

Whānau ora

**Whakapapa Research
Project series: Whānau event**



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Whakapapa Research Project series

This is part of a series of writings from eight whānau researchers on nine kaupapa. This kaupapa is about a whānau event.

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Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) and whakapapa

Kai

Matriarch

Research methodology and methods

Whānau event

Whāngai

Whenua

Taonga



He kupu whakaūpoko: Introduction

“Almost late to work getting major feels reminiscing the best parts of my childhood. I grew up at a time when Nan began hers and what become our journey of rediscovering and celebrating atua Māori. It was during the same time Ahorangi Genesis and Te Hei o Tāhoka were sooooo in. The productions, the stories, the lessons, the dancing in high heels, the education, the music, te reo. Amazing! I’m so grateful for them because they provided the resources during a time when there were hardly any. I hope they don’t mind these going on YouTube because they are still relevant now than when they were like 30 years ago. Their knowledge in this area are now being used in mental health and well-being, with a more familiar almost renaissance of our people utilising atua Māori. They to me were the pioneers and if I won lotto I would commission a reunion tour. Now to shut my door and turn the music up” (Cribb, 2018).

Originally this piece attempted to portray our 180-degree turn from Christianity to te ao Māori as the event-related story that changed our lives forever. Instead, on reflection, and as the revelation of whānau research goes, it was a lot bigger than that. This personal reflection weaves together a journey of decolonisation, learning and relearning, taking back that which is ours and, most importantly, courage. All were perpetuated through education, celebratory family traditions, and essentially what became known as whānau ora. Perhaps at the core of it is the reclamation of rangatiratanga as defined by our whānau, led by the matriarch, our grandmother, and supported by our parents for the betterment of future uri.

Ko tōu piki amokura nōu, ko tōku piki amokura nōku

You have your house of learning, as I have mine

Although I was the first and last grandchild to be baptised in the Catholic church, I never had any real memories of any religious experiences growing up. I mildly remember going to a midgets’ practice for Hato Weneti—a Māori Catholic club—as a baby and wrapping myself up in the curtains when the group would march on stage because I did not want to be there. I heard stories of my whānau once being a staunch Catholic family, serving with Bishop Cullinane of the Diocese of Palmerston North, running marriage preparation courses, marching through the street carrying heavy wooden crosses at Easter and preparing children for communion and confirmation. Unfortunately, or fortunately, I was never privy to those same experiences.

My earliest and most vivid experience had to be during my primary school years. It was the first bible—or it might have been religion—class of the year, taught by the English teacher. We were part of the immersion unit at the time and these lessons were set up for us as part of the curriculum. I remember my grandmother prohibiting me

from attending the class, so I never attended. While it felt a little embarrassing because I was the only student who remained, I was none the wiser as to what was really going on. I did not question the decision, and it did not seem too big of a deal at the time. Unbeknown to me, my grandmother knew exactly what she was doing.

That experience was the first of many, exemplifying my inquisitive discovery of what that particular situation meant. It is best portrayed in the abovementioned whakataukī, explaining that while religion and Christianity may be for others, it simply was not our kaupapa. And while I was not privy to any previous religious experiences, over the years I made a conscious effort to understand why such an effort was made for us to depart Christianity and religion in general and embrace our taha Māori. This piece is not about comparing or combining worldviews, nor is it about highlighting the pros and cons of different belief systems, but simply about our family embarking on our own journey.

The best explanation for me came from my grandmother's brief of evidence (Cribb, n.d.), submitted as part of Te Korowai o Te Awa Iti claim within the Waitangi Tribunal's Whanganui District Inquiry. At that time, I was studying in Wellington and became accustomed to the higher-order thinking skills needed at university and so the submission made a lot of sense to me, albeit gut-wrenching yet powerful to read. In essence, it spoke about the traumatic, physical, mental, and emotional effects of colonisation, particularly through educational initiatives such as the Native Schools Act. It described examples of suppression, humiliation, abuse, racism, robbery, institutionalism, suffering, banishment and brainwashing.

The submission outlined three potent, mind-altering weapons, with Christianity being the most powerful that the Crown harnessed on our people (the others were tobacco and alcohol). *"Christianity was the weapon of mass destruction set about programming us to prepare for a happy death"* (Cribb, n.d., p. 6). And while the Crown may not have been responsible for church practices, the Crown was very much responsible for *"the indoctrination of Christian values that have been encoded within our hearts, minds and souls to the point we are no longer who we were born to be"* (Cribb, n.d., p. 6).

The lightbulb moment came in the submission, where it stated that our grandmother thought seriously about what it was she could give us that would ground us firmly and strengthen us for the future. After seeing what our grandfather had in regards to his taha Māori, and on his passing in 1989, the decision was made to exit the church, make a new start, and focus on who we really were. It did not come without its challenges though, and it was not so apparent at the time that the choice was going to be so testing and so lonely. The family abandoned the celebrations of the church and while it was not so obvious to us grandchildren, it was difficult for our parents.

It started with Nan's enrolment in Te Rangakura, described as an Indigenous initiative that only Māori could devise through what they had already encountered in mainstream institutions. The teacher training programme was

the platform for all the other brilliant, courageous and educational efforts made to counteract and replace the dominant discourse often found in our schools. Many of these initiatives were established, driven, and tested at Te Kura o Kokohuia, where I spent the majority of my schooling while Nan was the principal and Mum the chairperson. All these efforts were founded on tikanga and kaupapa Māori, or more precisely, tikanga and kaupapa Whanganui.

Ngā Kai o Te Puku Tupuna (Te Puna Mātauranga o Whanganui, 2000), the Whanganui Iwi Education Plan, was launched at Pūtiki Wharanui Marae in 2000. It was a culmination of dreams, aspirations, planning, and deliberations of so many of our people who had passed on. It was what drove the curriculum at Kokohuia at the time. There was also Te Tūnga Ahurei (the philosophical base), Te Arapikinga ki Ngā Taonga Tuku Iho (cultural competencies), Kaupapa Atua (atua foci in the planning process), Rere Runga Rawa (self-directed learning), Kura-ā-waho (education outside of the classroom programmes), and a heavy emphasis on creating tribal graduates. Suffice to say we were spoilt and saturated in tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori and kaupapa Māori; and tikanga Whanganui, mātauranga Whanganui, and kaupapa Whanganui.

While the daily waiata, whaikōrero, karanga, kōrero, hītori, whakapapa, Matariki noho, whakaari, wānanga, whanaungatanga, and going to marae on the Whanganui River twice a year, seemed like normal, everyday practices, its value was not truly realised or appreciated until we either left or came face-to-face with outside experiences. At the time, it seemed as though we were on our own waka, pursuing our own kaupapa, celebrating our achievements and measuring our outputs against our own standards as determined by us, not some government department. It was hard work and it was tiresome, it required brave leadership, yet it was amazing, rewarding, and empowering.

Me he toka tū moana!

A rock standing firm in the ocean!

The journey did not just stop at school though. Our grandmother applied a holistic, whole-life approach to our departure from the church. It was never going to be enough that we were confined to this journey from the hours of 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and that it only happened within education. As continued within her submission, *“it is now a beautiful world I live in...”* (Cribb, n.d., p. 7), and if it meant carrying on the learning, relearning, and practising within the home, then so be it. While the change put us offside with wider family members, the bigger picture was more important. Hence this section appropriately opens with the whakataukī that describes our grandmother (and eventually parents), standing firm against a sea of criticism, challenges, weird looks and murmurs.

Thankfully though, there were others on the same journey or who were already proudly promoting te ira atua and kaupapa Māori. The likes of the Winitana whānau in Tūrangi were one of them as explained in the opening passage of this piece. We were also fortunate to have Tūrama Hāwira, who also made a significant contribution to our journey by providing a rich, simplistic source of knowledge and history without it being clouded by religion or



Christianity. And while we do not claim to be the perfect family or claim to have the answers on what it means to practise as a pure, decolonised Māori family, it was always about us doing what we needed to do.

We stopped celebrating Christmas and in particular the commercial activities of Christmas. We rarely participated in any religious practices although remained respectful if the situation called for it. Over time, it has become a personal decision by individuals within our family if they wanted to celebrate Christmas, but it was more important that we understood the choice more than the practice. *“Today, if we participate, it is because we want to as whānau, as hapu, as iwi and Māori and not because we have to or someone else’s tikanga states so”* (Cribb, n.d., p. 7). I feel that even as grandchildren, we understand this now more than ever.

Not that it was ever about justifying our decisions or actions to anyone else, but our whānau filled the void of particular religious traditions with other practices. Our whānau celebrated and acknowledged the very first time a female mokopuna menstruated and Nan gave us a taonga as a symbol of the gift from Hineahuone and Papatūānuku. While at the time one did not feel like celebrating, it was still important to understand the significance of the moment. Births and subsequent birthdays were well celebrated, and we would hold ceremonies for the burial of whenua. I even remember promising Nan that I would ‘tuku reo pōwhiri’ when my nephew Maruarua was born at the hospital.

Any milestones achieved by whānau members were acknowledged and would follow with kai, kōrero and gifts. We would and still often have whānau dinners for no reason at all other than because we could. Nan would make sure that we tuku mihi or ruruku if we were at McDonald’s, entering other people’s whenua, or at the start of any public presentation, hui, or forum (Māori or mainstream) if it had not occurred already. We would always visit the Awa and tuku ruruku if we were travelling or about to embark on something significant. While today these seem like normal daily practices, they did not seem that common, even when I was growing up.

A few years ago, our grandmother celebrated her 70th birthday and the older female mokopuna marked the occasion with an acknowledgement of her courage, decision to stay healthy, and commitment to te ao Māori, through tā moko. This kōrero was prepared by a cousin of mine, Matariki Cribb, and ties up this section on celebratory traditions as a vehicle for the journey we were embarking.

"Pare huia: the sign of chieftainship!"

The taa moko is in the shape of a rau huia for two reasons. It signifies a connection to our Kura, one of the many vehicles by which Nan taught us about our Whanganuitanga. The rau huia is more traditionally known as being a sign of nobility, and the wearers were revered for their leadership and mana.

"Your progeny, your legacy!"

The taaniko pattern at the top is the second panel on the St Vincents pari, and signifies for us the union between our Nan and Koro, and the resulting progeny, our parents. As well as this, the taaniko is on the top of the korowai and signifies to us whānau accomplishments, as this is the only time we've really seen the korowai worn.

"I am the River, the River is me"

The spine of the rau huia is a metaphorical representation of our Awa Tupua, and the spine of our whānau, our Nan. Niho taniwha represent myths, histories, legends and our artist told us that this is appropriate for a grandmother, teacher and keeper of whakapapa.

"The house that holds our stories"

The raperape are symbolic of beginnings and evolving towards the future, and we interpret this as the beginning of our whānau journey in Whare Atua, instigated by Nan.

"To move forward to the future, we must reflect on the past"

The whakarare is a pattern used to depict experience and lessons. We each have an individual interpretation of what experience and lessons those are, given that we all have unique experiences with Nan.

"Come alone, but come with your ancestry!"

Finally, the ara Poutama is the visual representation of "Kawae heke rangatira", and reminds us that our whakapapa gives us reason, and purpose, and mandate for the things we do. We are ever reminded that we are born of greatness, and descended from chiefs, from Atua

Our tāmoko dedicated to our Nan. Image courtesy of the Cribb whānau.



“Ko te pare huia, he tohu rangatira”. The tā moko is in the shape of a rau huia for two reasons. It signifies a connection to our kura [Te Kura o Kokohuia], one of the many vehicles by which our grandmother taught us about our Whanganuitanga. The rau huia is more traditionally known as being a sign of nobility, and the wearers were revered for their leadership and mana.

“He mokopuna, he puna moko”. The tāniko pattern at the top is the second panel on the St. Vincent’s pari, and signifies the union between our Nan and Koro, and the resulting progeny, our parents. As well as this, the tāniko is on the top of the korowai and signifies to us whānau accomplishments, as this is the only time we have really seen the korowai worn.

“Ko au te Awa, ko te Awa ko au”. The spine of the rau huia is a metaphorical representation of our Awa Tupua and the spine of our whānau, our Nan. Niho taniwha represents myths, histories, and legends, and our artist told us that this is appropriate for a grandmother, teacher, and keeper of whakapapa.

“He pātaka iriiringa kōrero”. The raperape are symbolic of beginnings and evolving towards the future, and we interpret this as the beginning of our whānau journey in te whare atua, instigated by our Nan.

“Titiro whakamuri kia anga whakamua”. The whakarare is a pattern used to depict experiences and lessons. We each have an individual interpretation of what experiences and lessons those are, given that we all have our unique experiences with Nan.

“Haere mai, koe me tō Raukotahi”. Finally, the ara poutama is the visual representation of kawae heke rangatira, and reminds us that our whakapapa gives us reason, purpose, and mandate for the things we do. We are ever reminded that we are born of greatness, and descended from chiefs, from atua.

Ko au te taupā kīhai i puawai aku moemoa

I am my own barrier to fulfilling my aspirations and dreams

Finally, and in continuation with the holistic approach, there was still much to be learnt and much to be offered. To really understand and appreciate what it meant to be healthy in mind, body, and spirit and what it meant to visualise and practise a world without colonisation, without religion, or without suppression, we had to go beyond education and family traditions. To reclaim rangatiratanga and to live a meaningful life, the journey had to and continues to go on. Ultimately, it goes on as a whānau and requires us to dig deep into what a healthy family means and looks like, literally, physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally.

This section illustrates our efforts to achieve this, not just as a journey that was started by our grandmother, but what the future looks like for us as mokopuna and for our mokopuna. Here, we have been given an opportunity to determine our own destiny, which is best portrayed in the opening whakataukī that states we are the only

barriers to our own dreams. Not barriers created by colonisation or the Crown, or as historically encountered by our grandparents' generation, but barriers that only *we* create. How lucky are we to be in such a position and even more so, in a position that was a consequence of the suffering and strength of the journey started by our grandmother and parents.

Our attempts to achieve this and our efforts to do justice to the journey are attempted and executed in the following ways. As a whānau we share and are involved in a myriad of kaupapa, particularly kaupapa Māori. The first is politics. While not all family members are avid supporters of the Māori Party, it remains a vehicle for some to be self-determining Māori. Likewise, it was more important that we remain politically astute to what was going on around us, to exercise our rights not just as New Zealand citizens, but as tāngata whenua. Election time still remains a great topic of conversation and debate amongst our whānau.

Secondly, it was also important to remain politically active and involved at a local level. I cannot help but think of the occupation of Pākaitore as a key event that sparked a fire in our bellies and in our hearts. It is the most radical and outgoing experience I have encountered around tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake. That 79-day occupation is a paper in itself but nonetheless contributes to the rich journey our family has encountered thus far. While as grandchildren we may have remembered the occupation as communal camping, making signs, early wake-ups, marching, and nightly meetings, later on the experience taught us about sovereignty, strategy, justice, kotahitanga, and self-sacrifice.

Governance also remains a common activity within our whānau, with family members holding various positions on hapū land trusts, marae committees, iwi governing boards, and school boards of trustees. It has always been important for us to be involved in the strategic direction of our tribe, communities, and schooling institutions. Ngā pae e rima o te marae often springs to mind when I think of governance and the important role that everyone plays on the marae, whether it is gathering kai, cleaning the toilets, working at the back, or on the paepae. Our whānau have never been quite the hunter-gatherer type, but our contribution was better made in governance and administrative roles.

It also remains important to be involved and seen on the ground, to be active in a physical sense in various sporting codes as participants, players, managers, supporters, coaches, and administrators of netball, basketball, tennis, and rugby league to name a few. Kaiwhaiki Netball Club and Aotea Māori Netball are two key kaupapa we are a part of. While historically Easter has been a time when our family would participate in the annual Hui Aranga, many of us now opt for the annual Aotearoa Māori Netball Oranga Healthy Lifestyles tournament; their mission is to encourage Māori whānau well-being using netball as the vehicle. It is also a time we create and maintain relationships with our Taranaki whānau.

Te reo is an area that we could perhaps have more involvement in, particularly in the home. However, certain family members continue to carry the torch for us, either through contributing to iwi or hapū reo plans; attending kura reo wānanga; being translators or facilitators of reo programmes; as teachers, participants, advisors, or judges of Ngā Manu Kōrero and kapa haka; and, working as announcers on the tribe’s radio station. It is hoped that te reo can be improved and increased within the whānau as it is one of the most underrated vehicles for well-being.

Finally, whānau-based activities are something we try to implement not just at special times but at all times—good and bad. So what does this mean in light of whānau ora? It is both working on ourselves to serve our whānau and to know that although whānau can be a cause of major stress, they can also be our saviour in times of need. And while it remains true that many Māori families are involved in many kaupapa such as those described, for us it has been the intentional and strategic act about *what* kaupapa to be involved in, *why* we should be involved, and to understand *how* it can contribute to not just us as a whānau, but to our hapū and iwi. Whānau ora is about continually defining and redefining what it means to be well.

He kupu whakakapi: Conclusion

In conclusion, while the particular event that changed our lives was the departure of our whānau from the Catholic church, it has been and continues to be a much bigger journey. It is about understanding and appreciating that there is value in te ira atua, which Nelson (2008) describes as our original instructions on how to live on earth. This is perhaps the ultimate goal. Colonisation disrupted Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and through education, new family traditions, and efforts to achieve whānau ora, these are only but the start for us to strip away what once was, and look at what truly is and could be. This has only been possible because of the courageous decision and efforts made by our grandmother and parents, for knowing the way, showing the way, and most importantly, going the way.



Kuputaka: Glossary

Use of tuhutō (macrons): the introduction of macrons over some Māori vowels, have (1) clarified definitions and (2) made it easier to pronounce Māori words (i.e., knowing where to place the emphasis as you are saying the words). When we quote sources from earlier periods where macrons have not been used, we have not included the macron to remain true to the original text. In the glossary, we have included both versions of the word (with and without macrons).

Ahorangi Genesis	Māori musical group
atua Māori	Māori gods or deities
Awa	Whanganui River
haere mai, koe me tō Raukotahi	come alone, but come with your ancestry
hapū	cluster of extended families, descended from an eponymous ancestor
Hato Weneti	Saint Vincent Māori Catholic Club
he mokopuna, he puna moko	your progeny, your legacy
he pātaka iriiringa kōrero	the house that holds our stories
Hine-ahu-one	first woman created by Tāne-nui-a-Rangi from earth
hītori	history
hui	meeting, gathering
ira atua	supernatural life
iwi	tribe, nation
kai	food
kapa haka	Māori performing arts group
karanga	female call on the marae
kaupapa	purpose, topic

kaupapa atua	atua foci in the planning process
kaupapa Māori	a philosophical doctrine, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society
kaupapa Whanganui	a philosophical doctrine, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Whanganui iwi
ko au te Awa, ko te Awa ko au	I am the River, and the River is me
ko au te taupā kīhai i puawai i aku moemoea	I am my own barrier in fulfilling my aspirations and dreams
ko te pare huia, he tohu rangatira	the huia feather, a sign of chieftainship
ko tōu piki amokura nōu, ko tōku piki amokura nōku	you have your house of learning, as I have mine
kōrero	stories, talking
kotahitanga	unity
kura reo wānanga	intensive, residential gatherings where te reo Māori is taught
kura-ā-waho	education outside of the classroom programmes
mana	power, status, prestige
mana motuhake	separate identity, autonomy, independence
Māori Party	Māori political party
marae	traditional place of gathering
Matariki	star constellation signalling the Māori new year; in Whanganui and other iwi, the star Pūanga signifies the new year
Matariki noho	sleep-over celebrating Matariki
mātauranga	knowledge
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge
mokopuna	grandchild, grandchildren

Ngā Kai o Te Puku Tupuna	Whanganui Iwi education plan
Ngā Manu Kōrero	speech competition for secondary students that encourages fluency in te reo Māori and English
ngā pae e rima o te marae	the many functions running simultaneously on a marae when in use
paepae	orator's bench
Pākaitore	seasonal fishing ground in Whanganui, later named Moutoa Gardens
Papatūānuku	Earth Mother
Pūtiki Wharanui Marae	marae on the banks of the lower reaches of the Whanganui River, near Whanganui City
rau huia	feather of a huia bird
rere runga rawa	self-directed learning
ruruku	prayer, incantation
tā moko	Māori tribal tattoo
taha Māori	Māori side
tangata whenua	people of the land, Indigenous people
taonga	Māori ancestral treasures, highly prized artefacts, tangible and non-tangible
te ao Māori	Māori world
te arāpikinga ki ngā taonga tuku iho	cultural competencies
Te Hei o Tāhoka	Māori performing arts group
Te Korowai o Te Awa Iti	Te Awa Iti claim presented during the Waitangi Tribunal's Whanganui District Inquiry
Te Kura o Kokohuia	school in Castlecliff, Whanganui, from years 1 to 13, based on Whanganui iwi curriculum
Te Rangakura	a three-year, bilingual teacher education degree that focuses on the uniqueness of respective iwi, hapū, whānau with the ultimate goal of redesigning curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation processes relevant to culturally responsive education

te reo (Māori)	Māori language
te tūnga ahurei	philosophical base
tikanga (Māori)	Māori customs and practices
tino rangatiratanga	self-determination, sovereignty
titiro whakamuri kia anga whakamua	to move forward to the future, we must reflect on the past
tuku mihi	give thanks, greeting
tuku reo pōwhiri	performing reo pōwhiri or karanga, a female ceremonial call
uri	descendants
waiata	song
waka	vehicle
wānanga	learning opportunities and gatherings, specific to kaupapa of importance to whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori communities
whaikōrero	oratory, speech making
whakaari	performance, production
whakapapa	genealogy, lineage, descent
whakataukī	proverbial saying, author unknown
whānau	extended family
whānau ora	whānau health and well-being
whanaungatanga	relationship building
Whanganuitanga	expression of being an uri of Whanganui
whenua	land

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