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Ngā pūrākau o ngā wāhine rangatira Māori o Aotearoa

The stories of Māori women leaders in New Zealand

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Whakarāpopoto: Abstract

Māori women form the backbone of Māori communities and have long worked within political, health, social, legal, religious and educational community environments to enhance the status and wellbeing of Māori communities. Traditionally, Māori were seen as maintaining roles of balance, harmony, and leadership in te ao Māori (the Māori world). This study sought to explore the life experiences of Māori women leaders and how these have been influential on their roles as leaders in Māori communities. Thirteen women were identified by Māori in their communities as leaders and were interviewed using pūrākau (traditional Māori narratives) as a method for life story narrative research in kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) interviews. Using a research analysis framework based on pūrākau and the four words which comprise its whole, pū (source), rā (light), ka (past, present, future), and ū (from within), four important research findings emerged. First, their source of leadership began from their ūkaipō (early childhood nurturing and protection) and was sustained by their connections to whakapapa (genealogy, descent) and guided by whānau (family) expectations. Second, particular experiences which led to enlightenment were important in sustaining and guiding their roles as leaders through the development of moemoeā (visions, aspirations) for their communities. These experiences involved wairua (spirituality), mātauranga (education) and experiences of racism and discrimination. Third, future aspirations in their roles as leaders were strongly influenced by past and present experiences in their specific social, historical and political contexts. Fourth, the individual attributes these women brought to their roles as leaders enhanced their roles in Māori communities. These attributes were nurtured and encouraged from generation to generation in Māori communities particularly through traditional Māori narratives such as whakataukī (proverbs) and pūrākau. These findings were interpreted to show how Māori leadership has evolved to meet the needs of Māori communities, and how Māori women have been actively involved in meeting and advancing these needs. As a result, this study provided insights into how leadership in te ao Māori was developed and can be used to encourage leadership in future generations.
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E hara taku toa he toa takitahi, engari he toa takatini.

*My strength is not from myself alone, it is from those who surround me.*
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