



WAIPAPA



WAIPAPA

He kohinga kōrero nō ngā
uri o Ngāti Whātua

He mea tautoko nā

WHIITIKI
WHAKATIKA
Te Ao Māori



WĀNANGA - WAIPAPA



This piece is a whare wānanga. At its centre is the whare, the tūāpapa, running directly underneath is a form of rauawa showing whakapapa as the foundation to protect, practise, and pass on.

The mangopare patterns represent leadership through action and service — mobilisation that was urgent, collective, and grounded in care. The raranga patterns hold whakapapa and its continuity, while the outer koru carry resilience and truth-telling, showing the flow of whānau connection and the dismantling of colonial myths.

Together, these patterns show whakapapa in action, service-led leadership, whānau-first resilience, and the courage to speak truth.

Nā Tukaroto Mahuta

Tahia te ara kia wātea, tahia te ara kia wātea.

Tahia i te pū, i te kore, i te pō, i te ao.

Ki te awatea!

Kia whiitiki whakatika—nau mai!

Clear the path, make way.

From the void, from nothingness, from darkness into light.

Into the light of day!

Prepare, rise, and step forward—welcome!

“Ko ngā mātauranga makaurangi ka kawetonutia, kia turakina ai ngā aupēhitanga o te wā. Nō roto mai i ngā tātai mātauranga makaurangi heke Iho, ko ngā hua motuhake, ngā hua whakawhanake, nō mai anō tātou e okea ururoatia nei ngā kaupareparenga o te wā. E kore rawa ēnei hekeihotanga e tau noaiho ki te rae, ka titia ki te kukū o te ngākau, e whakatangata ai te Iwi Māori.”

“Our ancestral wisdom carries proven pathways through crisis. Embedded within our inter-generational story-telling lies a profound knowledge of survival and adaptation, handed down through centuries of overcoming adversity. These traditional narratives don't just tell us who we are, they show us how to be resilient”

- Huirama Matatahi / Pou Urungi – Whiitiki Whakatika

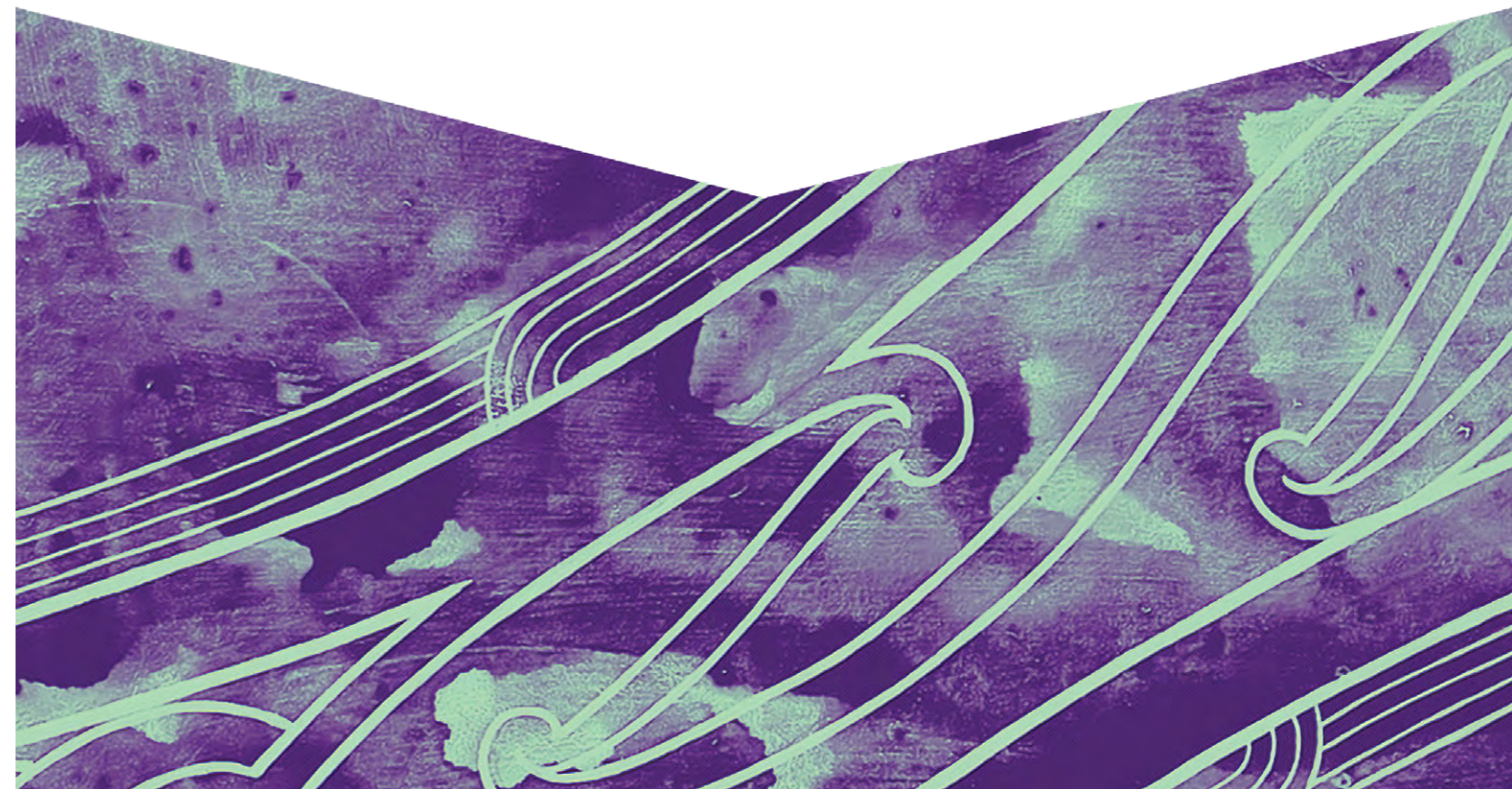
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WHIITIKI WHAKATIKA

Te Pūtake o te Kaupapa

WHITI 1



Māori resilience in times of adversity was guided by tikanga and mātauranga. Hei kaupare ake i ngā aituā, i ngā taumahatanga o te wā.

Today, this truth remains - the blueprint to our resilience lies within the tikanga and kōrero tuku iho from our tūpuna.

As the world increasingly turns to Indigenous knowledge for solutions, Mātauranga Māori is a puna whakaora—a healing source for those in Aotearoa seeking ways to protect whakapapa.

MĀORI HISTORY WITH PANDEMICS

Historically, Māori have been disproportionately affected by pandemics, epidemics and infectious diseases. But in recent times, the tikanga and mātauranga of te iwi Māori, including practices of isolation, rāhui and aukati became the blueprint for the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Opposite Image: Tahua Pihema



THE PROTECTION OF MĀTAURANGA AND TĀNGATA

For te iwi Māori there is a gap in the documentation of kōrero and rangahau from whānau and hapū around their traditional ways of protecting iwi during pandemics and infectious diseases. To better prepare and protect whakapapa, Whiitiki Whakatika collectivised to provide resources and guides informed by kōrero tuku iho and to support future national responses to pandemics and infectious diseases.

TE KOTAHITANGA O AOTEAROA WHĀNUI

Whiitiki Whakatika is the first rangahau project of its kind and was established to document and integrate Mātauranga Māori practices of resilience to support future national responses to pandemics and infectious diseases.

Throughout the duration of the project a rōpū of kairangahau Māori travelled the motu, capturing kōrero of Māori knowledge systems, including tikanga, pūrākau, and kōrero tuku iho. The sharing of the mātauranga is safeguarded under the Tiaki Taonga and Intellectual Property policies that Whiitiki Whakatika operates by, ensuring taonga and Mātauranga Māori are cared for with manaakitanga, whakaute, confidentiality and privacy.

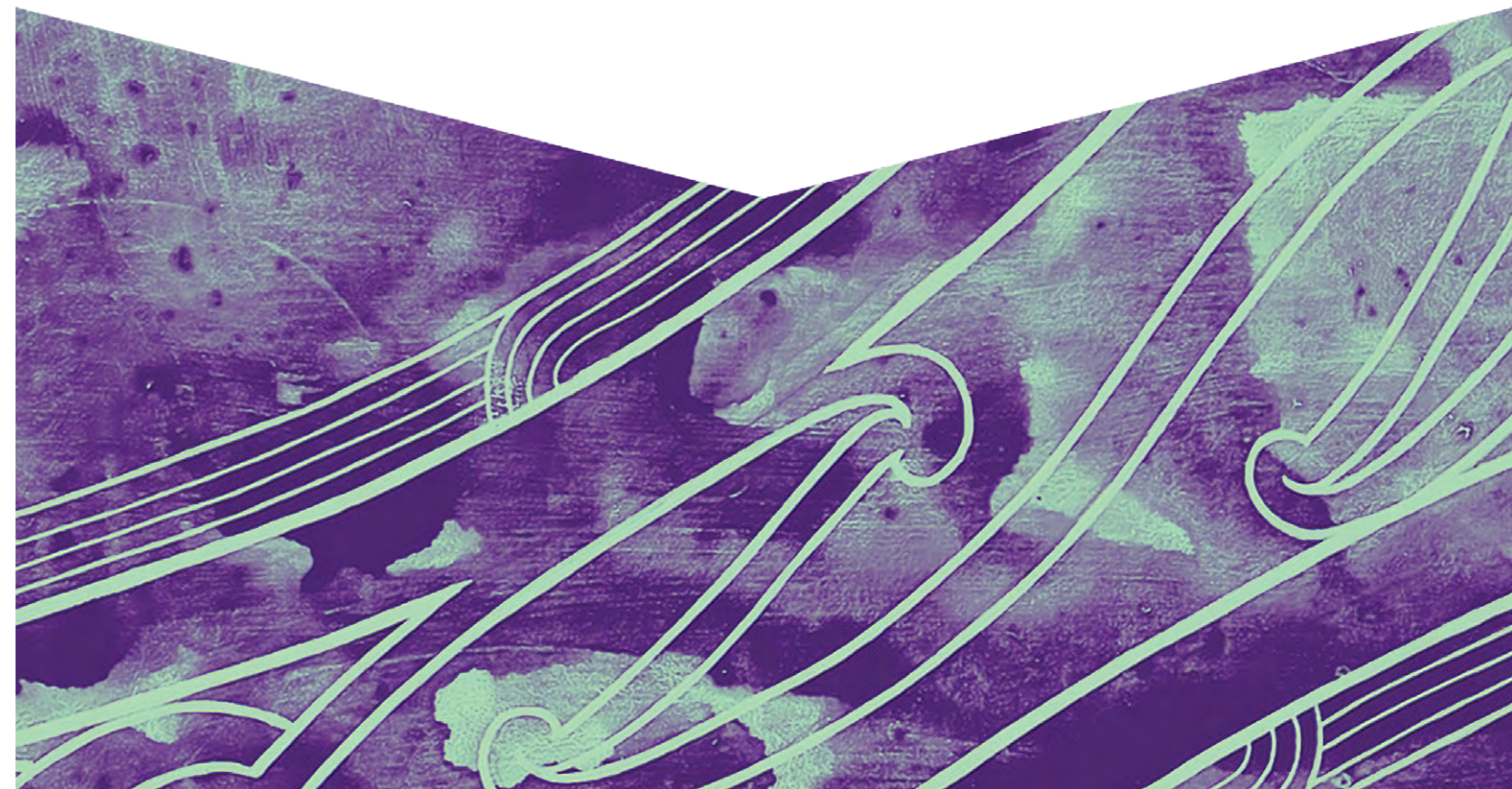
*Kia noho ko ngā kurahuna o ia iwi, o ia hapū,
o ia whānau, hei kurahuna motuhake ki a rātou mā.*

Where consent is given, and whānau, hapū and iwi allow, the mātauranga will also contribute to, and inform, an Aotearoa whānui response of kotahitanga when it comes to the context of future pandemics - ensuring that Māori voices, mātauranga and solutions are at the centre of national preparedness in the protection of uri whakatupu.

NGĀ TUKANGA RANGAHAU

Rangahau Methodology

WHITI 2



METHOD OLOGY

Whiitiki Whakatika Methodology

Whiitiki Whakatika is tikanga driven and Mātauranga Māori led. The approach to this rangahau project takes guidance from the mātauranga within the phases of Te Pū, Te Kore, Te Pō, Te Ao, and Te Awatea. Each phase in the methodology represents the unique positions this rangahau project sits in while on its haerenga to inform a foundation and guide for responses to future pandemics.

Ngā hua? What are the outcomes and what to expect?

In time, Mātauranga Māori will contribute to informing a kotahitanga approach to supporting Aotearoa whānui in pandemic responses - with the potential to influence national policy and support those on the frontlines who are responding on behalf of their whānau, hapū and iwi.

Ahead of the national approach being developed, Whiitiki Whakatika have reconnected with whānau, hapū and iwi to present the findings of the rangahau and its common themes.

TE PŪ TE KORE TE PŌ TE AO TE AWATEA

This book is shaped and guided by the Whiitiki Whakatika methodology, ensuring that its structure, tone, and flow reflect the principles and processes at the heart of the rangahau.

Each phase of the methodology provided the framework for how the kōrero was gathered, analysed, and shared in this book, allowing the reo and lived experiences of whānau, hapū and iwi from this wānanga to be presented in a way that honours both their context and their significance.

In doing so, this book embodies the methodology itself— ensuring that the stories told remain grounded in the kaupapa, uara, and tikanga that shaped their collection.

WHIITIKI WHAKATIKA METHOD OLOGY

TE PŪ
Te Arotake Rangahau



Defining research objectives
and parameters

TE KORE
Kōrero Tuku Iho



Narrative collection across
Hui, Wānanga and Uiui

TE PŌ
Tātari ā Kōrero



Analysis of narratives
Ā-rohe, Ā-takiwā and Ā-kaupapa

TE AO
Te Whakamātau



Practical application of
narratives in agency

TE AWATEA
Te Whakapūmau



Analysis of narratives
Ā-rohe, Ā-takiwā and Ā-kaupapa



Hinakitia



HEI TŪĀPAPA

From Te Pū, where all knowledge begins, the tuna moves with purpose. Te Rauiri, the unseen gates, guide its journey, shaping its path toward the hīnaki.

But the hīnaki is more than a net—it is a vessel of mātauranga, woven with intention, capturing wisdom so it can be held, nurtured, and shared.

Like the tuna, knowledge flows. It is guided, gathered, and gifted forward—a living force, forever moving, forever growing.

Taonga | Design & whakamārama by Tukaroto Mahuta

WHIITIKI WHAKATIKA NAU MAI

The Whiitiki Whakatika artwork has been woven with intention, guided by the incantation of the Whiitiki Whakatika kaupapa.

The foundation of this work is likened to the central ridgepole of a whare, or the sky above, representing the journey we follow in learning, thought, and spirit.

The puhoro symbolises the many pathways of this kaupapa and the mangopare represents resilience, determination, and the strength to walk this journey with integrity.

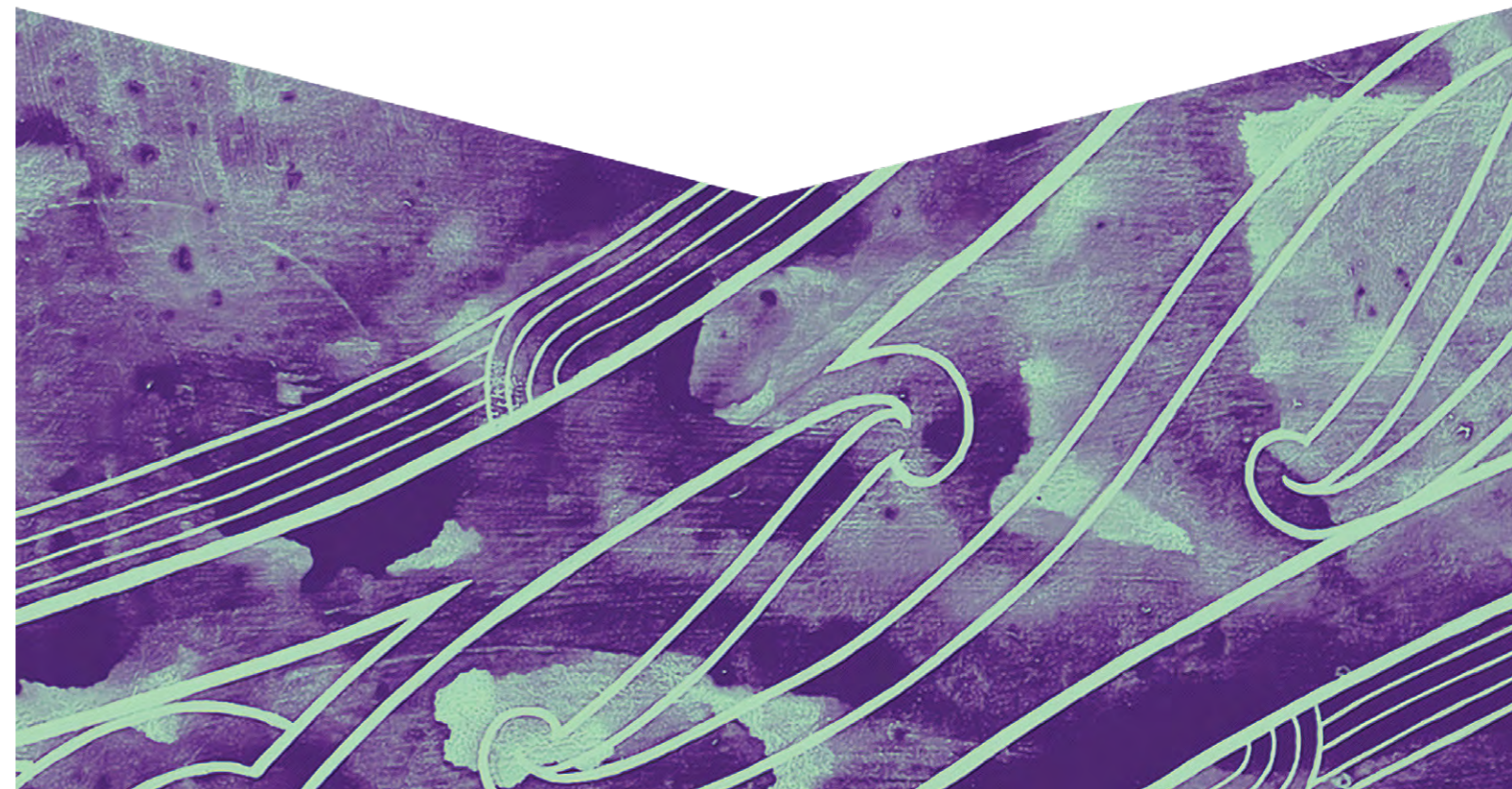
As a result, the Whiitiki Whakatika symbol stands as the central pillar of this kaupapa. A spiral or a rauru, is the portal that opens into every path that is followed.



TE PŪ

Te Arotake Rangahau

WHITI 3





TE PŪ TE RAUIRI

Te Arotake Rangahau

The tuna or eel has become the symbol of mātauranga that is carried through the many currents of life.

The tuna represents the knowledge that is collated through kōrero tuku iho and the mātauranga shared.

Te rauiri, or gates, are placed in a stream to guide and channel the tuna towards and into hīnaki, which capture the tuna. This is the initial phase of the methodology concept where necessary preparations are made in order to collate knowledge.

Te Pū, the darkness or nothingness, is likened to the initial phase of the birth of Mātauranga Māori, which represents the establishment of parameters, boundaries and the scope for rangahau to take place.

When first establishing Whiitiki Whakatika as a kaupapa, Te Pū was the preparation phase where parameters, boundaries and the scoping for rangahau to take place was established in order to collate mātauranga. There was a review of published and grey literature that was conducted to establish the extent to which Māori approaches to pandemic preparedness and infectious diseases have been documented in its exact context.

Protection of Mātauranga & Tāngata

Whiitiki Whakatika were intentional in the approach to wānanga by acknowledging that the interaction and engagement between whānau, hapū and iwi was respectful and conducted with care, and by doing so empowering local involvement where possible.

Of significance, areas where whānau, hapū and iwi involvement was key included the participation of a local facilitator, rangahau champions and mātanga panellist.

To ensure the engagement with these representatives was tikanga led, Whiitiki Whakatika developed key policies that highlighted Māori involvement along the way. These policies included:

- Rangatira & Mātanga Policy
- Intellectual Property & Tiaki Taonga Policy
- Rangatahi Rangahau Champion Policy

Each policy highlighted the importance of contribution and the means in which that contribution was protected from a tikanga and kawa perspective in accordance with the appropriate research ethics acts.

Rangatira & Mātanga Policy

The role of mātanga in the rangahau is a sacred one to acknowledge the generosity and trust in sharing generations of mātauranga tuku iho pertaining to whakapapa, te taiao, and an ā-wairua realm which they bring to the kaupapa. Intergenerational knowledge-holders carry whakapapa, stories, and a wealth of knowledge.



Intellectual Property & Tiaki Taonga Policy

The purpose of this policy is to set out the framework upon which the assurance that Mātauranga Maori and IP remains protected with mātanga. Tongikura Ltd on behalf of Whiitiki Whakatika maintain appropriate agreed kaitiaki responsibilities through the rangahau phase right through to the development of any framework.

On behalf of Tongikura and Whiitiki Whakatika, whānau, hapū and iwi as kaitiaki have the full and exclusive decision-making authority to Taonga Māori, as guaranteed by Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Any korero will only be shared with the consent of the appropriate kaitiaki who are sharing their mātauranga.

Whiitiki Whakatika is guided by the CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance and Wai 262 Tiaki Taonga principles, recognising that data relating to Māori and other Indigenous peoples must be managed to uphold their rights, interests, and wellbeing.



Rangatahi Rangahau Champions

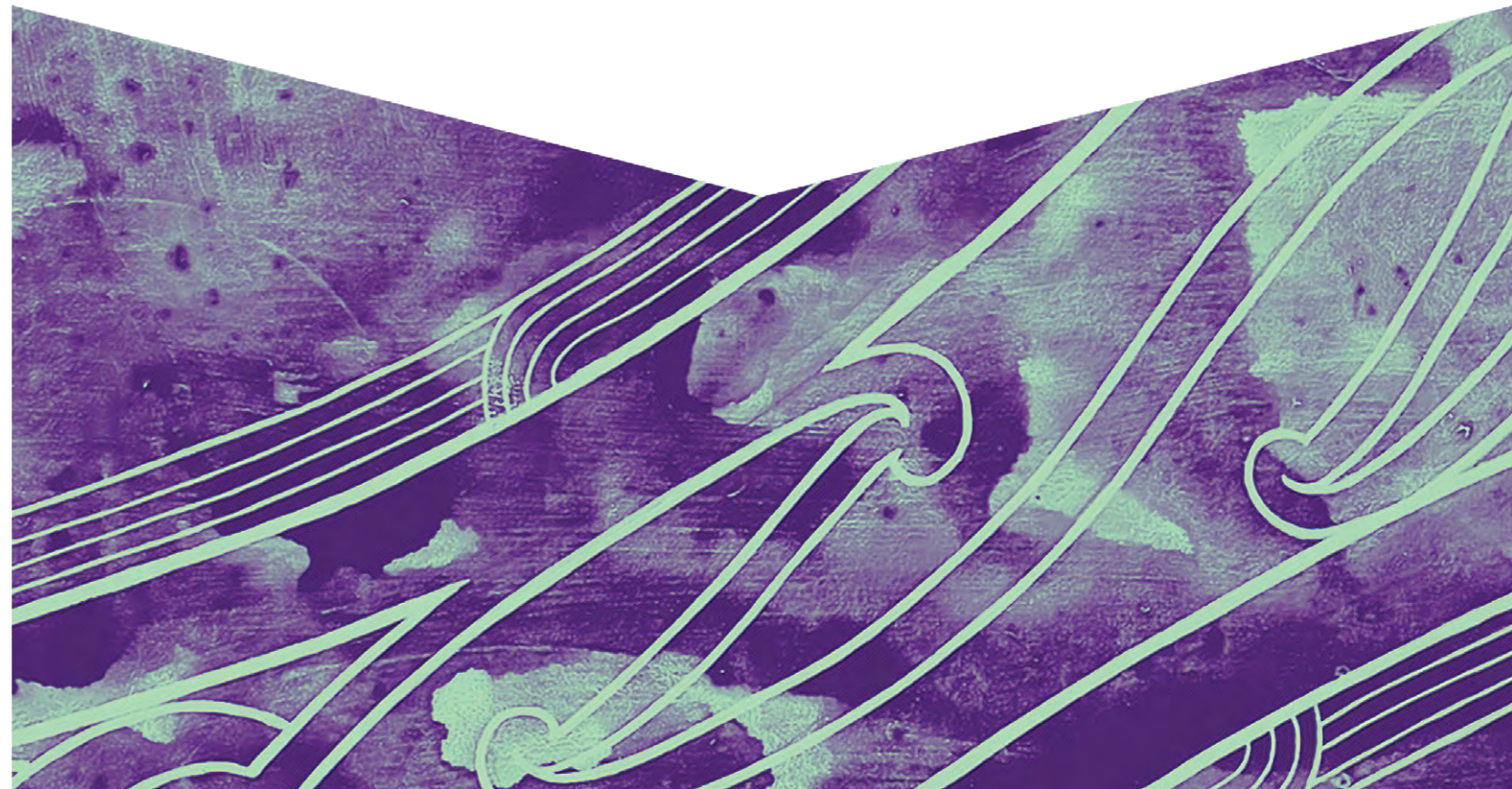
Rangatahi Rangahau Champions have participated in wānanga as a way of ensuring succession is achieved and that intergenerational transfer of knowledge is a part of the process, ensuring that a rangatahi perspective and interpretation of information was captured and understood.

Rangatahi Champions have supported the research across the Te Kore phase through wānanga engagements, data collation, data dissemination and analysis hui. This has also supported inter-generational transfer of knowledge and rangatahi perspectives on information to be included in the rangahau process.

TE KORE

Kōrero Tuku Iho

WHITI 4





TE KORE

The hīnaki represents the capturing or collating of knowledge being the net where the tuna swim into and are trapped. This second phase sees the gathering of relevant information, data, kōrero and knowledge.

Te Kore (the potential) – ngā tātai hekenga iho, wairua, mauri, whakaaro e whakatangata ai te ora – this is the code of creation in which ideation, innovation and evolution seek to conceptualise knowledge. This too is where knowledge is explored and sourced.

This second phase sees the gathering of relevant mātauranga, tikanga, information, data, kōrero and knowledge. This too is where knowledge is explored and sourced.



FORMAL ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The Waipapa Marae wānanga was engaged through Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei connections, as a follow-on from an earlier wānanga held in Waikato at Hopuhopu during the Koroneihana of the late Kiingi Tuheitia Pootatau Te Wherowhero te tuawhitu.

Key contacts *Joe and Huia Pihema* played vital roles in securing kaikōrero and facilitating discussions that sought solutions to real-world problems. Lead out by Tahua Pihema with a dedicated focus on attracting rangatahi, organisers invited *Eru Kapa-Kingi* to provide context on Te Tiriti and Tino Rangatiratanga in today's world, drawing parallels to the disinformation strategies used by kāwanatanga to confuse communities while crafting harmful legislation. *Ihapera Paniora*, Ngāti Whātua ki Kaipara Māori Ward Councillor, shared her journey into local government, the racism and challenges she faced, and the strategies applied as models of Māori resilience. The wānanga concluded with *Rangimarie Hunia*, who led the Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei COVID-19 response. She offered insights on iwi leadership in practice, and more importantly highlighted the beautiful model of care that reaffirmed that regardless of politics, stance on vaccinations, or geographical location – *your iwi cares about each and every one of you*.

The choice to hold the wānanga at a university marae within their rohe boundaries was deliberate – creating a space that catered to rangatahi, encouraged their voice, and connected them with pathways for leadership. Alongside reflections on what had already worked well, rangatahi were challenged to consider new and innovative approaches they could implement to protect their whakapapa into the future.

Opposite Image: Tahua Pihema

TRANSCRIPT ONE

FORMAL WĀNANGA TRANSCRIPTS - NGĀ KŌRERO Ā TE IWI

Rangimarie Hunia

LOCATION	Waipapa Marae, 16 Wynyard Street, Auckland 1010
DATE	28 September 2024
START TIME	9am
END TIME	3pm
TRANSCRIBER	Paaniora Matatahi-Poutapu
REVIEWER	Erana Kihi

Important Notice as to the Basis of Disclosure of this Information

This transcript is provided for the purposes of reporting internally to Whiitiki Whakatika only and not for wider distribution, in line with Tongikura Taonga and Mātauranga Māori Policy. This is consistent with the agreed basis on which the mahi of Whiitiki Whakatika would be shared – that the collection of views, accounts and stories regarded as taonga tuku iho in this document and associated information have been generated within the tikanga agreed and set by Tongikura Ltd. On behalf of all kaitiaki involved, all mātanga and associated whānau, hapū and iwi assert their mana motuhake and tino rangatiratanga to the information and to the circumstances under which the information may be disclosed.

RANGIMARIE
HUNIA

Kia ora ko Rangimarie Hunia tēnei. These details are right some people were for it, some people were against it. My experience was that we never suffered from any of that and so when I think about protection of whakapapa, this is about getting the absolute fundamentals right and the fundamentals are; we love our whānau, we will look after our whānau and we will do that however, wherever, whenever and with whoever. I found that this particular approach to life - to leading, to doing - got us in good stead. I worked a lot with Mariameno with the work she was doing with Aupōuri and every other iwi across the country. We just didn't have that reality. So really, I think the gift, or the thought I can give for us all here, as we're thinking about the protection of whakapapa, is how you might think about it in the work that you're doing and how do you make sure that inside, you have a deep respect and filter, to be able to work with as you're moving through stuff. So I did that and I've done a whole lot of kind of governance work. Now doing some other stuff more out of Wellington. So I'm doing that and that's quite new. So I can go anywhere that you like, I have a view about everything and anything. So I'm happy to just probably tease out. What are the key things that you want to understand out of the wānanga and how do I offer up something?

TAHUA PIHEMA

Can you please tell us how you, in your mahi position, managed the Covid response for your tribe?

RANGIMARIE
HUNIA

Yes, Ngāti Whātua ki Ōrākei is a little bit different. I think to many others in the sense that we are a tribal community in the biggest city with the biggest population and our papakāinga only sits five kilometres away from where the worst cases might exist. So you can talk about it and I got relations in Aupōuri living in Te Kao and I got my other in-laws which is where I've spent many years of my life in Te Teko. Te Teko, Te Kao and Ōrakei, he rerekē. In many ways, in beautiful ways. But my old people, our old people, our papakāinga is only three minutes away in a car from the worst cases that would hit this country. So if you were gonna pass away or if you were gonna be the worst case in this country, you were going there and that's only three minutes away from where our marae and where our kuia and kaumātua live. So the scale and the intensity of care heightens quite quickly. We had 24 hours. We got told that they were gonna close down. We had 170 staff which were across a whole lot of things and we had to figure out what we were going to do. So essentially what we decided is the day before we would stand up a response and I didn't care if you're a chief executive, you're a big flash manager, if you were working a planner or you were doing health stuff, the next day you were going to be part of the COVID response and you were going to be a part of the team. That meant

that our taiao team would start to deliver a whole lot of kai and the next day we were all the same. The day before COVID we had all these flash structures. I'm telling you with the best teams, strategies and every other bloody thing. The next day we were flat, we're going to work, work ourselves like how I would think about mobilising the marae for a tangi.

PARTICIPANT 1

What is whakapapa to you? And how does it affect you in your mahi?

RANGIMARIE
HUNIA

I think whakapapa to me is all about our connections to one another. And whakapapa to me is also a practice. I can't de-emphasise the fact that whakapapa is around how you connect to and your responsibility for others. So when I think about the way that whakapapa influences me today and the mahi that I'm doing, it is also about making sure that you are creating a contribution of consequence for yourself, your family and those that you are a part of. And I would hope that you choose professions that enable you to do that. So there is not one thing that I kind of get involved in, that I can't see how it might help and advance others. I think also, it is an inherent responsibility for us to be able to create whakapapa and ensure that whakapapa is strong. I'm saying that as a woman who is dying to have grandkids. I am dying to have mokos and I've said to my own kids, you can recite as much whakapapa as you want, but you gotta create some. One has listened, the other has not. Because I think the reality is, unless we are doing that, I'm not sure how we are going to actually move the dial and be as great as we are. So I'm quite a believer. I'm a believer in being able to, everybody has a role to be able to do that. What I would also say about whakapapa, building on what Eru has talked about, a consequence of our colonial reality is that many of us have not been able to have access to that connection - to it and or to be able to grasp that - and then so I think it is a responsibility for us to be able to create Environments where our young ones can learn. I'm going on 50 and the conversations I was having when I was five and the conversations our mokopuna are now having at five are really different and that tells me that we have slowly and successfully started to build the knowledge of, and connection to whakapapa. I think the other part too is that it connects us not only to ourselves but it connects us to other indigenous people across the world and I think we've got a bit of work to be able to strengthen that. The practice of love, the doing it in a way that you were wanting to care for and ensure that they were safe. To me, you can have all the flash strategies and iwi world that you want, but at the end of the day if you can't get that fundamental, cos even if you put it against, even if you don't really appreciate all the different ways of doing it, they

knew the heart of it. I never got attacked, or I never got anything but real graciousness in how to do that. The other thing that I think my learning away from that is to go and find the people that are quiet and so I was really adamant that we would get into the hearts and minds of the ones that sat in silence. We found them and we would do the simple things for them. The amount of our families that didn't have power, the amount of families that were cooking over a gas bottle, there were no other gas bottles. You weren't allowed to go out and do the trading of those sorts of things people take for granted and we found them and the way when you could see a grandmother who would ring me. So I would get phone calls from the nans "My mokopuna is stuck in the middle of nowhere, I can't get there cos I can't lift the stuff" and we would jump in a car and in an hour and a half we would be turning up and even this day, four years later, I will see all of them and they will all remember, our babies remember. So my learning for that one is that our people will never forget those moments of kindness and we have to, as you're trying to do stuff. You gotta be nice to one another. Even if you disagree, the question is how do you actually go forward with kindness? And that seems to put us in good stead I think.

TAHUA PIHEMA

Last pātai, if you could produce a pandemic preparedness plan for whānau, what's in it?

RANGIMARIE
HUNIA

A phone number Tahua. I think it's a phone number and it's a face because actually you could say we're in a pandemic at the moment right? You could say that there is an uncertainty. You would say that there is an environment that is hostile. You would say that it's an environment that there's so much stuff going on. You don't know how to do it and what to do. So I don't think a COVID pack is a pack of widgets. I think you would hope that it's got a way, that's got a phone number on it. I got an email yesterday and it was bizarre. People now, they don't have a face to the kaupapa. They just have a random admin kind of thing at the other end. I think people need to connect with pandemics. There's uncertainty, with a pandemic. People don't know what the hell they're doing with a pandemic - everybody reacts differently. There creates a whole lot of the dynamic and the relationships go a bit wonky and so people just need to be on the ground. I think the other part for me too, and I know this when we were doing our stuff, I would ring up most CE's across the country, iwi CE's. There would be a heap of us online cos we were all struggling. There ain't no silver bullet, that's problem. If we had the perfect map, we would've probably done it in a heap of different ways. We only had 24 hours. See you gotta go with your gut and you gotta learn as you go and you gotta be able to know that at the end of the line there's somebody who's gonna give you a

“NGĀTI WHĀTUA KI ŌRĀKEI IS A LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT. I THINK TO MANY OTHERS IN THE SENSE THAT WE ARE A TRIBAL COMMUNITY IN THE BIGGEST CITY WITH THE BIGGEST POPULATION AND OUR PAKĀINGA ONLY SITS FIVE KILOMETRES AWAY FROM WHERE THE WORST CASES MIGHT EXIST.”

- RANGIMARIE HUNIA

PARTICIPANT 2

RANGIMARIE
HUNIA

hand and so I saw those relationships between ourselves, and you back yourselves. I didn't ring up the government and say I need you to save our people. We weren't going that way? I was looking up my mates down the road going - "have you got some of this, that and the other? Can you go and take this over there to that one?" Those are the ones I rang, those are the ones that I depended on, those are the ones who had my back and those are the ones who had our back. So make sure you got good relationships, make sure you're really clear about why you're doing things, make sure that you're actually gonna do it. That's the other thing with a pandemic pack. If you say you gonna do something, you best be doing it. Don't try and dream about it. You gotta put some skin in it. Koinā. Koinā tērā.

I know you did touch on this a little bit but as we would've seen a lot of whānau didn't want to get vaccinated and some of them felt that it wasn't around long enough for them to have confidence in it and it wasn't out long enough at all. It was brand new and so a lot of whānau didn't have any confidence in it, they didn't see any sort of like evidence based results. And so personally I got vaccinated but I felt that that kōrero was actually validated. But how do you handle the situations cos a lot of our whānau Māori were discriminated against or even cut off because they chose to make a decision for themselves?

Well that's from our position, so I had a team of 170 and I made the decision that every single person in that organisation, if you wanted to be employed in there, you had to be vaccinated, that was my view. The reason why I had chosen that and our board had supported that was because they were on the front line. They were taking boxes into other people's houses and as I said, our populations a little bit different cos we're right in front of it. If it was gonna spread all those different versions of it our lot were gonna probably get it first cos we were mostly here and so that was the call we made. What I will say to you is that I met with every single one of them and there was only a handful of them. There was only half a dozen out of 170 that said we're not gonna be vaccinated and I said that's fine. But you know what they said to me, they said to me, but we understand what you're trying to do. We support what you're trying to do and when this is finished do you think I can come back? I said you go hard. So I think that part there is about understanding your position and being really tūturu to that cos this wasn't about not wanting to do it because you wanna do it, this is because actually you're walking to other people's houses and it came to the fore when we were only a week in and I just said a whole lot of people who didn't wanna be vaccinated. They had to go in the middle of Papakura and deliver some boxes to one of my aunties, and guess what Aunty's got Delta. They come out to me and they

say to me - "I'm unsafe" - I said you're on the front line, you gotta make a call. But we will be going out to that house every day and you just gotta figure it out for yourself but they never came back, this wasn't a dispute that we ended up having massive raru about. This was all about - this is where we're heading, this is why we're heading there - and they supported that. So I think that was our privilege. That's our privileged position. Understand that other people didn't have that and I think because we went that way, honestly, we just didn't have protests. When we turned up to kaupapa, no protest. When we turned up to kaupapa, no one getting angry. When we turned up to kaupapa, everybody smiling. Even if they were, even if they weren't. So that's what I think saved us. I can't talk about all the other employers. What I will also say is that there were people that we were working with like our version of essential services were people at supermarkets. So if you're stacking shelves, I don't know if you remember that, but you go to a supermarket, you got thousands of different people coming into your space every day and I remember our local one, which is in GI, just the fear. The fear that these people who are stacking those shelves every time somebody passed them, they didn't know whether or not they were gonna catch something or not and it's really interesting when you see that fear on people's faces. So I rung them up and said - "If you want to, you come down and we will look after you" - and they said to me - "Rangimarie, we're not allowed cos we're not considered to be essential". I said - "well, that's your version of the world, our version is different and so you wanna come, you just come." And cos that's when they said only this one who looks like this, this high, that wide only you can come and we just said, nah, or we go the other way and we'd say we're gonna turn up at five o'clock so you don't have to take off any mahi cos there's the other thing, people have to work. So we would go out to building sites and we would go out to warehouses, we'd go anywhere cos we did it privately and we did it in their space so they didn't have to take time off work cos it takes about three hours which actually three hours worth of income for a lot of people that means a lot. So we would go and do that and I think all of those sorts of actions help those people to make those choices but let's not forget some people didn't have a choice and so you just gotta make that choice easier for them to be able to access and cope with. Some of them too, we would have wives who were being attacked in their homes about making choices about stuff. So we would have to go and do secret squirrels where they were nervous about what was gonna happen. I get it, there's some stuff where those who had privilege to be able to get up and speak publicly, all good to you. But there was a whole heap that weren't and we would do those as well.

PARTICIPANT 3

RANGIMARIE
HUNIA

So I think we've got to be kind again on ourselves, understand that there's a raft of situations that go, but supporting people to do what they want, how they wanna do it at the fundamentals you gotta be able to do that in a pandemic.

Have you been able to identify where relationships personally for yourself in the whānau were strained in being that decision maker for your iwi and has it lasted or has it got in better?

Yeah that's such a good question. My quick response is marry a person from Teko and you'll be all good. Cos at the end of the day my husband was my backbone. My husband was the one that we had trailers full of kai. We had trailers full of blankets. We had trailers full of education resources and he was turning up to gang pads, he was turning up into some dodgy places with a smile to support a kaupapa. So I think that I was just so lucky. So I think you gotta have a good background, you gotta have good family to be able to do that. I think it was 24 hours a day, it didn't end, that was the interesting thing about that and it just kept giving, four years just kept grinding. But I don't think we've suffered, I think if anything we've just gotten really stronger with that. I think the kids, I got four kids between the age of 15 and 25. I think it was interesting for my kids. The big ones. The big ones, they see social media, they see all the stuff, all that misinformation, disinformation and get a bit wiriwiri about that sort of stuff. The way I solved that is I got them in the car with their father, I said wiriwiri that. Go in there and go and knock on doors, go to the marae, go and pack some food cos we had the marae cooking two and a half thousand meals a week and we were delivering them to all the kaumātua. So we would have them out and we went out as far as Wellsford. We'd go out and take kai to them and we'd go as far as Karaka. Go out there around the back of Drury and stuff and we would be taking kai and I tell you what, when you're in service to the kaupapa of others, all of a sudden you start being good in the house. So that kind of kept our lot OK.

PARTICIPANT 3

RANGIMARIE
HUNIA

What would be a key piece of advice for rangatahi between the ages of 12 to 24 that you could give as a decision maker about them being able to make a good decision regardless of what other people think of you?

For me, that's on the parents. It's on the parents. I don't put any pressure on our kids to be able to have to make hard crunchy decisions. I expect the hardest thing that these kids should have to do is ask and kōrero. I have no, absolutely none and I don't like it personally. So I keep saying to my own kids - "You're only a kid. Your biggest job is to make sure that you are open to being able to ask the right questions" - and frankly, until you're in your kind of twenty three and a half. You ask, you follow and you've got to

be able to. I think for them, there's too much pressure in my world. Maybe that's a Rangimarie world. I just don't prescribe to that. You gotta raise them. We've gotta raise them to be confident, to be able to ask questions to seek advice, to make mistakes, to be picked up and somebody is at the end of that part. Whereas, I think what's happening at the moment is that we say "The world's your oyster go out and make any decision you want." That's not mine, I know it's the way for others, it ain't in my book, because the thing is the kids, when they make mistakes, they're all good cos they know it's as long as they pick it up early and they learn from something like that. Yeah, is that a little bit too waffle for young people? I don't know.

PARTICIPANT 4

Pātai tāku, Kia ora my friend. Kia mōhio mai koutou, I was one of her 170 kaimahi that she delegated to attend to kaupapa during Covid. I was also one of those mums who was really crying about my kids, their struggles, respiratory issues. Just thinking about whakapapa and it's protection and just can't say enough about how you moved, how your team did it Rangimarie, yeah, she did most of the delivering, she had the most packing, thousands of things at a time, every day of the week. When we had other spaces and positions over in the West she was still supporting Māori organisations and kura over there as well. Even though Waipareira Trust was there, and so many others, in the Kaipara as well. But I guess one pātai I have for you Rangimarie is what was the hardest situation that you met during that Covid time, that had to do with Tamariki and their oranga? And what is your recommendation should we get hit with a pandemic of a similar situation? For all of us in the room, ok yeah me and you might be a bit kind of passed it by then, we might be on the phones ringing up to our mates and having gossip sessions. But, if a pandemic ever hit during this generation's time, what is your recommendation in those spaces of real hardship that really hit home and how would you deal with it?

RANGIMARIE
HUNIA

So I had, I'll do a story for that one. My cousin, he's in the Kaipara in the middle of nowhere. He lives in what we call whata. What's a whata? A cabin! He lives in a couple of cabins, he didn't have a washing machine. My nephew had got the hard one that Delta and his partner had got it and her parents, her mother had got it and her mother had died. So it was like it was the worst sort of viral infection and it was one of the worst cases actually. So it was one of the worst cases at that point. So this is about life and death. Life and death, and my cousin rings me he is the most blunt, rough, hedge teddy bear in the world and he said, "Cousin my boys gonna die and I don't know what to do. He won't listen, she won't listen, the kids are sick and I can't even wash our clothes." So it's not about if I get it, it's about when he's got heart problems, my cousin in his

mid fifties. The hardest thing was I said, "Alright, you get me on the phone on a video with that boy" and so my cousin, my nephew was only about 25 at that time and I say, "Darling, this is Aunty you got two choices right now? We are either gonna carry you out in an ambulance or we gonna put you in a coffin. You choose, and if you choose to live then Aunty will be there in an hour. I will help you and I will make sure that you are well." He could barely talk cos he couldn't move, "Oh, I'm alright Aunty" he said and so I said, again, "You make a call, you're not listening to mum and dad and if that call is the call I don't wanna hear, I'm gonna come there and I'm gonna grab you myself." So we picked him up in an hour and a half and he ended up in hospital next to his mother in-law who at the time when he was sick had passed away. I had to get the kids in front of running water, this is not it, the kids had no running water, they couldn't have a wash, they couldn't do their clothes. So we took them, we had some free houses, we managed to get some houses so I took one of those houses and we transferred them all cos he wanted to be close to his kids. "Aunty, my babies I got three babies." I said alright, I'm gonna take your kids and I said to my cousin, you give me the kids and you go into one house and then just by luck we managed to have another house. I said and when you get out of hospital cos you still gotta heal for a month. You go over there, was not more than 50 meters down the road, and you will get better down at that house but you will not go near those kids, I can't have those kids getting in a similar position to what you would wanna do. So when I think about that part, you just have to be really clear about what's important to you. Him living. His mokopuna's being close to it and I've never seen my cousins as fragile as they were. So I think that's probably one of the ones that I remember, which is why I don't get too caught up with the politics of stuff cos actually politics over here, life over here, what you gonna go to. I chose over there and they're beautiful, they're healthy, they're loving, they are up and ready to go and they are still with us. So I think that stuff was pretty cool. Darling, I think I'm done! No more questions but it's been a privilege.

TAHUA PIHEMA

Tēnei rā hoki te mihi atu ki te māreikura o Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei o Ngāti Whātua whānui, o Tāmaki Makaurau, tēnei te tūohu ki a koe, ki ō kōrero, ki ō whakaaro. ki ō mātauranga kua tohaina ki runga i te marea kua huihui mai nei, nei rā tētahi taonga iti noa nei nō ngā rangatahi ā - iwi e tuku ana i ngā whakaro o te aroha. Ka mutu te kaupapa i konei.

“... WE’RE GOING
TO WORK, WORKING
OURSELVES LIKE
HOW I WOULD THINK
ABOUT MOBILISING
THE MARAE FOR
A TANGI.”

- RANGIMARIE HUNIA

TRANSCRIPT TWO

FORMAL WĀNANGA TRANSCRIPTS - NGĀ KŌRERO Ā TE IWI

Ihaperā Paniora

LOCATION	Waipapa Marae, 16 Wynyard Street, Auckland 1010
DATE	28 September 2024
START TIME	9am
END TIME	3pm
TRANSCRIBER	Paris Matatahi
REVIEWER	Hana Toroa

Important Notice as to the Basis of Disclosure of this Information

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IHAPERĀ PANIORA I grew with my four brothers and sisters to a solo mum on the domestic purposes benefit. We grew up in a whare that my mum was able to get through a scheme with the government at the time when it was a scheme to help Māori families to be able to get into a whare. Now I think that the fact that we had a whare meant that we had a stable up bringing, I mean we were like poor growing up but we didn't feel poor, we were very happy. We had everything we needed; love, support, kai. My mum was a very strong believer of education because education was taken away from them so she came through her schooling out in a place called Ahi Kiwi, out in Waipoua forest where Tāne Mahuta is. My mum was first born about 10 kilometers from Tāne Mahuta as were all of their 13 brothers and sisters. They had like muscle shells for their spoon, the floor of their kāinga was dirt. The Native schools Act was also around at the time and that act said that if you're a Māori kid, and you went to school, you weren't allowed to speak Te Reo Māori. They were belted for it, they were caned for it and they went to the principal's office if they were caught speaking it. So that was the sort of up bringing that my mum had and it was part of her colonised up bringing and she still has those colonised views to this day and that's something that I have to accept from her. She has seen kōrero from you all as our next generation and it's really beautiful. I thank you Joe for inviting me here today as well as your girl. I suppose I'll just touch on where I grew up and how did I get to be standing here in front of you all today? - So I grew up in a little place called Dargaville. According to our Pāpā, he signed He Whakaputanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. He went up north, there's a place in Kaitiāia called Te Pā ā Parore. He was up there educating whānau on the rights that we had under He Whakaputanga, He had seen pain and suffering like no other and he didn't want that for us, he didn't want that for the people. So he said, "I will give you this whenua in exchange for jobs for my people" and we're still there to this day. So we only think, "oh well you gave away the land but why" - There's lots of other things that went on in the past. Yeah sorry, I kind of went off on a little tangent there. Do we have boujee kai? (at Council) Well no, because where the councils used to have lots of kai and then we decide if our ratepayers have to suffer and not get all of the things that they used to get, then we should provide our own food when we have hui and that's how it went.

WHĀNAU
PARTICIPANT 1
IHAPERĀ PANIORA
PERSON 2

Do you have to take a plate to Council?
I take me a plate. I don't know about those other ones.
Kia ora mo tō kōrero. My pātai is, do think that the Council that are there, the Mayor? Do you believe that they are representatives? Obviously the voting uptake for local elections is like really bad. Do you think that they are representative of that 85% of Pākehā in

Kaipara? Or do you think that most Pākehā in Kaipara are actually, oh well 75% of most Pākehā in Kaipara are actually supportive of our Māori voters?

IHAPER PANIORA

The short and the long answer, the short answer is no, they are not representative. The long answer is people don't quite understand that there's actually two towns within Kaipara that are large, so you've got Dargaville on the West and Mangawhai on the East. Mangawhai, the way that I describe them is they're cashed up millionaires from Auckland, so there's the retirees that have lived their lives in Auckland and they've sold up and then moved to these beautiful houses in Mangawhai. And so we're polar opposite. Our everything, our whakaaro and everything. Our Pākehā in Dargaville like they say to me, "oh, keep going, keep going, he's a honkey, this and that." and they just don't. He's very much not representative of even our community. We've all lived in harmony with one another, back to when we had the Dalmatians that came to build a Kauri swamp. So the diggers, the Dalmatians and the farmers we've all got along pretty well, up until now. He's just come along with his democracy Northland Hobson's pledge views. So they're all connected to Hobson's pledge and basically their whakaaro is that I don't know if you've heard of ethnocide, so you've probably heard a lot about genocide with what's happening with our brothers and sisters in Palestine, but there's another way to kill a people and it's through like cleansing the culture, you kill them through the term is "ethnocide" and what you're really trying to say is you're trying stamp out the Māori identity in the Kaipara from existence and just treat us as Indian, Asian, Māori and into that category. However we know that we're tangata whenua, but if we wanna put on the Pākehā whakaaro hat we're gonna say well we signed an international contract with England, Māori as a state, New Zealand as a state signed and that's why we have these rights because that wasn't the deal. When you came to this country and your ancestors signed that agreement for their descendants to be able to come and yeah, have those same privileges as well, benefits.

IHAPER PANIORA

You cannot take it personally. I've had so many attacks, they have called me all sorts of things. They've put a code of conduct on me that cost the Council \$30,000. The investigators have thrown it out because they threw all of these things at me and they don't understand, like my whakapapa I come from, like one of our chiefs that fought Ngāpuhi and held the line. It's in my whakapapa, you come at me and I'll come out swinging. I represent my tūpuna because the thing is that my tūpuna gave the piece Te Tunatahi to the coloniser and he's sometimes called a kūpapa. Then I can do that without getting a code of conduct on me and I only just

returned ā tinana (physically) to the meetings because I had another whawhai on my hands with them taking away our funding for Te Uri o Hau and Te Rōroa in Ōroko for them to be able to have the capacity to engage in resource management decisions for our whenua. Our people of the Kaipara and myself have one more year to get our whānau enrolled and get them voting so we can vote these people out because of the things that they say. I feel like the only reason that I'm able to not just fly off the handle is because I have trained for five years at this wānanga, especially in law and then I practice. I hate to say it because I'm sitting in that space that they're not designed for us, they're designed in the way that they are operating now like they're not broken that's what they were designed to do.

IHAPER PANIORA

And now along comes Pera like, oh my gosh I just got Māori ward Councilor, I've got all these lofty ideas I wanna create more social housing and more affordable housing for our whānau and I wanna help with Te taiao and then I got in there amongst it all and all I am gonna say "the KKK". - and it was to forget all my ideas and aspirations that I have, I'm fighting for all the things that our tupuna and my nanny's and koro's have spent their whole lives getting us to this point. So it's a lot of whawhai but it's very difficult, so the day of the disestablishment of the Māori ward I couldn't physically be near them, their wairua.

JOE PIHEMA

A ground zero of this whole Māori Ward kaupapa is going around the motu like wild fire at the moment and can I just say, I don't know what life is like in the room that you're in at the moment, being in a council that is actually acknowledged as being a very toxic, racist place to be, and so I just want to mihi to you. And so my question is, what do you do? Before you walk into a meeting, what is your meeting preparation?

IHAPER PANIORA

The one thing that I just wanted to say about why it's important to vote is because every single person's vote counts. We really think that it doesn't but it really does. Especially for getting the right person to represent us. These Māori wards - it's really important we also have the right people representing us. That's just my little kōrero and before we get into the groups to share our whakaaro. Does anyone have any pātai?

JOE PIHEMA

I've got a pātai, I'll just open up, I know there's a few pātai and maybe some of you aren't aware. There's a major issue at the moment regarding all of the kaunihera councils around the country voting on whether they maintain and hold on to the Māori ward or whether they get rid of it. Now that's happened around the country. I might be wrong but I think there are only two Councils in the whole country that voted to get rid of them.

IHAPER PANIORA Well there was only one, the other wasn't even enacted, it was just this seat that I sit in.

JOE PIHEMA: So there's only one and it's Kaipara!

HUIA PIHEMA If I can just comment to that, Upper Hutt did oppose! They went in to vote against because they did not want to be clumped in with your Council. They were so racist to Upper Hutt whānau.

IHAPER PANIORA What I'm gonna do with you all is to get you into three groups and you're going to come up with what we call a strategy. Does everyone know what a strategy is? It's like an action plan, as it's so important they've identified as being Māori because you can whakapapa Māori and if you have a look at 25 year olds and younger so our rangatahi, nearly one in three are Māori. So writing is on the wall that forget the times where we were so oppressed, we didn't have a voice, we weren't able to sit in these seats and positions of power and influence to be able to kōrero and to be able to represent our people for one of those times, because as one of our bros talks about Apirana Ngata, his whakaaro was grasp the tools of the Pākehā so that we can move our people into the future. He took away my ability to karakia before and after council meetings, he's taken te reo out of documents, removing all of the rights of our iwi and our hapū to be able to have a say in Te taiao matters. I had a look in one of the old suitcases that I got from my mum's whare because she's got a whole lot of other photographs and I wanna start digitising them and then giving them back out to the different whānau members that are within those photographs because I think that that's important. I wanted to hand this around and it's actually part of Eru's kōrero that he had this morning, this is my mum's birth certificate, so she was born in Ahi Kiwi which is just near Tane Mahuta and this is my nanny and my papa, and they used to back in the day say where you were born, they used to say what your iwi or your tribals were on your birth certificate and they used to say your āhukatanga or the description of who you were. And so when my nanny was born, a hundred years ago, when my kōrero was born over a hundred years ago, they were both registered on the first list of marriages as Ngāti Whātua. My mum wasn't registered at Ngāti Whātua because they have removed that description from the birth certificate. Both in the āhukatanga, in the description of both my nanny and papa's birth certificates, they were described as Māori of full blood. So that makes my mum a Māori of full blood.

IHAPER PANIORA But you would hear one of the other myths from Eru's kōrero this morning, was what were the ways in which the coloniser tried to take our right as tangata whenua away from us and that was "Oh there's no full blooded Māori left anymore". The Mayor that I work with said to me, oh well how Māori are you? Because if Māori

don't exist, then there's no other party on the other side of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. So that's just to show you that there's so many different myths in ways in which they've used different tools, whether it be the ACT like the Tohunga suppression Act or the Native Schools Act or percentage of fund, if you identify Māori, kei te pai. Whether it's 1% or 100%. But the other way that they used that myth was "Oh there's no more Māori, you're more British than you are Māori, therefore you fall under the British side of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi". So you heard from Eru this morning about those documents but they are just pieces of paper, but they were a contract between two peoples - Māori and the British. They say that we get special privileges and benefits today and it's racist and why do we get this and why do we get that? They got the ability to come here and live here and all we were asking was "please don't destroy our taiao, please don't destroy our moana, please don't destroy our wai, please don't destroy our maunga with all of your development and your different things and can we also be treated equally as British subjects." So mum she was like "they will lock you up", I'm like mum - "it's not like it was anymore". We have the power to speak where we didn't have that power before." So mum said - "You could do whatever you want, you can go to parties, you could do whatever you want as long as you come home to study and you go to school" and there were no questions asked from her. I graduated from this university as well, there are so many memories of her at Waipapa for some of the Ngā Tauira Māori students, out under the wharekai over there, whanaungatanga and what not, and I came out of university with a law degree and an arts degree, which I majored in political science and Māori studies. Now at the time the joke was "what job do you get out of an arts degree?" Because we didn't know, I graduated and I still didn't know and that's no takahī on anyone who wants to go away and get that but I couldn't see a pathway for that particular tohu that I got, until I became a Māori ward councillor and it was then all of the different education that I had received, I had been practicing law for eight years when I became a Māori ward Councillor and so I had all of these skills and tools, the experience to be able to actually go quite head to head with the colonial system and that is why they don't want us sit in these seats. So there's 10 Councillors around the table at Kaipara District Council and I'm only one of them! And it's all the voting system so you have to have six votes to be able to get anything across the line. I'm only one voice but they don't want it and when I say they, I'm talking about people who have been educated and have all of their experiences under the colonisers mentality and way of thinking, while Māori shouldn't have a say, they shouldn't have a voice, they shouldn't even have a chair and we also have another name that was given to which is Takiwira.

TRANSCRIPT THREE

FORMAL WĀNANGA TRANSCRIPTS - NGĀ KŌRERO Ā TE IWI

Eru Kapa-Kingi

LOCATION	Waipapa Marae, 16 Wynyard Street, Auckland 1010
DATE	28 September 2024
START TIME	9am
END TIME	3pm
TRANSCRIBER	Paris Matatahi
REVIEWER	Hana Toroa

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ERU KAPA-KINGI

Some say that Moriori got here before our Tūpuna, they gave whakapapa from the other side of the world and they got here before our tūpuna. Not long after our tūpuna came here and slayed all of them and ate all of them. That can't be true cause they're still alive and well today nē, e mōhio ana tātou Ngāti Moriori e ora ana. They are tangata whenua of their islands of Wharekauri, they sailed at the same time our Tūpuna did from Hawaiki and they came to this part of the world, but they went straight to their islands and our Tūpuna came on to the mainland. Their tangata whenua of their lands, they never came on to Te Ika-a Māui and that's why they have a little bit of a different reo to ours, very similar but some parts are quite different and slightly different tikanga as well. Very peaceful people. Hoi anō, there's that kōrero and he teka tērā nē? So why do you think that story exists? Why do you think people tell that story?

PARTICIPANT 1

It's very handy as a tool for the coloniser to come through and say oh they did it first, so it's ok that we done it.

ERU KAPA-KINGI

That's exactly it. It's a way for the coloniser to make themselves feel better and to justify what they've done to our people. Engari nui te teka i roto i tēra kōrero. Other teka is that our tūpuna got here by accident. Our tūpuna were the greatest navigators to ever live, e hoa mā, ever. If you live in the Pacific Ocean, that's the biggest ocean in the world, the only way you can survive as a people is if you are exceptionally good at sailing a waka. That was our tūpuna and that's why we're the first humans to come here a thousand years before any other people's. Again, that's teka to take away our Mana and to diminish our Mana and to try and convince the Rangatira that lives in us in our mind that we're not Rangatira, these are all teka e hoa mā. These are all threats to our whakapapa and our attempts to protect it as well. Ka pai. So then that's where I guess the tātai starts, our tūpuna come here and they live here for 20 generations. Undisturbed, there's no other Ariki, there's no other Rangatira. We're living here and we're living our best Māori lives for ages before any colonisers arrived. Coming back to the original navigators, what are some names of those Tūpuna that came here from Hawaiki first? Whakataupōtiki Āe, Paikea, Tamateārikinui, ka pai. Āe, ēnei ingoa katoa. So these Āriki when they came on to shore, wherever they landed. Were they Māori? ki ana tētahi kao, who reckons nah they weren't? Ka pai, who reckons they were Māori? Who's too scared to answer the question? Ka pai, māku e kī, ēnei Ariki, Rangatira, Kupe mā rā, Whakataupōtiki mā. They weren't Māori like you and I are Māori today. So they come from Hawaiki, they land in Aotearoa and they've entered into this whole new world, ka pai. What's different about Aotearoa if you think about the places our relations across the Pacific live? Cold ka pai,

the land mass it's huge, probably way more wetlands. Can coconuts grow here? no, ka pai. The climate, the weather, the type of kai that grows here, the animals running on the whenua, the birds flying in the sky, all of those things were just completely different to what was in the world that our tūpuna came from in Hawaiki. So they came here and they had to change how they lived to survive and to adjust to this new whenua. And then changing how they lived they also changed how they spoke, they changed some of their rules, their tikanga and across maybe two to four generations, they had basically been reborn into a new type of people. So that's when Kupe's people went from being Hawaiki people to transforming into what we call now, Māori people. That's important for us to know, that's really important and this isn't to takahi i te mana o Kupe mā. He tūpuna rātou nō tātou. However the importance of that is in the kupu tangata whenua. So tangata means, person and whenua means Land. So when we say we're tangata whenua, we're not saying, we like the land or that the land's cool. No, we're saying we're literally born from it. So this land made us who we are as a people. It's our identity, our way of thinking, our way of dreaming, believing all of those things came from this land and couldn't have come from anywhere else. Ko ngā kōrero mo Tumutumu whenua, nē? Tino hāngai ki tērā kōrero, ngā kōrero ā Tūhoe mō te kohu. Tino hāngai ki tērā kōrero. So it's important for us to know the history, the whakapapa behind the term tangata whenua. That's how deep it runs and so becoming tangata whenua happened over four generations and we maintain that for 20 generations. That's where our mana as tangata whenua comes from, no piece of paper can give that to us and no piece of paper can take that away. So again, protecting that whakapapa is how we protect the truth in our minds that we are tangata whenua. That's the only way a truth can survive is in the hearts and minds of people and we are those people e hoa mā. Nō reira, koia tēnā ko taku kaupapa. So our tūpuna here undisturbed and this Pākehā fullah from Europe stumbles his way across the Pacific Ocean and ends up here in Aotearoa. What was his name?

PARTICIPANT 2
ERU KAPA-KINGI

Captain Cook.

Captain Cook, ka pai. So the thing with Cook, it's crack up eh? Cause the coloniser will say that we got here by accident to make themselves feel better cause they were useless at sailing. However Cook actually got here, but not on his own there was a fellow who helped him Ko Tūpaea tōnā ingoa. Tūpaea was our relation from Tahiti and without Tūpaea there's no way Cook could've found his way here because this is the hardest place to sail to in the whole world. So he got here with Tūpaea's help and that's when the world

of our tūpuna, I guess collided with the world of Europe and the outside world and things started to shift a little bit and at that same time our tūpuna were going the other way, going to New York, San Francisco, London, Aussie and it was easy, too easy for our tūpuna cause they were mean at sailing. So they were going to see the taonga of the world and to bring those taonga back home for their people, hei orange mo te iwi kāinga. So when our tūpuna were going around the world and when the world was coming to us they started to learn about different peoples and their different tikanga. So one of the stories I always tell is about my tupuna of Ngāpuhi Te Pahi, who went to London in 1791. Tēnei Māori karore ana i Rānana and he buzzed out when he got there, because for the first time in his whole life he saw poverty, he saw people that were homeless, eating out of rubbish bins and he was like "He aha tēnei tikanga?" And at the same time he saw people living in castles who were rich, had heaps of kai and they called themselves Kings and Queens, leaders of their people and Te Pahi's looking around and said "e hoa, he aha wēnei tikanga?" - Why do you reckon Te Pahi buzzed out when he saw that?

WHĀNAU
PARTICIPANT 1
ERU KAPA-KINGI

Because our people tried to give everyone enough, or just have enough.

Tika bro. That's it, because in our world, in our rangatira verse, we measure rangatiratanga by the strength of a person to look after their people. All of their people, to feed their people, to house their people and to make sure e ora ana rātou. So Te Pahi, who would've been thinking, "e hoa, e kī ana koutou he rangatira koutou" - but your people are starving. What kinda rangatira does that? And Te Pahi's just one example, there are heaps of tupuna who had these same reactions, which proves my point before that the world our tupuna lived in before the coloniser got here was beautiful. There was plenty of kai, plenty of whenua, thriving e hoa mā. The story that was told is that our tupuna were savages and we almost had made ourselves extinct and that the coloniser saved us. E hoa, he teka tērā kōrero. There's an insight into the magic of te hinengaro Māori, te whakaaro Māori, te tikanga Māori. Eventually our tupuna started to grow wary around these Pākehā settlers that were coming into Aotearoa. They had a hui about it in Whangaroa in 1827. Our tupuna Hongi called a hui. When Hongi was in Aussie, our tangata whenua o Australia, te iwi moemoeā, they were warning Hongi and saying to him "e hoa, those Pākehā settlers be wary of them". And so Hongi he knew all these settlers have intentions to do bad to us and to our whenua. Hongi called a hui in 1827 and said we need to sort out these settlers. They are stealing our land, te mea, te mea. The year 1831, they write a letter to the King of England

saying come and sort your people out. 1835, He Whakaputanga is born. So what is He Whakaputanga? It is our Declaration of sovereignty. Declaration of independence is the more commonly used phrase, I prefer declaration of sovereignty its just heartier and because we were never depending on anyone before. So, Declaration of Sovereignty. It's in the name, It's real simple. What does puta mean? (to come out). So puta is to be out in the open and if whakaputa is to put out in the open, makes it a doing word. The "Nga" makes it a thing. So whakaputanga, putting something out into the open. What were our tupuna putting out into the open?

PARTICIPANT 1
ERU KAPA-KINGI

Our land is ours, not yours!
Perfect bro. I'm the boss of this place and the whenua also is the boss. So ko mātou ngā rangatira, ko te whenua he rangatira. So we are the boss here and so is the land. Our tupuna were saying this to the whole universe. So the universe didn't get it twisted. "E wātea ana tēnei whenua" - and so again this paper didn't create that mana. It just put it in a form that the world could understand and it was helpful to our tupuna to do that and they were deliberate in doing that. They did it for a reason because they thought, he whai take tēnei. So they did that in 1835 and then five years later Te Tiriti o Waitangi really just added another tikanga and said "I'm still the rangatira" - But I'm gonna let your people live here and govern themselves, control themselves. Why? Because they have been playing up since they came here and we're talking about, iwi haurangi, patu tangata, patu wahine, tāhae whenua, ērā mea katoa. Kororāreka or Russell as Pākehā's call it now, that was the capital of Aotearoa for one time of New Zealand and that was known as the hellhole of the Pacific. It was just all these Pākehā settlers and sailors. They were chasing whales and seals, they're just playing up, tikanga kore tērā iwi. So that's what Te Tiriti was meant to do. That was the problem Te Tiriti was meant to fix and that's what happened in 1840. However the Queen of England relied instead on these words in an English draft which said that our tupuna gave away all their mana to the Queen of England for free and at that time there were 80 thousand Māori living in Aotearoa and 2 thousand Pākehā so that's forty to one. If there was a rugby game of 40 people vs one person who do you think would win that. So in that game, if our tupuna just gave up and gave away all their mana, do you reckon that's true? Kāhore. It's not true but that teka has lived a very long life. It's still living today and that teka is the only thing that holds up this Government. Hoi anō, ka nui pea ērā kōrero mo te whakapapa. When I look at this whakapapa protection kaupapa, I think of a pā because that's how our tupuna protected, their way of living was using a pā. There are two functions of a pā.

Ko te pā kairiri. Kairiri is e karo ana you're warding off, the bad stuff. Then there's a pā whakaora, but then there's a pā that makes you well and makes you thrive. So that's kind of the two functions of a pā. I think about whakapapa, nōku ēnei whakaaro, I think it's three, One of the three, particularly in this context. Nā, tuatahi, ko wai ōna hoariri? Tuatahi, ko te kūare. So ignorance is massive, not knowing is a massive threat to our whakapapa. Ignorance in Pākehā but actually more so ignorance of tātou, nē? Te iwi Māori, not knowing our truth. Nā, tuarua ko te teka, te teka, misinformation, puruheti, lies, those are also massive threats to our whakapapa and then the last one, ki au, ko te wehewehe, division. Division also causes and poses huge threats to our mana, to our whakapapa as a people and that aligns with the need for kotahitanga, but I would also say kotahitanga doesn't mean ōritetanga. Kotahitanga doesn't mean everyone has to look and sound and think the same. No, that's actually what colonisation does. It means that everyone should just be converging and going in the same direction, but in different waka, pai ana tērā. Ki au, that's just my whakaaro. If those are the enemies or the threats to our whakapapa, then taku pātai ki a koutou, hei wānanga, "what's our best way of protecting against those threats, addressing those threats and then te whakaora i a tātou" and then, "how do we look inward to empower and to liberate ourselves and this whole kaupapa of whakapapa protection". Mārama ana tērā? Ka pai. Ka nui pea aku pahupahu i konei, ka tukua he wā ki a koutou ki te āta whakaaro. If you're not into Tiriti education, think about why and how you could get into it. If you hear misinformation, what's an effective way you think you could like neutralise that? And then how to bring us together on the same kaupapa. Ka pai, we'll break it up so we'll go roopū tahi i konei. Rōpū rua i waenganui, rōpū toru i tēnei taha. So think about what's the best ways to educate ourselves as a people on all of this stuff? Waenganui, how to address misinformation, so all the teka that you see on your phone or anywhere. What do you reckon is a mean way to protect against that and then tēnei taha mutunga, unifying, how we bring ourselves together and address wehewehe. He nui ēnei pātai, hoinō, kia kaha.

Kua mutu

TIROHIA NGĀ WĀNANGA

Access Wānanga images, videos
& voice recordings below:

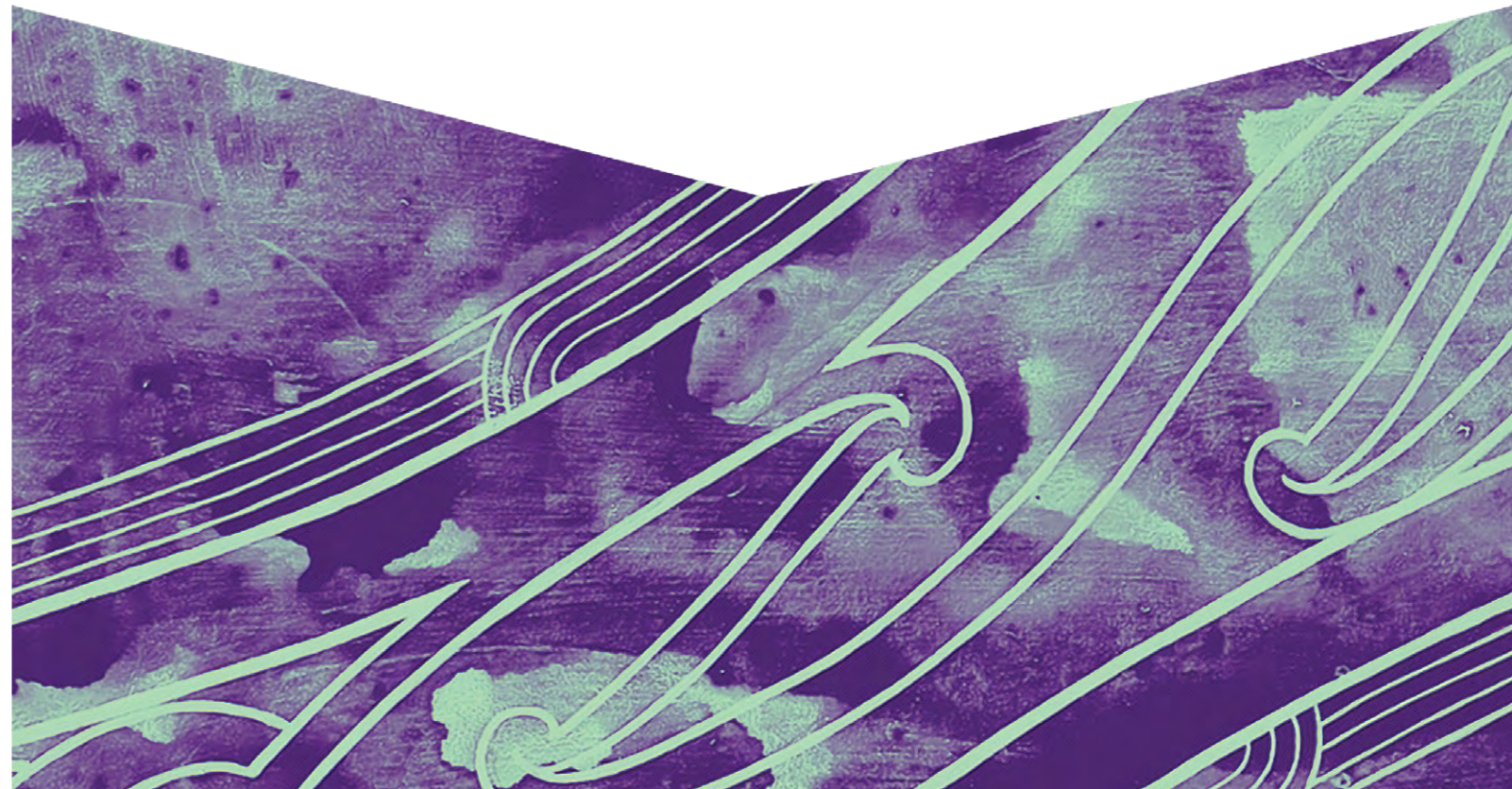


Visit www.whitikiwhakatika.com for more
information on the wānanga that took place.

TE PŌ

Tātari ā Kōrero

WHITI 5





TE PŌ

Once the tuna is captured in the hīnaki, they are harvested (te hao). This is a continuation of the phase of bringing together and sourcing knowledge.

Te Pō (the long night) – ngā tuituinga e hono ai te ora ki te taiao e ora nei ia. The code of life in which the conceptualised creation seeks to familiarise the space it occupies. This is where the sought-out knowledge begins to take shape and arise.

This is a continuation of the phase of bringing together and sourcing knowledge.

Ngā Wawata Haere Ake Nei

Whiitiki Whakatika aims to create a publication that can be handed down through generations as both a memory and a taonga, capturing how our people led pandemic responses not only during COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, but also historically through time, reflecting the inter-generational resilience as a people.

Guided by the Whiitiki Whakatika methodology, we want to honour the commitment of this kaupapa and wānanga by sharing mātauranga in ways that strengthen the future of Tūrangi in times of pandemics and contribute to the wellbeing of the nation. Where partnerships are acknowledged, and knowledge is returned, we will seek your approval before sharing this mātauranga more widely to help inform a national response.

REGIONAL ANALYSIS:

TĀMAKI MAKAURAU

Summary of kōrero and key themes from Rangimarie Hunia, Eru Kapa-Kingi and Ihapera Paniora

Rangimarie Hunia (former CEO of Ngāti Whātua Whai Māia, the tribal social arm of Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Trust) begins her kōrero by describing *whakapapa* as *a practice of connection and responsibility*. To her, the COVID-19 response of Ngāti Whātua ki Ōrākei was guided by the underlying principle that, “we love our whānau. We will look after our whānau and we will do that, however, wherever, whenever and with whoever.” As she acknowledges here, *aroha* was the key motivator for the responsible behaviour of the Trust and its kaimahi in order to help whānau in need. Rangimarie highlighted the reality for Ngāti Whātua ki Ōrākei was different from other iwi regions because their papakāinga sat just five kilometres from where Auckland’s worst COVID-19 cases would emerge. The immediacy of need and the scale and intensity of *manaakitanga* was elevated from the outset of the pandemic.

Rangimarie described that with just 24 hours’ notice before a nationwide lockdown, she decided that the 170 kaimahi across various roles within the organisation – whether they were chief executives, managers, planners or health workers – would all be on equal footing as part the COVID-19 response team:

“We got told that they were going to close down. We had 170 staff which were across a whole lot of things and we had to figure out what we were going to do. So essentially what we decided is the day before, we would stand up a response, and I didn’t care if you’re a chief executive, you’re a big flash

manager, if you were working, a planner, or you were doing health stuff, the next day you were going to be part of the COVID-19 response and you were going to be a part of the team. That meant that we were having our taiao team start to deliver a whole lot of kai. So basically, the next day we were all the same. The day before COVID-19, we had all these flash structures. I’m telling you, we had the best teams, you know, strategies and every other bloody thing. The next day we were flat, we’re going to work ourselves like how I would think about mobilising for marae for a tangi. Everybody’s got a role, there’s work enough for everybody, find your lane, do it well and make sure you look after everybody at a tangi, the key thing that we must do is manaaki. Manaaki and aroha. And so we took that idea and we did it.”

This organisational transformation, or more specifically the flattening of the hierarchical structures within Whai Māia, was a deliberate act of reconfiguring the kaimahi team into a model akin to a marae preparing for a tangihanga. In this context, every kaimahi holds a role and contributes collectively to a shared purpose. That purpose being to manaaki and have aroha for others through crisis. The shift reflects a kaupapa Māori approach to rangatira leadership and mahi taahi, which focuses on relational responsibility and caretaking. As Rangimarie asserts, leaders must, “...move mountains to be able to remove the noise to get the outcome that they [whānau] deserve.”

The government’s COVID-19 *vaccine mandate* created a complex ethical scenario for some kaimahi within the organisation who were *hesitant* and refused it on personal or philosophical grounds. Rangimarie acknowledged that “if you wanted to be employed there, you had to be vaccinated [against COVID-19].”. She goes on to describe a hui with those kaimahi who objected. She acknowledged their concerns with *empathy* and *respect*. Those who declined the vaccine were not made to feel whakamā. Instead, they were given space to voice their concerns and maintain their dignity. Rangimarie recalled one kōrero interaction where a kaimahi said, “I absolutely disagree with the mandate... but if you need a hand, I best be [sic] at the end of that phone call... We understand what you’re trying to do. We support what you’re trying to do. And when this is finished, do you think I can come back?”

In solidarity with this kaimahi, and from a place of understanding rather than judgement, Rangimarie responded by saying, “You go hard”. Her approach demonstrated aroha and manaakitanga in that moment. This is shown again by the above-mentioned statement, “Protecting your whakapapa is also about making sure that aroha is at the centre of your behaviour... you will move mountains to be able to remove the noise to get the outcome that they deserve.”

Rangimarie frames the pandemic response of Ngāti Whātua ki Ōrākei as one shaped by aroha and manaakitanga. The wellbeing of whānau is the central pou that guided decision-making.

In terms of future preparedness strategies, she insists that it must be based in human connection – “a phone number and a face.” This approach places whanaungatanga relationships and trust at the centre of resilience.

She also champions the importance of iwi backing themselves and asserting their rangatiratanga and mana motuhake. As she commented, “Don’t ring up the government and say, ‘I need you to save our people’... ring your mates... I didn’t ring up the government asking for help. We weren’t going that way. I was calling my mates down the road: ‘Oi, have you got some of this, that, and the other? Can you take it over there to that one?’ Those were the ones I rang. Those were the ones I depended on. They had my back...”. Such kōrero brings us back to the basics. In times of crisis, it is the people and quality of the relationships between them that make the most difference.

Eru Kapa-Kingi begins his kōrero by providing a counter narrative and historical correction of the common and false narrative that claims that Moriori arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand before Māori navigators and were subsequently conquered. Eru firmly rejects this version of history as a teka which is used by some dis-informers to justify colonisation and diminish Māori rangatiratanga. He points out that Moriori are still alive today and are the tangata whenua of Rēkohu/Wharekauri (the Chatham Islands). He goes on to explain that both Moriori and Māori sailed from Hawaiki around the same time, but Moriori settled on Wharekauri while Māori settled on the Te Ika-a-Māui. From this kōrero, Eru sets the tone for a wider reflection of key segments of Aotearoa New Zealand’s history from a decolonial standpoint.

Eru champions the exceptional navigational abilities of early Polynesian navigators who travelled the vastness of Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa to reach Aotearoa. Again, this counters the colonial narrative that our tūpuna arrived here by accident. Over time they settled here and adapted to the new climate and landscape. This environmental adaption shaped their language, their tikanga, their values and their worldview - which gave rise to a distinct identity – what we know as tangata whenua and Māori today. This identity anchors Māori to Aotearoa and Eru argues that it is essential for tangata whenua to know and maintain the whakapapa of

this history to continue asserting mana motuhake, tino rangatiratanga, and to resist disinformation that attempts to say otherwise.

Eru highlights the central role of the Tahitian master navigator and rangatira Tupaia in guiding Captain James Cook to Aotearoa. This leads into the fact that Polynesians were skilled navigators and active participants in trans-pacific voyaging and trade well before the arrival of Europeans and colonisation. He describes his tūpuna, Te Pahi, who travelled to England in 1791 and was shocked at the poverty and inequality he saw within Georgian era society. In so doing, Eru invites the audience to be critical of a society whose leadership and tikanga allow such disparities to exist where the wellbeing of an elite few is maintained at the expense of many.

Eru then contrasts the situation in England at that time with pre-colonial Māori society which was abundant and thriving under rangatira leadership – a model that is *measured* by one’s ability to *manaaki* their *people* and to *ensure kaitiakitanga* of *resources*. Such kōrero counters the myth of Māori as savages and celebrates *Mātauranga Māori* as a *source of insight* and *resilience*.

This wellspring of ideas and beliefs are what lead to the birth of He Whakaputanga – the Declaration of Independence in 1835, which was a *declaration of hapū sovereignty*. In pre-colonial Aotearoa, sovereignty resided in the relationship between tangata and the whenua to which they related. He Whakaputanga and later Te Tiriti o Waitangi of 1840 did not create this authority; these documents were expressions of it. Eru then speaks to the impact of the English version of the Treaty of Waitangi on Māori sovereignty, which claimed the rangatira who signed it were ceding their sovereignty to the Crown. He identifies this inconsistent translation as yet another teka that underpinned colonial governance at the time and continues to shape the practices and policies of successive governments today.

His kōrero then shifts to the metaphor of pā as a model for *protecting whakapapa* – one that reflects a multi-layered nature including historical, political, cultural, and spiritual dimensions and the foundations of Māori identity. The first is pā kairiri (to ward off threats, a defensive pā) and the second is pā whakaora (to nurture wellbeing, a pā of healing). Using this metaphor, Eru calls on Māori to defend whakapapa in all its dimensions and to confront and correct the disinformation that threatens its integrity as well as restore what has been muddied. Eru then outlines three key enemies or threats to whakapapa, namely *kūaretanga* – ignorance, especially among Māori. “Not knowing our truth” makes us vulnerable; *teka* – disinformation, misinformation and lies can distort our trust and only serve to undermine mana; and *wehewehe* – division which can

weaken kotahitanga . On kotahitanga , Eru explains that Māori must unify under this kaupapa not in sameness but rather through *a shared responsibility to resist disinformation and misinformation in all its forms.*

Ihapera Paniora begins her kōrero by describing her upbringing in Te Tai Tokerau near Waipoua Forest. She reflected on the upbringing of her mother under the New Zealand Government’s assimilation policies and the Native Schools Act where Māori children were punished for speaking Te Reo Māori. These policies fractured the transmission of Te Reo Māori, shaped the internalised beliefs of those who grew up under them, and often embedded feelings of whakamā and disconnection from Māori cultural identity. Despite the impacts of these policies over successive generations, Ihapera praises the efforts of today’s generations in overcoming the trauma of this past and the progress made towards restoration of cultural identity through reclaiming Te Reo Māori and kōrero tuku iho – itself a form of rangatiratanga. She shares her own whakapapa and references one of her tūpuna who signed He Whakaputanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi and who worked hard to educate whānau about their rights.

In responding to the question about whether the Kaipara District Council is supportive of Māori voters, Ihapera puts it plainly by saying that the current council makeup is unrepresentative of Māori voters and that there is a disconnect between council governance and the lived realities of many whānau outside of wealthier Mangawhai area. This reflects her broader concern about the lack of a Māori voice in local decision-making (beyond her own voice) particularly in light of the 2024 decision by the Kaipara District Council (KDC) to disestablish its Māori ward. She expresses concern that this decision by KDC may have been influenced by groups such as Hobson’s Pledge and Democracy Northland, which hold views widely associated with anti-Māori sentiment and opposition to policies that uphold Tiriti o Waitangi rights and Māori representation.

She describes her initial excitement of being elected as the Māori Ward Councillor for Kaipara and the aspirations to advance social housing and environmental protections. Despite entering with a vision for transformative change for Kaipara, the Council environment quickly became adversarial. It forced her to shift from pursuing community-focused goals to defending her position and protecting Te Tiriti-based Māori rights. Ihapera describes deliberate efforts by the Kaipara Mayor to undermine her role as Māori Ward Councillor and suppress

tikanga Māori within council processes, including attempts to prevent karakia before and after meetings, the removal of te reo Māori from official documents, and the erosion of local iwi rights to contribute to decisions affecting Te Taiao.

Ihapera reveals the emotional toll of being the only Māori voice in a hostile political environment. She was the target of repeated personal attacks and formal complaints (which were dismissed). She describes drawing strength from her whakapapa and the examples of resilience set by her tūpuna. Her education, legal training and experience also helped her to face these adversities.

Ihapera stresses the importance of voting and calls for voter mobilisation and Māori participation to challenge the current leadership within KDC. Ongoing attacks and attempts to marginalise Māori representation include the removal of the Māori ward for Kaipara and resource management funding for hapū like Te Uri o Hau and Te Rōroa Iwi, which allowed meaningful engagement in decisions about Te Taiao. Ihapera highlights that these actions are the result of systems deliberately designed to exclude Māori from meaningful decision-making.

NGĀ TIROHANGA WHĀNUI

Overarching Themes of the National Analysis

Historical Narratives in Pandemic Resilience

Kōrero Tuku Iho: Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer through Pūrākau

Rangatiratanga and Self-Determined Health Responses

International Indigenous examples of Self Determination - Indigenous-led healthcare systems
Mana Motuhake in Action - Community-Led Pandemic Responses
Mātauranga Māori-Informed Early, Proactive Responses

Te Whakatakatū mō ngā Urutā e Heke Mai Nei - Future Pandemic Preparedness

Tikanga

Rāhui
Disruption to Tikanga

Whanaungatanga – Social Connectivity as Resilience and Resource

Manaakitanga

COVID-19 Response Hubs: Marae and Manaakitanga in Action
Technology and Communication – Enhancing Connectivity and Emergency Responses
Manaakitanga is an Inclusive Framework

Kotahitanga

Aroha – Compassion and Empathy in Practice

Matemateāone – Yearning for Whenua, Whānau, and Whanaungatanga

Generational Shifts in Whānau Care Responsibilities

Meeting Kāinga Needs – Beyond Assumptions

Whakapapa – Relational Responsibility and Care

The Impact of COVID-19 on Kaimahi Māori

Leadership in Crises

Mana Wāhine Māori Leadership Through Crises

Whakapono me ngā Hāhi: Faith and Religious Movements

Disruption to Education

COVID-19 Impacts on Cultural Identity and Whanaungatanga

Vaccine Hesitancy, Attitudes and Decisions

Misinformation

Rongoā Māori

Te Taiao / Whenua
Karakia, Kapa Haka and Waiata –
Rituals and Practices of Well-being and Resilience

Tohunga / Tohungatanga

Te Reo Māori

Te Taha Wairua

NATIONAL ANALYSIS:

INTERIM REPORT ON WĀNANGA AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS: EMERGING THEMES AND INSIGHTS

Research Purpose

This research is collectively shaped by the expertise and lived experiences of pā, kāinga, whānau, hapū and iwi. The wānanga-led research is led by rangatira holding Te Tākere Nui representative roles in collaboration with the National Iwi Chairs Forum. The governance group, Te Tākere Nui, that was established, facilitated wānanga across multiple tribal regions, including Te Tai Tokerau, Waikato, Te Puku o Te Ika, Te Tai Hauāuru, Te Wai Pounamu and Te Tai Rāwhiti. These wānanga and relationships serve as essential forums for fostering relationships, building trust, and engaging in meaningful, reciprocal collaborations with kāinga communities. Furthermore, they provide a platform for expanding the mātauranga continuum through sharing knowledge, lessons, relationships and practices.

Kairangahau worked alongside nominated mātanga who held established and trusted relationships across rohe and iwi. At every opportunity, this collaboration included rangatahi rangahau champions and locally engaged facilitators to ensure community-led insights and meaningful engagement, which ensured the mahi remained grounded in the lived realities, the kōrero tuku iho, and Mātauranga Māori of the communities involved. These perspectives can reveal time-tested pathways for survival and adaptation in times of crisis.

This research weaves together individual and collective narratives of community-led solutions and intergenerational survival practices to inform pandemic planning and preparedness at both macro and micro levels.

Given the central role of Mātauranga Māori in this research and thematic analysis, establishing a clear definition is important for understanding its significance in shaping insights provided by kaikōrero. Mātauranga Māori, as defined by Sir Hirini Moko Mead, is an inclusive and evolving body of knowledge that encompasses kōrero tuku iho, values, and ethics alongside contemporary insights. Mead describes it as a term that:

“... includes all of the aspects of Māori culture... but much more. Mātauranga Māori has a past, a present and a future. Great minds of generations long gone added to the pool of Mātauranga Māori, as did many others who, in the course of their daily activities, made interesting discoveries [and] observations... Mātauranga Māori is a cultural system of knowledge about everything that is important in the lives of the people. Mātauranga Māori is thus made up of a core of inherited knowledge, plus the values and ethics that go with it, and new knowledge, some of which we’ve added as a result of our discoveries and research, and some we’ve borrowed outright from western knowledge and from our experiences of living” (Mead, 2022; see also Hikuroa, 2017).

Scope

To achieve this, Whiitiki Whakatika has brought together a diverse collective of people – including rangatira, kaumātua, mātanga, marae champions, hapū and iwi leaders, kaimahi, and technicians – to explore how best to develop pandemic resilience plans based on Mātauranga Māori. This research draws insights from marae, hapū, iwi, and Māori-led organisations, focusing on culturally grounded strategies to address infectious disease challenges.

Approach

The data collection phase includes:

- 3 national Māori engagements where respected mātanga discussed pandemic preparedness in public forums, culturally anchored to values carried at Rātana, Waitangi and Te Matatini.
- 10 regional wānanga, where collective knowledge was shared and explored.
- 21 individual interviews, capturing lived experiences and perspectives on past and present pandemic experiences and responses.

Methods

From October 2024 to May 2025, wānanga and interviews took place across Aotearoa New Zealand.¹ These locations reflect the breadth of engagement, ensuring diverse perspectives and regional insights were incorporated into the research. Wānanga-based research and methods ensured a way of determining the collective thoughts as opposed to individualistic views and provided a traditional Māori safeguard for accuracy amongst relational and trusted relationships, amongst those who were sharing, as well as

¹ Locations included – Stratford, Ruatoki, Tuahiwi, Wellington, Christchurch, Whanganui, and Omaio.

kairangahau. These qualitative, semi-structured interviews and wānanga served as the primary method for data collection, knowledge sharing, and collaborative analysis, which aligned with the Te Kore phase of the research framework.

Participant Engagement & Ethical Considerations

In line with principles of informed decision-making, respect, and reciprocity, the research upheld Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC):

- Participants were directly contacted via email and invited to contribute.
- Letters of invitation were sent out.
- Each participant received a Whakamōhio Booklet (an information sheet) and a kaikōrero consent form, which was completed before their interview.
- Interviews were conducted in person by Māori research assistants, and were audio recorded and transcribed with the support of Kaituhi, a digital transcription tool that maintains Māori Data Sovereignty principles, in line with WAI 262 Tiaki Taonga and CARE principles. Transcripts have maintained quality assurance methods that incorporate a two-tiered check, for Te Reo Māori use to consider distinct dialect variances across regions and for quality controls.

This research is tikanga Māori-centric, ensuring that tikanga, kawa, values, and mātauranga māori were upheld throughout the process. Mana motuhake was central, with mihi and whanaungatanga forming the foundation of engagement protocols as important voice-giving aspects of this process.

Furthermore, the research maintains that whānau, hapū, and iwi remain the kaitiaki of their knowledge, holding full and exclusive decision-making authority over taonga Māori, in accordance with Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Analysis

The interviews were analysed by the Pou Rangahau Māori (lead researcher(s)) using reflective thematic analysis (see Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019). Braun et al. (2019) outlined the six phases of reflexive thematic analysis:

- Familiarisation: Immersing oneself in the data over time to gain understanding.
- Generating codes: Identifying key patterns and assigning overarching labels.
- Constructing themes: Grouping related codes to develop meaningful themes.
- Revising themes: Ensure coherence across themes.
- Defining themes: Articulate the significance of each theme.
- Producing the report: Synthesise findings.

The Pou Rangahau Māori first read through each transcript in full as they were made available. The transcripts were revisited multiple times. The research lead team conducted a collaborative dual analysis of interview transcripts, discussing content in relation to key themes and subthemes. Notes were taken during multiple read-throughs, either by hand or using in-document comments in MS Word or Google Docs. These notes helped identify key meanings, which were captured as codes (i.e., concepts, phrases, key words, recurring ideas). Themes emerged as related codes clustered together, and patterns were then examined across transcripts, allowing for connections, comparisons, and refinements. The final themes were established through this iterative process of coding and cross-analysis.

Please note the following:

Throughout this analysis, multiple themes emerge from individual segments of kōrero. Given the interconnected nature of experiences and reflections, some insights could fit within multiple thematic categories. To ensure clarity and coherence, themes are presented within the framework that best encapsulates their dominant narrative, while acknowledging relevant areas of overlap. Additionally, subthemes are incorporated within broader thematic categories to highlight specific variations and nuances.

Across the interviews and wānanga discussions, recurring ideas and underlying patterns revealed a shared pandemic experience across Māoridom. The narratives also highlight nuanced differences shaped by regional, iwi, hapū and community-specific realities. The next section explores these key themes. The analysis acknowledges both the collective and locally distinctive dimensions of Mātauranga Māori and Māori pandemic responses.

Each thematic section begins with an introduction that establishes the theoretical and cultural foundations of the theme. This statement draws on established academic literature and Māori scholarly perspectives. This is to ensure that interview data is analysed within appropriate conceptual frameworks. It provides readers with the necessary background knowledge for understanding this analysis. It also acknowledges existing Māori scholarship in Mātauranga Māori. By grounding themes in the established literature before presenting participant voices, this methodology aims to enhance the credibility and cultural appropriateness of the thematic analysis while maintaining transparency in the analytical process.

For each theme, 2-4 representative transcript examples are presented to illustrate key concepts while avoiding repetition and redundancy. Examples were strategically selected based on their illustrative strength and ability to demonstrate different dimensions of each theme. The selection prioritised diversity across kaikōrero, regions, and experiences to showcase the breadth of each theme's manifestation. While numerous additional examples of each theme exist throughout the transcripts, the recurring nature of these concepts across different kaikōrero, geographical locations, and pandemic experiences is noted as a finding in itself that speaks to the cultural foundations that bind Māori within Te Ao Māori. This selective approach prioritised the most compelling examples while acknowledging broader patterns of cultural continuity that were evident in the data.

KEY THEMES AND FINDINGS

Historical Narratives in Pandemic Resilience

This is presented as the opening theme as many kaikōrero consistently contextualised their own or their whānau/hapū experiences within the broader continuum of Māori survival and adaptation (i.e., the 1918 influenza pandemic). This historical awareness provided the foundation from which many other themes emerged as kaikōrero drew on their own Mātauranga Māori and that of their tūpuna and the resulting survival strategies and collective memory to navigate contemporary challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This theme establishes the temporal and cultural framework within which tikanga adaptations, whanaungatanga networks, manaakitanga practices, and rongoā applications were mobilised. It demonstrates how Indigenous knowledge systems operate through intergenerational transmission and historical continuity. Beginning with historical narratives acknowledges that the myriad of Māori pandemic responses were not merely reactive innovations, but rather the activation of embedded cultural resources that have been refined through centuries of survival and resilience.

As the transcripts show, kaikōrero frequently recalled the experiences of tūpuna to contextualise the COVID-19 pandemic within broader patterns of whānau and hapū survival and adaptation. This historical consciousness was perhaps best captured in one participant's observation that:

“It's happened before... we've been here before.”

This is a reference to the devastating impact of previous pandemics, particularly the 1918 influenza outbreak that claimed disproportionate numbers of Māori lives. Rather than viewing COVID-19 as an unprecedented crisis, many kaikōrero positioned it within a continuum of historical challenges that Māori communities have faced and survived. These historical narratives functioned not merely as background context but as active resources for understanding and validating current responses as well as drawing strength from the resilience of tūpuna leadership. For example, one kaikōrero highlighted:

“When I think about infectious diseases and the control of its movements, I often think of a tupuna of ours from the central Kaipara. His name was Wātarauhi Kāwharu and during his time around the 1800s, there was an outbreak of influenza, other diseases. He informed his own people that they were not to leave their kāinga, that they were to stay within our district within our district but, more importantly, they closed off riverways so that travellers from Tāmaki, in particular, weren't coming up into the papakāinga, into the Kaipara and bringing any kino, any other diseases. So I often think of Wātarauhi, when I'm thinking about how do we control viruses and other infectious potential threats.”

Some kaikōrero invoked stories of community survival strategies, traditional healing practices, and adaptive responses that had sustained Māori through previous health crises. This serves to demonstrate how collective memory serves as both a warning and a guide. The historical consciousness reflects the intergenerational transmission of Mātauranga Māori and the enduring strength of Māori cultural identity in the face of repeated challenges that potentially threaten whakapapa, future generations, and vulnerable members of their communities. Kaikōrero also highlighted the risk of cultural knowledge loss, particularly among kaumātua knowledge holders, whose lived experiences and mātauranga are vital to preserving kōrero tuku iho.

The following examples from kaikōrero illustrate how historical narratives were employed as tools of resilience, a warning system and sources of guidance throughout the pandemic experience. These narratives show how the collective memory of whānau/hapū operates as a form of mātauranga that shapes contemporary responses to crises.

The impact of the 1918 influenza pandemic continues to resonate through the generations. As one kaikōrero acknowledged:

“Remembering that mamae, that loss that was felt... not only a loss of people but our reo and our tikanga.”

This kōrero reveals the multidimensional nature of pandemic loss within Māori kin-communities (but also other indigenous peoples globally). Pandemic loss extends beyond individual mortality to also include the erosion of whānau/hapū cultural infrastructure itself. The reference to loss of language and tikanga demonstrates how pandemics represent an existential threat to whānau and marae. The transmission of these historical experiences across generations is not just an act of memorialising and remembering, but a form of cultural protection and preparedness.

Another warning mechanism from the past was reflected in another observation by one kaikōrero about influenza era urupā:

“He urupā anō kei reira... ngā akoako o tērā urupā ki a tātau. ‘Ko ngā akoako o tērā urupā ki a tātau...’ ”

Such kōrero illustrates how whakapapa and whenua combine to create an archive of knowledge for survival. These urupā serve as tangible reminders of the risks of inaction but also of resilience that can speak across generations. Another example notes:

“...the Second World War, all of our koroua, they went and fought in Egypt and the design of those particular graves, in my mind came from Egypt, because no other graves were like that, it was really interesting. The reason why Ōtapuwae was located there, eh? It's because most of the people in that urupā died from disease, including the ones that were in those adult graves that I'm talking about and I believe that they designed, that they copycatted the design from Egypt urupā, from the graves of Kings and Queens of the Valley and Egypt, but our tupuna used them to close off and quarantine the diseases they died of, that's my understanding of that. That was very interesting to visit that Ōtapuwae. That's why it's different to every other urupā and that's why it was located where it is [...] Because really it was about achieving distance, and isolation of those who died from disease, serious disease.”

Some historical losses due to the 1918 influenza pandemic were highlighted numerically. One kaikōrero stated:

“We had the 1918 flu pandemic... 40 of our whānau died in that flu [...] how do we maintain that whakapapa protection?”

Another kaikōrero noted on the question of immunisation attitudes and uptake in the mid-20th century in their particular tribal rohe:

“I think they were highly skeptical, they were suspicious of immunisation back then. World War Two period and 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, they were still suspicious of immunisation. I think until they had that enormous one almost wiped out every newborn at Ōtapuwae where they are buried at Ōtapuwae, you know if you go to that Ōtapuwae urupā it’s literally littered with newborn babies of one year olds, up to one years old, two years old and a lot of their graves were covered by their (in those days they used to make) tin baby baths and those were sitting on their graves from last time I visited Ōtapuwae. There were a whole lot of tin baby baths, oval shaped baby baths overturned onto their graves to signify that that was a baby. But all those babies died of tuberculosis, some died of Hepatitis B.”

This demonstrates how traumatic pandemic experiences become embedded in the collective memory of whānau/hapū and how they become quantifiable warnings for generations today. Similarly:

“So, there are a number of things that we were kind of managing over that time. From a mātauranga perspective we’d already had the histories of whether it was the flu epidemic. One of my kuia, she survived the flu epidemic. I thought her name was Demic. I thought for wow [sic]. He ingoa pai tērā. My grandfather told me it’s short for epidemic. She survived the flu epidemic. Demic wasn’t her flash Pākehā name, her whole name was Epidemic. Kia maumahara ki tērā that she had survived, as a baby, the flu epidemic. Before that we’d had the leprosy epidemic which had followed through from Ōrākau and a number of our people had perished and are still buried here at Piripekapeka, and then on the way down to Moawhango. We can follow E pā tō hau the waiata. It marks their journey. Not only to survive the war but then also the leprosy epidemic that had come with them. We have other stories of our whānau surviving the flu epidemic and having to go into the ngāhere.”

The mātauranga highlighted here creates direct parallels that frame contemporary responses of kin-communities to COVID-19. It validates present-day caution, urgency, preparedness and response efforts within whānau and wider kin-communities.

Kōrero Tuku Iho: Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer through Pūrākau

Kōrero tuku iho emerged as a significant theme throughout kaikōrero discussions. It manifested primarily through the sharing and application of pūrākau during the COVID-19 pandemic. This theme covers both the process of knowledge transmission

across generations and the traditional narratives that serve as vehicles for this transfer (see, for example, Kingi et al., 2021).

Pūrākau, as integral components of Mātauranga Māori, are narratives “containing philosophical thought, epistemological constructs, cultural codes and world views” (Hikuroa, 2017, p. 6), while kōrero tuku iho represents the broader mechanism through which such wisdom is preserved, shared, and applied across generations.

Unlike the historical narratives theme, which focuses on references to specific historical events and collective memory of past pandemics, this theme centres on the transmission of timeless Mātauranga Māori and philosophical frameworks that guide appropriate responses to the challenges of the day. During the pandemic, participants demonstrated how kōrero tuku iho and pūrākau were actively recalled, shared, and applied as sources of guidance, illustrating the dynamic nature of kōrero tuku iho as both preservation and practical application of cultural knowledge.

The following examples from kaikōrero illustrate how kōrero tuku iho operated as a system of intergenerational knowledge transfer where pūrākau were actively applied as philosophical frameworks/practical guides for navigating COVID-19 challenges. Kōrero tuku iho are repositories of adaptive Mātauranga Māori that transcend specific historical contexts to help in resilience strategies.

The foundational pūrākau of Polynesian migration emerged as a framework for understanding pandemic adaptation among kin-communities with one kaikōrero drawing direct connections between ancestral navigation to Aotearoa and contemporary crisis response.

“We left Hawaiki to come here, and we adapted. We’re rapid adaptors.”

Narratives of the migration story of how Polynesian explorers navigated the vast Pacific expanse and found their way to Aotearoa emphasise how they found ways to adapt to new environments. Throughout history, Māori have drawn upon Mātauranga Māori to navigate crises as they arise. Māori have adapted their system of knowledge to ensure survival. It reinforces the fact that whānau, hapū and marae are capable of rapid, strategic adaptation in the face of crisis. The invocation of the Hawaiki migration story validates the knowledge within pūrākau. Pūrākau presents as precedents set by tūpuna, which are drawn on in contemporary adaptive responses to present-day challenges.

This form of Mātauranga Māori positions adaptation (e.g., rapid adaptors) as a fundamental strength of Māori that has ensured survival across centuries marred challenges.

Another kaikōrero provided a further example of an account of an 1830s influenza outbreak in the Whanganui basin. According to the writings of Kere-o-Matūwhāwhākia, the epidemic was devastating, with up to thirty deaths per day across numerous kāinga along the Whanganui river. The kaikōrero highlighted a whakataukī that emerged from this experience:

“Me te mea nei ka uea ake te kōrero, Ngāti Rangi haere hoki ki ngā ture o Murimotu. Kawea te whenua ora ki a koe, waiho mai muri i te whenua mate ki a au, i Hiruhārama tēnei kōrero, i Patiarero, ka hinga te tangata. Ka kīa ngā tūpuna, ko te hunga e ora ana, piki atu ki te maunga kua rerekē te ao.”

This whakataukī can be interpreted as a mnemonic survival strategy and a directive for those who remained to move away from areas of loss to rebuild and adapt to new conditions.

Many kaikōrero drew upon pūrākau as sources of guidance, wisdom, and cultural direction which demonstrated how these narratives continue to provide pathways for kin-communities navigating contemporary crises. Other key examples include:

“Nā akoako mai i te influenza o te tapuwae i roto i te back urupā rā. I think ngā akoako that has taught our people is that it’s happened before and we’ve been here before. So there’s no excuse to not know what to do, we’re used to that and if it’s happened before to you, there’s no need to be alarmed, [we can be] shocked and frightened but no need to be alarmed because we’ve been there before. We know how to deal with it and so we’re just gonna do it. That happened a hundred years ago.”

“When I think about the lessons learnt from Te Ika Ranganui, not only from 1825, but moving through the different stages of our evolution over the last two hundred years, I hark back and am reminded of the haka, ko te puru, ko te puru kōa tokatoka. And there’s a line in there and it talks about kia ueue, kia tū tangatanga. To be firm in times of challenge. To really pull yourself and muscle up. To come tight as a people. Engari, kia tū tangatanga i ōna wā. But also to be flexible and adaptable in those times where circumstances may be changing, where there may be new challenges cropping up in front of you. So I think it’s about always being adaptable. It’s about being firm when you need to be. It’s about having a plan A, plan B and a plan C. And ensuring that there’s capability but not only capability for now, but future-proofing that capability and looking at where those needs in the future are gonna lie.”

“The story and legacy of Te Putu stems from manaakitanga, from providing manaakitanga for whaanau and for ensuring that kai is sustained for future generations. Now Te Putu was the great grandfather to the first Maaori King, Pōtatau Te Wherowhero, and in the legacy of Te Putu he saw that whaanau in Raahui Pookeka would overfish tuna and at that time, times of old, three different types of tuna that were thriving and growing here within our lakes and so with the overfishing of our whaanau, our whaanau overfishing the tuna, meant that something needed to be done about it and what Te Putu done [sic] he took a Pookeka from his cloak, a feather from the back of his cloak, and he tied it to a pou and he put that pou into the ground and he declared that no one is to go fishing until this pou is covered by dirt – thus entailing a raahui and so our ingoa Raahui Pookeka comes from that legacy, a raahui to protect our tuna and a pookeka from the cloak that he used to wear, and once the dirt covered the pou, he would bring all the fishing families back together and he would ask the fishing families to go out and get tuna and bring it back for me and in that process was equally dividing the tuna, so they went, caught all the tuna, brought it back, laid it in front of him and that process was called Wawaahitanga, which is where our Lake Waahi gets its name, which is where our marae gets its name and our stories I think to ensure that we think of the future we also have to make sure that we go back, grab our stories and bring them into the future and so one of the things that could do really well is, there is now a kind of action Tiktok

song done and it’s taught inside our Koohanga Reo, so that when those tamariki go home and they teach the story of Te Putu, they’re the teachers with that story, so they (inaudible). So I think in terms of resilience of our hapori, our marae, our people of Raahui Pookeka are resilient people.”

The above pūrākau about the leadership of Te Putu contains multiple layers of Mātauranga Māori which are relevant to pandemic resilience. Elements include:

- Manaakitanga: The kōrero which speaks to the fair and equal distribution of kai amongst the community demonstrates manaakitanga and it provides the model for resource sharing that informed the manaakitanga efforts in the Rāhui Pōkeka rohe during the pandemic.
- Rāhui: The kōrero explains rāhui through the feather-marked pou of Te Putu which restricted fishing activities until the pou was covered in dirt. Such mātauranga relating to temporary restriction for sustained kin-community protection provides the socio-cultural precedent for understanding the instances of rāhui set during the COVID-19 pandemic that protected whānau throughout Aotearoa from virus transmission. Note – see rāhui theme section for further discussions on this kaupapa.
- The kaikōrero explicitly connects the pūrākau of Te Putu to resilience. It demonstrates how mātauranga offers practical guidance and emotional resilience during contemporary crises.

Rangatiratanga and Self-Determined Health Responses

Rangatiratanga, or self-determination, emerged as a significant theme throughout numerous transcripts, both through explicit references and implicit descriptions of community-led actions during the COVID-19 pandemic. As Professor Margaret Mutu explains, rangatiratanga:

“...is high-order leadership, the ability to keep the people together, that is an essential quality in a rangatira. The exercise of such leadership in order to maintain and enhance the mana of the people is rangatiratanga. Tino rangatiratanga is the exercise of paramount and spiritually sanctioned power and authority. It includes aspects of the English notions of ownership, status, influence, dignity, respect and sovereignty, and has strong spiritual connotations” (2010, p. 26).

Throughout the pandemic, kin-communities across the country activated their own solutions, leadership structures, and crisis response frameworks, with marae, hapū, iwi, and other Māori organisations demonstrating proactive, locally driven and culturally derived approaches to counteract the pandemic threat. There were numerous examples of rangatiratanga in practice shown throughout the transcripts, most notably through the marae and their kaimahi acting as first responders in community emergencies; iwi and hapū setting up inclusive health support services as well as the community-led establishment of roadside checkpoints that emerged as a response to protect regional/rural Māori

communities from virus transmission. Such initiatives exemplified community-led action grounded in tino rangatiratanga, where communities took decisive action to protect their whānau without waiting for government instructions, permission, or resources.

Instead, marae kaimahi acted swiftly according to their own tikanga and conscience. Significantly, these were not ad hoc reactions but were grounded in the longstanding belief in the principle of rangatiratanga, which entails collective care and leadership. This exercise of rangatiratanga was typically organised at the marae and hapū level and was inherently connected to the rights, duties and responsibilities of kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga, and the cultural imperative to nurture, care for, and protect their whānau and others. The following examples from kaikōrero illustrate the diverse ways rangatiratanga manifested as both principle and practice throughout the pandemic experience.

One kaikōrero reflected on the philosophical grounding of rangatiratanga:

“Tino rangatiratanga exists in your mind, if you put value to whatever your kaupapa is, that’s rangatiratanga aye?”

This kōrero suggests that autonomy is cultivated through intention, commitment, and recognition of the inherent authority within kaupapa Māori approaches.

Numerous transcripts showed that many whānau, marae, and hapū did not seek external protection but instead activated their own local, pragmatic solutions. As one kaikōrero stated:

“We can’t keep chasing their framework.”

This statement critiques external health models that may not align with Māori needs. The statement suggests that Māori communities must design and implement their own resilience frameworks. Another speaker emphasised the importance of greater Māori involvement in scientific spaces and policymaking:

“More researchers, more Māori involved in scientific spaces.”

This kōrero aligns with the wider push for Mātauranga Māori to influence health strategies to ensure that policy decisions are informed by both scientific expertise and Mātauranga Māori. Such kōrero affirms the need for long-term investment in Māori-led governance and health sovereignty. This strategic Māori direction would help ensure crisis response models reflect Māori priorities, cultural frameworks and on-the-ground realities.

International Indigenous Examples of Self Determination - Indigenous-led Healthcare Systems

The exercise of rangatiratanga extends beyond local community responses to embrace learning from and drawing inspiration from international, indigenous-led healthcare systems. In one of the wānanga, the researchers were provided with an example of successful indigenous self-determination in healthcare – specifically the Alaskan Native healthcare model, which serves as both validation of indigenous approaches to healthcare governance and a source of inspiration for what might be achieved within Aotearoa New Zealand’s healthcare system to better serve Māori communities and enhance pandemic

preparedness. A comparative perspective demonstrates that rangatiratanga operates not in isolation, but as part of a broader global indigenous movement towards self-determination and sovereignty in healthcare.

The kaikōrero illustrated how self-determined governance in their state has helped to embed cultural safety practices within the health system as well as generating stronger health outcomes and resilience for their people. The kaikōrero emphasised the power of indigenous governance in ensuring culturally appropriate care:

- “The ownership... the governance... are all Alaskan native people.”
- “Our own primary care system, we’re culturally appropriate.”
- “We have assumed the role from the federal government...”

This highlights how health sovereignty allows communities to shape systems of care that reflect their own cultural values and lived realities thus ensuring culturally safe, relevant and accessible services and long-term resilience.

Mana Motuhake in Action - Community-Led Pandemic Responses

Many Māori communities mobilised independently, developing self-determined health strategies tailored to the realities in their tribal rohe. Institutional responses were slow, leaving marae/hapū leaders to activate their own networks, engage iwi, and implement infection control measures before official directives arrived from the Government.

As one kaikōrero from Waikato stated:

“We sent emails to our iwi, look we’ve been noticing this thing’s happening in China, is anybody getting ready out there? We emailed even the MoH to say what’s happening and – crickets, nobody responded to us. We thought, okay then, what can we do within our own communities?”

Marae/hapū/iwi/other Māori organisations played a pivotal role as centralised support systems, facilitating resource coordination, funding access, and Māori-specific COVID-19 response planning. For example:

“Hui mate for us as Māori was hugely concerning to us. But then we thought we need to act on it anyway, because all of it is about the protection and well-being of our people. So through our wānanga, through our hui we say so. Whatever we got we’ve got a family down the road, we can’t accommodate them for housing shortages. So all we can do is leave them in their bubble, leave them in their little family grouping, but what would happen is we said we will try and prepare ourselves for if there was someone that became unwell [...] So we got together, we thought, well Ngāmoko’s empty. (Ngāmoko’s our Kōhanga Reo building). Okay then, let’s see what we’ve got in there, let’s see what we need to have in there, so we’ll furnish it and we’ll furnish it only on the understanding that if someone becomes unwell, that individual person and their caregiver will come and then they could care for them in there, so that was one solution. The other one was that’s possibly not enough area. So then we started looking within ourselves and we found two other caravans as well. Okay then let’s equip those caravans and let’s have them on

standby should they be needed. Should the need arise then we can at least mobilise that caravan to whichever household. So it was about doing things for ourselves, kicking ourselves off.”

Initially focusing on welfare and communications, their efforts evolved into public health mobilisation, with iwi-led immunisation and testing initiatives emerging. As the pandemic response progressed, localised actions transitioned into a coordinated regional strategy, as shown by the formation of Te Ranga Tupua – a collective of iwi working in unison to streamline resourcing and operational responses. Supported by government funding, the Te Ranga Tupua Response Hub became a mechanism for scaling up Māori-led pandemic interventions across the rohe. As one kaikōrero highlighted:

“As we moved out of that phase of just providing welfare and comms, we then moved into supporting the immunisation campaign.”

This shows the progression of marae-led initiatives – starting with direct welfare support, then expanding into public health efforts.

“... it wasn't really until phase two of lockdowns where our response moved away from an iwi-specific response to a rohe response.”

This directly reflects how localised efforts grew into coordinated regional action.

“Te Ranga Tupua, which is the collective of iwi in Whanganui tonu started to come together to say, ‘Ngāti Rangī you are doing this, Mōkai Pātea you’re doing that, Whanganui you’re doing this’.”

This kōrero illustrates the intentional, structured approach iwi took in aligning their pandemic strategies. Inter-iwi whanaungatanga likely played a key part of this. Similarly:

“Our collective iwi entities came together to support that. The Tūwharetoa responses, unlike many iwi, we don't have one kind of entity, we have four, five. And so communication was really important to try and strengthen up working together to ensure that we're all pushing back on government messaging and our whānau knew that we were here to support them and then to really deal with some bigger issues around inequity. Because whilst some marae like our whānau at Pākira, Tūtemohuta was set up right? Had Wi-Fi, had power, had a Bidfood account you could go book up ten grand worth a [sic] shopping. That is not the case for many of our marae. Some of our marae like ‘can I get some power?’, true story So there are major inequities here that over the last three years we've been addressing as a people.”

Kaikōrero discussions showed that mana motuhake manifested across multiple organisational levels with each level exercising distinct yet complementary forms of rangatira leadership. In the abovementioned examples, at the iwi level, coordinated welfare support systems and strategic resource mobilisation provided broad frameworks for pandemic support. Yet it was often at the hapū and marae level where mana motuhake was immediately and fully expressed as these entities stood up and assumed primary leadership, advocacy and engagement roles to protect their rohe and the needs of their people:

“We still have the street teams in the kaitiaki spaces in place now. We held onto that position until we morphed into an iwi space where I just walked into this tari and said to the Ariki, ‘what are you going to do for us?’ And he's like, ‘what shall we do?’, ‘This is what we're going to do’. And we practically rolled out a response amongst our marae. Which leads us to Te Kapua Whakapipi and how we do things now in terms of the response to the pandemic. We've done quite a bit actually because where we are today from the after-effects of what we implemented through a COVID[-19] response. It was just marae on the ground.”

“all of our people relied on fishing and hunting. And so when the Government very early on, said, ‘you can't go out and do these normal things that you would do to eat to survive’, actually that became problematic for us. So as an iwi, we were pushing back on government and we were able to do that with the support and advocacy of other government kaimahi within Te Puni Kōkiri and critical friends and Civil Defence just to say ‘hey this isn't going to work, particularly for rural people’. And so there was a lot of that pushback happening [...] There were places that we couldn't go to, or that Government were putting restrictions on, like puia, that have always been part of the way that we heal and look after ourselves. They were putting restrictions on these normal places of healing. And so it was really good that with the support of the Ariki, our pakeke and our hapū. That Tūwharetoa came together and said, ‘no, this is going to be our response’.”

Several kaikōrero stated that mana motuhake extends beyond healthcare. It includes self-sufficiency and economic resilience, and the need to move away from supermarket/corporate reliance and towards local sustainability models:

“Growing local, buy local, [and] returning to bartering.”

“When the food parcels came into the Recreation Centre, to Wainui School, there was a huge emphasis put on that as well. But looking at the time and probably looking at it now, you can see why our people get so dependent on stuff – it is because it's given to them. And what Anaru was talking about, like the lifestyle that he's talking about, was we grew up in that lifestyle so we grew up as hunter gatherers, we grew up as gardeners, the gardens were that huge it put you off veggies for the rest of your life. And then when you finish your little mahi at home then we go and help the neighbours with theirs. But the thing was the shopping list of those days was so, so small compared to the shopping list today. Growing up here as a child, as a young man growing up over here, if we had a funeral, a hui mate over here, very little shopping was actually bought from the store or bought from the shop. So all the preserves that Anaru was talking about, all the bread was made over here. So you know the shopping was pretty limited to flour, to sugar, to salt and stuff like that. So growing up here my dad he had cows, so every time there was a death at our door, a mate, then we would go and kill a cow and have it prepared for that hui. I don't know how you regenerate that in today's generation, it's quite a different lifestyle. So you know, you're talking about your modern technology, today you got pumps nowadays. Like we would have 40-gallon drums of water at four sides of each garden and lucky to be the little ones that you only had to have a little bucket of water

and you get this little cup that you water every plant, every tupu along the way. But the gardens were amazing, they were, but every household had a garden. Every household through the summer period had kina in their creek, wai Māori, kāngawai, kāngapiro in their creek and everyone grew like that. And then as the stores got bigger and the brands got better and the work got harder, everyone left from here to move away and then the garden slowly, slowly disappear. And that's what I'm saying you've got to grow, you've got to have that passion, you've got to have that patience for it because not everyone is a gardener, you can give seeds to every person, every person in this community. It's the fruits that come out of it. That's the result, it's about that mindset thing, it's about growing into it."

Mātauranga Māori-Informed Early, Proactive Responses

Mātauranga Māori-informed, early, proactive responses emerged as a theme from some of the kaikōrero transcripts demonstrating how some kin-communities, marae, hapū and iwi drew upon Mātauranga Māori systems and related historical responses. These systems were used to recognise and respond to the threat of COVID-19 as it spread throughout the globe and reached Aotearoa New Zealand. At the earliest signs of the highly contagious disease emerging as a potentially serious threat to Aotearoa, iwi as well as hapū and marae mobilised various degrees of response strategies – often before official government directives or public health mandates were established. This proactive approach was not reactive panic. The response strategies were a calculated foresight stemming from the memory of past health crises and the understanding of kin-community vulnerabilities and leading to rapid activation.

There were a range of measures employed such as initiating food distribution networks and implementing community safety protocols. The strategic foresight by various levels of Māori leadership represented the exercise of rangatiratanga where leaders evaluated the situation and took action based on their assessment of threats weighed against their responsibilities to protect their kin-communities. The following examples from kaikōrero illustrate how early awareness translated into quick action that prioritised physical and cultural protection and preservation throughout the emerging pandemic crisis.

"I remember when Iwi Chairs first met and then the hui was held there was this disease, this virus going around Aotearoa and up north, and then we got the news that the first person was infected and that was a whanaunga in Paihia who just come back from overseas and once we knew that was in Tai Tokerau then it was like ok, it's starting to get real now. And so we're like, okay, we better do something."

"The threat was real from the experience of the past of smallpox that we see very evident in our urupā across Te Tai Tokerau, and that flip of the switch that made us move into a space of Tai Tokerau Border Control, Whangaroa Border Control across the motu because we did not know what we were dealing with. The correspondence that was coming back via international kōrero that was being had at very high levels was, 'kia rite tātou' and all in our minds all that we could think of was protect our whakapapa..."

[...]...So our job was to do our best to protect our whānau, our hapū and our iwi and that's exactly what we did. Took to the road, shut the road down and we had multiple whānau out there collecting information."

Rather than waiting for government intervention, community leaders drew on both Mātauranga Māori and western science – utilising the tools at hand as well as best-practice infection control strategies.

"We started creating little vignettes of best techniques around infection control and how do we start improving some of our practices and readiness. By March we were well and truly prepared..."

"So at the time, we weren't actually a part of the Rūnanga and so a lot of the stuff we were doing, we were already doing it automatically for ourselves. So when COVID[-19] came along we examined COVID[-19] for what it was, then we had that discussion. We had our wānanga and we raised some concerns about the well-being of our people and if we talk about the Spanish flu we never really had an epidemic in Wainui as other communities did, but we're aware of the impact that it would have on us. And I tell the Ahipara story because of Amanda's whānau from up there. Amanda's family cemetery line was full so I talked to the kaumātua up there about whether we could extend or start a new family line behind where her parents were and he said, 'no that line is actually taken' and it was there, that I learnt about Spanish flu – the flu epidemic and that whole unmarked area was an unmarked grave from the flu epidemic. And it was a really, really, tragic story. So the concern at a home level back here was about the well-being of our people. So we had family, we had whānau that were living in a seriously overcrowded position. By then, to understand what this COVID-19 was, what this pandemic was – we started to engage with the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health gave advice – they had absolutely no idea how we lived as a people. They thought everybody lived in a three bedroom house and had running water. So the question that came about was, 'if someone became ill, how would we care for them?' So, she gave me the scenario that you'd care for them by isolating them. She said 'So you'll have one member of the family that will care for them. So then when they go to the toilet or they go to bath, that whole area will be sanitised after being used.' And then you kept a smaller bubble within your own household bubble and I said to her 'but we've got an overcrowding position. We've got a family of 11 that's living in an open church, an open church where the parents are living in a tent outside'. She had no idea. There was no idea, so we came back and we thought, well let's look for our own solutions ourselves."

"The Crown knew, oh yeah, you gotta keep the infrastructure going. So who had COVID tests first? Power companies? So we were the first to jump on that to say, 'bro? How do we get some of those COVID[-19] tests? You know, and a lot of healthcare clinicians said to us, 'oh no, they're still untested, unless it gets rolled out by Ministry of Health'."

... we're like, 'if they're good enough for power companies to ensure that the shifts can still happen to supply power to Aotearoa. Now if they're good enough for them, they're good enough for us'."

Throughout Māori history, the ability to read and interpret tohu (signs) and indicators has been central to decision-making, adaptation, and resilience. It was a key factor in the migration story to Aotearoa.

One kaikōrero emphasised the importance of situational awareness, urging Māori communities to strengthen their preparedness and refine their ability to identify and respond to tohu, not only within Aotearoa but also to look internationally:

“Kia matāra ai ki ngā tohu ehara ko ngā tohu noa iho ki roto o Aotearoa, ki roto i o mātou nei whenua, engari ngā tohu puta noa i te ao hurihuri.”

Māori are a part of the global community and broad-spectrum vigilance of what is happening is vital. Another reflection challenges kin-communities to evaluate their capacity for strategic foresight, asking:

“How well are we reading tohu... as [an] early warning?”

This emphasis on reading tohu as signals rather than reactionary cues reflects a proactive model of preparedness for crises. Not all tohu are to be interpreted in the same way:

“Different perspectives on tohu signify different potentials for action.”

This kaikōrero suggests that interpretation is not singular; the meaning of tohu can shift depending on context, worldview, and experience and that how tohu are read determines the pathway kin-communities take in preparing for uncertainty. Ā-hapū, ā-iwi dialogue and refinement of their response strategies for the next crises needs to occur.

Te Whakatakatū mō ngā Urutā e Heke Mai Nei Future Pandemic Preparedness

Future pandemic preparedness emerged as a theme throughout many kaikōrero discussions. Kaikōrero reflected on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 experience. Some articulated recommendations for improved responses for future health crises. This theme covers both retrospective analysis of what worked for kin-communities during the pandemic and prospective thinking about how systems, processes and approaches could be enhanced to better serve Māori in future pandemic or emergency response situations.

Kaikōrero drew upon their lived experiences of navigating COVID-19 challenges to identify gaps in current preparedness frameworks while also recognising the strengths of Māori kin-communities that could be built on. The ideas revealed both immediate practical consideration (e.g., resource distribution) and deeper systemic issues relating to cultural responsiveness, rangatiratanga (self-determination) and integrating Mātauranga Māori into emergency planning. Some kaikōrero articulated visions for future preparedness that centered Māori ways of knowing and being – emphasising the importance of relationality, community-led responses, culturally and geographically appropriate communication strategies, and better recognition of rongoā Māori practices with the broader health framework.

The following examples from kaikōrero illustrate their recommendations, aspirations and lessons learned from Māori kin-community perspectives.

“Definitely bring a Māori approach to it, especially for our whānau. Personally, we had a few mate, few whānau pass away and it was quite hard to not be in attendance of things or just being together. We kinda broke the bubble a little bit on some of those things because it was really hard for us. Hopefully when there is a next pandemic [sic], I hope they do adopt a lot of Te Ao Māori, Mātauranga Māori and kaupapa Māori into it because we need it, whānau need it, everybody needs it, they just don’t know it yet.”

“From my perspective, if we’re thinking about the future of what we should be investing in – is core groups or core teams that run across kaupapa providers, public health, hospitals and each of our communities, iwi, et cetera – and they could very well be rangatahi-led that are focused on preparedness, remaining prepared, and developing the capability, capacity and networks for preparedness of any crisis that might occur. Not just pandemic but it might be cyclone, or environmental or it might be something else that might happen in any of our communities. But if you invest in that core group that keep us always prepared and keep that muscle memory strong that we created during COVID around responding to something like a pandemic, then we’ll always be prepared, but we gotta [sic] invest in our rangatahi, we gotta [sic] invest in sustaining the capability, capacity and the thinking that we developed in the early 2020s to respond to COVID.”

[when answering the question of pandemic preparedness planning for whānau for the future] “I think it’s a phone number and it’s a face because actually we don’t, you could say we’re in a pandemic at the moment right? There’s uncertainty, with a pandemic. People don’t know what the hell they’re doing with a pandemic, everybody reacts differently. There [sic] creates a whole lot of, kind of, the dynamic and the relationships go a bit wonky. And so people just need to be able to kinda, just need to be on the ground. And I think the other part for me too and I know this when we were doing our stuff, I would ring up most CEs across the country, iwi CEs. There would be a heap of us online because we were all struggling. There ain’t no silver bullet, that’s the problem. If we had the perfect map, we would’ve probably done it in a heap of different ways. We only had 24 hours. See you gotta go with your gut and you gotta learn as you go and you gotta be able to know that at the end of the line there’s somebody who’s gonna give your hand. And so I saw those relationships between ourselves. I didn’t ring up the government and say, ‘I need you to save our people’. I was looking up my mates down the road going, ‘Oi, have you got some of this that and the other? Can you go and take this over there to that one?’ Those are the ones I rang, those are the ones that I depended on, those are the ones who had my back and those are the ones who had our back. And so I think that make sure you got good relationships, make sure you’re really clear about why you’re doing things, make sure that you’re actually gonna do it.”

Other kaikōrero frame mana motuhake as a fundamental prerequisite for effective pandemic preparedness:

“Now all we need to do is start this Ruia Taitea journey, shaking off all those things not of ourselves and to reveal our true nature. Kia tū ko Tai Kākā anake. That’s what is the forward path, then we’re on as an iwi.”

This suggests that preparedness requires whānau to reconnect with their own cultural and practical resources rather than relying solely on external agency/systems. A key factor to this is that it must be built from the ground up, ensuring that each level can sustain itself before supporting broader networks:

“It begins at home” [...] “And so can you sustain your home, your household, your kāinga? Can you go on to support up your marae and your hapū? Does that unit then contribute to the wider iwi and its continuation...”

Kai sovereignty is also identified as a practical test of preparedness for pā kāinga and marae:

“Have you got food sovereignty at home? Ka taea e koe te tiaki i tō whānau te tuatahi.”

“Probably too in terms of making sure that we are ready, there are still things like continuing mahi māra and educating our people about mahi māra, what that looks like just for your own home. The rokiroki kai being able to kohikohi kai and rokiroki kai is really important.”

Such kōrero positions kai security as key element for protecting whānau. Food systems are central to future pandemic resilience.

Building on this foundation of kai sovereignty, rongoā sovereignty represents another critical component of future pandemic preparedness which if put in place could enable whānau and marae to further develop resilience and enhance hauora through rangatiratanga over traditional healing mātauranga and practices. The ideas behind this theme embody whānau, hapū and marae being (or in some instances, continuing to be) the experts of mātauranga of rongoā as well as its cultivation, preparation and application. In some way this could reduce a dependence on external healthcare systems while strengthening internal hauora systems. This approach is exemplified by innovative initiatives such as those undertaken by Rangiwaho marae near Gisborne, which has led groundbreaking clinical trials in New Zealand – exploring the therapeutic potential of traditional Mātauranga Māori psychoactive practices for addiction and mental health treatment². Such an example shows how rongoā sovereignty can operate not as a rejection of contemporary healthcare but as the integration of mātauranga around rongoā with modern research methodologies to create culturally grounded, evidence-based treatments options that serve both Māori communities and broader health systems.

As one kaikōrero described:

“...become experts and top specialists in the production of and the knowledge of rongoā [...] I want them to know where it grows, what habitat it grows in and what’s the name of it? What are its properties? What are its medicinal properties? What is its function? How do you apply it? Those are the things I think that we need revitalising as knowledge as a specialist knowledge base amongst young people. Because it’s all preventative eh.”

² e.g., <https://atmos.earth/how-maori-people-are-reclaiming-psychedelic-mushroom-medicine/>

With this in mind, by developing expertise in rongoā cultivation, preparation and application, communities could ensure immediate access to rongoā resources during health emergencies and contribute towards well-being and pandemic resilience.

Tikanga

Tikanga emerged as a central theme in kaikōrero discussions. Participants directly referenced the concept or alluded to its presence in cultural practices and thought. Sir Edward Taihakurei Durie, highlights tikanga as one of Māori society’s most ancient practices, describing it as “proper and meritorious conduct according to ancestral law... [and]...necessary for good relations with people and with the land on which they live” (Mead, 2003, foreword). Similarly, Māori Marsden conceptualises tikanga as “method, plan, reason, custom, the right way of doing things” (Royal, 2003, p. 66).

Tikanga represents the central framework of customary practices within Te Ao Māori. Core values like rangatiratanga, whanaungatanga and manaakitanga inform and guide tikanga practices across diverse contexts and situations.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges to the practice and maintenance of tikanga. Kaikōrero recognised that certain tikanga were compromised during the pandemic by external factors and public health requirements.

Some kaikōrero drew parallels to the 1918 influenza outbreak, noting that during those times rangatira, tohunga, and their communities implemented their own protective measures – including community isolation and other traditional forms of social distancing where sick individuals were set aside until they were well before rejoining others.

Faced with the threat of COVID-19 and government mandates, some kaikōrero described the challenging process of navigating tikanga maintenance during the pandemic (e.g., tangihanga), where some practices required temporary suspension due to public health restrictions, while others were thoughtfully adapted and modified to ensure cultural integrity could be preserved within the constraints of COVID-19 safety protocols.

The following examples from kaikōrero illustrate the complex negotiations between maintaining cultural integrity and adapting to pandemic restrictions:

“So my nephew, he was māuiui. He was breaking bubbles. So for him we had to do a care plan. Like a whānau kaupapa and whānau tikanga kicks in. We all know what to do if something happens. Sometimes we don’t know what we do know, until something tragic happens and we realise oh we better do this and better do that. But it’s a natural thing. We know how to survive if we have to.”

“There was a whole lot of emotion and trauma that I don’t think people have gotten over to this day. With our knowings [sic] and our cultural space, tikanga and in carrying the wairua of tangihanga, we did our best to implement what we knew to protect both the whaanau pani, the wider whaanau and the mate and those were big learning [sic] and in some sense teachings to our wider whaanau. [...] We will always maintain what we know in terms of tikanga, we will always waananga what other implications may affect the kaupapa. But we will do the best in our intentions to maintain the wairua of the surroundings, paa whaanau pani, te whaanau whaanui and those who are leading the different areas in that space. Every tangihanga is different but those are

the fundamentals we carry into future experiences such as that and those come from your home, on the marae, understanding different ways of doing tangihanga and understanding the depths of tikanga and what it aligns to and being tau about the decisions you make and what whakamarama you have behind it. That's what influences or gives guidance to you."

"Rua wiki māua e noho ana ki reira i tino rerekē anō te puta atu i te kāinga o te takiwā o Whanganui, hoi anō ko tā māua anō te kawē i ngā tikanga, i ngā akoranga i whakatōngia ki roto i a māua, otirā tō mātou whānau, kia tiaki pai anō i te wairua. Hoi anō, rua wiki ki reira. Tae mai te whānau whānui, ngā hoa, taki ruruku, karakia, ērā āhuatanga, i reira i mea mai te takuta me tae atu māua ki Tāmaki Makaurā ki te Starship i taua rā tonu i maumahara, pūrangihō katoa tēnei whitiata i roto i taku hinengaro i tēnei wā i maumahara au, i mātaki au i te, you know, ia rā i tau mātou ngā announcements o Jacinda Ardern, and maumahara au i te announcement i taua wā."

Rāhui

Rāhui is a practice that operates within the broader framework of tikanga. Rāhui represents a customary restriction or prohibition placed on resources, an area or activities for spiritual, physical, conservation, safety or protective purposes (see for example Mead, 2003, p. 203; see also Maxwell & Penetito, 2007; Wheen & Ruru, 2011, p. 169). It is an established tikanga-based tool that tangata whenua communities can invoke when circumstances require protection, restriction or respect.

During COVID-19, rāhui became particularly relevant. Many iwi, hapū, marae and whānau implemented rāhui to protect their communities from direct virus transmission as well as preventing secondary risks that could endanger others or strain healthcare systems by the cascading effect of potential emergencies (e.g., diving and certain types of fishing that could put rescuers/medical staff at unnecessary exposure risk). Rāhui provided a culturally appropriate framework for restrictions rather than merely following government-imposed mandates. Rāhui also represented an exercise of rangatiratanga whereby kin communities were using their own tikanga as a tool for protection to contemporary health threats:

"Some of ours [tamariki] didn't grow up here. So we put a tapu, a rāhui on the water in case anything happened and they didn't know where to go and we couldn't go out and rescue them. So we took a different approach because a lot of them at home didn't grow up here on the water. It's not the same stroke. Some of them also don't have kāinga to come home to. So when they were wanting to send people back here from the city during COVID-19, there was a lot of kind of tūpato, with the ture of the Pākehā. That's the range of people who grew up here and those who didn't grow up here."

"We put a rāhui in the village, we shut down every fishing pool, we shut down any public space that any campervan or anyone could come into our village and park up. We sat down [by] the river and we cleared everybody out and we went fishing ourselves. We went hunting ourselves. Because it's our backyard and we had a hapū response like that."

"There are a number I think of tikanga that we re-introduced. We brought back. Rāhui was definitely one, aukati were others. You were not to go in these areas. You can only go in these areas once restrictions had been lifted. We were doing that with places able to gather kai with whānau, not to go there because, [as] Pākehā call it, we were immune-compromised. But actually, it was just about setting very clear barriers around those whānau and those parts of the papakāinga, where we knew if you have a hūpē nose whatever there is some restriction set around particular places so that we could have our babies and our old people be in safe places."

Looking back to the earlier example of rāhui in the pūrākau of Te Putu, it demonstrated how rāhui principles – grounded in whakapapa, tikanga, and collective responsibility – offer different frameworks for whānau protection that can enhance pandemic preparedness strategies. This whakapapa-based approach ensured that decisions prioritised future generations as vital decision-making consideration. This approach is an example of tikanga-based governance and localised decision-making. Decisions were made by those most affected rather than imposed externally.

Significantly for Māori, rāhui carries a different weight and meaning than government-imposed lockdowns, and its framing may be more digestible, especially for Māori communities that are more accustomed to tikanga-based management and governance.

Unlike lockdowns, rāhui embody whakapapa, manaakitanga, and kaitiakitanga principles. Rāhui position restrictions as protective measures for collective resources and hauora used for protecting resources. Crucially, rāhui are enacted and lifted through kōrero and collective agreement rather than top-down enforcement. This makes compliance inherently more local and organic rather than externally mandated.

This distinction suggests that if governments and health ministry responses had conceptualised pandemic restrictions in certain instances/areas as rāhui instead of lockdowns, public (and iwi Māori) trust might have increased, especially where government mandates faced resistance or outright opposition. Future pandemic responses that emphasise rāhui as a way of safeguarding whānau and ensuring oranga may encourage co-operation rather than resentment. While mainstream public understanding of rāhui is limited, the concept is not unprecedented, given its established use by local councils/hapū and iwi in environmental contexts, which provides a foundation for broader application in health or pandemic emergency management.

Disruption to Tikanga

While some tikanga practices were activated (e.g., rāhui), some were disrupted. Disruption to tikanga practices emerged as a key theme through several kaikōrero discussions. Some kaikōrero described how COVID-19 public health directives fundamentally changed tikanga protocols – most notably in tangihanga. The alteration of tikanga surrounding tangihanga during COVID-19 harkened back to the 1918 influenza pandemic where Māori kin-communities were forced to suspend tangihanga practices for survival.

These disruptions extended beyond practical inconvenience. It infringed upon a core tenet of Te Ao Māori – the ability to properly farewell the deceased, to gather whānau together at marae/kāinga to grieve collectively, to fulfil cultural obligations that ensure the

safe passage for the departed, the time and space for loved ones to mourn together, and to share/eat kai to lift the state of tapu.

This theme includes the immediate practical challenges of adapting tikanga Māori to pandemic restrictions but also the inherent spiritual and emotional impacts of being unable to honour the passing of a loved one and give/receive the comfort that tangihanga can provide.

The following examples from kaikōrero illustrate the impact the disruptions caused as well as the unavoidable adaptive measures whānau and marae developed to maintain some semblance of tikanga within the confines of public health constraints:

“The other part I wanted to touch on was our tangihanga, at first our tangihanga were 10 in that ope, then it went to 50. Well when it hit 50 we had one of our tino rangatira Matua Wiremu Wiremu, he passed away and we’re still in lockdowns with ope of 50. We have a waka moving down the road that I’m having to navigate into Rāhiri marae with hundreds of people coming, but they had to stay in the ope of 50. It changed the tikanga of the house, it really did where we still need to, you know, come out, feed our manuhiri and it went into little boxes where our manuhiri could then come out of the whare after paying their respects, grab their kai and me haere tātou. You know, the way our tikanga shifted in that space and right up to not going up to our tūpāpaku and our whānau pani but they were still able to pay their respects. But when you’re moving a cannon ball, a police contingency, an army contingency, and a waka all in the space and then having to set up three paddocks with 50 in each ope of the paddock. Those are the dynamics that change from a logistical point of view and it changed the way that were being with each other like we weren’t able to really connect and grieve with the whānau pani and help them grieve. Those were the sorta [sic] things that really touched me when there’s only 10 people, people in the urupā and the grave diggers over there. We had I think the first one at our urupā when my cousin passed away and it was only her and her immediate family and the grave diggers were over there, our minister was really far away. So that stuff hurt...”

“Ngairi talked about the kai packs, you know, because when we give - when we give our manuhiri a kai, it’s not just to feed them, it’s not to feed them because they’re hungry, it’s part of the tapu lifting process. And so that’s why we do it. Significantly one of our kaumātua died at that time. Rongopai tērā. And their whānau was distraught. They were in Whāngarei because all they could do was they could deal with the information that [they] were reading and looking at on the news. So then the need, the want, was to bring him home... through the middle of this pandemic. And so four of us went down to talk with our whānau, and hand on ngākau what our wairua was, was to bring our kaumātua home. And we did. We managed it around the well-being of our people. So then we are at an entry point as you passed up down there you had to fill out a register, wash your hands, wear a mask when you came into our whare, there was no contact, that was limited to your bubble. There was no contact with the tūpāpaku, there was no contact with the whānau pani. That was really, really hard. You know, when you grow up with that, with tikanga, with protocol and then you have to adopt something else, it’s really, really hard. But as difficult to hard as it was, it was about the survival of

our people. You know, everybody coined a phrase – ‘we got to protect our whakapapa’. And that’s all it was... and try and maintain to the best of our ability, our protocols, our tikanga within Ngāti Ruamahue.”

“You know, i a māua e tupu ana, otirā ki te whakatinana i ngā akoranga o te kāinga, o te kura, he hoki atu ki te ruruku ki te waiata, ngā mahi a Tamakōrero a Hinewaiata, e tiaki pai i te taha wairua o te whānau, nō reira ahakoa kāore i noho marae mātou i whakamaraetia taua āhuetanga, ki tōna whare, ki te Funeral Parlour, ehara i te mea i pai haere ngā mahi, engari kia Māori te haere, kia Māori tonu te kawe i aua tikanga. Hoi anō tērā wāhanga tērā. Haere ana te wā, I think he aha? Rua, toru marama, whai muri mai te tangi o tōku kuia. I heke ngā tūre lockdown. The lockdown 4,3,2,1 i ngā tai. Hoi anō i mau tonu ki ngā tukanga kōwhēori, tino whai mātou i te taha hauora, i te hygiene.”

One kaikōrero noted a specific dimension of tikanga disruption. Namely the potential for the continuance of tikanga formed during the pandemic – some of which have become normalised beyond their original need, despite pandemic restrictions ending:

“Yeah, we had to do some things that didn’t align with our kawa or our tikanga during COVID. How are we going to put those back to right? And I’m just thinking now tangihanga. Hey, what’s this whole scheduling of ope going on, right? Kei te haere tonu tērā āhuetanga. You can come at the 9 o’clock whakaeke or you can come at the one o’clock. But see these are all hangovers of something that happened to us as a result of a pandemic response. Because that’s what we had to get to in levels two and then one, which is 50, you could only have a gathering of 50 or gathering of hundred. But I don’t know if our whānau have clicked on. Oh, that’s not how it all used to roll in the past. You know, we’re still doing these things in response.”

Here, the kaikōrero suggest that the return to key pre-pandemic tikanga requires deliberate effort and choosing to restore tikanga practices deemed important to return to. It also suggests that some marae may have adopted streamlined versions of tikanga practices that are easier to maintain rather than returning to full tikanga practices.

Whanaungatanga – Social Connectivity as Resilience and Resource

Whanaungatanga emerged as a significant theme throughout kaikōrero discussions. It manifested in various forms as kaikōrero navigated the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. One component of the values associated with tikanga is whanaungatanga. “Whanaungatanga embraces whakapapa and focuses on relationships [...] whanaungatanga [extends] beyond actual whakapapa relationships and [includes] relationships to non-kin persons who [become] like kin through shared experiences” (Mead, 2016, pp. 32-33). He defines whanaungatanga as “relationship, kinship, a sense of family connection” (Mead, 2025, p. 376).

This formal understanding is enriched by Ngāi Tūhoe rangatira John Rangihau who provides a more experiential description of whanaungatanga as a deeply felt human experience, where “...kinship is the warmth of being together as a family group; what you can draw from being together and the strength of using all the resources of a family...

“THERE ARE TWO
FUNCTIONS OF A PĀ.
KO TE PĀ KAIRIRI.
KAIRIRI IS E KARO
ANA YOU’RE WARDING
OFF, THE BAD STUFF.
THEN THERE’S A PĀ
WHAKAORA, BUT
THEN THERE’S A PĀ
THAT MAKES YOU
WELL AND MAKES
YOU THRIVE.”

- ERU KAPA-KINGI

a strong feeling of kinship or whanaungatanga reaches out to others in hospitality” (1975, p. 166).

During the pandemic, when physical distancing measures challenged traditional expressions of connection and care, whanaungatanga took on particular significance as both a source of resilience and a practice requiring creative adaptation. Kaikōrero described how maintaining and nurturing these relationships – both within whānau networks and extending to broader community connections – became essential for well-being and survival during times of isolation and uncertainty.

In some instances, whanaungatanga relationships proved fundamental to initial pandemic responses and overall resilience. Whanaungatanga provided the relational infrastructure to meet the myriad of challenges presented by COVID-19. The strength of these established networks was evident in the confidence that support would be readily available when it was requested; in the ability to reinforce to whānau that assistance would always be provided to them because of the nature of the relationship, rather than a specific task. This pre-existing commitment to mutual/reciprocal tautoko enables rapid responses, mobilisation of resources, emotional support and practical assistance (i.e., kai mahi) in crises. This commitment shows how whanaungatanga operates as a social connector, support and active response system.

The following examples from kaikōrero illustrate the diverse ways whanaungatanga operated as a vital support system throughout the COVID-19 experience:

“Yes, always have been, ever since we left Hawaiki. What we do best is our relationships. Even though we have this heated debate about tino rangatiratanga, you talk to anyone indigenous overseas – they think we’ve got it. It’s a way of thinking.”

“We had no sanitisers to wipe our car down. You know, we’re told, ‘have to do this, you have to do that, these are all the things you have to do’. But with little resource and zero dollars and a marae and lots of audacity, we mobilised and the iwi reached out and asked, ‘how are you doing things, what [have] you got?’ And we actually had nothing but relationships. And those relationships enabled vans, plunket, Te Ahurei a Rangatahi, Te Kōhao Health, Waahi Whaanui – it was actually the relationships and in the time where nobody kinda knew what to do, audacity was on our side and we kinda just did and learnt...”

Manaakitanga

Throughout the transcripts, manaakitanga emerged as a guiding principle for many. Manaakitanga manifested in diverse forms as kaikōrero described their pandemic experiences and responses. Manaakitanga was exemplified by positive relationships, hospitality, and showing respect, generosity, and care for others. Manaakitanga represents a fundamental care ethic within Māori society. Hirini Moko Mead illuminates the intimate connection between whanaungatanga and manaakitanga, explaining, “a key dimension of whanaungatanga is manaakitanga meaning the ‘nurturing [of] relationships, looking after people, and being very careful about how others are treated’ (2003, p. 29).” This relationship demonstrates how the sense of kinship and belonging inherent in whanaungatanga naturally

extends into the active practices of care, hospitality, and mutual support that characterise manaakitanga.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when the usual forms of manaaki faced unprecedented challenges through physical distancing measures and lockdown restrictions, manaakitanga took on particular significance as communities sought creative ways to maintain their obligations of care and support for one another. Kaikōrero described various adaptations and innovations that allowed them to continue practicing manaakitanga while adhering to public health requirements.

Manaakitanga guided individual, whānau, pā kāinga, hapū, and iwi responses to ensure collective care and resource distribution during the pandemic. This code of conduct was in many instances extended beyond immediate whānau networks to serve all those in need.

The following examples from kaikōrero illustrate how manaakitanga operated as both a guiding principle and practical response throughout the pandemic experience.

“...the marae kāinga whānau just jumped up, there was no money involved they just get in a van and go and do the job. This is the mana you can have over your family where you’re saying to your nieces and nephews you’re gonna take this and you’re gonna drop off to Palmer Mill Road. We operated like that for a good three, four weeks out of iwi money, there’s no transaction that happened. We just responding [sic] and getting the mahi done. Whānau who work. They locked down for one day and they needed help and they were Pākehā families, Indian families, Asia, Asian families before they were Māori families. And they couldn’t believe it by the end, they stopping us in PAK’nSAVE as we’re walking, crying, saying, ‘thank you. Thank you for caring about us. Thank you for bringing this kai, thank you’.”

Some reflections reinforce how past examples of manaakitanga in crisis shaped contemporary Māori approaches. Several kaikōrero pointed to the role of Te Puea Herangi, who championed vaccination, sanitation, and proactive health initiatives in the early 20th century at the time of the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic. One reflection said:

“We had this amazing role model in terms of Te Puea... she took up vaccinations, the earliest forms, she was a great promoter of that ... when she developed Tūrangawaewae in the 1920s, we had a really good sanitation system on the marae. That’s all about preventing the spread of disease... all sorts of initiatives.”

“The establishment of Tūrangawaewae came around the time of the influenza back in 1918, and so Te Puea Herangi was a part of that movement.”

The establishment of Tūrangawaewae Marae following the 1918 influenza pandemic reflects how Māori leaders like Te Puea Hērangi activated manaakitanga in ways that extended beyond immediate crisis response. Their actions embedded health sovereignty within institutional and marae-based structures.

This legacy of proactive health leadership ensured that Māori communities already had foundational models of pandemic response, allowing them to activate tikanga-driven health measures during the COVID-19 crisis.

COVID-19 Response Hubs: Marae and Manaakitanga in Action

In the COVID-19 response, manaakitanga was expressed through marae-based COVID-19 hubs. Marae functioned as the central infrastructure for community pandemic responses that combined both the physical facilities and the established whanaunga networks to deliver culturally grounded and safe care. Kaikōrero consistently identified marae and their surrounding networks as fundamental to pandemic response capacity. Many kaikōrero recognised the marae (i.e., whare tūpuna, wharekai, cooking facilities, ablutions, kāinga) itself but more importantly the embedded mātauranga around crisis response (e.g., hauora services, food distribution, and collective care) that resides within their organisational systems, practices and tikanga.

One participant reflected:

“Our communities held the bones, the infrastructure together. Unless there were no Māori communities in that little place, they were coming to our hauora, they were showing up for food parcels, they were showing up to our manaakitanga.”

Other kaikōrero highlighted:

“I sit on the marae...as a trustee... I kind of figured out what was happening there was pressure coming in around supplying demand like the wharepaku paper etc. So at that I went and ordered \$10,000 worth of products with the Bidfood card on the marae card. I got box loads of toilet paper, any product that you could use like flour beef booster, anything that could make wild pork trout and anything that we harvested of the whenua flavoursome. So the kids will eat it. I bought pasta, bought non-perishable stuff, we bought soy sauces, we bought anything that we knew we could turn into kai to add to the kai that we will catch. We bought packaging, did all of that and then I lined up at the same time the entities that have a responsibility to us to get money off them to pay for the \$10,000 worth of stuff I just bought. And then this is a marae response that’s happening. We were about three weeks ahead of the lockdown thinking and then we also created a communication arm for marae. We created street teams for our village [...] We did a number of things and then before the lockdown happened that day, up to the day, the boys went out cause we got the keys to the gates too. This is all under cover. The boys went out and did a mass cull, and we came home with thirty seven venison that we cut down and hung up. So it’s like going on to the one minute to midnight. Where myself the head chef and our immediate family and a couple of my nephews locked ourselves into the marae. So the marae shut down and then we put ourselves in there so that we could create kai packaging. We cooked kai that we sent out through our street teams and we had a response like that. We created street teams down every street and they were responsible for monitoring their street, they’ll communicate with their street, they’ll come in and we had takeaways. A pick up and takeaway system that we organised at the marae. The street team captains will come in, they’ll pick up enough kai supply for their street and they’ll take it and do the drop offs. We covered every street. But then we ended up covering like half of Taupō where our whānau were situated. At any one time there,

we’re sending out like 6,000 meals in the whole response. Every day there was over 50 meals that were going out to our people who wanted it. And as we’re operating, we had a communication thread going on just to see what was happening. We got our marae van civil defence certified so that we could roll around the streets. At that same time this is a hapū response.”

“And our Māori response whakaaro was let’s go in every marae, get a freezer, we’ll fill that freezer up with kai, we’ll get them some seeds, get little planter boxes just so that you can get ahead of your thinking, we put \$3,000 in each marae account so that you had something to draw upon if you needed to get quick shopping. We created two pātaka kai and we filled it up with supplies. We bought the freezers, we ended up filling it with mutton and pork and whatever. Organised with the rural butcher and we bought band saws, four sets of band saws. We bought the butcher sets, the knives, fridges, freezers, chillers. The sausage makers, the meat patty processors because the thinking was we’re in this for the long haul and we know how to catch kai and we just bought the tools so that we could bring it out of the bush, process it down, harvest it, package it and then send it straight out and we’re doing that now [...] That’s how we chose to kinda [sic] wrap around marae to get them ready for just kai. It was always food sovereignty, what does that look like? And if you took care of the marae, the marae has the ability to take care of the community. Didn’t matter who it was.”

“Waahi Paa were essentially the initiators for all hubs around the motu, especially the COVID response hubs. They followed our lead in terms of relationships because I had a relationship with the DHB at the time, it allowed them to look at the Paa and see that it was a good taura to follow and we need to stand up more COVID response hubs, and it allowed more employment opportunity for whānau at the marae. We were not doing this for free, the bonus was we got paid in the end. It also made relationships grow stronger and that was one of my biggest highlights that come [sic] from the Paa.”

“...the marae being recognised as the hub. Not the first distribution hub but a hub of greatness, ideas, manaakitanga. it was all centered around the marae. There were organisations that were reaching out asking, ‘how can you duplicate that?’ And unless you had the right people in it for the right reason, you couldn’t duplicate it. It was pure and authentic and responded well to not only our marae whānau, hapori and iwi, but nationally too so recognising that responding to COVID was just something that just happens here.”

Such kōrero illustrates the central role of marae in sustaining whānau and wider communities through access to essential tools and resources.

Technology and Communication – Enhancing Connectivity and Emergency Responses

Technology and communications emerged as a theme from some discussions with kaikōrero. In one kōrero session, the critical value of reliable communication technologies was highlighted for pandemic resilience. This theme recognises that effective emergency

preparedness and response in a pandemic can depend entirely on communication infrastructure that can overcome geographical barriers and maintain connectivity during crisis situations. For many Māori communities, particularly those in isolated areas, technology represents a vital link between community networks and contemporary emergency response systems whether they be hapū, iwi or government entities.

The importance of communication technology becomes highly relevant in remote tribal regions like Tūhoe, where some marae communities are accessible only by foot, horse or helicopter. These remote regions can present challenges for maintaining connection at the best of times let alone in emergency health crises. The ability to communicate (i.e. phones, cellular networks, satellite phones) become an invaluable tool for enhancing community needs assessments, resource coordination, immediate health crises, rapid response and feelings of whānau safety and resilience.

“So we had to have an emergency thing pump, respirator and we had to learn fast how to use the defibrillator. So those things are the things that helped us become resilient in high and complex need situations... You know, some of the challenge was being isolated when you had somebody that was unwell. The resilience around being isolated was our ability to use a phone and not feel isolated and not feel fearful that you might not be able to operate the machinery properly because you were it. I remember feeling fearful like that a couple of times [...] We were afraid because of both of us, because she was becoming very unwell because of the COVID making her underlying symptoms more complicated. So we were on the phone one day all day with medical professionals, assisting me to know how to resuscitate her if she had another breathing problem. That helped to build a particular resilience around fear and also just having a blimmen [sic] phone which our grandparents would not have had in their day. To be able to speak to a medical professional who guided us through the difficulties.”

Manaakitanga is an Inclusive Framework

One kaikōrero emphasised that care extended to all who needed it, without restriction or condition:

“Whoever needed a hand, got it... There were no guidelines, there were no restrictions, there were no conditions by which you had to be supported.”

Another stated:

“...some of what I know in community in my other roles, is that they’re [Government, Pākehā communities] really appreciative of the Māori community out there in rural New Zealand. Because it was our communities that held the bones, the infrastructure together. And that’s true. Unless there were no Māori communities in that little place, they were coming to our hauora, they were showing up for food parcels, they were showing up to our manaakitanga. They thank us for that period of time. Even though the national kōrero is rubbish, the community kōrero is totally different. I don’t want our people to get fixated on what a few people in Wellington are saying.”

“But I must say that our move in that space was never just about iwi Māori, it was about the entirety of the community of Whangaroa. Pākehā mā, Māori. So it was about our aunty who’s a Pākehā who’s been down in Whangaroa longer than I’ve been alive. So how can we disregard people that’ve been in our communities for that long?”

These examples show manaakitanga in action, which is to help anyone in need, no matter who they are or where they’re from.

Some kaikōrero described manaakitanga as being most effectively expressed through the marae and its combined physical infrastructure and kaimahi network as illustrated through the following kōrero:

[To] “...respond to this thing called COVID-19 and the best way we knew how to work that or the best place I guess we knew how to work this was the marae, because it had the facilities, it had the space and it had that sense of manaakitanga whenever you would come in, so that was just the right place and space for us to stand up the hub [...] That’s where it really stems from and you know, I think the heart and like Tiana said, ‘the heartbeat of the hub was the marae, is the marae and it needed marae people to ensure that’. Manaakitanga was provided not only to the people of the marae and those who live around but the whole community and so, you know, once one house was safe, everybody got looked after.”

Kotahitanga

Kotahitanga is the principle of unity, mutual responsibility, and coordinated effort. Many reflections within the transcripts emphasised this principle as a defining feature of the pandemic response among iwi and other Māori organisations. The urgency of the COVID-19 crisis saw many marae communities and Māori organisations mobilise a unified strategy. One kaikōrero highlighted the strength of communal buy-in, and the importance of honesty, commitment, and trust as integral factors in their approaches:

“Everyone bought into it, the whole community, the iwi, and there was no bullshitting, no one bullshitted [sic] anyone.”

This kōrero highlights the necessity for transparency and trust building and trust keeping. Kotahitanga is strategic as well as essential for survival and effective resource distribution. A key example of kotahitanga in practice is the formation of Kotahi Te Hoe, where all eight iwi of Te Taihū came together to establish a cohesive response framework:

“So we’re pretty proud, all eight iwi of Taihū don’t always agree and come together collectively. However, COVID was one time we really stepped up as eight iwi.”

Considering the global impact of the pandemic, its possible severity within Aotearoa, and the potential for history to repeat with effects akin to the 1918 influenza pandemic on Māori, a coordinated approach was essential.

A common theme across some reflections was the speed at which iwi-led responses outpaced mainstream or government services. This was likely due to the urgency to protect vulnerable Māori communities but also self-reliance inherent in tikanga-based crisis

frameworks (e.g., tangihanga). Māori kin-communities are well versed in crisis management and are well practiced in delivery support to their own people:

“We were quicker than all of the other services.”

This statement critiques institutional delays while highlighting how Māori-led systems/ responses – which are cultivated in collective accountability – can rapidly adapt to meet urgent needs.

Another kaikōrero acknowledged how dual whakapapa and multiple iwi affiliations shaped their approach with an inclusive and holistic model of support:

“So many of our whānau have dual whakapapa or multiple whakapapa to Tauīhu so it was better for us to work as one to meet collective needs.”

This demonstrates how whakapapa connections ensured decisions were made not in isolation but with a broad view of communal well-being. The creation of Kotahi Te Hoe also ensured streamlined co-ordination, not just within Māori communities but across institutional interfaces:

“It helped us with the political side of it, dealing with health councils, everything to be able to be a bit more streamlined so everyone knew who to go to when they needed something during the pandemic.”

It showed “...the strength of Māori providers” [they] “absolutely smashed it.”

In this light, kotahitanga enabled effective pandemic response through a unified approach based on shared cultural values, ethics and Mātauranga Māori as opposed to the co-ordination of separate efforts. One kaikōrero aptly described this principle, stating:

“...to always take the stories of the past to influence the way that you enable your heart and the care for the people moving into the future, because that’s going to be the only source you’re going to rely on. For the wider understanding of how we move forward in terms of kotahitanga or Kīngitanga, it is to be able to pull people in who align to the same values and align to the same kaupapa you decide to accomplish, whether that’s in a national scale, regional scale, hapori scale or even a marae scale. Everybody is a rangatira and everybody is a rangatahi.”

Aroha – Compassion and Empathy in Practice

Aroha emerged as a subtheme of manaakitanga. Aroha represents the emotional foundation that underpinned care practices and community support during the pandemic. While aroha functions as a distinct concept involving love, compassion and empathy, it operates as an essential component of both manaakitanga (hospitality/care) and whanaungatanga (relationship building). According to Mead, aroha is one of the valuable principles involved in whanaungatanga and manaakitanga as it includes “... affection, love, compassion, empathy, interpersonal warmth and trust” – qualities that are always important no matter what the circumstances might be” (2003, p. 29).

During the pandemic, when physical distancing measures challenged the social norms of interaction care and connection, some kaikōrero highlighted aroha as both the motivation to go above and beyond the normal care practices and the emotional quality that distinguished genuine manaakitanga from mere service provision. Some kaikōrero described how aroha guided their response to community needs and how it influenced their approach to support those that were struggling. The following examples illustrate how aroha was expressed and experienced as both a driving force behind manaakitanga practices and the emotional quality that maintained whanaungatanga connections and kotahitanga throughout the pandemic:

“So during COVID, whilst we were undertaking the activations to turn traffic around, we wanted to remind our whānau, but also manuhiri, that we were looking to cross over into Brynderwyn and further north, that this is about love, aroha. Aroha to our whānau. Aroha to our whakapapa, but also kotahitanga, working together with a common goal to ensure that the threat of any disease didn’t touch our whānau. So those were our main messages, aroha and kotahitanga.”

“So it’s about, just having a bit of compassion within yourselves – from that whānau to that whānau to that whānau – that builds this community. And you know, what Anaru is talking about, using the business sense? Well that’s another level passed where we all live, but we as whānau, as a community in Wainui, as Mahinepua, as a hapū, we developed ourselves from there. We use that model to engage with all our people and with all our hapū because hapū have always been global. But now it’s the way we can communicate with them and the support we get from our hapū today is just so amazing.”

“The most vulnerable, but valuable people was our kaumaatua and sending out one of our rangatahi Epiha Muru-Kete who is a known face to all our kaumaatua and seeing him happy to see his rūruhi by being able to deliver kai packages to them. The emotion and the atmosphere at the time, when you watched that, was fulfilling – not only for us, but for them as well. The smiles on their faces! Although we could not touch, the biggest thing was having those that they know on their doorstep to bring them what they need and to manaaki [...], having members of our team out in the community like Tukaha who was a delivery person at the time, she would do things like karanga to the people in the house to come collect their kai parcel and the beauty of it was we had no rules to follow for how we engage with our whānau. People could throw their own personality into the ring and engage with them in a way that worked for those whānau. The best thing that come [sic] out of this was we knew our community better than anyone else did and it was important that we asked the right questions to gather the right information for our whānau to better manaaki them.”

Matemateāone – Yearning for Whenua, Whānau, and Whanaungatanga

Matemateāone can be described as a profound emotional and spiritual connection and pull to tangata and whenua. Some kaikōrero described matemateāone as a feeling that became so compelling for some individuals during the pandemic that they overrode

public health restrictions to be with their loved ones or to be in touch with their whenua, maunga or awa. Such kōrero shows how cultural and emotional needs can in some cases conflict with government health restrictions based on western administrative territorial boundaries (regional borders, city limits, district council boundaries) that do not align with cultural landscapes or traditional rohe. In this light, matemateāone connect tangata to their maunga, awa, marae, pā kāinga, wāhi tūpuna and wāhi tapu that exist within cultural rather than administrative geographies. As one kaikōrero noted on the topic of government bubble restrictions and the reasons for some individuals breaking of said restrictions:

“I think it was matemateāone, that isolation was an extremely extraordinarily foreign human trait and foreign intuition for our people and I experienced that most people broke their bubbles, it wasn’t for defiance of government rule, I think the strong motivation was matemateāone, I’m not gonna stand by watching them getting that unwell because it’s the rule about a bubble. Despite what the risk might be, I’m still gonna go in and offer somehow and assist our uri’. That’s what it was more so I think, what I experienced. That’s what I say, I think it was matemateāone. Nobody was gonna sit back and watch their whanaunga suffer.”

Generational Shifts in Whānau Care Responsibilities

Generational shifts in whānau care responsibilities emerged as a subtheme to manaakitanga from some discussions with kaikōrero. One kaikōrero observed changes in how recent and current generations responded to whānau care responsibilities compared to more traditional generations. The observations suggested there may be less inclination among younger generations to:

“...immediately drop everything, drop your job, drop everything and just come home, to take care of your parents. It’s less so the case unless that was a deep cultural value instilled in the whole family [...] [some kaumātua] they were isolated on their own and they got unwell very quickly, flu, colds really quickly and it didn’t go away because they didn’t have somebody warming the house up every day.”

This observation notes a shift from traditional manaakitanga practices to present day. The lower likelihood of younger people returning home to care for elder whānau created vulnerabilities during the pandemic and especially in winter. Older people living alone were more likely to become isolated and have greater difficulty recovering from illness without immediate whānau support. This change (which was noted in the speaker’s immediate locality of Tūhoe) may reflect contemporary economic pressures, employment obligations and geographic mobility under government public health restrictions that made immediate care responses more challenging. This shift in whānau dynamics also suggest potential erosion of traditional care values and practices that have historically sustained whānau well-being.

This observation represents not only a pandemic-specific challenge but potentially a broader issue within whānau/marae/hapū that requires attention to ensure manaakitanga/whakapapa obligations can be maintained within contemporary social and economic contexts.

Meeting Kāinga Needs – Beyond Assumptions

Some kaikōrero emphasised the importance of understanding the actual needs of whānau versus the assumed needs during the pandemic. Marae hubs refined their pandemic response efforts through direct experience and whānau feedback. Initially, in some instances, there was resource wastage as response efforts operated on assumptions about whānau requirements, distributing various starter packs and different manaaki care packs that didn’t necessarily align with kāinga priorities:

“...we ended up with three different boxes or packages. We built our little empire down here and started to get them ready. We had a meat box, a kai box that contained essential cupboard items, and a hygiene box. The hygiene box was the most requested box for whaanau as they wanted to keep their house clean and sanitised, and also for the medicine or RATs (Rapid Antigen Tests) provided in the pack [...] I also gave out my reo uukaipoo packs which was a whole lot of tongikura, cards and magnets for your fridge. So we shared these out to our whaanau as activities for their tamariki at home. Because we had the database that allowed us to identify the homes with tamariki in there, how many whaanau are living there and what would be most helpful because nobody needed one of the same thing, but in the first instance we were giving the same pack because it was essentially a starter pack and also to understand what were the needs. There was a whole lot of experience of wasted resources, some whaanau had three large hand sanitizers and only needed one, but we worked on it as a team as you do.”

Notably, the recognition from whānau that hygiene resources were most valuable reflects the practical understanding by whānau of infection prevention and priorities.

Whakapapa – Relational Responsibility and Care

Whakapapa emerged as an important theme throughout several kaikōrero discussions. It did not simply represent genealogical connection between people but a broader relational framework that directed individual (i.e., leaders) and community (marae, hapū) responses. While whakapapa is often understood in terms of the methodical recitation of whānau genealogy thus enabling individuals to trace familial connections backwards through time and link themselves to their ancestry (see for example Rewi, 2010, p. 83), its function extends well beyond genealogy.

Kaikōrero demonstrated an understanding of whakapapa in terms of relationality – the relationships that people have with one another and the responsibility, mutual caretaking and mutual guardianship that comes with relationships. Kaikōrero characterised whakapapa in terms of reciprocity and trust and this shaped how leadership and kin-communities organised manaakitanga, the sharing of resources and maintaining socio-cultural connection during the pandemic.

During COVID-19, whakapapa operated both as a conceptual framework and practical system for understanding and fulfilling relational obligations that extends well beyond immediate whānau connections. Some kaikōrero described how whakapapa responsibilities guided their responses to community needs. These responsibilities influenced their decision-making processes and priorities. It also provided the foundation for networks of

RANGIMARIE DESCRIBED
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SHE DECIDED THAT THE
170 KAIMAHI ACROSS
VARIOUS ROLES WITHIN THE
ORGANISATION – WHETHER
THEY WERE CHIEF
EXECUTIVES, MANAGERS,
PLANNERS OR HEALTH
WORKERS – WOULD ALL
BE ON EQUAL FOOTING AS
PART THE COVID-19
RESPONSE TEAM.

support that proved essential during the lockdowns and periods of isolation that came with it. The following examples from kaikōrero illustrate how whakapapa is “...simultaneously both paradigm and method” (Paki & Peters, 2015, p. 55):

“I think whakapapa to me is all about our connections to one another, and whakapapa to me is also, it’s a practice. And I can’t re-emphasise the fact that whakapapa is around how you connect to and your responsibility for others. And so when I think about the way that whakapapa influences me today and the mahi that I’m doing, it is also about making sure that you are creating a contribution of consequence for yourself, your family and those that you are a part of and I would hope that you choose professions that enable you to do that. So there is not one thing that I kind of get involved in, that I can’t see how it might help and advance others. I think also it is an inherent responsibility for us to be able to create whakapapa and ensure that that whakapapa is strong [...] What I would also say whakapapa [...] as a consequence of our colonial reality is that many of us have not been able to have access to that connection to it and or to be able to grasp that and then so I think it is a responsibility for us to be able to create environments where our young ones can learn. I’m going on 50 and the conversations I was having when I was five and the conversations our mokopuna now are having at five are really different and that tells me that we have slowly and successfully started to build the knowledge of and connection to whakapapa. I think the other part too is that it connects us not only to ourselves but it connects us to other indigenous peoples across the world and I think we’ve got a bit of work to be able to do to kinda [sic] strengthen that. The practice of love, the doing it honestly in a way that you were wanting to care for and ensure that they were safe. To me you can have all the flash strategies and iwi world that you want, but at the end of the day if you can’t get that fundamental, because even if you put it against, you know, even if you don’t really appreciate all the different ways of doing it, they knew it, the heart of it [...] You gotta be nice to one another. Even if you disagree, the question is how do you actually go forward with kindness? And that seems to put us in good stead I think.”

“So I loved that about us in terms of the way we implemented how we were gonna [sic] continue to feed our people through a time we were unsure about. Knowledge, mātauranga was important. We went way past the narrative of ‘if you’re gonna get COVID’ – it was a matter of when you do. If you are either immunised or not these are the two pathways that you can use so we have rongoā Māori supply. As well as knowledge to go with that, as well as pathways if you wanna get boosted up too, so you made your choice. Some chose to be immunised, some of us didn’t for whatever reason but we responded to all of our whānau in that space and just took the lead out on that. We rolled out campervans for whānau who didn’t have anywhere to stay. If you’re stuck and you’ve only got a small house, so we brought a caravan to your side, a campervan and you could stay in that so that you didn’t affect your whānau, we just tried anything possible.”

The Impact of COVID-19 on Kaimahi Māori

Some kaikōrero spoke of the emotional toll of the pandemic on their wairua or psyche due to the continuous workload, and the absence of personal recovery time for those in frontline roles. As one kaimahi noted:

“I think my personal experiences that as a group of kaimahi we probably didn’t have enough time to deal with our own emotions and ‘cause you’re on the run 24/7. Lockdown for some was chilling and baking and doing bread, making sourdough and what have you. I didn’t have any of those experiences because you’re so busy working. But you didn’t really get in a chance to, I guess, look after yourself. And so contracting COVID, okay, sweet I’ll do a week in isolation while working from home.”

Here the kaikōrero contrasts their experience with those able to slow down and engage in leisure activities during lockdown. This highlights the intensity of essential frontline work and the lack of personal downtime for some kaimahi Māori on the front line. The reference to contracting COVID-19 but continuing to carry out frontline mahi reflects the persistent demands placed on Māori kaimahi in iwi/hapū-run community care roles. This also highlights a critical gap in well-being support for Māori kaimahi whether it be professional or voluntary/ringa wera capacities – where self-care was de-prioritised in favour of collective responsibilities.

This theme speaks to the unique challenges faced by kaimahi Māori who were the backbone of many a response in rohe across the country. Some were volunteers while some were selected for their experiences as marae ringa wera, their intrinsic understanding of cultural values and their ability to provide culturally appropriate manaaki care. Many kaimahi found themselves functioning as multi-role responders. Some functioned as social workers, health advocates, kai distributors, inter iwi/hapū/whānau/government liaison – simultaneously and all while navigating traumatic situations, emotional burdens and likely taking care of their own whānau needs when returning home.

“Often, we were social workers, because you go and drop off kai, and we did have one of those with our crew. They went and did a kai delivery and kua mate tētehi, so she had passed and because of the no contact. There are a number of things that even as a workforce we needed to manage through and many of our kaimahi weren’t trained, they [were] marae ringa wera. That was the reason they were chosen for the response, was because they knew manaakitanga, kaha ki te manaaki. You can learn everything else, but if intrinsically you know how to look after people, then those were the people that we needed in the response. And kei konei tonu, e mahi ana.”

Leadership in Crises

During the COVID-19 response, in many places leadership emerged under pressure, often through re-active necessity rather than long-term pandemic-specific preparation. One kaikōrero reflects on the challenges of those in leadership roles, on the urgency of needing to build leadership, and the need to care for those who carried the weight of crisis leadership.

“...we don’t have to create leaders born of fire. Some will always be born at that time. But it doesn’t have to be every leader. And that afterwards, we’re there to look after them, to restore them. They took the hit for us. So ask yourself, what did you do to look after your COVID leader. Where are they now? Where’s their oranga now?”

This reflection calls for sustained care and proactive leadership development. The following comment extends the theme of leadership to cover the burdens placed on Māori leaders and how leadership is perceived as a service role rather than a position of authority. It challenges the normalisation of sacrifice and un-kindness in leadership. It questions the expectation that Māori leaders must simply endure hardship as part of their role:

“...leadership roles. Mentally, I see them more as service roles, but everyone goes, ‘Oh, that’s just part of what you’ve got to take, take that one on the chin, because it’s part of leadership’. I said, ‘who made unkindness a part of Maaori leadership, yeah? Who made whakaiti? Fair enough if I’ve got too big shoulders, me peeraa bring me back to the right size, yeah?’”

This kōrero suggests that leaders must be supported beyond moments of crises.

Mana Wāhine Māori Leadership Through Crises

Wāhine Māori leadership emerged as a significant theme throughout the kaikōrero discussions. This reflects the continuation of traditional roles in crisis management and contemporary expressions of female leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. Historically, wāhine Māori held pivotal positions within socio-cultural, political and community structures across Aotearoa. Traditional leadership roles included decision-making processes relating to whenua, whānau, resource use and hapū/iwi well-being. Central to their influence has been the crucial role of wāhine Māori in ensuring cultural continuity and Mātauranga Māori preservation. This legacy of leadership is exemplified in influential figures such as Te Puea Hērangi who was mentioned by several kaikōrero as someone who was instrumental in the Kīngitanga movement and the Māori response to the 1918 influenza pandemic. For example:

“Often when the iwi tell stories about their heroes and heroines they talk about the captain or their canoe and all that, but for us at Tūrangawaewae our heroine is Te Puea and the whole rationale behind her re-establishing Tuurangawaewae as a centre for Kīngitanga was in response to her experience of supporting Waikato during the Spanish flu pandemic. A lot of the steps she put into place when she developed the marae was about responding to the things that she learnt through her experiences, flu pandemic, it was about a lot of initiatives around infection control and stopping the spread of disease. Our knowledge as a community in Tūrangawaewae, it’s really entrenched around how to respond to pandemics, and it was that experience that really informed how we looked after our people during the COVID pandemic. It’s a part of our marae history, it’s really the thinking. The knowledge is really entrenched for us.”

“We had this amazing role model in terms of Te Puea, one of her mentions was she took up vaccinations, the earliest forms, she was a great promoter of that including to our

older members of our community to talk about mass vaccinations on the marae. So we try to say, it’s part of our tupuna. Whaea could see the benefits of immunisation, then we fly all of her stuff, she got it, we can get it and we can do it. Just little things around infection control, when she developed Tuurangawaewae for the 1920s we had a really good sanitation system on the marae, that’s all about preventing the spread of disease, all sorts of initiatives. If we don’t learn from the lessons, then we’re doing a disservice to our tuupuna, that was at the forefront of our response.”

Other key mana wāhine Māori from the past were mentioned alongside Te Puea Hērangi:

“In 1913-14 the bird flu pandemic hit Waikato and the resilience plan or pandemic response to the bird flu hitting is that she picked up a variety of hapuu along the river on a barge and settled back here and set up at Tuurangawaewae in the banks of Ngaaruawaahia and the banks of Waikato to seek salvation for her people and she established a hospital to care [for] and nurture her people. She didn’t only use that as a sheltering place, she used the facilities and what she had to look after those who would be able to seek salvation elsewhere or build up the marae to fit more people, so she was able to shelter them. There was a whole lot of inter-generational trauma because of the separation of whaanau along the river, those who had bird flu had to remain in one space and those who did continue on the journey [went] to a place [for] safety. She also reached out through a lot of her relationships. Paakehaa being some, doctors and people that had solutions through the pandemic. So there was a working relationship that was built to the Paakehaa community and the Maaori community to better look after their people together. But in those stories I think we’d come up, we identify the role of women and the ability of the legacies that she has created, multiple leaders within our community of Waahi. The examples that she has provided that have been established, the examples of Tutata Matatahi and Ramari Maipi who established the first Māori medical centre here at Waahi Paa. So there are a lot of examples or experiences that Te Puea has left, that Piupiu Te Wherowhero has left. Piupiu Te Wherowhero was a respected lady that went across the motu to inspire, to ensure the kotahitanga continues within those pockets of people that were feeling isolated and so she shared the words of Paimarire that also built the relationships of different haahi like Raatana and Ringatuu and carry those pockets of people to bring them together to understand what kotahitanga looks like. So there are a lot of people, a lot of examples or inspirational women that have grown through those whakapapa and through our foundations of our marae and our tikanga and the history that has been left.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, kaikōrero recognised how wāhine Māori continued this tradition of leadership and drawing upon their roles as community organisers to guide pandemic responses within their whānau, hapū and wider communities. The influence of wāhine Māori was evident across multiple aspects of the pandemic response – from maintaining cultural practices and organising whānau and marae support to advocating for culturally appropriate health measures and the continuation of Mātauranga Māori transmission despite the physical restrictions in place. The following examples from kaikōrero illustrate how wāhine Māori leadership manifested throughout the pandemic

experience. These examples demonstrate the strength and influence of wāhine Māori in times of crisis.

“Everybody’s got a role, there’s work enough for everybody, find your lane, do it well and make sure you look after everybody at a tangi, the key thing that we must do is manaaki. Manaaki and aroha. And so we took that idea and we did it. The first thing gotta do is gotta find out where everybody is and how everybody was going. And so to do that, and I think all it did is just made me very clear about how we were gonna lead this. I grabbed the best comms team I could possibly get and that comms team was my mother, her sister and my auntie. And I got them in a room on the day that we went into lockdown because we were all a bubble on the papakāinga. That was our kind of part of our bubble. And I made them ring every single kaumātua over the age of 60 and so they would sit down and I would be there. I’m in one room because I’m trying to organise. Have we got kai? Have we got health stuff? Is everybody okay? What happens when kids can’t go to kura, how are we gonna do that stuff?’ So you know real practical things, right? Everybody does not know what to do, who’s no longer gonna have a job? What are we gonna do for those people that aren’t working? And so you are thinking about all of that stuff. Can people eat? Can they afford things? Do they know what’s going on? Have they got struggles going on? What happens for people who are having a whole heap of hard times in their households? Where do they go? So I’m kind of in that mode and at the same time I’ve got these three wonderful comms people ringing, ringing all of their relations and what I could hear out of that was fear, what I could hear out of that was uncertainty. What I could hear out of that was nervousness and what I could hear out of that though was hope and resilience. So our old people, they didn’t ask for kai packs. Our old people didn’t ask for pūtea. Our old people asked, ‘how was such and such, what about my moko? What about my nieces and nephews? Can you go and do this, that and the other?’ That is quite a humbling, humbling good lesson around the way that they would behave, you know, of what was important [...] And so I think protecting your whakapapa is also about making sure that aroha is at the centre of your behaviour. Aroha is the centre of why you’re doing things and you will move mountains to be able to remove the noise to get the outcome that they deserve.”

By anchoring manaakitanga leadership within historical precedents (i.e., 1918 pandemic response), such kōrero as highlighted in this theme show the continuum between past and present approaches to well-being-focused leadership by mana wāhine Māori. These kōrero also show how the aroha and manaaki-based legacy of the likes of Te Puea Hērangi remain embedded in individual/whānau thinking as well as in health strategies of many marae and Māori organisations today.

Whakapono me ngā Hāhi: Faith and Religious Movements

Faith and religion emerged as a theme through the discussions. Some kaikōrero referenced Hāhi Katorika while others highlighted Māori religious movements such as Ringatū and Rātana/Mōrehu.

Some kaikōrero highlighted that whakapono can offer frameworks for understanding and coping with crisis – providing comfort and support during uncertain times and the

loss of loved ones. Karakia and other spiritual practices offered daily coping mechanisms alongside collective rituals that initiated interconnection during times of physical separation due to isolation measures. For example:

“Another aspect I think to foster in the next generation is whakapono. Ahakoa te whakapono, me he Katorika koe, he Mōrehu koe, he atua Māori tō whakapono, even if it is just whakapono to yourself, I think whakapono is huge and ehara i te mea pakeke matotorutanga o te whakapono. Hoi anō, that was helpful for us and again as you speak of mental health, that was a way that we could look after our mental state – whakapono, our whakapono. My one, whakapono atua Māori and things that we learnt at kura that we were brought up in, then we had our whānau who are hard out Katorika. You saw it across the motu, here and our rohe too. There were daily 7 pm Zooms, different hāhi, whether you were Mōrehu doing the whakamoemiti or the Katorika were doing their karakia or Atua Māori karakia tawhito. That’s a big thing that we should foster in our tamariki, is whakapono and ahakoa te whakapono not to force a whakapono but just kia morimori, kia poipoi i tērā reanga hou, kia tahuri atu ki te aha? Tō whakapono, me he atua, me he taiao, me he reo whatever. Belief that helps you get through things and when you feel taumaha, it’s easy to turn to that taha kia tiaki tō taha wairua, i tō hinengaro, i tō tinana, ērā āhuatanga katoa.”

Others highlighted Ringatū and Rātana/Mōrehu which emerged in the 19th and early 20th centuries. These religious movements represented distinctive Māori responses to colonial disruptions that blended Christian theology with traditional Māori spiritual practices and worldviews. These religions often often incorporated specific approaches to health, healing and whānau/hapū well-being.

Beyond serving as historical reference points, whakapono continue to actively shape individual, whānau and wider kin-community responses during contemporary crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. As some kaikōrero explained:

“The Rātana Faith is a big part of the Ngāti Whātua wider social landscape. It’s a major whakapono for our people. It always has been since its inception in the 1920s when T W Rātana had his vision. There have been a number of challenges because some of the teachings of the Rātana hāhi have had an impact on Ngāti Whātua but also our understanding of how we interact with our culture in the various expressions. So there has been a number of tukituki. And so one of the challenges has been to find ways for both the hāhi and its teachings to exist within a broader space where the culture and the identity of Ngāti Whātua can also flourish, without having to compromise their faith in the whakapono to Rātana. Those times aside, they’re going to make the jump over and fully adapt to a culturally driven, a tikanga driven pathway forward. However, a lot of our whānau are still practicing Rātana members, but at the same time sit on our paepae, undertake the various tikanga, whether it be in pōhiri, whether it be at tangihanga.”

Such kōrero suggests that many whānau maintain dual religious and cultural identities that would have influenced their pandemic decision-making. The kōrero suggests suggests this dual participation can be complementary, requiring ongoing negotiation about which framework to follow in different circumstances, like a pandemic. During COVID-19, whānau

would have needed to navigate the tensions – for example, balancing religious obligations with tikanga requirements and their broader cultural responsibilities.

Disruption to Education

The nationwide lockdowns and moves to online learning drastically altered the educational experiences of many rangatahi Māori. Many struggled to adjust. While solutions like iPads and Chromebooks were introduced to facilitate remote learning, the long-term effects were a concern listed by some kaikōrero. The impacts reshaped lifestyles, daily routines, social structures and social bonds that come from school/kura participation. Lasting consequences are still being felt today. One kaikōrero noted that:

“There’s almost a generation of kids whose educational experience and journeys were ruined by two to three years of lockdowns, remote learning, learning from home, online learning. And we’re still experiencing the issues now where kids just don’t go to school.”

COVID-19 Impacts on Cultural Identity and Whanaungatanga

A distinctive theme emerged from one kaikōrero in Te Tai Tokerau who reflected on the difference in effects of the 1918 Influenza and COVID-19 pandemics on cultural identity and whānau, hāpori relationships. This theme is an observation about the unintended cultural consequences of pandemic responses – particularly in the way COVID-19 restrictions and behaviours encroached on Māori values. Unlike other themes that focused on cultural resilience and adaptation, this theme highlights the creation of division within Māori kin-communities. One kaikōrero reflected on how the COVID-19 response of restrictions to some tikanga practices where necessary for physical health, they also came at a cost to cultural well-being and whānau and hapū unity.

The comparative analysis between the 1918 Influenza and COVID-19 pandemics suggests that while both were devastating health crises, the social and cultural impacts differed. As one kaikōrero stated the 1918 pandemic, while devastating for Māori, apparently strengthened collective Māori identity and reinforced tikanga values such as whanaungatanga and aroha. In contrast, COVID-19 measures – particularly government mask and vaccine mandates, social distancing and restrictions on tikanga practices – created an environment where kin-communities were policing each other, creating an atmosphere of judgement and exclusion as opposed to tautoko, aroha and inclusion. For example:

“...that pandemic [1918 influenza pandemic] taught us something. It taught us something that COVID never taught us. That pandemic of the Spanish flu taught us how to be Māori. How to come together as Māori, how to be fully Māori in everything. COVID taught us how to separate ourselves. How to become aliens towards each other. Come on, we were all going to the four square and judging anyone who didn’t have their mask on. ‘Hey uncle where’s your mask?’ [...] But this flu, this COVID, taught us about it, what taught me about all this. I don’t think it taught you about all this. But many of us lost, many of us at that time, lost who we were. My cousins were going to bury somebody at Pawarenga. They said, ‘no go away, go find another hui’. But he was from there.”

This observation represents cultural insight into the hidden costs of pandemic control – of how public health measures, when rigidly applied across rohe – iwi, hapū and whānau can create a sense of alienation within kāinga communities. Future pandemic planning must also consider the socio-cultural health of kāinga community so as to not inadvertently undermine the cultural foundations that provide resilience to these communities during crises.

It is important to note here that while this perspective emerged from one kaikōrero in a specific region and was not explicitly echoed by other kaikōrero in other rohe in this research, the instances described – such as whānau being denied access to tangihanga at their own urupā, community members policing mask-wearing, vaccinations and the general atmosphere of judgement and separation – likely occurred across multiple communities throughout Aotearoa during the pandemic. The specificity of this observation to one kaikōrero may reflect regional variations in pandemic experiences. This observation may also reflect the differences in how kin-communities and marae navigated restrictions. The reflective capacity of this kaikōrero may also express a particular cultural dynamic that may have been experienced by others but not articulated. While locally observed, as mentioned above, this should be considered in future pandemic preparedness.

Vaccine Hesitancy, Attitudes and Decisions

Vaccine hesitancy and the attitudes and decision-making processes around vaccine treatment was a theme brought up by several kaikōrero. Some kaikōrero described their own hesitancy or concern or that of their whānau within the context of broader discussions about healthcare access, historical experiences with the health system, and cultural approaches to health and well-being. These conversations highlighted the multifaceted nature of healthcare decision-making within Māori kin-communities, where individual choices intersect with whānau well-being, cultural values and kāinga responsibilities.

The following examples illustrate the range of experiences and attitudes that emerged from the pandemic.

“I wasn’t keen on it [vaccination], actually I didn’t get vaccinated at all, I was glad that when you needed the passes to be able to fly away, I was able to get the exemption from going to get tested, so not having to do it. I’m not against it, I just didn’t feel like doing it myself, I wanted my parents to get it because I never wanted them to get sick, they are a little bit sickly, I didn’t want it to affect them in case they did get affected badly, but luckily they never caught it.”

“Specifically, in my whānau we didn’t really like the fact that it [the vaccine] was sort of forced upon us. A lot of people were losing their jobs at that time, even my father, he lost his job and was at home. Losing your mahi and source of income adds a lot more stress on your shoulders especially having a whole family on your back to pay for and losing your job, [it] can be very stressful in that situation. So yes, my whānau and I ended up getting the vaccine obviously as it was enforced and we were sceptical about it, but in the end it all worked out well...”

“...but my whānau didn’t none of us [sic] got vaccinated for the COVID and in terms of did we get it or not? Yeah, I’ve had it [COVID-19 infection], like, four times whānau. I didn’t get the shot, I don’t know if it was a good move. I’m not anti-vaxxer but my mum and dad don’t believe in vaccines altogether and as a whānau collective because those are my mum and dad’s beliefs. It was only natural that me, my sister and my partner at the time followed.”

“I had a team of 170 and I made the decision that every single person in that organisation, if you wanted to be employed in there you had to be vaccinated, that was my view. And the reason why I had chosen that and our board had supported that was because they were on the front line. They were taking boxes into other people’s houses and as I said, our population’s a little bit different because we’re right in front of it, you know, if it was gonna spread all those different versions of it our lot were gonna probably get it first because we were mostly here. And so that was the call we made. What I will say to you is that I met with every single one of them and there were only a handful of them. There was only half a dozen out of 170 that said we’re not gonna be vaccinated. And I said that’s fine. But you know what they said to me, they said to me, ‘but we understand what you’re trying to do. We support what you’re trying to do and when this is finished do you think I can come back?’ I said, ‘you go hard’. So I think that part there is about understanding your position and being really tūturu to that, because this wasn’t about do it because you wanna do it, this was because, actually, you’re walking into other people’s houses. It came down to the four when we were only a week in and I had just said that to a whole lot of people who didn’t wanna be vaccinated. They had to go in the middle of Papakura and deliver some boxes to one of my aunties, and guess what, Auntie’s got Delta. And they come out to me and they say to me, ‘oh, I’m unsafe’. I said, ‘you’re on the front line, you gotta make a call. But we will be going out to that house every day and you just gotta figure it out for yourself but they never came back, you know, this wasn’t a dispute that we ended up having massive raru about. This was all about, this is where we’re heading, this is why we’re heading there and they supported that. So I think that was our privilege, eh? That’s our privileged position. Understand that other people kinda didn’t have that and I think because we went that way, honestly, we just didn’t have protests. When we turned up to kaupapa, no protest. When we turned up to kaupapa, no one getting angry [sic]. When we turned up to kaupapa, everybody smiling [sic]. Even if they were, even if they weren’t. So that’s what I think saved us...”

One kaikōrero reframed vaccine hesitancy not simply as individual reluctance or due to misinformation but rather as a symptom of systemic exclusion from healthcare research and development process. Their kōrero suggests that Māori hesitancy is reflective of being positioned as passive recipients of medicine (i.e., vaccines) rather than active participants in health research and practice. Hesitancy could be addressed by genuine participation in the health system rather than dependency on external health decisions:

“The vaccine hesitancy that existed was prevalent and really obvious in our hapori up in Kaitaia, throughout Northland, throughout all our Māori hapori. That shows that our people need to be more systematically integrated into these spaces, not just

waiting for the golden pill or the magical intervention to be offered to us at the end, at the healthcare service delivery stage. To be involved here, to be training up our young taurira in biomedical approaches and bio molecular discovery so that we can have this full connectivity into a system that I think we, rightfully, should have an element of ownership in.”

Seen in this light, vaccine hesitancy represents a rational response to historical and ongoing exclusion from the health system. Structural change is needed rather than just better messaging for future pandemic preparedness.

Misinformation

Misinformation and concerns about trust emerged as a theme in kaikōrero discussions as some kaikōrero described their views and experiences navigating the complex information environments during the pandemic. Some kaikōrero described specific instances of misleading information they observed or saw being shared, while others discussed the border challenge of maintaining information quality and trust during a period of uncertainty and rapidly evolving health guidance. Such kōrero highlights the complexity of information environments at that time of crisis when there was a need for accurate information.

“Why even the vaccination, like we got given some pūtea when I was working for the iwi-led health and social service in Whanganui. It [the funding] was to create a rangatahi response based on the vaccination data that we had received from the Government, telling us that there’s a high percentage of young people that hadn’t been vaccinated in the Whanganui, Rangitīkei, Ruapehu, Ngā Rauru, South Taranaki area. From there, what we created was a kaupapa called shock us, which was a pro-choice kaupapa. And all I wanted to understand was, why, why not? Or why are you? And that was it, you know. And then that gave us a way better understanding of this idea of misinformation, of the influx of information, of the influx of decision-making that was real intense, intense and real off the cuff and the announcements every day, the traffic light system. Like, it was just very overwhelming for our whānau. And so I reflect on that.”

Rongoā Māori

The term rongoā Māori embraces a range of healing practices. As a holistic system of traditional and contemporary Māori health treatments, rongoā includes interventions that are used to restore balance and bring oranga – well-being to a person’s hinengaro, tinana and wairua. The Waitangi Tribunal in its Wai 262, Ko Aotearoa Tēnei report characterises rongoā Māori as a ‘multi-dimensional form of care and healing’ (2011, p. 213), reflecting it as an approach that extends beyond physical treatment to include spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions of wellness. This broad characterisation recognises rongoā can involve plant-derived medicines, spiritual practices and other therapies that work in unison to treat underlying causes of physical, mental or spiritual illness and promote holistic well-being within a culturally appropriate and culturally safe framework.

Kaikōrero spoke directly about, or made reference to, various forms of rongoā that they knew of; or had either heard were utilised during historical pandemics like the 1918

influenza outbreak; or had personally found helpful throughout their experience of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following examples from kaikōrero illustrate the role of rongoā Māori during the pandemic.

“...we’ve got the river here, we’ve got the bush at the back of us. Rongoā Māori – another huarahi we need to go down with rongoā Māori is ensuring that we can provide our own rongoā for our people. Whether it be for a maremare, whether it be a mamae, any of those things. So it’s building up those pātaka of mātauranga amongst ourselves to ensure that it would be okay. We don’t have to be reliant on what’s available in town. I know that’s a big shift, that’s a big shift for our people because I will say our kaumātua, you know, they’re used to their rongoā Pākehā. They know it inside out and outside in. And yip it absolutely supports them, it helps them.”

The following subthemes are presented as components of rongoā Māori, reflecting its holistic nature that extends far beyond plant-based remedies. Rongoā Māori integrates physical, spiritual, mental, and social dimensions of healing (see for example, Pearse, 2023, p. 16).

Te Taiao/Whenua

Te Taiao and whenua emerged as a significant sub-theme of rongoā Māori. Many kaikōrero emphasised the critical importance of their own local natural environment as a source of both physical and spiritual sustenance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Te Taiao – the natural world that contains and surrounds us, including land, water, climate, and all living beings – represents the interconnection between tangata and whenua that underpins Te Ao Māori philosophy. Te Taiao provides balance, connection and wellness. Engagement with Te Taiao helps Māori to make sense of their lives and experiences they have as Māori. This can alleviate feelings of stress and generate states of ‘mauri ora’ and positive health outcomes (Lipsham, 2023, pp 189, 190).

This foundational relationship of tangata with Te Taiao flows through to all other rongoā practices. Namely:

- karakia, kapa haka and waiata as spiritual and cultural healing methods;
- various rituals and practices as therapeutic approaches;
- kai as both sustenance and rongoā;
- and te taha wairua as the spiritual dimension that permeates the healing process.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, kaikōrero demonstrated how these interconnected practices operated together as part of a unified rongoā framework as a response to pandemic challenges in their communities.

Kaikōrero frequently reflected on their connections to specific places – their maunga, awa, and pā kāinga environments – describing how these relationships fostered emotional and spiritual connections that proved therapeutic and healing during times of stress brought about by the pandemic. Some kaikōrero spoke of meaningful places where

the practice or ritual of being present and active within Te Taiao – engaging in physical movement and everyday activities – created healing experiences and a sense of safety. These place-based practices were understood as beneficial rituals that kaikōrero believed led to enhanced physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Such kōrero demonstrates how the connection to whenua functions as an essential component of holistic Māori healing and well-being approaches.

The following examples from kaikōrero illustrate how engagement with Te Taiao served as a vital form of rongoā during the pandemic.

“...the taiao that we were raised in and the taiao we were immersed in. That’s everything we know now and everything we don’t know, but are yet to know until we know, then we do know. So our taiao is what makes us different to everybody else because no one’s got an awa like ours, no one’s got a maunga like ours, no one knows our roads better than us because we obviously live on those roads and so if something happens to you while you’re outside in the world. One of the things that makes you you, that re-grounds you - is returning back to your kāinga, to where you grew up, to what you know best.”

“So when COVID hit Whangaroa, my family came running home. One was in Taumaranui, she just picked up her stuff and packed up and came straight home and my brother, he was in Kawerau, just packed up his stuff came straight home because we know how to look after ourselves in our own rohe and we know where all the fish is, we know where all the kai [is], the kai moana. So we knew that if anything came amiss we would, yeah. So people were still fishing, diving during COVID, yeah, but they just weren’t doing it in a big group. Yeah, and they weren’t taking big kai, a lot of kai, they were only taken up with themselves and the old people, the old or getting parcels of kai.”

Karakia, Kapa Haka and Waiata – Rituals and Practices of Well-being and Resilience

Karakia and waiata emerged as another significant sub-theme that aligns within the broader meaning of rongoā Māori. Some kaikōrero highlighted the importance of these traditional practices – both historically and during the COVID-19 pandemic – as essential aspects of healing and well-being. Karakia and waiata are core components of tikanga Māori; they can be enacted within everyday settings and used to enhance individual and/or collective well-being. Significant research has demonstrated the physiological, psychological, and social benefits of communal waiata and the ritualistic practices of karakia.³ Findings show that participants experience improved well-being and increased feelings of whanaungatanga (connectedness) to their peers. These practices function as influential collective social experiences that can draw people together, create unity, and generate lasting social cohesion and community bonds.

The therapeutic efficacy of waiata and karakia is a result of their calming effects, achieved via the melodies, rhythms, and tones that work to restore emotional and spiritual balance (Motu et al, 2023, p. 3 citing Rollo, 2013). Some kaikōrero described the use of

³ See for example Batt-Rawden & Andersen (2019); Glew, Simonds, & Williams (2021); Motu, Watson, Rātima, Karaka-Clarke, & Stevens (2023).

karakia as a means to achieve inner and outer calm. Some described it in conjunction with wai or other taiao-related taonga such as rongoā rākau (plant-derived remedies). This shows the integrated nature of traditional Māori healing approaches.

“...so I think what was interesting too, was many of our pakeke, we had marae stand-up and those marae stand-ups turned into like pō karakia. So Uncle Napa, he and some of the pakeke every night, pō karakia was happening because they were unsure right. I mean it’s not like they could just pop off to their cousins like they used to over that time. But then they didn’t know if they were gonna survive, because that was kind of the rhetoric, the world or you could watch was an update on COVID how many people had died, that was everybody tuning into the government updates at one o’clock every day to see. How many had survived today? So that was kind of happening and for many of them not being able to practice tangihanga and observe the tangihanga rituals was very difficult and so having things like pō karakia. Noho puku, noho wānanga, Zoom became our best friend. Like everybody had Zoom accounts. Even our pakeke, our kuia, they got on pretty okay with the old zoom. But pō karakia was a really good way for them to kind of see, that yes, kei te ora tonu tētehi. But then to be able to have some full and frank discussion around the way that tangihanga could be observed. We did lose a few people I think one of the first mate in the rohe was our whanaunga Nigel, he passed at Mōkai. Nobody could be there. Really important for them to have that pō karakia.”

“We practiced a lot of things that were new but we maintained the tikanga that calmed us. We had karakia every morning [...] We always had karakia, we had kai all the time [...] We had the high TV so we could Zoom everybody in. That was the wairua of the hub. Just being able to stay calm in the time of panic and making decisions to help better look after our people.”

Kapa haka also emerged as a significant cultural practice within the rongoā Māori framework (see Pearse, 2013, p. 16). Some kaikōrero highlighted its multifaceted therapeutic value during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kapa haka functioned as a vehicle for whanaungatanga – building relationships, whānau/friend networks, and connectedness that helped form a key part of community well-being. A significant aspect of the cultural value of kapa haka lies in its role as a mechanism for the use and practice of te reo Māori, tikanga, Mātauranga Māori and tribal histories which in turn strengthen individual cultural identity and continuity. Some kaikōrero emphasised its capacity for strengthening relationships, building resilience, and fostering kotahitanga belonging – outcomes that proved particularly crucial during the uncertainty and isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic period.

Kaikōrero described how group practices provided much-needed support for those experiencing despair and uncertainty during and after the pandemic. The well-being benefits of kapa haka were attributed not only to engagement with and connection to Te Ao Māori, but also to the enormous therapeutic potential that derives from kotahitanga, and the physicality in terms of exercise stemming from performing together in shared cultural expression.

The following examples from kaikōrero illustrate how these cultural practices served as vital forms of rongoā during the pandemic.

“What I take home from haka? What do you call it? It is my life, haka is my life and my whānau believe in that, they believe in what Te Karu, Te Kapa Haka o Ruatoki, provides. It’s [kapa haka is] a healing, you know, and like Rangi said it is and it’s the best form of rongoā that I can have. Yeah, yeah, it is a huge healing. My babies see it, my parents see it and my flatmates see it and yes he mea nui, I love my kapa.”

“[Kapa Haka] it brings people home and it gathers you, gathers your thoughts personally and socially and yeah just brings you back home. Ko te ahurei. The ahurei in terms of resilience to me is that kupu again, matemateāone because matemateāone is what brings us together. It’s what makes us Tūhoe, what it looks like and what it sounds like.”

Ko te kai, he rongoā. Ko te rongoā, he kai.

The concept of he rongoā ngā kai, that food is medicine, is well established within Te Ao Māori (see for example, Wiremu et al., 2022, pp. 14, 16, 17, 66). Building on this foundation, kai as a form of rongoā emerged throughout kaikōrero discussions. It manifested in several distinct yet interconnected ways during the COVID-19 pandemic. The first centered on traditional kāinga practices of growing, gathering and sharing kai from local whenua systems. The second involved organised food provision through marae and hapū/iwi support services to address pandemic-related food availability anxieties.

Kaikōrero reflected on mahinga kai practices, describing the growing and gathering of kai from different sources including māra, the ngāhere and waterways as occasions that were in some way integral to healing and maintaining connection and well-being. These practices represented an exercise of rangatiratanga over food sources, enabling kāinga to determine what they could provide for themselves with some kaikōrero describing healing and transformation through traditional kai that could uplift the hauora tinana, and hauora wairua (physical, mental well-being) of someone if they were unwell. In this light, some traditional forms of kai were prized over others as they carried deeper cultural significance due to them being more intrinsically connected to whenua, awa or mātauranga practices.

Complementing these traditional practices, the pandemic response saw extensive kai provision initiatives through marae, hapū and iwi support services where kaimahi teams worked collectively to lift the hauora tinana and hauora wairua of those who came into contact with these services.

These efforts centered whanaungatanga that helped to bring well-being into focus. Kaikōrero described how manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga and rangatiratanga formed the foundation of their kai-sharing initiatives.

Together these expressions of kai as rongoā illustrate how traditional food practices centred around wholesome and nutritionally-balanced kai and contemporary kin-community care converged to provide both physical nourishment and improved mental well-being during the pandemic.

The following examples from kaikōrero demonstrate how kai functioned as rongoā, cultural connector/connection and a focal point of community resilience throughout the pandemic.

“Our body is a preservative. But when it grows old, [it] starts breaking up and then it opens up those things. That’s what I believe is our pandemic. It’s our kai. You know I gave my dog an old burger. I said, ‘here, have this burger’. That was four days ago. And it’s still there. The dog eats all these kai around it. But he wouldn’t touch that burger. And I said ‘man you must be a clever dog’. You’re telling me if he wouldn’t touch it, but I think that Anaru was right, it’s what we eat. How do you change that? Almost three generations of eating wrong. I suppose we can only start with ourselves and our own whānau. Well that was one of the rongoā, was the mullet juice, the watercress juice. Pūhā, pūhā and all that. Those were all rongoā.”

“... te kōrero o ōku kaumātua i te rewharewhanui tuarua ā muri i te pakanga tuatahi, 1918, ko tētehi o ngā rongoā nui ko te pūhā, ko te pūhā juice, kaua ko te hinu o te mīti me te pūhā, engari ka waiwaitia te pūhā hei inu i te mea ko te pūhā juice he immunity booster. Nā reira koirā te tohu nui ā ngā tūpuna kia whakapiki ake i te ora o te tangata, kia tāea te tinana te ārai atu i ngā kino, i ngā mate.”

[Healthy kai/Rongoā] “... it’s all preventative eh. Promoting rongoā as a kai, if you can eat rongoā in your kai or it becomes your daily kai then you’re eating rongoā every day as a preventative measure. It builds the resilience of the cells of your body. But we need to seek building a resilient team of young people, of young folk who are experts in rongoā. You know, and it’s not just rongoā, physical rongoā, the rongoā would carry or cover things like karakia, takutaku pure, those forms of wellness and rongoā intervention. Includes all those things, all our cultural rituals. Māra kai, organic māra ka [...] I’m talking about that because of organic, the organic element of it, how imperative it was to grow clean kai, kai that was non-toxic, had no poisonous elements in them and it was considered a rongoā because it was clean [...] And that was all preventative, all that kind of thing, organic food, rongoā, eating rongoā as food every day was really about growing the stamina and the resilience of your cellular body, the cells of your body, it was preventative. It was to help prevent disease.... if you were assailed by a disease, your body could cope with it better. You know, I remember my grandparents doing these...”

Tohunga/Tohungatanga

Tohunga (priestly expert) and tohungatanga (the practice and knowledge system of tohunga derived from Mātauranga Māori) emerged as key concepts described by some kaikōrero. In traditional Māori society, tohunga served as spiritual intermediaries who maintained communication with atua and upheld the fundamental principles of tapu and noa that governed community life within pā and kāinga.

Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal provides some insight into the deeper meaning of tohunga, explaining that the term derives from ‘tohu,’ which describes “the arrival of mana within a person” (2005, p. 12). Drawing on teachings from the late Rev. Māori Marsden, Royal emphasises that a tohunga is fundamentally “a vessel of mana” – not merely a knowledgeable person, but also “a creative person, illuminated with an essential authority which allows them to bring new understandings and knowledge for the benefit of their community” (ibid, p. 13).

THIS WELLSPRING OF IDEAS AND BELIEFS ARE WHAT LEAD TO THE BIRTH OF HE WHAKAPUTANGA – THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE IN 1835 WHICH WAS A DECLARATION OF HAPŪ SOVEREIGNTY. SOVEREIGNTY RESIDES IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TANGATA AND THE WHENUA TO WHICH THEY RELATE. HE WHAKAPUTANGA AND LATER TE TIRITI O WAITANGI OF 1840 DID NOT CREATE THIS AUTHORITY. THESE DOCUMENTS WERE EXPRESSIONS OF IT.

Some kaikōrero distinguished between tohunga of earlier eras and those of more recent times, emphasising that regardless of the period, tohunga held responsibility for maintaining essential cultural practices, particularly tikanga around rongoā Māori use and healing and disease prevention. Some participants recalled individuals recognised as tohunga who possessed specific abilities and specialised knowledge that proved valuable during times of community crisis.

The following detailed narrative example is provided in full rather than segmented into shorter quotes:

“When we look at a historical backdrop, a backdrop of diseases and interventions used for diseases, well because all diseases were foreign at a particular point in time. It didn’t start at disease, the history of Te Māhurehure as with the entire whārua didn’t start at disease, it started at wellness. There were wellness practices and interventions and they were preventative. They were exercising and when I talk about historical timelines, I’m talking about the time of Kuramihirangi which would’ve been around about the 15-1600s. So that was all part of the mana motuhake period where she was a tohunga rongoā, a tāpuhi. He tohunga aho tapu, so she was like a senior senior tohunga. Her work was around a deep, deep dive study into ngā rongoā, ngā momo rongoā katoa o tēnā takiwā, i roto i a Ruatoki me te rohe pōtae. She serviced the whole rohe and then she was also to my understanding, she was also often asked to heal the sick in other iwi as far as Ngāpuhi. So she shared a lot of her knowledge beyond and then she would also heal from a distance, so there would be messengers who would come from other iwi, ride to her and seek her healing from afar. So she would provide healing interventions for people who were desperately unwell in other iwi, they were often high ranking people. And she would do the healing from Ruatoki. Now the reason I raised that is because all of that was preventative, it was to prevent the prevalence of disease and its entry into the whārua. It was her period of time, and then I think the next, then we come into the 1900s which was World War One, 1915. World War One had a terrible effect on our whārua – that was the beginning of the introduction of small pox, the flu influenza, the Spanish flu... [...] Same thing happened in World War Two, the same diseases were contracted and then brought home into the whārua. By World War Two, what I understand from some of our research at an iwi level and a hapū level is that there were specific tohunga who were specialists, every hapū had specialist tohunga who had already studied from World War One. The rongoā that did or did not work and was or was not effective for the countering of tuberculosis and in particular syphilis. You know, some of the most famous, famously well-known tohunga of that time of the World War One, World War Two was Te Oti Hororiri [...] Te Oti was buried something like eight or nine foot down deliberately and then when they dig a hole they put little mounds of dirt, so they can pull the ropes back up, there’s a little gap they could pull the ropes back up. But in Te Oti’s when they had to kind of exhume her, number one to check out the stability of her coffin because she died in the sixties and then put a plank on top if she deteriorated, so mama Leena could go on top. The moment they did that, they went down and cleared away all the dirt around her remaining parts of her coffin, they identified that there were caverns dug into the side. There were caverns that one of the boys could fit into, dug into the

side, both sides of the the hole, of the rua. And then when they went in, one of them was my nephew, and when he went in, and I asked them what he saw, and then he said he saw cauldrons. Black cauldrons. All different sizes of cauldrons. And that was Te Oti’s rongoā pots [...] Nehua atu ana because koira tana rongonui nē. So she had cauldrons on either side in those caverns that were buried with her and that’s why I speak about her because we did a significant amount of research for the settlement, for the iwi settlement around oral traditional history and one big section we wrote about was on Te Oti’s expertise and specialist ability to concoct, to develop to test different blends and what they call recipes of rongoā that had the ability to cure syphilis [...] But you know that’s an example of the innovative and scientific technicality of some of our tohunga. You know, so it was clear to me through that research that our tohunga, traditional tohunga, they struggled to find ways to combat foreign disease [...] Sometimes they were successful in finding a blend that did, that had a strong impact on foreign diseases and sometimes they didn’t. Sometimes they couldn’t. Sometimes it wasn’t the rongoā that could reverse that or cure that. I understood according to my mother who is now 85 that the rongoā was not effective with the tuberculosis and see with TB and smallpox, it was rampant, took people out, the rongoā was ineffective.”

Te Reo Māori

Te Reo Māori emerged as a subtheme of rongoā Māori with kaikōrero describing how the use, practice and learning of Te Reo Māori during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic functioned as a form of healing and spiritual nourishment. In this light, Te Reo Māori is not only a mode of communication but also embodies cultural identity, spiritual connection and the vehicle for Mātauranga Māori transmission. Moe Milne emphasises the therapeutic nature of Te Reo Māori noting that there are pepehā and whakataukī that have psychological, emotional and spiritual influence for Māori and that the interaction and communication of Te Reo Māori play an important role in maintaining the mana of people, their whānau, hapū and iwi. She states, “there is healing within our language. It is in the way we speak and spirit in which it is spoken” (Te Pou o Te Whakaaro Nui, 2010, p. 3).

This understanding positions Te Reo Māori as inherently therapeutic where the act of speaking, hearing and engaging with the language carries healing properties that extend beyond mere communication. The pandemic period characterised by physical isolation and restricted movement saw many participants turning to online platforms and digital resources to engage with Te Reo Māori and other cultural practices like kapa haka and tangihanga. Many discovered that this engagement provided not only language learning opportunities but also built and rebuilt connection (see for example, Wepa et al, 2023, p. 878) and aided in nurturing spirituality (see for example Finiki & Maclean, 2020) and maintaining traditional practices and protocols of which Te Reo Māori is a vital component (see for example Rangiwai & Sciascia, 2021).

For some kaikōrero, engaging with Te Reo Māori online during the lockdowns became a means of maintaining cultural connection that contributed to a sense of hauora well-being. The following examples from kaikōrero illustrate how Te Reo Māori functioned as both cultural practice and rongoā throughout the COVID-19 experience.

“...education for the tamaiti but for the whaanau too, there was a whole lot of barriers that came down and it opened a lot of doors of communication for others to learn.

There was a [sic] Te Poporo waiata sessions that Reiora would do, bringing back old Taniwharau songs and kura songs that we’ve sung since we were 6 years old and just normalising it on social media. There was a whole shift and focus on social media not just having tangihanga on there, but the whole education connection aspect of social media [...] Matehaere Clark and I ran a karanga waananga during COVID with our pakeke. We had Nanaia Mahuta, Moeroa Raihe, Moanaroa Matatahi, Ngairi Paki and two other members and the purpose of it was so that they would never have a dull moment in their marae life. So they never forgot how to do a karanga, and we were also able to better waananga about their reo and understand what their whakaaro is around karanga. The evidence was when we had poukai they was [sic] able to carry it with their mana and mauri and their alignment of what they understood. It was fulfilling knowing that methodology worked during the COVID pandemic.”

Te Taha Wairua

Te Taha Wairua emerged as a distinctive theme throughout kaikōrero discussions. Some kaikōrero spoke to the importance of maintaining spiritual well-being and connection during the pandemic. As one of the four foundational dimensions of hauora within Mason Durie’s Te Whare Tapa Whā model, te taha wairua includes spiritual health, cultural identity and the connection that links individuals to their tūpuna, whenua, whanaunga and the wider universe. During the pandemic, when physical restrictions limited traditional forms of spiritual practices and cultural connection, maintaining wairua became both more challenging and more essential for overall ora.

Some kaikōrero described how the disruption to normal spiritual practices (i.e., reduced access to marae, restriction on tangihanga and limitation on collective cultural activities like kapa haka) created particular vulnerabilities that required conscious attention, effort and an adaptive response.

Some kaikōrero who were able to experience lockdown within their home kāinga close to their marae described being able to appreciate this time on their whenua/papakāinga and enjoy the opportunity to fully embody the opportunity to be tangata whenua for an extended period of time without the distractions of urban life, work obligation and other external pressures. Ultimately, the lockdown became a moment of regeneration of wairua, of mātauranga, and of connection characteristics that always existed within the whānau but were felt with greater appreciation due to the impact of COVID-19.

Some kaikōrero articulated various ways they worked to nurture and protect their spiritual well-being during the pandemic. Some alluded to te taha wairua as fundamental to their ability to cope with pandemic stressors and maintain cultural identity during times of isolation and uncertainty. The theme includes both individual and spiritual practices and collective efforts to maintain spiritual connection within whānau and kin-communities.

This theme demonstrates that kaikōrero understood that spiritual health is integral to their pandemic resilience. Some described innovative approaches to maintain spiritual practices, sustaining connections, learning mātauranga – all despite physical restrictions. This shows how te taha wairua operated as both a source of strength and an area that required active care and protection.

The following examples from kaikōrero illustrate the ways spiritual well-being was understood, maintained and prioritised throughout the pandemic.

“Whakapapa, again whānau time was just special. You could be intimate with your whānau. You know, you never get to do that on a daily basis Monday to Friday. Parents are working, tauira tamariki at Kura, Kōhanga Reo, but that time that particular lockdown time was just a time for us to regenerate as a whānau first and foremost and then we did that as a hapū. We think about that too because our old people did that all the time because they need to go to town for anything. Mahi was home. Everything that we needed was here. The kōhi kai was home. For many of our families here on the marae, that’s what we had to put into place. That’s what we had to do. As sad as what was happening around the motu, it was beautiful to be able to reconnect with the whenua, to become that manawhenua as we always say we are. But truly be home and enjoy the luxuries of home. Regardless that you couldn’t go to town. Many of us loved it. You worked on your own whenua. So you could just imagine we needed that for six weeks. Our tūpuna did it, day in and day out, month in and month out, year in and year out. You understand just how plentiful things were, you were able to do that as a whānau or as a hapū, as a community, just being able to rebuild the wairua. That’s what it was for a lot of us. To be able to rebuild the wairua, ensure we had beautiful whakaaro, thinking of everybody around the motu and across the world. And again we managed to do that, online.”

“He nui ngā akoranga o taua wā, tētahi akoranga nui kia hoki atu ki ngā mahi tuku iho, ngā taonga tuku iho, pēnei i te ruruku i te waiata, te taha tiaki i te wairua, hoi anō e puta hoki i te whare i ētahi wā, ngā wā i whakaaetia kia hoki atu ki ngā mahi māra, i pērā i taua wā me te mōhio uaua te haere ki te toa hoko maha, hoko kai, ēra āhuatanga katoa. Ko tā māua mahi i taua wā he hangahanga i ngā pouaka māra, he whakatupu kai, he whakaako i a māua tamariki ahakoa kōhungahunga tonu rāua i taua wā, pēpi tonu tētahi, piripoho tētahi, whakaako i a rāua ki ngā āhuatanga o te māra, te whakapapa o te māra, ki ngā atua Māori, kia Haumie, kia Rongo ērā āhuatanga. I roto i te nuīngā o ngā ruruku o te kāinga nei, ngā ruruku ka tākina i te kāinga e kōrero ana mō ngā atua Māori katoa. So he hoki atu ki ērā o ngā akoranga me ērā kōrero tuku iho e ora ai tō mātou whānau, oti noa tō mātou whānau whānui [...] He whakapikinga ora, whakapikinga wairua tērā te hoki atu ki te awa ki te pā i te wai, e ora anō ai te hinengaro, tinana te wairua, nō reira te puta atu ki te taiao tētahi mea nui, tērā momo te māra hoki ki te awa oti noa ki te moana, e kite ai i a Tangaroa, mea atu au kōrero ana ngā ruruku mō ngā atua Māori, e rongo anō i te wairua, i te mahanatanga o ngā atua i taua wā taumaha tonu. He nui ngā wheako, ngā akoranga i roto i te noho Kōwhēori. Kaore mo te kī i hoki ki ngā mahi a ngā tūpuna, engari hoki ki ngā akoranga a kui mā, a koro mā, e ora ai mātou i taua wā. I mea mai a Rongo, i panoni ngā tikanga e whakapono ana au ki terā o ngā kōrero me mate te tikanga e ora ai te tikanga koia te āhua o te ao ināiane. Me mate tētahi tikanga e ora ai tētahi atu tikanga, me pērā rawa, he rerekē te ao i ngā rā o mua i mōhio he nui ngā pandemics, engari he rerekē te pandemic ki taua wā, ki tēnei o ngā pandemics he hoki ki ngā akoranga, tuku iho a kui mā, a koro mā, ngā taonga tuku iho, kōrero tuku iho.”

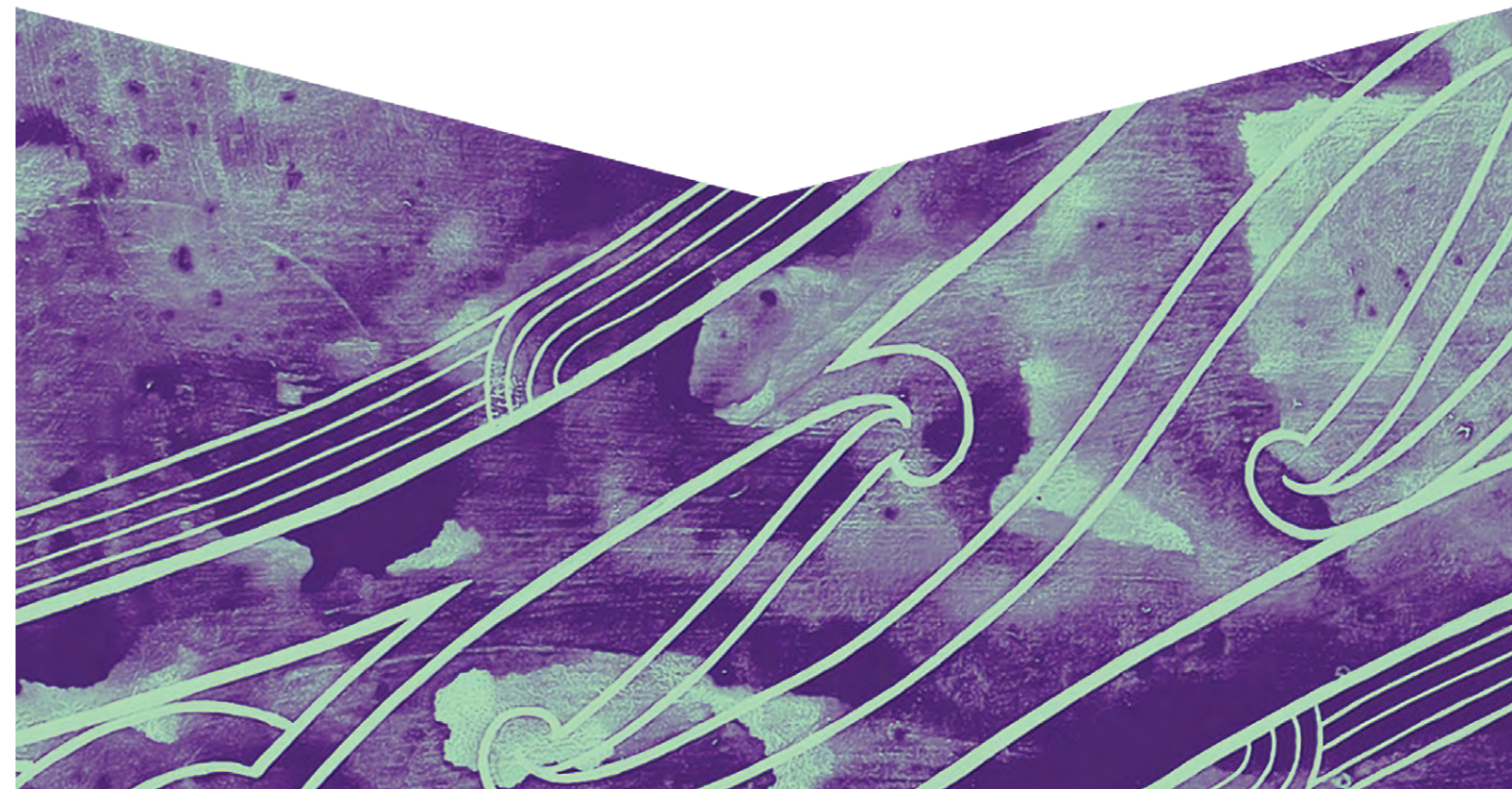
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TE AO

Te Whakamātau

WHITI 6





TE AO WĀWĀHI

Following the harvesting of tuna, they are separated and those that are of size and useful are retained, those that are not are returned to the wai.

This phase represents the analysis of information and the sifting through of what is relevant and what is not and is the process whereby the knowledge is analysed.

Te Ao (the coming into light) – ko te tukuihotanga o roto i te ora, e āio te aorangi. This is the code of balance that allows creation and life to work in binary universal balance. The manifestation of mātauranga.

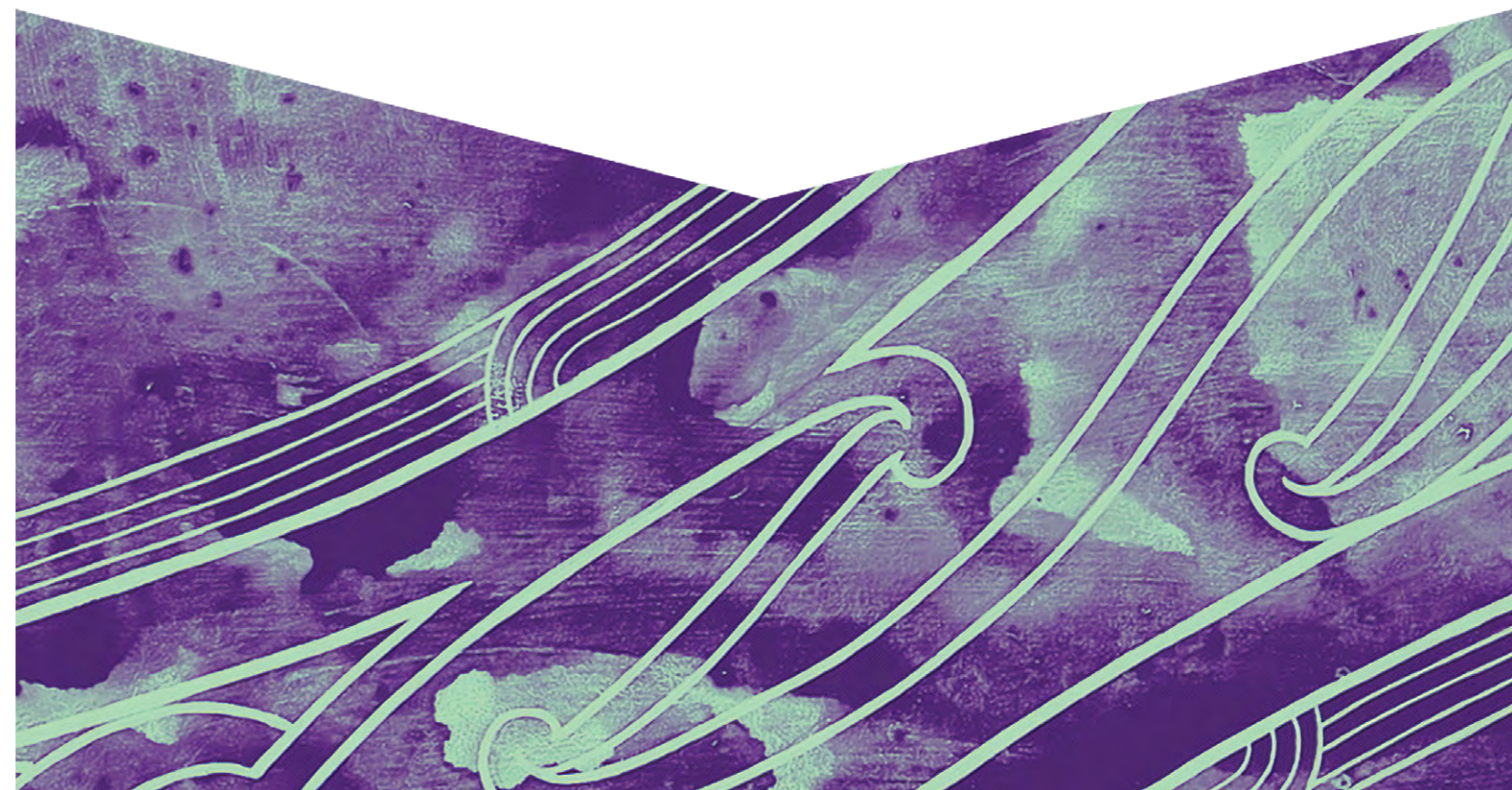
This phase represents the analysis of information and how mātauranga can inform future responses based on the narratives that have been shared.



TE AWATEA

Te Whakapūmau

WHITI 7





TE AWATEA TE HĀKARI

The hākari – feast – the consumption of the tuna represents the by-product of the process – the end result.

This is where the creation of a new body of knowledge/mātauranga is created and disseminated for consumption. Te Awatea (the breaking of dawn) brings light, normality, the coming into being, the constant. Mātauranga has been created and is in existence.

This is where the creation of a new body of knowledge or mātauranga is created and disseminated for consumption.

To ensure taonga and Mātauranga Māori are protected from the outset our research team holds fast to ensuring that upon first engagement there is transparency with whānau, the protection of mātauranga and access to it.

NGĀ HUA | WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES AND WHAT TO EXPECT?

As we near the end of the engagement phase of Whiitiki Whakatika we acknowledge the whānau, hapū and iwi who took part in this process and shared their kōrero tuku iho and mātauranga around their unique experiences, historical and current, in response to pandemics and infectious diseases.

With your contribution, we hope to inform a framework that supports Aotearoa whānui, assisting those on the frontlines of responding on behalf of their hāpori and people during challenging times.

We thank whānau, hapū and iwi who were engaged from Te Pū through to Te Pō, and the opportunity you allowed for our rōpū of kairangahau to hear your kōrero and share in your mātauranga. Upon the final presentation of the findings, we hope that each rōpū band together in sharing your kōrero and mātauranga on a national platform for all.

Hei taonga mō te katoa.

Ka tuia te rangi e tuu nei.
Ka tuia te papa e hora nei.
Ka tuia ngaa iwi kua wehe ki te poo.
Ka tuituia mai te poo ki te ao maarama.

E ngaa kaarangatanga maha, koutou i whai waahi ki te whaangai i te koorero, ki te whaangai i te waananga, ki te whaangai i te aroha, nei raa te mihi.

Anei raa o koutou koorero, anei o koutou waananga, anei raa to koutou aroha kua whakahoki mai ki a koutou.

Kei roto i o ringaringa te tikanga ki eenei kupu, ki eenei whakamaarama, ki eenei whakaputanga.

E te whaanau, teena koutou katoa.



Huirama Matatahi (Waahi Paa, Waikato)
Pou Urungi, Whiitiki Whakatika



