

Tēnā koutou katoa

Ko Ingarangi te whakapaparanga mai

Ko Newcastle te whenua tupu

Ko Ros Moffatt au

Tēnā tātou katoa

What Waitangi Day means to us. Me and my husband, Vic, who are of British ancestry.

It's the National Day, it's a day for all NZers to celebrate the signing of our founding document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

A year ago, days after relocating to Katikati, the Waitangi Day service was the first community event we attended. We thought we'd discovered a WD custom of Hone's amazing seafood chowder, served, amusingly to us, in antique fine china.

We now know that's not a custom, but we *have* discovered Katikati's vibrant community, with rich and diverse cultures, and, as we're seeing today, a multitude of ways in which to celebrate.

By coincidence Waitangi Day was the day we first landed in Aotearoa, also at dawn, 18 years ago. Arriving on a national holiday, we decided to find out what it was all about.

We learned that Aotearoa New Zealand was settled by Treaty which is unique in the Commonwealth, and that Te Tiriti upholds tino rangatiratanga (Māori autonomy) and mana motuhake (or self-determination). This is in contrast with a dominant conquest and subjugation of one people by another.

We felt this was worthy of great celebration and Te Tiriti is a major factor in us being comfortable settling in this country.

We experienced the relevance of Te Tiriti during 17 years in Tāmaki Makaurau. As healthcare professionals we regularly considered the equity of outcomes for patients and how this could be achieved.

We understood something that's topical today but misunderstood by some, the crucial difference between treating everyone equally, *and achieving equity of outcome*, is that *everyone doesn't have the same starting point or needs*. Also, tino rangatiratanga and self-determination need to be respectfully included in the planning of every public service.

Te Tiriti formally recognises we can have an equitable Aotearoa without all having to be the same. It's our founding document, our constitution, as relevant today as it was in 1840, and its validity remains independent of the number of people in each party.

Te Tiriti has been the subject of debate, it's been dishonoured by some, and it *has* been contentious. It *has* also been remarkable. It's the framework through which we've sought to right wrongs, to give hope, and to come together. It's a sometimes-imperfect partnership but it sets us apart from other nations, to give place and voice to Indigenous people.

That we haven't succeeded yet in achieving what Te Tiriti sets out, is not a reason to give it up or to change it. It's the reason to try harder, just as gender equity hasn't been achieved yet but is a work in progress.

So, *we'd* like to encourage *more* learning of Te Reo and tikanga. Let's keep moving towards a bicultural or multicultural society, and *never step back* from the challenges we face and the work that still needs to be done.

If you're living in NZ and aren't Māori, you're here *because* of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We are Tangata Tiriti, people of the Treaty, which we consider a great honour and privilege. It's also a responsibility.

Upholding the Treaty is the duty of descendants of *both* Treaty Partners, *and* the duty of each and every one of us who's arrived here since.

Toitū te Tiriti!

In contrast with friends across the ditch, we *can* celebrate our *Non-Invasion* Day, Te Rā o Waitangi for what *has* been achieved, and thank those who've made it possible.

Tēnā tātou Katoa

