

Election 2023: Winston Peters claims 'maori are not indigenous' during Nelson meeting with NZ First supporters

By [Lincoln Tan](#)

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New Zealand First leader Winston Peters told supporters at a public meeting in Nelson on Sunday that Māori are “not indigenous”.

“Here’s the rub if you are Māori. We’re not indigenous,” Peters claimed, according to a report by Stuff.

“We come from Hawai-iki. Where’s our Hawai-iki? We think it is in the Cook Islands. We think it’s in Rarotonga, but we’re not from here.

“And [if] you go back 5000 years, we came with our DNA from China.”

When contacted by the *Herald* after the meeting, Peters said his tribe Ngāti Wai’s name translates to “people of the sea”, and its members came to Aotearoa about 900 years ago or longer.

“We didn’t come 54,000 years ago, for example, like the Aboriginals in Australia,” the former deputy prime minister said.

“If our story says we came from Hawai-iki or this place from the Pacific, then it means we’re not indigenous. I’m not trying to kid anybody, so why are we trying to kid each other?”

Peters claimed the belief Māori were the indigenous people of New Zealand was a “misconstruct”.

“Every tribe will have in its ancestry where it came from, and it’s not New Zealand,” he said. “Why are we lying to each other? We should be believing in truths and not myths.”

Peters also told the crowd the National Party and the Māori Party in 2010 signed up for the 5th generation on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Undrip).

This declaration is an agreement which emphasises the rights of indigenous peoples to live in dignity and maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions. NZ First's policy is to formally withdraw New Zealand from Undrip.

Peters also attacked what he described as the “two hospital systems”, calling them a massive and total failure.

“One is Māori, which has been a massive failure, and the other one is a total failure as well,” he said, according to Stuff.

“Te Whatu Ora, excuse me, I don't want to speak the Māori language when I go to hospital. I want to be fixed up whether I am European or Māori.”

In June, [Newstalk ZB and the Herald revealed](#) Te Whatu Ora - Health NZ has introduced an “Equity Adjustor Score”, which uses an algorithm to prioritise patients according to clinical priority, time spent on the waitlist, geographic location (isolated areas), deprivation level and ethnicity.

In the ethnicity category, Māori and Pacific are top of the list, while European New Zealanders and other ethnicities are lower-ranked.

Peters continued by claiming the Three Waters reforms are a programme designed “to transfer the water ownership from the heavens to one race in this country – Māori”.

But Stuff reported he said no “ordinary Māori” believed water belonged to them - instead it was members of the “Māori elite” that were “ramming this down our throats”.

The meeting at the Trafalgar Centre was attended by about 300 people.

The centre was also the venue for a Freedoms New Zealand protest where the party's supporters were chanting and waving flags.

Lincoln Tan specialises in covering stories around diversity and immigration. He's been a journalist at the *Herald* since 2006.