

Achieved

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Inquiry Focus: Treaty Principles Bill

Overarching Question: How do differing perspectives and responses to legislation reflect ideas of rights, responsibilities, and social justice in Aotearoa New Zealand?

Part 1: Planning the Inquiry

- **Focus Questions:**
 - What is the perspective, viewpoint and values of those who support the Treaty Principles Bill?
 - What are the perspectives, viewpoints and values of those who opposed the Treaty Principles Bill?
 - How have people or groups exercised the right to social action in response to the Bill?

Sources I will use:

- Radio New Zealand. (2024). *Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership a misinterpretation, David Seymour believes*. RNZ. <https://www.mz.co.nz/news/political/507272/te-tiriti-o-waitangi-partnership-a-misinterpretation-david-seymour-believes>
- The Post. (2024). *Treaty principles debate: David Seymour rules supporting out citizens-initiated*. The Post. <https://www.thepost.co.nz/politics/350444565/treaty-principles-debate-david-seymour-rules-supporting-out-citizens-initiated>
- NZ Herald. (2024). *ACT leader David Seymour: Why a conversation on Te Tiriti o Waitangi is important for our nation*. NZ Herald. <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/kahu/act-leader-david-seymour-why-a-conversation-on-te-tiriti-o-waitangi-is-important-for-our-nation/IY4IMUEBEJDOXKG3HAHUJS3HAY/>
- 1News. (2024). *'I'd do it again and again': Hana Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke talks to John Campbell*. 1News. <https://www.1news.co.nz/2024/12/07/id-do-it-again-and-again-hana-rawhiti-maipi-clarke-talks-to-john-campbell/>
- Māori Party. *Hana Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke*. Māori Party. https://www.maoriparty.org.nz/hana_rawhiti_maipi_clarke
- YouTube. (2024). *"David Seymour lays down the Treaty Principles Bill in Parliament"* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzqePTJ9RKw>

Background to the Issue:

Thousands rallied to the other side of Aotearoa (New Zealand) in protest called by Te Pāti Māori (The Māori Party) as a new conservative government took office in December. Rally organisers have called the movement "Toitu Te Tiriti", referring to the need to uphold and enhance Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) against the new government's racist attacks. The proposed Treaty Principles Bill seeks to redefine the principles of Te Tiriti in law, replacing long-standing interpretations that many say undermines Māori rights and partnership. This bill is at the heart of the Toitu Te Tiriti campaign, which calls on people to resist changes that would change the Treaty's role as a foundation document for New Zealand.

Part 2: The Findings

What is the perspective, viewpoint and values of those who support the Treaty Principles Bill?

David Seymour

David Seymour talks about seeking equality and universal human rights when discussing the Toitū Te Tiriti campaign and the Treaty Principles Bill. “It is a document that establishes New Zealand as a country, where in Article 1 the government has the right to govern, in Article 2 we each have the right to tino rangatiratanga—the right to flourish in self-chosen ways—and in Article 3 we all have ngā tikanga katoa rite tahi, or the same.” David Seymour told *Midday Report* he believed Te Tiriti o Waitangi was a founding document, but the idea that it is a partnership is based on a misinterpretation. He has been a strong advocate for his Treaty Principles Bill, which aims to reinterpret the principles of Te Tiriti in a way that emphasises equality under the law and individual rights. He states, “We need a national conversation. Are there two classes of New Zealanders, or are we all equal before the law?” Seymour argues that the Treaty does not establish a partnership between Māori and the Crown but instead provides a framework for governance and individual rights. This stance has led to debates and discussions, including a notable one with Ngāti Toa chief executive Helmut Modlik, where Seymour defended his interpretation of the Treaty as a “beautiful document” that has been misinterpreted over time. His Bill has faced criticism for potentially undermining Māori self-determination and cultural preservation, but Seymour maintains that his approach seeks to clarify the Treaty’s principles for the benefit of all New Zealanders. He has said, “The Bill emphasises the universal human rights that appear throughout Te Tiriti and invites an open debate on it.” Seymour values equality before the law and universal human rights. His views on the Toitū Te Tiriti campaign reflect ideologies of libertarianism (which ACT is known for) because they believe in individual autonomy and rights.

What is the perspective, viewpoint and values of those who oppose the Treaty Principles Bill?

Hana-Rāwhiti Maipi-Clarke

Hana-Rāwhiti Maipi-Clarke is the youngest Member of Parliament representing Te Pāti Māori. Hana-Rāwhiti’s view on the Treaty Principles Bill and the Toitū Te Tiriti campaign reflects an indigenous perspective and traditions from the Aotearoa East Coast, focused on raising the hopes and voices of hapū and iwi within their place. Her perspective centres on preserving the integrity of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and safeguarding Māori rights. Central values are whakapapa (genealogy), tikanga, and mana motuhake. She has been a vocal supporter of Te Tiriti many times. She has stated that Te Tiriti “should unite rather than divide people” and has demonstrated her commitment to speaking out against ACT’s Treaty Principles Bill by showing unwavering support for the Toitū Te Tiriti campaign, which opposes the Bill. In 2024 when she performed a haka inside Parliament to protest against a proposed bill she felt would strip rights from Māori. As the House was casting votes, Maipi-Clarke rose to deliver her party’s opposition and initiated the “Ka Mate” haka, a traditional Māori dance expressing challenge. During this demonstration, she tore a copy of the bill and cast the pieces to the floor, symbolising her strong feelings against the proposed legislation.

Her actions prompted immediate responses. First, there was a Parliamentary Suspension. Speaker of the House Gerry Brownlee suspended the parliamentary session for approximately 20 minutes due to the disruption. Secondly, Maipi-Clarke was “named” by the Speaker - a formal reprimand - leading to her suspension from Parliament for 24 hours. This penalty barred her from participating in debates, voting and attending committee meetings during that period. Thirdly, Maipi-Clarke, along with fellow Te Pāti Māori co-leaders Debbie Ngarewa-Packer and Rawiri Waititi and Labour MP Peeni Henare, were referred to Parliament’s Privileges Committee for their involvement in the protest. In a December 2024 interview, Maipi-Clarke reflected on her protest in Parliament, stating, “I’d do it again and again.” She emphasised that her actions were a response to the perceived threat the Bill posed to Māori sovereignty and the principles of the Treaty.

How have people or groups exercised the right to social action in response to the Bill?

People and groups in New Zealand have actively exercised their rights through various forms of social

action in relation to Toitu Te Tiriti particularly in response to government policies perceived as undermining Maori rights and the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

For people who opposed the bill, the main form of protest has been the hikoi, a traditional Maori march. Activists have organised hikoi to raise awareness and demonstrate unity against government actions perceived as attacks on Maori rights. The hikoi was aimed to draw attention to the implications of the Treaty principles bill, which many viewed as a threat to Maori sovereignty. The hikoi saw a significant turnout, with estimates of around 42,000 participants joining the final march to parliament. The march went through different towns across the north island, gathering momentum and support as it progressed. Major stops included Auckland and Rotorua where the number of participants doubled at each location. The end of the hikoi was at a large gathering in Wellington, where participants were involved in cultural performances, speeches and solidarity activities, showing their support for the cause. This protest brought together lots of people around New Zealand, including Tangata Whenua, Tangata Moana and Tauwiwi.

Part 3: Key Understandings and Evaluation

Key Understandings:

In relation to the big inquiry question, "How do differing perspectives and responses to legislation reflect ideas of rights, responsibilities in Aotearoa New Zealand," I have learnt that people hold very different views on the Treaty, which can lead to strong and active responses such as creating a bill or organising a hikoi. Some political parties and individuals oppose the Treaty Principles Bill, claiming it causes division, while others argue it promotes justice for Māori and holds the government to account. I have also learnt that the Toitū Te Tiriti campaign emerged as a direct response to the Bill proposed by the ACT Party, which many view as a threat to Māori rights and sovereignty. Through peaceful protest, the campaign united thousands of people in honouring the Treaty.

Researching the Bill and the responses from different groups helped me understand that the campaign not only supported Māori in standing their ground and fighting for their rights but also inspired indigenous people globally. The campaign gained international attention after Hana-Rāwhiti tore up the Bill, which motivated others around the world to protest for their rights and advocate for their communities. Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke was also listed by Time magazine as one of "the world's most influential rising stars". This was unexpected for me because New Zealand is not widely known internationally, so learning that our people inspired global action for equality and rights makes me proud to live in a country where people fight strongly for justice.

How reliable are your sources?

I explored different perspectives from people like David Seymour and Hana-Rāwhiti, which showed how views on the Treaty can differ great. I also think that a strength was that I used reliable websites. By this, I mean that they were all from reputable news agency which have trained journalist doing the research. This included 1News, RNZ, The Post and NZ Herald. These all uphold journalistic standards and ethics. Additionally, these sources were helpful as many directly cited or included clips from the key primary sources – which provided me with direct quote of the viewpoints of Seymour and Maipi-Clarke. Watching the Youtube Clip of Seymour talking in parliament was also helpful, as it meant that none of the information was selected out for a particular purpose and I got to see the whole speech. However, this was published by the ACT website, so I need to be mindful that this clearly only shows his views. However, for the purposes of this inquiry – that is ok, as I had other sources to show the other side of the debate.

What are the weaknesses of your inquiry? What would you do to improve your inquiry process next time? How would this improve your inquiry?

One weakness is that I relied on a limited range of sources and didn't include much variety in the information I found. Most of my evidence came from news articles or quotes, and I could have looked into academic articles or Māori sources to deepen my understanding. I also think I could have added more historical context about Te Tiriti o Waitangi to explain why people feel so strongly about protecting it today. This would have helped to develop my understanding and perhaps better connect it to global issues where other indigenous rights were being impacted.

Next time, I would use a wider range of sources, especially Māori voices and kaupapa Māori websites, to make sure my information is accurate and respectful. It could have also been useful to look at a legal perspective from experts in the field, such as Sir Geoffrey Palmer or academics like Professor Dean Knight. This would improve my inquiry because I would have a broader and deeper base of information to consider for my assessment and also may have provided a more neutral analysis on the matter, rather than one that was based on race.

Grade: Achieved

For Achieved, the student needs to conduct a reflective social inquiry.

This involves deciding on a clear focus, developing focus questions, and gathering information and background ideas that enable them to describe people's points of view, values, and perspectives in relation to the inquiry focus. To achieve, the student must also reflect on and evaluate the understandings they develop throughout the inquiry.

The student has identified a clear focus: the Treaty Principles Bill. They have written purposeful focus questions that support exploring differing viewpoints, values, and perspectives. To meet the requirement for gathering information and background ideas, the student lists relevant sources and provides a succinct background paragraph. The depth of specific quotations and detail used in their findings further demonstrates active information gathering.

Two distinct points of view are described: David Seymour's position in support of the bill and Hana Rawhiti Maipi Clarke's position in opposition. Each is supported with appropriate evidence, including direct quotations and references to actions taken. The student also identifies the perspectives (libertarian and indigenous) and values underpinning these viewpoints (libertarian and indigenous), as required by the standard.

The student reflects on and evaluates their understandings by addressing the overarching inquiry question: "How do differing perspectives and responses to legislation reflect ideas of rights, responsibilities, and social justice in Aotearoa New Zealand?" Conclusions clearly arise from the evidence they have gathered and considered. They also comment on source reliability. They propose improvements, including adding kaupapa Māori sources and legal experts and broadening their historical understanding. This shows an awareness of how reliability and source selection can affect conclusions.

For Merit, the student must explain the perspectives, values, and viewpoints by making the relationships between them explicit. In practice, this means showing how a perspective informs values and how those values shape the person's viewpoint on the issue. For example, Hana Rawhiti Maipi Clarke's indigenous perspective centres on whakapapa, tikanga, and mana motuhake. These values lead her to see Te Tiriti as a living, relational agreement that protects collective rights and shared authority. This has shaped her viewpoint that the bill threatens Māori self-determination and should be opposed, which in turn influenced her actions.