

Understanding languaculture from an indigenous Māori worldview

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This paper presents understandings from indigenous Māori *kaumātua* (elders both male and female) and *whānau* (parents and extended family members) from Aotearoa New Zealand. These people live in a close-knit *hapū* (subtribe) community close to an ancestral meeting space known as their *marae*. Their *marae* continues to be essential in the promotion of Māori knowledge, language and ways of being. *Kaumātua* and *whānau* recall important cultural understandings and practices from this journey. From growing up largely in *te ao Māori* (the Māori world) they consider “languaculture”, the inter-relationships between language, identity and culture, as foundational to their future “hope” for collective cultural strength and wellbeing.

To renormalise the use of the language of their ancestors, we use many Māori words throughout. These words are italicised and translated the first time they are used.

Keywords: languaculture, identity, culture, wellbeing, colonisation, Māori

Introduction

This paper reports on the initial stages of a Marsden research project in Aotearoa with an indigenous Māori *hapū* (subtribe). Our research question asks: How can a richer appreciation of traditional, pre-colonial Māori-related knowledge, together with infants’ languaculture as relational dialogue, help to revise our understandings of *hauora* (wellbeing) and legitimate literacy learning for infants? In posing this question, we understand that, to benefit from traditional pre-colonial Māori views of languaculture, we must be prepared to understand and resist the pervasive colonial constructs that we have grown up with and learned through education. We understand colonisation as “oppressive acts [that] have been developed, maintained, and reproduced as means for the justification and the ongoing perpetuation of oppressive systems” (Pihama, 2019, p. 30) within education and health as both a “target and tool of colonialism” (Pihama & Lee-Morgan, 2019, p. 19), and a means for perpetuating oppression.

Kaumātua (elders both male and female) and *whānau* (parents and extended family members) share important understandings and practices from *te ao Māori* (the Māori world) as they relate to their own experiences. Collectively, they contribute deeper understandings of the inter-relationships between Māori language and culture (languaculture) for themselves and also for members of their *whānau*. We begin by introducing some of the ways that early *tāngata whenua* (first people of the land) viewed *te reo Māori me ona tikanga* (Māori language and cultural practices) prior to colonisation. We use *whakatauaāki* (traditional sayings) and seminal Māori writers to consider some traditional pre-colonial views about language and culture. Then, to position the relevance of this research, we consider some of the influences

of colonisation on Māori language and cultural practices. Next, using their own narratives, we present some of the inter-generational childhood experiences of these hapū members. We conclude by considering wider implications for Māori and for other indigenous peoples being raised in a society within a more dominant overpowering language, culture and view of the world.

Tāngata whenua view of the world

In pre-colonial times tāngata whenua enjoyed a successful lifestyle that benefited from a shared in-depth knowledge of and respect for their land (Berryman, 2008; Jenkins, 2000). This indigenous body of knowledge, much of which still exists to this day, links the land, people, plants, animals and gods together and acknowledges their relationships, one to the other, as well as their interdependence (Marsden, 2003; Walker, 1990). This worldview is based around concepts such as *tapu* (protection by the spiritual dimension) and *noa* (removal of the spiritual dimension and return to everyday status) that work to regulate and maintain the balance between the spiritual world, the world of people and the land (Durie, 1998; Marsden, 2003).

Central to te ao Māori was the shared language with its wide-ranging genre of oral traditions and pedagogies that served to create, maintain and pass on knowledge. Knowledge such as this was also captured and maintained through static images and art forms. Identity was understood to grow out of the values, practices and beliefs of a view of the world lived, promoted and understood by tāngata whenua. Tāngata whenua identified themselves by their connections to whānau, hapū and *iwi* (tribal groups) (Pihama & Cameron, 2012) and through these people to Ranginui the Sky-Father, Papatūānuku the Earth-Mother and to all of their children. While these stories and related theories may have slight variations according to the *iwi* from which they have emerged, they reflect a shared ontology or way of being.

Hemara (2000) describes the very special regard in which tāngata whenua viewed their children in those pre-colonial times, to the extent that, often, conception was strategically planned for prior to relationships beginning between potential parents. The young were considered to be an “*iwi*’s greatest resource” (Hemara, 2000, p. 11). The *tamariki* or *Tama-a-Ariki* (Child of Gods) were the ones who would grow to build the *mana* (ascribed prestige) and *mauri* (life principle) of their whānau, hapū and *iwi*, and so they were treated with respect and their education and correct growth were of paramount importance. Mead (2003) also notes that *tamariki* were treated with great affection in traditional society. Taonui (2010) writes that “violence towards children in pre-European times was an exceptional circumstance rather than a rule” (p. 195).

Hemara (2000) explains how important it was for the children to learn the skills, attitudes and moral codes necessary to flourish, not only as strong individuals but also, and more importantly, as strong contributors to the health and wellbeing of the whānau. The children were often taught and guided by their grandparents, their *kaumātua* generation, while their parents were away tending to the daily matters of living (Te Rangi Hiroa, 1987). *Kaumātua* watched the children as they grew, noticing their natural inclinations, their strengths and gifts, and from these observations made decisions about the direction of the child’s education (Morehu, 2005; Royal, 2007). Children raised by their grandparents often slept with them as well. Metge (2015) makes the point that this exposed children to conversations, *karakia* (prayer), *oriori* (lullaby), *waiata* (song), *moteatea* (traditional lament) and *mātauranga* (knowledge) during their everyday life, while they were awake and even while they slept. This indirect, experiential learning was often internalised by the young child without them realising, having direct implications for

the interdependence of language and cultural development (languaculture). However, ancient tāngata whenua also understood that life, therefore knowledge and language development, began in utero.

Knowledge and language development

Mead (2003) supports this contention confirming that, while both parents contributed to the new life, it was “nurtured by the woman and it developed within the womb” (p. 323). From ancient karakia he reports that while in the womb “‘*ka whakawhetu tama i a ia*’ (the child develops eyes)” (p. 324), thus activating the child’s *wairua* (spirit). After this event, the child’s thinking processes began with “‘*ka riro mai a rua-i-te-pukenga*’ (then is obtained the knowledge)” (p. 324).

Hei tiki pūmau: He taonga kura iti (The Huria Management Trust, n.d.), a *kaupapa Māori* (incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society; see theories section for further explanation) resource prepared for pregnant mothers, builds on this idea by referencing Marsden (2003) as he relates conception, gestation and birth to the genesis and creation of te ao Māori: “The subconscious harking back to its creator began to stir and grope its way forward towards Te Whakaaro [the thought] and emerged into wānanga [tribal knowledge]. Now the whole process has purpose” (p. 13). Within this process and purpose *te whē* (the sound) is contextualised by the Huria Management Trust (n.d.) as:

the sounds, words, and teachings that a mother, father and the whānau provide, and or impart to the foetus whilst in the womb. The noises and sounds that the foetus is exposed to in time and post birth, will help conceptualise those things around them (p. 13).

Marsden (2003) concludes by acknowledging that both *te whē* and *wānanga* are needed before wisdom can occur: “With Whē and Wānanga, with ‘sound’ and ‘knowledge’, that is, wisdom, the transition from the spiritual world to that of the natural world was now possible” (p. 58).

Knowledge sharing may have been through everyday cultural events as discussed previously, or, through movement with practices such as *mirimiri* (to stroke or massage). Undoubtedly, it was understood in ancient times that the *wairua* of the mother also influenced the *wairua* of the child and vice versa, given that their *wairua* had already entered the child when their eyes were formed.

Traditional knowledge systems of the tāngata whenua

Salmond (1983) and Smith (1995) suggest that tāngata whenua practised a functional and sophisticated system of knowledge transmission that was supported by complex knowledge structures, learning principles and practices. Smith (1995) writes that this system involved:

a complex oral tradition and a dynamic ability to respond to new challenges and changing needs. The traditional system of education, while complex and diverse, was also fully integrated in that skills, teaching and learning were rationalised and sanctioned through a highly intricate knowledge base. (p. 34)

Learning within these traditional contexts included a variety of cognitive, oral, auditory and visual processes aimed at maintaining and extending cultural mores and knowledge as well as harnessing, maintaining, conserving and extending their assets and resource bases such as the land and the sea. Hemara (2000) suggests that traditionally the tāngata whenua clearly understood the centrality of a learning process that promoted the importance of lifelong inter-generational learning and knowledge.

Learning was based upon previous experiences and built on the students' strengths. Giftedness and special skills were identified early and nurtured specifically.

Tāngata whenua enjoyed a holistic lifestyle that recognised the importance of spiritual and mental wellbeing, as well as physical health and strong family relationships, and their language and culture was a central part of that wellbeing. To get a better understanding of how the language and culture of Māori were traditionally viewed, it is possible to consider *whakataukī* (idioms, proverbial statements) to show how *te reo Māori* (the Māori language) was perceived, for example:

Ko te reo te mauri o te mana Māori. (The language is the life principle of Māori.)

Tōku reo, tōku oho oho. (My language, my inspiration.)

Tōku reo, tōku mapihi maurea. (My language, my special ornament.)

Tōku reo, tōku whakakai marihi. (My language, my special treasure.)

According to this *whakataukī*, language is an essential skill that helps us to communicate and to identify our culture and who we are. Berry and Candis (2013) define one's cultural identity as the "significant way(s) in which a person is defined or defines oneself as connected to culture (customary beliefs, traditions, practices, values and language)" (p. 44). Hawaikirangi-Pere (2013) also contends that, "cultural identity is sustained by Māori language and cultural practices" (p. 84). Furthermore, Durie (2006) contends that a secure cultural identity comes from "being able to access *te ao Māori* and to participate in those institutions, activities and systems that form the foundations of Māori society" (p. 7). These definitions emphasise the central importance of language, culture and practices to the flourishing of one's identity prior to colonial settlement.

Te reo Māori was regarded as sacred as it was given to the ancestors by the gods, and so is a means to know the gods (Barlow, 1991). Language has a life force, a living vitality and a spirit. Pere (1991) states that "language is the life line and sustenance of a culture" (p. 9). It is both a communication tool and a transmitter of values and beliefs. Language is also a means of transmitting customs, valued beliefs, knowledge and skills from one person to the next and from one generation to the next. It reflects the cultural environment and ways of viewing the world. It is a source of power and a vehicle for expressing identity (Barlow, 1991; Rameka, 2018). According to Reedy (2003): "Language is the window to a culture, and transmits the values and beliefs of its people" (p. 70). An ability to speak the language and possess knowledge of cultural values, protocols and histories impacts on one's sense of belonging and acceptance by others. Conversely, one's inability to speak the language can impact negatively on the development and maintenance of a sense of belonging, identity and acceptance. However, this view of the world began to change with the coming of colonisation.

Beginnings of colonisation

In 1769, Captain Cook claimed the north island of Aotearoa for King George III under the Doctrine of Discovery (Ngata, 2019), thus starting a long history of colonisation and the racialisation of all who lived and would later come to live on this land. According to these doctrines, indigenous populations were not regarded as equal citizens (Jackson, 2012; United Nations, 2012), but rather became part of the flora and fauna to be researched and restoried. Despite the Treaty of Waitangi, whose principles promised partnership, participation and protection, being signed between the British Crown and *iwi* in 1840, these principles have been breached many times. Through determined political acts there are many examples

of Māori knowledge, land, waters and other resources being appropriated from Māori, generally without proper consent or compensation (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2017). The use of te reo Māori, for example, was brought to the verge of extinction through schooling by the 1970s.

Impact of the colonial education system

In terms of the education system, colonisation was largely negative for Māori. The Office of the Auditor General (2012) concluded:

In the early 1800s the British settlers began to arrive into Aotearoa, New Zealand and in 1816 the first mission school opened in the Bay of Islands where the missionaries taught in te reo Māori. They were the first of many Europeans bringing with them their beliefs of cultural superiority and a desire to educate the people out of their primitive ways and into civilisation. (p. 16)

According to Barrington (1992), for much of the period until 1940 there continued to be:

aspects of official policy for Māori which reflected a narrow and limited view of Māori potential and the role of Māoris [sic] in New Zealand society ... the “natural genius” of the Māori lay in manual labour rather than in the country’s expanding professional, commercial and governmental sectors. (p 57)

It was not until the very last part of the 20th century that activism by Māori themselves challenged the prevailing negative stereotypes and led to developments for Māori self-determination. Despite such activism, traditional power imbalances set by the coloniser have continued to reinforce a status quo of disparity for Māori across all social indices. This is a familiar story for indigenous peoples across the world.

Colonisation had a disastrous impact on the language and culture of Māori and the subsequent ways in which Māori began to view themselves. Colonisation and an education system focused on assimilation have worked to erode and degrade the inter-relationships of languaculture for Māori, replacing them with those of the coloniser. Over time, this has impacted negatively on ways Māori have perceived their own language, culture and identity. In order to challenge ideologies based on the colonising agenda, we must gain understandings of the socialisation of babies from conception in order to promote effective social interactions through early childhood and schooling. This research aims to better understand the early experiences of languaculture within Māori communities as foundational features for wellbeing and effective communication.

Underpinning theories

This research is informed by sociocultural, kaupapa Māori and critical theories. In this section we briefly connect to each, then through our findings we exemplify these theories as we connect with the voices of our *kaikōrero* (speakers).

Sociocultural theories

Sociocultural theories emphasise the interlinking social systems that surround the individual and the understanding that development is grounded in a particular society and a particular time in history.

Fundamental to sociocultural thinking is the belief that our worlds are socially, historically and culturally constructed and that learning, thinking and knowing occur through our activity, negotiation and participation in and action upon our worlds (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff 2003).

There are four basic tenets associated with learning and development and sociocultural theory. Firstly, we are social beings and this fact is a central aspect of learning. Secondly, knowledge is competence in valued undertakings. Thirdly, knowing is about participation in such undertakings and therefore relates to engagement in the world. Finally, meaning is the result of our ability to experience, engage with and participate in our world (Wenger, 1998). External factors, such as colonisation, have inhibited Māori from full participation in their world.

Kaupapa Māori theories

Pihama (2015) contends that kaupapa Māori is “a culturally defined theoretical space” and “relates to Māori philosophies of the world, to Māori understandings on which our beliefs and values are based, Māori worldviews and ways of operating” (p. 7). Therefore, kaupapa Māori theories focus on areas of importance and concern for Māori. Māori aspirations, philosophies, pedagogies and processes provide the foundation for intervention strategies or methodologies that result in positive transformations for Māori (Eketone, 2008). Kaupapa Māori theories, according to Smith (2003), are able to fulfil a number of functions. They affirm and validate Māori language, knowledge and culture. Furthermore, they promote Māori advancement by challenging structural inequities, and reclaiming and reframing Māori language, knowledge and culture in educational contexts (Smith, 1997; 2003). For some, kaupapa Māori and critical theories can align in that they can provide a means for retrieving space for Māori perspectives and voices (Tolich, 2001) to maintain power.

Critical theories

Critical theories strive for social, economic and political transformation through the recognition and resistance to unequal power dynamics and relations (Pihama, 1993). Transformation is necessary to expose, confront and challenge these disparities, inequalities and injustices. This requires what Parker (2000) describes as an unmasking of those identities which do not fit, which are not one’s own, but that have been unconsciously internalised, then, reclaiming identities, knowledge and understandings that may have previously been denied, and reframing these for contemporary and renewed ways of being. Such changes require new dynamic relationships between theory, practice and action as praxis for transformation (Darder, 2012). Embedded within this understanding is the affirmation of people as learners, in the process of becoming (Freire, 2001; Wearmouth & Berryman, 2009).

Freire’s (2001) notion of *conscientização* (conscientisation), or an “awareness of the world, of facts, of events, of the demands of human consciousness to develop our capacity for epistemological curiosity” (p. 55) has the capacity to move those located within the dominant culture from positions of acceptance and passivity to positions where they might begin to resist and take action in transforming their current reality of privilege and positional power. Until this happens, spaces of hope can only emerge when the powerless create spaces of critical self-determination.

Research methodology

Kaupapa Māori research methodology enables the development of spaces for revitalising and privileging Māori epistemologies, knowledge and ways of being. For researchers, it means creating spaces where

Māori participating in the research are in control of how their stories will be told and the lens through which they will be legitimated and authenticated. Accordingly, it can be seen as a process of decolonisation, as it rejects the idea of researcher imposition over the lives and experiences of Māori. Kaupapa Māori research requires researchers to model cultural knowledge and show deep relational respect so that participants are treated as equal partners who both contribute to and benefit from the research endeavours. Graham Smith (1997) extends on this to say that kaupapa Māori must deliberately challenge dominant Western theory and provide “counter-hegemonic practice and understandings” (p. 455) to bring a much more critical perspective to the research.

Research procedure

Initial discussions were undertaken through a hapū research, with kaumātua who then helped to identify whānau members who would become kaikōrero in this space. Five different families, connected to the kaumātua and linking up to four generations, with new-borns or pregnant mothers were identified.

Next, open-ended questions and group-focused interviews as culturally located learning conversations were used. Kaumātua were interviewed first. These were undertaken inside their *wharenuī* (ancestral house), following *mihi whakatau* (rituals of encounter) and *whanaungatanga* (establishing of relational connections). At this time, the wider research team introduced themselves and explained the parameters of the research. Kaumātua were then ready to have the research conversation and share their stories. Their stories were transcribed, checked, annotated and agreed upon through a dialogic process involving participants and researchers as part of a collective interdependent endeavour. Whānau conversations and then follow-up conversations with smaller groups or individuals followed.

Emerging themes

Three themes, *marae* (ancestral meeting space), *te mana o te reo Māori* (the prestige of the Māori language) and *tūrangawaewae* (“our” place to stand), are now used to amplify the collaborative story of these kaikōrero.

Marae

Mead (2003) contends that marae are “a vital part of Māori culture ... a significant site for carrying out the ceremonies and cultural practices of the owning group ... a uniting force” given that “the marae can trace a genealogical line to the ancestor. So, it is their ancestor and their house and their land” (p. 102). Today, links to important marae landmarks were discussed. One kaumātua recalled:

I used to walk 500 metres from the main road, that’s how far we were from everyone else down here in the valley.

Connections were made to the land, the streams and the inner harbour around the marae that sustained the people. Kaumātua spoke of important local landmarks that had once been both their playground and their food source, and always central to the land was their marae or ancestral meeting space:

Here on the marae. This was our playground. Otherwise, it was going down to the beach. But we didn’t want for anything when we were growing up. The *moana* [sea] was full of *kai* [food]. You know we could cross the road and get the pipi [the first of three common shellfish listed] over the other side of the bridge, and then you could go and get the *tuangi* [cockle],

and the *tītiko* [mud snail]. It was plentiful. And when my dad put his nets out, he'd get herrings, and then he'd go eeling down the river. That's where we used to go, down the side there. But there was plenty of kai. And when he'd come back, he'd go floundering. He used to have his boat moored down here and he dug a big trench so that the water could just stay there. His boat could be there when the tide came in. And then off he'd go on the other side with his boat to get a feed of fish.

Another kaumātua remarked on the changes with today's generation:

Our kids today they go to the shop and get their kai. But down here, that was our supermarket. You could get figs, figs are still growing down there to this day; feijoas, tuangi, there were even eels down here and you can see the oyster beds, or the remains of them.

Not only was food harvested from the local environment, they also spoke of growing food and farming in order to sustain themselves and wider whānau, especially when important cultural events were held on the marae:

We had a huge *māra* [garden] in front of our house and we had a big orchard, and we had pigs and calves that my father used to feed. When we had *tangihanga* [rituals of grieving for and burying the dead], he would ready them for that or whatever we had on at the marae. Then we had a stream going from the back of our house and where my father used to grow the corn there, so we could have rotten corn, for breakfast, lunch and tea. It was my favourite. And then on the other side of the house we had a huge caravan and it was on top of a potato pit, and that's where my father used to put the potatoes, kumara, the kamokamo. Everything went into the pit.

Many of the cultural practices of looking after people involved the everyday sharing of food, as well as ensuring food was set aside for important cultural occasions such as *Poukai*, the formal cultural tributes led by the *Kingitanga* (the Māori King Movement), marking respect for recently deceased members across multiple marae, hapū and iwi:

Nothing was wasted. Even when I was growing up. Everything was shared, and I had two aunties down there [marae road]. They used to bottle all the fruit, and put away all the veges ready for our Poukai every year without fail. Those were my aunties.

We had this big huge pantry where we lived it was always full. Don't dare go get anything out. It was for the Poukai. And funnily enough, that's what my husband has been doing since we've been here. He bottles anything, gathers them makes them all up, anything. We just had our first lot of honey and we shared it all around to everybody. We've only got two hives, but because of the bees he's going to learn how to become a beekeeper. So, when he did that, he passes his kai around.

Traditional carvings and waiata were a means of linking to the past, remembering the people, their stories and the passing on of historical events. Using the *pou* (carved posts) inside the wharenuī, a kaumātua recalled:

We have a waiata called "Te Oriori a Matatu" so it's all in there. I'll move to another one [pou] ... we just finished talking about why ... if you go back in time the *whakapapa* [genealogical connections] was kept close for different reasons. ... After 1867, he saw

something happened that never has happened and the reasons being, after the battles of Gate Pa and Te Ranga, our *tipuna* [ancestor] Koikoi, the women and children were caught at Gate Pa and he took them out and he went back up to the Taumata where our village was in Taumata. He went to a place called Te Tihi o Taumata.

A waiata which was used to pass on important information about food sources and historical events was referenced:

We have another waiata talking about that bed, and that's called "E Rere Te Karoro". Using the tuangi, where one of our ancestors takes his life.

Everyone spoke about the importance of looking after each other. One kaumātua said:

We were brought up by everybody, everybody in and on the *whenua* [land]. If mum and dad left we'd go to the *kuiia* [woman elder], or the aunts, or the uncles. It was beautiful - everything.

A young mum recalled similar experiences in her own upbringing which she was seeing play out for her own children today:

For me culture is about all of that - growing up I had the same experiences. You know there was an aunty or an uncle or a nanny that would help with our upbringing. My baby is very lucky because he gets the same. You know he's surrounded by a lot of nannies and a lot of aunts, and I'm the same. Most times I don't have to do my son, because everyone else just sort of comes in and does it. You know without even having to ask them, ... that to me is culture. Māori culture. I don't ever ask someone to pick him up, or to burp him, you know it's automatically done. It's a big whānau thing for me.

She talked about cultural knowledge being "instilled" in her daughter:

I would say that culture has a lot to do with upbringing. Because you know, my daughter knows not to put her feet on a table or anything personal on a table. You could ask her why not? And she probably couldn't tell you. But it's just something that's instilled in her from the get go ... it's got a lot to do with upbringing.

In sharing how her daughter was raised she recalled:

I didn't want it to be a burden on anyone. That's my job. She was around whānau but not the wider whānau.

However, this had changed in the eight years since her daughter was born:

But my son has a big involvement in his hapū and his iwi. So, I feel like I'm a bit more lenient with him with everyone else. I'm not so protective, and I guess I've gotten more involved in my Māori culture side, that I'm happy for him to be brought up by the wider whānau.

The cultural practices that we heard about were the everyday acts of growing up close to the marae, and learning how to look after the land in order that the land was able to provide for the people through the gathering and growing of traditional food sources. This was a time of abundance, however, today many of these practices are greatly reduced and new activities, such as shopping at the supermarket, have

begun to replace them. In part this is due to the increasing population now living in this region and the impact of pollution as a city has increasingly encroached upon the doorsteps and foreshore of this marae community. In part it is also due to how society has been affected by modernity from living in an increasingly modern world that expects children to be in school and parents to be working.

Learning language through related cultural activities was once normal and everyday, however, formal schooling was to have a devastating impact on the mana of Māori as the language and culture of the coloniser began to dominate. A granddaughter recalls:

I can only speak for my *koroua* [grandfather], but he was a native speaker, his mother spoke te reo Māori, his dad was out working the orchard. But when my *koro* [granddad] went to the Native School, his reo was absolutely bashed out of him and those of that generation. Being Māori wasn't cool back in the 1920s, 1930s for my *koroua* ... and possibly for my *kuia* [female elder] as well because she came from a different *rohe* [region]. I know those experiences for *koro* weren't good, but I know he still had an interest in education.

Unfortunately, his experience was all too familiar. Within the colonial education system, the mana of te reo Māori and how it was inseparable to cultural activities being undertaken and even how it was perceived by Māori themselves all took a severe beating.

Te mana o te reo Māori

A *kuia* explained that her parents, like the grandfather before her, had been punished for speaking te reo Māori at school themselves. Unfortunately, their belief in the power of education meant that they believed the colonial rhetoric, that it was more important for their *tamariki* (children) to learn English, that their own language served no purpose. Subsequently English became the dominant language of communication in the schooling system and most of this generation no longer learned te reo Māori in the home or community:

They [parents] spoke to you in English. But they spoke the language within themselves, they spoke to each other in te reo. But not to us. "Can you go and get us a cup of tea."

One said:

Like the only time I'd hear her speak Māori, was over the phone, otherwise – there was none of that in the home. And it didn't help that her *tamariki* didn't speak reo. They had no reo. So, then it fell back to our generation [the grandchildren].

A member of the next generation recalled:

I look back and realise I'm fortunate that I had the upbringing I had. I feel for my mother's generation, because they were that middle generation who missed out. Like my grandparents told them, "You need to go and get jobs. Earn money. Go and get educated. The marae and things Māori will always be here."

While this advice, that the marae would always be there, might seem safe. The reality for many caught up in urban migration has been dislocation from their roots.

Hononga ki ngā ao Māori (Connecting to the Māori world)

This situation began to change with a determined reconnection and relationship with Māori knowledge beginning with the language. This movement was led through the emergence of *Te Kōhanga Reo* (Māori language nests). Grandparents again began to speak te reo Māori, the language they had suppressed, to their own children. We heard from a granddaughter:

I was born in the 70s, ... the Kōhanga Reo movement came some 10 years after my birth.

Te Kōhanga Reo sent a strong message around Māori communities that if communities did not use the reo they had it would be gone forever and this had a galvanising effect on many communities especially her own:

The language that I learnt primarily came from my grandparents as a child growing up, I was immersed in it. We lived next door to the marae, and all the kuia and koroua around me, they all spoke Māori to one another ... and so I was fortunate in that manner to have had those two as my teachers and many more who were around when I was born and growing up as a youngster.

She shared that her grandmother was:

a staunch advocate for the Kōhanga Reo movement. When the marae was registered as a Te Kōhanga Reo in the current building now, my grandmother was one of the first *kaiako* [teachers].

She had a passion to impart the reo, her passion enabled her to refine and further develop her compositional skills for that age group in te reo Māori.

More recently she recalled:

I was tapped on the shoulder to come back and teach at the Kōhanga Reo. My cousin and I applied for the two available positions which were *kaiako* and *kaiwhakahaere* [teacher-aide]. We were both successful with getting those jobs. Never in my life did I think I would end up going to the same Kōhanga Reo that my nan went to and taught at.

Kōhanga Reo drove the development of *kura kaupapa Māori* (Māori language and tikanga determined schooling) which was discussed by some:

When I started *kura kaupapa*, I remember from that day on when I walked through my nan's door – she just constantly spoke to me. Like I never heard my nan speak Māori before until I started going to *kura kaupapa* ... She would only speak to me in Māori. It was pretty cool though thinking about it now, because my nan never spoke to anyone else in Māori like she did to me.

One *kaikōrero* explained that her grandmother was proud of the way her *mokopuna* [child] spoke te reo.

I know she was proud by the way she spoke.

An interesting aspect of these inter-generational conversations were the different ways of speaking or types of language being used. *Kaikōrero* put this down to old and new language.

We had two different dialects almost. She was the old-school Māori, and I was learning all the new-school Māori.

Yes, and learning her reo to my reo. 'Cause my reo was what was going on at the time, where she was learning almost 40 to 50 years ago before I had started to speak.

Being raised within an extended whānau cultural context meant that young children learnt to communicate effectively with a range of people and ages. It was the natural inculcation of language, culture and communication skills through everyday living together that for this marae community was beginning to be renormalised. One mother explained that she had learned to speak with babies and was trying today to pass these skills on to her daughter:

I was brought up around a whole lot of family where ... you know when I saw a baby I knew to ... how to speak to one whereas, [indicating she's talking to her daughter], "*kōrero ki te pēpi*" [talk to the baby]. And she'd be like, "hello, what's your name?". You know, whereas when I was her age I knew to be like, "awwwww. Hello" and change my voice.

She explained that a course for pregnant mothers on the marae had supported her in the learning of karakia that had allowed her to welcome her baby appropriately into the world:

I always thought that the karakia had to be done by a koroua ... but when I got more in depth in karakia, I was able to welcome my son into this world ... little things like that you know ... right down to, I did the hei tiki pūmau, antenatal course here, that was based around all tikanga Māori.

Another important cultural practice that she shared with us was the burial of her baby's *pito* (umbilical cord) and *whenua* (after birth) within the wider context of their marae, which connected him to his tūrangawaewae.

Tūrangawaewae

Metaphorically, tūrangawaewae refers to the place where one has a right to stand because of whakapapa and cultural practices such as these. It is through whakapapa that a person maintains links to the places that their ancestors are connected to and the history of those ancestors. On the marae, this knowledge is also often maintained and transmitted through the important process of *whaikōrero* (speechmaking). We heard about kaumātua from this marae who recognised that the numbers of competent speakers on the *paepaetapu* (speakers' seats) had dwindled, so determined that the male *pakeke* (adults) had a role in language regeneration:

This kaupapa was born in 2010 from an identified need of the koroua, specific to the poor health of te reo Māori that was communicated from the *paetapu* [orators] of our marae. My koroua never envisaged it to reach so many other paetapu from across this district.

He named the program *ka tangi te titi, ka tangi te kaka, ka tangi hoki ahau*, meaning, the mutton bird sings, the kaka sings - I too want to speak.

His granddaughter listed the program's five goals:

1. Impart, develop and extend the language proficiency of the participants.

2. Impart, develop and extend the use of idioms, proverbial statements (*whakataukī* and *whakatauākī*) specific to our district and their meanings and contexts for application.
3. *Te Kīngitanga* (King Movement)
4. *Kōrero a iwi* (tribal dialect).
5. *Whakapūmautia te tangata i tōna ake mana* (harness the potential of individuals).

This program is now in its eleventh year. Since the passing of this kaumātua, his work has been picked up and continues to be led by other kaumātua from this marae and from across the region who are keeping the goals alive and injecting their specialist expertise. Running alongside, women also lead the learning of traditional waiata and composition so that the tapu and mana of the speaker can be most appropriately enhanced and returned to a state of noa immediately following their whaikōrero.

Unsurprisingly, other initiatives have emerged from this marae since the 1980s. In many cases these are catering for whānau who no longer live at home. Often these initiatives are led out of a business arm being run by a women's committee. Now, funding from the Crown is being accessed in order to overturn the ravages of colonisation; the program for young parents being one such example. The initiatives we heard about straddle health and wellbeing, birthing practices, *te reo me ōna tikanga* (language and cultural practices), the environment, education, providing cultural guidance, employment and governance. This work involves *ngā pito ki ngā pakeke* (birth to old age) and continues even when one has moved on to the spiritual realm.

In relation to these programs, one kaikōrero said:

These entities create communication platforms via emails, post, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, website updates and information, videos, and other resources for our whānau keeping them informed about home without having to be at home. It's a way of sharing and keeping our people informed on pertinent matters, be it cultural, political, educational or other.

This marae, like others, has continued to be an important hub for hapū activities and is continuing to operate in the languacultural realm that is Māoridom. Many marae are now also moving into the social and business world as a means to finding new ways to nurture their people and maintain their languacultural knowledge. The leaders of this marae, like others across the country, have looked for authentic ways of reclaiming through whakapapa what rightfully is essential to their tūrangawaewae and, therefore, belongs to the people themselves. This knowledge is available to their own hapū wherever they live, for other Māori who live locally, and also for non-Māori who have always been welcome in these spaces and remain so today, whether through marriage or wanting to be respectful visitors and learn alongside.

Conclusion

In contemporary urban contexts, belonging for Māori is often linked to sites of cultural reproduction. These sites allow Māori to experience and connect with Māori environments, processes and structures within urban settings. Within these urban and, indeed, wider societal settings of modernity, there are definers of Māoriness that can order, shape and constrain an individual's ability to belong as Māori. Barcham (1998) makes the point that "while urban Māori have lost some of the symbols used in the rural

environment to demarcate their ethnic and cultural identity, they have adapted other symbols to help make coherent their life in the modern urban environment" (p. 305). This hapū would contend that their own symbols must contribute to the development and retention of a sense of cultural connectedness to people, place, and the wider physical and spiritual worlds, no matter where the individual resides. For many, the development and retention of a sense of connectedness is related to whanaungatanga. Whanaungatanga or "kinship" is the way Māori view, maintain and strengthen whānau/hapū/iwi relations. Through shared experiences and working and living together, whanaungatanga provides a sense of belonging, a sense of kinship with people, with place, with the natural world, and with the spiritual world.

Marae continue as tūrangawaewae—places to protect, revitalise and maintain pre-colonial knowledge through a range of traditional and modern genres and technologies. Change requires groups to work together to become more consciously aware of and able to resist the current reality of privilege and positional power in society. Spaces of hope can emerge when society seeks to learn from their indigenous people in order to reform the existing relational and hierarchical structures that have traditionally been responsible for the linguistic of indigenous languages and the oppression of these people. This has important implications for other indigenous and marginalised peoples worldwide.

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