

PUBLIC APOLOGY STATEMENT

As at 18th April, 2024

The purpose of this page is to provide information regarding reconciliation processes engaged in regarding a grievous error on our part in the 2024 booklet. We are very sorry for the hurt this has caused.

Summary

Becoming aware of our wrongdoing we engaged with the impacted parties. A tikanga Māori reconciliation process was put in place. This culminating in a hui at which the matter was discussed kanohi ki te kanohi. With grace extended we are humbled and it is now our duty to do better.

Details

Our wrong was the errant use of a photo of a wero that we edited. At the time we were unaware it was owned by Rawhitiroa Photography. To have used this image it would need to have been purchased. Purchasing images is our standard practice. We wronged Rawhitiroa, and for that we are sincerely sorry.

To edit the image, irrespective of intent, permissions would typically be needed from the person whose image it was – in this case most affecting a person, their whanau and the local Wānanga. This was a significant failure on our part.

Having connected with those most affected we expressed our desire to put this right however possible. Concurrent actions included stopping of our own booklet delivery where it was up to. A few hundred thousand 'Hope For All' booklets were disposed of through recycling by volunteers across the nation as a result.

Some restitution was requested and given, which was then donated by its recipients to the work Te Wānanga o Mau Taiaha of Mokoia.

Those most affected invited us to a reconciliation hui for the matter to be discussed kanohi ki te kanohi. This was held at Tarimano Marae on 17th April. Words explaining the hurt created were expressed verbally – expanding upon words expressed in letters sent prior. Grace was generously extended and we are humbled.

Beyond the above apologies we recognised that we had wronged others at the same time. This included Ngāti Torehina, whose ancestor's story (Ruatara) was told in the booklet, as also Anna and Matt who had shared their very powerful personal stories of personal challenge and hope in the 2024 booklet. Apologies have been extended to each. Te Hurihangā of Ngāti Torehina very generously attended and spoke at the reconciliation hui.

We also recognised that we had wronged the wider Christian community who we serve in our work as a Christian charity. We are supposed to conduct ourselves in a manner that is 'beyond reproach', showing respect to all. While not with intent, we failed in this and extended these apologies throughout our network as a result.

Our wrongdoing was, however, of particular significance to the many Christian Māori across our nation, who found themselves torn between their love of their culture and concurrent love of their faith. A recognition of this has therefore sat within our apologies.

Looking forward

With significant grace extended to us by those most affected as also the kaumatua represented at Tarimano Marae, we are committed to do better. We had no policy regarding AI – so this will be corrected. The systems we had around checking booklet content included many people, including some with a Māori lens. These systems had worked without incident since the work began in 2014, but had not adapted with our changing times and technologies. The identified problem with this system was that there were no specific individuals who were responsible and accountable within this group to assess our media, with a view to protecting mana Māori. The group was therefore too indirectly empowered to catalyse a needed questioning of imagery and processes. This was a failure on our part we will now be correcting.

Beyond this, while this whole process has been to the shame and detriment of our work, we recognise that our poor example can be an opportunity for a wider education regarding correct processes regarding the use of imagery, the dangers and use of AI - and especially regarding the use of indigenous imagery. We recognise that others are now learning as a result also, and that we can be a very humbled voice within that wider picture by speaking of our failure.

We again apologise for our failure in this matter. We both caused offence and poorly represented the wider Christian community we serve.