



Non-Māori and the ground from which we see, speak and meet

**Stories about
connecting through
tūrangawaewae
conversations**



**Inclusive
Aotearoa
Collective**
Tāhono



Acknowledgements

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Background

Tūrangawaewae is a National Iwi Chairs process for having conversations about belonging. IACT has been using it to sit alongside other conversations we have run on belonging and inclusion. The tūrangawaewae conversations include online and face-to-face hui with Pākehā and Tauwi of Colour. Some of the conversations were part of our Community Voices webinars, where we asked people to share their tūrangawaewae stories.

Within the IACT team, we used the tūrangawaewae sessions to shape our team building activities, and to help us get to know those who joined our new and growing collaborations.

The Tūrangawaewae conversations showed us that those who took part can grow a deeper sense of belonging and connection in Aotearoa New Zealand. They are also a way of improving people's understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the responsibilities we hold as a society to honour Te Tiriti.

The kōrero we gathered from the conversations highlights the way that cultural background and experiences shape the way Pākehā and other Tauwi define belonging and their place in Aotearoa New Zealand. This then affects how they relate to Tangata Whenua. This document is a summary of what we learnt, and includes some case studies from the conversations.

What we learnt

How people understand tūrangawaewae is nuanced, fluid and may shift over time. For some it is a physical place, for others a spiritual connection. Recent migrants and refugees may feel they are in a middle space, somewhere between their country of birth and their home here in Aotearoa New Zealand. The tūrangawaewae conversations can help them bridge this divide and connect the rich heritage of their whakapapa to a sense of belonging here.

Although tūrangawaewae is a Māori way of expressing belonging, we see it as a universal concept. It allows us to connect through cherished memories and opens a space to begin talking about Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Overcoming loneliness through tūrangawaewae

Anna moved to New Zealand with her Kiwi husband. They planned to stay for just one year. Shortly after arriving her husband got sick, and they could no longer travel. He had a kidney transplant, and after that, they fell pregnant. Anna had a difficult birth experience and when her baby was three months old, her husband's new kidney failed. He waited a couple of years for another transplant and in that time, they had a second child. After her second child was born, she struggled with her mental health. It was a very stressful and tumultuous time:



‘Once I got out of the shell shock of the past few years, I realised I was so lonely living here. And I was sick of being lonely. I started a course in public health at MIT. One of my tutors introduced tūrangawaewae to me. It was a new word, but I could feel what it meant. My tūrangawaewae is in Sweden. It's a little village where I spent my summers. Knowing my interest, my tutor found an internship for me with Inclusive Aotearoa. I worked through data they had collated from tūrangawaewae conversations they had facilitated with Pākeha and ethnic groups.

It was amazing to read about and listen to people talk about their tūrangawaewae. I learnt so much about why I was feeling so lonely. It seems like a human, natural feeling. When you feel belonging, you feel safe. You can be who you are. To come across this concept, I realised so many things about where I had come from, the belonging I had been missing. It really helped me to make sense of where I was, and the feelings I was having. To have a word for this; it resonated so deeply for me and opened my eyes. I feel like I'm at peace with things in a different way.

Tūrangagwaewae is a human feeling. It's nice to know it's universal. People have a place that is their place. I am fortunate that I have never doubted my tūrangagwaewae or that this is my identity. My Swedish roots go back hundreds of years. I grew there, I sprouted there from the ground. I think it definitely helps to have a sense of identity and to know your tūrangagwaewae. It gives me strength and confidence to venture out in the world, because I have a place.

Reading the tūrangagwaewae stories helped me. I did my last assignment for the public health course on how to overcome loneliness and social isolation. Learning about the concept of tūrangagwaewae was like finding a little gem of knowledge that was missing for me. Loneliness. It's a massive issue in public health. If people know about the concept of belonging, of tūrangagwaewae, it could help them.

The name of my tūrangagwaewae is Årsta Havsbad and it's located in the archipelago of Stockholm, Sweden. It's a very beautiful little seaside village. I spent all my summers there which made it more magical because two to three months a year, all the kids from the city were there. I belong to this place, and it belongs to me.



Going there is like coming back to the womb. In my darkest moment when I was sick, I had the strongest feeling of wanting to go back there, for nature to hold me. When I went back there with my parents, it helped me to heal. **This place is where I am whole.**

Going Home 家 / Jiā

The word I use to describe my tūrangawaewae is 家 (Jiā – home). Coming to Aotearoa as an immigrant child who didn't come here with my mum and dad has been a journey of constant self-discovery of understanding who I am, and where and how I belong.

For me 家 [Jiā] is not about a physical space, but the connections with the people within my whānau [家人], my whakapapa, my roots, my culture, my language, and my friends. It's also about my connection to the land I was born in.

When I say 回家 – huí jiā – I'm speaking about returning home, even though I am often a stranger in Taiwan. The sense of home is the journey I take every few years to rekindle all these connections. My mother is my connection to my home. She connects me to my culture, my language, my land and my whakapapa. Hui jiā is also a sense of being looked after and looking after those close to me.

Going back home to Taiwan is also a connection to family members who may not be 'blood' but are family that I love dearly. Those that have patiently guided me. Those that have modelled what an older and younger relationship looks like and what reciprocal and harmonious relationships feel like. Ultimately, the love and care we have for one another makes us family.

In this land of Aotearoa that I call home, lie responsibilities to uphold and foster these relationships and to honour and acknowledge my relationships with tangata whenua, the people of this land. My love for the culture, the people, the language, the deep connection, the love I have of who I call my own. I thank those who have been, are on and will be on this life journey with me. (Taiwanese-Kiwi, male)



The grass, the trees and the quiet – it's just not complicated when it's home

Tūrangawaewae is the place where I started. My grandmother was very matriarchal, and she pulled everyone in. Having that sense of her bringing us together - being able to know that connection and how you can bring people together, that has stayed with me. Now, growing my own family, I want to instil that in them in a very core way. Being connected to my immediate family, that's one thing. Also, there's my grandmother. There are my cousins. They bring me back to my roots. There's a connection for me here in how Māori connect to their whakapapa. It brings me back. My grandmother's place provides that for me.

The image that stays with me is driving down the main road – the big road as we called it – from the town and then you'd turn off and go down and nothing was paved and depending on the weather it could be hard driving. That sense of simplicity, the grass, the trees and the quiet – it's just not complicated when it's home.

We all had a right to be loved by others in our family and that was most important ... they might completely disapprove with what you are doing but they would always love you. We were very much loved – so the right to be loved and feel that way was very much present. When I came home, I'd be hugged... When I get home, I'm safe.

It was expected that you would support your family in the same way that they had supported you and that you would honour your family. It came from a good place, the us versus them and not showing the bad side of what's happening in your family. The responsibility is to portray a certain face to the outside world. This expectation that we would live in a certain way, I'm asking myself right now: "Did I take this with me?" (Malay-Chinese Kiwi, Mum)



Tūrangawaewae conversations can allow migrant and ethnic communities to call on their rich and valuable heritage to guide their relationships with Tangata Whenua and Te Tiriti.

Navigating across two colonial histories

In Lanka, when you're introducing yourself, gama (ගම) or the village is often central to the conversation. The family name will also be brought up, and that's essentially your connection with others in the village. If someone came up to me, they'd ask: 'where is your village?' And I'd say: 'My mum's village is in Ratnapura. And through that conversation they would know that I have connections to different aspects of Lanka and to other villages.

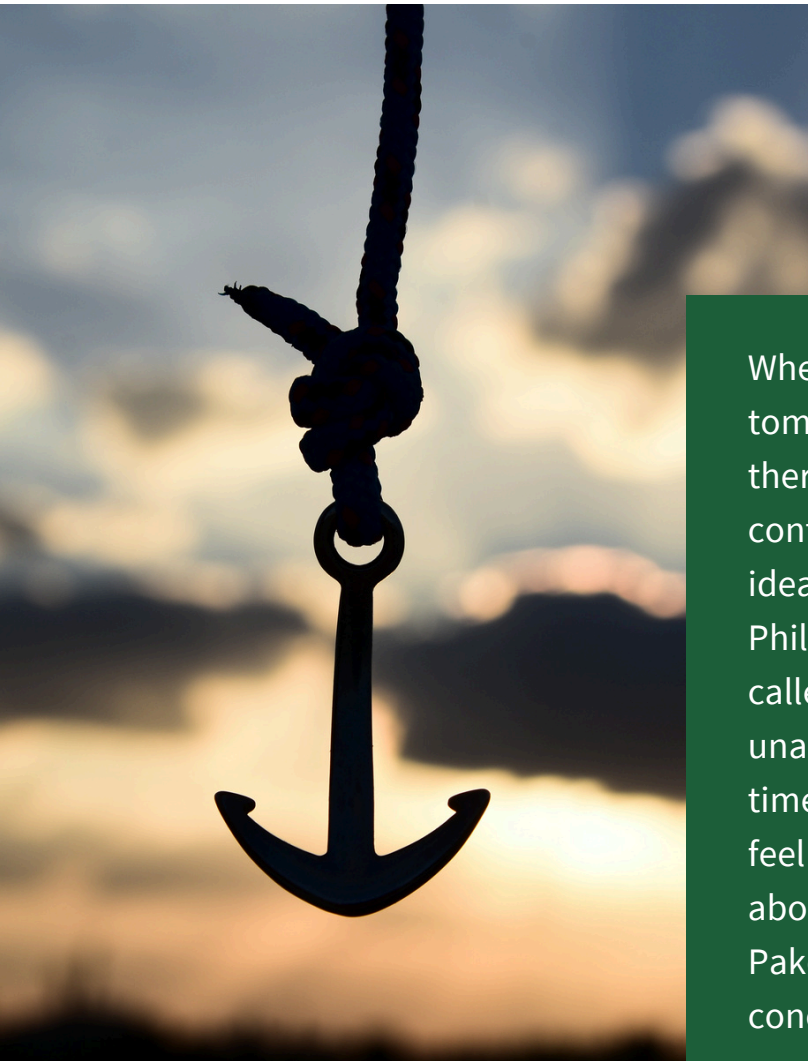
Dual identity is a difficult space to navigate – when you come from a colonial bloodline and then find you're navigating another colonial context in Aotearoa. When we land, we are dominated by a pākehā framework, which defines us. We don't really have authority. People say: "you're good at cricket. You like your tea. Beautiful tourism. You're a doctor or engineer." It's a process of colonisation.

So I thought, how do I honour what is essentially my whakapapa? As Moana Jackson said, your truth is your whakapapa. There's no denying the bloodline. It's on your skin. It's the DNA, the history that it carries down with you, down those generations. It's the historical context that comes with it. And then also, how do I understand the whakapapa of Mana whenua as well ... what is our responsibility going forward as we navigate this space?



How do we navigate this space without being defined by it, without being redefined into another colonial context? That's essentially how we have grounded our complex tūrangawaewae. For me it was learning pre-colonial art forms, learning to converse in both Tamil and Sinhalese. I'm Sinhalese, so attempting to get more into the songs and understanding the context and history has given me that positionality and grounding as we navigate our way forward and the mahi that we do. Even in times like now when there are struggles in Sri Lanka, we are still using that framework that Moana Jackson provided us, making sure that whakapapa is at the heart of our mahi going forward. (Lankan-Kiwi, male)

Some Pākehā struggle to articulate their tūrangawaewae (their place of belonging). There are those who have or are becoming aware of their obligations as tauiwi under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, along with the impacts of colonisation on Mana Whenua. They may be reluctant to claim a place of belonging because of this. Others are made uncomfortable, because the process can challenge them to recognise their Pākehā privilege and the impact of colonisation.



I don't feel a lot of the moor points

When I drive down my driveway tomorrow and my wife and dogs are there, then I will feel a deep sense of contentment. I've struggled with this idea of tūrangawaewae.

Philosophically I struggle with being called NZ European. I feel we are unanchored. For me, moving about 9 times before I was ten, means I don't feel a lot of the moor points. I thought about whether it was appropriate for a Pakeha like me to co-opt a Māori concept. It might not be appropriate for me to seek a Tūrangawaewae. (Pākehā male)

Most who sign up for tūrangawaewae sessions come with a commitment to confront racism and want to develop strategies to engage others in conversations about racism in our society, conversations that can be challenging, perhaps heated. Some have thought long and hard about racism and injustice and the links to our colonial past. Others have not, but their presence indicates an openness to learning anew.

A sacred space before the ships started to sail and things started to go wrong

Tūrangawaewae is where you feel greater than yourself ... for me it would be in nature at Porangahou, where you can shake hands with the angels. There are also two maunga there. When I drive past, I feel connected. Tūrangawaewae are the places where I can speak with passion... connect with others. I think your understanding of tūrangawaewae evolves with time. Māori have their whenua buried in the land and have that connection with the land. [As a pākehā] I don't have a place like that. Aotearoa is one of the best places to learn about this, as colonisation is still quite raw, and traditions are still very much alive.

The right I have is to be authentic, whatever that looks like – whether that's being vulnerable, or having a voice. It's a kind of pure right to be authentic in that space. It's about true connection to your own integrity. How do you sit in a place of pure integrity and then take it to another level? There is a responsibility to always come back to a place of love that links back to Tūrangawaewae.

Tūrangawaewae is like a very sacred space before the ships started to sail and things started to go wrong. The feeling is of something greater than you. It's the feeling of being in love, it's ecstatic almost whether it's with humanity or nature. You feel you're part of the universe. (Middle-aged Pākehā woman)

Others who have not explored our colonial past may not recognise how the words they choose when they talk about place and home may be hurtful. Asking Pākehā to reflect on tūrangawaewae can invite sharing of stories where they claim place/home in ways that hide or ignore the on-going impacts of colonisation in Aotearoa New Zealand.

These tensions provide opportunities for learning. For example, being able to talk about privilege and injustices from the past and present. People also reflect on the stories and ways of thinking that they have absorbed, that hold the injustices in place for now and the future. Facilitators need to allow for this learning, while making sure the space is safe for everyone, so that they all feel comfortable to speak. This can be challenging.

We are finding that with Pākehā participants, we must make sure they know that tūrangawaewae is not the same as caring about or nostalgia for a place ('the place we used to go to every summer'). Facilitators may need to move away from inviting people to 'share more', and instead, push participants to think about their role as manuhiri, and how they have gained from Māori being left out of so much of society over decades. When these conversations are carefully managed, they open opportunities to lead the participants into conversations about injustice, racism and colonisation.

For the facilitators, this means inviting tauiwi Pākehā and tauiwi of colour to be both vulnerable and open to others, as they identify the ground from which they see, speak, and meet. In closing our tūrangawaewae conversations, we encourage tauiwi participants to keep thinking about what was discussed and how they might change their kōrero around what was discussed. This allows the participants to be open to understanding the strong links between this mahi, their understanding of Te Tiriti and their role as Tangata Tiriti.



Whatever happens, there is a hidden hug ... it's like landing with your soul

My standing feet are where my family are. It's always a very exciting moment, a joyful moment when I am with family and friends. It makes me feel who I am. It always means a lot to me when I meet my family and friends. Those times when the tears are in my eyes, these are the moments that I know when I have arrived. When I arrived in NZ, I cried as I knew I had arrived, and my children were in a safe place. Whatever happens, there is a hidden hug from the atmosphere ... either from the trees, or the clouds. It's like landing with your soul.

There were no easy times for me growing up in Palestine. There was always something going on, an intifada, or a conflict. The only access to freedom was through education. It was the only thing I could control that would allow me to step forward.

My parents raised us in the context that we would always support each other. Even now when my siblings are living in different countries, we still have that connection even though there are millions of miles between us. I have a responsibility to keep trying, whatever I'm faced with, because of the trust others have in me and the safe spaces others have created for me. No matter what happens, it's all about the journey I've been through. I'm learning something from this journey about my resilience. There'll always be some way to find a solution to what I'm experiencing. It's a huge responsibility to keep on trying.


Why is this my tūrangawaewae? It's about unconditional trust and love and acceptance. It's the moment when I have all these feelings coming together. That's when I know it's okay, that things will be fine. I feel empowered. It's also about the reality that you are who you are and that trusting yourself is the first step to really belonging to this place. When the physical and emotional borders are removed - that allows me to trust who I am, and I can allow myself to feel supported.
(Palestinian woman)





**Te Tiriti is a warm welcome to others
to come to Aotearoa.**

**Tūrangawaewae conversations help
us to develop our sense of place and
connection to one another. This is
vital to creating an Aotearoa where
everyone feels they belong.**



Although tūrangawaewae is a Māori way of talking about belonging, we see it as a concept that applies to everyone. Tūrangawaewae allows each of us to connect with one another through the sharing of cherished memories and opens a space to talk about Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

While we are all New Zealanders, we are different New Zealanders. Te Tiriti affirms for Māori their tūrangawaewae and gives others in Aotearoa a tūrangawaewae here. Te Tiriti also strengthens everyone's rights. Māori as tangata whenua have two sets of rights. They had indigenous rights before 1840, and then from the signing of Te Tiriti, Māori had citizenship rights as well. While only Māori can be indigenous to Aotearoa, the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi gave others the authority to be here and to also have rights and responsibilities.

Inclusive Aotearoa Collective Tāhono is a nationwide community-led project working to create a fully inclusive, Te Tiriti-based future for Aotearoa New Zealand. Our vision is of an Aotearoa New Zealand where everyone feels they belong.

We are available to facilitate this tūrangawaewae workshop across Aotearoa New Zealand. If you have a group of friends, colleagues or community members who would be interested, please do contact kiaora@inclusiveaotearoa.nz for a chat.

