

# ***Charlie - Te kaitiaki i Te Reo Māori***

“It’s not Maw-wow, it’s Mauao!” When I heard you, Charlie, telling us the right pronunciation of the majestic Maunga o Tauranga Moana, I had to tell your mama. I felt it was really important to acknowledge your ako and your efforts to preserve the mana of Te Reo Māori. Do you know what your mama said?

“Oh, I know, he corrects us all the time. The other day he told us ‘it’s not Ohpotiki. It’s Ōpotiki.” I smiled at your mama’s words as I pictured you, slightly frowning and speaking with conviction.

But the beautiful thing about your mahi in our place is that you also take every opportunity to teach us ngā kupu Māori. Take for example yesterday. As I was raking the bark around the big rākau to cushion potential falls, I mentioned how important our Taha Tinana was.

“Tinana means body in Māori,” you explained to your friends. It is these powerful moments that tell me that you are te kaitiaki i te reo Māori.

## ***What learning is woven in these ordinary yet significant events?***

Charlie, e te hoa, as Tangata of this land, we all have a responsibility to ensure Te Reo Māori “not only survives but thrives.” But for this reo to thrive we need everyone on board, fully committed to learning and embracing it. It is true that some people find pronouncing the words a bit tricky, but with the support from advocates like yourself, we can all grow our collective knowledge. I’ve been thinking a lot about this word, ***kaitiaki*** and whether it was tika to use it here. And do you know what? I think it is because *tiaki* means to care, to look after, to protect and *kai* refers to the person doing the action. “Tū pakari ia hei kaitiaki i te reo Māori/ to stand as guardians of te reo Māori” means, amongst other things, that kaiako have a professional responsibility to champion tamariki like you, who want to ensure that te reo is spoken correctly and wish to take the lead sharing this taonga with our entire community.

## ***How can we all stretch this learning further?***

Charlie I have no doubt that, in the years to come, your Te Reo voice will gain such momentum that you’ll speak it fluently. And I really hope you will continue to teach others this beautiful reo and the wisdom woven in it. But for now, as you well know, our Te Pura Te Taniwha play is fast approaching and I would love to offer you the opportunity to play a part that requires speaking a few Te Reo sentences. Would you be up for a fabulous challenge like this? Hopefully...