

Messaging Guide for Taiwi Tautoko Volunteers

The following is a guide for how to respond to these common responses to the call from Māori to halt the taking of tamariki Māori by the state and for the government to devolve decision-making power and resources for iwi, hapū, whānau and kaupapa Māori organisations to care for tamariki Māori in a tikanga based way.

Simply click on the common theme in comments for suggestions of how to respond:

- ["Māori need to stop abusing their own kids first"](#)
- ["Māori need to stop abusing their own kids first 2.0"](#)
- ["What about non-Māori children?"](#)
- ["What about \[insert high profile child abuse case here\]"](#)

This is a list of great articles that can provide you with further insight into this kaupapa:

- [How closed adoption robbed Māori children of their identity](#) by Te Aniwa Hurihanganui
- [The call from the hui was loud and clear: give us back our kids](#) by Laura O'Connell-Rapira
- [Listen to Māori midwives – they know more than you think](#) by Elizabeth Strickett
- [The Māori problem](#) by Aaron Smale
- [Uplifting children is not a Māori problem. It's a colonisation problem](#) by Tina Ngata
- VIDEO: [The role of Whangai and Adoption in Aotearoa](#)
- [Stop trampling on the mana of children](#) by Khylee Quince
- Every 4 minutes: [A discussion paper on preventing family violence in New Zealand](#)

“Māori need to stop abusing their own kids first”	
Listen for what is behind the comment (whakapapa): the person’s experiences, values, and emotions. Ask questions to better understand.	• Hi {{name}}. I’m not sure people are calling for children to stay in abusive homes. I’m curious to know what experiences you’ve had that make you see it this way.
Lead with curiosity over judgement. If possible, seek common ground based on shared values.	• I can tell from your comment that, like me, you want children to be safe and cared for. I totally agree and I think that’s what the people who are rallying are calling for too. We all want our babies and kids to be safe and loved.
Reframe our claim(s) as personal perspectives, not absolute truth.	• From what I have read it seems that what Māori are calling for is for the opportunity to place Māori children and babies with other members of their whānau, instead of with strangers. What do you think about that idea?
ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVE	
Introduce your own perspective leading with vision and values.	• I also think what people are calling for is a more supportive approach to the people who may be at risk of causing harm to children by getting them what it is they need to care for themselves and their kids.
Name some of the barriers and agents blocking your vision.	• Unfortunately, we live in a society where the government would rather spend billions of dollars on locking Māori up and taking Māori babies into state custody than provide great mental health, addiction and social services.
Unite the people. Highlight a solution. Be specific.	• I think if we can all support this call, and focus on prevention of harm and support for whānau we can create a New Zealand free of child abuse - wouldn’t that be awesome!

“Māori need to stop abusing their own kids first”	
Listen for what is behind the comment (whakapapa): the person’s experiences, values, and emotions. Show you are listening in this way, by asking questions or acknowledging what you hear.	• Kia ora {{name}}. I totally hear what you’re saying - none of us want kids to be abused. But did you know that prior to the arrival of European settlers there was actually very little to no violence toward children? It’s commonly mentioned in the diaries of early settlers like Rev Samuel Marsden and Auguste Earle.
Lead with curiosity over judgement. If possible, seek common ground based on shared values.	• I think it’s important to remember our past in order to inform our future, don’t you think? • I think it would be great to return to that reality, don’t you?
Reframe our claim(s) as personal perspectives, not absolute truth.	• I know, for me, I know a lot of great Māori parents and whānau who do an amazing job with their kids who just don’t fit into the stereotype of “abusive Māori parents” and it’s unfair when we paint a whole race of people with the same brush isn’t it?
ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVE	
Introduce your own perspective leading with vision and values.	• Personally, I think if it’s really important for children to be connected to their whānau and cultural identity for their own wellbeing.
Name some of the barriers and agents blocking your vision.	• But right now, we have politicians who would rather spend billions of dollars on locking Māori up and taking Māori babies into state custody than spend that money on making sure every Māori whānau has a safe and loving home.
Unite the people. Highlight a solution. Be specific.	• I think we can return New Zealand to a place where kids don’t experience abuse and I think listening to Māori midwives is one way we can get there.

“What about non-Māori children?”	
Listen for what is behind the comment (whakapapa): the person’s experiences, values, and emotions. Show you are listening in this way, by asking questions or acknowledging what you hear.	• Hi {{name}}, it sounds like children’s well-being (or equality) is important to you. • It sounds like you’re worried that some children would be left behind. I’m curious what you’ve experienced that makes you worry about this. • Kia ora {{name}}, interesting question. What do you think should happen with non-Māori babies/kids?
Lead with curiosity over judgement. If possible, seek common ground based on shared values.	• I personally think it’s good for kids to be connected to their whānau or family, whether their Pākehā or Māori. It helps with a sense of belonging. What do you think?
Reframe our claim(s) as personal perspectives, not absolute truth.	• From my perspective, it seems like Māori are calling for Māori babies and children to be cared for in a tikanga Māori way, that means things like whangai where Māori babies are placed with whānau or someone in their hapū to maintain a connection to their family and culture.
ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVE	
Introduce your own perspective leading with vision and values.	• I think that’s a beautiful thing to be calling for personally, and I think it’s a solution that would work for Pākehā/Tauīwi babies and children too.
Name some of the barriers and agents blocking your vision.	• I think sometimes race is used as a tool to divide us when actually I think most of us want babies and kids to be safe, cared for, and in loving homes. Wouldn’t you agree?
Unite the people. Highlight a solution. Be specific.	• I think it would be great if more of us Pākehā/Tauīwi could join Māori in their call for kids to be placed with family.

??“What about [insert high profile child abuse case here]”	
Listen for what is behind the comment (whakapapa): the person’s experiences, values, and emotions. Show you are listening in this way, by asking questions or acknowledging what you hear.	• I remember that case too {{name}}. It was really heartbreaking. I think the people who organised this rally would agree it was heartbreaking too. I think that’s why they’re calling for change because sadly kids get abused in state custody too. What do you think are some of the solutions that would have helped prevent that case?
Lead with curiosity over judgement. If possible, seek common ground based on shared values.	• From my perspective, I think we need to look at what we can do to make sure that all families have everything they need to care for kids - a warm and dry house, enough money to provide kai and pay the bills, and whatever other social services they may need to support good mental health. What do you think about that?
Reframe our claim(s) as personal perspectives, not absolute truth.	• I think cases like [name] are really sad and I also think there are things we can do as a society to prevent cases like that from happening again. Did you know that 77% of the people in prison were once victims of family or sexual violence themselves?
ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVE	
Introduce your own perspective leading with vision and values.	• For example, I think if we eliminated poverty from New Zealand - and I believe the government has the power to do that - we would eliminate some of the stressors that push people to violence. • For example, I think if the government invested in helping families to break intergenerational cycles of violence and heal trauma through great mental and sexual health services + drug and alcohol counselling, that would really help.
Name some of the barriers and agents blocking your vision.	• But unfortunately, we know that some people in our society benefit from keeping people in poverty because it keeps them rich. We could afford to house and feed everyone if the government were more courageous about tax.

	Unfortunately, successive governments seem more interested in spending billions on prisons and ‘uplifting’ children rather than investing in the health and wellbeing of families.
Unite the people. Highlight a solution. Be specific.	I think if more of us came together to call on the government to do more to make sure all families and children have a warm house and enough money to thrive, we could prevent and end family violence for good.

Other key facts:

- Since 2013, the number of Māori children in state custody has increased by more than 20 percent. On average, three Māori babies are being taken from their families every week.
- 220 children were abused in state care in the first six months of 2019.
- Oranga Tamariki have failed 14 reviews, yet received an additional \$1 billion dollars in Budget 2019, while Whānau Ora - which had a glowing review - received just 2% of that
- Over 70 percent of the people the state locks in prison have a background in “state care”
- Children who have been in “state care” are 107 times more likely to be imprisoned than any other children
- The government is essentially funding a vacuum that traps Māori in the justice system and we’re saying enough is enough
- What we want to see is the billions of dollars that are spent on prisons, state care residencies and “uplifts” be given to iwi, hapū, whānau and kaupapa Māori organisations so we can truly uplift our own people