

CHAPTER SIX

NGĀ KARANGARANGA MAHA O TE NGĀKAU O NGĀ TŪPUNA TIAKI MOKOPUNA: ANCESTRAL HEARTFELT ECHOES OF CARE FOR CHILDREN

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*E kore au e ngāro
he kakano ahau
i ruia mai i Rangiatea*
I can never be lost
I am a seed born of greatness
Descended from a line of chiefs of Rangiatea¹
(Tamehana 2001)

Abstract

Indigenous people continue to culturally invigorate the development and delivery of social work globally, both in practice and theory (Ruwhiu 2013, 1999, 1995; Ruwhiu & Ruwhiu, 2005; Ruwhiu, Ruwhiu, and Ruwhiu 2009, Eruera 2013, 2012, 2005; Grey, Coates and Yellow Bird 2008; Pohatu 2008, 2004; Te Hira 2007; Mafileo 2004; Fook 2002). This is a critical lifeline for statutory social work because affecting organizational cultural change to be more responsive to Indigenous needs continues to be a source of contention for mainstream social work theory and practice (Nash 1998). Subsequently, in this paper we share critical reflections and experiences as Indigenous social work practitioners, thinkers, strategists, researchers, and theorists; and provide a focused look at statutory social work engagement through exploring and examining innovative Indigenous practice approaches from Aotearoa, New Zealand, that may have applicability throughout the world.

Our Voices

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold: first to share critical reflections and experiences as Indigenous social work practitioners, thinkers, strategists, researchers, and theorists; and second, to ground those reflections in real *pukorero* (narratives) that reinforce the significance of our voice in this work.

A paramount concern in the construction of “welfare” and “well-being” for Māori *mokopuna* (offspring)² involves providing them with the best possible care available within their own cultural paradigms. Throughout our histories as Indigenous people of *Aotearoa* (New Zealand), an undeniable echoed truth eloquently displayed in the title of this chapter, and also above in proverbial form, is the centrality of caring for, protecting, safeguarding, and supporting the growth development and well-being of our *mokopuna*. Subsequently, *mokopuna* Māori are born into kinship cultural engagement structures known

¹ Traditionally speaking, Rangiatea or Ra'iatea, an island north-west of Tahiti, held the ancient shrine at which the Tahitian people gathered to render homage to Io, the supreme god of Hawaiki Nui, the land that the ancestors of the Māori people came from. However, metaphorically, Rangiatea can be known as a state of enlightenment.

² Mokopuna—there are varied understandings and translations for the word “mokopuna” and the most common literal translation into English is grandchild. However when used in the spoken language the translations are much broader to reflect the child's significance inside the extended whānau system. For the purposes of this writing the following description has been adopted; moko can be translated as tattooing or blueprint and puna means a spring of water, therefore the *mokopuna* is often referred to as the reflection or blueprint of its ancestors.

as *whānau*, *hapū* and *iwi*.³ Within these kinship structures, responsibilities for their care are often shared beyond their immediate nuclear family group (Cram 2012; McRae and Nikora 2006; Walker 2001).

Traditional Māori parenting has been described as a kinship parenting system (Pere 1982), and inherent in our collective histories as Māori, there are numerous accounts reflecting how highly valued and significant *mokopuna* (offspring) were within these social structures (Cooper and Wharewera-Mika 2011; Jenkins and Harte 2011; Munford et al. 2001). *Whānau* (extended family) invested in the long-term development of *mokopuna* to meet their full potential through cultural practices to ensure their safety and well-being. The care, safety, protection and guardianship of *mokopuna*, was viewed as a very serious consideration as the survival of the *iwi* (tribe) relied upon it. Within traditional Māori society there are many accounts that demonstrate the abhorrence of committing acts of violence on your own *whānau* members. There is little historical support for claims that violence and abuse towards *mokopuna* and *wāhine* (women) were tolerated by the traditional Māori society (Durie 2001). Violent and abusive acts were considered dangerous to the well-being of the collective group and were dealt with accordingly. Our histories speak of people acting with *mana*⁴ in their responses to violence and abuse, and of *whānau* and *hapū* moving in to support their *wāhine* and *mokopuna* (Jenkins and Philip-Barbara 2002).

Unfortunately in Aotearoa society today, due to a range of complex contributing factors, both historical and current, there are significant numbers of *mokopuna* (offspring) Māori who are not safe within their *whānau* (extended family), and are over-represented in the state welfare system. The impact of dispossession and dismantling of Māori social structures, economic and cultural, through colonization is important in understanding our current context (Grennell 2006). These impacts combined with socio-economic determinants are drivers of *whānau* vulnerability and poverty as major risk factors for *mokopuna* (Cram 2012). As such, collective kinship parenting and support is not a current reality for many *whānau* Māori. Solutions require multi-layered approaches that aim to strengthen the conditions and cultural foundations that *whānau* require for positive *mokopuna* and *whānau ora* (development and well-being).

Hutia te rito o te harakeke, Kei hea te komako e kō?
Rere ki uta, rere ki tai
Ki mai koe ki au, he aha te mea nui o te Aō
Māku e ki, He tangata, he tangata he tangata
If the centre shoot of the flax bush is plucked, where would the bellbird sing?
You fly inland, you fly to sea,
you ask me. What is the most important in the world?
I would say, Tis people, tis people tis people
(Metge 1995, 13).

Tiaki Mokopuna

Often Māori drew strength by metaphorically aligning the composition of the *harakeke* (flax plant) to the relational realities of extended *whānau*, inclusive of those *hoa haere* (influential critical friends and ancestors), who were all responsible for protecting, making safe, caring for, and self-governing their own development of their progeny, as represented by *te rito* in the above quote (Durie 2001; Eruera 2010; Metge 1995; Pohatu 2011; Ruwhiu 2009). This depiction introduces the cultural protective principle of *Tiaki Mokopuna*.

Tiaki Mokopuna is a cultural principle that asserts the collective roles, responsibilities and obligations to care for, make safe, support and protect our children and young people within healthy families (Eruera, King and Ruwhiu 2006). The principle is founded in customary beliefs and when applied within the *whānau* context, has the transformative potential to guide and strengthen strategies for *mokopuna* care and safety. The traditional underlying belief is that *mokopuna* (offspring) were gifts from *Nga Atua* (Gods), which meant that they were *tapu* (under special rules and restrictions), and any negativity expressed to them was breaking *tapu* (Barlow 1991; Harte and Jenkins 2011; Mead 2003). Tiaki Mokopuna integrates four functions described as key to the care and upbringing of *mokopuna* Māori. These are: first, the significance of *mokopuna*; second, children belong to *whānau*, *hapu* and *iwi* (extended family, sub-tribe,

³ For the purpose of this writing *whānau* is translated as extended family, *hapu* is sub-tribe and *iwi* is tribe.

⁴ For the purpose of this writing *whānau* is translated as extended family, *hapu* is sub-tribe and *iwi* is tribe.

⁴ *Mana* can be described as: “a Māori way of expressing the worth of the human person is to speak of a person’s *mana*, an external expression of influence, power and achievement” (Jenkins and Philip-Barbara, 2002 pg. 26).

and tribe); third, the rights and responsibilities for raising children are shared; and fourth, children have rights and responsibilities to their whānau (Pitama, Rinui and Mikaere 2002).

Furthermore, Tiaki Mokopuna also promotes the care, safety and protection of Māori children within extended whānau (extended family) networks, moving out to trusted community members, service providers where support is required, and lastly, on some occasions, to a statutory child protection worker.

Linking to our positioning in statutory social work—Aotearoa

There is no doubting that real compassion and concern for our mokopuna definitely underpinned heartfelt echoes from both Tūpuna⁵ Māori advancing what they considered to be Indigenous well-being (Hollis-English 2012b; Ministerial Advisory Committee 1988; Mooney 2012; Paniora 2009; Pohatu 2011), and Tauwiwi⁶ pioneers responsible for the construction of the Aotearoa statutory social work system (Connolly and Cashmore 2009; Doolan 2009; Tennant 2007, 1989; Tennant and Dalley 2004). Such divergent worldviews found commonality in caring for, protecting, and reinforcing future generations to explore their potentiality in safe and stimulating home environments. In recent times, strength-based mana-enhancing child centred developments in whānau (extended family) and whānau ora (family health; Te Puni Kokiri 2012, 2009) indirectly challenged the status quo of a dominant culture inside statutory social work.

It is our contention that *Tangata Whenua* (Indigenous Māori) ways of knowing through the development of our own critical social and community work theories (Pere 1991; Pohatu 2004, 2008, 2011; Ruwhiu 1995, 2013; Ruwhiu et al. 2011; Ruwhiu, Ruwhiu and Ruwhiu 2009), practice frameworks, and models of engagement, with associated skill-sets and practice tools, can only be of benefit for the entire profession of social work practice and, in particular, the child welfare and protection statutory scene in Aotearoa (Hollis-English 2012a, 2012b; Hollis 2005; Wilcox et al. 1992). Currently in Aotearoa, there is a facade being built on new layers of hypocrisy echoed in cries that we are “all New Zealanders”. It is advancing a view that values dominant ethnicities views of the world over Indigenous race relations (Mikaere 2004), but has done little to dampen the voices of *Tangata Whenua* (people belonging to the land of Aotearoa) in reclaiming traditional practices of caring for, making safe and protecting our *mokopuna* (offspring).

Mareikura and whatukura voices together

We, the authors, in our dual roles as Principal Advisors Māori (Poutaki Māori), have reinforced an Indigenous mantra validating and legitimating Māori worldviews, knowledge, wisdom and practice, in strengthening our service delivery to Indigenous mokopuna (offspring) and their whānau (extended family). We are both Māori, but have different world perspectives because of our gender realities. In our cultural Indigenous worldviews, gender elements are referred to as *mareikura* (female) and *whatukura* (male; Edwards, pers. comm. 2013; Ruwhiu, P. T and W. E., pers. comm. 2013; Taniwha, pers. comm. 2013).

Mareikura-wāhine Māori reclaiming practices of Tiaki Mokopuna

This contribution offers a *mareikura-wāhine* (female-woman) Māori perspective and analysis on Tiaki Mokopuna. The reclaiming of our cultural practices in birthing and mokopuna (offspring) care provides a guide for increasing protective behaviours and processes for keeping mokopuna safe. Moreover, wāhine Māori play a specific role within cultural practices used for protecting whakapapa and advancing long-term sustainability of whānau, hapū and iwi (extended family, sub-tribe, and tribe). Herbert (2001) writes:

A feature of Māori history of significance in parenting is the importance of the female both as the repository and transmitter of cultural values. Thus the concepts of mana wāhine and wāhine toa are relevant within Māori perspectives on parenting.

⁵ Tūpuna is a concept that is used to indicate ancestors, of whom we are the posterity.

⁶ Tauwiwi was a concept to describe strangers to our lands. In contact history, this was used to indicate who the overseas colonizers were. In recent times, Tauwiwi infers those who are not indigenous/non-Indigenous to Aotearoa New Zealand.

The well-being of the mother, both antenatal and post-natal, is the primary protective factor for shaping the *hinengaro* (brain) systems of mokopuna so that they are able to form close and healthy emotional relationships with significant others in the future (Harte and Jenkins 2013).

My Dad's birthing story and experiences of maltreatment through childhood have been a source of both anguish and inspiration for me in influencing how I practice Tiaki Mokopuna in the birthing and kinship parenting of my own children. His story is a constant reminder that the desire to protect and care for mokopuna (offspring) to ensure that unhealthy patterns of behaviour are not repeated is a powerful catalyst for inter-generational change.

Our iwi (tribe) lives inland and the river is a key source of well-being for our whānau and hapū (extended family and sub-tribe) members. We are known for expertise around both catching and preparing tuna (eels) as a delicacy specific to our hapū. So, it wasn't a surprise to find out that my Dad was born on the side of our river while my Grandmother was eeling. My own joy of becoming pregnant took me on a cultural journey of exploration to reclaim traditional birthing and parenting knowledge and techniques inspired by the strength of my Grandmother. This included natural birthing at our home amongst a large group of extended whānau (18 in all) who would remain loving and committed to this mokopuna from that day forward. We implemented the practice of traditional birthing rituals before, during, and after the birth which meant receiving *rōmirōmi* and *mirimiri* (traditional massage) from a *tōhunga* (healer) while pregnant; ongoing *karakia* (prayers); burying the afterbirth on our whānau land under our whānau Puriri tree alongside the afterbirth of generations of our whānau; and singing oriori (lullabys) containing lyrics about iwi histories. The following is an example of an oriori written by one of our elders for a mokopuna kotiro (girl) called Hineraukatauri:

He Oriori ki a Hineraukatauri

E taku iti Kahurangi, taku tamahine purotu e
Kua puta mai koe, ki te Ao-tu-roa nei
Nau mai, Haere mai, Haere mai

Takiri mai ko te ata, ki runga i o maunga e
Korihi mai ko nga manu hei powhiri atu ki a koe
Ka whakaoho au i taku moe

Ko wai koe? Ko Hineraukatauri koe
Taku kuru pounamu e, no Ranginui no Papa koe
Matawaia, ko aku kamo e

Kake mai e hine, ki runga te tohoraha nei
Ko te ika nui a to tupuna Maui
Ko Aotearoa nei e

E taku hinehou, taku kohine rereke, ahua rereke
Maku koe e poipoia, kia maumahara e
Ki to mana ahua ake, Whakatangata, kia
whakatangata koe

My precious little treasure, my beautiful and
handsome daughter
You have arrived to the light of day to this world
Welcome, welcome, welcome
The dawn breaks upon your mountains
The birds sing as a welcome to you
And I am awakened from my sleep

Who are you? Why you are Hineraukatauri
My precious jade pendant, you are from Ranginui
and Papa
And my eyes are overwhelmed and wet with tears
Climb up oh girl, upon this whale here
It is the great fish of your ancestor, Maui
It is Aotearoa

My baby daughter, my special girl child, special!
I will lovingly nurture you that you may cherish
Your absolute uniqueness, you are a person!

Tangaengae ki te mahi kai mau
 Tangaengae ki te whatu pueru mou
 Tangaengae ki te karanga manuhiri
 Tangaengae ki te waha watui mau
 Tangaengae ki te kerī mataitai mau
 Tangaengae ki a
 Hineraukatauri
 (Munro 1997)

Confer vigor to gather, plant and grow food for
 you
 Confer vigor to weave garments for you
 Confer vigor to welcome visitors
 Confer vigor to sing the songs for you
 Confer vigor to gather shellfish for you
 Confer vigor to Hineraukatauri.

The preparation and application of these traditional practices included our extended whānau in the roles and responsibilities of Tiaki Mokopuna from birth, and modelled the importance and obligations of collective caring in culturally significant ways.

Many complex factors have shattered the collective nature of kinship parenting and whānau child-raising in today's context. Significant numbers of whānau are disengaged from their extended whānau networks, cultural beliefs, and processes for caring for children, and as such, have never been taught how children were *he tāonga* (a treasure) in traditional Māori communities (Cargo 2008). Discussions with Māori parents show that there is a desire to learn traditional Māori parenting practices based on Māori values and knowledge about childrearing (Cargo 2008; Herbert 2001).

These examples of Tiaki Mokopuna strategies founded on cultural beliefs, principles, and customary practices prevent or reduce the risk factors leading to child maltreatment. They include the strengthening of whānau participation building relationships, and increasing cultural knowledge to advance whānau capacity to care for mokopuna. The simple principle of Tiaki Mokopuna reintroduces the notion that mokopuna are tāonga. As iwi members and social and community workers, the principle of Tiaki Mokopuna challenges us to strengthen, promote and practice Indigenous cultural protective, customs, and processes in our lives and as informed extensions of our professional practice.

Whatukura-tane Māori roles in Tiaki Mokopuna

This contribution critically examines the *kaupapa* (purpose) of Tiaki Mokopuna from a *whatukura-tane* (male-man) Māori perspective. It draws from my socialized experiences of being a *mokopuna tamaiti* (grandson) growing up in a rural urban setting characterized by engagements with large immediate whānau and extended whānau male entities—some good some not so good, but all strong in a particular faith with whakapapa links to the iwi (tribe) nations of Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāi Tahu ki Mohaka.

In terms of Tiaki Mokopuna, my parents came from contrasting environments, and yet, both had influential experiences with significant males in their upbringings. My Dad, Pirihi Te Ohaki Ruwhiu, was the sixth child of the first family of seven siblings raised on the East Coast in the rural farming community of Horoera amongst his mother's hapū (sub-tribe) called Hunaara of the iwi, Ngāti Porou. Her name was Tirahaere Huriwai, and she passed away when Dad was four years old. His father, Hau Ruwhiu, re-married soon after to Tehere Taiapa, who came with her first child. The experience of being raised as a step-child was complicated as 13 more siblings (half brothers and sisters) followed that union. We had a non-communicative father and a young stepmother, who was busy giving birth to children and not coping well with older stepchildren. These inter-relational dynamics made reconfiguring and/or weaving the two families together in a healthy manner very difficult. Upon reflection, Dad indicates that he received a sense of worth from his male cousins, but they all had to cope with various forms of physical and emotional abuse from significant adult males in their community. A change in heart for my father came by way of building a personal relationship with his *Atua* (god) at a very early age, which helped him make sense of the trials and tribulations he suffered. Prefaced by a *kōrero* (the words) from Jerry Edwards, whānaunga from Mohaka (17 October 2013: pers. comm.), Pirihi Te Ohaki Ruwhiu (12 September 2013: pers. comm), discusses this:

(Jerry) I remember your Dad telling me a story about how a river back home on the East Coast was flooded, and he was nine years old and had to get some food supplies from Te Araroa for his family...and to help him get across that flooded river, he made a conscious decision about following God. He was in a situation where his life was in peril and asked God to look after him. He remembers Dad saying "I did that a lot of times...that was one of the many times." Jerry asked my father, "how could you come to that decision, to that knowledge at such a young age?" And my father's simple reply was "because of the trials and tribulations."

(Pirihi Te Ohaki Ruwhiu) I had to go to town to get some stores and the river was flooding...I knew I had to get the stores for our family. I swam the horse across. I had to have a karakia before I swam across and when I came back I did the same thing. I got myself across by speaking to my Atua...

I remember I had an oil skin for a blanket, while staying with my sister, your Aunty May. I remember we used to go to the slaughter house—the Hovell's ran the butcher shop in Te Araroa and had a slaughter house up Tutua Road where my older sister May and her first husband, Toko Totoro lived. While staying with them, because they were pohara (poor), we would have to go and get the offal from the slaughter house to eat. I remember getting puha and beef bones (waikohua—leftover's from the beef bones) and for a week we re-cooked these same bones for eating.

I also had to horse ride from Horoera to school. I didn't enjoy going to high school, it had to do with being embarrassed by what I had to wear. But all these experiences were blessings for me, from all those trials, because that's where I got my grounding from. I used those negative things to bless our whānau. I learnt from all of those mistakes that my brothers and sisters made. I had trials and tribulations even in education. One of my Dad's younger sisters lived in the township where we went for our secondary schooling. She didn't want me to live with her because of the way that my older siblings had acted out (because we received very little support in the home environment and because we were marginalised because other children being born took precedence in the circle of attention for care). We were raised in poverty, one pair of pants, one shirt and a pair of boots (that were too small for me—that's where I got my bunion on the side of my foot from). However, even at school, I was on my own... and I had no mates... because I was a skinny kind of kid, I used to get called all types of derogatory and abusive names such as Rodeo (names they made up to make fun of those from poor families), lighthouse (big eyes)... However, all those things have steadied and influenced how I care for people today. The most important thing is that there is a great need for looking after and taking care of people no matter what nationality they are. That care flowed on to my own and other's children and our mokopuna, and all in need of care.

The loss of his mother, a fruitless father-son relationship, being exposed to contention between father and stepmother, combined with disoriented older siblings on negative self-fulfilling prophecies, left my father in a very lonely space. The impact of watching significant adults continuously in battle mode, openly arguing and fighting with each other, did little to advance a safe home environment for caring, nurturing and protecting mokopuna. In his early teens, Dad also remembers well a comment made to him by one of those significant adults, who said that he and his siblings would amount to nothing. Instead of fulfilling that view, my father took these comments and transformed them into a very powerful driving inner motivating force to create a healthy kainga (home). He would prove to that adult that he and his siblings were definitely of worth. Subsequently, the foundational values and beliefs that he developed during that time are a legacy that we, his offspring, continue to advance in our whānau ora (family health) aspirations today. Although my Grandfather taught my Dad how to work hard to survive, be resilient and self-sufficient, his inability to communicate to his children stifled meaningful father-child relationships; when it came to Tiaki Mokopuna kaupapa, much of the care, support, safety, development and protection came through female entities such as his mother, who up until her dying breath, strategized to provide protection for her children by stressing to my Grandfather that he raise their children in a particular faith. A grandmother, Heni Te Awhimate Paringatai, who was a kuia⁷ knowing that her mokopuna (offspring) were motherless, would walk more than 8km, carrying food, firewood and clothing on her back for her mokopuna despite the fact that she was half blind.

Likewise, my mother, Waikaraka Emily (nee Pere) was the fourth of nine children (seven daughters and two sons) to my grandparents: Marie Taaringaroa (nee McLroy) originating from Waipiro Bay, hapū—Te Whānau a Iritekura, iwi—Ngāti Porou; and Hawi Pere from Mohaka, hapū—Ngāti Pahauwera, iwi—Ngāti Kahungunu, and hapū—Ngāi Toenga, Te Otaha, iwi—Ngāi Tahu ki Mohaka. Initially, they all lived in Mohaka, but soon after my mother was born several cultural warnings changed the direction our whānau was taking.

Heni Lewis (nee Huka), a *matakite* (seer), and also sister to my Grandfather's mother, Mate Huka, spoke to my Grandfather about a vision she had after Mum's older siblings had been visited by past ancestors. In her vision, she saw my Grandmother being followed and protected by a big *kuri* (dog). That *kuri* was my Grandmother's *kaitiaki* (protector) from Waipiro Bay. Heni's message to my Grandfather was

⁷ Kuia infers an older woman, often ones grandmother, held in a position of high esteem and respect by the extended family & community

to take his wife and family away from Mohaka immediately because if they stayed, something bad would happen (Waikaraka Emily Ruwhiu 12 September 2013: pers. comm).

This was a display of courage and concern by a father who knew that his homeland was not a safe environment in which to raise his then four daughters because of the proliferation and normalization of sexual abuse. This prompted him to move his entire family to Hastings. Subsequently, along with her siblings, Mum was raised in a Māori Affairs sponsored home aligned to the pepper potting policies of the 1940s in the centre of an urban development in Hastings, Hawkes Bay. Interestingly enough, her father fulfilled a significant Kaitiaki⁸ Mokopuna role in that he was conscientious in maintaining a home environment where his children were not without food, clothing, and most importantly, given an abundance of *aroha* (love). His strength in later years when we, his mokopuna, came along was in gathering his loved ones around him. In those whānau moments, cultural knowledge and tikangā⁹ transmissions to the next generation occurred. We knew without a doubt that our Grandfather, affectionately known to us as Gangan, loved us unconditionally, and truly had our best interests in terms of safety, protection, and development at heart.

Combined, these two contrasting illustrations of whatukura reinforce that tane Māori are definitely in key positions to influence the health and well-being of their offspring and posterity (Eketone 2008; Ruwhiu et al. 2011). I loved my maternal grandfather who presented as a wise, warm, caring, calm, trusting, and loving individual of enormous faith. We knew he had our best interests at heart. On the contrary, our relationship with our paternal grandfather was less warm. While we felt connected when with him, our love for him was different, and in reality, was slightly distant.

For mokopuna who have come into statutory care, their experiences with tane Māori will need unpacking. Linking them to safe tane Māori requires careful consideration for their safety, care, protection, and development needs to be addressed more effectively. At the same time, what I take from my Father is that although there were many influential people in his life, the positive changes he made were effectively self-driven from being placed in spaces of trauma, turmoil and tribulation. He personally made the effort to change both his heart and mind, which led to significantly different behaviours that has left a legacy of care, trust, love, respect, and support that contributes to the development for our whānau and many others with whom our parents have had contact.

Weaving our voices as one

In weaving together mareikura (female) and whatukura (male) contributions to Tiaki Mokopuna, there are five Indigenous messages of wisdom echoed from the pukorero shared in this chapter. First, there is no doubting that poverty combined with post-colonization trauma has heavily impacted whānau in terms of caring for and protecting mokopuna (offspring) Māori. Elements of dispossession from land and natural resources, loss of language, identity and cultural practices, disenfranchisement from all forms of decision-making, exclusion and marginalization of Indigenous status, have exasperated the pain, loss, and hurt experienced. Nonetheless, these areas of struggle and contestation have created an air of resilience, determination, resourcefulness, strength, and resistance in the form of mokopuna and whānau ora (family health) strategies and practices.

Second, Kaitiaki roles for wāhine (women) and tane (men) Māori are essential in modelling healthy relationships and behaviours for mokopuna to create safe environments conducive to their strong, confident development. This is incomplete without considering the critical voice and role of mokopuna. Dobbs and Eruera (2010) state “mokopuna Māori are therefore a key stakeholder in the positive long-term transformation of Māori communities in Aotearoa society.”

Third, these whānau (extended family) experiences re-emphasise the centrality of tangata whenua¹⁰ worldviews, knowledge, and practices (Eruera et al. 2013). Subsequently, regeneration of customary cultural practices is essential in order to clearly map out the complementary role, obligations and functions of mareikura and whatukura in raising mokopuna in safe and caring environments (Eruera et al. 2010).

⁸ Kaitiaki - A person whose role is to care for, protect, safeguard, support and develop, in this case, our young offspring who are the most vulnerable of our communities and families.

⁹ Tikanga is defined as peoples' ways of doing things with others, their processes and protocols. Often infers as the right way to engage with them.

¹⁰ Tangata whenua/tangata whenua is defined as 'People of the land', in this case the Indigenous peoples of the land.

Fourth, real sustained growth and change for mokopuna must be determined by whānau Māori. Community and statutory responsive practices should be grounded in knowledge and competencies that reinforce whānau leadership, whānau oriented strategies, and whānau decision-making for the future.

A fifth message clearly indicates that the gathering of Indigenous data from whānau repositories of mokopuna ora (child care) is essential in building knowledge, practice, and evidence concerning Tiaki Mokopuna for the next generation.

Finally, to our whānau Māori contributors, your pukorero (stories) resonate deep in the heart and homelands of Aotearoa and now are finding new lands in far off shores amongst other Indigenous wisdoms. Those actions are truly a koha (gift) to humanity about our wisdom and learning in raising the health and well-being of our posterity and our mokopuna.

Kia kaha rawa atu!!!

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