

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**Ka haere tonu te mana o ngā wahine Māori:
Māori women as protectors of te ao Māori knowledge**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master
in
Social Work

at Massey University, Palmerston North,
New Zealand.

Paulé Aroha Ruwhiu

2009

Abstract:

Māori women play a critical role in whānau, hapū and iwi as whare tangata (procreators) and as whare mātauranga (repositories of knowledge). Wahine hold specific knowledge pertaining to their roles and responsibilities. As the primary nurturer to their young, they have a prime opportunity to provide this essential knowledge to the next generation. Historically, this occurred through oriori; however in recent times these processes have evolved to include technological advancements in communication. This research examined the nature of te ao Māori knowledge and the processes used to transmit it through three generations of Māori women in three whānau. It explores the roles and responsibilities of Māori women in pre-colonial Māori society, the influences of the colonisation process and Māori women's resilience to continue to pass on the practices of their tūpuna.

The methodology drew on aspects of three different theories in order to address the needs of the participants as historically oppressed, minority indigenous Māori women. Critical theory acknowledged the oppression and minority status as well as encouraging the sharing of experiences. Kaupapa Māori theory localised the issues of Māori in relation to the colonisation process and mana wahine theory identifies the significant roles and responsibilities of Māori women as leaders/agents of change within their whānau, hapū and iwi. A qualitative approach allowed the information gathered to be conducted similarly to Māori oral traditions. It was identified from the understandings gathered from the participants that significant te ao Māori knowledge has been passed down through the generations. It also showed that the knowledge has changed from generation to generation and the passing on of knowledge has also changed due to the social and technological advancements associated with development and outside influences on the younger generation.

This thesis confirms that Māori women are resilient and some have been able to continue to pass on te ao Māori knowledge despite the challenges of the rural to urban shift and the effects of colonisation. It also encourages women and whānau who have not been privilege to this knowledge to begin the journey to reclaim their right and provides some strategies for doing this. It celebrates the voices of three whānau who have demonstrated their strength to maintain the philosophies of traditional Māori.

Acknowledgements:

There are numerous people that contributed to this thesis and for that I am truly humbled. Firstly I would like to acknowledge my whānau who have shown immense patience and tolerance towards my role as a student. To my partner, Rangaunu Hohepa Ngatote Reihana, you have been my blessing and my stability through the entirety of my studies, without your support I could not have accomplished what I have and in return shared it with you. To my son Chase Ruwhiu, I hope I have inspired you to reach your fullest potential and not settle for anything less. To my sister Donna Kelling, I have enjoyed rekindling our sisterhood over these years; you are truly a remarkable woman. It is with the utmost respect that I treasure my parents for forming the foundation of who I am which allowed me to think outside my square and aim for excellence. My extended whānau whānui, I celebrate your endurance, your resilience and your spirit. I am proud to be a Ruwhiu and part of the Reihana-Ngatote and Steele whanau as a contributor to this generation, '*Ka hoki a maua ki Ngā Puhi*'. To Hannah Mooney, our journey started together, our friendship and whānau connections lasts forever.

With respect and humility, I am deeply and sincerely grateful to my supervisors who have pushed me to my limits. My eternal thanks and gratitude goes to Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata and Felicity Ware, who have always believed in my potential and my passion even at times when I doubted myself. The safe and secure environment you have provided me enabled the completion of this research. I am immensely honoured to have had your support and commitment walking alongside of me.

I thank Te Rau Puāwai for the inundated ongoing support over the last four years; it is with this belief in the Māori workforce that you give Māori the opportunity to fulfill their passion to work with their own. Oranga Hinengaro Māori have provided me with the space to study when working full-time. While this has been a struggle, the team has been encouraging.

My appreciation and admiration goes to the participant whānau who have contributed to this research, it is hoped that my intentions to celebrate and privilege your voices have been a success to you and your iwi, Ngā Puhi, Ngāti Porou and Ngāti Raukawa. It has been enriching to know that the three whānau I had the pleasure in interviewing, have enlightened the 'mauri' to this research and made it come alive.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to three beautiful women who have passed away. My grandmother Te Here Taiapa, who I never met but I always feel around me. Nan, Huhuna Reihana, who passed down impeccable morals and values to the whānau and contributed to the flow of te ao Māori knowledge within the whānau, hapū and iwi of Ngāti Kahu. Tuakana Olsen (nee Mcllroy) who lived life to the fullest and hungered for more, you are a wahine toa. My inspiration has come from all of you.

Table of Contents:

Abstract:	ii
Acknowledgements:	iii
Table of Contents:	iv
Chapter One: Introduction	8
Aims of Research	8
Rationale.....	9
Research Approach	10
Key definitions	12
Key Issues	14
Chapter outline	15
Conclusion	16
Chapter Two: Te ao Māori - pre 1840	17
Introduction	17
Cosmology.....	17
Balance	19
Leadership	19
Wairua	20
Birthing Practices.....	21
Hinengaro	22
Whānau, Hapū, Iwi	22
Whakapapa.....	24
Transmission of knowledge	24
Conclusion	25
Epilogue.....	25
Chapter Three: Contemporary Te Ao Māori	27
Introduction	27
Kuia: 1930- 1960	27
Introduction	27
Urbanisation.....	27

Pregnancy and Parenting	28
Religion and Christianity Influences	29
Health	29
Whānau	30
Education	30
Leadership	31
Transmission of Knowledge.....	32
Tikanga	32
The Link.....	33
Whāea: 1960-1990	34
Introduction	34
Leadership	34
Parenting	35
Religious Influences versus Spirituality	36
Health	37
Education.....	38
Feminism	38
Social Policy	39
The Link.....	40
Kōtiro: 1990- 2010	40
Introduction	40
Leadership	41
Whānau	41
Health	42
Identity	43
Knowledge	44
Whakapapa.....	44
Tikanga	45
The Link.....	45
Conclusion	46
Chapter Four: Methodology.....	48
Qualitative Approach	48

Critical Theory.....	49
Kaupapa Māori Theory	49
Mana Wahine Theory	50
Indigeneity	51
Research Design	51
Selection of the Participants	52
Participant Consent	52
Data Collection	53
Equipment and preparation	54
Thematic Analysis.....	54
Transcribing	54
Ethical Considerations.....	55
Ethical issues.....	55
Conclusion	57
Chapter Five: Results.....	59
Introduction.....	59
The Whānau	59
Traditional te ao Māori.....	60
Contemporary te ao Māori	62
Cultural practices and activities	67
Transmission of knowledge	74
Conclusion	77
Chapter Six: Discussion	79
Traditional Te ao Māori.....	79
Contemporary Te ao Māori.....	81
Cultural Practices.....	83
Spirituality/Christianity	84
Healing Interventions.....	85
Birthing Practices/Returning the Whenua.....	86
Transmission of Knowledge.....	87
Continuity for the future	88
Conclusion	89

Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Recommendations	91
Summary of Chapters.....	91
Objectives fulfilled.....	92
My Personal Journey	94
The participant whānau	94
Further Research opportunities	95
Recommendations/Considerations.....	96
Conclusion	98
Glossary	99
Appendices:	101
Participant Information Sheet	101
Participant consent form.....	105
Bibliography:	106