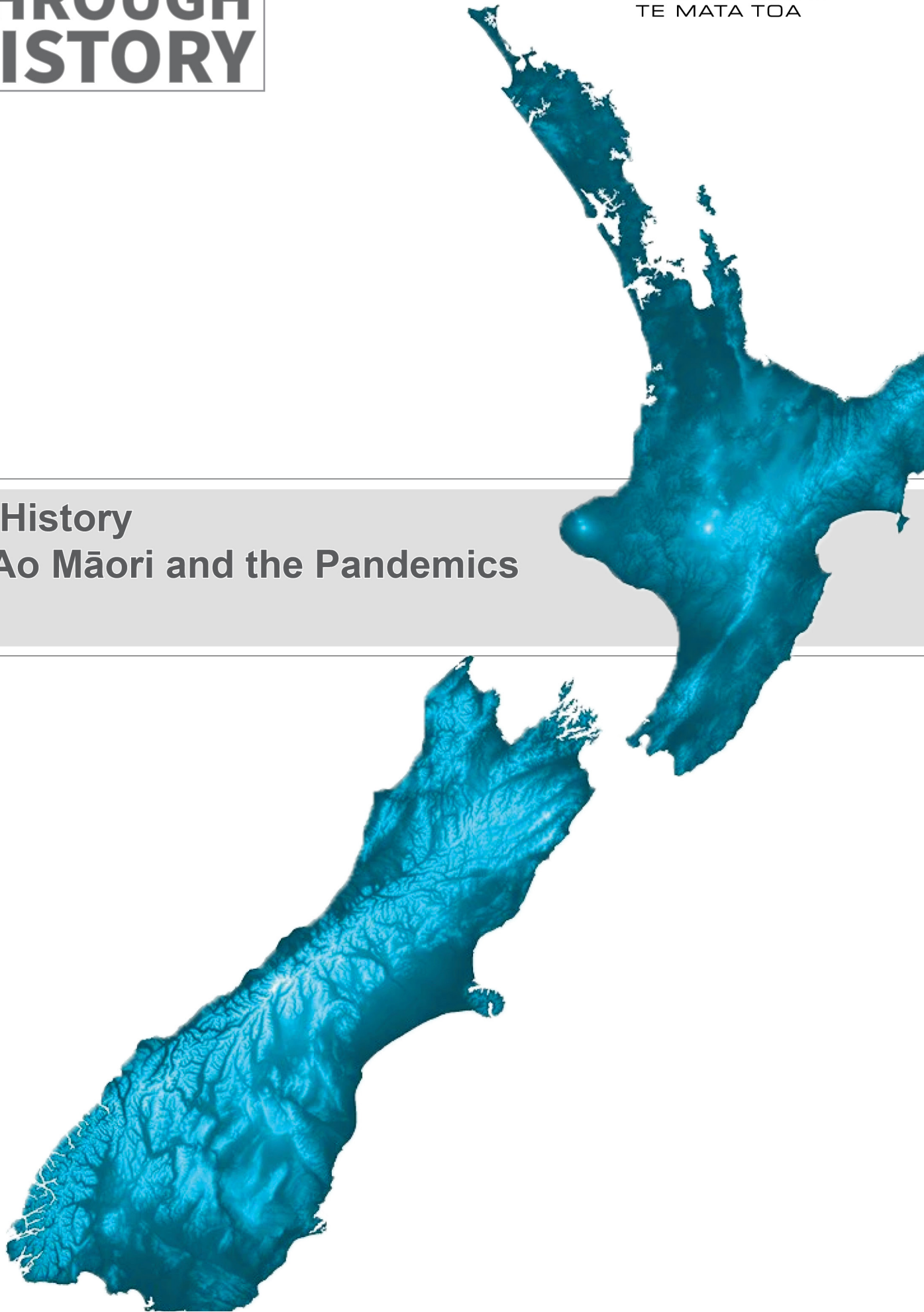


# LIVING THROUGH HISTORY

**NATIONAL  
ARMY  
MUSEUM**  
TE MATA TOA

NZ History  
Te Ao Māori and the Pandemics



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## He waka eke noa

We are all in this together

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History isn't something that happens to someone else. Right now, you are living through an extraordinary event that is changing the New Zealand way of life: the COVID-19 pandemic. Future children, in their classrooms, might look back on this moment and ask: how did they feel? How did they make it through?

In Lessons 6 and 15 we learnt how the Great War made the Spanish Flu worse and helped it spread. Those lessons also explained how Aotearoa was unprepared for the devastating effect on the country. We examined the devastation through the eyes of one Pākehā family (Lesson 6) and the rural communities on the main trunk railway lines that travelled down our country (Lesson 15).

In this lesson we will take a look at a longer timeline and consider epidemics in New Zealand from a Māori perspective.

- **Read** how both disease and colonisation have impacted on Māori, and how Māori have responded in the past and in the current COVID-19 crisis.

- **Reflect** on how Māori saw the arrival of viral threats and the subsequent efforts (led by Pākehā) to replace rongoā Māori (traditional Māori medicine) and tikanga, with Pākehā medicine and values.

- **Respond** to and answer the questions and complete the exercises on how epidemics and colonisation impacted Māori, and how COVID-19 has demonstrated what has changed and what may happen in the future.

Purewa Macgregor and her 'kanohi kanohi' harakeke masks.



## Activity 1: Māori health in 1914

By 1914 Māori were only 5% of the population of Aotearoa NZ as they had been heavily affected by epidemics and warfare from 1808-1880.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century Māori language (te reo Māori) and spiritual beliefs were in decline, and Māori ancestral lands had been confiscated, all due to government policy. This decline was accelerated in 1907 by the Tohunga Suppression Act.

### Tohunga Suppression Act

By 1907 the risk of an international war had become a threat to NZ and the government was seeking the unity of all citizens. This included the unity of Māori and Pākehā regarding British culture and new western medicines.

While many Māori had become Christian, and a generation was learning the English language, the government believed some Māori communities were still too independent, and that interest in mātauranga Māori (knowledge) and healing practices (rongoā Māori) were still too strong.

The government brought in a new law called the Tohunga Suppression Act. The authorities said it was created to protect Māori from acts of fraud (being tricked into giving away money) out of a fear of the spirit world. In effect though this Pākehā law made practicing rongoā Māori against the law. This forced the mahi (work) of tohunga to be practiced in secret for many years.



Rua Kenana was seen as a threat by the government in 1916 and was arrested for his teachings.

**1a** If your language and spiritual beliefs were restricted and then contact with your elders and their knowledge was banned by the government, how would you feel?

**1b** Do you think connection to ancestral land is important for your wellbeing?

**1c** If you had to learn traditional knowledge in secret, what do you think this says about your status in the community?

## Activity 2: Te Ao Māori and Māori health today

*“The Māori world view (te ao Māori) acknowledges the interconnectedness and interrelationship of all living and non-living things”*

During the 2020 pandemic the Prime Minister stated that “a te ao māori approach of community well-being absolutely needs to be one of our on-going lessons in our pandemic response”. There is a long history leading up to these words and they ask interesting questions for the future.

In the Treaty of Waitangi traditional Māori wisdom is seen as one of the taonga that was guaranteed protection. The suppression of knowledge and medicine, including the Tohunga Suppression Act, is now viewed as a breach of the Treaty. The Act was eventually taken out of law in 1962.

In the 1960s civil rights were discussed by people all over the world. In the following decades te reo Māori became a national language (The Māori Language Act 1987) and was then protected and promoted in kōhanga reo and kura.

The Treaty of Waitangi regained its status as a living document and many settlements and initiatives have come out of this, including those for Māori health and rongoā Māori.

Te ao Māori helps us think about both physical and spiritual illness and how thoughts, feelings, and te reo Māori can all be part of a healing process. Tikanga reflects te ao Māori, and guides people in how to behave. It is apparent in day to day life e.g. respecting the rules around tapu (sacred/restricted). Tikanga Māori is increasingly being included in the ways we look after our rivers, workplaces, and whares.

### Wai rākau (plant based medicines)

In rongoā, ailments are treated in a holistic manner with spiritual healing, the power of karakia, the mana of the tohunga (expert), and by the use of herbs.

Herbs and plants found in NZ are becoming popular again for both kai and for rongoā. Knowledge of the connections between individual plants and the benefits they can give has been kept and passed down. Sharing knowledge and providing access to medicinal herbs has an interesting history in NZ. Catholic missionary Mother Mary Joseph Aubert lived with Māori and created tonics using native plants. There is now a promising future with collaborations between rongoā Māori and chemists. New scientific studies are underway, including confirming the traditional use of kawakawa for healing pain and inflammation.



**2a** Why do you think researching the traditional healing properties of plants, unique to NZ, is interesting and gaining support in Aotearoa?

**2b** Read about rongoā on the Te Papa museum link below. Research the plants you find there and think about why products, like mānuka honey, have become popular in recent years?

<https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/discover-collections/read-watch-play/maori/maori-medicine>

**2c** COVID-19 is believed to come from nature. Can you think of a relationship between te ao Māori and diseases that come from nature like COVID-19?

## Activity 3: Self-determination and Māori leadership in pandemics

Since the time of the first rewharewha (influenza epidemic), and after the Treaty of Waitangi was signed, the story of NZ includes important changes in understanding Māori health and whose mahi (work) it is to look after Māori health.

During the Spanish Flu pandemic in 1918 Māori communities were still often isolated in rural areas. While there were Māori politicians, and departments in government, Māori health was still seen by government as a problem that could only be fixed by Pākehā using Pākehā solutions.

As the Spanish Flu washed over NZ the government response was different from place to place and communications were very slow. One response was the creation of hospitals just for Māori to be run by Pākehā. Also, as with the smallpox policy in 1913, the government controlled the movement of Māori, regardless of their health or standing in the community and some Māori officials helping with the pandemic were not allowed on trains.

### Māori Leadership

Many Māori communities were isolated and without help, doing what they could with rongoā Māori to fight Spanish Flu. Some communities were almost completely lost. Of the nearly 10,000 deaths in New Zealand in 1918, 2,500 were Māori. Despite being only 5% of the population Māori made up 25% of fatalities.

Respected Kīngitanga leader Te Puea Hērangi did not stand by and wait for action.



*“Te Puea made an epic trip down the Waikato River gathering all the orphans and old people who had nobody left to look after them. She took them back to Ngāruawāhia, to Tūrangawaewae Marae, where the more than 100 orphans became the core of the Kīngitanga, or Māori king movement”.*

**-NZ Geographic, 2004.**

Memories of what happened in 1918 created concern for iwi and kaumātua when COVID-19 arrived here in 2020. Some Māori communities took unique action. Several iwi worked with local police during the lockdown to set up checkpoints to monitor who was approaching these communities. This was done to monitor the movement of traffic from one region to another. It helped to lower the risk of spreading the disease to vulnerable communities.

**3a** In 1918 there was no national plan for a pandemic, and vulnerable Māori communities suffered greatly. While the government reacted quickly and had a good plan in 2020, how do you think the plan could have been more inclusive for Māori?

**3b** Watch the YouTube clip “beyond COVID-19 - Sir Mason Durie”. Think about the stories in the clip and the activities in this lesson. Can you see examples of Māori leadership in 1918 and 2020?  
<https://youtu.be/BmuL7aDKGZY>

**3c** Kōhanga Reo and Kura have created a great foundation for preserving and promoting te reo Māori. Rongoā Māori is now accepted and promoted by the Ministry of Health. The COVID-19 lockdown created examples of protecting whānau and promoting good health, such as growing your own kai and cooking healthy kai at home. Research other ways the lockdowns helped created chances for tamariki and whānau to improve their health.

## Beyond the Worksheet

During the 2020 COVID-19 emergency there have been examples of a well-managed response by Māori for Māori, sometimes in collaboration with local authorities, such as Te Pouwhakarae in Auckland. Follow the links below and make a list of groups working together and the communities they helped. Then make a list of the different services they can provide.

<https://ourauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/articles/news/2020/04/maori-led-response-delivers-support-during-covid-19/>

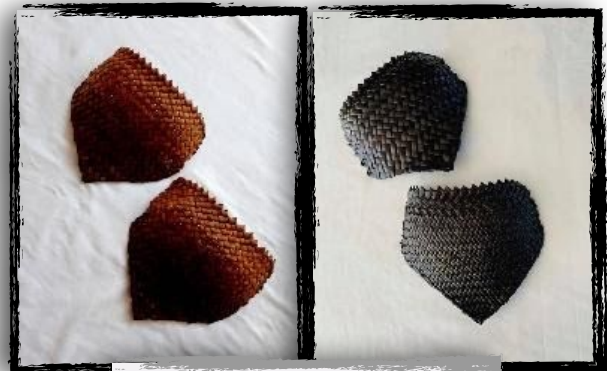
<https://paerangi.nz/>



Wearing protective masks during the pandemic has become common in some countries, because people believe they help stop the virus from spreading. Some communities have done this while making unique masks or face coverings to tell their own unique story. Look at the Native American and Māori artworks on the links below. Talk with your whānau and teachers about why some people are wearing masks during the pandemic and the difference between those made for art and those recommended for health reasons in NZ. Then go ahead and make your own mask in a way that tells your COVID-19 story.

<http://firstamericanartmagazine.com/masks/>

<https://www.teaomaori.news/hawkes-bay-artist-makes-facemasks-harakeke>



Purewa Macgregor's 'kanohi kanohi' harakeke masks.

### References:

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**Maori leadership activities'**, URL: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/classroom/ncea-level-2-history/maori-leadership-in-the-nineteenth-century>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 13-May-2016

**Raeburn Lange**, 'Te hauora Māori i mua – history of Māori health - Health devastated, 1769 to 1901', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/te-hauora-maori-i-mua-history-of-maori-health/page-2> (accessed 19 May 2020)