

Proposal to adopt Rapa Taiwhenua as the Māori name for LandSAR

Introduction

In 2016 the LandSAR Board requested cultural advice on the inclusion of an appropriate Māori name as part of the LandSAR NZ brand. This paper summarises that review and recommends the 2019 AGM ratifies the adoption of the name *Rapa Taiwhenua*.

Discussion

LandSAR and its members are an integral part of the land in Aotearoa. The official languages of New Zealand include English and Māori. Up until now, the recognition of Māori has not featured in our name or branding.

As part of the national commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi, government agencies have been increasingly expected to be bicultural - that is, to fairly represent Māori and non-Māori interests in their operations and their allocation of resources. It has become the norm for New Zealand government departments such as DOC (Te Papa Atawhai), Ministry of Transport (Te Manatu Waka), under which the NZSAR Council sits, and the New Zealand Police (Nga Pirihimana O Aotearoa) to identify with Māori culture by including Māori bylines in their names.

Doctor Ruakere Hond (Taranaki/Ngāti Ruanui/Te Ati Awa) was engaged to research a suitable name for LandSAR. Dr Hond is a former commissioner of the Māori Language Commission and he conveyed to us the following:

*I played around with this a bit trying to consider how to get the best meaning with few words. I came up with this: “**Rapa Taiwhenua**”.*

- 1. Rapa - has two meanings 1. to spread out and 2. to search*
- 2. Taiwhenua - means rural or land that is not urban or well populated*

I thought the other elements such as people and rescuing are secondary within the context to primary role of finding the person/people, however I realise that sometime people are already located but need rescuing. Trouble was that it added a lot of extra words that made the name ungainly or had meanings that could be misinterpreted and used by some to make fun of your group. I thought that there is value in linking that name with an old Maori statement, that I think is appropriate, as a form of positioning for the name.

Mā tini, mā mano, ka rapa te whai

With the support and coordination of many, the search can be broadened

This is usually used metaphorically for the value in coordinated efforts to a quicker and more effective results. 'Rapa' relates to the differentiating of roles and maximising effort, and as I said it also means to search. 'Whai' also means to search, pursue or hunt for, but it also means to obtain or take possession of, which can be linked with the concept of rescue. It is a word that is widely known and used. Trouble is 'whai' also meaning to grab at something or to hoard and if used instead of 'rapa' it could be construed as kind of meaning 'land grabbers' which you don't want to be associated with. I toyed with the name "Ranga Rapa Te Whai" ... Ranga meaning a team or group of well trained people. Its quite alright but a little cumbersome and doesn't convey the concept of 'land'.

Also the proverb can be shortened to just "Ka rapa te whai" ... leaving out the "Mā tini, mā mano" bit because it kind of implies you have hundreds engaged in the activity of the search. That said the shortened statement will still be recognisable and have the same impact. Those who know the whakatauki will immediately understand the deeper meaning of the name. So I suggest it should be:

Rapa Taiwhenua

"Ka rapa te whai"

On confirming with the Maori language Commission and other language specialists from across iwi, all agree that "Rapa Taiwhenua" is appropriate to who LandSAR is, and is fitting for the context and purpose of our organisation. There are other options, such as:

- "Haurapa whakaora a whenua" – Haurapa – to diligently search for something, Whakaora – to save/rescue
- "Haurapa Whenua, whakaora Tangata" – this one connects to the people and gives people more of a connection & relationship to the service being provided.
- "Rapu(nga) Whenua me te (ki) Whakaora" a literal translation.

The list goes on, however given the fact that Rapa Taiwhenua is not only endorsed by prominent members of Māori and by the Government agency tasked with language planning for te reo Māori and contribute to the Maihi Karauna (the Crown's Māori language revitalisation strategy), Rapa Taiwhenua can be considered appropriate for LandSAR.

The Māori Language Commission has acknowledged LandSAR for our efforts to give status to Te Reo Māori within our organisation. They have also offered to assist us should we want to delve further into language planning for te reo Māori and contribute to the Maihi Karauna (the Crown's Māori language revitalisation strategy).

Recommendation

We therefore propose that the LandSAR 2019 AGM adopts the following Māori name.

Rapa Taiwhenua

"Ka rapa te whai"

Questions and answers

Does this affect my Group?

No, the proposal is to adopt a Māori name for the national body. Because LandSAR Groups are separate entities in their own right, it is entirely up to each Group whether they wish to adopt it for themselves or not. A number of Groups have already started using the Rapa Taiwhenua name.

Do groups need to change their logo, uniform or signage?

Not unless you want to. If your group wishes to adopt the name then it makes most sense to change your branding over time, as gear comes up for renewal.

Why don't we we just translate Land Search and Rescue into Māori?

Rapa Taiwhenua is not intended to be a literal translation of Land Search and Rescue, rather it is a name that helps articulate the ethos and spirit of the organisation.

In Māori these words can have other meanings.

Yes, Rapa Taiwhenua can be taken to mean other things and people can choose to misinterpret the words. Dr. Hond discusses these issues in his letter, copied above, and concludes that this is still the best name for us.

What will this cost?

If equipment and signage is changed over time, as it comes up for replacement, there is no extra cost. In the LandSAR national office stationery and letterheads are all electronic, so the costs of the change are negligible.

Why should we do this?

Having a Māori name brings benefits including:

- Better integration and communication with our communities.
- Opening doors to private land.
- Creating new potential avenues for sponsorship and support.
- Demonstrating that LandSAR is an alignment with our funding agencies' priorities.
- Showing that we are offering a universal service, equally available to all.