided Māori and other ethnic and cultural groups. We are aware that we have prevented these relationships that would have enabled a shift in the dominance of whiteness in psychology and created a holistic foundation of knowledge.

We recognise and acknowledge that there have been persistent failures to lead the psychology profession to meet our obligations set out in Te Tiriti o Waitangi and UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People). We recognise and acknowledge that we have benefited from the impact of racism and colonisation and this is evident in the disproportionately low number of Māori across all areas of the psychology profession. We are ashamed for the role that we have played in this and the harm done to Māori.

Article 2: Rangatiratanga

We are sorry for taking up the space, autonomy, self-determination, and decision-making of Māori, and that we have not protected Māori knowledge, values, processes, and treasures. We apologise that we have ignored Māori worldviews that include wairua, whakapapa, whānau, te taiao, and tikanga and kawa.

We recognise that settler colonisation and racism are structures that have negatively impacted Māori while benefitting the dominant white culture in psychology in Aotearoa. These have impeded self-determination for Māori psychologists and for Māori that we serve.

Across all settings, we as a profession have ignored, minimised, and failed to support the mana inherent in mātauranga Māori. We have perpetuated racism towards this knowledge and prevented Māori from bringing mātauranga Māori and kaupapa Māori to the fore. We denounce racism in the invalidation and exclusion of kaupapa Māori in psychology.

Although many recommendations have been made for systemic change around resources, training and practice, and space for self-determination by tangata whenua, the small steps taken to date have been inadequate, inconsistently applied, and poorly resourced. We know that more should have been done sooner to enact the changes needed and for that, we are deeply sorry and hold ourselves accountable.

Article 3: Rights and equality

We apologise that we have failed to ensure equitable rights for Māori, resulting in low numbers of Māori as psychology students and practitioners, and limited access for Māori to meaningful and culturally appropriate services.

We recognise that mono-culturalism in psychology has led to a lack of inclusive and diverse psychological perspectives. This has meant that there have been limited, or no options available to Māori, or other peoples from which to draw healing knowledge. This has prevented the normalising of culturally diverse psychologies in practice and resulted in culturally unsafe psychology training and workplace environments. Despite some progress in this area, we recognise that this has significant impact on inclusion and retention of Māori in the profession.

Article 4: Spirituality, faith and tikanga

We apologise that racist attitudes towards mātauranga Māori and tikanga have resulted in the undermining of their role in healing and a failure to recognise their place in psychological theory and practice. As a result, Māori psychologists have not received recognition or validation for their knowledge and have been unable to bring this vital part of themselves into their mahi. The ongoing impact of this has been limited access to culturally responsive services for those that we work with.

Commitment to Action



Tēnā te mana o Rehua. Behold the greatness of Rehua.¹

As leaders in the psychology profession, we commit to being better partners, and to be active and authentic in our partnership with Māori. The following actions are our initial commitments.

Article 1:

We will work to dismantle racism and oppression in psychology by meeting our obligations to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and UNDRIP.

We will develop an anti-racist action plan at governance level of our organisations.

We will build responsive and respectful relationships with Māori.

We will advocate to ensure that all practitioners and educators of psychology uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

We will advocate for mandatory cultural safety training, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi education for all psychologists entering Aotearoa.

Article 2:

We will work to significantly increase the number of Māori psychologists to enable a “by Māori for Māori” approach.

We will challenge the delegitimizing of mātauranga Māori that has arisen from a western model of training and practice.

We will prioritise cultural safety for Māori accessing psychological services, both consumers of services and Māori practitioners.

Article 3:

We will work in partnership with Māori to ensure these commitments are actioned with regular feedback to monitor progress.

We will ensure a culture where discrimination, oppression and racism can be safely named and challenged.

We actively support innovative solutions to address racism and inequity within psychology services and organisations.

Article 4:

We commit to fund and protect Kaupapa Māori knowledge, approaches, practices and research.

We commit to equitable access for Māori to practise, utilise and receive Māori psychology.

¹ Rehua is often spoken as the Chief among our stars. He possesses the power of health, the ability to heal and to disperse doom and gloom from the minds of man. In aspiring to the highest levels of health and healing for our communities, Rehua is the navigating star. As the oldest son of Ranginui and Papatūānuku, he is revered as a benevolent and prosperous being, and is invoked as a protector and a guide. <https://www.tpoom.co.nz/article/what-rehua-means#>

Conclusion



In the spirit of our commitment to partnership - we have come together, representing the professional bodies of psychology in Aotearoa. We seek to begin a process of healing, to rebuild trust through open and authentic dialogue, and to commit to doing better as partners with tangata whenua. We do not take for granted that Māori will be wanting to work and partner with us, this is our offer and request to do so.

We know that this statement is a small first step into our journey towards repairing the harm to Māori. This letter itself may be a painful reminder of the trauma and the open wound that exists. Our hearts go out to you in your pain. We know that Māori have been waiting a long time for a world that is safe, equitable, and connected. We commit to do the mahi that we know needs to be done and to be monitored and accountable for our progress. We take full responsibility for our part in creating a space of healing and thriving, where the teaching, practice, research and governance of psychology in Aotearoa complies with its commitment to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

From: The elected and appointed leaders of the profession of psychology:

Executive members of the New Zealand Psychological Society,

Executive members of the New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists



Appendix



Glossary/Definitions

Monoculturalism – the policy or process of supporting, advocating, or allowing the expression of the culture of a single social or ethnic group, e.g., often observed in Eurocentric Monoculturalism – the belief that one group, specifically the white group is superior to other races and lifestyle.

Oppression – the systematic subjugation of one social group by a more powerful social group for their social, economic, and political benefit.

Racism – an ideology that sustains racial inequalities and power differences. Based on historically constructed notions of a racial hierarchy, racism manifests differently across space and time. Forms of racism include interpersonal and everyday racism as well as institutional and structural racism.

Settler colonialism – a system of oppression based on genocide **and** colonialism, that aims to displace a population of a nation (oftentimes indigenous people) and replace it with a new settler population.

Tauīwi – people who are not Māori, in particular, non-Māori New Zealanders.

Reference: <https://wero.ac.nz/resources/glossary/>

Process for development of this document

The Apology Group was made up of members of the NZ College of Clinical Psychology (NZCCP), the NZ Psychological Society (NZPsS) and the Psychologists Board (NZPB). We have met regularly in the last four years, consulted and had endorsement from He Paiaka Tōtara² and the Executives of NZPsS and NZCCP. People had read over the Wai claim and worked together on the development of the letter, a plan to deliver the letter and an action plan to address identified failings and deliberate harm. Advice was sought on mechanisms to deliver the apology and legal issues that may need to be considered from the National Standing Committee on Bicultural Issues and Te Whenua Law. Feedback was sought from participants at the NZCCP and NZPsS conference and incorporated into the final draft. On the advice of the Ministry of Health New Zealand's Chief Allied Health Professions Officer, NZPB was directed to stand back from delivering this apology on (12 December 2024).

Message to Tauīwi/Pākehā

There may be struggle within individual psychologists when reading this document. Acknowledging a role in perpetuating harm is difficult, but we are mindful that resistance or discomfort in this journey is a reflection of defensiveness and fragility that continue to reinforce the status quo. Addressing these issues will result in psychology in Aotearoa/ New Zealand being more responsive to all and we hold in the forefront of our minds historical, current, and ongoing oppression for tāngata whenua.

² He Paiaka Tōtara Manatōpū is the Māori Psychologist Association formed to support and develop Māori psychologists, academics and tauira.

Strategic Plan



An apology without action would be hollow. We commit to action on the failings outlined above. After the apology is delivered work will need to start on the remedying the issues identified.

Partnership

We are conscious that any plan needs to be developed and implemented in partnership, however we also wanted to demonstrate that we want to take action and have developed this draft as a way acknowledging the work to be done. The conversation has been started by many and the content below has been taken from the apology above and from the work of Dr. Michelle Levy in her *Indigenous psychology in Aotearoa: Reaching our highest peaks (2018)* and claim to Te Rōpū Whakamana i Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Waitangi Tribunal (2018) documents.

Significant kōrero between Tangata Tiriti and Tangata Whenua will need to occur to develop the plan and for it to be an agreed way forward. We will need to start the conversation to find who we should be talking to before we discuss what to change, and how it should be monitored and reported on to ensure change actually happens this time. All goals should be measurable to enable accountability. We would want to establish those measures in consultation.

Whilst working in partnership, we need to ensure the burden of delivery falls on the party that has failed in its duty, not on those that have had wrongs perpetuated against them.

Implementation

In order to ensure there is action we believe an accountability/oversight body would need to be established and funded. This should have a clear and agreed Terms of Reference and budget.

We suggest any plan will need to be woven through the strategic plans of NZPsS and NZCCP and monitored in partnership to ensure progress is made. We will seek to work with He Paiaka Totara to partner/guide. Once developed, an audit of the Strategic Plans of NZPsS and NZCCP against an agreed plan should be undertaken to ensure accountability is created and the profession works together in unity. Much of the work required falls outside of our organisations direct control – however we can take steps to advocate, pressure and lead the profession towards these goals. We also call on our members and colleagues to consider how they can take action in their sphere of influence to enable these goals to be achieved.

Accountability

Both entities, and any oversight body, need to report back to the profession on progress against the plan.



Articles	Commitment	Year 2	Year 4	Year 6	Results
Kawanatanga Partnership We apologise that we have not worked in partnership with Māori in the development of psychology in Aotearoa, delegitimised Māori in decision making and not engaged with Māori expertise.	We will build responsive and respectful relationships with Māori, Iwi and Hapū.	Develop an anti-racist action plan at governance level of our organisations. Develop a strategy to build relationships with the appropriate mana whenua for each institution and initiative to work in partnership with them.	A strategic mentoring, succession and training plan for Māori participation in key stakeholder organisations is developed and implemented.		Co-governance of organisations providing psychological services, psychology professional development and regulation.
	We will advocate to ensure that all practitioners and educators of psychology uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi	Advocate for accreditation systems and processes to be audited and revised to ensure they fulfil Part 3 of the Boards Accreditation Standards Advocate for accreditation committees to have appropriate membership to audit cultural components.	Advocate to ensure that programmes not meeting cultural competency criteria are not accredited		Competency to work with Māori is a core component of best practice within training programmes. Psychologists training programmes are delivered in partnership with and are inclusive of Te Ao Māori worldview.
	We will prioritise cultural safety for Māori accessing psychological services, both consumers of services and Māori practitioners	Advocate for mandatory cultural safety training, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi education for all psychologists entering Aotearoa Implement safe pathways so people can challenge racism and oppression Commit funding to training about Te Tiriti o Waitangi and anti-racism in psychological practice with an expectation that all psychologists will engage with this.	Advocate that competencies required to create cultural safety are included in all psychologists CPD CPD programmes will be provided (NZPsS, NZCCP) Culturally appropriate supervision, and cultural matching in Supervision is implemented	Advocate that audits focus on demonstration of Cultural Safety in practice Commit to addressing defensive strategies that centre whiteness at the expense of Māori or minoritised groups. This includes white fragility, white privilege, denial, white saviourism, 'moves to innocence' (it's not my fault).	Pākehā/Tauīwi psychologists are upskilled and Pākehā/Tauīwi psychologists are culturally competent

Tino Rangatiratanga Autonomy We are sorry for taking up space, autonomy, self-determination, and decision-making from Māori, and that we have not protected Māori knowledge, values, processes, and treasures. We apologise that we have ignored Māori worldviews that include wairua, whakapapa, whānau, te taiao and tikanga and kawa.	Provide leadership to build and utilise the collective capacity of existing Māori Psychologists and psychologists	Support the ongoing development of - He Paiaaka Tōtara – Māori Psychology Association	Utilising workforce data establish the critical mass for change in each area of specialisation and update plans based on this		Māori Psychologists have professional support and networks. A thorough understanding of the current state and future needs is driving action.
	We challenge the delegitimizing of mātauranga Māori that has arisen from a western model of training and practice	Advocate for compulsory papers in all training pathways Training Pathways are developed which are inclusive, relevant and encourage Māori participation Advocate for further development of a Kaupapa Māori psychology training programme	Actively support development of a Kaupapa Māori Scope or endorsement to recognise the expertise Challenge the use of western-based diagnostic tools and exclusion of mātauranga Māori knowledge in services supporting Māori.	Challenge use of models of assessment and treatment that perpetuate a biased and inaccurate portrayal of the capacities and skills of Māori, and perpetuate white supremacy in Pākehā	That Psychology is an inclusive profession in which Māori wish to participate. Competency to work with Māori is a core component of best practice within training programmes Diagnostic tools, assessment and treatment models that reflect Aotearoa and Te Ao Māori have been developed, researched and are in use.
	We commit to increasing the number of Māori psychologists to enable a “by Māori for Māori” approach	Advocate for workforce data, information and targets with regular reviews and action items to follow up Work with other organisations to enable a workforce Pipeline report to be developed which includes attraction into, and retention of Māori in psychology training and the profession. Actively advocate for ongoing support for Māori students in psychology training programmes	Ensure that we have an accurate understanding of the number of Māori psychologists operating within scopes, and delivering services across specialist areas Creating new scholarship and leadership opportunities for Māori psychologists and students		Māori practitioners are at least representative of the population but preferably, of those who would like to access services. Māori psychology trainees/ interns will have Māori-centred spaces and initiatives within training programmes

Oritetanga Participation We apologise that we have failed to ensure equitable rights for Māori, resulting in disproportionately low numbers of Māori as psychology students and practitioners, and limited access for Māori to meaningful and culturally appropriate services.	We will ensure a culture where discrimination, oppression and racism can be safely named and challenged	Code of conduct development and Code of Ethics review enshrine anti-racism requirements.	Actively support innovative solutions to address racism and inequity within psychology services and organisations. Review systems and processes to ensure the Codes of Conduct and Ethics are accessible to Māori and Complaints processes are inclusive and safe - to encourage grievances to be heard and resolved.	All complaints involving non-inclusive or culturally inappropriate actions are audited to ensure the right sanctions have been applied.	We will be role models for our members and commit to eliminating racism. We will have a safe, speak-up culture where discrimination, oppression and all forms of racism are named and challenged.
	We commit to resourcing solutions for Māori who have been harmed by our failure to address state and institutional abuses	Advocate for funding and resources for those harmed by psychology.			Māori harmed are provided safe and effective support that is accessible in a timely way.
Article 4: Spirituality, faith and tikanga We apologise that racist attitudes towards mātauranga Māori and tikanga have resulted in the undermining of their role in healing and a failure to recognise their value in psychological theory and practice.	We commit to fund and protect Kaupapa Māori knowledge, approaches, practices and research	Research programme and dissemination mechanisms established and funding committed to this			Māori belief systems are fully integrated into care provided
	We commit to equitable access for Māori to receive and utilise Māori psychology	Create a database of culturally safe services and/or psychologists			That Māori recipients of psychological services are able to receive them from a Māori psychologist.

<https://www.psychology.org.nz/journal-archive/Reaching-Our-Highest-Peaks-2018.pdf>

https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt_DOC_137601318/Wai%202725,%201.001.pdf

https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt_DOC_234270260/Wai%202725%2C%201.001%28a%29.pdf

