



Poem: A Young Tāne

Volume 8 | Issue 2
Article 9, October 2026

Haidee Rēnata MHSc, BHSc, RN

Auckland University of Technology and Te Whatu Ora

He Mihi – Acknowledgements:

I wrote this poem, a pūrākau (story, way of teaching), for a critical reflection contributing to a postgraduate assignment in 2021. Dedicated to a young tāne and tangata whaiora - a young Māori man and service user seeking wellness.

A Young Tāne

You came to us broken,
alone and homeless.
Stripped and raped,
physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
In our 'better, best, brilliant' DHB hospital,
straight to high-care,
under the Mental Health Act.
You were left in dirty clothing,
without shoes,
for six days.

We judged you by this daily.
Your notes said you were:
'Intimidating,'
'Difficult to engage,'
'Dishevelled and malodorous,'
'Wearing the same clothing as yesterday'
(and the day before that, and the day before that.)
Had anyone thought, why might this be?
No critical lens, no kaupapa Māori,¹ no te Tiriti.²
I was then allocated to be your nurse,
I, too, Māori.

¹ Māori approach, Māori topic, Māori customary practice, Māori institution, Māori agenda, Māori principles, Māori ideology - a philosophical doctrine, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society.

² Treaty of Waitangi. Founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand (1840)

You came up to the glass screen that separated us.
You asked me for a hug.
I came outside the ‘safety’ of the nursing station.
You stood over me, six and a half feet tall.
You looked down at me with piercing eyes.
You were used to being intimidating.
You thought I would flinch;
I did not.
I hugged you, and
you were shocked.

Whakawhanaungatanga, pepeha, whakapapa.³
To me, a brother, cousin, whānau.⁴
We were no different,
yet I was the nurse, and
you were the patient.
You did not fit our ‘one size fits all’ hospital pajamas.
You were larger than your average Pākehā.⁵
No WINZ⁶ application, no special needs grant.
No money, no access, no mana.⁷
I took you to the Ware Whare.⁸
It was a bargain.⁹
Respect, confidence, mana.
One hundred and twenty dollars:
shoes, socks, clothing.

You walked around with a sparkle in your eye,
a smile on your face.
A simple act, yet
outside of professional boundaries
and ethical code.

But soon, you were discharged,
nothing really addressed.
Racism, inequity,
dishonour of te Tiriti -
still blatantly the oppressed.

Then I got the news that
your body lay cold.
I attended your tangi.¹⁰
Whānau mourned, and
it fucken dawned.

³ Māori custom and protocol involving the building of relationships through connection and conversation of mutual descent.

⁴ family

⁵ New Zealander of European descent

⁶ WINZ Work and Income New Zealand manages benefits for unemployed and tangata whaiora seeking wellbeing.

⁷ Māori power and authority.

⁸ Whare is house, Ware Whare, idiomatic term for The Warehouse, a New Zealand retail chain.

⁹ The Warehouse marketing slogan

¹⁰ Funeral, to cry.

About the Author

Haidee Rēnata (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Rēhia, Ngāti Rēnata) is a registered nurse with a Master of Health Science. With 15 years of clinical experience in mental health nursing and five years in nursing education. Proud of her whakapapa Māori, she is an advocate for the realisation of Māori and Indigenous rights and autonomy. Her Master's thesis (2025) argues the activation of hauora kaupapa as a way to assert Māori aspirations and disrupt racism within the health and education sectors. Currently prioritising whānau responsibilities, while working in two casual positions with Auckland University of Technology and Te Whatu Ora. This poem first appears in Haidee's Masters research.

Rēnata, H. (2025). *Activating hauora kaupapa: Realising Māori aspirations and disrupting racism through Māori health workforce transformation* [Master's Thesis, Auckland University of Technology]. <http://hdl.handle.net/10292/19219>