



# “Cloaked in our aspirations”: Māori mothers and grandmothers weaving stories from their past for the future

Volume 5 | Issue 1

Article 7, May 2020

Hinekura Smith  
*University of Auckland*

## Abstract

Māori women play a vital role in enabling our children and grandchildren to live secure, positive cultural identities “as Māori”. In utero we surround our children in a protective *kaahu* (the term for both cloak and amniotic sac) and, after they enter the world, we continue to cloak them in tangible and abstract ways with our values, beliefs, and aspirations. Of the multiple aspirations that Māori women hold for ourselves and our *whānau* (families) to be healthy, happy, and whole, this research concerns itself with Māori women’s aspirations to “live as Māori” – understood as living a full and holistically well life, connected to people and places, and able to participate confidently in both the Māori and the global world.

A qualitative project grounded in Kaupapa Māori and Mana Wāhine theory, this study explores the stories of eight Māori women, including myself as a researcher. As I taught the women to weave traditionally made Māori cloaks, they told stories

of reclaiming, restoring, and revisioning living as Māori for themselves and their whānau.

**Keywords:** Kaupapa Māori research, Māori women, identity, language, cultural reclamation

## He Mihi – Acknowledgements:

Nei rā au e mihi ana ki ngā ringa raupā, ngā ringa aroha i whatu mai i tēnei o ngā kaupapa kōrero. Whatuora ki a koutou! I acknowledge with deep gratitude and love, the “calloused hands” that continue to weave stories that connect us from our past to our present and into our future. These hardworking hands belong to the women of this research, my ancestors, my *whānau* (family) and those relations, some of whom are yet to be born, who take up these threads, the words, the ideas, the aspirations and the stories of what it means to us to live well and fulfilled lives “as Māori”

## Introduction

This article emerges from a wider research project about Māori mothers and grandmothers as key cultural revitalisers. As the women wove feathered Māori cloaks, they discussed how their experiences of growing up and “being Māori” now inform the aspirations they have for their children and grandchildren to “live as Māori”. This discourse was popularised by renowned Māori scholar Mason Durie (2001) as a way to

describe Māori-held aspirations to live well, fulfilled, holistically balanced lives with access to the Māori world including language, culture, community, resources, and land as well as active participation at a global level.

I discuss the aspirations these Māori mothers and grandmothers hold for their children and grandchildren to enjoy fulfilled and engaged lives, positively participating in both Māori and non-Māori worlds. Their aspirations to develop a positive Māori identity, speak the Māori language and connect to the land, its history, and people, do not fall out of thin air. Instead, they emerge from often painful stories of their own cultural assimilation and colonising oppressions, and the work they engage in to heal themselves from this trauma.

I begin by introducing myself in relationship to the research context then tease out some of the terminology about traditional Māori cloaks to explain a theorised connection between these cloaks and Māori women. Within the scope of this article, it is not possible to fully unpack the complex practice, language, and process of *whatu kākahu*<sup>1</sup> (Māori cloak making) nor is it possible to discuss in depth the many themes that emerged from the moving stories the women shared during this research (H. L. Smith, 2017). Instead, I choose to focus on one theme that emerged from the women, that is the aspirations they hold for their children and grandchildren to live well lives as Māori.

## Embedded in the Research

Where Western scientific approaches forward researchers as a-cultural and objective observers, Māori and Indigenous researchers intentionally locate themselves in relation to the research and those involved (Lee, 2008; Pihama 2015; L.T. Smith 1999). I am a Māori woman with tribal links to the Te Rarawa people from the Far North of Aotearoa New Zealand and Te Ati Awa on the West Coast. On my father's side, I have English and Scottish heritage. Here I identify myself as a weaver, researcher, storyteller, teacher, mother, sister, and daughter to declare as I disclose

(Grierson, 2007) just some of my multi-layered identities.

I am the daughter of a Māori mother who sought to actively heal, reclaim, and restore Māori identity in her family; ways of being that had been systematically stripped away by colonising processes. Her deliberate actions to reclaim her language and identity served to disrupt our family's experience of cultural disconnection so that her children, and now her grandchildren, may experience a positive cultural identity as Māori. Now, as a mother of two young daughters, I continue to seek out or create for them, opportunities to express and reaffirm their Māori identity. In a sense, as I continue to reclaim, I am embodying aspirations for my daughters to continue a legacy handed down to them through matrilineal lines.



Figure 1. My mother wearing the first full-length cloak that I made and gifted to her

The effects of cultural assimilation and urbanisation in Aotearoa New Zealand led to a rapidly increasing number of people who were Māori through ancestry but who had few opportunities to engage with Māori language, culture, and identity (H. L. Smith, 2017). Almost 20 years ago, Māori health scholar Mason Durie (1998) forwarded the notion of living as Māori, warning that self-determination is a shallow goal if developing a strong Māori identity and cultural base is not part of that equation. As Mikaere (2011) states:

<sup>1</sup> Whilst the original research privileges the use of Māori language, English terms are used here to support the reading of the article by an international audience. Where a Māori term is used an English translation will follow the first time it is mentioned. There is also a glossary Maori at the end of this article.

[T]here is more to survival than merely ensuring the continuation of our gene pool . . . in order to guarantee our ongoing presence as Māori, we need to preserve those things that make us unique. In other words while our physical survival may no longer be under threat, it is our cultural survival that now must be fought for (p. 299).

Mikaere’s (2011) call for “cultural survival” echoes that of Durie (1998) who said that survival for Māori is about being strong “numerically, economically and culturally – and rejecting any notion of passive assimilation” (p. 5). The notions of resistance, reclamation, and revitalisation are actively taken up in multiple ways by the women in this project to ensure their children and grandchildren experience holistically well and culturally secure lives as Māori.

### Methodological Threads

This project is informed by and seeks to contribute to, two key sets of theory, *Kaupapa Māori* and *Mana Wāhine*. *Kaupapa Māori* theory emerged as a radical response from Māori academics in the 1990s to create “culturally defined theoretical space” (Pihama, 2001, p. 77; (for further explanation see Henry & Pene, 2001; Irwin, 1994; Lee, 2008; Pihama, 2001; G. H. Smith, 2003; L. T. Smith, 1999). In my view, it is research which is undertaken by Māori and with Māori, has positive outcomes for Māori and has Māori ways of knowing, being, language, and beliefs at its centre.

*Mana Wāhine* theory also emerged in the 1990s as “a *Kaupapa Māori* theoretical framework that attends to the multiple issues that are faced by Māori women” (Pihama, 2001, p. 258). Described by Te Awēkotuku (1991) as “woman-initiated political action at its ripest most elemental” (p. 11-12), *Mana Wāhine* theory intentionally centres Māori women’s voice. As such this project does not set out to juxtapose Māori women’s voices against *Pākehā* (New Zealand European) women, Māori men, or any other group. Instead, this research seeks to contribute a theorised research approach and a set of stories to write into the wider *Kaupapa Māori* and *Mana Wāhine* theoretical agenda or speaking our truth in our ways.

### Weaving the Threads - Methods

As a qualitative study, this research involved eight Māori *wāhine* (women), mothers and grandmothers who had expressed a desire to weave a family cloak and who work in active ways to live as Māori women. Both myself and my mother participated in this research as our experience as mother, daughter, and grandmother “gave birth” to the research topic as a way to explore the active ways we work to reclaim, restore, and revitalise our cultural wellbeing. Enabled by the relationships, trust, and respect inherent in the *Kaupapa Māori* nature of the project, being both researcher and participant was not difficult. I would argue in fact that it was *through* my relationship with the women and my participation in the project that deeply personal stories were offered. Upon satisfying the necessary University of Auckland ethical requirements, the women attended six-weekend *wānanga* over the course of a year.



Figure 2. Families share stories at one of the weaving *wānanga*

*Wānanga*, broadly speaking, means to meet, discuss, and deliberate (Williams, 1997). Simmonds (2014) further discussed *wānanga* as a research method in her doctoral work about Māori maternities. *Wānanga* is a *Kaupapa Māori* method, not a Western focus group or semi-structured interview with another name, and as such, are framed by Māori cultural practices, Māori language, values, and beliefs. Simmonds (2014) says there are no methodological guides about how to conduct *wānanga*; instead *wānanga* as method “falls into a space between” (p. 86) a conventional focus group approach and participatory group method.

Audio recordings of our *wānanga* were often punctuated with hungry cries, bumped heads, or

babies needing to be fed. Wānanga space in this sense, whilst more challenging than a conventional interview or focus group, ultimately proved a culturally appropriate space to meet the needs of the women whilst providing a familiar and comfortable context for them to talk. Each wānanga was transcribed by me and returned to the women to edit.

The women were also asked to keep a reflective journal in which they wrote stories, recalled memories, drew pictures, and added photos. Three journals were written to a child or mokopuna, one of whom had yet to be born. One mother invited her daughters to add to her journal. At the end of the research, the journals were handed back to the women through a ceremony, acknowledging the treasures contained within.



Figure 3. Two friends talk and weave together

The reflective journals and transcribed wānanga comprised the qualitative data for the study (H. J. Smith, 2017), which was thematically analysed.



Figure 4. A mother weaves a cloak for her newborn son as he sleeps at her breast

### Māori Cloaks and Our Maternal Bodies

The terminology of Māori cloaks is richly embedded with maternal language, including aspects of childbirth (Henare, 2005). For

example, *whenu*, the many hundreds of warp threads that make up the body of a cloak, is an abbreviation of the word *whenua* meaning both placenta and land; the former is the essential element that sustains the child within the mother's womb while the latter continues to nurture the child once born (Maihi, 2011).

Another example, *aho* or vertical warp threads, is the same term for line, genealogy, and umbilical cord (Williams, 1997). Understood as vital connectors to the past and the future, *aho* act as “tangible and substantive links between ancestors or *tīpuna* and their living descendants” (Henare, 2005, p. 121). Finally, the term for cloak (*kākahu* or *kahu*) is the Māori name for the amniotic sac or foetal membrane that envelops the unborn child (Henare, 2005; Mac Aulay & Te Waru-Rewiri, 1996). Historically, *kākahu* or woven textiles surrounded children from the moment they entered the world. Best (1929) recounts examples of *kākahu* being laid between the legs of the birthing mother to receive the child while more finely woven pieces were used to wrap the newborn child to present her to her people.



Figure 5. *Whenu*, the vertical strands or warp threads of a cloak



Figure 6. The *aho*, or horizontal weft threads - used to bind each *whenu*.

Whilst in utero, I suggest that we “cloak” our children both literally and metaphorically in a



protective cloak before they are born. Consider that when a mother is pregnant with a daughter, she is simultaneously carrying her future grandchildren as a female foetus holds all her eggs within her unborn ovaries. This knowledge further strengthens the connection between grandmother, mother, and grandchild, particularly within a matrilineal line.

From the moment of conception, we as mothers metaphysically cloak our children in our desires for them, our hopes, aspirations, and dreams. Every day that I was *hapū* (pregnant), I would talk to my babies as they grew within the protective kahu of my womb, stroking them, singing to them, telling them of their ancestry, and the aspirations I had for them once they were born. Mothers create that aho, or direct line, that acts as a physical and spiritual conduit between our ancestral past and our present. It is through this aho and within the protective waters of the kahu that I suggest we pass on more than our physical DNA but also our aspirations for our children to live as Māori.

### **Introducing the Women**

I have an existing and enduring relationship with all seven women that I invited to participate in this research (I am the eighth participant). Each woman agreed to be identified tribally and by their first names, which they also gave permission to be used here<sup>2</sup>. All of the women live in Auckland, the largest urban city in the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand, but connect back to a wide range of tribal areas around the country. During the year-long wānanga phase of the research, many of the women described an inescapable obligation to pass on to the next generation a Māori identity that is positive and affirms holistic wellbeing. Not only are we, as mothers and grandmothers, responsible for nurturing the day-to-day physical and emotional wellbeing of our children, but we are also one of the most important influences to how they understand themselves living secure and positive lives as Māori.

### **Cloaking our Children in Aspirations to Live as Māori**

As mothers, we aspire to surround our children with positive experiences and cloak them in the

values and beliefs that we feel will enable them to live enriched lives. We make conscious and subconscious decisions based on what we believe is best for them in the context of the time, influenced by the people and ideologies that surround us. The broader aspirations that these women hold for their children and mokopuna range from wanting them to be healthy and active, to being good people, sensitive, connected to the environment, contributing in meaningful ways to society, and being life-long learners. Rather than aspirations being dreams or hopes that are passively engaged with, these women's aspirations arise from a conscious reflection on their own experiences and an active commitment to embody the change they want to see. As the women wove they spoke passionately about the aspirations they hold for their children to live as Māori. From the wānanga and journals, the following themes emerged.

### **Being and Becoming Mothers and Grandmothers**

Being mothers and grandmothers is inextricably intertwined with our efforts to live as Māori women. For some of us, becoming a mother or grandmother proved a turning point providing a conscious awakening that strengthens our resolve to reclaim and restore cultural identity (Gangé, 2013; Pohatu, 2003). As Hawaiian scholars Goodyear-Ka'ōpua and Kap'opua (2007) say, "becoming a mother only made learning and work seem more important – now there were young lives, a visible sign of the future. What kind of life did I want you to inherit? (p.60).

During the wānanga, and in the journals, the women spoke about their roles as mothers and grandmothers:

“When I think back to my life 20 years ago and compare the things that I found important back then to my values and aspirations now, I am almost unrecognisable! Haa! And it all started when I gave birth to my children.” (Arndrea)

“Being home now as a 41 year old I also feel at times the outsider. It's a repetitive story that maybe in some way I should make peace with especially now as I am a mother.” (Tia)

“When Maioha was born I remember looking down into this perfect little face and saying to her, ‘I will never let you feel lost and uncertain about

<sup>2</sup> Participants and their backgrounds are explained more fully in H. L. Smith, 2017, p. 35.

who you are and where you come from.”  
(Hinekura)

Becoming a mother was a profound moment in my mother’s life. When her first child was born (me) she experienced an almost inexplicable moment of awakening that this child would reclaim and restore aspects of living as Māori that she herself had not yet realised she aspired to. It appears that from my birth I was cloaked in my mother’s aspirations for us both to live as Māori. Mum writes in her journal:

“Hinekura was born weighing 9lb 14oz. She was perfect. Beautiful skin, head covered in red hair and as the nurse commented, ‘as if she was 3 months old.’ I recall standing at the side of the bed and lifting her up to me saying, ‘You are my secret weapon’. What that might have meant at the time I have no idea. I now contend, in my maturity, that she was going to be the cultural reclamation, restoration and rejuvenation I felt our whānau needed.”



Figure 8. Mum and her “secret weapon” – 2 months old

During the research process, the three grandmothers spoke with great pride about their grandchildren, alluding to a special connection different to that experienced with their children. Kim says:

“I remember a *koro* [male elder] talking about the word *mokopuna* [grandchild] as the reflection in the *puna* [spring of water] of the *moko* [traditional facial tattoo] looking back at you. When the grandparent looks at their mokopuna there is a reflection of themselves in there because they possess similar DNA. As a grandparent you ‘see’ them even more so because you saw it in their father or mother as your child and then you see it come out in that mokopuna.”

The emotive imagery created by Kim’s words perhaps shifts the idea of reflection from looking to our past to see where we have come from, to reflection as looking forward to our future to see where our grandchildren will take us.

Carol talks about being a mother and then becoming a grandmother:

“Giving birth was a truly wondrous experience, to give life. But to watch my granddaughter coming from the body of a child I had birthed was life-changing. Being a mother is a very responsible and stressful time. It is the most important role that any woman can play. Being a grandmother is also a very responsible and busy time, but busy in different ways. It allows me to reflect on my parenting, embracing new ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating which may be more appropriate for this time, a kind of ‘re-parenting’. I have a new sense of value and contribution.”

The relationship between grandmother and grandchild, in my mind, is untouchable and beyond the realms of a parent-child relationship. It is special and unique to them and, as mentioned above, it began before I was born.

### Being Proud to be Māori

Important to the women in this research is that their children and mokopuna are proud of their Māori identity. Being proud to be Māori is about knowing who you are and where you come from. Being Māori is a birthright by genealogy. Living as Māori and being proud of that identity activates that genealogy to enable a positive and secure sense of cultural self.

Luana discusses how her experience of “missing out” on a secure Māori identity has influenced her choices for her children:

“I have two beautiful children. I want to give them what I missed out on. Not that it was my parents’ fault that I didn’t go to *kōhanga reo* [Māori immersion education] it was society’s ideals at the time on what type of person ‘fitted in’. My parents tried to do right by me. My grandmother was told by her mum, ‘If you want to succeed in this world then you must live and breathe as a Pākehā’. And that’s what she did because at that time that’s what was expected of them.”

Carol talks about a long and enduring struggle to reclaim and restore a sense of pride in being Māori for her children and mokopuna:

“I want for my children to be proud to be Māori. I want for them to know that they truly belong to this land and I want them to fight for this for their children and their mokopuna ... Ideally, I do not want them to have the challenges that I have had. I grieve that they will have this challenge; however, in my grief, I have a hope that they will become stronger for the struggle. I pray that in embracing the challenges, they will have the skills to balance their well-being so that they grow from their struggle and not become unwell spiritually.”

How we navigate cultural and ethnic identities was spoken about as the ability, or indeed instability, of walking in two worlds.

### To Walk in Two Worlds

Some of the women spoke about aspirations for their children and mokopuna to “walk in two worlds”, a common rhetoric, most famously articulated by Māori politician Tā Apirana Ngata in the early to the mid-20th century. His often-recited proverb encouraged Māori to take hold of the values, beliefs, and knowledge of both Māori and Pākehā cultures in order to flourish in a fast-changing world.

Arndrea’s aspiration is that her children are able to walk in two worlds or, better still, bring these two worlds together:

“The aspirations and decisions about what we [her and her husband] wanted for our kids came from all different areas. What we decided for our children is that we wanted them to stand tall in both worlds. We didn’t want them to be stronger in one culture than the other; we wanted them to be strong in both. I also thought into the future about what that would mean for our children and the aspiration I had was that, there is still a lot of racism, a lot of misunderstanding between Pākehā and Māori so what if there were people that have a strong understanding of both worlds, that could bring those two cultures together.

We truly wish for our tamariki [children] to be secure within their identity. To find peace; to live as Māori ALL of the time; to be confident at navigating their way through and within te ao Māori [Māori world]. That’s what we want for our children.”

Listening to this discussion I struggled internally with the idea of “walking in two worlds”.

Later that day I wrote this journal entry:

“I have had people say to me, that I am so lucky to have a foot in both worlds – both the Māori

and Pākehā world. I used to think that this was an advantage that I was able to ‘walk in both worlds’. This gives the false notion that there is a balance, a way to negotiate both worlds equally. As a teenager I saw this dichotomy as more of an imbalance as I was challenged to jump from one side to another, because it is hard to live as Māori in my Pākehā world. Now as a Māori woman and mother I choose to spend my time more fully in the world that best reflects those values and beliefs that resonate with me. I choose to live as Māori and for my children too.”

Esther discusses negotiating this bicultural dichotomy in terms of viewing the world through two lenses. Thinking about her mokopuna she says:

“The world to me is two lenses, everything to me is two lenses in terms of the Pākehā world, the modern world and bearing in mind the Māori world, but it is easy for me to say that. How are our tamariki able to perceive their world like that?

They need to truly know their tribal connection so that they are able to stand proud and be able to walk in those two worlds.”

Aspirations to live as Māori inevitably mean a negotiation of our multiple “cultural selves”. I maintain that to live as Māori is not to negate other cultural or ethnic identities; instead, it is an assertion and active political engagement to reclaim, restore, and self-determine our own cultural selves.

### Reclaiming Ways of Being

During the wānanga the women referred to cultural notions such as *aroha* (love, care, and compassion), *koha* (reciprocal gifting), *manaaki tangata* (care of people), *manaaki whenua* (care for the land) and *rangatiratanga* (self-determination) as Māori ontological terms vital to their wellbeing that they actively seek to pass on to their children.

Kim talks about *aroha* as a way of being, handed down to her from her grandmother:

“My Nanny’s words that have remained as a *whakatauki* [proverb] in our whānau said the greatest gift you can share and maintain is *aroha* for each other and those you bring into our whānau. This is her legacy and is reinforced through our *manaakitanga* [care].”

Carol draws on the Māori value of *koha* as an act of reciprocal giving or contribution, to express an aspiration she has for her children:

“For my children to be able to stand in both their worlds and to be successful and in this success they koha or contribute back those things they have gained and learned. It is important to me that they care and support others less fortunate than themselves, to share with others and to be role models to others to stand proud and live as Māori.”

I wrote in my journal about reclaiming our rangatiratanga as Māori women with my daughters at the forefront of my mind:

“My daughters remain the central thread that binds all others together and gives meaning to the whole. I see that, at 8 and 6 years old, they are already confronted with the challenges of living as Māori women in a patriarchal world that overtly and covertly tells them that they should look, think, act, speak and relate in a particular way... I will persevere and cling to the hope that I am laying down the foundations for them to understand themselves, live and love themselves as Māori women.”

Luana talks about wanting to pass down to her children Māori notions of respect, understood as aroha:

“How Māori respect what they gather from the sea. How they respect what they gather from the forests, *kōrero* [talk] from their elders, how they behave in the *whare kai* [communal dining hall]. That’s what I really admire about Māori people; how we live, respect for resources and our elders. That’s how I want my children to live, to respect *Papatūānuku* [Earth Mother], to respect their parents and themselves. The peaceful feeling I get when I go home, that strong connection I have with home. I want my kids to experience that too.”

Luana highlights a connection between reclaiming ways of being and sustaining secure and enduring connections with our tribal lands and its people.

### **Whenua and Whakapapa – Connecting to the Land and its People**

Connecting, or in some cases re-connecting, to their tribal land and its people was discussed by the women as a vital element of their wellbeing. Māori connection to the land is reinforced in a number of ways, such as burying a new born’s afterbirth in their tribal land. Present in other Indigenous cultures, for example, the Navajo (Lamphere, Price, Cadman, & Darwin, 2007) and Oiwi Hawai’i (Green & Beckwith, 1924), paying

special attention to the umbilical cord and placental afterbirth has long been a traditional practice for Māori (Gabel, 2013; Jenkins & Mountain Harte, 2011; Mead, 2003; Pere, 2006; Simmonds, 2014), forever connecting the child physically and spiritually to the land.

The women discussed connecting to land and people in broad and fluid terms. Some cautioned that narrow and fixed definitions of what it means to connect to your tribal lands and *whakapapa* (genealogy), negates the impact of colonisation, urbanisation, and assimilation on our lived realities and risks further alienating some Māori from living as Māori. Despite this, Esther says her aspirations for her mokopuna to live as Māori, rest in a physical and spiritual connection to the land and its people. She says:

“the most important thing for our tamariki and mokopuna is that they truly know who they are...Not only in words, being able to stand and say it, but to be able to live it, it’s all about connections.”

Kim discussed their family’s annual reunions as a time and place to sustain connections to the land and its people by passing on knowledge and enacting expectations and aspirations. Celebrations such as family reunions, birthdays, and funerals often provide opportunities to reconnect.

Arndrea makes the important link between land, people, and living as Māori:

“I think being Māori as a part of living as Māori comes from our bloodline. An inherent source of *mauri* [life essence] that has been passed down through *whakapapa* that stems from the time of creation. We have an intricate and intimate relationship with our whenua and a complex and highly practical understanding of nature. We have spoken [a] language that holds the key to our essence, which provides explanations of our values.”

Carol wants her children and grandchildren to understand that, in claiming a connection to the land, they are simultaneously accepting a responsibility to that land:

“I have four mokopuna from my children, and their whenua is buried together on land special to us. They know where their whenua is buried, they know where they stand on Papatūānuku. As with my children, I want my mokopuna to pass



through this physical realm leaving an *ara* [pathway] they have created which they can say ‘I made a contribution to this world.’”

Arndrea shares a *purākau* (story) about weaving a cloak for her grand-niece as a way of connecting the child to its whakapapa and whenua. This child carries the name of Arndrea’s mother and therefore holds a special place in her thoughts:

“Part Māori, part Australian. As far as I know, my nephew and his partner have no intention to move home to New Zealand. I had been thinking a lot about my moko niece before she was born. I had chosen to make her a cloak even before her mother had given birth. My thoughts are, what if her family did not move home to New Zealand? Would her culture and her family be foreign to her? I have trust in my *tipuna* [ancestors] but felt that a little Nanny Aunty intervention would not go astray!

The *kākahu* that I am making for her depicts her family and the inhabitants of the sea who have sustained my family for generations. I have included a little peak of Aussie because that is who she is also.”

## Summary

If, as the saying goes, “the best way to predict the future is to create it”, then the women in this research create change through their conscious choices to live as Māori. This article highlights a fraction of the many aspirations that these Māori mothers and grandmothers have for their children and grandchildren to be holistically and culturally well; to have a secure and positive identity as Māori. As Arohia Durie (1997) reminds us these complex identities “continue to be made and re-made as life circumstances change, so that even the submerged can recover a Māori identity given sufficient confidence and opportunity” (p. 157).

The women in this research recognise that they are both a product of, and participants in, a colonised existence that is overlaid with socio-political and historical complexity. Despite this, they refuse to sit back, passively hoping that their children might live as Māori; instead, they are active, and activist, in their choices to live well, to reclaim, restore, and self determine ways of living as Māori for themselves and future generations. Where once Māori parents held aspirations for their children to “live as Pākehā” and assimilate

into dominant Western language and society, these eight Māori mothers cloak their children in their aspirations to live holistically well, and culturally connected lives as Māori.

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## Glossary

Ara	pathway
Aroha	love, care, compassion
Iwi	tribal grouping
Kahu	clothing, clothing and amniotic sac
Kākahu	clothing, generic term for cloak
Koha	reciprocal gifting
Kohanga reo	Māori immersion education centre
Kōrero	to speak or talk
Koro	male elder
Manaaki tangata	to care for people
Manaaki whenua	to care for the land
Mauri	life essence
Moko	grandchild and traditional Māori tattoo
Mokopuna	grandchild
Pākehā	a person of European descent
Papatūānuku	Earth Mother
Puna	spring of water
Pūrākau	story
Rangatiratanga	sovereignty, self-determination
Tamariki	children
Tangata whenua	Indigenous, people of the land
Wānanga	knowledge creation space, meeting, discussion
Whakapapa	layered genealogy
Whakatauki	proverb or saying
Whānau	family
Wharekai	dining room of the marae complex
Whatu	eyes, the practice of finger twining used to make cloaks
Whatu kakahu	traditional cloaks made through the practice of whatu
Whenua	land, placenta

### About the author:

**Hinekura Smith** I am a Māori woman, mother, educationalist, weaver, and academic with over 20 years of experience in education. Currently a lecturer in Education at The University of Auckland, my research interests are a nexus of Māori identity, Māori fibre arts, de-colonial education, and Mana Wāhine discourse. I return each month to my tribal community in the Far North of Aotearoa New Zealand to teach and learn Māori fibre arts alongside my relations and elders. A mother to two young daughters, I am committed to a number of artistic communities

of practice and local political initiatives.  
[hlj.smith@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:hlj.smith@auckland.ac.nz)