

# Decolonising thinking, being and relating\*

A teaching unit on challenging colonial legacies and imagining decolonial futures

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## Year

Years 9–13

## Level

Level 5 and above.  
The resources can be adapted to suit senior or junior secondary learning programmes

## Duration

7–8 weeks

## Learning areas

English, Social Sciences, Arts (Drama, Visual Arts, Dance)

## Inquiry focus

Decolonising thinking, being and relating

## Description

This teaching unit engages with the effects of colonisation on indigenous ways of knowing, relating and being. It then engages with current indigenous whenua (land) and moana (ocean) struggles as sites of contestation over meanings, values and ways of relating with te taiao (the natural world).

## Key understandings, knowledge & actions

- Examine the philosophical grounding of European colonialism
- Observe how indigeneity/indigenous are framed and consider why this matters
- Understand the effects of colonisation on indigenous ways of knowing, relating and being
- Correlate philosophical ideas about our place in the world with practices that enact the values and relationships associated with these ideas
- Explore how indigenous ways of knowing, relating and being continue to contest Western colonial values today
- Use our imaginations to start decolonising ourselves

\* The authors would like to sincerely thank Dr Maria Perreau and Holly Bodman for their valuable feedback on this teaching unit.



## Decolonisation

### **Kia ora kaiako mā!**

We are really pleased that you have decided to engage with the important topic of decolonisation. By bringing this topic to the classroom, you are contributing to the efforts of decolonising education as well as decolonising thinking, being and relating in Aotearoa New Zealand.

We have put together some questions that we invite you to think about before bringing these learning experiences to your students. Perhaps the following questions will provide a generative opportunity for a department/staff team activity to be discussed among colleagues. As we are teaching in a “post-colonial” context that is still strongly influenced by Western values, it is important that we reflect on the following questions:

- What is considered knowledge, and what is left out of that category? Who holds valid/accepted/universal knowledge and whose knowledge appears as invalid/limited/folkloric?
- What kind of relationships with nature are enacted in Western knowledge? What does the term ‘natural resources’ tell us about Western relationships with nature?
- What are the relationships with whenua (land), moana (ocean) and te taiao (the environment) that appear in indigenous cosmogonies? What can a concept such as ‘tangata whenua’ tell us about indigenous relationships with nature?
- What happens when disagreements arise between Western and indigenous ways of relating with te taiao/the environment?

We also invite you to consider different possibilities and approximations of social knowledge when looked at from new vantage points. For example, how is the field of social studies troubled when:

- We take seriously the idea of non-human agency (such as through the concepts of mauri/mana)?
- We extend the understanding of social relationships to non-human elements (through whakapapa, kaitiakitanga)?

Here, we use *troubled* to indicate that fixed understandings are challenged. *Staying with the trouble* involves embracing the complexity of thinking through the challenge, and, we suggest, might be a better way to approach these questions, rather than seeking ready-made or final answers. We encourage you to stay with the trouble as you think and discuss these questions with your colleagues before approaching them with your students through the activities in this unit.

## Glossary of terms

- **colonisation:** The process of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous people of an area, through military force, as well as through the imposition of the colonisers' institutions, values and ways of knowing and understanding the world.
- **cosmogonies:** Accounts of the origin of the universe. By giving an account of how order emerges from chaos or form from formlessness, a cosmogony also establishes the ways different beings are expected to relate in order to assure the ongoingness or continuity of the universe.
- **decolonisation:** Involves decolonising the mind, the heart and the ways of relating with the environment and with others. It endeavours to overcome the practices of oppression towards different human groups brought about and sustained by colonialism.
- **Eurocentrism:** An ideology and matrix of power that positions Europe as the highest and most advanced culture, makes Europe the universal reference of truth, knowledge, aesthetics and values and disregards all other cultures as inferior.
- **indigeneity:** The characteristic of being indigenous and identifying through genealogy, culture and values to an indigenous human group and to a land that is a co-constitutive part of their identity.
- **indigenous land/moana struggles:** Struggles that emerge due to disagreements between indigenous people and national, regional or local governments concerning the management of land/moana (ocean/sea) in territories to which indigenous people have an ancestral and spiritual connection. These struggles involve not just the physical territory but also meanings and ways of relating in the place.
- **indigenous people:** People belonging to culturally distinct ethnic groups who are native to a place. Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment.

## Glossary of terms

- **kaitiakitanga:** Māori word that expresses the guardianship and protection of te taiao (the natural world) that is a social responsibility given the deep kinship between humans and the natural world.
- **linear progress:** A linear conception of time; time is understood as a straight line extending from the past into the future with history taking place as a sequence of events. Linear progress is the idea that beings, including humans, evolve in time from lower forms of development or organisations towards higher forms of being and organising.
- **mana:** In a traditional Māori sense, mana entails power, status, influence, dignity, respect, status and influence. Mana is derived from atua (gods/ancestral forces). Animate and inanimate objects also have mana, as they, too, derive from the atua, are associated with people imbued with mana and/or are used in significant events.
- **manaakitanga:** A Māori concept that encompasses hospitality, kindness, generosity, support. The base of this word – manaaki – joins two things, mana and aki (uplift). Manaaki is to encourage or uplift the mana of others.
- **mauri:** A Māori concept that denotes the life principle or vital essence, the essential quality and vitality of a being or entity.
- **Moana Nui a Kiwa:** The Māori name for the great ocean (the Pacific).
- **relationality:** A way of understanding and living in the world that takes relationships as the foundation. Things 'are', not in absolute terms, but are constituted by the relationships in which they take part and exist.
- **taiao:** Māori word for the natural environment that contains and surrounds human beings. It encompasses all the offspring of Papatūānuku (the Earth Mother) and Ranginui (the Sky Father), who are connected through whakapapa (ancestry). The concept of taiao brings attention to the interdependence of all beings.

## Glossary of terms

- **tangata whenua:** (First) peoples of the land. Indigenous to Aotearoa New Zealand.
- **values:** The important principles or ideals about what is important that are shared by members of a group or culture.
- **whakapapa:** Popularly, whakapapa is used to mean genealogy, but the Māori word itself literally means 'to create a base or foundation'. Whakapapa in practice is the recitation of genealogies or stories which create a base or foundation of meaning for people. As whakapapa can include genealogies or stories about the entire world, they express ways by which people come into relationship with the world, with people, and with life. Whakapapa therefore bind all things.
- **whenua:** The Māori word for land, and also for placenta. In its polysemy, this word suggests that land and people cannot be understood separately from one another, as evidenced by the term 'tangata whenua'.



# Learning experiences

## 1. The Great Chain of Being: Philosophical underpinnings of European colonialism

Through an embodied approach to “The Great Chain of Being”, this learning experience generates an understanding of the mythical foundations of Western thought. Unravelling the core beliefs of Christian Europe about the world and the place of humans in it, we explore how these beliefs relate to the practice(s) of European colonialism.

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## 2. Māori cosmogonies: Stories of origin

With a focus on storytelling, this learning experience explores several Māori cosmogonies (creation stories), linking them to fundamental Māori concepts such as whakapapa and kaitiakitanga.

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## 3. Land struggles: Contending worldviews

In this learning experience, we engage with Mauna Kea, Hawai‘i, as a case study to explore what happens when Indigenous and Western worldviews enter in conflict around the management of and relationship to whenua/land.

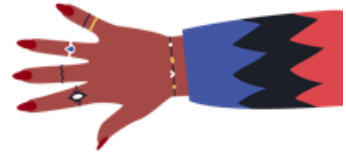
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## 4. Decolonising futures through the imagination

In this learning experience, we engage with song, poetry and fiction as creative mediums that can push forward the endeavour of decolonisation. We use the imagination as a powerful tool to summon and make visible and palpable hopeful futures that eschew the colonial script.

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# The Great Chain of Being



## Description

This learning experience engages with a graphical representation of 'The Great Chain of Being', a hierarchical conception of the nature of the universe that encapsulates some core beliefs of Christian Europe and contributes to the philosophical underpinnings of European colonialism.

## Key concepts

- Linear progress
- Hierarchical organisation
- Eurocentrism

## Learning outcomes

- Engage with the philosophical underpinnings of European colonialism through visual arts and drama
- Identify the relationships between philosophical/scientific ideas and material and cultural practices
- Engage with possible alternative understandings of the place of place in the world through embodied imagination

## Materials

- Copies of [Worksheet 1](#) (one per student)
- Paper craft
- Coloured markers and crayons

## Resources



- [Explanatory sheet 1](#) (for teachers)
- Image: *The Great Chain of Being* by Didacus Valades (1579), included in [Worksheet 1](#)

## Learning sequence

### Activity 1. Interpret an art work

Hand out the copies of [Worksheet 1](#), featuring the art work by Didacus Valades (1579) representing the Great Chain of Being, a common understanding of the hierarchy of beings in early modern Europe.

Give students 5–10 minutes to look at the art piece and think about the questions on the worksheet. Then, discuss the following questions as a class:

- What are the different categories/species represented in each step of the chain of being?
- How are elements organised in this graphic representation? Think about what hierarchies are being represented. Who can rule over whom?
- Why do you think that heaven and hell appear in this painting? What do these places represent?
- What does it mean to be closer to or further away from heaven in the Great Chain of Being? What do you think are the consequences of being placed at the top and bottom?
- Is the Great Chain of Being also a *moral* scale?

*Make sure students are able to identify the different categories represented, which include, from bottom to top: God, angels, Man, birds, aquatic animals, land animals, plants, soil/minerals and Satan. Note that, of the earth beings, humans occupy the highest category.*

### Activity 2. Drama: Frozen frames

Ask students to get together in groups of 4. Ask them to come up with an embodied representation/sculpture of the Great Chain of Being (taking out God, angels and Satan). They can do so by standing in line, or at different height

levels, with each member representing a different link of the chain, according to the hierarchy of the Great Chain of Being.

Each group has a turn to show their 'frozen frame' in front of the class. The teacher might want to press the 'play button' to make each frozen frame come to life: students will then 'unfreeze' to show the category of being they are representing 'in action'.

Back in their groups, students are asked to shift places in the line (while holding to the category they originally represented) and explore what happens when a new category exists at the top of their Chain of Being. Give them time to explore different options (embodied experience) and offer them some provocation questions to discuss in their groups:

Questions to ask:

- What are the implications of having humans at the top of the hierarchy?
- Is this still the way some of us understand our place in the world?
- Do you think that this worldview has had consequences for ecological sustainability? Why/why not? In what ways?
- What would a world in which trees/see animals/soil were at the top of the hierarchy be like?
- What are the consequences of altering the order?

Let each group create a new frozen frame in which they arrange the different categories of being and the relationships between them in a new way. Each group gets a turn to show their new frozen frame.

Questions to ask after seeing all of the frozen frames:

- Do the frozen frames still represent hierarchical relationships?
- What is the place of human beings in the new frozen frames?
- In what ways do the new frozen frames offer hopeful or dire visions for the future of the planet, in terms of sustainability? How do you get this impression?

### **Activity 3. Draw an alternative representation**

Each group is given a big piece of craft paper. Their task is to draw an alternative and more hopeful version of The Great Chain of Being, one that can show the way for a more respectful relationship with other natural beings.

*Tell students the representation does not have to follow their revised frozen frame or use a linear or hierarchical structure. Encourage them to draw from their diverse cultural knowledges and values in order to represent a different disposition towards the relationships between all beings.*

## Beyond the learning

### Extension activity 1. Questions for further discussion

- How has the Great Chain of Being influenced our way of understanding the world today?
- What have been the consequences of understanding mankind as the master of creation, in terms of ecology and sustainability?
- How is the Great Chain of Being related to racism and colonialism?

*The idea of the existence of more and less-evolved beings that informs the Great Chain of Being offered a framework of thought that was applied later to the understanding of different human groups. The idea that there existed a category of uncivilised/savage humans who had not yet achieved full humanity (through civilisation) became one of the central notions that made colonisation possible.*

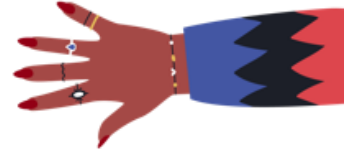
### Further resources

Press article: *Rethinking 'race' in Aotearoa* by Dame Ann Salmond (2021).  
<https://www.newsroom.co.nz/rethinking-race-in-aotearoa>

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# Māori cosmogonies: Stories of origin



## Description

In this lesson plan, we approach Māori cosmogonies (stories of origin) and link them to fundamental Māori concepts including whakapapa and kaitiakitanga. The aim is to understand the relationships between the stories and ways of relating and being in the world.

## Key concepts

- Indigenous cosmogonies
- Māori cosmogonies
- Relationality
- Whakapapa
- Kaitiakitanga

## Learning outcomes

- Deepen understandings of Māori fundamental concepts and the relational underpinnings of te ao Māori (the Māori world)
- Experience the importance of origin stories and understand how they are embodied in practices and relationships
- Imagine and produce accounts of the origin of the universe

## Materials

- Copies of [Resource A](#) (one origin story per group of five students)
- Copies of [Worksheet 2 \(one worksheet per student\)](#)
- Mobile phones
- Sound editing software (optional)

- Arts and crafts
- Recycled materials

## Resources

- [Explanatory sheet 2](#) (for teachers)
- Video: *Toi Tū Toi Ora Exhibition Teaser* by Winstanley (2020).  
<https://www.thistooshallpass.nz/?fbclid>
- Website link: *Te Kete Ipurangi*  
<https://eng.mataurangamaori.tki.org.nz/Support-materials/Te-Reo-Maori/Maori-Myths-Legends-and-Contemporary-Stories/A-trilogy-of-Wahine-Toa>

## Learning sequence

### Activity 1. Watch and discuss introduction to cosmogonies video

During 2020, Auckland Art Gallery hosted the exhibition 'Toi Tū Toi Ora', a selection of Māori contemporary art organised around Māori cosmogonies (creation stories). With your students, watch this 3-min video, in which the narration of Māori cosmogonies comes alive through glimpses of different contemporary art pieces.

*Share with them that the telling of stories is part of an oral tradition in Māori culture that was passed on from generation to generation (as in the recitation of genealogies). Ask students to pay attention to how the cosmogony is narrated in the video, as well as to the soundscape of the narration. Explain that, within oral traditions, the prosodic elements of intonation, rhythm, tone and gestures are fundamental to the stories themselves.*

Video link: <https://www.thistooshallpass.nz/?fbclid>

## Activity 2. Read and interpret origin stories

Get students in groups (four to five students per group) and give each group a copy of one of the origin stories ([Resource A](#)). There are three different stories, featuring Hinenuitēpō, Hineahuone, and Papatūānuku, so, depending on the number of students, there might be multiple groups with the same story.

Give students time in their groups to read the story they have been given. Allow them to do a bit of online research (if available) about the atua (god/powerful ancestor) that their story talks about.

As a link with the English curriculum, you might want to draw attention to the literary elements of the stories:

- The poetic images and metaphors used
- The function of the first-person narrative employed
- The role of repetition

## Activity 3. Creatively explore origin stories

*For the following activity, we offer a range of possibilities for you to choose from, depending on the resources available to you and the possibility of working with colleagues from dance, drama, technology or visual arts for this learning experience.*

The task for each group is to produce the story. There is a multiplicity of options to accomplish this. The first part of the production involves the narrative, the storytelling. Each group will have the option to either record their voices as they read (using their phones), or memorise the narrative (each person of the group memorising one paragraph) and perform it in the way of spoken poetry (see explanatory note).

*Ask students to pay attention to the elements of storytelling and explore ways they can use tone, intonation, rhythm, gestures, singing, polyphony (more than one voice reading specific words/sentences to highlight them) in order to make the stories come alive.*

After they have recorded/learnt the story, they will add a second layer to the creative exploration. They will engage with photography/dances/frozen frames/soundscapes/character design in order to produce an accompaniment to the narrative, generating a multisensory experience of the origin stories.

*The following are some options for this stage of creative exploration. You might come up with others. Give students options so that the work of each group is distinct.*

**Using sound:** You might want to play the 'Toi Tū Toi Ora' video again and ask students to pay attention to the composition of sound in the background. What can they hear? Point out that the sound is not random but was composed to accompany the narrative. Ask students to use their phones to record sounds to accompany their origin stories. Recordings can include the sounds of nature (wind, trees, birds), of the city (cars, noise, machines), made with their bodies (tapping fingers, rubbing their palms or even reproducing sounds from nature such as wind), or made with musical instruments. If students have access to computers (and it would be awesome to have the support of the technology teacher), they might be able to use a sound editing software (such as Audacity, which can be downloaded for free) to put the narrative and the soundscape together. Sound editing software allows for playful interaction with the volume and the speed of the sounds and enables users to overlap sounds. This software will allow students to match each part of their story with the corresponding background sound and produce one unique audio track that they will present to the rest of the class.

Useful resources:

Sound editing software:

<https://www.audacityteam.org/download/>

Quick tutorial on how to use Audacity:

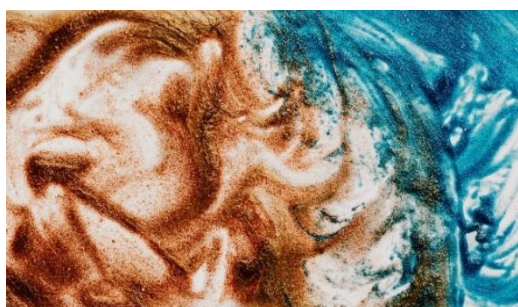
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ClwSNm362E>

Alternatively, if you do not have access to computers, students can record and name the sounds in their phones and play them along with the corresponding part of their narrative when they present it. This can be



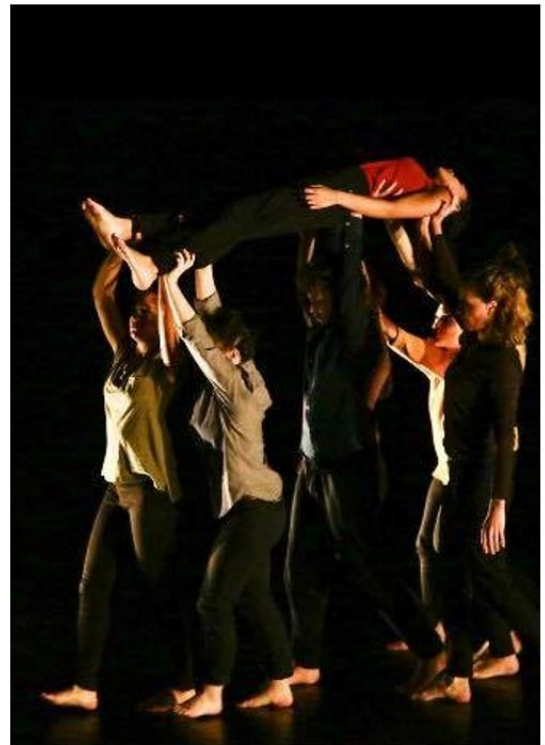
done most easily if there are two phones in the group, with one playing the story and the other playing the sounds that make the soundscape.

**Using photography:** Students can use photography to produce images that will accompany each paragraph of the story. Invite them to compose the images they photograph, using their bodies (frozen images/shadows), elements from nature (leaves, sand, soil, flowers) or arts and crafts materials. They might use a combination of all of those to compose images to photograph. Encourage students to pay attention to light, colour, symmetry, reflection and composition and to use their 'selfie' literacies and the apps on their phones to play with these aspects of photography in their compositions. Ask them to assemble the series of photographs (ideally 10 or more) in the order they accompany the narrative. If possible, they can use a projector to display the photographs or print them and present them as an 'installation' to provide the audience with a multisensory experience of the story.





**Using dance/drama:** If you can work through this activity with a dance/drama teacher, it would be awesome, but you can also work through this option with your students if you feel comfortable. Invite students to create a sequence of movements (choreography) or frozen images (with transitions) that they can perform to accompany each part of the narrative. Encourage them to use their whole bodies (arms, head, hair, hands, fingers, torso, legs, facial gestures), to incorporate a variety of levels (low/floor, medium/kneeling, crouching, high/jumping, lifting, extending arms) and to include different qualities of movement (floating, dabbing, wringing, thrusting, pressing, flicking, slashing and gliding).



Students can also draw from their cultural dance knowledge to put together movements/poses. Tell them they do not need to compose movements/body images that literally represent each part of the story, but can use symbolic representations or just use the narrative as inspiration for each movement/pose. Once they have rehearsed their choreography or frozen frames (with transitions) a few times and are ready to present their work, have them do so in front of the class. The narrative can become the background sound of their dance, with one of

the group members doing the storytelling while the rest do the dance/movements. Alternatively, they can use background music to accompany the story and their movements.

**Using spoken poetry:** If students choose to perform the story in the way of spoken poetry, ask them to focus on the prosodic elements of speech, such as tone, intonation, volume, rhythm, musicality, polyphony. For example, working as a group, they can identify words/sentences that they can say in unison to give more power to those parts of the story. Performing spoken poetry as a group is like dancing a choreographed piece together, as each person must know the cues to follow to start their bit or join in. They can also use gestures and body music (percussing the floor with feet or tapping parts of their bodies with their hands, using different rhythms) to create the atmosphere of the narrative. You can invite students to watch spoken poetry group performances to get some inspiration.

This is a good example by the collective *Ngā Hinepūkōrero*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiUivy62SCE>

**Using character design** through make-up and attire creation (with recycled materials). In order to work with this option, you will need a set of materials for students to work with, such as: newspaper, cardboard, scissors, glue, glitter, large brown paper grocery bags, fabric, chalk, markers, paintings, a stapler and staples, strings, ribbons, pom poms, elastic bands, shiny and bright paper or other craft materials for decorating. You might also want to include body paint and make-up.

After reading the story of their atua, students will choose a person from their group who will wear the dress of the atua. Together, using the materials at hand, the group will design the ornaments and dressing of the wahine toa of their story. Other materials they can use include elements from nature, such as fallen leaves and flowers. As a group, they can also come up with some postures or gestures that the character will use as the narrative progresses.



*If any of the previous options do not suit your needs or you do not have the resources, you can focus on the storytelling component. Ask students to come up with a way of telling the stories as a group. Even if they are simply reading the text aloud, encourage them to improve their oral expression. Ask them to use straight body posture, to connect with the audience by looking at them, to vocalise each word, to play with intonation as they read/perform their stories for the group.*

#### **Activity 4. Reflect on and write origin stories**

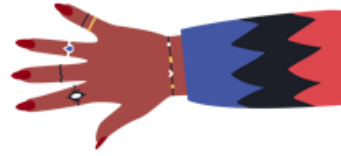
*After having engaged with the three cosmogonies through different sensorial and creative experiences, your students will be ready to reflect on the role of origin stories and their importance to indigenous people. For this, you will use the individual worksheets ([Worksheet 2](#)).*

First, ask students to read about the concepts of whakapapa and kaitiakitanga and think about how those concepts are related to the stories they have worked with. Open up a discussion and give space for students to express their views.

After discussing the issues presented on the individual worksheet, give students time for the subsequent creative writing task.

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# Land struggles: contending worldviews



## Description

In this learning experience, we engage with one case study (Mauna Kea, Hawai'i) to explore what happens when Indigenous and Western worldviews enter in conflict around the management of whenua/land, moana/ocean or other natural beings.

## Key concepts

- Land struggles
- Mauna Kea
- Occupation movements
- Protest
- Civil disobedience
- Relationships with whenua/awa/taiao

## Learning outcomes

- Get an insight on the complexities of bicultural relationships in formerly colonised nations
- Engage critically with Western frameworks (institutions, knowledge systems, assumptions)
- Gain awareness of the value of Indigenous worldviews
- Analyse how different understandings of the place of humans in the natural world translates into different natural resource management practices
- Gain knowledge of struggles by indigenous people for the management of land and natural resources/beings

- Consider different ways to manage disagreements with those who hold authority

## Materials

- One copy of [Resource B](#) (cut out the cards beforehand)
- One copy of [Resource C](#)
- Projector or computer to show the videos

## Resources

- Video: *Why Native Hawaiians Protesting Giant Telescope on Mauna Kea Aren't Going Anywhere* by Ali Withers, NBC Left Field (2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxdV7i54Rfc>
- Video: *Like a Mighty Wave: A Maunakea Film* by Imouye, Mikey/ Puuhonua Puuhuluhulu (2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4J3ZCzHMMPQ>

## Learning sequence

### Activity 1. Watch and discuss video 1

*During the first part of this unit, we will explore a struggle indigenous Hawaiians are currently involved in, involving the protection of Mauna Kea, which is, according to Hawaiian cosmogony and traditions, the most sacred place on all the Hawaiian Islands.*

*The conflict started in 1968, when the state Land Board issued a general lease to the University of Hawai'i to build an observatory on Mauna Kea. Over the following years, 13 telescopes were built on the site. In 2010, a new permit was requested and granted to build a thirty-meter telescope (TMT), despite the opposition of many indigenous Hawaiians.*

*Since 2015, kia'i (protectors) have been taking action to stop the construction of the TMT and revoke the permit. This has involved protests, petitions, international diffusion, roadblocks to stop the transportation of workers and equipment and other*

*forms of action. Several kia'i, including tupuna (elders), have been arrested by the police.*

With your students, watch this 10-min video, which presents an overview of the Mauna Kea struggle, including the two conflicting positions.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxdV7i54Rfc>

After watching, ask your students:

- Had you heard about the Mauna Kea struggle before today?
- Can you make any links between Mauna Kea and other land struggles you are aware of?
- What are your thoughts on these land struggles?

## **Activity 2. Values continuum: Take a position/identify underlying values**

You will need to print [Resource B](#) for this activity. [Resource B](#) includes nine cards with statements representing different positions on the Mauna Kea TMT. The statements on the cards have been extracted from news and academic articles, and they include the different stances of the people involved in the conflict.

Before starting this activity with your students, it can be valuable to revisit the definition of 'values' from the glossary:

**values:** the important principles or ideals about what is important that are shared by members of a group or culture.

In terms of whenua/land, individuals and groups typically hold one or more of the following values:

- **Capitalistic values:** Nature is capitalisable, that is, can be exploited as a resource for profit.
- **Relational values:** Humans have a relationship with the natural world that entails practices of mutual care and co-responsibility.
- **Colonial values:** Indigenous land can be justifiably confiscated through the process of colonisation. These values promote/allow for the continued dispossession of indigenous people of their ancestral lands.

- **Decolonial values:** Indigenous people have sovereignty over ancestral land that has been/was once alienated through colonisation.

*It might be useful to write the above values on the whiteboard before moving on.*

*For this activity, you might want to move the desks aside and create some open space in the middle of the classroom so that students can walk from the back wall to the front wall. **The front wall will represent the opinion 'I totally agree with this statement' and the back wall will represent the opinion 'I totally disagree with this statement'.** After hearing each statement card, students can position themselves anywhere along the line, forming a continuum of opinions.*

After reading (or asking a student to read) each card, give some time for students to decide where they want to stand. If they agree with the statement, they should walk towards the front; if they disagree, they can walk towards the back. Alternatively, they can find a place somewhere in the middle. Wait until students have found their places and ask them to discuss with the people that are near them why they have chosen to stand at that position. Allow 2–3 minutes for those conversations, and then ask two or three students (ideally representing distant positions) to share why they agree or disagree with the statements. Allow for movement of students at every point, as engaging in dialogue might result in a shift in their position.

Finally, ask students to **identify the underlying values** of those statements.

Repeat the same activity for each card.

At the end of the activity, you might want to reflect with students by asking:

- How do we form our opinions?
- What/who do we need to be mindful of when forming our opinions?
- How can we disagree with others in a respectful manner?
- What influences us to change our mind over an issue?
- Do we need to have an opinion on every issue?

### **Activity 3. Watch video 2 and discuss**



With your students, watch the second video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4j3ZCzHMMPQ&t=814s>

*If you do not have enough time to watch the full 15-min video, you can play the following extracts: 0.0-0.52' 4.04'-5.45' 7.51'-12.20'.*

The idea of watching two different videos on the same topic is to make students attentive to the fact that the information we receive has a particular framing, depending on the authors, their backgrounds and values, what they want to portray and what they are interested in.

Ask students:

- How are these two videos different?
- What conclusions can we make from each?
- How do they shape our stance towards the Mauna Kea struggle?

It is important to note that traditional media has often worked on the side of settler society, producing in many cases negative stereotypes of indigenous people and invalidating their struggles. While this is still happening today, we have seen small shifts in the media. An example of this is the apology to Māori published on *Stuff* (news site):

<https://interactives.stuff.co.nz/2021/02/our-truth-history-aotearoa-new-zealand/>  
[https://www.rnz.co.nz/assets/news/250121/eight\\_col\\_stuff\\_2.jpg?1606677914](https://www.rnz.co.nz/assets/news/250121/eight_col_stuff_2.jpg?1606677914)

*The way traditional media portrays indigenous people is a very important topic of its own. The videos and news article are a good start to approach this topic, which could develop into a whole lesson in and of itself, if you and your students are interested in expanding on it.*

#### **Activity 4. Discuss the place of protest**

Play this 10min extract [min 23-33] from Māori TV's 'Ake, Ake, Ake' episode 1 for your students. The clip depicts SOUL (Save Our Unique Landscapes) members presenting to the Auckland Council on the Special Housing Area designation of



Ihumātao: <https://www.maoritelevision.com/shows/ake-ake-ake/S01E001/ake-ake-ake-episode-1>

..

After watching the extract, read to your students the position of Māori lawyer and scholar Moana Jackson regarding the effects of colonisation on indigenous legal systems:

*Moana Jackson states that one of the consequences of colonisation is that indigenous law or justice systems become inoperative, making it necessary for indigenous people to reframe and redefine their rights from within Western law.*

Open up a discussion to address the following questions:

- How does framing and defining indigenous people's rights from within Western law put them at a disadvantage?
- What options do indigenous people have within a Western legal system?
- What options do we have when we disagree with the law/authority?
- How can we make ourselves heard?
- Is protest a legitimate form of citizenship?
- What sorts of things might we need to consider in order to plan a protest?

### **Activity 5. Frozen frames**

*This is a quick drama game that will help students understand through embodied learning the different ways of relating to the mauna (mountains) that appear in the Mauna Kea struggle.*

Students get in groups of appx four (make sure the total number of groups is an even number 2, 4, 6).

Half of the groups will have the role of kia'i (protectors) and the other half will be the workers in charge of building TMT.

Ask students to imagine that they are standing in Mauna Kea, either as kia'i or TMT/government workers. Each group will make a 'frozen frame' (a still shape created with their bodies) that represents their relationship with the maunga

they are standing on. Ask each group to discuss the question that is relevant to their role:

- How do kia'i/kaitiaki perceive and relate with the maunga? Are they standing in protest? Sitting down connecting with the maunga? Are they lying down?
- How do TMT workers perceive and relate with the maunga? Are they drilling? Are they trying to push protectors away? Are they happy to be part of the TMT project?

Give the groups of students 3 minutes to create their frozen frames. Ask each group to show theirs in front of the class. While each group presents, ask the other students (the audience):

- What do you see?
- What is represented in the frozen frame?

The next step is to merge two groups: one group of kia'i and one group of workers will come together. Now, they have to create a new frozen frame in which they are still committed to their previous role, but they are also trying to position themselves in relation to the new actors involved. Give the groups 5 minutes to create the new frames and then allow each group to present in front of the class. Again ask the other students (the audience):

- What do you see?
- What is represented in the frozen frame?

### **Questions to reflect on after the activity:**

- What is the power dynamic in this conflict? What stance/worldview exercises power over the other?
- How can the important differences between the two parties be negotiated?
- Are both positions equally valid?
- How can an acknowledgment of the wrongdoings of colonialism inform the negotiation process?

## Activity 6. Role play

Based on the second video and the arrest of tupuna by the police, invite your students to be part of a small role play activity.

The fictional situation for the role play will be the court trial of the people that were arrested while peacefully protesting and blocking the road access at Mauna Kea. (Refer [Resource C](#))

### Roles:

- One student will act as the judge and will moderate the discussion
- Two to five students can act as the defendants (they can only speak to their lawyers)
- Four students will act as the lawyers for the defendants
- Four students will act as lawyers for the state

The remaining students will act as the jury (make sure the jury includes an odd number of students). They will have to vote in the end to decide whether the defendants are found guilty or innocent of the charge.

### The scenes:

1. The judge reads the charge ([Resource C](#))
2. Lawyers have 10 minutes to present their case regarding why the defendants should be considered guilty/innocent of the charge. (The judge moderates, giving equal time to each team.)
3. The jury gets 10 minutes to deliberate. They finally vote to decide whether the defendants will be found guilty or innocent.

## Activity 7. Explore and create a visual expression about #ProtectMaunaKea

Invite students to explore on the internet and social media @ProtectMaunaKea and #ProtectMaunaKea on their phone/computer. After watching and reading information related to this indigenous struggle, students design (using your preferred materials) a visual piece that could inform people about what is happening at Mauna Kea.

## Beyond the learning

### **Extension activity 1. Research indigenous struggles as expressed in social media and present findings**

*In Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori people continue to engage in kaitiakitanga, the protection of whenua, moana, te taiao and all 'living' beings. For a very long time, they have been standing against infrastructure and extraction projects in the territories that they whakapapa to. In recent years, social media has served as an important medium to organise protests and make those struggles visible.*

Invite your students to do some research into current or recent indigenous struggles in Aotearoa or other places of the world that they feel linked to. Ask them to explore in which ways those movements have engaged with social media in order to achieve some of their purposes.

*Examples of recent/current struggles in Aotearoa New Zealand include Ihumatāo and Pūtiki.*

You can ask students to present in front of the classroom the case they have researched. Give your students choice by allowing them to present their case study research in a format of their preference, e.g., poster, PowerPoint, Prezi, encyclopedia entry, video.

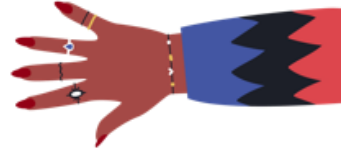
### **Further resources**

A useful resource to develop the topic of the Mauna Kea struggle further is:

<https://www.maunakeasyllabus.com/>

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# Decolonising futures through the imagination



## Description

In this learning experience, we engage with song, poetry and fiction as creative mediums that can push forward the endeavour of decolonisation. We use the imagination as a powerful tool to summon and make visible and palpable hopeful futures that eschew the colonial script.

## Key concepts

- Decolonising the imagination
- Decolonising relationships with te taiao
- Indigenous futures

## Learning outcomes

- Gain an understanding of how the arts can work to strengthen the endeavour of decolonisation
- Generate connections between theoretical concepts and poetic images
- Use the imagination in creative writing to craft and make visible alternative and hopeful futures

## Materials

- Copies of [Resource D](#) (one per group of five students)
- Individual copies of [Resource E](#)
- Individual copies of [Resource F](#)
- Video projector (with sound)
- A4 paper sheets

- Magazines (to cut out)
- Glue

## Resources

- [Explanatory Sheet 3](#) (for teachers)
- Report: *Indigenous Resistance Against Carbon* by Goldtooth, D. & Saldamando, A. (2021). <https://www.ienearth.org/indigenous-resistance-against-carbon/>
- Legislation: *Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017* <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2017/0007/latest/whole.html>
- Song: *KA MĀNU* by Rob Ruha (2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlj3cKbWgRE>
- Video: *UN Climate Summit Poem 'Dear Matafele Peinem'* by Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner (2014). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJuRjy9k7GA&t=19s>

## Learning sequence

### Activity 1. Reimagine relationships with te taiao through collage

Indigenous ways of being, knowing and relating can serve as beautiful inspiration to put the imagination in motion and to create other narratives beyond the settler narratives that have become monological, and occlude or make invisible other ways of existing in the world.

In a world that faces enormous ecological challenge, learning, thinking and imagining with indigenous people has become more important than ever. Indigenous people across the world have knowledge that could help heal our damaged planet and restore the sacredness of human relationships with the rest of beings with whom we share the universe.

According to the report *Indigenous Resistance Against Carbon* (2021), 'Indigenous resistance has stopped or delayed greenhouse gas pollution equivalent to at least one-quarter of annual U.S. and Canadian emissions.'

Indigenous people have imagined carbon-free futures, and they have moved to action in order to achieve such futures. In this way, indigenous visions of the future have started transforming the present.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, indigenous visions are also opening new possibilities of being and relating. An example of this can be found in the achievement of legal personhood for the Whanganui River. This could be the beginning of a legal movement whereby indigenous understandings start finding place within Western Laws.

This activity involves two tasks: students reflect on the consequences of recognising the legal personhood of the Whanganui River and then create a collage to represent a place as a human being.

### **Reflection:**

In groups, students read a copy of [Resource D](#), an extract of the Public Act that recognises the legal personhood of the Whanganui River as well as its status as a living being.

Students discuss in their groups the following questions:

- Have you heard about this Act before?
- Do you know of other natural beings that have been recognised by the law as living beings with the rights, powers, duties and liabilities of a legal person?
- What do you think are the consequences of legally changing the understanding of the river as a resource to an understanding of the river as a living being?
- Would you like other natural beings to be recognised by the law in a similar way? Which ones?

### **Collage:**

Ask students to think about a mountain, waterway, beach or other area of land that they feel connected to (For example, they might feel connected to a

mountain they often climb, or a specific tree that gives them wonderful shade, or a beach they often go to for a swim in the summer.)

Using the collage technique, students will create a visual representation of that place, representing it as a living being and honouring the kind of relationship they have with that place/being (they can use the Whanganui River Act to think about how would they describe that place/being).

They will cut out shapes or images from magazines and compose a visual piece. They can also include some words to the collage and even perhaps natural elements such as flowers and leaves, or other materials they might have access to.

*The cover image of the book “The Relational Self: Decolonising Personhood in the Pacific” offers an excellent example of what reimagining relationships with te taiao through collage could look like. <https://ubiq.co.nz/p/the-relational-self-decolonising-personhood-in-the-pacific-9789820109681>*

If possible, create an exhibition corner in which all student work can be displayed.

## **Activity 2. Video/song: Listen and discuss**

Show students the song video *Ka Mānu* by Rob Ruha (2019). *Do not give out copies of the song lyrics yet.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlj3cKbWgRE>

Discuss with your students the following questions:

1. How might this song be related to decolonisation?

*Draw students’ attention to the observations that:*

- *The song is written and performed in te reo Māori*
- *It is done by Māori for Māori*
- *It brings forward a sense of community, togetherness and hope*



- *It speaks to the valuable contribution Māori people make to ecology and conservation*
  - *It highlights the importance of the Māori struggle to protect their knowledge, culture and relational worlds*
2. What issues that figure in the video are related to the topics explored through the unit?

*Some of the images from the video relate strongly to topics we have approached:*

- *Law vs Lore (0.35')*
  - *Protectors – kaitiaki*
  - *Ihumātao (protest, occupation, indigenous movements)*
3. What Māori values are being portrayed in the song video?
- *Relational values (sense of community)*
  - *Kaitiakitanga of the natural world*

Hand out copies of [Resource E](#) with the lyrics of the song in te reo and English. Give students time to read the lyrics.

Show the song video again and encourage students to sing along.

Discuss these questions with your students after the second view:

1. How many flags appear in the video? What flags are they? Why are all those different flags flying together? What is the common cause?
2. The song speaks about a waka/vessel that “shall never be overturned nor unsteadied”. What might that waka represent?

### **Activity 3. Experience poetry**

Hand out individual copies of [Resource F](#).

Allow time for students to read the poem ‘We Are Because We Don’t Have’.

Give students 5 minutes to write down the answers to these questions:

- How does the poem make you feel?
- What emotions does it bring up for you? What ideas? What thoughts?

Play the video of the poem 'Dear Matafele Peinam'.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJuRjy9k7GA&t=19s>

Give students 5 minutes to write down their answers to the above questions in response to the video/poem.

Ask students to identify the two different narratives of the future that appear in the poem 'Dear Matafele Peinam'. *E.g. Forecasts of disaster Vs. Hope and activism*

Discuss the sense of the expression 'We are', which appears repeatedly across both poems.

Allow for students to share their reflections with the group.

Ask students about the kind of futures that these poems prompt them to envision.

#### **Activity 4. From words to poems**

Ask students to highlight 10–15 words from the poems and song that they like, feel inspired by or find important.

Using those words, students will write an original poem inspired by the reflections arising from this unit on decolonisation.

## Beyond the learning

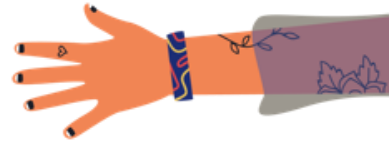
### **Extension activity. Writing fiction**

Encourage students to imagine that it is the year 2550, and a group of children are listening to the story of how humanity managed to curb the ecological degradation of the planet and save thousands of species (including themselves) from the brink of a mass extinction. The storyteller is also teaching children how are they currently living and working to restore the damaged planet they inherited.

Ask students to write individual accounts of the story that is being told to children of the year 2550.

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# The Great Chain of Being



*Kia ora, kaiako mā! Hello, teachers!*

*This lesson plan intends to explore the philosophical foundations of European colonial enterprise. We are using the graphic representation of “The Great Chain of Being” to visualise the linear and hierarchical way of organising different life forms that lay not only at the base of man’s exploitation over nature, but also runs through Eurocentric beliefs of a superior human race.*

*To facilitate teachers’ understanding of this lesson plan, we propose you read aloud this brief extract from an article by Professor of Māori Studies, Dame Anne Salmond.*

‘The Great Chain of Being,’ was a cosmic hierarchy tracing back to the ancient Greeks. In mediaeval times, God sat at the top of the Great Chain, followed by archangels and angels, a divine sovereign (the origin of ‘sovereignty’), the ranks of the aristocracy and commoners, with men over women and children; and ‘civilised’ people over ‘barbarians’ and ‘savages’, sentient and non-sentient animals, plants and rocks.

In this top-down way of thinking, everything in the lower ranks of the Great Chain of Being was subservient to those higher up, owing them obedience, service and tribute. This provided a God-given mandate for an array of exploitive relations, from ranked classes to racism, sexism and human ‘dominion’ over the earth and all other life forms.

During the mid-eighteenth century, the Great Chain was laid on its side and the Western ‘arrow of time’ (lineal history) run through it. This produced ‘stadial’ theories of human evolution, a one-way ‘progress’ from hunter and gatherer societies to pastoralism, agriculture, and industrial ‘civilisation’.

These also have their contemporary echoes, from ideas of ‘more advanced’ and ‘less advanced’ societies, to notions that ‘private property’ is a more ‘civilised’ way of working with the living world than, for example, the idea

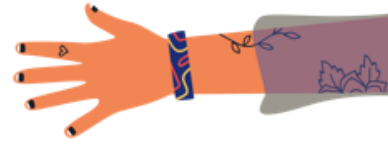
that the Whanganui River, or the Urewera, or Hinemoana, the ocean, owns itself.

*Extracted from: <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/rethinking-race-in-aotearoa>*

*During the lesson, students will explore, through visual art and drama, the hierarchical relationships between the different living beings. They will also be able to come up with new ways of understanding the human place in the world/universe as well as their relationships with other beings.*



# The Great Chain of Being



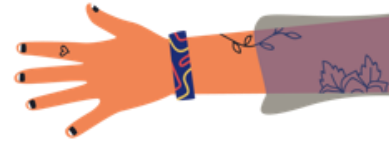
*The Great Chain of Being, by Didacus Valades (1579)*

Questions to discuss as a class:

- What are the different categories/species represented in each step of the Chain of Being?
- How are elements organised in this graphic representation? Think about what hierarchies are being represented. Who can rule over whom?
- Why do you think that heaven and hell appear in this painting? What do these places represent?
- What does it mean to be closer to or further away from heaven in the Great Chain of Being? What do you think are the consequences of being placed at the top or at the bottom?
- Is the Great Chain of Being also a *moral* scale?



## Māori cosmogonies



*Haere mai! Welcome back, teachers!*

*During the first learning experience, we explored with students one of the philosophical foundations of Western modern thought. The purpose was to encourage students to critically examine Western knowledge practices which have served to justify colonisation and ecological exploitation.*

*In this second experience, we turn to **indigenous knowledge** in order to problematise its dismissal as secondary to, or less important/valid than, Western science. By looking at **Māori cosmogonies**, we open the exploration of what important lessons can be learned from Māori philosophy, not only to create a path to decolonisation but also to reimagine and weave a more sustainable future.*

*In this lesson plan, we will work with three atua/powerful ancestors. The idea is to form either three or six groups in the class and give to each group one of the origin stories. (If there are three groups, each group will have a different story. If there are six groups, there will be two groups for each story)*

*For the first part of the activity, the focus will be on developing students' oral expression and storytelling skills. The second part of the activity offers some flexibility, depending on the resources available, to creatively explore the stories in groups and create a way of expressing the story through different mediums (see options below).*

*If you have the opportunity to spend two days on this teaching experience, students will be able to gather resources outside the classroom (taking photos, recording sounds, gathering recycled materials) to develop their creative approach to the stories.*

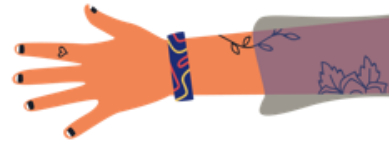
*The learning experience concludes with a worksheet that will allow students to reflect on the importance of cosmogonic narratives and to connect this learning experience with the previous one. The questions proposed ask students to contrast the Great Chain of Being (as a foundational concept encompassing linear progression) with*



***whakapapa*** (as a foundational concept encompassing **interconnectedness and relationality**).

*These are some of the questions we would like students to engage with during this learning experience: How is each worldview embodied? What relationships and practices correspond to each? What is valuable in each? How can we thread the worldviews together to build a more sustainable and just world for all creatures to thrive in?*

## Māori cosmogonies



### Origin story 1: Papatūānuku

My flesh, muscle, sinew, and cartilage are composed of rock, granite, dirt, mud, stone, sand, and all that is dense and solid.

My bones are fossilised trees, veins of granite, gold, silver, copper, and all precious metals, branching from my core, from the centre of my being.

My blood is molten lava, liquid rock, water, boiling mud, nourishing bone and flesh through a labyrinth of rigid veins.

My breath is sulphur, gas, air and mist, seeping through countless layers of hardened skin, a skin of regenerating life. Life for my children, my grandchildren and the countless offspring which derive from them. They are the forests, plants, seas, rivers and creatures which clothe me. They are my wondrous korowai which sustains us all.

This is my story.

My new born, Rūaumoko, suckles at my breast, kicks and plays as any child, causing my belly to rumble, my body to shudder and my children to be wary. Rūaumoko stayed with me when I was separated from Ranginui, Sky Father, when we chose to allow light to come between us.

It was the right time for us to grow apart, my husband and I. It was also the right time for our children to grow and understand the responsibilities of becoming all they possibly could. And so we allowed our son Tāne to brace himself against me, to thrust his legs upward, pushing Sky Father away, to sever our embrace.

And the journey of following the unspoken words of our forbearers continued. This was their gift to us, an imprint in our consciousness, handed down from Te Kore, the nothingness, through Te Pō, the nights. A gift of love which we in turn passed on to our children, to continue the cycle of creation.

Creation requires pain, requires sacrifice, requires possibility and belief, as food, water and light for any living thing. Our separation was a time of inward turning – a time of discovery, a time of power, a time of regenerating energy, a time of change.

My korowai which cloaked my body in the past was also the foundation to receive the seed for the future. Ranginui instructed Tāne, our son, to plant the seed, to weave it into the tapestry of my korowai. And as he did so, Ranginui's tears nourished the seed, so too did light give the seed food, fulfilling a promise from the past.

This was the beginning of my journey as the mother of all, from whom all living things are created, to whom all will eventually return.

We had allowed our children to create a space between us, a space which admitted light. Light which allowed growth and the ability to stand tall. And now that our children have been free to create whatever their will desires, some have forgotten from whom they came.

But I hear them calling, a karanga of acknowledgement, of understanding that they will not forget. They call to celebrate a new day, to honour those who have passed to the next world, they call to acknowledge their ancestral parents, Sky Father and Earth Mother.

I am Papatūānuku, Earth Mother.

*Taken from: <https://eng.mataurangamaori.tki.org.nz/Support-materials/Te-Reo-Maori/Maori-Myths-Legends-and-Contemporary-Stories/A-trilogy-of-Wahine-Toa>*

## Origin story 2: Hineahuone

My flesh is the deep red clay of Kurawaka, the blood of my parents. This blood is my blood, a sacrifice Ranginui and Papatūānuku endured so that I, the first woman, could come in to being. My bones are the bones of my ancestors, gifted by my mother. My breath, the first breath of life was mine to take – was mine to hold, was mine to release.

And following the first breath was consciousness, encompassed in this newly formed body. A body filled with love, beauty, wonder, and every emotion that I, the first human vessel, could possibly contain.

Blood, bone, flesh, spirit, and breath. 'Tihei mauri ora!' Behold I live!

This is my story.

Following the separation of Ranginui and Papatūānuku, light flooded the world. And with light came the possibility of life.

The children of Ranginui and Papatūānuku had only talked of life, had debated and argued over it. They had not experienced it for themselves, not in the physical forms that tormented their imaginations.

Life could not be commanded, could not be forced. Life in the physical form eluded the children of Ranginui and Papatūānuku long after Tāwhirimātea's rage had abated.

The two celestial parents, newly separated, needed time to consider how life, in all its wondrous forms, should be created. They prayed, at this time, that their lives apart would continue to follow the pathways of their ancestors, that their decision was truly for the future.

Tears of love and remembrance spilt from the eyes of Ranginui, as too did ascending mists of love rise into the sky.

And after this time of sadness, of letting go, the tears and mists which followed finally settled, covering the newly woven korowai Papatūānuku had prepared long before the separation.

It was Tāne, the male essence who followed the instructions of his father, who was gifted the seed and guided by him to weave life into the fabric of the enormous korowai. A korowai of life, of creatures, of living things, held by the earth, nurtured with water and warmed by the sun.

It was the human form that eluded Tāne, and was hidden from him. Papatūānuku waited until she knew the time was right, then led Tāne to her sacred place, to Kurawaka. This was where he fashioned me from the red clay he found there.

I was the first. The first to breathe, to touch, to feel, to hold, to know, to experience everything of the newly created world.

I was in awe with what had preceded me, with what had ensured my creation. Overwhelmed with responsibility, I felt the guiding hand of Papatūānuku in my prayers, in my blood and in my body. I felt the spirit of Ranginui in my mind and the breath of Tāne in my lungs. These things helped me understand.

And when Tāne came to me he helped sooth my fears, showing me his world as an atua, the creations that had passed by him. And in turn I helped him understand what it was to be human, to feel, to touch, to experience the world as a physical being. And from that time we brought our worlds together to conceive our first born, Hinetitama, whose journey was also written before her time.

I am Hineahuone, the creator of people.

*Taken from: <https://eng.mataurangamaori.tki.org.nz/Support-materials/Te-Reo-Maori/Maori-Myths-Legends-and-Contemporary-Stories/A-trilogy-of-Wahine-Toa>*

### Origin story 3: Hinenuitepō

My pores excrete the absence of light, darkness. My bones are memories of past lives, my flesh, nourished with stories and gifts left by those who continue past me. My arms are forever open, lovingly held in welcome.

This is my story.

Beyond Te Rerenga Wairua, beyond the pōhutukawa tree standing at the cliff's edge, is the darkness. The darkness is my marae, my whare tipuna, my tūrangawaewae, my home. This is the place I choose for myself, this is where I dwell.

I wait for them here, the children, the grandchildren, the parents, the grandfathers and grandmothers. I wait for them to come to me, 'Haere mai, haere mai, haere mai ra...' I call.

"Welcome my children, to your ancestress, to your tipuna whaea. Welcome to life beyond the earthly realm, welcome to Rarohenga, the home of the spirit." My tupuna, Ranginui and Papatūānuku, were pushed apart and light entered the world. With light came possibility, aspiration and desire, a desire for growth, a desire for life.

It was Tāne who felt this desire in his bones and flesh, who sought that his desire be satisfied. It was Tāne who searched in vain until finally Papatūānuku, my grandmother, chose to guide his path.

And so Tāne came to Kurawaka, the pubic area of Papatūānuku, where the sacred blood of my ancestors, Ranginui and Papatūānuku had spilt into the earth. And from the red clay that he found there, he fashioned Hineahuone, the first woman, the first human, my mother.

I was conceived at this time when my parents joined themselves. As I grew inside my mother's womb, she sang to me the teachings of creation, gifted by my grandmother.

And as a young girl these teachings continued until I reached an age when blood became a sign of womanhood. Blood that not only shaped my mother but also shaped me, shaped my future.

And at this time questions of my past and future troubled me, questions of my place in this newly created world, questions of who I was to be. I asked these questions of my mother and she sent me to pose them to the carved posts of our whare.

The posts told me my father was of the spirit realm, an atua, my mother of the earth, a physical being, and I, the first born, the mātaamua, traversed these worlds, encompassing them both.

I realised as I read the carved stories that the animals, insects, plants and all living things were also part of this wider order of things. And that my father, mother and grandparents were the procreators, the storytellers.

This was when I wondered about the pathway of the spirit and also about the physical being, these two parts of myself. I wondered about the future of my siblings ultimately returning to Papatūānuku when their lives came to an end. I prayed to my grandmother to guide me, and a space opened up on the carved posts, a space for my future to be created.

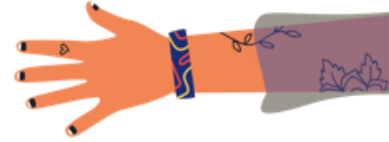
And as the newly formed carvings revealed themselves my journey became clear. This was the gift, he taonga tuku iho, from my grandmother, to my mother, to me.

And so I left my parents and travelled to Rarohenga, to receive all those who passed from the physical world to the next.

Since this time, I have welcomed them to my marae, my whare tipuna, my tūrangawaewae, to give thanks for past lives and to start anew.

I am Hinenuitepō, guardian of the spirit.

*Taken from: <https://eng.mataurangamaori.tki.org.nz/Support-materials/Te-Reo-Maori/Maori-Myths-Legends-and-Contemporary-Stories/A-trilogy-of-Wahine-Toa>*



## Origin stories: Whakapapa and kaitiakitanga

In traditional Māori knowledge, as in other indigenous cultures, everything in the world is believed to be related. People, birds, fish, trees, weather patterns – they are all members of a cosmic family.

This linking is explained in tātai (genealogies) and kōrero (stories), collectively termed whakapapa (meaning to make a foundation, to place in layers). Experts recite the whakapapa of people, birds, fish, trees and the weather to explain the relationships between all things and thus to place themselves within the world. This helps people to understand the world, and to know how to act within these relationships. In that sense, origin stories encompass values that guide human interaction with other beings.

Māori origin stories express a deep kinship between humans and the natural world. The idea of being born from the earth is the foundation for such kinship. When one is a child of the earth there is no sense of ownership of land – rather, one holds a sense of care towards it. This sense of care is embodied in the concept of kaitiakitanga. Kaitiakitanga means guardianship and protection. It is a way of managing the environment, based on the Māori worldview. A kaitiaki is a guardian. This can be a person or group that cares for an area such as a lake or forest or another element of te taiao (the environment)

*Adapted from <https://teara.govt.nz/en>*

## Workshop

- **Reflect:** How are the stories of Hinenuitepō, Hineahuone, and Papatūānuku related to the concepts of whakapapa and kaitiakitanga?
- What stories of origin do you have in your own culture?

Remember that origin stories are present in all cultures. Science offers origin narratives including the Big Bang and Evolution. These scientific narratives appear as universally valid given the pretension of science that it builds



knowledge that is universally valid. This pretension of universality has worked together with colonisation to dismiss local/indigenous knowledge and stories, which have been demeaned as myths and untrue, as they contradict Western scientific logic. Colonisation, besides involving military control, land expropriation, change of population balance and change of institutions (e.g: law), has also involved the colonisation of indigenous worldviews.

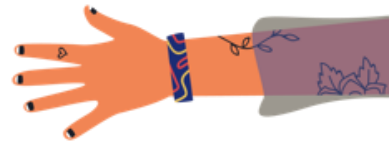
While the imposition of a dominant colonial worldview has been a reality for Māori people, they have managed to preserve much of their knowledge, practices, values and traditions until today. This does not mean that they resist scientific knowledge. Rather, they are able to embrace more than one worldview and can see themselves as both the children of Papatūānuku and the result of evolution. Western culture and its science practices have had more difficulty accepting the value inherent in indigenous knowledge, but that is slowly starting to shift.

Tensions between science pretension of universality and indigenous knowledge are still present in New Zealand today.

The Great Chain of Being that we studied in the previous learning experience is a component of Western cosmogonies. How are the ideas of the Great Chain of Being similar to or different from Māori cosmogonic narratives? What kind of relationships with the natural world are embodied in each origin story?

- **Creative writing:** After having reflected on the origin narratives that are present in your culture, now you have the possibility to create your own origin story. Remember to add information not only of the origin of human beings but of the world itself and the other living creatures. Remember that origin stories are important because they allow us to understand our place in the world as well as our relationship with all other beings.

## Land struggles



## Positions regarding Mauna Kea

1.

**The telescope should be constructed in Mauna Kea because it is best place in the world for it and the scientific knowledge that will come from it is important for the whole of humanity.**

'TMT scientists selected Mauna Kea after a rigorous five-year campaign spanning the entire globe that measured virtually every atmospheric feature that might affect the performance of the telescope. This represents the possibility of pushing our vision farther into space and our understanding farther back in time to help answer fundamental questions about the universe. It is very likely that TMT will enable discoveries that we cannot even begin to anticipate today.'

Source: <https://www.maunakeaandtmt.org/facts-about-tmt/>

2.

**Hawaiian Indigenous people should be respected for their decision to defend their most sacred place from desecration and environmental damage. TMT should not be built.**

'There is a deep-rooted Hawaiian phrase that underscores the importance of Mauna Kea: "mālama 'āina." There is no literal English translation, but it represents a profound cultural belief that is rooted in fidelity to a cause greater than oneself — the custody and stewardship of the land, preserving it for the next generation of Hawaiians.'

Source: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2019/09/06/hawaii-mauna-kea-respected-build-thirty-meter-telescope-somewhere-column/2078408001/>

3.

**Police should come and arrest the protestors who are blocking access to Mauna Kea, as they are endangering the safety of TMT workers and stopping a project approved by the law.**

'Hawaii's governor, David Ige, said at a news conference that he had issued an emergency proclamation that would allow the authorities to better manage roadways and cordon off certain areas on the mountain. He said the protests had created a dangerous situation, that roads were being illegally occupied and that the state would work to ensure the telescope's construction could begin.'

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/17/science/mauna-kea-protest.html>

4.

**The TMT should be built at Mauna Kea because it will bring economic benefits to the Hawaiian economy.**

'TMT Corporation, the nonprofit behind the telescope, estimates its project could inject more than \$US150 million to Hawaii's economy and create 140 high-paying engineering and tech jobs. It also says the construction plan has met all the legal and environmental requirements.'

Source: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-02354-5>

5.

**Although TMT might bring economic growth to Hawaii, this will not necessarily result in economic growth for indigenous people. Their call for privileging relationships with Mauna Kea over profit should be respected, and the TMT project stopped.**

'There are now 13 telescopes on the mountaintop, but they have brought less of an economic boom than expected. The telescopes were supposed to help change that and didn't. The problem is that most observatory jobs do not go to Hawaiians... Most jobs are outsourced to the universities and organisations that invest in the telescopes.'

Source: <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/30-meter-telescope-should-be-built-mauna-kea-2015-8>

6.

**The TMT must be stopped until an agreement is reached between both parties.**

'I think we need to halt construction and restart a conversation between the state, the universities and Native Hawaiians about potential alternative futures for Mauna Kea — which include restoring the ecological damage caused by the 13 other telescopes on the mountain and dismantling the 5 telescopes slated for decommissioning. Such steps would provide credibility that the University of Hawaii recognizes its responsibility to take care of Mauna Kea. Moving the TMT to an alternative site in the Canary Islands should also be seriously discussed in consideration of the community.'

Source: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-02304-1>

7.

**Protectors of the mauna should not block the road, as this is disrupting the scientific activity and work at the established observatories. They should look for alternative ways of getting what they want through legal avenues.**

'The shutdown is the longest interruption to scientific activity on Mauna Kea in the five-decade history of astronomy on the mountain. Technicians are able to make limited visits to the summit, where the telescopes are located; each is negotiated by the activists and the office that manages scientific activities.'

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-02354-5>

8.

**Protectors of Mauna Kea should continue with the roadblocks, as they have exhausted other legal actions and also because their arguments of having a sacred relationship with the mountain (as an ancestor and place of origin) are unlikely to be taken into account by Western institutions.**

'Our distinct claims to land, difference, meaning, and meaning making become irresolvable in settler courts, state discourses and Western scientific paradigms (because) any recognition of a distinct indigenous Kanaka ontology (Hawaiian worldview) or kanaka indigeneity might also require action, which would undermine the perpetuation of settler colonial antics on indigenous soil.'

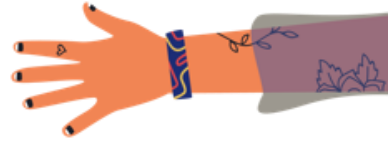
*Salazar, J. A. (2014). Multicultural settler colonialism and indigenous struggle in Hawai'i: The politics of astronomy on Mauna a Wākea (Doctoral dissertation, University of Hawai'i at Manoa).*

9.

**The conflict at Mauna Kea is not merely a struggle over land but a struggle about understanding, practices and relationships with the world and with others.**

'What is really at stake ... is a conflict between two ways of knowing and being in the world. For many Native Hawaiians and other Indigenous peoples, sacredness is not merely a concept or label. It is a lived experience of oneness and connectedness with the natural and spiritual worlds. It is as common sense as believing in gravity. This experience is very much at odds with the everyday secular-humanist approach of Western thinking that emerged out of the Enlightenment, and which sees no "magic" or "enchantment" in the world. And of course, seeing nature as inert facilitates both commercial exploitation and scientific exploration.'

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/heart-hawaiian-people-arguments-arguments-against-telescope-mauna-kea-180955057/>



## Charge pressed against the defendants:

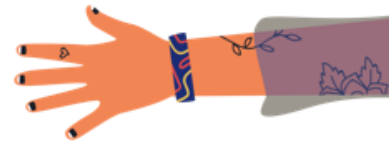
Obstructing government operations.

(1) A person commits the offense of *obstructing government operations* if, by using or threatening to use violence, force, or physical interference or obstacle, the person intentionally obstructs, impairs, or hinders:

- (a) The performance of a governmental function by a public servant.
- (b) The enforcement of the penal law.
- (c) The preservation of the peace by a law enforcement officer acting under color of the law enforcement officer's official authority
- d) The operation of a radio, telephone, television, or other telecommunication system owned or operated by the State or one of its political subdivisions.

The obstruction of government operations is a misdemeanour, penalised with a maximum sentence of 30 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

## Decolonising futures



*Kia ora, kaiako mā! Thank you for getting on board with your students in the waka paddling towards decolonisation.*

*In the previous learning experiences, we embarked on a journey that started with developing an understanding of the philosophical foundations of colonialism, the assumptions, taken for granted, that shape colonial ways of being, knowing and relating.*

*From that first learning experience, we started wondering and imagining how things could be Otherwise, how a hierarchical organisation of relationships between beings could give place to a woven whāriki (mat) of relatedness.*

*We then creatively explored stories, from te ao Māori (Māori cosmogony) and the wisdom of wahine toa (powerful ancestress). These stories embody a relational understanding of humans as part of nature and as connected through whakapapa (genealogy) and kaitiakitanga (co-responsibility) to other beings, including animals, moana (ocean), maunga (mountains), awa (rivers), whenua (land).*

*Then, we engaged with Mauna Kea, as a case study through which we explored what happens when colonial and indigenous ontologies (worlds) collide and enter in dispute not only over the management of nature/resources, but also, underneath that, over meanings, understandings and relationships.*

*In this last learning experience of the unit, we would like to point towards hopeful futures, futures that are starting to appear as more and more visible/viable/thinkable, thanks, in great part, to the indigenous people across the world who continue to resist the “one truth” ideology of the West. This “one truth” ideology is still very palpable, as was evident in the recent letter by 7 university academics published in the Listener, in which these academics claim that mātauranga Māori is not science and is less valuable than science as it is defined by Western standards is<sup>1</sup>.*

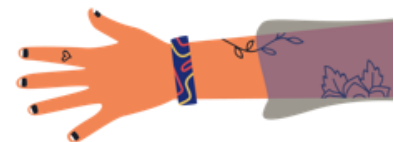
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<sup>1</sup> See the letter and a response to it here: <https://tinangata.com/2021/07/25/defending-colonial-racism/>

*Decolonising knowledge continues to be a fundamental endeavor in schools. This implies not only decolonising the school curriculum but also questioning the hierarchies that we have inherited from colonial worldviews that place some subjects over others and some types of intelligence over others. Even more, a process of decolonisation challenges the hierarchical ways in which school subjects are approached and students are related to. Teachers can play a fundamental role in this process by pushing the agenda of decolonisation of the curriculum, of the educational institutions themselves and of relationships in schools. That is the invitation and challenge that we bring to teachers with this unit.*

*In this final learning experience, we engage with music, poetry and fiction-writing and we wonder how we can tell different stories so that they will open a door to more hopeful futures: indigenous futures, futures that defy settler logics, relational futures, futures of abundance and of more loving relationships with te taiao (the natural world).*

*We also explore how indigenous futures (indigenous narratives and hopes for the future) are starting to become more tangible, thinkable and real, thanks to the engagement and activism of indigenous people. We briefly examine the achievement of legal personhood status for the Whanganui River to wonder what new possibilities become available when Western institutions allow themselves to learn from the worlds and knowledges of indigenous peoples.*



## Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017

Public Act 2017 No 7  
Date of assent 20 March 2017  
Commencement see section 2

### *Te Awa Tupua and Tupua te Kawa*

#### **12. Te Awa Tupua recognition**

Te Awa Tupua is an indivisible and living whole, comprising the Whanganui River from the mountains to the sea, incorporating all its physical and metaphysical elements.

#### **13. Tupua te Kawa**

Tupua te Kawa comprises the intrinsic values that represent the essence of Te Awa Tupua, namely—

##### *Ko Te Kawa Tuatahi*

(a) *Ko te Awa te mātāpuna o te ora*: the River is the source of spiritual and physical sustenance: Te Awa Tupua is a spiritual and physical entity that supports and sustains both the life and natural resources within the Whanganui River and the health and well-being of the iwi, hapū, and other communities of the River.

##### *Ko Te Kawa Tuarua*

(b) *E rere kau mai i te Awa nui mai i te Kahui Maunga ki Tangaroa*: the great River flows from the mountains to the sea: Te Awa Tupua is an indivisible and living whole from the mountains to the sea, incorporating the Whanganui River and all of its physical and metaphysical elements.

##### *Ko Te Kawa Tuatoru*

(c) *Ko au te Awa, ko te Awa ko au*: I am the River and the River is me: The iwi and hapū of the Whanganui River have an inalienable connection with, and responsibility to, Te Awa Tupua and its health and well-being.

##### *Ko Te Kawa Tuawhā*

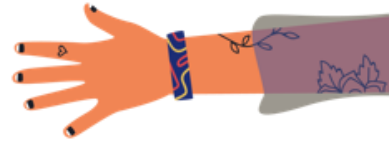
(d) *Ngā manga iti, ngā manga nui e honohono kau ana, ka tupu hei Awa Tupua*: the small and large streams that flow into one another form one River: Te Awa Tupua is a singular entity comprised of many elements and communities, working collaboratively for the common purpose of the health and well-being of Te Awa Tupua.

#### **14. Te Awa Tupua declared to be legal person**

Te Awa Tupua is a legal person and has all the rights, powers, duties, and liabilities of a legal person.



# Decolonising futures



## Ka Mānu

E te hunga whakapono iti  
Me haere Māori i runga i te  
moana nui  
E tā!

Ka whati te moana nui – e tā!  
Ka whati te moana roa – e tā!  
Ka mānu, ka mānu tonu e tā – e tā

He waka tē ai tahuri – e tā!  
He waka tē ai tīkoki – e tā!  
Ka mānu, ka mānu tonu e tā – e tā

Hikohiko te uira,  
Kanapa i runga  
Whētuki i raro rā  
Ka papā, ka rū ana  
Ka porepore koa e  
Takinakina e – E tā!  
Takinakina e – E tā!  
Takinakina e – E tā!  
Takinakina e – E tā!

## English translation

Oh ye of little faith  
Walk forth with ease upon the great ocean

Though the seas may roar  
And the oceanic expanse rage  
You will remain afloat

For you command a vessel that shall never be overturned nor unsteadied  
You will remain afloat

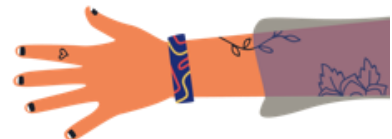
Lightning may flash

Illuminating the heavens above  
Sending rolling thunder below  
Resounding, trembling  
Though overcome with fear  
Ascend  
Prevail  
Lead  
Sing!

Note from the composer:

In the face of great adversity, faith is a powerful agent; Faith in the divine, yourself, your purpose, your kaupapa, your supporters, your atua and the core beliefs that maintain your aroha and your mana in times of great hardship. With the growing conflicts at Ihumātao, Mauna Kea, and Standing Rock, the continued marginalisation of indigenous peoples, perpetual injustices historic and current, and the narratives surrounding the celebrations of the 250th anniversary of the landing of Captain James Cook in Tūranga – faith is the stabiliser, the enabler. Faith continues to manifest goodness and moral courage in all the kaupapa we uphold and the immense burdens we carry. Whakapono affords us clarity in times of calamity and an unyielding drive to endure and overcome, so that our spirit may still rejoice to the gentle song of peace that faith brings to our struggle.

## Decolonising futures



### We Are Because We Don't Have

By Upolu Luma Vaai

We don't *have* the spirit  
We *are* the spirit  
We don't *have* land  
We *are* the land  
We don't *have* the ocean  
We *are* the ocean  
We don't *have* relationship  
We *are* relationship  
We don't *have* stories  
We *are* the story  
Rooted  
Connected  
Fixed yet fluid in bonds of  
Being in *Areness*  
Born from the depths  
Of *Inness*  
I am 'in' the community  
The community is  
'In' me

I live  
Because  
We *are*  
A chorus of  
Inextricable relatedness  
Breathing concords  
Of differences  
Savouring variations  
Of unity

*Have!*  
And perish in  
A unison of loss  
Uttered by

One-truth ideologies  
Secured by  
Systems of oneness

*Are!*

An all becoming source  
Whose becoming  
I become  
A genesis of harmony  
Visible  
In the sleeps of the stones  
In the breaths of the trees  
In the dreams of animals  
In the whispers of clouds  
In the speeches of waves  
In the walking of mountains  
In the re-turns of flowers  
In the rhythms of life and death

We *are*  
Because  
We don't *have*

*Extract from: Va'ai, Upolu Luma & Nabobo-Baba, Unaisi (2017) The Relational Self : Decolonising Personhood in the Pacific. The University of the South Pacific and Pacific Theological College (pp. 283-284).*

## **Dear Matafele Peinam**

*By Kathy Jetnil Kijiner*

dear matafele peinam,

you are a seven month old sunrise of gummy smiles  
you are bald as an egg and bald as the buddha  
you are thighs that are thunder and shrieks that are lightning  
so excited for bananas, hugs and  
our morning walks past the lagoon

dear matafele peinam,

i want to tell you about that lagoon

that lucid, sleepy lagoon lounging against the sunrise

men say that one day  
that lagoon will devour you

they say it will gnaw at the shoreline  
chew at the roots of your breadfruit trees  
gulp down rows of your seawalls  
and crunch your island's shattered bones

they say you, your daughter  
and your granddaughter, too  
will wander rootless  
with only a passport to call home

dear matafele peinam,

don't cry

mommy promises you

no one will come and devour you

no greedy whale of a company sharking through political seas  
no backwater bullying of businesses with broken morals  
no blindfolded bureaucracies gonna push  
this mother ocean over  
the edge

no one's drowning, baby  
no one's moving  
no one's losing  
their homeland  
no one's gonna become  
a climate change refugee

or should i say  
no one else

to the carteret islanders of papua new guinea  
and to the taro islanders of the solomon islands  
i take this moment

to apologize to you  
we are drawing the line here

because baby we are going to fight  
your mommy daddy  
bubu jimma your country and president too  
we will all fight

and even though there are those  
hidden behind platinum titles  
who like to pretend that we don't exist  
that the marshall islands  
tuvalu  
kiribati  
maldives  
and typhoon haiyan in the philippines  
and floods of pakistan, algeria, colombia  
and hurricanes, earthquakes, and tidalwaves  
didn't exist

still  
there are those  
who see us

hands reaching out  
fists raising up  
banners unfurling  
megaphones booming  
and we are  
canoes blocking coal ships  
we are  
the radiance of solar villages  
we are  
the rich clean soil of the farmer's past  
we are  
petitions blooming from teenage fingertips  
we are  
families biking, recycling, reusing  
engineers dreaming, designing, building  
artists painting, dancing, writing  
and we are spreading the word

and there are thousands out on the street  
marching with signs  
hand in hand  
chanting for change NOW

and they're marching for you, baby  
they're marching for us

because we deserve to do more than just  
survive  
we deserve  
to thrive

dear matafele peinam,

your eyes are heavy  
with drowsy weight  
so just close those eyes, baby  
and sleep in peace

because we won't let you down

you'll see

*Retrieved from: <https://www.kathyjetnilkijiner.com/united-nations-climate-summit-opening-ceremony-my-poem-to-my-daughter/>*