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Connectedness to Nature Deeply Impacts our Wellbeing: Kōrero and Themes from Iwi Taiao Knowledge Holders

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Cherryl Smith
Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa

Andre McLachlan
Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa

Jasmine Sampson
Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa

Pauline Hiroti
Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa

Abstract

Access to and engagement with *whenua tūpuna* (ancestral lands) is a core component of wellbeing and identity for Māori. Western measurements of nature-wellbeing relationships do not address the special stressors and needs of Indigenous people in their relationships with the *whenua* (land).

Guided by Kaupapa Māori research methodology, this study presents key information from interviews with 10 Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa Knowledge Holders who have maintained connection with the *taiao* (environment) throughout their lives.

A thematic analysis found four themes that highlight the relationships between the *uri* (descendants) of Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa and the whenua: *Tūpuna Taiao* - learning from the environment itself; *Mahi-a-pōtiki* - engaging in the taiao through play, tuition and risk taking; *Mentorship/Kaiārahi*: the importance of guidance and support engaging in the taiao and *Manaakitanga and Kaitiakitanga*: caring for the land and for others.

The four themes show a transition from learning by exposure and engagement through to taking responsibilities for caring for each other and the whenua, our *tūpuna* (ancestor) that cares and sustains us. These four themes have been incorporated into a broader wellbeing questionnaire to enable an iwi based analysis and understanding of their *Rangatahi* (youth) wellbeing, strengths and needs.

Keywords: Connectedness, nature, Ngā Wairiki, Ngāti Apa, Taiao, rangatahi, maripi, tuatini, tangata whenua, tangata ora, whenua, wellbeing, indigenous, Māori.

Introduction

Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa is an *iwi* (tribe) based in the southern Rangitīkei (Manawatū-Whanganui region in the North Island of Aotearoa). Over

recent years the iwi has developed an iwi-based education curriculum through a leadership programme *Māripi Tuatini*. The curriculum is based on living and learning within the different *hapū* (subtribes) of the iwi. Young leaders are taken to their *marae* (community complex), three times a year for a week, learning about the tribal history, the lands, the people and leadership roles for the hapū and iwi. This includes hosting groups of people, cooking, cleaning, gathering *kai* (food), understanding the tribal businesses, and knowing the tribal and hapū systems. *Rangatahi* (youth) enter the programme when they are in their first year of secondary school aged 13 and remain in the programme until they have finished school. Each rangatahi is selected and nominated by their own hapū. Overall, when full, the programme caters for 40 rangatahi. Over the 5 years they are on the programme, rangatahi live on the four marae and learn extensive *whenua* (land) based and hapū knowledge. They learn both *mātauranga Māori* (Māori knowledge) and practices, and contemporary and creative knowledge and practices.

The goals of the programme are to create *whānau* (family) and hapū leaders who contribute to the collective wellbeing of their whānau, hapū and iwi. Research identified as a key part of their leadership training has played an important part of the programme. Types of researcher input has come from iwi historians, Māori water safety researchers, iwi health, science and social researchers. The rangatahi learn critical research skills which are important in developing intrapersonal skills. They engage in research journeys to recover mātauranga Māori knowledge, including through interviews with kaumātua and strengthening their own storytelling skills.

Over recent years the iwi has begun research with rangatahi to look at ways to strengthen and develop the programme, to advance the work for future rangatahi. Previous research within the iwi had shown the importance of reconnection to whenua, as a critical component of building the wellbeing of the people (Sampson, 2021; Smith, 2010; McLachlan, 2022). An iwi research team, as part of a national Tangata Whenua/Tangata Ora project, led by Prof. Helen Moewaka Barnes (Te Kapotai, Ngapuhi-nui-tonu) has begun to gather evidence about reconnecting rangatahi to the whenua.

As part of this project, McLachlan, Smith and Sampson (2023) recommend the use of the Hua Oranga (health outcomes) Māori mental health model (Durie & Kingi, 1997; King & Durie 2000; Kingi, 2002) to measure the wellbeing of rangatahi in the Māripi Tuatini programme. The Hua Oranga model measures the four dimensions from Te Whare Tapa Whā (The 4-sided house), an holistic Māori health framework (Durie, 1985). This includes *Taha Wairua* (spiritual wellbeing); *Taha Hinengaro* (mental and emotional wellbeing); *Taha Tinana* (physical wellbeing) and *Taha whānau* (family and social wellbeing). McLachlan et al., (2023) recommend the addition of a fifth dimension: *Te Taiao* (the environment) with another four factors: *Mauri tau* (sense of connection and belonging to and with whenua tūpuna); *Pūkenga Taiao* (skills and abilities to access and utilise the taiao); *Kaiārahai whānau* (family guidance and participation) and; *Kaitiaki ki te whenua* (active engagement in caring for and protecting the environment).

To build upon the addition of te taiao to Hua Oranga, aligned with iwi values, aspirations, and mātauranga, we interviewed 10 iwi Knowledge Holders about the taiao, our traditional pursuits, and wellbeing and oral traditions, such as *waiata* (songs), *oriori (*songs of dedication) and *pūrākau* (traditional stories) that reference wellbeing and/or the role of te taiao in wellbeing. We sought out those who had grown up on tribal whenua and who had retained a strong connection to the whenua. In particular, we wanted to hear how they had learnt to be *whenua kaitiaki* (guardians) as *tamariki* (children) and rangatahi. We sought to understand if there were consistent themes that kept them connected to the whenua throughout their lives. Additionally, how did they develop their deep knowledge of the whenua and become active kaitiaki of the whenua?

This article presents the themes from the interviews, based on previous research on the development of rangatahi connectedness to te taiao (McLachlan et al., 2023). A trial version of an extended Hua Oranga (Māori wellbeing) questionnaire includes dimensions of connection to Te Taiao and Hapū and Marae (see appendix

1) based on the programme goals of Māripi Tuatini. Contributing to the measurement of rangatahi connection with nature, to allow for a broader Indigenous understanding of wellbeing, identity, and connection.

Methods

Participants

Purposeful sampling found 10 participants selected for the present study who all met the inclusion criteria of *whakapapa* (geneology) to Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa, and a history of being actively involved in activities related to the whenua. One participant was in the 35–45-year age group, one in the 46–55-year age group and the remaining eight within the ages of 55-75. Seven participants were male, and three participants were female.

Methodology

Kaupapa Māori research (KMR) guided the research process. At a foundational level, KMR focuses on the needs, aspirations, and preferences of *tangata whenua* (people of the land). KMR also ensures systemic post-colonial issues are explored and addressed in the academic research process, while ensuring that the approach is an active research process, inclusive of data analysis and reporting (Moewaka-Barnes, 2000; Bishop, 1996; Smith, 1999; Walker, Eketone, & Gibbs, 2006).

Tangata whenua Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa required research objectives that aligned with their iwi priorities and aspirations, and also met their expectations of researcher behaviour. The project centred around the values documented by 'Ngā Paiaka Matua', developed in 1997 by Pahia Turia (Ngā Wairiki, Ngāti Apa, Whanganui, Ngā Rauru, Ngāti Tūwharetoa), to guide Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa decision making and organisational development (Te Runanga o Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa (n.d.)). The 9 values of Paiaka Matua include: *Manaakitanga* (care, respect); *Rangatiratanga* (leadership, self-determination and authority); *Ūkaipōtanga*, (sense of place, recognition of origins); *Whanaungatanga* (tika & pono - good family and wider relationships); *Kaitiakitanga* (Guardianship, management right); *Wairuatanga,* (spirituality, belief); Kotahitanga (unity, harmony); Whakapapa (genealogy, connections); *Te Reo me nga Tikanga* (Māori language and culture).

Methodology Overview

The 9 Paiaka Matua values are presented in figure 1 below (green column), as central to and guiding the research methods. The two other columns represent the links with data collection and data analysis from an overarching Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa research project*,* Hei Ārahi Mō Ngā Tapuwae: exploring whenua-based knowledge and approaches to rangatahi ora. This article is about research that is one of the stages of this broader project. The arrows between the three columns provide an overview of the rich interplay between Ngā Paiaka Matua values, data collection and data analysis.

The data collection process as outlined on the left-hand column was framed within a case study design undertaken within the rohe (tribal boundaries) of Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa. The unit of analysis is experience of whenua tūpuna. The data analysis column on the right outlines several of the analysis processes used at different stages of the overall project. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and *wānanga* (meetings to discuss and consider) were used to code transcripts and produce themes. Following 3 broad stages of thematic analysis (Saldana, 2013) included organisation of the data through structural and descriptive coding; data reduction through pattern coding; and interpretive coding in the development of broader themes.

Reporting each of the four themes here starts with a *whakatauākī* (proverbial saying), often related to an event or behaviour, and imbued with meanings and important teachings capturing "valued characteristics, personal virtues, modes of behaviour, life lessons and appropriate courses of action" (Patterson, 1992 cited in Rameka, 2016, p. 394). The whakatauākī reflect the experiences of participants and provides a direct connection to the role of intergeneration knowledge transfer for the learnings of this study, and the stories connected to them to be carried and shared by the *uri* (descendants) of Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa.

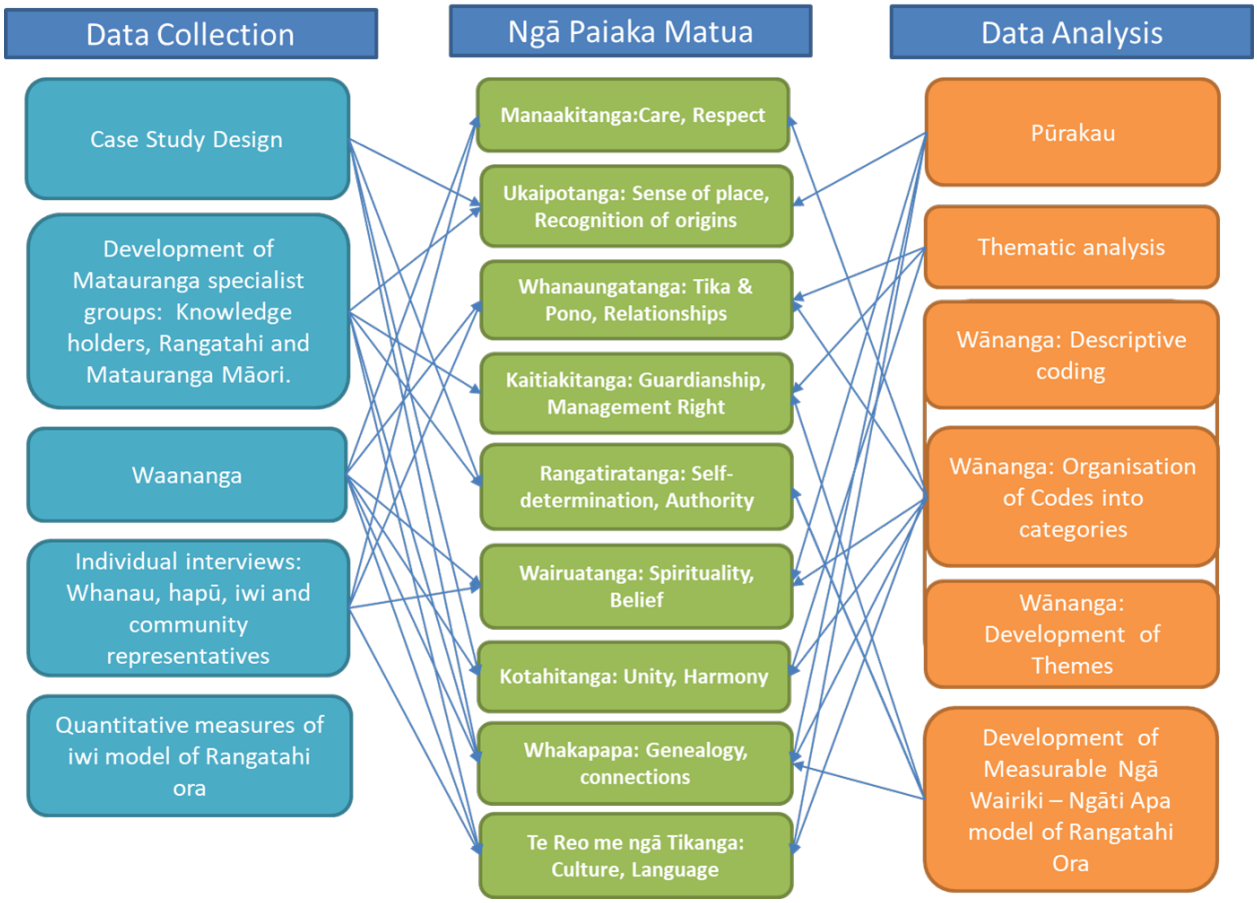

Figure 1 Methodology overview

Results

The analysis of the 10 interviews produced four themes: Tūpuna Taiao recognising and building knowledge of the multitude of tūpuna in the environment and learning from those tūpuna; Mahi-a-Pōtiki, engaging in te taiao through play, experimentation, testing limits and innovation including by using what is in the environment for construction; Kaiāwhina/Mentorship, the importance of guidance and support from older sibling and peers in engaging in te taiao and; Manaakitanga/Kaitiakitanga: caring for whenua and people being at the base of everything they did. In particular looking after kaumātua was emphasised.

Tūpuna Taiao

> Hoki atu ki to kāinga i te atapō. Mā tō awa, tō whenua, tō maunga e ako.
> Return to the house when it is near dark. Let your river, land, mountain teach you.

This is a new whakatauākī created from the common saying of parents and grandparents of Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa, urging their tamariki to go outside and play and to not return until dinner time. This was a way of encouraging children to be independent. "We weren't allowed in the house till after teatime, so we thought we may as well go and do something else" (RW)

The Tūpuna Taiao theme focuses on the different ways that people referred to te taiao as a tūpuna or to a time when the tūpuna taiao was a teacher. This includes its role in teaching its uri, and the structures such as *whare tūpuna* (ancestral houses) and *urupā* (burial grounds) that hold the remains of the tūpuna, constructed and maintained by descendants. All are involved in representing and reinforcing learning and transmission of roles, responsibilities, and life.

Most of the 10 interviewed said they learnt most of what they know about te taiao on their own, with very little guidance. For example, learning from *awa* (rivers) from playing in the rivers, testing out floating devices, learning the currents, the flows, the safe and the unsafe parts of rivers. As whānau and hapū we may have lost *kōrero*

(stories) but te taiao itself is seen as a keyway of learning through *tohu* (signs or messages):

> It's not necessarily always having to learn the kōrero (talk) and the pūrākau (story) of places. I mean, if they reveal themselves in whatever form, that's really cool. But just trying to slow down and just be intentional with what you're doing and hopefully some of those things might reveal themselves just by being there and being present….. All of our environment, our taiao spaces are powerful. Just take the time to tune in and whatever messages you get, if you can hear them, yeah. Take it on board (JG).

Learning from the environment was noted to be an important process, such as the times when the night was black or the full moon, which signalled readiness for certain times of planting and fishing. Younger participants spoke about the importance of learning the natural cycles of the environment, and this could be found in the recollections of older participants who recalled signs in the environment that signalled an upcoming event, such as the migration of whales or the fact that they knew the eels were running when there was no moon.

> I think that's probably one of the major things we should start being aware of – things like *Matariki* (Māori New Year), *Maramataka*, learning our lunar calendar, our lunar moon phases and all those things, because it's just far more aligned to our time and space of where we are right now rather than a calendar that can help us predict what's coming on what day in the future (JG).

Mahi-a-Pōtiki

> Kei whea tō tīpuna, kia whakaputa mai. I muri anō Whakatau-pōtiki, nāna i tautoko te rangi i runga - Ka puta koe ki te whaiao ki te ao mārama! Where is your ancestor, to bring you forth? Afterwards there was Whakatau-pōtiki, who propped the sky above and so you come forth to the light of day, the world of light!
> (Te Hākeke, He Oriori mō Te Rara o Te Rangi, in Orbell,1978, p. 64).

Within the Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa iwi memory, there are two well-known tūpuna who were *pōtiki* (the youngest child born in a whānau), Whakatau Pōtiki and Maui Pōtiki, who appear in iwi waiata (songs) and names. Maui was the original pōtiki discussed by Ranginui Walker (1990) as having particular traits. 'He was quick, intelligent, bold, resourceful, cunning and fearless, epitomising the basic personality structures idealised by Māori society' (p. 15). Te Hākeke composed the above whakatauākī for his son Whakatau-Pōtiki, who like Maui was a risk-taker, a person who challenged the established order.

The theme Mahi-a-Pōtiki reflects the participants experiences of engaging in te taiao through play, adventure, getting kai, and risk taking. It reflects the felt sense, and at times both fear and joy of engaging with nature and learning through informal ways. The other end of the learning spectrum, formal education, is also discussed within this theme.

Commonly the participants actively engaged in aspects of te taiao around 8 or 9 years of age. This engagement was often physical and direct with the local taiao, and for some this also involved developing deep interests about taiao around the world. Participants spoke about being taught aspects of preparing kai that had been caught or harvested, whereas others spoke about their learning coming about by observation of these practices.

> There would be a lot of us kids and we would camp out there for the weekend. We would go out there for the kahawai run. I remember watching the uncles and dad. They would go out with a drag net. There would be two of them holding the net, and the other three or four would walk out to the middle of the awa and start bringing the net around. The further they got around, you would just see the kahawai jumping out of the water, trying to get out of the net. They would pull the net in and there would be at least forty in there, in one sweep (AT).

Others spoke about engaging in te taiao as part of an adventure, reflecting on times they travelled to favourite eeling spots and catching giant eels. These adventures were noted to involve some significant risk to the individuals involved. This was pointed out by several participants who noted that they would not let their own children out at these times of night, to these places, or unsupervised. This adventure was at times also reflected as risk taking, however this presented as an accepted part of growing up in the *rohe* (area).

> We used to go across the train bridge down the Valley Road. This would be like eleven or twelve at night. Two nine- or ten-year-olds walking across this train bridge, hoping the train wasn't

> coming, to get to a stream at the bottom of the hill. We would go there. We would also spear or gaff. It didn't matter how we did, the cousin was the man… It was no problem to turn back up home at two or three in the morning (AT).

Many of the participants focused on the role that formal education played in either fostering or inhibiting skills and knowledge connections to te taiao. For JG, the transition into *Kura Kaupapa* Māori medium schooling played a fundamental role in fostering his relationship with the environment.

> I think it was actually going to kura Māori, growing up in mainstream kura, did Kōhanga when I was little, then into kindy, went into primary school... it was coming back to kura Māori where I was exposed to our atua Māori (gods) and that real deep connection to taiao, Ranginui (Sky Father) and Papatūānuku (Earth Mother) - those types of kōrero. Just being immersed in that world and that way of thinking and that knowledge, I think, helped me understand what it meant to have a relationship with the environment. Our camps would always be marae trips up the river - that was just normal for us. That's where I really got a good physical and spiritual connection to the river and living on the marae up the river. So probably how we learnt at kura was why I've got such a strong connection to this river here (JG).

Kaiārahi (Mentorship)

> He taonga te tukuihotanga o te mātauranga.
> Knowledge passed down is a true treasure.

A key theme was the important role of mentorship. Each participant from Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa identified a person or multiple people throughout their lives that helped to foster their connection to te taiao in various ways. This theme focuses on the different supports that were in place to guide learning, encourage risk taking and at times ensure safety.

Many of the stories surrounding how mentoring took place were grounded in action, in 'doing', and by physically engaging with te taiao. By being immersed in the whenua, the awa, and the *moana* (sea), our people were being mentored and guided by te taiao and influential people in their lives that engaged in different practices. AT recounts some of his memories of being guided through eeling practices, as he explains,

> We would always be out eeling or setting possum traps. I'm talking about the age of nine, or something like that – nine or ten. It's something I've never let my kids do. You're out at like two or three in the morning and you're hanging out over the willow branches and the water is rushing underneath you, and you're tying a possum trap to the tree. We would do that two or three days a week. It was no problem to turn back up home at two or three in the morning. Cousin knew everything about that sort of thing – possum trapping, gathering kai and tuna. He taught me how to pāwhara an eel and tuna – hang them up and dry them. I never used to eat them. I learnt a lot from my cousin. We were both the same age. I'm about six or seven days older than him. That was the early days of my upbringing out at Whangaehu. Spent a lot of it with the cousin (AT).

Participants gave many examples of learning by observing or joining in with their fathers, grandparents or aunties and uncles. JG recounts similar memories, of observing his *koko* (grandfather) working in the garden and playing alongside him.

> The whānau weren't really hunters or gatherers or on the farm or anything like that, but Koko was a massive gardener, so he probably really connected us to the whenua wherever we were. He was digging and we were right there behind him not really listening and paying attention, but that was just play time for us as well, digging the dirt and just getting the hands *paru* (dirty) and things like that; that was Koko's life in the whenua. He would work but then the rest of his time would mainly be preparing the whenua, growing kai, cooking kai, eating kai, sharing kai - so that's where myself, I have memories of really learning what the whenua can do for us in terms of our wellbeing (JG).

AT now passes his skills and knowledge on to his children and *mokopuna* (grandchildren), as some of these activities are practiced less and less, as he noted.

> I think it's important that we teach our kids a lot of those things; those are all dying arts really (AT).

Manaakitanga and Kaitiakitanga

> Mai Motukaraka ki Omarupapako
> The boundaries of the iwi start at Motukaraka and extend to Omarupapako
> These are the boundaries of our manaakitanga and our kaitiakitanga

Both manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga were seen as 'superpowers' by those we interviewed. They were aspects of whānau, hapū life that enabled the wellbeing of people and whenua through everyday situations and in crisis situations. *Kaitiakitanga* is the role of maintaining a watchful eye over the changes and the ebbs and flows of the natural world. But it is also a role of active caring for both the environment and people, taking action to restore balance where possible. A number of examples were referred to about the active maintaining of both a watchful eye and actions to maintain that tiakitanga. Manaakitanga was built into daily life in the past and today. It is a value of generosity to others and their needs. Participants provided many examples of manaakitanga being enacted. JT recalls that when watching his koko, his garden did not only feed himself and his direct whānau, but he grew enough kai to share with the community.

> I think of my Koko, like man, he knew how to live off the whenua, how to survive. How to feed not just the whānau but the community as well. He just had massive sacks of spuds and all that that he would take around the community, around town, around the pa, all those types of things (JT).

In a similar vein, JM remembers:

> Yeah, the main thing was share. If you catch heaps, spread it out. That's what dad and my great grandfather used to do, fishing up the coast. Go fishing, would even catch heaps of fish and then walk along the beach and just give it all away. They probably end up with two. Just enough. Then they'd go back out again the next day. I'm like that (JM).

Many participants spoke about their role in preserving, protecting whenua, and knowledge related to the whenua. Both AT and RW see themselves as kaitiaki who keep a watchful eye out on the whenua and waterways even today, whether that is removing rubbish that has been dumped beside rivers or educating people who are overfishing. AT explains:

> I always have that in mind – that if it's going to benefit our mokopuna, let it benefit us all; so we all benefit from it. That's just how I think (AT)

Participants also spoke about the stories they had been told about kaitiakitanga of different relations, such as monitoring and protecting whales during breeding season.

> We were told about how when the whales came in to give birth at the mouth of the river, the people would go out on *waka* (canoes) and protect them from the sharks (AT)

Participants were also keenly aware of the role of pollution in the environment, and the impact this was having on tangata whenua. It caused pressure from neighbouring iwi, who might have lost kai sources through pollution:

> Back in those days, the Whanganui river, it was paru (caused by sewerage discharge off the coast). Everybody knew that, it was very bad. Of course, you went to the Turakina River, you could jump in it, you could swim in it, it was not a problem. By the amount of whitebait we caught, it could be a bit patchy, but definitely the sea fishing was good. I think that the coastal aspect of Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa is significant (CS).

Discussion

The results of this study highlight the role of te taiao (the environment) as a tūpuna, and as a *kaiako* (teacher). Knowledge of te taiao as tūpuna is transmitted intergenerationally through practices and oral traditions. For example, this is represented in the phrase *ki te whai ao, ki te ao marama*. The delivering of knowledge by tūpuna who sourced that knowledge in the cosmological realms and brought that back to te ao marama, indicates that the natural world is a world of embedded knowledge.

Before exploring the meaning of the themes presented in the findings section, it is valuable to set the context that the participant's experiences were derived from. Predominantly drawn from the 1960's through to the 1980's, *Te reo Māori* (language) was at a low point for the iwi during the early years of this timeframe. Many were growing up in English only speaking environments, with little direct teaching of *tikanga* (correct way). Participants aged 75+ were likely exposed to direct teaching of tikanga (Smith, 2010) but this fell away in the iwi except for a small group who were upholding tikanga on marae. Generally, the lowest point for Te reo Māori and tikanga was that prior to the language and cultural revival period of the 1980s. Before this there was a low level of mātauranga Māori

being explicitly passed on intergenerationally to participants. Te reo Māori was rarely used except on marae by a handful of people. It was generally an era of assuming that *Pākehā* (settler) knowledge was the way forward for the people. However, there were pockets of *Te Ao Māori* (Māori perspectives or ways of life) that remained throughout this low point. Our participants were active in te taiao, and there was a consistent pattern of being taught by te taiao itself or Tūpuna Taiao. With the opportunity for those aged 35 and under to attend bilingual schools, Kura Kaupapa Māori and *Kōhanga Reo* (Māori preschool), a change occurred in the numbers speaking and learning te reo and tikanga in classrooms or at wānanga on marae.

The discussion surrounding where, who, and how knowledge and skills are fostered in different contexts is of value when considering mentoring for rangatahi. It again highlights the necessity to revitalise, practice, and establish strategies to maintain Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa practices that aid in fostering connections to te taiao for our people. Through kai gathering practices, *māra kai* (gardens), *raranga* (weaving), *whakairo* (carving), and even just having space and time to explore and establish personal connections to te taiao; each of our participants received guidance throughout their journeys by whānau, friends, teachers, and the environment surrounding them. Through observation, participation, and being immersed in te taiao with mentors; knowledge and skills were passed through generations that enabled them to ground themselves within the whenua. 'You know that years and years ago, your tīpuna (ancestors) were out here doing the same thing' (AT).

The theme Mahi-a-Pōtiki reflects the important attributes or risk taking and adventure that are well represented in pūrākau involving Maui Pōtiki and Whakatau Pōtiki including within the Tāwhaki cycles (Walker, 1990). Māui has been noted to be a tīpuna who ventured greatly and took significant risks for the betterment of the collective, such as slowing the sun, fishing up *Te Ika-a-Māui* (The north island of New Zealand) and giving people the secret of fire. Both Māui and Whakatau broke the mould of lineage roles and responsibilities, as younger siblings who set forth and accomplished incredible feats. These pūrākau reflected important lessons that anything is possible.

The commonly occurring age for engagement in te taiao was also an important consideration. In her Master's thesis 'Te Toi Huarewa Tīpuna: Kaupapa Māori an educational intervention system', Tuakana Nepe noted that according to Rose Pere (1982)

> by the age of seven the Māori child has developed a deep inner-soul understanding of natural phenomena. This affinity can become so strong that they are able to develop their knowledge and skills to literally 'read' nature like their tīpuna before them" (Nepe, 1991, p.34).

This aligns with the theme 'Tūpuna Taiao' and it likely reflects the importance of play and exposure to the Taiao.

Parents and grandparents were also teaching about te taiao. All the interviewees emphasised play, the sheer joy of creativity of playing and being at home in te taiao. AT learnt from his cousin but also, he was out in the environment every day, catching kai. He was allowed freedom to roam all over the lands around Whangaehu. The boys set *hīnaki* (eel traps), went bobbing for eels and mentioned tickling eels. Huge quantities of kahawai were caught in the net at the mouth of the Whangaehu River. They were not alone, their siblings, cousins, friends, neighbours, mates were also doing the same and together they learnt about the natural environment. This was important for teaching independence, resilience and knowledge of te taiao.

The value of manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga has been an evident thread through each of our interviews with uri of Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa and is expressed and practiced in many shapes and forms, and something that helps guide our people in their outlook and mindset through life. From the sharing of kai, to assisting in a time of crisis, or pulling together to contribute to a common goal or ambition for our people, manaakitanga guides our relationships and connections to both people and our environment that surrounds us. By holding steadfast to this theme, we are able to remain a strong and resilient collective and revitalize our own iwi knowledge, stories, and practices.

Recommendations for developing Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa Rangatahi Health Indicators

In analysing the relationship between the four factors of te taiao dimension recommended by McLachlan et al., (2023), and those of the four themes identified in the interviews with iwi knowledge holders, the authors found strong overlap and support for the proposed dimensions. There were particularly strong connections between the proposed Hua Oranga factor of 'Kaiārahai whānau: whānau guidance and participation' and 'Kaitiaki ki te whenua: active engagement in caring for and protecting te taiao' with the theme from iwi knowledge holders of 'Mentorship/Kaiārahi: the importance of guidance and support in engaging in te taiao' and 'Manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga: caring for the land and for others respectively'. The second theme extends upon caring for te taiao, by noting the reciprocal nature of te taiao in turn caring for us, along with te taiao providing the opportunity for us to show care towards others. This is done through the *koha* (gifting) of kai to others from harvesting and hunting. The act of koha within this theme also showed a connection to the proposed Hua Oranga factor of 'Pūkenga Taiao: skills and abilities to access and utilise the taiao'.

The proposed Hua Oranga factor 'Mauri tau: sense of connection and belonging to and with tūpuna whenua' aligns most closely with 'Tūpuna Taiao: the way the participants learn from the environment itself', noting the connection is not just a focus on some form of a calming state, but that of feeling safe and trusting of the taiao as a tūpuna, and as a Kaiako. The theme 'Mahi-a-pōtiki: engaging in the taiao through play, tuition and risk taking' aligns both with 'Pūkenga Taiao: skills and abilities to access and utilise the taiao' and 'Mauri tau: sense of connection and belonging to and with tūpuna whenua' from the proposed Hua Oranga factors. Again, based on the iwi knowledge holders of engaging with their tūpuna, in an adventurous yet trusting way.

Based on the alignment between the themes from this study, and the additional Hua Oranga factors proposed by McLachlan et al. (2023), the four recommended dimensions were incorporated into an extended Hua Oranga framework to include Te Taiao. The next step in this research project will be to trial with rangatahi, their whānau and community support people. This will allow gathering of health data, and also feedback on the items and factors themselves. The themes from this study also allows the continued transmission of the themes through the four whakatauākī developed from iwi knowledge holders and provide information to reflect upon in the ongoing design of the iwi Māripi Tuatini, rangatahi leadership program.

> Hoki atu ki to kāinga i te atapō, Mā tō awa, tō whenua, tō maunga e ako.
> *Return to the house when it is near dark, Let your river, land, mountain teach you.*
>
> Kei whea tō tīpuna, kia whakaputa mai, I muri anō Whakatau-pōtiki, Nāna i tautoko te rangi i runga -Ka puta koe ki te whaiao Ki te ao mārama!
> *Where is your ancestor, to bring you forth? afterwards there was Whakatau-pōtiki,*
> *Who propped the sky above, And so you come forth to the light of day, The world of light!*
>
> He taonga te tukuihotanga o te mātauranga
> *Knowledge passed down is a true treasure*
>
> Mai Motukaraka ki Omarupapako
> *The boundaries of the iwi start at Motukaraka and extend to Omarupapako*
> *These are the boundaries of our mana-akitanga and our tiakitanga*

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About the Authors:

Dr Cherryl Smith holds a PhD in Māori Education. Cherryl is a Kaupapa Māori researcher with over 25 years of Kaupapa Māori research. She has nine mokopuna and is raising the eldest. She has contributed to iwi, hapū and whānau wellbeing and research for 20 plus years. cherryl@ngawairikingatiapa.iwi.nz https://100maorileaders.com/leaders/dr-cherryl-waerea-i-te-rangi-smith

Dr Andre McLachlan (Ngāti Apa /Ngāti Kauae, Muaūpoko/Ngāti Pāriri) is a Clinical Psychologist, Addictions Counsellor and Clinical Specialist in the design of Kaupapa Māori workforce development and therapeutic resources. Andre.McLachlan@terauora.com https://100maorileaders.com/leaders/andre-mclachlan

Jasmine Sampson holds a master's degree in Māori and Pacific Development. Jasmine is a Kaupapa Māori Researcher currently undertaking her PhD studies. Working for her iwi of Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa, she continues to also contribute towards whānau, hapū and iwi spaces.Jasminesampson04@gmail.com

Dr Pauline Hiroti obtained a PhD in Dance Studies, Bachelor of Dance Studies, Bachelor of Dance Studies (Honours). Pauline is a māmā of two girls, a dance educator and academic who is currently teaching dance at secondary school level. She is actively engaged in community dance spaces and has interests in Kaupapa Māori and community dance research, and the connection between movement and whakapapa. hiroti.pauline@gmail.com