

Practicing Democracy from Childhood: Democratic Praxis in Te Ao Māori

Kylie Smith, Ksenija Napan, Raewyn Perkinson, and Roberta Hunter

► **Abstract:** Democracy manifests itself in a range of ways and is an imperfect, dynamic struggle for collective decision-making. This article discusses the multifaceted processes of deliberative democratic praxis found in traditional Māori society. Central to decision-making in *te ao* Māori, *hui* provide formal and informal structures for deliberative democracy, precedent setting, learning, and transformation through consensus making, inclusive debate, and discussion across all levels of society. Rather than coercion and voting, *rangatira* relied on a complex mix of customary values and accomplished oratory skills to explore issues in family and community meetings and in public assemblies. Decisions made through inclusive deliberative processes practiced in *hui* established evident reasoning and responsibility for all community members to uphold the reached consensus. This article claims that practicing deliberative democracy as a fundamental way of life, learned through ongoing active and meaningful participation throughout childhood, improves the integrity of democratic decision-making.

► **Keywords:** consensus, deliberative democracy, democratic schooling, *hui*, indigenous democratic processes, Māori

*Pūrūkau*¹ (Māori cultural narrative) tells of an important *hui* (meeting/assembly²) held by the children of the original family. Deeply in love, *Ranginui* (the Sky father) and *Papatūānuku* (the Earth mother) were tightly embraced, not wanting to be separated. Their children lived in the dark, cramped space between their parents, and although held by love, they longed for space and light. The children met and discussed ways to separate their parents. Finally, *Tane* (the God of the Forests) pushed his parents apart. *Ranginui* and *Papatūānuku* wept for each other but were not angry with their children. This *hui* of *Ranginui* and *Papatūānuku*'s children sets a precedent for Māori way of life. In times of difficulty or disagreement, people come together, and, through open deliberation, debate, and



consensus making, agree on ways to move forward (Jenkins and Harte 2011; O’Sullivan and Mills 2009; Rewi 2010).

Building on these concepts, we explore examples of indigenous deliberative democratic practices within traditional Māori society. Māori expertise in deliberative consensus making can be seen in the complex yet fine-tuned procedures of *hui* in family, community, and regional groupings (Mead 2003; Ngata 1928; Walker 1979; Winiata 1956). These traditional practices are discussed here in terms of their democratic nature. There has been little written about pre-colonial democracy in Aotearoa New Zealand, however, there is broad information on the social and political structures of pre-colonial Māori, albeit not specifically related to democracy. This may be because the literature on the subject was imperialist and bonded to a Western, colonized view of reality, often rejected by Māori people. Using this as a baseline, we discuss how the concept of *hui* was a conduit for democratic praxis in traditional Māori society.

In understanding deliberative democracy, we take lead from Martin Samuelsson (2016) who affirms that “theories of deliberative democracy hold that the essence of democratic politics does not lie in voting and representation but in the common deliberation that underlies collective decision-making” (2012: 2). A key postulation in this research is that in a participative and inclusive democracy, citizens need a solid understanding of the processes and fundamentals of democracy, and this must be learned by doing from a young age, rather than by being taught an abstract concept in a non-democratic institution (Alshurman 2015; Dewey 2011; Fairley and Wilson 2017; Fielding and Moss 2011; Greenberg 1987; Tikoko et al. 2011). Māori offer us a process for achieving this goal. When learned and experienced through ongoing active participation throughout childhood, such deliberative democratic practices provide a framework for citizens to retain their individual freedoms alongside a clear understanding of their collective responsibilities.

Modern democracies can benefit from greater investigation of the traditional Māori practices of collective deliberation and consensus making, to better understand and comprehend, and thereby feel more confident participating in deliberative democratic processes. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the indigenous Māori people have been engaged in a struggle for a return of self-determination since it became clear that formative agreements with the British Crown³ were not going to be upheld by colonizers (Walker 2004). Following in the footsteps of his ancestors, Ranginui Walker (1979) writes of the need to reestablish a deliberative democracy in Aotearoa New Zealand, inclusive of the minority Māori voices outvoted in the current “majority rules” system. “In the political processes where Māori are the outvoted minority there is a need to broaden the meaning

of democracy from its limiting majority rule convention” (Walker 1979: 6). This article aims to add to the conversation on deliberative democratic processes in schools, and democracy more broadly.

It is important to note that with this article we hope only to learn from Māori indigenous wisdom to advance the general conversation around democracy in a range of settings. We in no way intend to imply that Māori be expected to work within Western frameworks, and we strongly support Māori in their struggle for decolonization and *tino rangatiratanga* (self-autonomy/absolute sovereignty), for Māori by Māori. We strongly acknowledge that Māori voice is not homogenous, as each *iwi* have their own way of doing and knowing and their own procedures of practice.

Non-westernized Understandings of Democracy

It is important at the outset to clarify our understanding of democracy. The promotion and ownership of democracy by westernized nations, combined with academic writing on democracy based around narrow westernized assumptions and histories, alongside confusion (often media driven) between economic policies and democratic processes has led to narrow interpretations of this broad concept (Chou and Beausoleil 2015; Ercan and Gagnon 2014; Fielding and Moss 2011; Isakhan 2012; Isakhan and Stockwell 2011; Muhlberger and Paine 1993; Žižek 2014). Many Māori do not identify their traditional socio-political systems as “democratic,” probably because a British imperialist, Westminster-style democracy was imposed on them through colonization and westernized perceptions of the concept clash with their own struggle for *tino rangatiratanga*. Furthermore, the narrow nature often presented of the concept does not directly translate to the wider understandings and diverse praxes of political participation of Māori (Bargh 2013). Such participation includes mediating structures, such as school boards, Māori governance boards, *Marae* (Māori community house/meeting space), churches, and wider inclusion of *iwi* (tribe) and *hapū* (sub-tribe) when local community decisions are made as described by Wally Penetito (2010) and parallel institutions for Māori as described by Walker (1979) that give “recognition to Māori identity and desire for self-determination” (1979: 3). This article aims to contribute to discussions on a contemporary practice of democracy, which includes indigenous wisdom, enabling all voices to be heard.

We understand democracy as an open, dynamic concept that lends itself to different perspectives, epistemologies, and understandings, which

requires deliberative aspects to meet its intended purpose. People come with different perspectives, epistemologies, and understandings, and these change over time. It is probable that democracy was the preferred way of ruling among most communities throughout the history of humanity (at least informally; see Behrendt 2011; Glassman 2017; Isakhan 2011; Isakhan 2015; Keating 2011; Kizza 2011; Muhlberger and Paine 1993; Muhlberger 2011; Paine 2011; Pires Boulhosa 2011). A concept that essentially describes ways in which people can have their collective voice heard would manifest itself differently across different time periods, cultures, groups, and collective needs. For example, in Aotearoa New Zealand, the *Kīngitanga* movement⁴ resulted from a need to reconsider intertribal relationships following colonization. More contemporary examples include calls for guaranteed Māori representation in local government bodies, through Māori wards, and democratic representation on local and regional issues through Iwi Boards (O’Sullivan 2005, 2021).

Each rendition of democracy must be open to internal debate and change, as and when necessary. Any democracy in Aotearoa New Zealand must have a solid understanding and representation of the values of indigenous Māori culture and of the documents of relationship agreement between the Māori and the Crown, such as *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*⁵ (the Treaty of Waitangi) and the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975. Within this frame, supported by research on indigenous and non-westernized democracies (Behrendt 2011; Chou and Beausoleil 2015; Isakhan 2012, 2016; Keating 2011; Kizza 2011; Paine 2011), democracy is considered within a broad interpretation, including inclusive deliberative decision-making at community, local, regional, and national levels, rather than being limited to modern westernized perceptions of Westminster-style (majority rules) voting.

Opening our discussion of democracy to its broader interpretation is to acknowledge that there is no pure form or definition of democracy, but rather an imperfect struggle by all peoples for a more inclusive form of collective decision-making that embraces a wider range of individual voice (Isakhan and Stockwell 2011; Walker 1979). Democracy is a process; and such a dynamic process can sometimes seem messy. By its very nature, democracy must be continually contested, redeveloped, and reinterpreted (Biesta 2015). Essentially, democracy gives people, as citizens of a community, the circumstance (or right) to participate in establishing or changing the common law of that community but also the responsibility to abide by this same common law. Indigenous practices such as *hui* can aide the advancement of democracy from majority rules, to one of consensus making and ensuring minority voices are heard.

Traditional Māori Society and *Hui*

The complex processes of *hui* are critical to Māori society and, traditionally, were central in the management of social and political matters (O'Sullivan and Mills 2009). This is evident in the cultural landscape of traditional Māori villages where the *marae* (central meeting ground), *wharenui* (large meeting house), and other key community buildings and places, such as the *wharekai* (dining hall), *urupā* (cemetery), and smaller meeting houses, hold central and important positions (Mead 2003; Walker 1979; Winiata 1956). The survival of *hui* and *whaikōrero* (formal speech-making) through the devastating effects of colonization on Māori and subsequent urbanization of *tangata whenua* (people of the land, Māori people) speaks of its importance in *Māoritanga* (Māori culture/Māori way of life) (Rewi 2010; Salmond 2004).

Principles of kinship and hierarchy (through lineage and birthplace) are important in traditional Māori socio-political structures. However, like the African nations described by Immaculate Kizza (2011), this in no way excludes a role for democratic praxis. Traditional Māori socio-political systems were a complex mix of spirituality, tribalism and democracy, personal freedom and autonomy alongside strong collective ideals, inherited hierarchy blended with meritocracy, and a mixture of direct and representative deliberative democratic decision-making (Best 1924; Boast 2013; Bowden 1979; Mead 2003; Shortland 1856; Walker 1979). While a hierarchy based on birth right and gender existed, the limited size of social-political groupings in traditional Māori society maintained a governance based on bottom-up consensus decision-making, rather than by a top-down central authority (Walker 1979).

The *whānau* (extended family group) was the primary unit for social and economic affairs in *te ao Māori* (the Māori world) (Best 1924; Walker 2004; Winiata 1956). Normally headed by the elder generation, each *whānau* would have its own defined space and could be comprised of more or less one hundred-plus members (Mead 2003). *Whānau* lived and worked together to produce food and educate the younger generation. Two or more related *whānau* formed a *hapū* (sub-tribe). *Hapū* varied in size but generally consisted of a few hundred people who lived as a close community and who united for work, management of the land they took care of, had rights over, distribution of resources, and warfare. While *hapū* were relatively autonomous social and political units, they united for bigger issues (such as warfare, marriage, ritual ceremonies, land management, resource issues, etc.). This united group is called an *iwi* (tribe). Pre-colonial Māori society comprised of approximately 50 politically autonomous *iwi*,

varying in size from a few hundred up to many thousands of members (Bowden 1979).

Leadership of each of these socio-political units was headed by one or more persons in an elevated position. While hierarchy played a major role in the choice of a leader, at *hapū* and *iwi* levels (in particular) democratic processes in terms of community deliberation and the will of the people, were a considerable influence in any leadership role (Best 1924; Shortland 1856; Winiata 1956). Allegiances between *hapū* changed regularly and “*hapū* divided or fused according to the demands of the day” (Durie 2012: 5). The emergence of a new *hapū* was dependent on both the size of the group and whether a suitable leader could be identified. It was therefore incumbent on any leader to maintain strong political support from within their respective groups (Walker 2004).

Decision-making through negotiated discussion was practiced for most *whānau*, *hapū*, and *iwi* matters (other than during times of war). *Whānau* leaders would represent⁶ the collective consensus of their constituents in *hapū* meetings. *Hapū* leaders then represented these respective *whānau* in *iwi* meetings. The usual practice of *whānau* and *hapū* being maintained as smaller groups meant that all members of a community had somewhat personal representation in larger public assemblies, through a close family delegate (Winiata 1956). While it was common that *whānau* and *hapū* were represented by preordained leaders in *hui*, participation was open, and all free men had a right to speak. Women (and men descended only from families of junior lines⁷) were sometimes excluded from speaking on the *whare rūnanga* (political meeting house), particularly at the larger *iwi hui* (similar to practices of democratic assemblies in ancient Greece.) This exclusion was dependent on the tribe and the *mana* (presence, spiritual power, charisma, honour, prestige) of each particular individual (Winiata, 1956).

Traditional Māori lifestyle was based around communication. As such, processes for *hui* range from an informal *kōrero* (discussion) to the highly formalized, hallowed, and theatrical practices of *whaikōrero* (formal speech-making), which continue to be practiced today. While the intricacies of the formal procedures of *whaikōrero* differ between *iwi* (and contexts), a summary of the general order of protocols can be provided⁸. The entire *hapū* or *iwi* have a role to play; those not involved in formal speech-making participate through welcoming visitors, leading *waiata* (songs), or helping in the kitchen and dining area. A strict order of speakers is followed based on the rank and importance of each speaker, and speakers alternate between the hosting and visiting parties. Speeches follow a stylized process and start with traditional greetings acknowledging the land, ancestral meeting house in which they sit, ancestors passed,

people present, and reason for the gathering. Each speech is followed by a relevant and carefully chosen *waiata* (song) that supports and emphasizes what has been said. The *mana* of the entire tribe rests on the speaker/s and as such they must be highly trained in oratory and theatrical performance (Mead 2003; Rewi 2010; Salmond 2004). In *hui* processes, setting the intent of the discussions is very important. The opening practices help set the intent of the *hui*, including leaving *Tūmatauenga* or *Tū* (god of war) at the door.⁹

The *whakataukī* (Māori proverb) “*He aha te kai ō te rangatira? He kōrero, he kōrero, he kōrero*” (What is the food of the leader? It is knowledge, communication, conversation.) strongly expresses the need for leaders to be widely educated in Māori wisdom, with particular emphasis on communication and oratory skills. Young children of the *rangatira* class (chiefly or upper class) would be taken to meetings to sit alongside their fathers and to watch and listen to the speakers. Adolescent boys were trained in oratory skills in preparation for participation in these democratic debates and deliberations in *whare wānanga*¹⁰ (house of higher learning) and were allowed to participate actively in the *hui* (Bowden 1979; Jenkins and Harte 2011; Mead 2003).

Titles and political leadership roles bestowed on a *rangatira* (weaver of people/chief) demanded respect but not unquestioned control and power (except during times of war), and as such, their political authority was limited to influence (albeit formidable influence). An important part of leadership was ensuring the ongoing support of those in their collective. This provided for accountability of political leaders and ensured the focus of *hui* was on establishing consensus. While chieftainship was a birth right, potential leaders considered as not having the oratory skills needed were sometimes given the title for a customary or spiritual role, with a more competent sibling or other relative taking on the active political leadership (Winiata 1956). This allowed for the will of the people and the spirit of democracy to be included in leadership appointments (Shortland 1856).

Key values in Māori society, including *kotahitanga* (togetherness), *whanaungatanga* (belonging), *manākitanga* (caring for others) and *rangatiratanga* (self-determination), help to develop a collective society within which individual diversity is celebrated. The *whakataukī* ‘*ko Waitaha ngā tangata, ko kawē kē te ngakau*’ (all men of Waitaha tribe, but all differing in inclinations) illustrates the balance between collective contribution and respect of individual freedom celebrated in *te ao Māori* (the Māori world). Traditionally, Māori people enjoyed the freedom to make their own personal decisions, and, except in times of war, chiefs did not have the power of command without question (other than slaves). Leaders relied on a good understanding of the complex mix of customary norms

and values, kinship ties and oratory skills to explore issues in family and community meetings, as well as larger public assemblies, rather than use coercive authority. People in the *iwi* were “led rather than ordered” (Bowden 1979: 56). The governing of the village was undertaken by the heads of each *whānau*, with the *rangatira* in a supervisory and summative role (Mead 2003; Rewi 2010). While the opinion of the chief took on a greater weight at a *hui*, it was by no means the final word on a subject being debated (Winiata 1956).

Rules in traditional *te ao Māori* were seen as guidelines, and collective discussion of precedents took place when establishing any appropriate course of action (Durie 2012). Māori expected to be able to resolve conflicts by discussing the issues at length (Rewi 2010). This process, allowing discussion and consideration of the diversity of perspectives, assured community ownership of any decisions made. The effect of public opinion on ensuring the maintenance of the rights of others was integral within the *hapū* (Best 1924). *Hui* offered the opportunity for community members to participate in, and therefore better understand, both the development and justification of rules and decisions made. It allowed communities to discuss accusations of rule breaking and decide on reciprocation. Rules and attitudes around the gaining and loss of *mana*, which affected one’s status within the community also helped to maintain social order (Durie 2012; Shortland 1856).

Māori inherently understand and value the development of cumulative and interdependent knowledge. The focus on collective consensus making meant that, unlike Western style meetings, *hui* are not limited by predetermined timeframes (O’Sullivan and Mills 2009). A *hui* is finished when all perspectives have been heard and a decision is agreed on collectively, and not beforehand. In determining a way forward, subjects are “thoroughly discussed . . . and every knotty point argued according to principles recognised by Māori law, till they had arrived at conclusions” (Shortland 1856: 231). Precedents determined during this collective decision-making were often re-raised in later *hui* (it should be noted that contact with Europeans brought unusual circumstances for which precedent had not been set) (Durie 2012; Shortland 1856).

While the customary and procedural practices (such as the order of speakers, predetermined seating positions, etc.) of *hui* differ between tribes, one key factor for all *iwi* is the importance of *whaikōrero* as a central element in any *hui*. Many early colonizers revered the skill of Māori at speaking publicly, with some liking it to an art (Best 1924; Lambert 1936; Shortland 1856). Like *hui*, *whaikōrero* is a multifaceted concept, making direct translation into English difficult. *Whaikōrero* links public speech-making, physical stagecraft, and thematic exploration and development with

social, political, and economic well-being, customary and spiritual ritual, cultural context and meaning, history, present and future. *Whaikōrero* recognizes that listening is as important as speaking and that healthy debate includes being able to consider the, sometimes opposing, perspectives of others in your own discourse¹¹ (Rewi 2010). Enshrined in ancient cultural narrative, *whaikōrero* offered *tangata whenua* “a safe and stylised means of airing differences and resolving conflict” (Rewi 2010: 12). It was indeed an art and was learned and practiced from a young age. Adolescents of the *rangatira* class attended *whare wānanga* where they were formally schooled in *whaikōrero* processes and skills.

Children and *Hui*

Māori children participated actively in the day-to-day lives of their parents, and all aspects of life were accessible to them. This participation included, significantly, children attending and openly participating in *whānau*, *hapū*, and *iwi hui*. Children were seen to ask questions of respected chiefs, who answered them willingly, acknowledging the learning opportunities this provided, while respecting the inherent *mana* of the child. Māori children were (and are) raised under a *kaupapa* (collective vision) of love and given a lot of freedom in their movements and decisions. Children were protected and never punished. Mistakes were considered a part of learning, and indiscretions were overlooked. Adults who chastised children, including their own offspring, were themselves scolded, and sometimes retribution for the offense occurred. Shortland observed “freedom given children, made them bold, brave and independent in thought and act” (as cited in Jenkins and Harte 2011: 22). “The children were *tapu* (sacred) and therefore untouchable so that confidence in themselves and their abilities developed” (Jenkins and Harte 2011: 22). Early European observers noted that Māori children were often ahead of their British counterparts in development (Jenkins and Harte 2011).

Mythology played an important role in guiding traditional Māori parenting (O’Sullivan and Mills, 2009). The story of the original parents *Ranginui* and *Papatūānuku* discusses how they held the children close to keep them safe, but the children eventually felt cramped. “The children argued and debated in *whānau hui*” (Jenkins and Harte 2011: 3). The children knew how to behave, resolving disputes together through debate and by always treating their parents and grandparents with respect. Guided by such stories of the original parents, Māori children were encouraged to participate in *whānau* and *hapū hui*, learning the valuable democratic skills of oral expression, receptive listening, and respectful negotiation.

Māori children participated openly and actively in the day-to-day lives of their parents from the moment they were weaned from their mothers (Jenkins and Harte 2011). The formal and informal schooling of children and adolescents in both the art of *whaikōrero* and their active participation in *hui* (be it as part of the formal discussion or in the organization of arrangements) is a further example of the importance of active and regular dialogue in the social and political make-up of the traditional Māori world.

Strong links can be seen between the traditional rearing practices of Māori¹² and the participative approaches of Democratic Schools,¹³ where children and their family are able to participate actively (and challenge) the day-to-day and long-term decision-making of the school through ongoing dialogue (Smith 2021). Like the processes of deliberation found in traditional Māori *hui* and the child-raising/education processes supporting this practice, Democratic Schools teach collaboration and citizenship through meaningful participation, giving students opportunity to practice and refine their democratic skills regularly and on an ongoing basis. Democratic Schools are established through collaborative processes of dialogue, and as such, the schools and their constitutions are grown organically, based around the needs of the community each serves (Korkmaz and Erden 2014). Through research in Democratic Schools, we can establish the long-term present-day benefits of such participation. As they practice collective responsibility, students from these schools develop in-depth skills in negotiation, dialogue, debate, and listening. They learn diplomacy and citizenship hands-on (Greenberg 1987; Hecht 2010; Neill 1995; Rietmulder 2019; Traxler 2015).

Many of these deliberative democratic practices are reflected in strategies aiming to support student voice and participation through culturally sustainable pedagogies guided by *kaupapa* Māori (collective Māori vision), in Aotearoa New Zealand schools. These include the *Te Kotahitanga* Effective Teaching Profile (Bishop et al. 2003), *Ka Hikitia: Accelerating Success 2013–2017* (Ministry of Education 2013); *Kia Eke Panuku: Building on Success 2013–2016* (Ministry of Education 2013), and most recently, the *Te Hurihanganui* project (Ministry of Education 2019; Te Hurihanganui Mātanga 2019). Relationships, collaboration, and dialogue feature strongly in these pedagogical strategies (Bishop and Berryman 2006, 2009; Penetito et al. 2011). Together, these call for teachers to build communication-focused relationships with and between students, developing teachers who are open to truly listen and act upon¹⁴ the perspectives of Aotearoa New Zealand's diversity of students and who find ways to include student voice in curriculum and classroom decisions (Savage and Hindle 2011).

Learning from Indigenous Wisdom

Much can be learned from the aspects of deliberative democracy in traditional Māori society, previously discussed, in relation to its practice within school systems and, more broadly, to democratic theory in general. As Edward Durie reminds us, “it is the beliefs and values of a society that furnish its legal norms” (2012: 2). With the rapid influx of European settlers, most of whom displayed an arrogance toward Māori social and political structures and a lack of will to learn them, alongside epistemologies that valued materialism above the natural environment (Sorrenson 1975; Walker 2004), tensions between Pākehā (non-Māori people¹⁵) and Māori arose. Sorrenson (1975) unapologetically notes a desire from Pākehā to “civilise” Māori by assimilating them into a European way of life. Despite the democratic actions taken by Māori seeking to maintain their own way of life and continued control over their land, including the Declaration of Independence, *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, and in some respects the *Kīngitanga* Movement, loss of land and community ties, alongside Pākehā failure to uphold their *Te Tiriti* obligations has meant Māori socio-political systems and general way of life has eroded. Māori today still seek a return to self-determination/their own sovereignty within Aotearoa New Zealand¹⁶.

Tino rangatiratanga and decolonization is “perhaps the most fundamental issue associated with the whole *kaupapa* Māori movement” (Bishop and Glynn 2000: 4). Since the signing of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* in 1840, Māori have been fighting, in various ways, to have their rights for self-determination and sovereignty upheld. Despite these efforts of Māori various government agendas, alongside the westernized philosophical biases of the general population, have severely hampered this goal (Boast, 2013; D. O’Sullivan, 2005; Walker, 2004). Dominic O’Sullivan notes that the “narrowing and limiting conceptions of democracy and justice” maintained by successive imperialistic, colonial, and neoliberal governments have maintained the power balance away from Māori social and political structures (2005: 49). Maria Bargh suggests that Aotearoa New Zealand needs to embrace a broader definition of Māori participation, “including Māori engagement in tribal organizations as political participation” (2013: 445).

Conclusion

Traditional Māori lived within a refined socio-political system. Māori today are still fighting for a return to control over their own socio-political structures. Most of the characteristics of democracy, including

deliberation and debate, response to the will of the people, free speech, participation, accountability of leaders, and the civic virtue required to appreciate the rights of others, were practiced in traditional Māori society. After spending considerable time living with various Māori *hapū* in the mid-1850s (not long after the signing of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*), European commentator, Edward Shortland concluded, “no people in the world are greater lovers of freedom than the New Zealanders; and the best idea to be given of the political constitution of their society will be to describe it as a democracy, limited by a certain amount of patriarchal influence” (1856: 227).

Democracy is a broad, living, and dynamic concept. The breadth of the concept and a lack of education and praxis in democracy on a local level have caused misunderstandings and distortions of its application in lives of communities it is supposed to serve (Beane 2017; Biesta 2015; Englund 2000; Ercan 2019; Fielding and Moss 2011; Glassman and Patton 2014). In accordance with Mark Chou and Emily Beausoleil (2015) and Benjamin Isakhan (2015, 2016), most Western political theorists and historians take a narrow perspective of democracy, and there is a persistent lack of acknowledgment of the history of democracy outside of the well-worn Eurocentric narrative. Democracy can be hard to sustain; nonetheless, millions of people throughout time and around the world willingly risked their lives for it (Muhlberger and Paine 1993). The imperfection of democracy could also be its value as it provides strategies for participation in the problem solving of the ongoing contradictions in a dynamic mixed society. It is through the processes of free speech, equal participation, deliberation, and debate, as well as openness to continuous change and transformation, that society can respond to the diverse needs of the people within it.

Collective agreement-making and governance was pervasive among many indigenous societies, and democratic participation was, more or less, a way of life (Behrendt 2011; Kizza 2011; Stockwell 2011). Māori communities also fit this narrative. Through a system of representation across family, community, and regional levels, alongside measures of accountability and consensus decision-making, each person in the community had a voice and therefore a significant role in governance. This ongoing, bottom-up participation both safeguarded the sustainability of the system and ensured the will of the people was served through democratic self-rule. There is a need to ensure citizens have a solid understanding of the processes and fundamentals of democracy, and this must be learned by doing. Traditional Māori offer us a process for achieving this goal.

The very nature of democracy as a dynamic concept of inclusive governance allows nations and communities to create their own variation

based on their unique diversity of cultures and values. Each rendition of democracy must be open to internal debate and change, as and when necessary. Any democracy in Aotearoa New Zealand must have a solid understanding and representation of the values of indigenous Māori culture, alongside the documents of agreement between the Māori and immigrant groups, such as *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, and the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975. It is through democracy that we can begin decolonization processes. However, this must be led by Māori. Building on the indigenous wisdom of practicing deliberative democracy as a fundamental way of life, learned through ongoing active participation from childhood, will ensure the integrity of democracy by developing citizens with strong alignment to an inclusive, deliberative, people's democracy. It is aligned with current decolonization processes led by indigenous peoples and supported by descendants of colonizers and immigrants, for a more socially just world.

►► **Kylie Smith** is a teacher at both primary and secondary levels, with an interest in democratic schooling, critical pedagogies, student voice, and self-directed learning. She is currently working toward her PhD looking at the positive impacts of student participation in secondary school settings in Aotearoa New Zealand. E-mail: kylie.smith.16@uni.massey.ac.nz
ORCID ID 0000-0002-3781-6367

►► **Ksenija Napan** is a curious scholar keen to immerse herself in new discoveries of cutting-edge science of the twenty-first century. Aotearoa New Zealand is a country of her choice, and she feels deep resonance with *kaupapa* Māori. She values social justice, academic relevance, sustainability, and *kaitiakitanga* (sustainable guardianship) expressed in a context of collaborative and respectful relationships with integrity, joy, and creativity. She is engaged with processes of de-colonization (ethic of restoration), intercultural communication, inquiry-based and collaborative learning which she endeavors to apply in her teaching practice. Ksenija believes that meaningful research, appreciation of indigenous wisdom and transformative education are essential for improvement of the quality of life on the planet. She is an Associate Professor at Massey University in Aotearoa, New Zealand. E-mail: K.Napan@massey.ac.nz
ORCID ID 0000-0002-2157-8800

Raewyn Perkinson's honors dissertation was analyzing the goal setting processes within the "I Have a Dream" mentor program, working with disadvantaged students in Whangarei. She also assisted with data collection for the longitudinal study. She was a summer intern for Woolf Fisher, assisting the team developing "Talk Moves" within high school classes. Currently, she teaches *kura kaupapa* Māori within a mainstream school. She is interested in localized curriculum, and the development of *kura ā iwi*. E-mail: rperkinson@breambaycollege.school.nz

Roberta Hunter is a professor of Pāsifika education studies in the Institute of Education at Massey University in New Zealand. Her research explores ambitious teaching; mathematical practices; communication and participation; and strength-based and culturally sustaining practices in mathematics classrooms. Her most recent research has examined the mathematical practices students use as they work on problems embedded in social justice contexts. E-mail: r.hunter@massey.ac.nz
ORCID ID 0000-0002-9136-1551

Glossary

Hapū – sub-tribe comprised of related family groupings

Hui – public assemblies

Iwi – tribe

Kaumātua – grandfather, elderly man, male elder

Kaupapa – collective vision, policy, plan

Kaupapa Māori – the collective vision, aspiration, and purpose of Māori communities

Kōrero – talk, conversation, speak, discuss

Kuia – grandmother, elderly woman, female elder

Mana – charisma, spiritual and personal power, prestige, personal importance

Māori – the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand

Māoritanga – Māori culture, traditions, way of life

Marae – ceremonial courtyard or village plaza

Pākeha – non-Māori person

Papatūānuku – the Earth mother

Pūrākau – cultural narrative / mythology / ancient wisdom

Rangatira – weaver of people / chief, or upper class

Ranginui – the sky father

Tane – the God of forests

Tangata whenua – people of the land (of Aotearoa) / Māori

Tapu – scared

Te ao Māori – Māori world / Māori worldview

Tino Rangatiratanga – autonomy / self-determination / absolute sovereignty

Urupa – cemetery

Waiata – song, chant, psalm

Whaikōrero – Māori formal speech-making

Whakataukī – traditional Māori proverb

Whānau – family group

Wharekai – kitchen / dining hall

Wharenui – big house / central meeting house

Whare rūnanga – political meeting house

Whare wananga – house of higher learning

► NOTES

1. It should be noted that Te Reo Māori (the Māori language) is a highly contextual language and a crucial conduit to expressing culture, making it difficult to directly translate to English.
2. Different grammar rules apply when pluralising in Māori, so in order to stay true to the language, we did not pluralise the word *hui*. Therefore, *hui* in this instance can refer to singular or many phenomena.
3. These early agreements include the He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirene (the Declaration of Independence of the United Tribes of New Zealand) signed in 1835 (see <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/declaration-of-independence-taming-the-frontier> for further information) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) signed in 1840 (see <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/treaty/the-treaty-in-brief> for further information).
4. The *Kīngitanga* movement was initiated in 1858 after Māori recognised the need for a shared, central leadership in combatting unexpected colonisation of their land and culture. *Iwi* collaborated to appoint a Māori King to represent *iwi* concerns as a cohesive body, equal to the British Crown. See <https://teara.govt.nz/en/kingitanga-the-maori-king-movement> for a more detailed explanation.
5. *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (the Treaty of Waitangi), signed in 1840, is an agreement between the British Crown and a large number of Māori chiefs asserting Māori right for sovereignty. *Te Tiriti* is Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document, parts of which were enshrined in law in 1975 following over 130 years of Māori protest for its principals to be upheld. Its full implementation is still to be seen. See <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/treaty-of-waitangi> for more information.
6. Representation was an expectation and was based on birth right. Children of the rangatira class were trained from childhood in the art of public speech making, deliberation, and debate. If a higher born child was not deemed able to fulfil the high expectations of representation, another would be chosen by the *iwi* and trained for the role and the former would keep the title in name only. The famous chief Te Raupara is identified as someone who was elevated above his inherited role because of his successes in war and administration (Bowden 1979).
7. While there is a recognized distinction between high and common classes in traditional Māori society, many authors note that as whakapapa (genealogy) was so important to Māori, almost all Māori claimed to be part of the *rangatira* class through family association (for more information see Best, 1924; Bowden, 1979; Shortland, 1856; Winiata, 1956).
8. For a more detailed explanation, see Rewi 2010.
9. See Rewi (2010) and Salmond (2004) for more detailed information on *hui* processes.
10. The *whare wananga* (house of higher education) was usually conducted in a pit dug into the ground, where higher-class adolescent boys would be trained in oratory skills and tribal wisdoms through repetition and rote learning.

Training was usually at night-time, as this allowed an undisturbed environment, as well as study of the night skies.

11. Rewi writes, *whaikōrero* “emerges out of listening and involves thematic development; expounding on a particular point that was made, analysing and developing that point, and either supporting it or critiquing it, or both” (2010: 18).
12. See Jenkins and Harte (2011) for a more detailed explanation of traditional childrearing practices in *te ao Māori*.
13. The term “Democratic Schools” encompasses a large number of schools worldwide who identify as following a pedagogy of democratic education aligned to the 2005 Resolution of the 13th International Democratic Education Conference (IDEC) (See <http://en.idec2005.org/documentation/resolution/>). Examples of such schools include Timatanga School and Tamariki School in New Zealand, the Sudbury Valley Schools worldwide, and Summerhill School in England.
14. See Laura Lundy (2007) for a broader discussion on listening to student voices, which includes not just hearing but listening (and taking note of non-verbal cues), taking children’s views seriously, and addressing these perspectives by either acting on them or explaining why it is inappropriate to do so. Listening also includes ensuring children are given opportunity (appropriate to age) to voice their perspective.
15. More contemporary understandings of Pakeha encompass New Zealanders of non-Māori descent.
16. For more detailed discussion on this topic, see Hutchings and Morgan (2016).

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