

Whānau voices: Contributing to the revitalisation and transmission of mātauranga and te reo Māori for the next generation

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Prior to colonisation in Aotearoa New Zealand, the Indigenous Māori population lived within *whānau* (family) and *hapū* (sub-tribal groups) community contexts where *mātauranga Māori* (Māori knowledge) was passed on from one generation to the next. Community contexts were strengthened by well-developed knowledge systems and effective pedagogical practices. *Te reo Māori* (the Māori language), reflecting both the cultural and social environments, was key to knowledge transference. Unfortunately for Māori, colonisation soon succeeded in undermining the cultural knowledge and beliefs of indigenous peoples and replacing these beliefs with the colonisers own values and practices.

This article begins by considering the destruction of intergenerational transmission of mātauranga Māori due to colonisation. The voices of *kaikōrero* (speakers) from research with two different tribal groups then consider how the benefits of growing up within whānau have provided opportunities to reconnect with mātauranga and te reo Māori. Acts of revitalising and renormalising their own tribal knowledges and practices have reasserted and affirmed pride in their own cultural identity and ways of being.

Keywords: intergenerational transmission, indigenous knowledge systems, revitalisation

Introduction

Mātauranga Māori is the term commonly used to describe Māori knowledge (Mead, 2022). *Mātau* can be translated as “to know”, or “understand”, and *ranga* transforms the word from a verb to a noun (Muru-Lanning, 2022). *Mātauranga Māori* originates from *tupuna* (ancestors), and among other things it includes *ahurea* (cultural practices), *ahureo* (the language), *tikanga* (customs, protocols), *mahi toi* (arts, creativity), *pūrākau* (traditional stories), *whakapapa* (genealogy), *taiao* (environments), *kawa* (ceremonies, rituals), *hangarau* (technologies), and *ture* (law, property, social control, systems) (Broughton & McBreen, 2015; Hikuroa, 2016). Mead (2022) explains that mātauranga Māori is all-encompassing. It incorporates all features of Māori culture, linking the past to the present and the future. At the core of mātauranga Māori is inherited knowledge, and the associated values and ethics. Over time new knowledge has been added, some from new discoveries and research. Inia adds that mātauranga Māori has its origins in Polynesia. He describes mātauranga Māori as an umbilical cord, “a two-ply binding, interweaving the truly ancient with the newly acquired” (2021, p. 9).

Pre-European times

The transmission of mātauranga Māori through the generations was a highly sophisticated process, involving knowledge structures, teaching and learning practices, and educational principles (Broughton & McBreen, 2015). It was a combination of processes that sought to maintain and extend knowledge, and recognise how resource bases could be harnessed, maintained and extended (Berryman et al., 2022; Hemara, 2000). Mātauranga Māori transmission within traditional contexts included a range of oral, intellectual, auditory and optical processes that were expected to maintain and extend cultural principles and knowledge (Berryman, 2008), and to care for, harness, sustain, and extend assets and resources. Resources included the *whenua* (ancestral land), the *moana* (waterways) and all that lived thereon (Berryman et al., 2022), and promoting *waiaora* (wellness) required connecting the physical and spiritual health of the people to the wellbeing of the environment. The promotion of lifelong intergenerational learning and knowledge transference was fundamental to the knowledge transmission process (Hemara, 2000).

Educating *tamariki* (children) occurred mainly within the *whānau* (nuclear and extended family). Communal and intergenerational living supported the transmission of mātauranga Māori from one generation to the next, as adults were always present (Jenkins et al., 2011). Three generations of whānau often lived together, leading Te Rangi Hiroa (1987) to assert that a great deal of knowledge transmission, especially in the early years, was from grandparents. Furthermore, the learnings had immediate functional application, and as the *tamaiti* (child) matured the learning became more complex and interconnected.

Although much knowledge transmission was through everyday activities, there were sites known as *whare* (often translated as “house”), for the more deliberate teaching and learning of mātauranga Māori. Whare were not always physical structures; they were also “metaphors for housing philosophies and identifying stages of educational progression” (Melbourne, 2009, p. 75). Melbourne describes a Whare-Mauokoroa as having a focus on identifying children’s talents and skills, and making decisions about potential learning or instruction. Melbourne explains that “the child’s level of attention, inquisitiveness, or understanding would be gauged in order to help determine their natural tendencies” (2009, p. 73). New mothers and pregnant women would also attend the whare with their tamariki so that they, too, could be exposed to the mātauranga of their people.

Another whare, the Whare Taikorera, had a broad-spectrum curriculum focusing on a pedagogy of exploration, discovery and play. Melbourne contended that “the myriad of games that were such a favourite pastime of traditional Māori societies all served a purpose of challenging the intellectual, physical, emotional and metaphysical attributes of children” (2009, p. 74). The games enhanced the advancement of skills and emotional discipline. Advancement to the next whare was dependent on the tamariki demonstrating the required ability and agility, and the necessary emotional and mental composure. At every stage, progress only occurred when all the required mental, emotional and physical competencies and skills were proven.

Te reo Māori (the Māori language) was used to transfer knowledge, beliefs, customs, skills and ways of viewing the world from one person to another, and from one generation to the next. It reflected the cultural and social environment and was linked to the expression of identity and power (Barlow, 1991; Rameka, 2018). *Te reo Māori* was viewed by Māori as sacred, as it was gifted to the ancestors by the *atua* (deities or gods) responsible for the creation of all things. It was therefore a means of connecting to the *atua* Māori (Barlow, 1991). Māori believe that, like all things, *te reo* has a spirit, a life force, a living energy.

Pere makes the point that “language is the lifeline and sustenance of a culture” (1991, p. 9). It is not only a means of communicating, but it also transmits values, norms and beliefs. Reedy, another seminal writer, asserts, “Language is the window to a culture and transmits the values and beliefs of its people” (2003, p. 70).

Colonisation

Unfortunately, new positionings related to language, culture and race were established with the coming together of indigenous and settler peoples under the Doctrine of Discovery (Jackson, 2019; Ngata, 2019). Beliefs held by the Indigenous Māori people in Aotearoa New Zealand were silenced (MacDonald, 2018) and, supported by the Crown’s imposed systems (Jackson, 2019, 2021; Mutu, 2003, 2018), the systematic subordination of Māori by the coloniser ensued (Consedine & Consedine, 2012). Colonisation ranked people as higher or lower beings based on beliefs that the British were superior in terms of race, culture, religion and technology. Māori were considered to be culturally, socially, intellectually and morally inferior to those of European descent. Negative traits associated with Māori included being depraved, sinful, idle, dirty, immoral and unintelligent – the opposite of traits accorded to the British, who regarded themselves as honourable, intellectual, righteous, upright and liberal (Hokowhitu, 2004). Therefore, despite the sophisticated, well-developed, intergenerational teaching and learning procedures in place prior to colonisation, these systems were supplanted by European schooling constructs, practices and policies. Colonial constructs were aimed at interrupting and fixing the supposedly cultural deficits of Māori children (Bishop et al., 2014).

These deeply held perceptions instigated a relationship with Māori that consistently and unfailingly undermined and diminished Māori communities, and established colonial domination through racist acts and white supremacy. This situation has adversely impacted on Māori for decades, with the harmful outcomes still being felt and written about by Māori academics, scholars and other experts today (Berryman et al., 2022; Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019; Rameka & Paul-Burke, 2015).

In many parts of the world, colonisation was preceded by and predicated on Christianity. In Aotearoa, many missionaries believed Māori lived in a state of “barbarism”, with poor intellect, language and culture. For Māori to be Europeanised and civilised, their souls first needed to be saved (Belich, 2001; Harris, 2007; Hokowhitu, 2004). The Office of the Auditor-General (2013) explains that missionaries teaching in mission schools brought with them beliefs of their cultural superiority, as well as an aspiration to move Māori from their primitive state to becoming civilised. The history of schooling for Māori that followed was one of subjugation, deprivation and cultural dislocation (Rameka, 2012; Simon & Smith, 2001). These deficit perceptions worked to justify ongoing education policies and practices. Berryman asserts, “State-controlled education resulted in Māori being educated within a system that not only devalued them as a people but emphasised the negative features of Māori knowledge and culture” (2008, p. 33). The experiences of many Māori today, as recorded in their Waitangi Tribunal research-reports (available online through the Waitangi Tribunal reports and hearings), continue to reinforce this situation.

The colonisation of Aotearoa impacted across all aspects of life as highlighted by Moewaka Barnes and McCreanor, who state, “Through land alienation, economic impoverishment, mass settler immigration, warfare, cultural marginalisation, forced social change and multi-level hegemonic racism, Indigenous cultures, economies, populations and rights have been diminished and degraded over more than seven generations” (2019, p. 19). Government land acquisition policies, confiscations and land purchases, after World War I, resulted in many Māori experiencing ongoing alienation from tribal lands. This was a

devastating blow, as it severed connections to the land and the people (Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019; Thom & Grimes, 2022). It also impacted the economic base of Māori communities, resulting in over 80% of Māori having to move to urban environments to find employment (Raerino, 2007). Walker (1989) explains that approximately 70% of those who left lost all connections to their whenua (ancestral homeland). By the 1970s, few Māori lived on their whenua, with most living in urban, nuclear families working as low-paid labourers or factory-hands. This affected their ability to participate in and contribute to the day-to-day activities of their whānau and community (Durie, 1997), including traditional knowledge transmission practices (Thom & Grimes, 2022). Without support from the wider whānau, traditional Māori communal knowledge transmission practices could not be upheld. This resulted in generations of Māori being deprived of daily, communal teaching and learning experiences critical to developing their understandings of mātauranga Māori (Rameka et al., 2024).

Gilgen makes the point that “while Māori have experienced 178 years of formalised colonisation since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, *Pākehā* [settlers in Aotearoa of European descent] have experienced 178 years of systemic dominance” (2018, p. 13). She explains that this systemic dominance became a prevailing discourse or societal norm that was further enhanced through the development and enactment of government policies. Pihama adds that the “oppressive acts [of colonisation] have been developed, maintained and reproduced as a means for the justification and the ongoing perpetuation of oppressive systems” (2019, p. 30).

The schooling system has continued to be the source of oppression and cultural struggle for tamariki Māori (Berryman, 2022; Harris, 2007). Walker (1991) asserts that the embedding of racism within the Education Department and schooling system explains the engrained education gap between Māori and *Pākehā*. Over time, deficit perceptions of Māori have justified successive assimilatory education policies imposed on Māori and the gap in schooling success between Māori and *Pākehā* learners remains.

Interrupting the transmission of mātauranga Māori and te reo Māori was critical to the colonial imperative, as was replacing te reo with what was viewed as the far superior English language and knowledges, thus transforming Māori into brown Britons (Belich, 2001). In 1867, the *Native Schools Act* required that English alone be used to school Māori. By 1894, the use of English had become compulsory, and speaking te reo Māori in schools resulted in the speakers being physically punished (Te Puni Kokiri, 2018). Thus, Eurocentric domination, aimed specifically at Māori subordination and English-language dominance, led to widespread English language use and a severe decline in te reo Māori speakers.

The destruction of te reo Māori, culture and traditions was almost achieved by the 1950s (Gilgen, 2018). In 1975, less than 5% of Māori school children spoke te reo Māori, down from more than 90% in 1913 (Calman, 2012). This rapid decline highlighted the impending risk that te reo Māori would become extinct (Benton, 1979).

Decolonisation

Māori were increasingly aware that the colonial schooling response to te reo Māori was decimating the language, and by the 1970s Māori had begun to reassert their identity as Māori. More groups emerged who were committed to revitalising the Māori culture and language (Manatū Taonga – Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2024). By the 1980s and 1990s the growing dissatisfaction and heightened consciousness among Māori, together with the deficit societal, cultural, economic and educational positioning of Māori (Rameka & Stagg Peterson, 2021), resulted in a revival movement within education and among other societal groups (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Mahuika, 2008). The deficit positioning, present

in previous educational initiatives and policies, was rejected and Māori self-determination was emphasised. Walker states, “After 25 years of trying to reform the education system from within to make it more bicultural, Māori leaders realised that the co-operative strategy was not effective” (1996, p. 156).

The *kaupapa* Māori movement, therefore, saw Māori begin to reclaim ownership of Māori knowledge, language and cultural identity (Rameka et al., 2023). Pihama argues that kaupapa Māori is “a culturally defined theoretical space [that] relates to Māori philosophies of the world, to Māori understandings on which our beliefs and values are based, Māori worldviews and ways of operating” (2015, p. 7). Kaupapa Māori centres on areas of significance and concern for Māori. Māori objectives, values, pedagogies and procedures provide the basis for intervention approaches resulting in positive transformations for Māori (Smith, 1997).

As highlighted by Bishop and Glynn, “Kaupapa Māori responded to the dual challenge of imminent Māori language death and consequent cultural demise, together with the failure of a succession of government policy initiatives” (1999, p. 62). Walker (1996) explains that Māori were forced to embrace the radical approach of leaving state-funded education. It required that Māori take control of the education of their tamariki, and establish a parallel Māori system of schooling, with the emphasis on saving te reo Māori from extinction. Subsequently, a kaupapa Māori approach developed across all education fields beginning with *te kōhanga reo* (Māori language early learning). As graduates emerged from te kōhanga reo, a movement into the creation of *kura kaupapa Māori* (primary) and *wharekura* (secondary) followed slowly but unrelentingly (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). *Wānanga* (Māori-led tertiary institutions) also emerged from this movement.

Today, we are seeing a resurgence in the speaking te reo Māori and the utilisation of mātauranga Māori. This resurgence and transference of knowledge, customs and skills through te reo Māori is once again influencing a more positive sense of identity, wellbeing and belonging in increasing numbers of Māori (Berryman et al., 2022; Rameka & Stagg-Peterson, 2018).

The research

This research was part of a three-year, Marsden-funded research project involving *kaumātua* (elders) and whānau from three regionally located *marae* communities. Marae are physical cultural spaces around which generations of tribally connected whānau continue to reside or return to for important cultural celebrations or occasions. The wider research context aimed to deepen understandings of the diverse types of cultural communications that take place in homes and communities with babies, and to promote deeper understandings of wellbeing and cultural identity as Māori.

In this research, whānau groups and individuals, who had agreed to participate in the research, came together in culturally contextualised spaces to talk about and share their knowledge about the research questions, and to ask their own questions for others to consider. Research *kōrero* (learning conversations) occurred over time, and each time *kōrero* were recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were then checked, annotated and agreed upon by the *kaikōrero* (speakers). Analysis used constructivist grounded theory (Chamaz, 2006), which acknowledges the integral role the researcher and *kaikōrero* play in bringing their prior experiences and subjectivities to the study and, therefore, to the emerging theories. Key aspects in the transcriptions were highlighted, themed and grouped to generate theories grounded in the diverse experiences of the *kaikōrero*. Themes were then returned to *kaikōrero* for verification and annotation.

Thus, this research employed a qualitative kaupapa Māori methodological approach, which, according to Graham Smith (1997), involves the contesting of Western structures, and the repositioning of Māori worldviews, knowledge and culture as equivalent in status to those of Europeans. Smith argues that kaupapa Māori must consciously challenge dominant Western theory and afford “counter-hegemonic practice and understandings” (1997, p. 455). Kaupapa Māori research requires researchers to display relational respect and cultural knowledge to ensure that participants are viewed as partners who contribute equally to, and benefit from, the research endeavours (Berryman et al., 2022). At the same time, this research also adhered to all ethics processes required by the academy.

As stated previously, this research involved wānanga with kaumātua and whānau. Traditionally wānanga were regarded as places of learning, where mātauranga Māori, histories and traditions were taught and conserved. In contemporary Māori contexts, wānanga practices still depend upon, and derive from, tikanga Māori interpretations and understandings (Mahuika & Mahuika, 2020; Whaanga-Schollum et al., 2015). These understandings remain consistent with the wānanga undertaken with whānau in this research.

Ngā hua – Findings

These findings begin with a traditional narrative from a kaikōrero from the Wairarapa region. We continue with the voices of kaumātua and whānau from the Waikato region. Due to COVID restrictions at the time, most of the research processes in this region were completed through Zoom wānanga. Although this was not the most culturally appropriate or relational research process, the close whānau relationship between the *kairangahau* (researcher) and this community, together with his recognised cultural leadership, ensured that the wānanga could proceed online and that the kōrero of kaumātua and whānau were not compromised. Rather, kōrero were still able to be captured in culturally acceptable ways and incorporated into these research findings.

The revitalisation of mātauranga Māori

At about the same time as kairangahau were making sense of the kōrero from the Waikato region, we were privileged to attend a final wānanga with kaikōrero from the Wairarapa. This wānanga provided opportunities for research participants from this region to hear what we had been up to, and to again share their perspectives and understandings of the research and what they felt had been achieved. One of the kaikōrero, Aperahama Hurihanganui (authentic name used with his permission), shared a powerful insight into how mātauranga Māori was inculcated into *pēpi* (babies), both pre- and post-birth. We use his kōrero to consider the importance of revitalising and reclaiming authentic cultural narratives that have much to teach us, in this case about intergenerational knowledge transmission through whānau to new-borns in our contemporary world.

Aperahama talked about Tāne-nui-a-rangi and his ascent through Ngā Rangi Tūhāhā or the 12 heavens. He explained that every *rangi* (heaven) had its own *whare wānanga* (houses of learning) with its own *tohunga* (expert):

When Tāne would ascend, he would acquire the mātauranga that adorned each *whare* [house], embedded in the *kōwhaiwhai* [decorative painted panels] and the *whakairo* [carvings].

He recounted that when Tāne ascended through each whare, he began by entering through the *tatau* (door), he would progress to *te pou tuarongo* (the back wall), then to the ceiling and finally to the

pūmotomoto (the hole in the ceiling), through which he would exit. At Tikitiki-o-rangi (the twelfth heaven) he was able to obtain the three baskets or *kete* of knowledge which:

[Tāne named] *te kete tuauri*, *te kete tuatea* and *te kete aronui*, and in each basket were different types of mātauranga. Wairarapa kōrero also refers to *whatu* [stones] that Tāne also collected.

Aperahama then told how Tāne made his descent in reverse, entering through each *pūmotomoto* with these *kete*:

Then he would adorn each whare with the new mātauranga he had received from the pinnacle heaven and from within the baskets.

Aperahama explained:

Pūmotomoto is also the word for the fontanelle, the soft part on the baby's head when they're born, which hardens over time.

Like the *pūmotomoto* in each of the whare, the *pūmotomoto* allows for the transmission of mātauranga to the *pēpi*:

The idea is that before they're born and when they're newly born, you want to feed them with as much mātauranga as you can, through *oriori*, *mōteatea*, *haka* [music and the arts], *whakapapa* [genealogical connections], and kōrero all of those different ways of transmitting mātauranga into the *pēpi*, through their *wairua* [spirituality], their *ngākau* [heart] and their *hinengaro* [mind], where it can be stored for the future. They are then able to realise the full potential of that mātauranga as they develop and as they grow.

Aperahama concluded:

So the *pūmotomoto*, the fontanelle of the baby's head, it's a representation of how Tāne brought the mātauranga through the *pūmotomoto* of the whare wānanga, and even though they [*pēpi*] might not understand it when they're so young, what you're doing is planting the seeds of all that rich mātauranga to be stored, and they can access and realise the full potential of that mātauranga as they develop and as they grow.

People in the room, most of whom had never heard this story before, were captured by its connections. As kairangahau we also realised that young people with such knowledge are precious because of their rarity. They have had the privilege of experiencing a pathway that has protected and nurtured mātauranga Māori. They come from whānau who have retained this knowledge and who have continued to protect and lead its journey through kaupapa Māori pathways.

Disruption and reconnection to the transmission of mātauranga Māori

The voices from the Waikato region emerged largely according to two overall themes. The first theme speaks of the intergenerational disruption to the transmission of mātauranga Māori. The second theme speaks to opportunities for reconnecting with mātauranga Māori through movements of decolonisation and revitalisation led by whānau.

Colonisation

The impact of colonial assimilation through education in Native schools more often led to Māori believing they needed to deny their own cultural identity, including the value of te reo, tikanga and mātauranga Māori for their tamariki (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011). This rejection is in line with the strongly held Eurocentric view, dominant in mainstream education, that Māori knowledge was of little value in a contemporary world, and that to establish a platform for living and working, one must focus on learning European knowledge, skills and values (Jackson, 2016).

Gay, one of the kaikōrero, explains that her parents did not support her, or her siblings being educated in te reo Māori. Having themselves been physically punished for speaking te reo Māori at school, her parents did not want to see their children punished and now believed that te reo Māori would not support tamariki to learn a trade and gain employment in the Pākehā world:

Our parents wanted their children to be brought up to learn the trade of the Pākehā, to be educated and to find employment within the Pākehā world. So, we were unfortunate to be brought up without the reo. Even today the majority of my whānau don't speak the reo—*he iti noa iho* [just a little].

Another kaikōrero, Te Hiri, also grew up with little reo or mātauranga Māori. She explains:

Although my grandparents, and even my mother, grew up speaking the reo, they weren't really *tūturu* [true] in that they didn't hand down marae tikanga to us, so we never really got that from them. I understand why; it was because of whatever happened in their timeline.

[My mother] pulled their family out of the marae. It was when my mother married my dad, she started coming back and she tried to pull the brothers and sisters back into the marae, tikanga as well. I guess he [Dad] had the privilege of being brought up by his grandparents ... steeped in tikanga Māori. He eventually went on to hold a lot of the knowledge I guess for Pōhara [the name of their specific home marae].

Another kaikōrero explains that her decision to enrol her daughter in kōhanga reo was not supported by her father-in-law, who did not believe that te reo Māori education was the best pathway for his grandchild. She however, followed her own convictions.

I remember [telling] Craig's father, "We're putting her in kōhanga reo." He said, "Where's Māori going to get my granddaughter?" [I said,] "Just feels right, Barry, so we're putting her into kōhanga." So hence the journey through kōhanga reo, kura kaupapa, wharekura and through te whare wānanga.

Sense of missing out on te reo and mātauranga Māori

Several of the kaikōrero expressed a sense of missing out on learning from mātauranga Māori, resulting in feeling a sense of loss and inadequacy. McIntosh (2005) argues that one's inability to speak te reo Māori can negatively influence one's sense of acceptance as Māori. This failure to speak te reo Māori can not only exclude one's participation and feeling of belonging in some Māori settings, but can generate a sense of shame and embarrassment in people. McIntosh states, "The sense of shame experienced by those who are non-speakers is very real" (2005, p. 45). Harata explains:

I never grew up knowing or understanding what our *tupuna* [ancestors] used to do in terms of tikanga and surrounding process. So, a lot of it from my experience was very Westernised and I

look back and I wish that I did go [to wānanga]. I guess, for myself, I wish I had more education around that kind of thing ... I wish there was a lot more information or education around tikanga Māori.

Lee, another kaikōrero, acknowledged her feelings of inadequacy from missing out on learning te reo and tikanga Māori. She explains this strengthened her determination that her tamariki would not suffer the same feelings of inadequacy.

In terms of reo for our tamariki and feeling inadequate ... back then I was determined to ensure my children never went through what I went through when I was young. Hence, we made a commitment to put Kiritahanga into kōhanga reo.

When thinking about which pathway was best for his tamariki, Hatu contacted a whānau member to ask for advice and to gain reassurance.

I went to see my auntie, my father's sister. Me and Rose went to her, and we sat down with her, and I asked her what the advantages will be of putting my kids into kōhanga versus mainstream. ... [We] had a long conversation, took a couple of hours. I think it was then I looked at Rose and I said, "Let's do it. What have we got to lose? Nothing happened for you and me in mainstream." So, we put our kids straight into Te Ararima [a kura kaupapa Māori].

And then the rest is history because we moved them straight down to Tōku Māpihi [a kura kaupapa Māori] and we managed to get Karepe in and the kids went into Ngā Kūaka Kōhanga and then they all just never stopped from there on.

Being bullied and embarrassed for learning mātauranga Māori

For some, missing out on learning te reo Māori led to feelings of inadequacy and embarrassment; however for others, speaking Māori in mainstream schooling also resulted in embarrassment and bullying. Not only did bullying take place in the classroom, but there was also a strong sense of embarrassment because of the reactions of teachers. Nicola remembers:

Me and Vincent used to go with Mum and Dad, being the youngest they couldn't leave us behind. So, we went to a lot of *hui* [meetings], and we'd take a lot of days off school. Dad would always write up the notes because he had the better writing, whereas my teachers would think that I wrote my own notes. So, when I took my note to the teacher one time, she read it out to the class really embarrassing. She'd say, "Oh here she goes again, Nicola went to another "taangi" to a "taangi" always going to a "taangi" [modelling the teacher's mispronunciation of the word *tangi* (funeral) each time].

I felt really embarrassed about that and so when I went home, I said to Daddy, "I'm not coming to any more tangi", and fortunately they didn't listen but that's how much it affected me ... when I was telling Rahui that story he said, "You know you're not the only one who's told stories about that" ... He said for our generation it caused us a block and not allowing us to move further.

Just a couple of months ago Taurikura said to me, "Mum did you have some bullies at your school?" And I said, "Oh no, not really", but then I said, "Oh yeah, the teachers", and she said, "The teachers?" [I said,] "Oh yeah you got hit, strapped or got the ruler." And she said, "Did you cry?" I said, "I wanted to, but I didn't want to be shamed out in class." And she was looking at me and she asked, "Did you tell your mother?" And I said, "No." She said, "Why?" She couldn't understand why wouldn't you go and tell your mother? Because everybody got a hiding ... everyone got a whack, well, the Māori anyway.

Sometimes mixed outcomes of te reo Māori

Being fluent in te reo Māori, was not always viewed positively. Waitu, another kaikōrero, remembers his experiences as mixed, with both benefits and challenges. He describes some of his experiences and the *whakamā* (shame) he felt at times:

Tama and I, we've been fluent throughout our whole lives ... it has been our first language. I remember wanting to learn English when I was about year 5, year 6, but Mum and Dad were quite stern on me, you know sticking to te reo.

Thinking back, there were times where we didn't like it. We didn't like that we had to speak Māori all the time. We don't like that our friends didn't want to come over home because we had to speak te reo, so we would go to their [the friend's] place. So there were the benefits but there were also challenges, like, kids wouldn't want to come over home because of that.

You know with the privilege that came, there were also the pressures. Why are we the only ones carrying it? That's what it felt like at the time.

We have to talk Māori all the time and I think it was Mum and Dad being so involved with our lives and with sports. Mum was a relief [teacher] at kura. So everyone knew Mum and Dad and they knew their expectations when coming over home.

Every time we'll go back to Gisborne, she [his mother] told us that we would have to stand up. We have to talk about what we've been up to. And Mum and Dad used to be very firm with me. All ... my cousins would stand up and speak in English and everyone ... all the other cussies [cousins], there was 13 of us, would understand what they were up to. Whereas me and my sister would have to say it [in Māori], but only my parents, some of the aunties and my Nana and Koro knew [understood], but none of my other cousins knew.

It was okay at that time, but, as soon as we go and play outside, the mockery starts. It was that *whakamā* aspect to it.

Growing up in a whānau learning environment

As previously discussed, the transmission of mātauranga Māori within traditional whānau contexts included a range of valuable teaching and learning techniques that were used to transmit learning by members of the whānau for members of the whānau. Hatu, one of the kaikōrero, discussed his experiences of learning growing up in a whānau environment, where elders shared their mātauranga:

That's where I believe a lot of our teachings come from, from all those old people, [the] likes of Koro M—. He used to be the "Energizer Bunny" back then. Honestly, we didn't realise that we were watching him until they [the old people] were all gone. Then we became aware, we took over from them ... If you look back, he was a big role model as we were growing up, because he was doing everything around the *pā* [the marae and wider environs].

So having these role models. Mum had all the brothers, our uncles. All these father figures, and mother figures. People that we were just surrounded by, immersed in, not to mention all the other whānau.

They all sprinkled a little bit of their whatever they were, on all of us. We were in this, [and it has made us] who we are today. I was always thankful for that. And that's the reason we have always brought our kids back, all the time, so that they can also share in the little bit of teachings, that they get from the whānau today.

Decolonising by returning to the whenua

Traditional transmission of knowledge was founded on community and intergenerational living. Today, unfortunately, over 80% of Māori no longer live in their tribal communities, prohibiting the traditional intergenerational transference of knowledge. Decolonising, by regularly returning to the whenua to be with whānau is one way of disrupting and countering the challenge of intergenerational knowledge transfer. Waitu explains that growing up in her whānau involved always returning to their whenua:

So, we always went back. They [her parents] always made it compulsory. Every year it's at least Christmas or New Years that we spend back in Gisborne with the rest of the whānau, so pretty much, Mum, Dad's siblings, my Uncle Dawson, my Auntie Polly and my Uncle Ben. They were brought up in Gisborne.

I grew up ... my whole life here in Waikato at Hamilton. We had really strong connections with our first cousins on our *pāpā's* [father's] side ... all of us would meet up during the school term holidays, so at the end of every 10 weeks ... we'd meet back in Gisborne for a holiday.

Another kaikōrero, Tahida, also talked about regular trips home to their whenua and marae, with extended whānau. These occasions were often linked to opportunities for knowledge transmission:

I remember asking Uncle W—, “Why do we keep coming down”, and you could see the smile on his face. It was all about the *Kīngitanga* [Māori King movement]. That was a stepping-stone for me to learn about the Kīngitanga and what we have to do, to *tautoku* [support this learning].

She explains that living away from home resulted in a strong desire to return, especially when there was a tangi:

I always felt most homesick when then there was a *mate* [death], when somebody passed. That was when I felt that we were so far away ... 'cause being that far away you had to choose which one you came back to. Because you can't afford to come back for all of them.

Te Hiri agrees, suggesting that living in Australia made it even harder for whānau to return home to their whenua, whānau and community:

All our children [live] in Australia. When we lost our brother, two months ago, all our children in Australia felt the heaviness ... because he was the last one of us that was in Australia. When sending him home, they felt that their *pou* [pillar] was leaving. So, we have to have a *karakia* [prayer] every night. We had *whakamoemiti* [the saying of prayers] every night with all our kids over there. And more often than not, we had something like 30 at our whakamoemiti. They all needed to make sure that they were covered with the *korowai* [metaphoric cloak] that we all were.

What they did learn, however, was that utilising contemporary communication methods, such as Zoom, allowed cultural practices and values to be learned, enacted and respected. Te Hiri explains:

So, it's about demonstrating that it's not actually necessarily about the kōrero, the kōrero just naturally comes out but *huitahi* [meeting together] whether it's over Zoom or whether it's at a birthday gathering or anything like that.

Thus, she highlights the importance of knowledge transference between herself and her tamariki:

It's when you demonstrate something to your children, and you demonstrate it with the emotion and the *āhua* [characteristics of that emotion] that you want to. And they see it. Like my children

have realised the importance Pōhara [the home marae] plays in their life, and the importance that *whānau whānui* [wider family] plays in their life.

Pride in kaupapa Māori education pathways

For most kaikōrero, however, participating in the kaupapa Māori education pathway was viewed with pride and positivity. Lee expressed pride that her four tamariki had attended kura kaupapa Māori, having started in kōhanga reo, and that one had competed in the *Manu Kōrero* speech competition and won a prize:

Tokowhā ā māua mokopuna i noho ki te wharekura. I tīmata ai i te kōhanga reo ā nā papa i āwhina i a Jacqueline ki te whakarite i tōna kaupapa mō te Manu Kōrero ā i te mutunga o te Manu Kōrero i whiwhi tohu ia. (We have four grandchildren, who attend te wharekura. They started at the kōhanga reo [language nest]. Papa helped Jacqueline to sort/put together her topic for the Manu Kōrero competition. In the end she received an award.)

Taiapa, a grandparent, describes how “awesome” he felt that his grandchild was being raised in te reo and how he supports their development:

My daughter-in-law is bringing our *moko* [grandchild] up with te reo as well. She’s Pākehā and him, my son, they are really trying to kōrero Māori. I go over there sometimes encouraging the moko to kōrero Māori, that’s awesome.

Benefits of te reo and mātauranga Māori learning

Tama described the benefits he derived from being a speaker of te reo, including academic gains, and sports, arts and cultural connectedness. He explains:

Our reo was our first language growing up and so I think our reo was developed really well at home and then we went to school and so aspects of te reo were being explored ... how to count in te reo, how to read in te reo, how to listen in te reo (*mahi whakarongo*), mahi toi in te reo, performing arts in te reo, karakia and then sports came.

Playing tākaro tahi in sports, but also being in a collective of Māori speakers and going to Pākehā tournaments and being able to communicate in te reo where our opposition will not understand us. So, it was, I think, that’s where a lot of the exploration of te reo kind of came was from home then school and into sports.

And then as soon as we left kura and I went to UT [a university of technology] to study on the Northshore – yep, not much Māori there ... I was very comfortable in who I was, where I came from, my values and I knew straight away the people that I liked to hang out with.

Learning as an adult

Taiapa explains that, although he didn’t learn to speak te reo as a child, he had made the decision to learn te reo as an adult and felt the benefits:

I didn’t know how to kōrero Māori until I was 18. Even then, the reason why Dad and Mum didn’t kōrero might be because back in those days they weren’t allowed to kōrero at kura ... at school and that was why they didn’t teach us te reo. But I was [in my] mid-20s when I started going to wānanga and learned ... that was inspirational.

Conclusion

Key to the themes that emerged from this research were the challenges associated with the disruption to traditional conduits of intergenerational mātauranga Māori transmission. Colonial assimilation processes resulted in the alienation of Māori from their ancestral homelands and from their traditional home communities, thus severing opportunities to participate in communal, intergenerational transmission of mātauranga Māori. Prior to this, traditional Māori communities provided the contexts for lifelong teaching and learning, and the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next. Through the establishment of Native schooling, set up to address the supposed cultural deficits associated with Māori children, colonisation effectively supplanted the intergenerational transference of mātauranga Māori. Furthermore, colonial assimilation processes caused many Māori to believe they needed to deny their own cultural heritage and identity, and focus solely on learning the knowledge, skills and values of the coloniser.

This denigration of Māori culture, language and identity for many Māori resulted in a sense of their missing out on the privilege of learning te reo, tikanga and mātauranga Māori, and a search for other pathways through which this knowledge could be reclaimed. For some, this involved regular trips home to their whenua and marae to participate in knowledge transmission opportunities with extended whānau. For others, utilising contemporary communication technologies, such as Zoom, supported cultural practices and values to be learned, enacted and respected. An important point to make with regards to the reclamation of te reo, tikanga and mātauranga Māori is that the start of this learning journey was not age related, rather there was an inspirational, individual starting point for each learner, no matter their age.

Kaupapa Māori education grew out of the growing rejection by many Māori of being positioned within deficit educational contexts. Its aim was not to just decolonise the overarching education system, but to develop strategies required to nurture and revitalise te reo, tikanga and mātauranga Māori. Opportunities for reconnecting with mātauranga Māori through movements of decolonisation and revitalisation are being led by whānau, who have retained this knowledge and who have continued to protect and lead its journey through kaupapa Māori pathways. Maintaining and sharing this knowledge is both a privilege and responsibility.

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