

HE WHAKAPUTANGA OUTSIDE TE TAI TOKERAU

[He Whakaputanga o Te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni](#) (1835) was not discussed often outside [Te Tai Tokerau](#) during the hui of [Matike Mai o Aotearoa](#), but wherever it was discussed its [kaupapa](#) of different polities working together was acknowledged as important. In many hui it was defined as the only tika way to establish the kind of constitutional relationship with the Crown that is contemplated in [Te Tiriti o Waitangi](#) (1840).

Those outside Te Tai Tokerau also felt that the traditional relationships between [Whānau](#), [Hapū](#) and [Iwi](#) that had been undermined by the Crown in the course of colonisation, could only be rebuilt with the institutionalisation of some form of unity similar to that contemplated in He Whakaputanga.¹



"We never signed He Whakaputanga, but what it talked about are the same things that we have always talked about, especially our people finding a way to come together."

"Everything that He Whakaputanga tells us about making decisions together ... what they now call unity in action, was a warning really that with all these new people coming there would be threats to our way of life and our rangatiratanga ... and that's exactly what happened."

"Our tūpuna [Te Hapuku](#) signed He Whakaputanga, and it has always been part of the understanding that [rangatiratanga](#) is not about being beholden to anyone else ... not something dependent on the Crown like the Crown seems to think."

"[Te Wherowhero](#) signed He Whakaputanga and then later became the first king, so I have imagined that the aspirations of the two are the same. They wanted ... expected their authority and, yes, their independence to be acknowledged and respected. That's got to be the base for any constitution for our people, then we can go and get some sort of kotahitanga with the Crown."

"I find it really inspiring that our old people could have foresight like that and build upon ideas they already had about politics to evolve something different in He Whakaputanga. It must have been a big ask in those days, and I'd only hope we can do that if we look at a new constitution."

¹ Eleventh edited extract from pp. 46 – 48 of [He Whakaaro Here Whakaumu Mō Aotearoa – The Report of Matike Mai o Aotearoa](#).

“Our rōpū thinks that the idea (in He Whakaputanga) that different Iwi or Hapu can come together is a really good one. It was an attempt at [Kotahitanga](#) that would be really crucial in any new constitution today.”

“There were some practical difficulties with He Whakaputanga like the infrequent assemblies, but that was the circumstances of those times ... the ideas were amazing. Our old people were visionaries, and that’s what we need now.”

“We see [Kingitanga](#) as our idea of unity, bringing together our marae in allegiance as well as in practice ... and He Whakaputanga has that same idea. So the values are there but we have to work out how to translate that into something workable for our people today, because unity can be so hard to achieve.”

“The key of He Whakaputanga ... is where it says that we will recognise no other legislative authority but our own. That’s the only basis upon which a new constitution should be developed ... recognising our self-determination as well as the kāwanatanga that gives Pākehā the right to do the same thing ... then we have to work out the boundaries between them and make rules about how that would work in practice.”

“”[He Whakaputanga] guarantees Hapū representation, and that’s what a constitution should do ... Things are different now, but if constitutions are about first principles, then that should surely be the first ... while also allowing Māori the right to debate what the representation might look like and whether it might include other roopu.”

“We sometimes forget that it was all about Hapū back in the day ... He Whakaputanga is all about Hapū, and working out how we manage that now is going to be a real challenge.”

“Both the Declaration and treaty talk about Hapū, but that’s always been too hard for the Crown to deal with. But we have to be honest with ourselves and find our own ways to rebuild those relationships among ourselves.”

In one sense, He Whakaputanga is the prelude to a longer debate about the difficulties that need to be overcome if any form of unity is to be achieved in Aotearoa in a constitutional sense.

Next week we will begin to consider Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the context of constitutional transformation.