

TIAKI Podcast.

AN INTRODUCTION

TIAKI Rōpū Rangahau
2026



To find out more about our podcast, scan the QR code with your phone camera, or search for TIAKI podcast on Apple Podcasts.

The QR code will also take you to our website content, including plain language summaries and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) interpretations of each of the TIAKI podcast episodes.

TIAKI (meaning 'to care') is a Kaupapa Māori research project that focuses on the lived experiences of Māori adults who have been imprisoned (in prisons either in New Zealand or overseas) and their whānau.

This zine has been written by Paula Toko King and Gabrielle Baker and published by the TIAKI Rōpū Rangahau 2026,
Te Whanganui-a-Tara.

Welcome to our podcast...

Most of us want to live in a society where we can all be well – as individuals, as whānau, and as communities. A society where our government and its agencies work to keep us safe and protected.

However, our society doesn't deliver on this promise for everyone. One of the most obvious examples of this is how Māori have been imprisoned on a mass scale in Aotearoa New Zealand: a legacy of colonisation, coloniality, white supremacy, racism, and discrimination.

TIAKI, which means 'to care', is a Kaupapa Māori rangahau (research) project focused on the health and wellbeing of Māori who leave prisons.

We have made a six-episode podcast series to share our findings, and each episode has a zine that expands on the episodes themes. This zine sits alongside episode one and provides background to our project, shares kōrero of some leading national and international experts on Indigenous health, health equity, and prisons, and introduces some key concepts behind our rangahau.

The aims of TIAKI include identifying the most successful strategies for supporting Māori leaving prisons, increasing our overall knowledge and awareness as a society, and improving government accountability when it comes to the criminalising legal system. But it is important that we add a foot note here:

We fundamentally do not accept the inevitability of prisons. But while there are prisons, and while Māori are being harmed by prisons (which they are), the government has obligations to do better and they need to do better right now.

The podcast hosts...



Associate Professor Dr Paula King

Nō Te Aupōuri, nō Te Rarawa, nō Ngāpuhi, nō Ngāti Whātua, nō Waikato Tainui, nō Ngāti Maniapoto ahau.

I'm a public health medicine doctor, Associate Professor and Kaupapa Māori researcher based in Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare/the Eru Pōmare Māori Health Research Centre at the University of Otago in Te Whanganui-a-Tara.

My mahi focuses on upholding tāngata whenua rights to health and wellbeing for mokopuna Māori and their whānau in Aotearoa, with most of my rangahau situated at the intersection of racism, ableism and disablism, state care, youth justice residences and prisons.

I am one of the co-leads of this research.



Gabrielle Baker

Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Wairupe-Ngāti Kuri ahau.

I'm a policy consultant. What that means to me is that I'm interested in how the government and other publicly funded organisations do their business – and importantly I'm interested what could be done better for whānau Māori. My area of work is mainly in Māori health, and I worked in Māori health policy for the government for a long time, but I'm actually interested the full range of things that impact our wellbeing.

I'm also a longtime podcast listener and have been involved in podcast productions before – but this is my first time on the mic in a series like this and my first time translating a research project into a podcast series.

The rest of the team...

Cheryl Davies (research co-lead)

Ko Cheryl Davies toku ingoa, no Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga, Ngāti Wehiwehi, Ngāti Mutunga ki te Wharekauri e te iwi. I manage the services for the Tū Kotahi Māori Asthma and research trust. We are also part of a large Whānau Ora collective – Tākiri Mai Te Ata – and we're based out in Te Awakairangi where we also work alongside one of our Whānau Ora collective partners, Kōkiri Marae in establishing our own Kaupapa Māori research centre.

Associate Professor Dr Ruth Cunningham (research co-lead)

I'm a public health physician, or a public health doctor, and I work at the University of Otago in Wellington, as an Associate Professor of public health. I identify as Tangata Tiriti, because I am Pākehā, and my Tiriti relationship with Māori is an important part of how I work as a researcher.

Kairangahau (researchers)

The TIAKI Rōpū Rangahau includes: Jimole Cremin, Crystal Dickson, Ace Goff, Steffanie Gill, Saulo Kolio, Janet Matehe, Lisa Maule, Jim Moriarty, Dr Helen Pearse-Otene, Natalie Paki Paki, Nataahia Pasene, Dr Frederieke Sanne Petrović-van der Deen, Assoc Prof Bridget Robson, Jeannine Stairmand, Autumn Tahere, Jordan Tane, Huia Tavite, and Belinda Tuari-Toma.

TLAKI is a Kaupapa Māori rangahau project.

Kaupapa Māori, at its core, translates to a Māori way. But it's so much more than just a phrase.

Over the last several decades, there have been many Kaupapa Māori leaders like Professors Graham Hingangaroa Smith, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Leonie Pihama, and Jenny Lee-Morgan, and so many other activists, advocates, scholars and practitioners who have led the way in Kaupapa Māori theory and praxis. If we had a list of names, that the list would be a mile long.

Kaupapa Māori, as an explicitly stated concept, emerged in the 1980s as a response to colonial pressures constantly seeking to assimilate Māori into non-Māori ways of life. It stood (and stands) as an assertion of Māori identity, a declaration that being Māori is not a deficit but a strength. It challenges colonial narratives victim-blaming Māori social and health inequities on personal failings, instead highlighting the systemic racism and underserving of Māori by the colonial state and society.

"I always think back to how I first started in research, and it was research then there was no rangahau, over 20 years ago and how I was really afraid because it was a whole new area I was stepping into. And I often think of that time... [that early experience] enables our service and our kaimahi to know how best support and tautoko our kairangahau who have come into learn."

Cheryl Davies

Tū Kotahi

Kaupapa Māori is not just about knowledge for knowledge's sake, it's about knowledge that uplifts, empowers, and creates positive transformational change for whānau and communities. Research and knowledge within a Kaupapa Māori paradigm has to resonate with Māori experiences and it has to be transformative for the whānau and communities it serves.

Our approach.

TIAKI, as a Kaupapa Māori rangahau project, is really wanting to shine a light on the issues for Māori leaving prisons in a way that is empowering. We have done this by keeping a focus on the structural or societal contexts that have led to mass imprisonment of Māori and that influence the entire process of returning to the community.

It was essential to all of us that if we were going to do rangahau in this area then we needed to do it in a way that was tika and pono. And this meant involving kairangahau, with lived experience of being imprisoned, and their whānau, and to do it ways that are not extractive.

TIAKI has both quantitative and qualitative elements

We'll talk about these two elements in episodes two and three respectively. But the short version is that the quantitative element meant looking at data held by government and interpreting that data in a way that was useful for whānau Māori and their communities.

And the qualitative element involved almost 40 interviews with individuals and whānau with lived experience of prison and of re-entering communities from prisons coming 'out the gate', so to speak. These qualitative interviews were all led by kairangahau who had the same individual or whānau experiences of being imprisoned and coming 'out the gate'. They did an amazing job - more on that in episode three.

The health of Māori leaving prisons has not been well researched



Of course we should be precise here, because actually there are already a lot of reports on the harms of prisons and what needs to change with that system. There has been a huge amount of work undertaken by Māori leaders, activists, advocates, practitioners and scholars. But in TIAKI we are looking specifically at the health and wellbeing of Māori who are re-entering their communities from prison. This is something the 'system' hasn't given real attention to, and an area of hardly any research, let alone any solutions for change that come from whānau with lived experience themselves.

"These massive gaps have been well known and for ages, and I have been wanting to do something about it, more than just saying 'well this situation badly sucks' or 'hmm, I hope it gets better', which reminds me how a colleague the other day said that Matua Moana Jackson always did used to say 'hope is not a strategy', anyway, that is why my colleagues and I developed TIAKI."

Paula Toko King
Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare

What do we already know?

Moana Jackson and his work dating back to 1980s has been a massive influence on all of our rangahau. And of course he has influenced so many others.

Probably the most recent look at our prisons and their workings began in 2018, the government, and the then-Minister of Justice Andrew Little, wanted “an honest and constructive conversation about how we can deliver safer and more effective justice”. This led to the establishment of Safe and Effective Justice Advisory Group – Te Uepū Hāpai i Te Ora.

In the podcast we interview two members of the Safe and Effective Justice Advisory Group: Professor Tracey McIntosh and Professor Carwyn Jones.

“...we particularly heard from Māori of course that there was racism within the system. And you know that was both institutional racism and individualised racism that they were experiencing, and of course we know the kind of disproportionate statistics in the way Māori are impacted by the criminal justice system. And we also, know, alongside that, a kind of separate strand of thinking about the impacts of colonisation ... grounded in loss of land, resources, authority, jurisdiction, cultural alienation, all of these kinds of processes that were impacting on the ways in which Māori individuals and whānau were being impacted by the criminal justice system.”

Carwyn Jones

Kaihautū, Te Whare Whakatupu Mātauranga, Te Wānanga o Raukawa

“When we were doing the the safe and effective justice work in 2018, we went out and we spoke to thousands, literally like we listened to I think thousands of people, rather than spoke to them, and one of the overwhelming elements that came through that, whether we were speaking to people who had been harmed, whether we were speaking to people who had supported those who had been harmed, or whether we were speaking to people who had harmed others. No one thought the system worked...”

No one thought it worked; those who wanted stronger penalties didn't think that it worked, those who wanted far greater emphasis on different forms of restorative and other forms of justice didn't think it worked...”

Tracey McIntosh

Professor of Indigenous Studies, Te Wānanga o Waipapa, University of Auckland

Australia.

We talked with Kathryn Gilbey, Professor of Indigenous Social Policy and Practice at the University of Queensland.

There are similar patterns of racial

My name's Kathryn Gilbey and I'm Alyawarre Arelhe so my tribe is from the Northern Territory up into Queensland.... I am first and foremost a community member and I feel like that's the biggest self-identifier for me.

Another secondary part of my identity is ...I'm an academic and an activist.

Certainly in the Northern Territory there's a shocking similarity of circumstance that exists within global Indigenous communities. That's partly because we're very local, land based, place-based knowledge systems. Our language comes from where we are from, and that determines how we think about the world, and how we interact in the world. But also there are these tools of colonialism.

In Australia, as a whole our young people are locked up at rates that are higher than anyone in the world. So Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are locked up. And in the Northern Territory in a youth detention facility called Don Dale that's 100% Aboriginal. And that's not because of any innate criminality but that is racism and colonialism at play, in its finest example...

This is an edited summary of our interview. To hear more, listen to episode one of our podcast.

discrimination in other countries...

My name is Marshall Chin. I'm a physician, a primary care doctor and researcher on health equity, trying to improve the care and outcomes of everyone especially the most marginalised people, including people from racial ethnic minoritised backgrounds, poor people, people from LGBTQ backgrounds. I'm also a collaborator on a new project, working with recently incarcerated, primarily men, trying to help with the transition back to health care.

There are parallels [for New Zealand] to the incarceration of marginalised groups in the US.

[In the US], if you're a young black boy there's about a one out of three chance that you're going to be imprisoned in your lifetime. Latino boys about one out of six. White boys about one out of seventeen. And our Indigenous populations in the US, they're incarcerated at a rate 38% more than the average population. So you ask, why? Well a lot of it is just the systemic societal injustices. Discrimination that led to less economic opportunity, poorer health, poorer housing in these communities and then discrimination through all phases of the criminal justice system.

United States.

We talked with Professor Marshall Chin, physician, academic, teacher, and researcher on health equity based at the University of Chicago.

Ngā kupu.

What we mean by the words we use.

The criminalising legal system.

While you might hear people use the term 'criminal justice system' to refer to all the agencies, law-makers, and institutions responsible for people being imprisoned, we don't think that it's an accurate term.

Firstly, given that system actually perpetuates unfair and unjust impacts on some of our communities, we can't really call that any kind of justice system. It is more accurately a legal system.

Secondly, the term 'criminal' implies that there is a single wrong-doer, a person doing crimes. But thinking about what Kathryn Gilbey said on the previous pages, being imprisoned isn't about some kind of innate criminality. It's more about being criminalised by the legal system.

Abolition.

The term abolition is used in different contexts. Here it is a rejection of prisons, but it's also more than that.

An influential theorist for us is Professor Ruth Wilson Gilmore. Professor Gilmore emphasises that abolition isn't just about absence or dismantling systems of oppression – don't get us wrong of course that mahi is critical – but it is also about imagining and building something better.

“Abolition requires that we change one thing, which is everything.

Contemporary prison abolitionists have made this argument for more than two decades. Abolition is not absence, it is presence. What the world will become already exists in fragments and pieces, experiments and possibilities. So those who feel in their gut deep anxiety that abolition means knock it all down, scorch the earth and start something new, let that go.

Abolition is building the future from the present, in all of the ways we can”.

Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2018).

Practising abolition.

We talked to Associate Professor Donna Cormack from the University of Auckland about what it means to be an abolitionist.

Ko Donna Cormack ahau he uri nō Kai Tahu, nō Kāti Māmoe hoki. I'm a researcher and teacher at Te Kupenga Hauora Māori at the University of Auckland. My work is focused on racism and colonialism and the impacts of those oppressive systems on Māori health.

I guess I came to abolition about ten years ago... it was really through the chance to sit in a classroom and hear Ruth Wilson Gilmore speak. I cannot remember exactly what she said, but I can remember how it felt and I knew by the time that I left that classroom that there is no place for prisons in the world that I want.

[During the 2020 Covid-19 response] it was interesting seeing the conversations in public health, globally, about the need for rapid decarceration. These places are deeply unhealthy even outside of the context of a pandemic. But they're even more deadly if you have people in conditions that are crowded and unsanitary, people are isolated from family, and people don't have the ability to control their environment or keep themselves safe.

But it didn't really gain any traction here. And what we saw instead was a typical colonial government response – kinda using that situation to be even more punitive and carceral.

This is an edited summary of our interview. To hear more, listen to episode 1 of the TIARI podcast.

‘Non-reformist reforms’.

When practising abolition, we have to be thoughtful about becoming mere reformists.

Focusing on prison or justice system reforms can make the carceral system more palatable, more efficient, more expansive, more research, and of course more legitimate.

Whereas, as Professor Ruth Wilson Gilmore tells us, non-reformist reforms act to disrupt, dismantle and thereby reduce the power of the carceral state. Non-reformist reforms advance decriminalisation and decarceration but alongside the advancement of health, employment, housing, food sovereignty, environmental protection, land rights, language, and culture.

It is from the perspective of non-reformist reforms that we engage in improving the lives of whānau Māori, without accepting the inevitability - or legitimacy - of prisons.

Tracey McIntosh talked about this when we talked to her too:

“Particularly as Māori or Indigenous abolitionists [there is a] cultural responsibility to intervene in the life of whānau. [This involves] the need to take back the notion of intervention. Intervention has largely been used against Māori and Indigenous communities in ways perpetuated and exacerbated by racial prejudice. But, within our own communities there is the need to intervene, to recognise that there may be harm happening, and to respond to that”.

The prison pipeline.

The soft pipeline isn't really "soft"

The soft pipeline is used to refer to actions outside of the criminalising legal system that have an associated increased risk of being imprisoned.

The school-to-prison pipeline is an example of what is meant by the "soft pipeline".

Often this starts with exclusion from school for children.

"A really sort of incredible characteristic of the school to prison pipeline is exclusion from education. This is so significant ... It's an overwhelming characteristic I've had very few people, certainly less than I can count of one hand, who have come into the prison at a young age who have not been excluded by 13.

So there's no way we should be calling that a soft pipeline but it's a very clear pipeline."

Tracey McIntosh

The “prison pipeline” is a concept that we heard a lot about during the TIAKI project. When we talked to Tracey McIntosh she explained that there are two types of pipeline – a hard pipeline and a soft pipeline.

The hard pipeline can be intergenerational

“The other pipeline, and this one I do call the hard pipeline, is the state care-to-prison pipeline, and that is just absolutely overwhelming. You know, we’ve got a whole range of statistics. I can remember statistics from quite some time back of young people coming into the prison and 83% of them at that time were in the care of the state. In other words, the state was their parent at the time of their arrest. Again, overwhelmingly, I can think of few exceptions who have not had the state involved in their life from a earliest of ages. In some cases that will be in faith-based institutions, but they have been in the care of the state.

...

The intergenerational nature of that pipeline is so significant, so not only do I know children who have gone through state care, but in many cases so have their parents and their grandparents. I’ve had young people come through whose grandparents were in Lake Alice as children.”

Tracey McIntosh

This is an edited summary of our interview. To hear more, listen to episode one of the TIAKI podcast.

The purpose of episode one of the TIAKI podcast is to introduce you to our rangahau, which aims to shine a light on the issues for Māori leaving imprisonment.

The main things we cover in episode one of the podcast are:

- Introducing you to our amazing research team.
- Touching on some of the thinking, theorising, and writing that has informed TIAKI - from the work of Moana Jackson in the 1980s to today.
- Kōrero with some of our international colleagues about the similarities between what is happening in the criminalising legal system and the experiences of other Indigenous and communities that experience marginalisation in Australia and the United States.
- Clarifying some of the terms we use.

Future episodes.

There are five other podcast episodes for you to listen to.

- Episode two covers data - and analysis of what the government holds on its integrated data infrastructure about the health and wellbeing Māori who have experienced imprisonment.
- Episode three covers the qualitative research and findings of interviews conducted by kairangahau with lived experience of imprisonment.
- Episode four looks at the different ways to share research findings (other than academic published literature), including poetry, art, zines, and theatre.
- Episode five takes an in-depth look at “OUT THE GATE” a theatre marae production based on the TIAKI research, that was performed throughout the Lower North Island in late 2025.
- Episode six looks at the recommendations from the TIAKI research and especially at what the government must do in order to do better.

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