# Ngā karangaranga maha o te ngākau o ngā tūpuna Tiaki Mokopuna

Ancestral heartfelt echo's of care for children

By Moana Eruera and Dr Leland A Ruwhiu

E kore au e ngāro he kakano ahau i ruia mai i Rangiātea I can never be lost I am a seed born of greatness Descended from a line of chiefs of Rangiātea<sup>1</sup> Tamehana (2001)

### Our voices

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 & Ruwhiu, 2008; Eruera, 2013, 2012, 2005; Grey, Coates & Bird, 2008; Pohatu, 2008, 2004; Te Hira, 2007; Mafileo, 2004; Fook, 2002). This is a critical lifeline for statutory social work, because effecting organisational cultural change to be more responsive to indigenous needs continues to be a source of contention for main stream social work theory and practice (Nash, 1998).

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

A paramount concern in the construction of 'welfare' and 'wellbeing' for Māori offspring (mokopuna<sup>2</sup> Māori) involves providing them with the best possible care available within their own cultural paradigms. Throughout our histories as indigenous peoples of Aotearoa (New Zealand) an undeniable echoed truth eloquently displayed in the title of this chapter and also above in proverbial form is the centricity of caring for, protecting, safeguarding, supporting the growth development and wellbeing of our mokopuna. Subsequently, mokopuna Māori are born into kinship cultural engagement structures known as whānau, hapū and iwi<sup>3</sup>. Within these kinship structures, responsibilities for their care are often shared beyond their immediate nuclear family group (Cram, 2012; McCrae & 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 were within these social structures (Cooper & Wharewera-Mika, 2011; Jenkins & Harte, 2011). Whānau invested in the long-term development of mokopuna to meet their full potential through cultural practices to ensure their safety and wellbeing. 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 traditional Māori society tolerated violence and abuse towards mokopuna and wāhine (Durie, 2001). Violent and abusive acts were considered dangerous to the wellbeing of the collective group and were dealt with accordingly. Our histories speak of people acting with mana<sup>4</sup> in their responses to violence and abuse, of whānau and hapū moving in to support their wāhine (women) and mokopuna (Jenkins & Philips-Barbara, 2002).

Unfortunately in Aotearoa society today, due to a range of complex contributing factors, both historical and current, many mokopuna Māori are not safe within their whānau and are overrepresented 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) combined with socio-economic determinants are drivers of whānau vulnerability and poverty as major risk factors for mokopuna (Cram, 2011). 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 wellbeing).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Traditionally speaking, Rangiātea 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> **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 childs 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*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this writing whānau is translated as extended family, hapu is sub-tribe and iwi is tribe.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> **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."

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, Pg. 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 represented by Te Rito in the above quote (Pohatu, 2010; Eruera, 2010; Ruwhiu, 2009; Durie, 2001; Metge, 1995). 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 & Ruwhiu et.al). 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 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 (Harte & Jenkins, 2011). 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; third, the rights and responsibilities for raising children are shared; four, children have rights and responsibilities to their whānau (Pitama, Ririnui & Mikaere).

Furthermore, Tiaki Mokopuna also promotes the care, safety and protection of Māori children within extended whānau networks, moving out to trusted community members, service providers where supports are 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 Tūpuna Māori advancing 'Indigenous wellbeing' (Hollis-English, 2012a; Mooney, 2012; Pohatu, 2011; Paniora, 2008 & Ministerial Advisory Committee, 1988) and Tauiwi pioneers responsible for the construction of the Aotearoa statutory social work system (Connolly & Cashmore, 2009; Doolan, 2009; Tennant, 2007, 1989; Tennant & Dalley, 2004). Such divergent worldviews found commonality in caring for, the protection of and reinforcing future generation's to explore their potentiality in safe and stimulating home environments. In recent times 'strengths based mana-enhancing child centred in whānau/family focused' and 'whānau ora' (Te Puni Kokiri, 2012, 2009) developments, indirectly challenged the status quo of dominant culture inside statutory social work determining its functionality.

It is our contention that Tangata Whenua (Indigenous Māori), ways of knowing through the development of our own critical social and community work theories, practice frameworks, 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.

### Mareikura and Whatukura voice together

More specifically, the authors in our shared role as Principal Advisors Māori have reinforced an indigenous mantra validating and legitimating Māori worldviews, knowledge, wisdom and practice, in strengthening our service delivery to indigenous mokopuna and their whānau. More importantly we are both Māori and yet provide uniqueness in the way we view the world because of our gender realities. In our cultural indigenous worldviews, gender elements are referred to as Mareikura - female and Whatukura - male (Taniwha, 2013; Edwards, 2013 Ruwhiu, P.T. 2013).

## Mareikura – Wāhine Māori reclaiming practices of Tiaki Mokopuna (cultural protective factors)

This contribution offers a wāhine Māori perspective and analysis (Mareikura) on 'Tiaki Mokopuna'. The reclaiming of our cultural practices in birthing and mokopuna care provide a guide to increased protective behaviours and processes for keeping mokopuna safe. Moreover wāhine Māori, play a specific role within those two cultural practices used for protecting whakapapa and advancing long-term sustainability of whānau, hapū and iwi. Herbert (2011) 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" (p.85).

The wellbeing of the mother both antenatal and post-natal is the primary protective factor for shaping the hinengaro (brains) systems of mokopuna so that they are able to form close and healthy emotional relationships with significant others in the future (Harte & 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 of the ability for intergenerational change to occur from the desire to protect and care for mokopuna to ensure unhealthy patterns of behaviour are not repeated.

Our iwi (tribe) lives inland and the river is a key source of wellbeing for our whānau and hapū members. We are known for expertise around both catching and preparing tuna or 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 or 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 their iwi histories. The following is the example of an Oriori written by one of our elders for a mokopuna (girl) called Hineraukatauri.

## He Oriori ki a Hineraukatauri (Composed by Taipari Munro, 1997)

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

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 keri mataitai mau Tangaengae ki a Hineraukatauri 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 nuture you that you may cherish Your absolute uniqueness, you are a person!

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 practices included our extended whānau in the roles and responsibilities of 'Tiaki Mokopuna' from birth and modelled the importance and obligations of collectively 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, in traditional Māori communities children were 'He Tāonga,' a treasure (Cargo, 2008, p.15). Discussions with Māori parents show that there was a desire to learn traditional Māori parenting practices based on Māori values and knowledge about childrearing (Cargo, 2008; Herbert, 2001).

These examples encourage 'Tiaki Mokopuna' strategies founded on cultural beliefs, principles and customary practices that prevent or reduce the risk factors leading to child maltreatment. This includes the strengthening of whānau participation and relationships, increased cultural knowledge and capacity to care for mokopuna. The simple principle of Tiaki Mokopuna reintroduces this notion that mokopuna are taonga. 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 into our lives and as informed extensions of our professional practice.

#### Whatukura – Tane Māori roles in Tiaki Mokopuna (cultural protective factors)

This contribution of critically examining from a Tane Māori perspective (Whatukura) the kaupapa of Tiaki Mokopuna, draws from my socialised experiences of being a mokopuna tamaiti, growing up in a rural urban setting characterised by engagements with large extended whānau and variant whānau male entities – some good some not so good, strong in a particular faith, with whakapapa<sup>5</sup> links to the iwi 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 had influential experiences with significant males in their upbringing. My Dad, Pirihi Te Ohaki Ruwhiu was the 6th child of the first family of 7 siblings raised on the East Coast in the rural farming community of Horoera, amongst his mother's hapū – Hunaara, of the Iwi - Ngāti Porou. Her name was Tirahaere Huriwai and she passed away when Dad was 4 years old. His father Hau Ruwhiu remarried 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 (1/2 brothers and sisters) followed that union. Evidence of a non-communicative father, a young stepmother giving birth to children and not coping with older stepchildren, marginalised older siblings, made reconfiguring and/or weaving in a healthy manner, inter-relational dynamics between the two families, very difficult. Upon reflection, Dad 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 and making sense of the trials and tribulations he suffered. Prefaced by a korero from Jerry Edwards, whānaunga from Mohaka (17 October 2013 – personal communication), Pirihi Te Ohaki Ruwhiu (12 September 2013 – personal interview) provides illustrations to back this up:

"(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 Hauvell'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 – left over'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 sister's, 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 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

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looking after and taking care of people no matter what nationality they are. That care flowed on to my own and others 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 disorientated 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 adult's, that he and his siblings would amount to 'nothing'. This could have easily led to fulfilling that view but for my father, these two events became a very powerful driving inner motivating force to create healthy home kainga, and also to prove otherwise to that adult that he and his siblings were definitely of worth. Subsequently, those foundational values and beliefs that he developed during that time are a legacy that we his offspring continue to advance in our whānau ora aspirations today. Although my grandfather taught my Dad how to work hard to survive, to be resilient and to be self-sufficient, the inability to communicate to his children stifled meaningful father-children relationships, and 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 to raise their children in a particular faith; and a grandmother - Heni Te Awhimate Paringatai, who was a ½ blind kuia, knowing that her mokopuna were motherless, would walk over 8km's, carrying food, firewood and clothing on her back for her mokopuna.

Likewise, my mother, Waikaraka Emily (nee Pere) was the 4<sup>th</sup> of 9 children (7 daughters and 2 sons), to my grandparents Marie Taaringaroa (nee McIroy) 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 – Ngāti Toenga, Te Otaha, Iwi – Ngāti 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 were being visited by past ancestors. In her vision she saw my grandmother been 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 to take his wife and family away from Mohaka immediately because if they stayed something bad would happen (Waikaraka Emily Ruwhiu – interview 12 September 2013)."

This was a display of courage and concern by a father who knew that his homeland was not a safe environment to raise his four daughters in because of the proliferation and also normalisation 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 urban development in Hastings, Hawkes Bay. Interesting enough, her father fulfilled a significant Kaitiaki Mokopuna role in that he was conscientious of 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 tikangā 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 wellbeing of their offspring and their posterity. I loved my maternal grandfather who presented as a wise, warm, caring, trusting, loving individual of enormous faith, whom we knew had our best interests at heart. On the contrary our relationship with our paternal grandfather, was less warm, and while we felt connected when with him, our love for him was different, and in reality, it was slightly distant.

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

## Weaving our voices as one

In weaving together Mareikura and Whatukura 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 impacted heavily on whānau in terms of caring for and protecting mokopuna 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 marginalisation of indigenous status, have exasperated the pain, loss and hurt experienced. None the less, these areas of struggle and contestation have created an air of resilience, determination, resourcefulness, strengthen and resistance in the form of mokopuna and whānau ora strategies and practices.

Second, Kaitiaki roles for wāhine and tāne 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. Eruera & Dobbs (2010) state, "mokopuna Māori are therefore a key stakeholder in the positive long-term transformation of Māori communities in Aotearoa society."

Third, these whānau experiences re-emphasised the centricity of tangata whenua worldviews, knowledge and practices. Subsequently regeneration of customary cultural practices is essential in order to clearly map out the complimentary role, obligations and functions of Mareikura and Whatukura in raising mokopuna in safe and caring environments.

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 gathering of indigenous data from whānau repositories of mokopuna ora, is essential to building knowledge, practice and evidence concerning Tiaki Mokopuna for the next generation.

Finally, to our whānau Māori contributors, your pukorero resonates deep in the heart and homelands of Aotearoa, and now findings landing places 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 wellbeing of our posterity, our mokopuna.

Kia kaha rawa atu!!!

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### **Interviews**

Jerry Edwards - personal communication 17 October 2013 Waikaraka Emily Ruwhiu – personal interview 12 September 2013 Pirihi Te Ohaki Ruwhiu – personal interview 12 September 2013 Terry Taniwha – personal communication 15 October 2013



## Authors

Moana Eruera - MPhil; BA Māori; DipSocSc; MANZASW; NZ SWkr Regist.

Dr Leland A Ruwhiu - PhD; BSW (Hons); MANZASW; NZ SWkr Regist.