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Performing pūrākau: Liberating bodies, healing wairua, and reclaiming ancestral  
wisdom

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## Abstract

Studies by government agencies and advocacy groups report that Māori women and children are more vulnerable to experiencing family violence, sexual abuse, and incest than Pākehā. They acknowledge colonisation and historical trauma as contributing factors, and call for a systems-focused response to tackling sexual violence. This includes providing access to contextually responsive and culturally appropriate interventions. This study initially aimed to explore traditional Māori understandings of incest and healing from sexual trauma that are embedded in the pūrākau (ancestral story) of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō, and her parents, Hineahuone and Tānemahuta. As it would apply a unique Māori theatre pedagogy called Theatre Marae, the project was then expanded to investigate the utility and potential of this innovative approach, which draws together Māori and non-Māori performance traditions, therapeutic models, Māori language, and customs in a process for creative inquiry. In pursuing these two activities, the resulting thesis comprises three publications. In the first article (chapter 2), I unpack the conceptual framework of Theatre Marae pedagogy as a suitable approach for kaupapa Māori (by Māori, for Māori) arts-based research against the backdrop of growing scholarship in Indigenous research and psychologies. In the second article (chapter 3), I deepen this exploration into Theatre Marae and its core methods within an historical account of the theatre company most associated with the practice, Te Rākau. The third article (chapter 4) builds on the preceding chapters by returning to the initial focus of this study and describing how Theatre Marae was applied in a performance-based analysis of this ancient pūrākau as a narrative of survival and healing. The analysis revealed new themes that highlight the collectivist customs of traditional Māori society as protective factors against the proliferation of sexual violence and incest. When drawn together in this thesis, these articles and contextualising discussion illustrate how Māori ancestral knowledge can inform the development of more culturally responsive therapies for recovery from historic sexual trauma. Furthermore, in presenting Theatre Marae to the realm of kaupapa Māori research, this thesis contributes to an international agenda to decolonise research in ways that are emancipatory, healing, and transformative for Indigenous communities.

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## Kuputaka | Glossary

<i>ahi kā</i>	the people who reside on the marae and take care of it
<i>Aotearoa</i>	Māori name for New Zealand
<i>aroha</i>	love, compassion, empathy, mercy
<i>aruhe</i>	fernroot
<i>atamira</i>	raised platform for displaying a corpse; stage
<i>atua</i>	deity, supernatural being
<i>haka</i>	dance; to dance
<i>haka whakaeke</i>	a dance or choreography for entering a space
<i>hapori</i>	community
<i>hapū</i>	clan; to be pregnant
<i>hau kāinga</i>	home people of the marae
<i>Haumiatiketike</i>	guardian of aruhe and uncultivated foods
<i>Hawaiki</i>	ancestral Māori homeland in the Pacific Ocean
<i>Hineahuone</i>	the first human being
<i>hinengaro</i>	mind, intellect, consciousness
<i>Hinenui Te Pō</i>	the guardian of death
<i>Hinetītama</i>	the dawn maiden
<i>hongi</i>	to press noses in greeting
<i>hua</i>	fruits, produce; benefits
<i>hue rarā</i>	rattle, shaker
<i>hui</i>	gather; gathering
<i>iwi</i>	tribe, nation, bone
<i>iwi taketake</i>	Indigenous peoples
<i>kāhui</i>	flock, constellation, chorus, company
<i>kai</i>	food; to eat
<i>kaiarahi</i>	navigator, guide
<i>kaihaka</i>	Someone who participates in kapa haka and/or ngā mahi a te rēhia

<i>kāinga</i>	village, home
<i>kai tahi</i>	to partake in a shared meal
<i>kaitiaki</i>	steward, guardian, caretaker
<i>kaitiakitanga</i>	stewardship, guardianship
<i>kakī</i>	throat, neck
<i>kapa haka</i>	codified form of group dancing; Māori concert party
<i>karakia</i>	invocation, spell; speak to the atua
<i>karani</i>	nana, granny
<i>kare ā-roto</i>	emotions, feelings
<i>kaumātua</i>	elder, elderly person/people
<i>kaupapa Māori</i>	philosophical doctrine that incorporates the knowledge, skills, values, and perspective of Māori society
<i>kawa</i>	protocol
<i>kēhua</i>	ghost; to haunt
<i>koha</i>	gift, contribution, presentation; to gift
<i>kōrero</i>	to speak, tell; story, narrative
<i>kōrero pūrākau</i>	storytelling
<i>kūare</i>	ignorant
<i>kuia</i>	female elder, grandmother
<i>kūmara</i>	sweet potato
<i>Kurawaka</i>	the sacred birthplace of Hineahuone
<i>Kuwatawata</i>	the guardian at the door to the underworld
<i>mahi</i>	activity, work
<i>mahi-a-aroā-nekeneke</i>	movement awareness exercise
<i>mahinga kōrero pūrākau</i>	storytelling session
<i>mahi tahi</i>	work together, cooperate, collaborate
<i>mahunga tītaha</i>	tilt head to the side
<i>mana</i>	respect, dignity, personal authority
<i>manaakitanga</i>	the process of showing respect, generosity, and care for others; reciprocity

<i>manawa kiore</i>	last breath before dying; to yield to defeat
<i>mana whenua</i>	host tribe
<i>manuhiri</i>	guest/s
<i>Māori</i>	person/people indigenous to Aotearoa
<i>marae</i>	communal gathering space for Māori communities
<i>marae ātea</i>	sacred space in front of the meeting house
<i>māra kai</i>	gardening
<i>matapaki</i>	discussion; to discuss
<i>mātauranga</i>	knowledge
<i>Māui</i>	a demi-god and hero of pūrākau throughout the Pacific
<i>mau rākau</i>	Māori weaponry; to wield weapons
<i>mauri</i>	essence, life force of an object, individual, social group or ecosystem
<i>mihi</i>	greeting, acknowledgement
<i>mihi whakatau</i>	speech of greeting/official welcome speech
<i>mirimiri</i>	massage that targets muscles, tissue, and bones
<i>mokopuna</i>	grandchild/ren
<i>mōrehu</i>	survivor/s, remnant/s
<i>mōteatea</i>	a lament
<i>motu</i>	country
<i>ngahere</i>	forest
<i>ngā mahi a te rēhia</i>	the arts of entertainment, traditional Māori performing arts
<i>ngā tākaro</i>	games, sports
<i>ngau whiore</i>	incest
<i>noa</i>	secular, not sacred, common
<i>pā</i>	fortified stronghold, village
<i>paepae</i>	orators' bench designated for the representatives or elders of a tribe
<i>Pākehā</i>	New Zealander of European settler descent
<i>pao</i>	short song or ditty

<i>papa kōrero</i>	place for talking, storytelling, speaking
<i>Papatūānuku</i>	personification of the land; earth mother
<i>pātaka kai</i>	food bank, food storage
<i>pepeha</i>	form of introduction in which people declare their tribal, ancestral, and geographic connections
<i>poi</i>	a ball on a plaited string
<i>pokerenoa</i>	reckless
<i>poroaki/poroporoaki</i>	farewell
<i>porowhita</i>	circle
<i>pou</i>	post, marker, pillar, upright support, sustenance
<i>pou whakairo</i>	carved ancestral post
<i>pōwhiri</i>	to welcome; ceremonial welcome into a tribal territory or onto a marae
<i>pūkana</i>	to stare wildly
<i>pūrākau</i>	story, narrative, ancestral story that holds ancient knowledge
<i>pūiriri</i>	ghost moth
<i>rākau</i>	tree, stick, staff
<i>rangatira</i>	chief, leader
<i>rangatiratanga</i>	chieftainship, leadership
<i>Ranginui</i>	personification of the sky; sky father
<i>Rarohenga</i>	the underworld
<i>rohe</i>	district, region
<i>romiromi</i>	massage that targets internal organs
<i>rongoā</i>	traditional medicine
<i>Rongomātāne</i>	personification of peace and guardian of kūmara and cultivated foods
<i>rōpū</i>	group, team, collective
<i>Rūaumoko</i>	guardian of earthquakes and volcanoes
<i>ruruku</i>	invocation to bind everyone together
<i>taitōkai tamariki</i>	child sexual abuse
<i>takahi whare</i>	tramping the house ceremony; house blessing

<i>take</i>	issue, reason
<i>tamariki</i>	children
<i>tāne</i>	man, husband /men
<i>Tānemahuta</i>	guardian of the forest and its inhabitants
<i>Tangaroa</i>	guardian of the sea and its inhabitants
<i>tangata whenua</i>	people of the land
<i>tangi</i>	weep, cry
<i>taonga</i>	gift, treasure, tool
<i>taonga-o-wharawhara</i>	costume, adornments for the body, make-up
<i>taonga pūoro</i>	musical instruments, music
<i>tapu</i>	sacred, esoteric, restricted
<i>tara</i>	vagina, peak
<i>tatau pounamu</i>	a symbol of enduring peace between iwi, such as an arranged marriage
<i>Tauīwi</i>	non-Māori; foreigner; New Zealander not of Māori or Pākehā descent
<i>tauparapara</i>	utterance at the beginning of a formal speech
<i>Tāwhirimātea</i>	personification of the wind and guardian of the weather and storms
<i>Te Ao Hurihuri</i>	the modern world
<i>Te Ao Māori</i>	the Māori world
<i>Te Ao Mārama</i>	the world of understanding, being, reality, light
<i>Te Ao Wairua</i>	the spiritual world
<i>Te Ārai</i>	the threshold between the spiritual and corporeal realms
<i>Te Kore, Te Korekore</i>	the realm of potential; the void prior to the creation of the world
<i>tenga</i>	Adam's apple; crop of a male bird
<i>te reo/ te reo Māori</i>	the language; Māori language
<i>Te Wheiao</i>	the liminal space of emergent being
<i>Theatre Marae</i>	a contemporary Māori theatre pedagogy
<i>tihei mauri ora</i>	the sneeze/breath of life
<i>tikanga</i>	custom, tradition, the right way

<i>tikanga Māori</i>	Māori customs/way of doing things
<i>tinana</i>	body
<i>tipatapata</i>	A form of footwork where the person stamps very fast on the balls of the feet to create a drumming effect like rainfall.
<i>toi whakaari Māori</i>	contemporary Māori theatre
<i>tuakana-teina</i>	elder sibling-younger sibling; a type of mentoring system
<i>Tūmatauenga</i>	personification of warfare and guardian of people and the marae ātea
<i>tūpāpaku</i>	corpse
<i>tūpuna</i>	ancestors
<i>uha</i>	female element; femininity
<i>wahine/wāhine</i>	woman/women
<i>wāhine toa</i>	warrior women
<i>waiata</i>	song; to sing
<i>waiata ā-ringa</i>	action song
<i>wairua</i>	spirit, soul
<i>waka</i>	canoe
<i>wānanga</i>	space and time given over to knowledge production and transmission; house of learning
<i>whakahā</i>	exhale
<i>whakahīhī</i>	arrogant, vain
<i>whakairo</i>	carving/s
<i>whakamā</i>	to be ashamed, shy, bashful, embarrassed
<i>whakanoa</i>	remove tapu
<i>whakapapa</i>	genealogy, family tree
<i>whakataukī</i>	proverb, saying
<i>whakawhanaungatanga</i>	process of building relationships/ connections
<i>whānau</i>	family; to be born
<i>whanaunga</i>	relative/s
<i>whanaungatanga</i>	relationship/s, connection/s
<i>whare karioi</i>	traveling troupe of performers



<i>wharenui</i>	carved meeting house
<i>whare puni</i>	communal sleeping house
<i>whare tapere</i>	traditional house of entertainment
<i>whenua</i>	land; placenta
<i>Whiro</i>	personification of evil and guardian of war veterans
<i>wiri</i>	quivering hands

# Chapter 1 Introduction

“E Tāne, hoki atu koe ki te ao hei whakatupu mai i ā tāua hua ki Te Ao; waiho hoki au i raro nei hei kukume i ā tāua hua ki Te Pō” —*Husband, return and raise our offspring in the world of the living; Leave me here below and I will draw them to the night.*

So were these words uttered by Hinetītama as she bade goodbye to her father-husband and descended into the Underworld to become Hinenui Te Pō, the Guardian of Death. The story of Hinetītama the Dawn Maiden and her discovery of her father’s treachery against her is more than what anthropologists would call a Māori version of the incest taboo. It offers a Māori explanation for mortality and what happens to us when we die. It is also a survival narrative, a story of a woman’s rejection of the burden of shame, and her transformation from unwitting victim into a powerful, wise, and fully autonomous being. Hinenui Te Pō’s reclamation of Herself —albeit a Self that is forever changed — can set a powerful example for survivors of childhood trauma who are at various stages of their healing journey. Hinetītama’s journey to become Hinenui Te Pō is one of many ancestral narratives or *pūrākau* that are an enduring *taonga*<sup>1</sup> gifted to us from our ancestors. As a window that allows us a glimpse of our ancestors’ view of life and death, her *pūrākau* counterbalances that of her mother, Hineahuone, whose birth signalled the creation of human life. Before going any further with this introduction, it is appropriate that I first provide the core ingredients that are the focus of this study: the *pūrākau* of Hineahuone and her daughter Hinetītama —or more precisely —the renderings of what I remember learning as a girl.

## 1.1 The first human being

This is the story of the creation of Hineahuone, the first human being. After they separated their parents, Ranginui the sky father and Papatūānuku the earth mother, the children set about creating homes for themselves and their descendants. Tangaroa went to the sea where he became the guardian of fishes, and Tāne created the forests and clothed Papa from head to toe in green. Tāwhiri took charge of the wind and withdrew into the heavens to live with his father. Rongo and Haumia, the gentlest of the brothers,

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<sup>1</sup> *taonga* = gift, treasure, tool

took refuge with their mother, Papa, and became the guardians of *kūmara*<sup>2</sup> and *aruhe*.<sup>3</sup> Rūaumoko, the unborn, remained inside Papa's belly to cause volcanoes and earthquakes, and Whiro the evil one, descended to the underworld and continued to plot against his brothers. As for Tū, he became the guardian of war and of humanity—but only of our *wairua*,<sup>4</sup> because our *tinana*<sup>5</sup> had not been created yet.

The sons of Rangi and Papa considered how they might create people to live in *Te Ao Mārama*<sup>6</sup> and realised they needed to find the *uha* or female essence. The search to find the *uha* was led by Tāne the creator; he conducted many experiments where he joined his essence with the objects around him. Through this process Tāne produced ferns, trees, birds, lizards, and different types of rocks and sand. But still the *uha* evaded him. Tāne turned to his mother Papa for guidance, and she directed him to a sacred place called Kurawaka. There Tāne heaped up the red clay and shaped it into a woman. He embraced the figure and breathed into the nostrils, and the figure sneezed—*tihei mauri ora*!<sup>7</sup> The red woman's eyes opened and she came to life. Her name was Hineahuone: the Red Earth Woman.

Tāne then set about testing his creative powers with Hineahuone to find the *uha*. He moved around her body in an effort to penetrate her and join his essence with hers; this caused her to produce tears and sweat, and discharge waste from her body. Finally, Tāne found her *tara*<sup>8</sup> and was able to join with her. From their union, Tāne and Hineahuone had many children who were all girls. The eldest was called Hinetītama, and she was known to the world as the Dawn Maiden.

## 1.2 When Death came to the world

This the story of Hinetītama, and how she became the Goddess of Death. Tāne and Hineahuone had many daughters, the eldest of whom was Hinetītama. Along with her sisters, Hinetītama was raised by her mother Hineahuone, and so did not know who her

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<sup>2</sup> *kūmara* = sweet potato

<sup>3</sup> *aruhe* = bracken/fernroot

<sup>4</sup> *wairua* = spirit, soul

<sup>5</sup> *tinana* = body

<sup>6</sup> *Te Ao Mārama* = the world of light, being, reality

<sup>7</sup> *tihei mauri ora* = the breath of life

<sup>8</sup> *tara* = vagina

father was. As the years passed, she grew into a beautiful, kind woman and became known as the Dawn Maiden.

One morning, when Hinetītama went out to bathe, her father Tāne caught sight of her and fell in love. Although he knew that she was his daughter, he decided that he would take her as his wife. His mother, Papa warned him that no good would come of his plan, but Tāne ignored her and set about courting Hinetītama so that in time, she too fell in love with him. Together they had many children and were happy, and Hinetītama began to wonder about her own father and considered that Tāne might know him. One day as he was leaving the house, Hinetītama asked him, “Husband, who is my father?” Tāne tried to avoid answering her but in the end said, “Ask the posts of the house” then left. Hinetītama took her question to the posts of the house who revealed to her that Tāne was indeed her father. Filled with *whakamā*,<sup>9</sup> Hinetītama fled to the underworld of Rarohenga to be with her grandmother, Papa. As she approached the doorway to the never-ending night, she was stopped by Kuwatawata, who warned her to turn back before it was too late. But Hinetītama was determined to leave the world of light. As she went, she turned around and saw Tāne following her, weeping and asking her to return, but Hinetītama refused. “Go back Tāne,” she said, “go back to the world of light and raise our children. I will stay to gather them in.” Then she uttered a *karakia*<sup>10</sup> to weaken Tāne, so that he became drowsy and could not stop her. She placed the *tenga*<sup>11</sup> in his throat as a reminder of this story and as a symbol that all men must carry. Then Hinetītama crossed over into the underworld and put aside her old name to become Hinenui Te Pō: Great Lady of the Night and Guardian of Death. There she dwells for eternity and waits patiently for us to follow the path she has left for us in the red glow of the sunset, so we can join with her in the spirit world.

### 1.3 Study rationale

For Hinenui Te Pō the darkness became her sanctuary and place for recovery, but to other adult survivors of *ngau whiore*<sup>12</sup> and *taitōkai tamariki*<sup>13</sup> the dark remains a menacing place that once hid perpetrators and now harbours unwanted memories. Life

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<sup>9</sup> *whakamā* = shame, embarrassment

<sup>10</sup> *karakia* = invocation, spell

<sup>11</sup> *tenga* = Adam’s apple, crop of a male bird

<sup>12</sup> *ngau whiore* = incest

<sup>13</sup> *taitōkai tamariki* = child sexual abuse

is endured in a limbo punctuated by soul wounds (Duran, 2006), stabs of traumatic flashbacks, unanswered questions, betrayal, and the unwanted and undeserved burden of shame. For these individuals, such wounds do not heal, but merely scab over to be ripped open again and again, leading to self-harm, extreme risk taking, addiction, criminal activity, imprisonment, domestic violence, mental health issues, and suicide (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2009; Niland & Fernando, 2016; van der Kolk, 2014). The unresolved fallout is not contained solely to survivors either; the long term effects of incest and sexual abuse can damage key relationships, destabilise families, and more insidiously, transfer into the next generation (Frazier et al., 2009; van der Kolk, 2014).

The initial purpose of this study was to engage in qualitative arts-based research that might reveal traditional Māori interpretations of ngau whiore and taitōkai tamariki contained in the pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō. It would explore the philosophies that established social customary practices regarding consanguinity and the incest taboo, and then consider how this knowledge might be applied to develop *kaupapa Māori*<sup>14</sup> therapies that are transformative, sustaining, meaningful, and readily accessible to Māori communities and whānau. As the research would employ a contemporary Māori theatre process known as Theatre Marae, a secondary aim of the study was to document and examine how this Māori theatre practice may be applied as a methodology in qualitative inquiry.

## 1.4 Thesis organisation

This document is a thesis by publications; it is constructed around three articles that have been prepared for publishing in peer-reviewed journals.

Chapter 1 introduces the study, the project background, and rationale for the research design. Within this extensive section I reveal my presence in the study as a *wahine*<sup>15</sup> Māori whose life journey, creative experience, and profession have converged to initiate the study and formulate the research design. This is followed by a summary of the research aims and their subsequent readjustment in response to an identified gap in the literature. The chapter concludes with an account of the chosen methodology and

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<sup>14</sup> *kaupapa Māori* = philosophical doctrine that incorporates the knowledge, skills, values, and perspectives of Māori society

<sup>15</sup> *wahine* = woman

methods, which provides detail and context for the chapters that follow.

Chapter 2 lays out the theoretical orientation of this study in the form of a published article that introduces Theatre Marae pedagogy as a methodology for Indigenous arts-based research. It unpacks the conceptual framework of Theatre Marae to show its suitability for this particular study and for kaupapa Māori arts-based research in general.

Chapter 3 ventures further in our interrogation of Theatre Marae by exploring its core processes. As part of an article that narrates the emergence and development of Theatre Marae alongside the history of Māori theatre company, Te Rākau, the chapter describes Theatre Marae's key methods for creating theatre, training performers, and in the case of this study, undertaking arts-based research.

Chapter 4 follows on from the previous sections to illustrate Theatre Marae methodology and methods in practice, via an article that reports on the research project and its findings.

Chapter 5 summarises the research, then discusses the findings, strengths, and limitations. It then considers the study's broader implications for the development of kaupapa Māori arts-based research methods, and their potential to make a meaningful contribution to community participatory projects that pursue liberation, transformation, and well-being.

## **1.5 Background to the study**

When first considering whether or not to pursue this particular topic, I knew that I might be able to draw upon my background in theatre, psychology, and my role as a facilitator of family violence programmes for a social services provider based on a *marae*.<sup>16</sup> The deciding factor, however, was listening to the programme participants, wāhine and tāne, family violence victims and perpetrators alike, who divulged the memory of being sexually violated as the catalyst for the downward spiral of their lives. Their stories placed childhood sexual abuse at the core of unmanageable lives punctuated by early exclusion from education, alcoholism, substance abuse, violent relationships, suicide

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<sup>16</sup> *marae* = a communal gathering space for Māori communities

attempts, prison sentences, risky sexual behaviour, poor health outcomes, and long term welfare dependence. Some felt unable to access specialist trauma therapy due to a lack of Māori specialist therapists and affordable or free counselling services in the area, mistrust of health professionals, and fear that counselling might not work. Others, in seeking help through the ACC sensitive claims<sup>17</sup> process, interpreted the gentle, non-judgmental probing style often adopted by therapists as a cold, inhuman pressure to disclose secrets. One-on-one therapy did not bring about relief but an increase in psychological distress, including invasive flashbacks, anxiety and vulnerability, fear of scaring the therapist, and the dread of being judged or blamed. Unwilling to go through the sensitive claims process again, they sought out support in kaupapa Māori social services such as those provided at Kōkiri Marae, where part of this study took place.

The integrity of this project centred on a brave group of *wāhine*<sup>18</sup> and *tāne*<sup>19</sup> who agreed to delve into their trauma memories as pūrākau of survival and wisdom. Their willingness to analyse a raft of painful experiences that were not of their choosing inevitably nudged them towards appraising their own responses to the abuse —coping strategies that gave only the briefest reprieve and then over time contributed to a stack of lifelong problems. I remain in awe of their courage to come out from the shadows so that this research could take place, and their gracious example challenges me to do the same —me: a playwright whose natural habitat is a corner in the rehearsal room, a *kaiwhakaari*<sup>20</sup> who prefers being in the ensemble rather than performing solo, and a psychologist who safeguards people’s right to privacy — including my own. For that reason, the following section has taken shape in the understanding that I too have contributed as a research member to the shaping of this project, that I too am embedded in it, informed by it, and at times have felt unravelled by it, therefore: *tēnei au*—this is me.

## 1.6 Tēnei Au—This is Me: Locating the researcher

*Te Taha Matau:*

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<sup>17</sup> Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) is the Crown’s mechanism through which survivors of workplace accidents, sexual violence, and other traumas can access rehabilitation services, including free counselling.

<sup>18</sup> *wāhine* = women

<sup>19</sup> *tāne* = men

<sup>20</sup> *kaiwhakaari* = theatre practitioner, performer

*Ka rere taku kaitaki te ruru  
E matatū nei i tōna Tai Ao  
Ruru pūkanohi nui —ahakoa moroiti!*

*Ka koukou te ruru i te matatihi o Taniwha  
Ko Maungataniwhawhakarongorua  
Ka tangi te taniwha he wai ko Tāpapa  
Nā te wai i tārai te tāwhārua o Mangamuka  
Nā ngā muka i here te waka o Ngātokimatawhourua  
Nā ngā toki i hanga te whare kōrero o Ngāpuhi  
Ka takahia te kuaha e ngā tapuwae tawhito  
o Kuri, o Rarawa kai whare, o Ruanui —he tatau pounamu  
Ko Kōhatutaka he toka tū moana o Hokianga ki te Raki  
Kua toka hoki ōku mahara.*

*Te Taha Mauī:  
Ka piki ki runga te maunga Tararua  
Ka titiro aku kamo ki ngā wai e rarapa ana  
Ka whakatopa haere au mai i Heretaunga hauku rau  
ki Te Wairoa Hōpūpū Hōnengenenge Matangi Rau  
Taihoa, ā, ka rere.*

*Ka rongu au i Te Māhia mai Tawhiti  
Ka ū ki reira te waka tapu o Takitimu  
Tirotiro Kauika te tohunga ko Ruawharo.*

*Ka ruku au ki ngā ngaru a Te Huki  
ki Mōhaka Harara Tauponga Opunga  
ki te puna waitapu o Kotemāori  
Ka whai au i ngā tuna matapō o Whakakī  
Mauri ora!*



It is right that I first land myself in this work via the *pepeha*,<sup>21</sup> a traditional form of introduction that honours my forebears, the vessels that carried them to Aotearoa, and the landmarks that anchored them to place, over time, shaping and nurturing the ensuing generations. For those unfamiliar with marae protocols, it is customary to stand and deliver one's *pepeha* as part of a larger speech of greeting to acknowledge the hospitality of the host tribe, the guests, and the reason for gathering. My *pepeha* is a performance that is personal and political; when I stand I am engaging my right to be visible and known as myself and as a representative of my *whānau*,<sup>22</sup> *whakapapa*,<sup>23</sup> *hapū*,<sup>24</sup> and *iwi*.<sup>25</sup> In a room of strangers, my *pepeha* becomes the means with which I seek out my community. The words I utter follow through with the required formalities of the gathering while simultaneously casting out threads of cryptic images and messages to alert the ears of fellow tribal members. The familiar sound vibrations that recall the names and deeds of eponymous ancestors and the locations for food gathering and rituals plumb the depths of the viscera, and evoke a collective knowing and connection among some in the audience, whose murmurs of surprise, curiosity or delight telegraph the message that I am standing in the presence of *whanaunga* (relatives). Further confirmation occurs during consecutive speeches and then later over refreshments when so-and-so approaches me and says, "I'm your mother's second cousin" or "I lived down the road from your grandparents". Such is the unspoken power of a spoken *pepeha*.

My family tree is populated with soldiers, community helpers, musicians, spiritualists, storytellers, and healers, and bears unquestionable influence on me becoming a theatre practitioner, writer, programme facilitator, and psychologist. The lens through which I see the world and thus motivates my work in kaupapa Māori social services, historic trauma, and family violence demands that I also confront my own childhood memories of the physical and sexual violations that occurred in the neighbourhoods in which I played and in the homes of some of my school friends and relatives. Although daunting, this exercise bestows a personalised view of previously concealed and seemingly disparate forces that work together to sustain intergenerational family violence.

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<sup>21</sup> *pepeha* = a way of introducing oneself in Māori

<sup>22</sup> *whānau* = family; to be born

<sup>23</sup> *whakapapa* = genealogy, family tree

<sup>24</sup> *hapū* = clan; to be pregnant

<sup>25</sup> *iwi* = tribe, nation; bone

### 1.6.1 *Taku pūrākau: My story*

My siblings and I were the first generation of our whānau to be born outside of our tribal territories. My parents met as adults in *Tāmakimakaurau* (Auckland) but were raised in their respective *rohe*<sup>26</sup> in different parts of rural New Zealand, and are members of iwi that were historic enemies. The stories of their tribes' ancient enmity held all the way to my parents' wedding and indeed in the years they were together. My mother said that when she and my father married in 1970, the reception hall was split down the middle; at one end sat my father's people from the Far North and lining the opposite wall were my mother's lot from Hawke's Bay. My parents were left to dance by themselves in the centre. I'm not sure how true this story is (my mother later said that she and my father eloped on an Iroquois helicopter that landed on the roof of my grandparents' house), but I do like the image of my parents dancing in No Man's Land and the romantic hope and potential for peace that it conjures up: two people from enemy families attempting to heal an ancient rift through the ritual of marriage. Very Romeo and Juliet. Very *tatau pounamu*.<sup>27</sup>

Whenever my parents argued I never heard them swear, nor saw them raise a hand to each other. Instead, their frustrated attempts to make the other person accept their point of view would turn into a points scoring debate about whose tribe was stronger, better looking, and the most adept at warring, holding out in a siege, tracking enemies, and casting spells. From memory I can say that Rongomaiwahine<sup>28</sup> and Ngāti Kahungunu<sup>29</sup> are very handsome people who can survive on clay, Ngāti Pahauwera<sup>30</sup> are innovative at fishing in the rapids, Ngāti Ruanui<sup>31</sup> are expert in guerrilla warfare, while Ngāpuhi<sup>32</sup> will carry their *waka*<sup>33</sup> on their backs for miles inland and through the most inhospitable terrain if it means they will gain a tactical advantage in the ensuing battle. I cannot recall how these arguments ended or who inevitably got the upper hand. However, I do

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<sup>26</sup> *rohe* = district

<sup>27</sup> *tatau pounamu* = greenstone door; arranged marriage for peace

<sup>28</sup> Rongomaiwahine is an iwi in Te Māhia.

<sup>29</sup> Ngāti Kahungunu is an iwi in Hawkes Bay.

<sup>30</sup> Ngāti Pahauwera is an iwi whose district includes the Mōhaka river and forest.

<sup>31</sup> Ngāti Ruanui is an iwi in Southern Taranaki.

<sup>32</sup> Ngāpuhi is an iwi in Northland.

<sup>33</sup> *waka* = canoe

remember being entertained by my parents' tit-for-tat exchanges of *kōrero pūrākau*<sup>34</sup> that they had heard in childhood from the previous generation —oral histories of ancestral daring, courage, strength, and endurance through events that today would be described as collective historic trauma. These are the building blocks upon which tribes construct and hold onto their collective identities and distinct cultures; the stuff of pride and legacy and, I suppose, of grieving for what has been lost.

For an urbanised child who was becoming more geographically and socially disconnected from her *kāinga*,<sup>35</sup> *kōrero pūrākau* became beacons for my own developing consciousness of being a Māori and therefore different from my Pākehā friends. Later, as a teenager living in South Auckland, these same stories would serve as reminders of resistance and survival that I could draw upon to psychologically arm myself against a constant barrage of racism and sexism that my brown friends and I were subjected to in the 1980s —by strangers on the train or in the street, by our teachers, by suspicious department store workers, by our Pākehā friends' fathers, by the boys at our brother school —even by our relations in the country whose fury at being stripped of our land and status was ultimately dominated by a deeply held belief that we were a conquered people who needed to assimilate and let the past die. Watching their friends struggle to acquire a property with their Māori surnames was the reason given by my parents when they decided to add my mother's Pākehā maiden name to my birth certificate when I was 11. Perhaps it might have worked had I not turned out looking so Māori and was therefore unable (unlike some of my friends and cousins) to hide in plain sight. But that did not matter, for I already knew that I could not and did not want to be like the mullet-haired bogans who hurled beer cans and racial abuse at me on my way home from school; I could never belong to the same class of people as my friend's drunken father who called me a black bitch at her birthday dinner and accused me of stealing his bread roll. I was Māori —not a half-caste, not a quarter-caste, nor a one-sixteenth, and I was certainly not a Pākehā with a tan (this news came as a shock to a couple of my Pākehā friends).

If I looked Māori and was rejected by Pākehā for being Māori, then surely I should start

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<sup>34</sup> *kōrero pūrākau* = storytelling

<sup>35</sup> *kāinga* = home, village

acting Māori —whatever that meant —so it seemed a good idea to me that I should make an effort to speak Māori. My father was aghast when he found out I had gone behind his back and chosen Te Reo Māori as a high school subject, saying, “Shit! Why don’t you do economics? Māori will get you nowhere.” I could have lied to him by saying it was the only option that was available, but even then I knew that my father’s words were a conditioned response to soothe his schoolboy memories of having his first language thrashed out of him. Instead, I respectfully told him that I was claiming a birth right. And that was that. He never asked again.

I wish I could say that this was the watershed moment, where I began a journey towards achieving academic excellence in *mātauranga Māori*<sup>36</sup> and in education in general, but not so. I was average at Te Reo, English, and Social Studies, and not very good at everything else. By the time I was 14, I was sick of school and itching to move out of home. I spent most Fridays and Saturdays drunk in pubs or rolling around on the floor in a friend’s bedroom. You would have to ask my very small friend group at the time, but I imagine I was probably not a fun person to be around —unless I was off my face and cracking jokes. My mother put my poor attitude and falling grades down to hormones, laziness, and a burgeoning disrespect for her authority. I came to the attention of our school principal who told me that I seemed lost and was lacking the spark of self-confidence she had observed in me the previous year. I could only nod and shrug my shoulders. I was sent to the school guidance counsellor who appeared to accept my story that I was physically exhausted from heavy periods and the long-distance travel to school in Auckland. My suspicion that anything I said in confidence to the counsellor would make its way back to my parents was confirmed late one night when I overheard them debriefing the appointment. I decided that therapists were not to be trusted.

Moving overseas to Singapore for two years with my family would be a welcome distraction from the waste-of-a-life I was beginning to carve out for myself in Auckland. The warm monsoon rain, heady nightlife, and exotic sights and smells could not have been more different from what I’d previously known and, with a handful of excellent mates, I threw myself into experiencing everything there was to try in downtown

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<sup>36</sup> *mātauranga Māori* = Māori knowledge

Singapore on a Friday night (excluding, of course, anything that could get us pregnant or arrested, jailed, and caned). So much fun, getting trashed, dancing up an uncoordinated storm in a nightclub and trying to avoid being picked up by the Military Police. But in the end, even that was no escape from a deep scab of anger that I carried within me wherever I went. Really, I was burning with it, an absolute rage fed by a memory of being indecently assaulted in the previous summer by a relative and the shame that I had not done enough to stop it, nor had the strength of character to “just get over it”. Contrasting the memory against the stories of other girls from back home who’d endured sickeningly worse at the hands of their own fathers or a car load of strangers merely increased the sense of betrayal and whakamā I felt whenever I recalled how, in one crucial moment, my own body froze up and let me down, and again much later, when my decision to tell others did not go as I’d anticipated. So I drank to have fun and forget, and in the process became fat—which then made me feel ugly and so I started to act ugly. At parties, I would overhear men commenting on how ugly I was, some of whom drunkenly told my mother, who later sat at the foot of my bed and suggested I do something about it.

But then again, in my estimation, being unattractive kept me safe from those sorts; I was left to my own devices to drink and watch gender power relations playing out among the adults, and develop an instinct for identifying potential predators and past victims by observing their non-verbal communication. My body became both a prison that I resented and a haven for my mind that was working overtime to find some way to process this ickiness out of me. I was watchful and silent, and perhaps appeared harmless enough so that I often found myself sat next to grown men who would talk about the problems they were having with their girlfriends, their worries for their best mates, issues they had with some of their bosses, and their musings on life back home and the universe in general. Not once did I say what was going on in my mind: *hey...ah dude, I'm only 15 and I've got my own problems to deal with*—although I know I should have. Instead, I played with a cigarette lighter and listened as best as I could, while trying to recall back to how that school counsellor had acted with me; I shared my opinion if I had one, and only if they asked for it. Once they’d left to re-enter the fray of the party, I’d wonder what the hell that was all about, set fire to the plastic straw from my drink and watch it spill in hissing bursts onto the tabletop and then on my forearm. A few sharp burns were all it took to snap me back to reality and an internal telling off

for being a hypocrite: *what the hell makes you think you can help others when you couldn't even help yourself when it mattered?*

My frustration with failing to expel the deep rage from my body intensified over the next few years as I nurtured a reputation for being a “bit of a hard case” and a “good sort” that people could talk to. Admittedly, it was better than being known as a self-involved piss-head. I’m not sure how my father knew that I would become a psychologist. But when I turned 17 and was by now working in a petrol station on the Desert Road in Waiōuru, he suggested that I go to university and train to become one. I told him that I had no interest in whatever it was that psychologists did and wanted to join the Army instead, but he said it would be a waste of my brain. I didn’t have the heart to tell him that I knew my grades were nowhere near good enough to gain entry into most of the degrees on offer. Another two decades would go by before I would start my first psychology paper.

#### *1.6.1.1 Awakening*

Our director wants to choreograph a type of prelude at the top of Spring Awakening and instructs us to mime a memory from our youth. One by one I watch my classmates act out snippets from the past: listening to their parents arguing, getting caught smoking, being slapped in the face. It’s my turn. I lie on the ground and begin, allowing the cold rehearsal floor to transform into a scratchy brown sofa. Feeling hands and a mouth on me, exploring me, cupping, brushing, rubbing, testing me for compliance. My eyes squeezed shut tight, feeling the night air mock my exposed places and a chill of horror fusing my body into stillness. Wishing I was drunk or knocked unconscious so I wouldn’t have to feel anything.... blaming myself already for not seeing this coming, and worried what he’ll do next if I try to push him away. So I pretend to be in a deep sleep and brush his hand away before turning into a foetus. He tries to roll me over, but I’ve jammed my arms deep into the gap of the sofa and after a while he withdraws. Boom, boom, boom, the pulse in my ear counts down the minutes as I wait for him to fall asleep on the floor, and then I sneak out of the room. The End. I open my eyes and wait for a response from the director. “Hmm. Ok.” He straightens up his glasses. “Let’s do that again, but this time, go to downstage-centre and I want you to repeat the whole thing standing up, with your eyes open, and look directly at the audience.”

For those unfamiliar with this classic 19th century play, *Spring Awakening* (Frank Wedekind, 1891) was highly controversial for its portrayal of rape, abortion, family violence, child abuse, suicide, and homosexuality. Wedekind wrote the piece to condemn the repressive authority of religion, parents, educators, and self-involved

artists who collectively manipulate, suppress, consume, and ultimately destroy the younger generation. In retrospect, I have a deep respect for this play and its menagerie of doomed teenagers; however, in 1995 as a first-year acting student at Toi Whakaari: The New Zealand Drama School I was livid at being cast as one of the leads, Wendla Bergman, a tragic figure who is raped and then dies during a failed backstreet abortion. At the time, I did not regard Wendla as a repressed, naive victim at all, but a mollycoddled dumbass who should've known better. In hindsight I can see that I was transferring my own internalised oppression, shame, and self-blame onto an innocent whose voice deserved to be realised by an emotionally available actress. But my empathy and courage were spent. My aversion to playing Wendla intensified over the rehearsal period as we took part in improv classes and exploratory exercises that only served to trigger more disturbing memories that left me feeling vulnerable and increasingly disconnected from my world. In reply, I pulled back from the character, limited my process to a superficial analysis of the dialogue, and subsequently did Wendla Bergman a great disservice by phoning in my performance.<sup>37</sup>

My tutors were very disappointed with my efforts and I had to work extra hard in the next challenge, a solo project, to prove my right to be in the school. It took a lot longer for me to regain confidence in my practice; this occurred some months into my second year of training, when I realised that all I could remember about *Spring Awakening* was the prelude and the abstract mime that I performed to the audience night after night. It was the only part of the production where I felt that I'd arrived in my body and was fully present onstage. Additionally, I had come to understand that, by making slight adjustments I could successfully re-craft an intrusive, shameful memory into useful dramatic material. A sense of distance now existed between me and the memory, which I traced back to a gradual desensitising occurring in my body during each performance. Without knowing anything about the world of expressive arts therapies, applied theatre, or drama therapy, I had unwittingly made contact with the healing potential of theatre and felt better for it.

#### *1.6.1.2 Jobbing*

In 1996, I graduated from Toi Whakaari and based myself in Wellington as an

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<sup>37</sup> To phone in a performance refers to when an actor puts in minimal effort, emotion, and personality into their role that they might as well have stayed home and performed the part over the telephone.

independent Māori theatre practitioner or “jobbing thespian”. Various contracts at the start of my professional career offered an array of opportunities; I was lucky to tour throughout Aotearoa and overseas in the plays *Purapurawhetū* (Briar Grace Smith, 1996) and *Waiora* (Hone Kouka, 1997), and also performed in one of the earliest productions of Taki Rua Theatre’s annual *Te Reo Māori Season*. As a performer I could observe first-hand the craft of exceptional playwrights and dramaturges in the rehearsal room. I took whatever learnings I could from these opportunities to develop my own writing.

In 1999, I met my partner Jim Moriarty, and joined his theatre trust called Te Rākau. My first day of rehearsal as a member of Te Rākau was spent in the gymnasium of Christchurch Women’s Prison. There I played theatre games and ran vocal exercises with women whose life experiences had understandably hardened their bodies, shut down their sense of play, and choked their voices. Over the next three months we worked together in a therapeutic creative process that culminated in a performance piece called *Wātea* for the Christchurch Arts Festival. Using our bodies and voices we carved our memories into the basketball court in the gymnasium: narratives of childhood trauma, shame and abandonment, violent relationships, racism, sexism, the numbing force of addictions, the pathway to crime, the isolation of imprisonment, and the sheer weight of losing everything and failing over and over again. In a routine comprising physical theatre training, *ngā mahi a te rēhia*,<sup>38</sup> and group therapy circles, we disciplined our bodies to endure the demands of the performance season and to ride out the emotional storms that would seemingly come out of nowhere during the devising process.

*Wātea* was my first practical experience of Theatre Marae, a process that combines the values and customs of the marae and the theatre into a model for therapeutic creative practice (Baskerville, 2009; Battye, 2002; Glassey & Welham, 2003; Scott, 2006; Williams, 2007). It allowed me to apply my theatre skills in a useful way that could support someone on their journey of healing and transformation. In the twenty-two years since *Wātea*, I have continued to work in Te Rākau as the house writer and a

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<sup>38</sup> *ngā mahi a te rēhia* = Māori performing arts



group facilitator in the Theatre Marae format, while also raising my *tamariki*,<sup>39</sup> and studying part time to become a psychologist. During my studies, I have seen a growing interest in qualitative psychological research that is Indigenous, participatory, and creative (Archibald, 2008; Drawson et al., 2017; Hammond, et al., 2018). In Aotearoa, the Health Research Council funded project on Māori intergenerational trauma, *He Kokonga Whare* (Te Atawhai o Te Ao, 2018) recommended further research in kōrero pūrākau as survival narratives of resistance and healing from historic trauma, a suggestion that appeared to mirror the purpose and approach of my study that was taking shape around the pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō. I took this as confirmation of the relevance and validity of my research to the well-being of our people, and felt even more encouraged when I was awarded a generous doctoral scholarship from Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga<sup>40</sup> to undertake the project.

## **1.7 Reframing the literature review**

As this is a creative research project that produces a thesis by publications, it departs from convention and redefines the literature review as an ongoing process that reveals itself in response to the research journey, and is brought to light within each successive article. In lieu of a dedicated chapter, this brief overview offers a frame of reference for the study's rationale and its key research areas, which in turn, provides context for the following sections that attend to the research design, methodology, and methods.

### ***1.7.1 The lie of the land: Sexual violence in Aotearoa-NZ***

In their review of sexual abuse services for Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Te Wiata and Smith (2016) found that one in three girls would have experienced unwanted sexual contact by age 16, while 20% of New Zealand adult women will be sexually assaulted (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004). Furthermore, approximately 50% of female survivors are at risk of experiencing *revictimisation*, or repeated sexual violence (Te Wiata & Smith, 2016). At the same time, the reviewers observed that statistics pertaining to male victims “vary significantly” (Te Wiata & Smith, 2016, p. 1), and agreed with current understandings that such inconsistency is likely due to pervasive underreporting

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<sup>39</sup> *tamariki* = children

<sup>40</sup> Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga (Māori Centre of Research excellence) carries out and invests in research that is of importance to Māori communities, and also contributes to the international Indigenous research network.

(Leclerc & Wortley, 2015). Their suggestion that unhealthy social norms of masculinity contribute to the underreporting of sexual violence against men and boys in this country is supported by more recent research focusing on the specific recovery needs of male victims (Carswell et al., 2019).

Māori are overrepresented in statistics on sexual assault (Fanslow et al., 2007), with Māori girls and women being nearly twice as likely than Tauīwi (non-Māori) to be sexually violated (Mayhew & Reilly, 2007). Given that, in stark contrast with the Pākehā population, Māori feature poorly across all indicators of well-being (Ministry of Health, 2002; Ministry of Social Development, 2016), the long-term negative impact of sexual abuse on individuals, their whānau, and *hāpori*<sup>41</sup> creates additional pressure for Māori social services and iwi who are poorly resourced to address sexual violence and its plethora of sequelae (Te Wiata & Smith, 2016). This issue, however, is not reflected in a sexual violence sector that is conspicuous for its want for specialist kaupapa Māori services (Te Wiata & Smith, 2016; TOAH-NNEST, n.d.; Wharewera-Mika & McMillan, 2016). In the ACC sensitive claims setting, for example, a preference for evidence-based practice continues to privilege client-centred and trauma-focused one-on-one talk therapies such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) over holistic Māori approaches to healing (Te Wiata & Smith, 2016; TOAH-NNEST, n.d.). This undoubtedly contributes to the current conditions of a sector dominated by mainstream<sup>42</sup> services (Te Wiata & Smith, 2016; Wharewera-Mika & McMillan, 2016), but additionally, speaks to a larger scale issue of inequity throughout health, education, and social services, where Māori NGOs and programme providers are obliged to comply with incompatible non-Māori policies and philosophies in order to acquire government funding (Aldridge, 2012). Kaupapa Māori providers that choose not to conform to this arrangement are nevertheless compelled through *tikanga*<sup>43</sup> to serve their communities. Such organisations make up for deficits in funding, resources, and technical expertise by relying on the goodwill of underpaid staff and volunteers who possess an enviable amount of intimate knowledge of the social relations and context of their communities. Additionally, some will pool their resources together to deliver social services in

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<sup>41</sup> *hāpori* = community

<sup>42</sup> In the social services, the term *mainstream* is used to differentiate a service or product from a Māori one, so mainstream is therefore interchangeable with the terms Pākehā (European) and Tauīwi (non-Māori).

<sup>43</sup> *tikanga* = custom, tradition, the right way

alignment with the womb-to-tomb practice of a traditional kāinga. One such network is the Tākiri Mai Te Ata Whānau Ora collective.

### ***1.7.2 Kōkiri Marae /Tākiri Mai Te Ata***

2021 marks my seventh year of working at Tākiri Mai Te Ata Whānau Ora collective, an alliance of Māori education, health, justice, and social service providers operating throughout the Wellington region. The focal point for the collective is Kōkiri Marae, an urban marae established in Seaview from the remnants of a former munitions depot abandoned by the American Government after WWII (Tākiri Mai Te Ata Whānau Ora Collective, 2021). Initially providing employment programmes and classes in te reo, genealogy, and *toi Māori*<sup>44</sup> to draw young Māori away from gangs and crime, Kōkiri has expanded over the ensuing decades to provide wrap-around service that attends to the overall well-being of the whānau and the various life course stages of each of its members. This whānau-centred lens propels the collective to continue developing additional supports for the community, including a *pātaka kai*,<sup>45</sup> parenting courses, youth programmes, women's refuge, homelessness prevention service, and a *kaumātua*<sup>46</sup> programme.

### ***1.7.3 Navigating the family and sexual violence sector***

My role in Tākiri Mai Te Ata is hosted by Kōkiri's hauora (the health and social services arm of a marae) and Kōkiri Marae Māori Women's Refuge. I have provided one-on-one psychotherapy for wāhine healing from trauma, represented the refuge at family violence inter-agency response meetings hosted by the Police, consulted with the community on their experience of racism in the local health system, collaborated on the development of a pilot kaupapa Māori service for family violence perpetrators, and co-facilitated group family violence programmes for both wāhine and tāne. Predictably, these tasks have brought me into contact with a variety of statutory agencies, government departments, non-government organisations, volunteers, health professionals, researchers, and whānau who together make up our country's Family and Sexual Violence sector (Ministerial Group on Family Violence and Sexual Violence, 2017). My experience of navigating the sector has evoked an impression of a flimsy

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<sup>44</sup> *toi Māori* = Māori art

<sup>45</sup> *pātaka kai* = food storage, food bank

<sup>46</sup> *kaumātua* = elder/s

network of relationships impaired by:

- Inconsistency in the assumptions and philosophies about the causes of family violence and its sequelae and how best to address the problem;
- A tendency for government to fund short term treatments that focus on individual needs and risks as opposed to interventions that target long term, intergenerational change for societal well-being;
- Issues of mistrust, power imbalance, and legal obligations compromising the efforts of statutory agencies and non-government organisations to work together;
- A tendering process for government funding that promotes a territorial mindset between non-government services and sets them up to compete against rather than collaborate with each other;
- Poorly resourced community organisations not being able to access up to date research on family violence, programme tools, nor being able to support the professional development of their workers who are experts in the field;
- Disconnection between Māori academics, researchers, and psychologists, and the Māori communities and non-government organisations who are tasked with doing the frontline work;
- Lessened visibility and support for cultural diversity amongst victims of sexual harm, including LGBT2Q+ communities, refugees, migrants, and men;
- Consistent and sustained Government underfunding of sexual harm and family violence services —especially kaupapa Māori services, and despite government generated reports that recommend increased funding, and;
- Structural racism and a reluctance of one Treaty signatory (in the form of government agencies) to share power with their partner (Māori NGOs, Iwi).

#### ***1.7.4 Systemic issues and barriers for Māori communities***

While I am aware that my view is subjective and informed by my work experiences, it nevertheless aligns with the current literature that refers to a sector that is grossly underfunded, overburdened, and in urgent need of a reset (Action Station, 2019; Ministerial Group on Family Violence and Sexual Violence, 2017; Ministry of Social

Development, 2017; Te Wiata & Smith, 2016; TOAH-NNEST, n.d.; Wharewera-Mika & McMillan, 2016). From a systems-oriented viewpoint, the literature provides a wider context for the local conditions in which kaupapa Māori organisations are forced to operate in ways that undermine tikanga Māori, compromise the wellbeing of workers, and threaten organisational resilience. Furthermore, it acknowledges the underlying causes of compounding issues that specifically hamper the efforts of Māori communities to break the abuse cycle, particularly in the following areas:

*Workforce.* There is a dearth of registered Māori psychologists working in community services, but this is reflective of the psychology profession overall, where only 5% of the workforce identify as Māori (Wilson, 2019), yet Māori are 50% more likely than Pākehā and Tauīwi to experience mental distress (New Zealand Government, 2018). Better funding and job stability draw Māori psychologists towards government agencies such as Corrections and District Health Boards (DHBs), while others might forgo the registration pathway to pursue teaching roles and research opportunities. To illustrate, at the time of writing this thesis, I am the only registered psychologist practising in a kaupapa Māori marae-based service in the Wellington region.

*Contracting.* Again, Māori are poorly represented at the organisational level of the sector. There are very few Māori therapists and kaupapa Māori organisations holding contracts in the government's ACC sensitive claims framework, the majority of which are held by Pākehā/Tauīwi organisations, clinical psychologists, and psychiatrists. The growing calls to develop the Māori sexual violence workforce (Te Wiata & Smith, 2016; TOAH-NNEST, n.d.; Wharewera-Mika & McMillan, 2016) is indicative of a longstanding dissatisfaction with the sector and its failure to fathom sexual harm in the local context, and in particular, the forces of colonisation, intergenerational trauma, cultural values, and community relationships that are exacerbating factors common amongst many Māori and Pasifika Whānau.

*Available Therapies.* Imported, evidence-based models such as CBT, and one-on-one therapy remain the preferred methods of delivery over group therapy and kaupapa Māori therapies in the ACC framework. Until very recently, the standard ACC sensitive claims contract provided for one-on-one therapy only, ignoring survivors who preferred

to engage in group therapy. Although this has since been adjusted (Accident Compensation Corporation, 2021), the terms under which a group-based intervention might be implemented through the sensitive claims format are too constraining for Marae based services that deliver group interventions within a whānau centred, wrap-around service model.

*Funding and Resourcing.* Underfunded Māori organisations are unable to access kaupapa Māori programmes, up to date resources, and expert knowledge that would directly benefit the communities that they serve. So, while the story of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō is well known in Māori academic circles and has been covered by previous kaupapa Māori research on pūrākau in therapy (Taitimu, 2016; Tamanui 2016), Māori sexuality (Pihama et al., 2016), Intergenerational Trauma (Pihama et al., 2014), and Māori child-rearing practices and learning styles (Jenkins & Harte, 2011; Pere, 1994), very little of this important research ends up as tangible, useful resources in the community.

The last point above makes the current conditions all the more jarring. The gulf that exists between Māori researchers and their communities effectively traps Māori knowledge in academia and out of reach of those whānau who could benefit from it the most. At the same time, however, these systemic barriers can be the spark that prompts kaupapa Māori organisations such as Kōkiri into scoping the potential to develop their own solutions. Indeed, the idea that this study could one day lead to the creation of a sexual violence programme in a space such as Kōkiri Marae was a contributing factor in shaping the initial research aims and focus areas.

## **1.8 Research Aim and Objectives**

In the beginning, the overall aim of the study was to examine the pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō and draw out ancestral messages that might resonate with survivors of incest and child sexual abuse along their healing journeys. Ideally, this would set down the groundwork for a future project to develop a kaupapa Māori sexual violence intervention tailored for a group setting. The research design was framed upon

the following activities:

- Analyse the pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō as a survival narrative and blueprint for healing from sexual trauma;
- Unpack Theatre Marae as an Indigenous arts-based approach to carrying out applied psychological research as well as producing and disseminating knowledge directly to the community, and;
- Report on the use of Theatre Marae as a decolonising strategy in actor training and theatre making.

However, not long into the project, it became obvious that there was already a fair amount of commentary on the therapeutic relevance of this particular pūrākau (Jenkins & Harte, 2011; Pere, 1994; Pihama et al., 2014; Pihama et al., 2016; Taitimu, 2016; Tamanui, 2016). In stark contrast, no literature existed on Theatre Marae pedagogy in research nor on the performance of ancestral pūrākau as a feasible method of thematic analysis. The absence of literature thus evidenced a research gap, which in turn encouraged a shift in focus. In light of this new perspective, the research activities were unchanged but reprioritised to accommodate a new overarching purpose, that is:

*“To investigate the potential of Theatre Marae as a kaupapa Māori methodology in arts-based research, using the performance analysis of the pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō as an example of this process in action.”*

In the section that follows, each research area is introduced and expanded upon to explain its contribution to the overall aim of this study.

### **1.8.1 Research Area 1**

*Theatre Marae as an Indigenous arts-based approach in applied psychological research, and for producing and disseminating knowledge directly to the community.*

Previously, Theatre Marae has been described as an education pedagogy (Baskerville, 2009), as political theatre (Scott, 2006), as drama therapy (Battye, 2002), as applied prison theatre (Glassey & Welham, 2003), and as a method for healing and transformation (Williams, 2007). This project will delve into the viability of Theatre Marae as an Indigenous approach to arts based research that privileges Māori ways of being, knowing, and doing in the world. As such, the study will entail a review of the

literature that should serve to locate Theatre Marae methodology against the backdrop of:

- The emergence of Indigenous psychologies (Adair, 1999; Allwood & Berry, 2006; Nikora et al., 2016; Waitoki et al., 2018; Wilson, 2003, 2008);
- Indigenous principles and agenda in research (Mahuika, 2008; Smith, 2012; Stewart-Harawira, 2013);
- Arts-based research with Indigenous groups (Drawson et al., 2017; Hammond et al., 2018) and by Indigenous researchers (Archibald, 2008);
- Mātauranga and Tikanga Māori (Barlow, 1991; Buck, 1949; King, 1975; Makereti, 1986; Marsden, 1975; Mead, 2003; Patterson, 1992; Walker, 1975, 1990), and Te Whare Tapere (Brown, 2008; Royal, 1998, 2007) in relation to theories of embodiment (Corrigall et al., 2006; Cromby, 2015; Merleu-Ponty, 1962; Snowber, 2018; Varela et al., 1991), performance studies (Conquergood, 2002; Schechner, 2006), and healing from historic trauma (Brave Heart, 1998, 2003; Danieli, 1998; Duran, 2006; Duran et al., 1998; Pihama et al., 2014; van der Kolk, 2014; Volkas, 2014; Wirihana & Smith, 2014).

### **1.8.2 Research Area 2**

*Theatre Marae as a decolonising strategy in actor training and theatre making.*

The study will deepen its investigation of Theatre Marae methodology by unpacking its processes in action, whether that be devising live theatre or training performers. A thorough analysis cannot occur, however, without also acknowledging the history and work output of the theatre company most commonly associated with Theatre Marae practice, Te Rākau (Te Rākau Hua o Te Wao Tapu, 2019). That being the case, this research area will account for the history of contemporary Māori theatre and its emergence as part of Māori socio-political movements that started gathering momentum from the 1970s onwards. It will locate contemporary Māori theatre as a stronghold for anti-colonial attitudes, Māori language, and Māori self-representation in the arts as an act of resistance against the cultural hegemony traditionally embedded in mainstream New Zealand theatre. Inevitably, this will lead to a discussion on the underlying tensions in the arts sector that continue to privilege one type of theatre over the other (Kouka, 2007; Young & Hansen, 2009).



### 1.8.3 Research Area 3

*The pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō as a survival narrative and blueprint for healing from sexual trauma.*

*The Incest Aesthetic.* A performance based analysis of the pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō employs a creative lens that could bring forth fresh thematic insights that might otherwise remain hidden. For example, the *incest aesthetic* expresses an age-old fascination for incest held by writers, dramatists, composers, and painters. Incest and genetic sexual attraction have been represented across all art forms, as plot points in classic tragedies like *Oedipus Rex* (Sophocles, c.429 BC) and *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore* (John Ford, c.1626), and subject matter in famous paintings such as Rubens' *Lot and His Daughters* (1613–14). In recent times, the incest aesthetic has decreased in shock value, having become normalised through television programmes like *Arrested Development* (2003–2019) and the global phenomenon, *Game of Thrones* (2011–2019), and is implicated in the rising popularity of incest themed cartoons and pornography (Marche, 2018). Due to the sheer size of the available literature, the incest aesthetic is a daunting subject that warrants its own analysis and therefore will not feature in this study; nevertheless, its referencing here as an ubiquitous artistic device lends more credibility to the inclusion of a performance based analysis in the research design.

*Incest as Creative Narcissism.* In Donald Mclean's version of the pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō (Royal, 2003a), Tānemahuta attempts to convince Hinetītama to return home with him, stating that his natural urge to create justifies his committing incest with her. His rationale invites an analysis of *incest as creative narcissism*, a recurring motif personified in the brilliant yet self-absorbed artist who elevates their art above everything else, and regards their abusive exploitation of others as necessary for their creative process. The archetype of the incestuous, creative genius is not confined to Tānemahuta, however, but features in the unauthorised biographies of world renowned artists including Eric Gill (Hamer, 2002; MacCarthy, 1989), musician John Phillips (Phillips, 2009), writer Lawrence Durrell (Hamer, 2002), and poet Lord Byron (Marchand, 1993).

*The Silencing of The Other Parent.* According to *Te Orokohanga*<sup>47</sup> (the name given to the Māori creation cycle), Hineahuone is the first human being created from the earth by Tānemahuta, and is destined to become his wife and the mother of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō. The *whakataukī*<sup>48</sup> “Me aro ki te haa o Hineahuone —pay heed to the dignity of women” locates Hineahuone as the embodiment of *mana wāhine*,<sup>49</sup> and the reference point for research on Māori women’s narratives of child birth and miscarriage (Kenney, 2009), health (Rosier, 1988), participation in higher education (Waitere & Johnston, 2009) and experiences in the Justice system (New Zealand Law Commission, 1999). I am interested, however, in how an important female role model such as Hineahuone is either absent from or silent in her daughter’s story, and wonder how this might be reflective of the lack of literature on the experiences of parents whose partners have sexually abused their tamariki.

*These research areas form the body of this thesis and are explored in detail in chapters 2–4.*

## 1.9 Pūrākau Theory

“Stories transcend time and space, travelling down generations and across borders, cutting through the otherness of cultures and languages. Prehistory pieces together whatever evidence it can find to tell us possible stories about our earliest selves. Stories beckon us in pursuit of the unanswerable ‘why’, the relentless quest of the Holy Grail: to make sense of our lives and give them shape.” (Alfreds, 2013, p. 5)

Cultures have stories that explain the creation and order of the world, that offer life lessons on what is meaningful and correct, and conversely, what is worthless or wrong. Such stories provide instructions for social norms, behaviours, and values that define one particular culture or community from another. So while the pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō is posited as an ancient Māori explanation of human mortality, it is also a time capsule that preserves a Māori ethical stance on incest as a transgression of the creative process and anathema to the sanctity of human life.

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<sup>47</sup> *Te Orokohanga* = the creation cycle

<sup>48</sup> *whakataukī* = proverb, saying

<sup>49</sup> *mana wāhine* = dignity, power, and authority of women

Pūrākau theory assumes our use of stories to understand the deeper meaning of life and the universe (Elkington, 2011; Lee, 2005, 2009) and is drawn from the custom of kōrero pūrākau. Kōrero pūrākau, or storytelling, is identified by Royal (1998, 2007) as one of the six core elements of the *whare tapere*<sup>50</sup> —the traditional house of entertainment or Māori theatre house. Wintertime was the season for storytelling, as people gathered at the fireside to keep warm, and told stories to entertain one another and pass down sacred lore (Parahi, 2020). Through the telling, memorising, and retelling of these pūrākau within the whare tapere or the *whare puni*,<sup>51</sup> the people ensured the successful transfer of tribal genealogy, customary lore, and ancestral world perspectives to the next generations.

Pūrākau provided guidelines for what was deemed acceptable behaviour in Māori society (Walker, 1978) and also extolled desirable characteristics —many of which were at odds with those valued by Victorian era Western-European societies (Rameka, 2016) and by Pākehā settlers who collected and published them as quaint myths or fairy tales. Therefore, when working with published texts of our ancestral stories we tread lightly with the knowledge that they may be compromised materials —edited to suit the opposing worldview, values, commercial interests, and aesthetic tastes of the coloniser (Lee, 2009; Mikaere, 1994; Pouwhare, 2016). At the same time, we also recognise that iwi and hapū have also contextualised pūrākau to the local environs to establish connection to *whenua*,<sup>52</sup> embellish the *mana*<sup>53</sup> of their *rangatira*,<sup>54</sup> protect precious taonga, and in the modern judicial setting to verify their *kaitiakitanga*<sup>55</sup> status over dwindling resources (Cavino, 2019; Jones, 2019; Lee, 2009). While communities might tell different versions of a specific pūrākau, these variations will still contain universal details that serve a particular purpose —the significance of which invites closer analysis.

Against the backdrop of a fast-paced world saturated with western popular culture, technology, and media, the custom of kōrero pūrākau has been flexibly applied in

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<sup>50</sup> *whare tapere* = the house of entertainment

<sup>51</sup> *whare puni* = sleeping house

<sup>52</sup> *whenua* = land; placenta

<sup>53</sup> *mana* = authority, respect, autonomy, power, dignity

<sup>54</sup> *rangatira* = chief, leader

<sup>55</sup> *kaitiakitanga* = guardianship, stewardship

different contexts to recover, protect, and reinvigorate Māori knowledge and history that are “core to our identity” (Pihama et al., 2019, p. 140). In the social sciences, the tradition of kōrero pūrākau has been reimagined into a culturally grounded method of narrative inquiry that seeks out and amplifies Māori experiences of and resistance to colonisation (Archibald et al., 2019; Lee, 2005, 2009). Ancestral pūrākau are also being applied to Māori innovations in psychiatry (Kopua, 2018) and psychology (Cherrington, 2002, 2016; Taitimu, 2016; Waitoki & Levy, 2016), to help Māori in psychological distress to understand their past and validate their commitment to find ways to live authentically in *Te Ao Hurihuri*<sup>56</sup> (Cherrington, 2002).

Being a technique to explain the forces of nature or give meaning to human experiences and behaviour, pūrākau are shaped in a similar fashion to other ancient narrative traditions from around the world. They contain the essential elements of larger than life characters, setting, conflict, resolution, and a linear plot structure (beginning, middle, end) that often brings about an irreversible transformation. These elements are also core fundamentals in theatre and the dramatic arts; such synchronicity creates an opening for a performative analysis of pūrākau using Theatre Marae pedagogy.

At this point I should comment on referencing for the pūrākau of Hineahuone and Hinētītama/Hinenui Te Pō. This thesis includes references for a handful of published versions of the pūrākau that are cited and discussed. However, there are multiple versions of the pūrākau, many of which are not cited in documents but are transmitted orally, and differ from iwi to iwi. Some versions of the pūrākau the research whānau found to be offensive, and some have previously been deemed by Māori researchers as untrustworthy or compromised sources. Unfortunately, these same versions are the most academically accessible, and so I have worked against citing and referencing them in this thesis in order to avoid reifying their authority over those oral versions, copyrighted artworks, and the team’s own artistic creations that were also shared in our storytelling sessions, but are unable to be reproduced in this thesis.

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<sup>56</sup> *Te Ao Hurihuri* = the modern world

### 1.10 Methodology: Theatre Marae

Theatre pedagogy refers to a discipline in which drama and stagecraft are used as tools for teaching and learning, and as theatre that seeks to educate and provoke the public on social justice issues. Materialising in the late 1980s as a means for Māori arts practitioners to claim performance space in the Wellington theatre scene (Glassey & Welham, 2003), Theatre Marae is a theatre pedagogy unique to Aotearoa/New Zealand and is a conflux of theatre craft, ngā mahi a te rēhia, tikanga Māori, and creative therapies. Its history and development are entangled with that of Te Rākau Hua o Te Wao Tapu, a Māori community theatre company known for staging social justice theatre that is political, anti-colonial, and disruptive to the country's fictional status as a racially harmonious society. To the outside eye, Theatre Marae appears to be a simple practice whereby a theatre space is transformed to resemble the interior of a *wharenui*.<sup>57</sup> However, such a perspective fails to appreciate the customs, aesthetic concerns, and assumptions characteristic of Māori culture that are enacted by this transformation and then go on to bear influence on the creation of the theatre work and its public reception. In centralising Māori ways of experiencing, relating to, and performing the world, Theatre Marae easily lends itself as a suitable environment in which to carry out kaupapa Māori arts-based research.

#### 1.10.1 Conceptualising the research space

Consistent with the decolonising pursuit of Kaupapa Māori Theory and Praxis (Bishop, 1999; G. Smith, 1997, 2003; L. Smith, 2012), the traditions of the whare tapere (Royal, 1998, 2007), and the daily protocols of a working marae, a Theatre Marae standpoint reclaims a theatre and its stage, repurposing it as a *wānanga*<sup>58</sup> for creative inquiry. This dynamic environment elicits four research spheres that (as asserted in the terminology) situate mātauranga Māori and *toi whakaari Māori*<sup>59</sup> as the norm, while accounting for the presence of non-Māori philosophies that are enacted through the practice of theatre craft. They are:

*Te Kore (The void)*. The concept of an infinite, creative potential that is yet to be revealed (Marsden, 1975; Royal, 2003b). Te Kore is complementary with the theatrical

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<sup>57</sup> *wharenui* = the carved meeting house that is the central feature of a marae complex

<sup>58</sup> *wānanga* = space and time given over to knowledge production and transmission; house of learning

<sup>59</sup> *toi whakaari Māori* = Māori theatre arts; contemporary Māori theatre

principle of *the empty space* (Alfreds, 2013; Brook, 1968).

*Te Wheiao (The liminal space)*. According to some versions of the creation narrative *Te Wehenga*,<sup>60</sup> Te Wheiao was the shaft of light that ignited the curiosity of Rangi and Papa's children, which led to their separation and the appearance of our world (Pere, 1994). Consistent with the concept of liminality and cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1994), Te Wheiao envisages a creative third space (Greenwood, 2001) that accepts uncertainty and diversity.

*Te Ārai (The veil)*. This is the threshold through which esoteric knowledge and spiritual forces transcend into the physical world (Marsden, 1975; Royal, 2003b). Te Ārai enacts the sanctity of ritual, acknowledges the presence of the ancestors, and welcomes the theatre's concern with metaphysics, as seen in the plays of the ancient Greeks and Shakespeare.

*Te Papa Kōrero (The talking place)*. Here the stage is repurposed to interweave and host the day-to-day practices of a marae, a theatre, a wānanga, a research laboratory, and a therapeutic encounter. This occurs in performances of: welcome, *mihi*,<sup>61</sup> *hui*,<sup>62</sup> airing and resolving grievances, kōrero pūrākau, group process, debate, exploration, analysis, and *poroporoaki*.<sup>63</sup>

Situated in the heart of these settings, Māori understandings of the corporeal and spirit worlds, spatial awareness, movement, time and wellbeing are in a privileged position to dialogue with compatible non-Māori disciplines and practices such as performance studies (Conquergood, 2002; Schechner, 2006), drama therapy (Jones, 2007), and group psychotherapy (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

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<sup>60</sup> Te Wehenga o Ranginui rāua ko Papatūānuku is an ancient narrative that explains the formation of our world through the separation of the sky (Ranginui) and earth (Papatūānuku).

<sup>61</sup> *mihi* = greet, acknowledge; greeting

<sup>62</sup> *hui* = gather; gathering

<sup>63</sup> *poroaki/poroporoaki* = farewell

## 1.11 Method

### 1.11.1 Introduction

Indigenous peoples have long held a justifiable mistrust of Western academics, enduring the outrage of being “researched to death” (Castellano, 2004, p. 98) while their art forms and knowledge are appropriated, misrepresented, and commercialised by outsiders (Smith, 2012). Researchers can become jaded by the restrictions and bias imposed by conventional research methods, and be drawn towards more unorthodox modes of inquiry such as arts-based research (Gergen & Gergen, 2018). An arts-based approach exposes the inherent elitism of social science research (Gergen & Gergen, 2018) that traditionally cultivates imbalanced power relations between researchers and participants (Coemans & Hannes, 2017; Leavy, 2018). Theatre Marae addresses this dynamic throughout the research design. From the outset, community members were accepted as knowledge holders and artist-researchers with curatorial power to analyse and organise how their experiences, narratives, and messages would be collectively realised, revealed, and remembered. I planned for two data collection phases that would be hosted first at Kōkiri Marae, then at Massey University (Wellington). Tikanga Māori was privileged as the cultural bedrock in both spaces to provide continuity and security for the research team, especially for those community members who were cynical of research and ambivalent towards the performing arts, but wanted to participate in the study nonetheless. I endeavoured to be transparent in my consultations at all times, and assured the community that the study was a research project and not an intervention; at the same time I also emphasised that the sensitive topic of inquiry and the research method would ultimately call upon people to learn a repertoire of performance tools with which they might engage their own trauma memories. It was therefore vital to design a creative research encounter that was caring, mana enhancing,<sup>64</sup> transformative, and could account for potential risk, and therefore have in place suitable mechanisms with which to address it—to not have done so would have been unethical and irresponsible practice.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *Mana enhancing* is a term that loosely means to respect and emphasise the individuality, autonomy, and agency of another.

<sup>65</sup> Two of the senior members of the team are registered mental health professionals and risk assessment is commonplace in intervention planning.

### 1.11.2 Recruitment

After securing ethical approval, I started the recruitment process in person at Kōkiri Marae Māori Women's Refuge and the hauora, emailed *pānui*<sup>66</sup> across the wider Tākiri Mai Te Ata network, and engaged in formal kōrero with theatre practitioners who had previously expressed interest in the project. My original intention to collaborate with a group of wāhine survivors of incest and child sexual abuse was short-lived when, upon further reflection, I realised that to solely focus on Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō would exclude the voices of the other characters, such as her mother, Hineahuone. In addition, it would miss an opportunity to examine the actions of these dynamic characters and how the events of this story played out within the context of a family system. Other factors contributed to my decision to open up the project to include tāne, whānau members, and adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse by a non-relative:

- Early community feedback during the consultation process sent a clear message that people comprehended the pūrākau of Hinetītama and Tānemahuta as an incest taboo, but some thought that the idea to only work with wāhine survivors might place too much responsibility on them to produce a solution.
- Although the original characters in the pūrākau are blood kin, whānau structures today are more diverse. I decided to widen the research lens to invite those whose sexual abuse was committed by a step parent, foster parent, or a responsible adult who, in the place of an absent parent, held a trusted position of influence over the victim.
- Tāne also wanted to have their voices included in the research to address what they perceived as a lack of visibility and understanding for male survivors of child sexual abuse. Their perception of being excluded from the wider conversation is endorsed by the dearth of male-centred literature and specialist services (Carswell et al., 2019; Leclerc & Wortley, 2015).

To pre-empt the possibility of imbalanced researcher-participant power relations, and promote the concept of a unified research community, participant recruitment was reframed as an invitation to collaborate. Terms such as “research participant” and “study participants” were excluded from pānui and in-person presentations in favour of

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<sup>66</sup> *pānui* = announcement, newsletter



the more mana enhancing “artist-researcher,” “co-researcher,” and “research whānau.” Informal presentations took place that invited survivors as experts who could use the project as a public platform to present their viewpoints and solutions for family and sexual violence, and included opportunities for people to sample the process through mindfulness exercises using drama techniques and kōrero pūrākau. These small but significant acts helped attract twelve individuals to the first phase of the project. Together we formed a research whānau at the hauora on the marae grounds; then we entered into wānanga to develop our kawa (protocol) for working together and to deliberate on a name for our collective. In line with tikanga Māori, the group’s ideas were passed on to the *hau kāinga*,<sup>67</sup> who responded by gifting the name *Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai*.<sup>68</sup>

### 1.11.3 Phase One: Hui

For eleven weeks, Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai engaged in wānanga that were organised to allow members to simultaneously learn and experiment with devising tools, discuss their responses to the pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō and Hineahuone, and support each other in the sharing and processing of past experiences. Theatre techniques and therapeutic models from Western sources could be employed so long as they aligned with tikanga Māori, were deemed useful by the research team, and added value to the project —whether through enhancing members’ creativity, providing “in the moment” relief and care for people in distress, or supplying ongoing reinforcement to the *whanaungatanga*<sup>69</sup> of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai. For example, I drew upon the complementary processes and principles of group psychotherapy (Moreno, 1953; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005) and drama therapy (Jones, 2007) to bring shape to the *hōtaka* (hui schedule):

1. Tīmatanga/Arrival: Opening the wānanga with a *porowhita*<sup>70</sup> that comprises a mihi to welcome everyone, a karakia/ruruku (invocation to set off proceedings) and a whakataukī (thought for the day) that is chosen by one of the group members.

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<sup>67</sup> *hau kāinga* = home people who take care of the marae

<sup>68</sup> This name refers to the blossoming of well-being through creativity, but also acknowledges the host-guest relationship between Kōkiri Marae and the research team.

<sup>69</sup> *whanaungatanga* = relationships, connections

<sup>70</sup> *porowhita* = circle

2. Whakataū/ Settling/Warm up: Recapping the previous week, sharing pānui/announcements, engaging in a group reflection round on the opening whakataukī and rounding off the section with a short mindfulness exercise or a theatre game. Some people may choose to share some creative writing at this time or in the ensuing *mihimihi*.<sup>71</sup>
3. Mihimihi/ Check-in: Individual sharing and self-report using a self-ranking measure based on the SUDS protocol.<sup>72</sup> All activities enable team members to attune with each other's *mauri*,<sup>73</sup> as well as the *mauri* of the combined group; the *mihimihi*, however, is the part of the day where the format and therapeutic factors of group psychotherapy come to the fore, invoked by the group setting substituting for each individual's social microcosm or family unit (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Within this social forum, people can develop interpersonal learning (self-awareness, insight) and practice new social techniques.
4. Kai tahi (shared lunch) and a short break.
5. Kaupapa/ Main activity: Depending on the day's objective, this part of the hui might involve one or more of the following activities: a) engaging in a group matapaki about the pūrākau; b) exploring a drama technique or devising a piece of theatre; c) participating in a show-and-tell and feedback session.
6. Poroaki/ Farewell: A reflection round that summarises the work that has been done, presents an opportunity for people to reflect on the day and to revisit their earlier check-in. The round also allows the group to acknowledge any issues that might have occurred during the hui, and to then affirm the way in which they were addressed.
7. Whakakapinga/ Adjournment: Karakia to close the hui and send people safely on their way.

This basic hōtaka provided routine and stability for the research team, but was not strictly adhered to. Theatre prizes tension and conflict as necessary elements in the dramatic journey towards resolution and catharsis; this same attitude was encouraged among group members, who responded by inserting a group agreed protocol for

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<sup>71</sup> *mihimihi* = introductory speeches at the beginning of a meeting

<sup>72</sup> Developed by Wolpe (1969), a subjective units of distress scale (SUDS) enables people to rank their own well-being or levels of distress or anxiety.

<sup>73</sup> *mauri* = life force or essence that is possessed by all living and inanimate things

addressing conflict into our kawa. If a breach or disruption occurred during the proceedings, they were not avoided but openly welcomed as an opportunity to support someone's healing, strengthen whanaungatanga, or set a course of action that might forward the research and/or lead to the devising of dramatic material.

#### ***1.11.4 Kōrero Pūrākau Analysis***

Kōrero pūrākau or storytelling, was our main method of analysis in phase one; it aligns with Indigenous storywork methods (Archibald et al., 2019) where people tell a personal story and/or re-craft an ancestral narrative in response to a research topic (in this case, the pūrākau of Hineahuone and Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō). At our first meeting, each team member was given copies of the pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō and that of her mother, Hineahuone, along with a journal to capture ideas and record personal experiences of the research journey. Only two had previously heard of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō and Hineahuone, and there were no fluent Māori speakers. English translations of the stories were composed using common plot points from a variety of published texts. The impact of Tauīwi influences on the original source material was explained to the team and provided the rationale for encouraging them to seek out other interpretations of the pūrākau, such as images, *waiata*,<sup>74</sup> carvings, contemporary literature, and proverbs/ metaphors.

Over the course of phase one, our hui revealed a myriad of responses to the pūrākau, with some people voicing confusion and disbelief around Hineahuone's apparent failure to act, as well as rage and blame towards Tānemahuta. Others expressed a palpable sadness and anger at being robbed by the coloniser of our language, stories, identity, and therefore being ignorant of valuable knowledge that could have made a difference to their lives. Some were suspicious of the content of the pūrākau and wondered which parts were authentically drawn from our tūpuna, and which sections were incursions made by the coloniser. The tāne in our group found themselves in an uncomfortable space —of wanting to acknowledge Tānemahuta as the ancestor who created Te Ao Mārama and brought us into existence, but ultimately rejecting his behaviour as “reprehensible,” “unforgivable,” “the worst thing he could have done,” and “ironic...because he's the one who gave us Life and then he does what he does and

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<sup>74</sup> *waiata* = song; to sing

causes Death.”

As our kōrero progressed over the weeks, we began to collectively distance ourselves from the material and appreciate these two pūrākau as: 1) a lens through which to view our own painful experiences, and understand our emotional responses and choice making; 2) an authentically Māori view of the *tapu*<sup>75</sup> and mana of women, children, and their bodies, against which we can contrast Western/Christian beliefs and their prevalence in societal attitudes towards gender relations, family, child-rearing, and; 3) a warning from our ancestors of the real threat that ngau whiore poses to our very existence as Māori and to Māori society, by infiltrating at its most basic social unit, the whānau, and poisoning it from within. In the final week of phase one, these initial themes and other responses were recorded for transference into the theatre studio.

#### ***1.11.5 Notions of trauma***

Right from the outset of our wānanga sessions, members of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai displayed an immediate willingness to share their experiences and voice their hopes for the project. The word *trauma* was applied liberally to personal accounts of sexual violence, as well as intimate partner violence, family violence, horizontal (workplace) violence, and of structural violence in day-to-day dealings with government agencies. It appeared that our initial interpretations corresponded with the following theories of trauma and their impacts across different levels of analysis:

*Historical Trauma.* Historical trauma and historic trauma response (HTR) call attention to a primary trauma that is historically and collectively experienced on a large scale, for example, genocide, famine, colonisation, and is then transferred from the survivors to their descendants as a communal psychic wound across multiple generations (Danieli, 1998). In the present day, the historical trauma is magnified by oppressive social conditions that contribute to a community enduring long term socio-economic and health problems (Duran et al., 1998; Brave Heart, 1998, 2003), and developing negative cultural identities as a result of internalised oppression (Volkas, 2014).

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<sup>75</sup> *tapu* = sacred, sanctity

Leni:<sup>76</sup> I hated being a girl, I saw that men had it easier in the world....And the women in my family —some of them getting beaten by their husbands and it's like they go and take it out on us...the things they said about us girls when we were teenagers —judging us by our looks and our bodies... you had to be skinny and white looking with big boobs [they] had no idea the damage they were doing to us in here (taps side of head) —

Caren: (interjecting) Oh God —same, same here. Why are women so mean to each other?

Leni: Yeah. And I never heard them talk about their sons like that.

Andrew: Men are more powerful than women... Samoan is my first language but I've never even been to Samoa. My step-father beat the language into me. I thought that was normal.

Kohu: When I am with a man, he dominates me. They have all the power.

Gracie: I've been going between a man and a woman. It's like this past week my body's been in the wars —The Land Wars.

(Hui notes, October 31, 2019)

Efforts to make sense of and heal from historical collective trauma include programmes that promote reconciliation among communities affected by intercultural conflict (Leveton & Volkas, 2010; Volkas, 2014); rituals and cultural performances that draw out repressed grief and loss from the body (Nikora et al., 2010; Wirihana & Smith, 2014); and Indigenous research that promotes storytelling traditions as narratives of survival, reclamation, and resilience (George et al., 2014), and as decolonising tools to expose and challenge intergenerational legacies of trauma perpetuated in gendered violence (Cavino, 2019) and familial sexual abuse (Cavino, 2016).

*Psychological Trauma.* Neuroimaging technology has given rise to the discipline of neuroscience which interprets trauma as a somatic (body-based) experience that disrupts the body's important regulatory processes (Acolin, 2019; van der Kolk, 2014). At the moment of exposure, fear is experienced in the body and the trauma memories remain imprinted there (Gray, 2019; van der Kolk, 2014), leaving the person in a constant state of hyper arousal. The relentless stress promotes the overproduction of stress hormones and other chemical imbalances that tax the body's immune system and affects brain development (Gray, 2019; van der Kolk, 2014), leading to compromised physical health and the onset of issues in learning, behaviour, and mental wellbeing (Acolin, 2019; van

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<sup>76</sup> \*n.b. apart from my name and Jim's, all names referred to in these excerpts are pseudonyms.

der Kolk, 2014). “In short, the body is a primary locus for the reproduction of oppression, and it bears much of the burden.” (Johnson, 2019, p. 351).

Jeannet: I did P.<sup>77</sup> I’m so angry... I’m scared of me. I know my anger is from being abused as a child. And I have to sort it out because I have too much to lose.

Mari: [He] did things to my body and I abused myself too. Not anymore. I got sick. I had all my women’s parts taken out of me. I treat my body as a temple... Mauri tū, mauri ora.

Serena: Drinking. Drugs. I tried to block it out. Life is for living—I got sick... What happened to me as a child, and what my ex did (pounds chest with her fist) it’s right in here—right in my marrow.

(Hui notes, September 26 & October 10, 2019)

Conventional interventions include talk therapies like cognitive behaviour therapy, and medications that target imbalances in the brain’s limbic system. However, current research also supports “bottom-up” somatic approaches that include deep non-verbal, movement therapies like dance (Gray, 2019), yoga (van der Kolk, 2014), or a combination of techniques that interact with the mind-body connection (Acolin, 2019).

I [summarised our kōrero to the themes of]... body memory, retraining the body, and reconnecting our wairua and hinengaro with the tinana and trauma in order to heal...as well as develop a new, healthier relationship with the body. This segued into a group mirroring exercise (everyone stands in a circle facing inwards and then copy my movements. In due course, I transfer the leadership role to Kohu, and then after a while, she passes the role to someone else, and so on). We then played a game called “ID the Leader” (one person leaves the room, the group decides who will lead the mirror exercise, then begin moving. The person who has left the room re-enters and tries to identify the group leader). I was able to pick out Serena; then it was her turn, she was able to correctly guess Ruhi. We wound up the game with a reflection round where people shared their experience of the game and spoke about the different strategies they used, as well as what they noticed about their body, their sense of self, and their feelings towards others during the game. I then related their reflections to current uses of mirror exercises in drama and drama therapy to promote body awareness, empathy for others, and well-being (Jones, 2007; Koch et al., 2015).

(Hui notes, September 26, 2019)

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<sup>77</sup> In Aotearoa/New Zealand, “P” is the street name for pure methamphetamine.

*Relational Trauma.* Relational trauma pertains to childhood experiences of abuse and/or neglect perpetrated by trusted family members or carers. This trauma of deep betrayal disrupts a child's ability to attach to family and to feel security and belonging, which then leads to an emergence of behavioural problems (Gray, 2019). Children who are subjected to sexual violence, whether via a solitary assault or sustained revictimisation, can develop a host of complex physical and mental health issues in adulthood (Niland & Fernando, 2016). Long-term effects also include the inability to form trusting intimate relationships (Carswell et al., 2019; Gray, 2019; Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2009; van der Kolk, 2014), material hardship and unemployment (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2012), and self-harm and suicide (Ministry of Social Development, 2017; van der Kolk, 2014).

“Waiho rā kia tū takitahi ana ngā whetū o te rangi /Let it be one alone that stands among the other stars in the sky.” Gael chose this whakataukī as the thought for the day, because he has been thinking about his loneliness, his need to be with people to be affirmed and wanted —and how in the past this has led him to be hurt, to make unsafe and unhealthy choices. He realises that he needs to find self-confidence to stand on his own —but this is hard for him to do. Others in the group were able to relate to this kōrero... [making distinctions] between loneliness, isolation, and being alone —in one's own company.

(Hui notes, November 14, 2019)

The isolating and marginalising effects of relational trauma may be addressed in group based interactions that allow for the safe analysis of past relationships, enable the development of healthy ways of relating, and provide opportunities to experience community connection and belonging —a collective “meaning beyond our individual fate” (van der Kolk, 2014, p. 333). Collective, relational activities that initiate feelings of belonging, meaning, and universality include theatre (Emunah et al., 2014; Johnson, 2010; van der Kolk, 2014), drama therapy (Garcia, 2010; Jones, 2007; Leveton, 2010; Sajnani & Johnson, 2014; Volkas, 2014) and group psychotherapy (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

We looked at question 1 on the board: “What should a child expect by just being born into the world?” We brainstormed on large sheets of butcher paper strewn around the table, and then read them out. We talked about what we noticed in our response to the exercise: anger and resentment at not getting these things in our childhoods, and then started to wonder if we are doing the same to our children – are they missing out? Are we transferring our pain onto the next generation? To finish the exercise, we each chose a word from the

paper that resonated with us as something we would have liked in our own childhoods, then offered it to the person sitting to the left, thus setting off an affirmation circle, that is: Helen: Helen, I wish you to know that you are valued. (Turns to Gael on her left) Gael, I wish you to know that you are valued. Then Gael takes his turn, looking for a word on the paper to affirm himself and then Andrew on his left, and so on.

(Hui notes, October 24, 2019)

#### ***1.11.6 Key exercises***

Life can feel unpredictable, unmanageable, and even terrifying for people who are locked in trauma; they may become disconnected from their body and emotions, and their capacity for creativity and spontaneity shuts down for the sake of self-protection and control (Garcia, 2010; Jones, 2007; van der Kolk, 2014). Theatre asks people to do the exact opposite of what their trauma has habituated them to *not* do: feel, engage, connect, take on, embody, express/voice, emote, project, create, and play. Any type of therapy that draws upon theatre pedagogy, that is, therapeutic theatre, psychodrama, drama therapy, expressive arts therapy, and so on, values creativity and spontaneity (or playfulness) as important factors for surviving the everyday of human existence (Garcia, 2010) and for recovering from trauma (van der Kolk, 2014). Creativity and spontaneity are also essential skills for devising and experimenting in the theatre, and so from our first hui, we started playing games to experience and harness our creativity and sense of play. We also carried out a core Theatre Marae whanaungatanga exercise called *whakapapa*, and explored two techniques for self-care and stress reduction (one verbal and the other somatic) that people could adjust to suit their well-being goals. These three exercises are described here:

*Exercise One: Whakapapa.* Developed by veteran actor and director, Jim Moriarty, *whakapapa* is a core exercise from Te Rākau's repertoire and is employed in nearly all of the company's Theatre Marae programmes, whether one-day workshops or full scale theatre productions. The word *whakapapa* is a noun that means "genealogy," but as a verb it means "to recite in proper order," or "to place or stack one upon another in layers." These definitions form the basis of this exercise as a cumulative, layered process that aims to put people's wairua at ease, build whanaungatanga, and lead to the



performance of “a joint statement of the group in the here-and-now.”<sup>78</sup> This is done by the company weaving together the individual mauri of each member’s name:

1. The company is instructed to break into pairs of strangers, or if everyone knows each other, they pair up with the person they know the least or feel uncertain or curious about.
2. Within the pair, one person takes five minutes to tell the other the story of their full name, its origins and meaning. If they do not know what their name means and the story behind it, then they might talk about what their name means to them —the same for if they do not like their name, or are known by a nickname, etc.
3. Based on the information that they have received about their partner’s name and any other sense or feeling they might notice about that person during the exchange, the second person devises a set of movements and vocalised sounds to symbolise their partner.
4. The pairs repeat the exercise with the second person explaining their name to their partner, who in turn, interprets them through movement and sound.
5. The company gather together for a show and tell session; in their pairs, each person takes turns to introduce their partner to the wider group, recite what they can remember about their partner’s name and then perform the interpretation that they created about their partner.
6. The company splits back into the original pairs who now use their devised pieces to create a single statement of their pair.
7. The company regathers for another show and tell session, this time performing the new combined pieces that signify each pair.
8. Through a process of random selection, each pair is joined with another to form a quartet. They repeat the process of step 6, i.e. they craft their pieces together to symbolise their new group of four, then repeat step 7 (company show and tell).
9. Random selection takes place again (step 8) to form octets, and the alternating processes of devising/ show and tell/group selection occur, culminating in the entire company working together to create and perform their final piece: an expression of their collective mauri.

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<sup>78</sup> Jim Moriarty, personal communication, April 25, 2021.

For the purposes of this research project, the *whakapapa* exercise was undertaken in the very first hui to establish whanaungatanga and a safe, non-judgmental, collegial environment in which to present everyone with their first challenge: to connect with the creative potential of their own tinana to communicate expressions of mauri.

Serena gets the feeling that Shannon is a sparkly person, so she raises her arms high above her head, then continuously flicks her fingers open and closed while drawing her arms down in a wide arc to rest at her side. She accompanies her finger flicking with short bursts of exhalations through pursed lips. Serena ends her piece with a wide smile and in a clear voice she says, “Stars”....Kohu shares that both she and Mari have been nervous about this project but excited and hopeful at the same time. She reports that Mari has been shedding a lot of tears but that they are cleansing and healing for her. Kohu then places her hands to her face and performs a soft wiri, letting her hands fall slowly to her puku. “That’s it,” she says. The audience clap and Mari smiles and mouths, “Thank-you” to Kohu.

(Hui notes, September 9, 2019)

Although the exercise starts with the core material of people’s names, as they work together, the participants become familiar with one another and volunteer more information, leading them to find out that they share similar interests, life experiences, and cultural backgrounds. For people who have felt isolated and excluded from society, becoming aware of the universality of their life experiences within the group is a powerful revelation that can bring about a sense of connectivity, commonality, and comfort (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

#### *Exercise Two: Nā wai tērā?*<sup>79</sup>

“The trouble with words is they begin to create their own reality.”

(Evans, 2013, p. 26)

The power of the spoken word to induce deeply rooted responses within and through the body has been known since ancient times. Performing artists, charismatic leaders, therapists, educators, sports fans, concert goers, and meditators engage this principle in both individual and communal activities intended to heal, to rally, to terrify, to celebrate, to soothe, to excite, to mourn, and to memorise. In my therapy work, I am drawn to interventions that tap into the therapeutic potential of sound vibrations,

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<sup>79</sup> *Nā wai tērā?* = Who was/said/did that?

metaphors, and word patterns to decrease the effects of psychological suffering brought about by traumatic memories or distressing thoughts. Such techniques include meditation, waiata, oriori, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy or ACT (Hayes, et al., 1999), is a mindfulness-based intervention that, according to Harris (2006, p. 2) can help people “create a rich and meaningful life, while accepting the pain that inevitably goes with it”. ACT is underpinned by Relational Frame Theory (RFT), an analysis of human cognition and language. Relational framing refers to an ongoing process of psychologically responding to events (Blackledge, 2003,), creating relations between them, joining them into more complex relations and then transferring *functions* between events. Relational frames allow us to compare, invent, create, anticipate, infer, and imagine. Because of this, it also enables us to construct and experience fears and other sufferings that can be transferred through language. The primary objective of ACT is for people to cultivate psychological flexibility, the capacity to apply different mental resources to adapt to various life demands (Kashdan, 2010). ACT comprises six core processes, one being *defusion*, a skillset of thinking strategies that can create cognitive distance from distressing thoughts, emotions, and overwhelming sensations (Harris, 2006).

*Nā wai tērā?* is a defusion exercise that I developed and introduced to members of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai as a tool that they might utilise whenever they noticed themselves being drawn into thinking upsetting and negative self-beliefs. It follows the ACT /RFT premise that language can cause and transfer distress, but strengthens this analysis with similar perspectives of language drawn from the family violence arena and Māori metaphysics, that being:

- Hate speech weaponises language that can be internalised by victims to adopt dominant narratives that reinforce their own oppression;
- Prolonged verbal abuse, scapegoating, and humiliating criticism causes psychological harm to children;
- Family violence is transferable between generations through children witnessing (seeing and hearing) acts of physical and verbal abuse;
- We can reach across te ārai/the veil and invoke our ancestors in the spirit world by using our oral traditions including whaikōrero, karakia/ruruku, and kōrero;
- The spirit world can in turn impact on the psychological and physical realms, for

example, our tūpuna are present with us; they can walk amongst us and talk to us;

- *He tao rākau e taea te karo; he tao kupu, kāhore e taea te karo* — a thrust of a spear can be parried but not the thrust of words. This is a Māori proverb meaning that hurtful words can cause pain where physical blows cannot reach.

*Nā wai tērā?* is a question that, depending on the context, can mean *who did that* or *whose is that?* In this instance, *that* refers to distressing thoughts, intrusive memories, harmful judgment statements, and the like that might present at any given moment and cause us to feel increased anxiety, anger, or distress. *Thank you, mind* is a conventional ACT defusion tool that is thought or said aloud to create cognitive distance between a person and a distressing thought. *Nā wai tērā* works in a similar way, by allowing us to simultaneously acknowledge and distance ourselves from an intrusive memory or harsh judgment statement about ourselves, by gifting it back to the voice of the family member or other person who we remember said it to us. We do this by saying aloud or thinking the thought “Tēnā koe, [name of other person].” In te reo Māori “Tēnā koe” is a formal greeting to one person and literally means “there you are”. So in performing this greeting, we are simultaneously acknowledging the presence of trauma in our world and gifting it back to the agent of this distress and in doing so create distance and perspective —we change our relationship with it. This can be a potent exercise for those who are open to analysing their childhood interactions with parents or caregivers to understand their low self-esteem or negative self-schemas.

While defusion exercises like *thank you, mind* are meant to be effortlessly applied, prior to its application, *nā wai tērā* requires some preparation in the form of research. This entails *tracking trauma* through the whakapapa, that is, identifying the origins of one’s distressing internal processes in their immediate whānau and, if possible, tracing it further back in the family tree to tūpuna who have since long passed. This is an optional therapeutic process that I can take in my own time and space to investigate the sequelae of historic trauma that have emerged and then been handed down through the generations, and taken hold within me as voices of internalised oppression. It is possible that, as an outcome of this process, I might one day begin to develop a sense of empathy or compassion towards others in my family as people who were undeniably shaped by their social world and life experiences that were not always of their choosing. I do this,

however, without underplaying their role in the *mamae*<sup>80</sup> that I have inherited.

*Exercise Three: Te Wākāinga (The True Home).*

Through experiencing the intrinsic healing potential of theatre, people can also effect their own healing as artist-therapists (Jones, 2007). An exercise called *te wākāinga* is one such example; initially emerging as a thematic response to Hinetītama's journey to the underworld which was then developed into a self-soothing movement meditation, *te wākāinga* (The true home) was later transferred to the studio as a process for devising material for the show. The notion of a *wākāinga* came from the whānau's collective belief that to recast Hinetītama's journey to the underworld as a suicide unfairly sentenced her to remain a powerless victim forever, without opportunity for redress, healing, and the restoration of mana. Instead, the story of Hinetītama's journey to the underworld is a survival narrative of healing and metamorphosis, a template of hope for today's survivors to follow. Our *kōrero* turned to how we too could access a place of safety, solace, and healing within the context of managing to function in our daily lives. This materialised into *te wākāinga*, a cumulative experiential exercise that is rolled out in three sections:

1. *Building Te Wākāinga.* The whānau engage in a relaxation exercise where they are guided through a script that asks them to use their imaginations to create their own safe haven or true home. They focus on each of their senses to experience all of the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, textures, and spiritual phenomena in their *wākāinga*.
2. *A Day in The Life.* The whānau participate in a physical exploration of their *wākāinga*, imagining what they would do if they were to spend 24 hours there. Over the course of an hour they mime all of their activities.
3. *Compression & Abstraction.* The whānau then condense their physical exploration by mining for six activities from the previous exercise they found especially comforting, which they then act out in an uninterrupted order. Next, they isolate key movements or gestures from each activity. These become building blocks for each person to choreograph a slow, organic, repetitive sequence that they can choose to adopt as a personal movement meditation.

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<sup>80</sup> *mamae* = pain, hurt

During the show and tell session, I float the idea that we perform together. Jim is on babysitting duties for Jeannet. He places us in our start positions (lying down on the floor) in various spots around the room and then directs us to begin. We perform our pieces in repetitive cycles, accompanied by a live soundtrack of waves of deep breathing, hums, animal noises, and vocalised machine sounds. The atmosphere becomes dense with the sound of communal breathing that has somehow synchronised. Time slows down. Jim invites individuals to step out of their sequence and walk around the space to experience our collective work as an audience member. In the reflection round that follows, Katarina and Anj say that they felt they were in a sacred ritual and could sometimes sense a connection occur with others close by —during moments of co-ordinated breathing and compatible movements. Others report that they noticed themselves become calm and focused. Caren, Mari and Andrew say that in the beginning, they felt nervous and self-conscious, so that when they started to move, they had the urge to speed up their choreography, hoping that somehow it might force the ending sooner. Their attitude changed through a combination of watching their peers commit to the exercise, not wanting to let them down, nor wanting to draw negative attention to themselves, and then being able to observe the work from an outsider’s perspective. Upon further encouragement, the group collectively starts to analyse the piece for its theatrical possibilities: as a scene in a museum or gallery where the statues come to life, he *māra*,<sup>81</sup> he *ngahere*.<sup>82</sup> I especially like the idea of using this exercise to recreate the *ngahere* somewhere in the play —it is the domain of Tānemahuta and is the place that binds all of his creations: birds, trees, us. Jim sees its potential as a means to construct an ethereal pre-show world that the audience walk through when they enter the studio.

(Hui notes, November 28, 2019)

The responses of the *whānau* towards the exercise illustrate the capacity for deep non-verbal movement therapies and collective relational activities to initiate feelings of belonging, meaning, spontaneity, and creativity. These things are often missing from or deprioritised in the lives of people whose bodies are storage sites for traumatic memories (Gray, 2019; Johnson, 2019), and are in a constant state of stress and hyper-arousal (Acolin, 2019; Gray, 2019; van der Kolk, 2014). As a therapeutic activity, te *wākāinga* promotes our own capacity for self-healing through meditative processes (Huirama, 2019), and aligns with a concept of creating “islands of safety within the body” (van der Kolk, 2014, p. 245), a somatic approach in trauma work which entails us identifying those parts of our body, gestures or movements with which we can ground or settle ourselves when we feel overwhelming terror or rage. The body communicates

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<sup>81</sup> *māra* = garden

<sup>82</sup> *ngahere* = forest

experience on both conscious and unconscious levels and is a surface on which to inscribe, mark, and engrain identity, social status, gender, beliefs, and interests (Cromby, 2015; Jones, 2007; Varela et al., 1991). In undertaking this exploration, the whānau were able to encounter their own capacity for self-healing and experience their embodied potential as creatives and performers (Jones, 2007; Snowber, 2018).

#### ***1.11.7 Phase Two: Theatre Marae Wānanga and Rehearsal***

In 2016, I wrote *The Swing*, a play set in an isolated rural community in *Te Waipounamu*<sup>83</sup> that follows the story of a whānau dealing with the tragic consequences of intergenerational sexual abuse. The script was developed over a six-month period and drawn from research comprising a review of the family sexual abuse and incest literature, and hui with family violence workers and adult survivors of child sexual abuse and incest. The original intention was to tour the play around Māori communities throughout Te Waipounamu as a means for local social services and health providers to work collaboratively to engage with survivors and their whānau. This did not come to fruition and so *The Swing* had lain dormant until now, when I had the idea to repurpose the script as a vessel to help contain, organise, and present the outcomes of this research project.

After a short break for Christmas and New Year's, we relocated the project to the theatre lab at Massey University's Wellington campus. Six of the Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai team met members of Te Rākau Theatre who were joining the production. After a *mihi whakatau*,<sup>84</sup> kai tahi, and walk through the facilities, we gathered in the studio and had our first company read through of the two pūrākau and the play script. It was the first time that Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai had read the play, which they responded very favourably to; they then relayed their analysis of the pūrākau to the theatre company. Four of the whānau joined the theatre company as cast and crew, while the others attended rehearsals when they could to preserve the mana and kaitiakitanga of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai.

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<sup>83</sup> *Te Waipounamu* = The South Island of Aotearoa/New Zealand

<sup>84</sup> *mihi whakatau* = official welcome speech

The workshop and rehearsal were compressed into an intensive three week programme that used a split rehearsal format across three spaces where we could simultaneously:

- Continue researching the pūrākau and the key plot points and themes already identified by Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai, but this time by employing tools from ngā mahi a te rēhia (Māori performing arts);
- Investigate, workshop, then block the scenes from *The Swing*;
- Compose waiata and *mōteatea*,<sup>85</sup> and choreograph physical theatre, chorus work and haka to weave the two strands (the scripted scenes and the pūrākau work) together into a unified performance piece;
- Track and account for the well-being and development of the company members (collectively and individually) as they engage with and are impacted by the research and the rehearsal process.

These activities were enabled through the application of core methods of Theatre Marae pedagogy: te kāhui, the creative paepae, and te porowhita.

*Te Kāhui.* Based on the flight patterns of birds, specifically the murmuration performed by starlings at dusk, *kāhui*<sup>86</sup> is the term that we use to describe the combined mauri of the company at work as well as the collective noun for the chorus/ensemble. The metaphor comes from the idea that everyone is a unique individual in possession of their own strengths, weaknesses, and perspectives, but has chosen to join their expertise and efforts together for the purpose of the joint objective—in this case, the production. In the studio, this entails the performance ensemble undertaking an intense training programme to develop fitness, whanaungatanga, a common movement language, and a collective choral voice.

*The Creative Paepae.* The creative *paepae*<sup>87</sup> is a way to cultivate the professional and creative development of the company—especially junior members, by allowing members to swap roles (including technical/production positions) to participate in the creative process outside of their contracted role. This facilitates the potential for fresh new insights and strengths to emerge that might otherwise have remained hidden. For

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<sup>85</sup> *mōteatea* = a lament

<sup>86</sup> *kāhui* = flock of birds, constellation of stars, company of people

<sup>87</sup> *paepae* = a bench for birds to perch; an orator's bench



example, one of the actors who played a lead role in *The Swing* is a highly accomplished dancer and so, over the course of the production, he also became a choreographer. During one of the devising sessions, the stage manager decided to improvise some music on acoustic guitar to inspire the performers; this led to him becoming the live guitarist who played throughout the show. The creative paepae builds on the concept of the kāhui in flight, when birds swap positions with each other, along with their associated responsibilities.

*Te Porowhita*. Steeped in tikanga Māori, and informed by principles from group therapy (Moreno 1953; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005), group dynamics (Lewin & Gold, 1999), and the common characteristics of empowering community settings (Maton, 2008), the *porowhita* is a process for checking in with the overall well-being of the group, as well as anticipating and addressing disruption, conflict, and tension that can occur at any time in the studio. When a *porowhita* is called, the entire company “down tools” and form a circle on the stage to participate in a hui to discuss and resolve the *take*.<sup>88</sup> The *porowhita* reimagines the stage as a *marae ātea*,<sup>89</sup> the space for public discussion, dissent, challenge, deliberation (Walker, 1975), and ultimately, resolution and collective agreement.

#### **1.11.8 Mahi Toi Whakaari: Studio Analysis**

Engaging in performative analysis with a kaupapa Māori lens allowed us to make contact with the whare tapere, the original home of kōrero pūrākau and ngā mahi a te rēhia (Brown, 2008; Karetu, 1993; Royal, 1998, 2007). We utilised other tools of te whare tapere in our studio analysis which correspond with modern theatrical conventions, that being: *haka* (dance and movement); *waiata* (song and chant); *taonga pūoro* (music, sound effects and soundscape); *taonga-o-wharowharo* (costume, make-up, colour); *ngā tākaro* (games, improvisation, puppetry, and props). We focused on the key plot points and themes identified by Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai, and estimated where they might occur in sequence as a connecting section between two scenes of dialogue; we then set about using different elements to workshop each sequence, to reveal any hidden meaning underneath the metaphors, to interrogate the themes, and to illuminate or emphasise the research findings or messages. For example, the costume designer

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<sup>88</sup> *take* = issue, reason

<sup>89</sup> *marae ātea* = sacred space in front of a meeting house

created the entire wardrobe around a colour palette of warm, earthy colours to emphasise the whakapapa connection between the characters with the whenua as symbolised by Hineahuone and Papatūānuku. Furthermore, we responded to Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai’s concern that the pūrākau silenced Hineahuone’s voice (thereby reinforcing patriarchal notions of gender relations and the Western nuclear family) by composing a waiata dedicated to her as the penultimate human ancestor, and where no mention is made of Tānemahuta. Using *mau rākau*,<sup>90</sup> *nekeneke*,<sup>91</sup> physical theatre, and acting methodology the kāhui explored the creation of Hineahuone at Kurawaka to investigate the power dynamics between her and Tānemahuta. During the climactic “ask the posts of the house” scene, the actors playing Hinetītama and Tānemahuta performed their dialogue in the centre of the stage, while the rest of the kāhui created the dimensions of their whare by transforming themselves into *pou whakairo*<sup>92</sup> and embellishing their frozen stance with *pūkana*,<sup>93</sup> *whetero*,<sup>94</sup> and *mahunga tītaha*.<sup>95</sup> When Hinetītama approaches three of the pou to enquire after the identity of her father, the kāhui respond in turn by miming the three wise monkeys proverb, “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil”. When Hinetītama realises that her husband is also her father, the sound operator triggers the sound of an earthquake and the kāhui react to this by falling out of their static pou positions and using *tipatapata*<sup>96</sup> footwork to dismantle the scene, leaving her alone onstage. This image carries the group’s message that when the secret of abuse comes out, it breaks up the family, destroys the household, and can isolate the victim even more.

Arts-based inquiry accepts that our worlds are socially constructed and negotiated (Gergen & Gergen, 2018), and therefore emphasises research that democratises meaning making (Leavy, 2018). That is, arts-based research practices reject explicit claims to universal truth, and instead, with respect for subjectivity and diversity, seek to evoke reaction and stimulate dialogue among those who engage with the research. Theatre practitioners recognise that audience members’ responses towards a piece of theatre will

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<sup>90</sup> *mau rākau* = Māori weaponry; to wield weapons

<sup>91</sup> *nekeneke* = movement

<sup>92</sup> *pou whakairo* = carved posts in a house denoting important ancestors.

<sup>93</sup> *pūkana* = wild stare that shows the whites of the eyes.

<sup>94</sup> *whetero* = protruding tongue

<sup>95</sup> *mahunga tītaha* = Head tilted to one side

<sup>96</sup> *tipatapata* = A form of footwork where the person stamps very fast on the balls of the feet to create a drumming effect like rainfall.

vary —determined by factors that include their cultural background, knowledge of the art form and genre, understanding of the story, and their connection to the subject matter and themes. This understanding works well with ongoing efforts of Indigenous communities to shield esoteric knowledge from the prying eyes of outsiders while at the same time ensuring its protection and transmission to other community members who could benefit from it. Knowledge is contained within cultural narratives that are multi-layered and metaphorical, so while there is a surface story available to all, the deeper meanings are to be known by insiders/community members who have the means to decipher them (Archibald, 2008). In that case, the meanings that are extracted from the pūrākau and presented through the collective efforts of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai and Te Rākau may or may not be entirely received by those who come to watch *The Swing*; what matters however is that each audience member connects with an element, a concept, theme or message that in some way affects them. The way we determine the experience of an audience is in the *matapaki*<sup>97</sup> or post-show forum.

#### ***1.11.9 Dissemination: Theatre production “The Swing”***

Presenting research findings as theatre is a performative act that creates new space for the excluded and ignored (Hammond et al., 2018); here, the stage provides a platform for performers to reveal new worlds and new possibilities, to amplify previously silenced voices, and to direct an audience’s focus to the presence of a marginalised other who now holds centre-stage.

In February 2020, Te Rākau presented an “invitation only” season of *The Swing*, targeting audiences from our existing community networks, friends and whānau of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai, and from further afield in the health, justice, social development, arts, and academic sectors. Although the name of the play remained unchanged, *The Swing* was by now transformed into a live theatre piece comprising two interwoven performance narratives of ngau whiore and taitōkai tamariki. The first was shaped in the naturalistic, dialogue driven form of an intimate kitchen-sink drama, whereas the second used ngā mahi a te rēhia, chorus work, and physical theatre to imagine an unspoilt, magical world in which to land our research findings. The play itself became the mid-point for a hui that was bookended at the start with tikanga to first draw the audience

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<sup>97</sup> *matapaki* = discussion

into the space, and at the end with a facilitated matapaki that included mihi, manaakitanga, waiata tautoko, and karakia. The sharing of food and drink at this time worked to *whakanoa*<sup>98</sup> the company (cast and crew) and the audience, establish whanaungatanga, provide sustenance and warmth, and induce kōrero.

Social justice theatre such as *The Swing* aims for “moments of intense discomfort” (Johnson, 2010, p. 78), opportunities to turn the focus onto the audience, as bystanders, as witnesses, and lay down the challenge before them that asks, “How willing are you to prevent evil?” The matapaki provided an opportunity at the end of the show for the audience to reflect on this question, as they consider their own potential and willingness to act in the face of injustice or cruelty. For members of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai, the matapaki was an ideal space in which to share the work with whānau, friends, and those members of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai who were unable to participate in the studio based research. To ensure that her voice was heard by the organisations and statutory agencies whose actions impact on the day-to-day lives and struggles of a community, one of the research team inserted a message into the programme brochure:

I was doing a course to work on myself and my anger to be a better person for myself and my kids. While doing the programme I was offered the opportunity to come on a journey to help raise awareness around sexual abuse and incest. It was through doing Ngā Puāwai that I realised that a lot of my anger is built up from my life time experiences, one of them being sexually abused. This was something I thought was no longer an issue for me but I later discovered that I had not even dealt with it. I have been processing my own thoughts and emotions while on this journey and could not have gotten through it without this amazing whānau. Spreading awareness through this theatre has created a journey of healing for me and will benefit not only myself but also my whānau. The Swing may not be the same sequence of events, but it is not just a story—it’s my story, it’s your story, it’s our story. My own experience is still swept under the carpet today but I am no longer a victim of it. I am mana wahine and I will stand proud. I strongly support this kaupapa and urge everyone to dig deep so this journey can be opened up for the rest of our whānau who are struggling.

(Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai member, February 2020)

During the matapaki on the closing night, and with her family present, the whānau member revealed herself to the audience and read her message aloud to them.

The matapaki also allows for more analysis of the impact and clarity of the work via

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<sup>98</sup> *whakanoa* = remove tapu or restrictions

audience reaction —how they critique the quality of the art-form, and how they comprehend and respond to the play’s themes. Audience feedback during the matapaki was overwhelmingly positive, as representatives from NGOs and government agencies deliberated with health professionals and family members in kōrero that agreed that Māori solutions to social justice issues were required because the current systems are not working. Post the production, we received invitations to tour the show to other venues as a training tool for agencies and organisations whose workers are confronted daily by the fallout of family and sexual violence. Unfortunately, not long after, Aotearoa/New Zealand was placed into level 4 lockdown as a means to halt the spread of Covid19; this led to the immediate cancellation of all public art events, theatre productions, and touring shows.

## **Chapter 2 Setting the scene for Theatre Marae Methodology**

This chapter presents my first published article which lays out the conceptual territory in which I land Theatre Marae pedagogy as a research methodology. The article opens by introducing the broader international landscape of the decolonising project, a concerted effort to target and confront the colonial legacies inherent in the narratives, art-forms, media, political systems, and institutions that are complicit with the continued deprivation and oppression of Indigenous peoples. I emphasise the work being done to decolonise the social sciences, and in particular, the indigenisation of psychology as a natural outcome of researchers applying more culturally relevant solutions to solving local social problems (Adair, 1999), through the revitalisation of traditional therapeutic knowledge and the re-centering of Indigenous ontologies and principles in research (Waitoki et al., 2018). From there, the paper acknowledges the transdisciplinarity of Indigenous psychology, its presence and potential for transformative action across multiple spaces, including the world of arts-based research. Arts-based research (ABR) has long been associated with the field of community psychology, which shares some commonality with Indigenous psychology in that community psychologists are also compelled to address social justice issues, end structural oppression, promote diversity, and prevent human suffering. Community psychologists have a long tradition of partnering with marginalised communities, including Indigenous groups, in participatory action research projects that harness arts-based research methods.

As Hammond et al. (2018) note, researchers working with Indigenous groups can apply a decolonial stance to knowledge production and dissemination by encouraging communities to use their “own dominant art-forms” (Hammond et al., 2018, p. 274). At a practical, real-world level, this ensures the accessibility of the research findings to the community, who in turn are more likely to develop sustainable solutions as a result. At an epistemological level, it opens up the possibility for Indigenous meaning making that can create and secure space for further Indigenous research. This chapter illustrates this potential by presenting Theatre Marae as a local example in action: a performance pedagogy imbued with Māori perspectives of reality and ways of knowing, so that Western research methods and ontologies are recalibrated as the external, exotic other.

In so doing, this article contributes to the ongoing commentary on decolonising psychology and social science research.

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# Theatre Marae: Māori theatre pedagogy in research

## Abstract

This article outlines Theatre Marae as a research methodology based in a conceptual partnership between traditional and contemporary Māori performing arts, applied theatre, and the therapeutic encounter. As a form of theatre pedagogy, Theatre Marae has been applied as a decolonising strategy in ensemble work, and to craft evocative theatre that honours Māori expressions of colonisation, trauma, and social justice. Theatre Marae projects have been carried out in kāinga, schools, prisons, youth justice residential centres, community centres, and mainstream theatres throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand. Although its creative and therapeutic outcomes are influenced by both Western and Māori psychologies and performance traditions, the underlying principles and day to day practice of Theatre Marae are based in Te Ao Māori. This configuration positions Theatre Marae as an Indigenous creative framework that is also applicable to kaupapa Māori arts-based research.

**Keywords:** Theatre Marae; Māori Theatre; Kaupapa Māori; Indigenous Psychology; Arts-based Research, Practice as Research Methodology

## Introduction

Half a dozen Māori Vietnam veterans have travelled for hours to sit in a square against the edges of a darkened black box listening to words they have spoken being said back to them. A theatrical device —a haunted transistor radio — switches on by itself, tunes between stations and, in the framework of a talkback radio show, plays excerpts from interviews the veterans have given. “The government don’t really know what it’s like to be a soldier. You know... there’s the story out there that you’re not wanted when everything’s right, but you’re the first one to turn to when something turns bad.”

A shape-shifting chorus enters from all four corners of the space at once, breaking with dramatic convention to segue to scenes set in the past and in other locations. They play an integral part, embodying moths, trees, an Iroquois helicopter, spirits, soldiers and nurses. Their movement, speech and singing helps realise the artistic objectives of the story.



Photographs the veterans have taken or collected appear on the walls, projected onto white gauze that looks like bandages or a shroud. Tears begin to roll down the faces not only of the veterans but of others in the audience to whom this story is new.

After the performance, a long kōrero. More tears. A waiata. The following day, after staying up talking late into the night, the veterans tell me that the play was healing for them, and the story needs to be told again—but that it's a story for all soldiers, not just their lot.

This article presents a model of contemporary theatre practice unique to Aotearoa/New Zealand called Theatre Marae, and its application as an Indigenous-informed creative framework for qualitative research. I arrive at this work as a Māori psychologist and theatre practitioner who has been working in contemporary New Zealand theatre and Theatre Marae for more than two decades. First, I locate the conditions for a Theatre Marae framework as part of a global movement to legitimise Indigenous psychologies and arts-based research methods within the Academy, then describe the underlying principles of Theatre Marae that are drawn from ancestral knowledge embedded in Māori language, daily customs, rituals, and performances from the marae and the whare tapere. These principles ground Theatre Marae in kaupapa Māori, while making use of complementary ideas from liberation and community psychologies, theatre craft, and performance studies. The addition of these other strands into the framework reveals new research spaces drawn from traditional concepts of Te Kore – empty space, Te Wheiao – liminal space, and Te Ārai – the veil. Furthermore, the Māori word widely used for the stage, atamira, is placed aside in preference for a more flexible term papa kōrero, an emergent space that hosts rituals of encounter, training routines, rehearsals, workshops, fora, and performance seasons.

To illustrate these spaces in action, I provide excerpts from my reflective journal from a theatre production called *The Landeaters*, a Theatre Marae research project that I undertook with a group of New Zealand combat veterans on their perspectives of healing after active service. From this combination of conceptual framework and examples, a picture is developed of Theatre Marae as a dynamic setting for tackling social science research that is hybridised and interdisciplinary, and privileges Māori ways of being, knowing, relating and doing.

*The indigenising project*

The limitations of psychology, its research methods, assessment tools, and therapy models have long been argued by Indigenous researchers as a reason for pursuing a locally derived psychology that is sensitive to customs, issues, and potential solutions specific to the Indigenous context (Adair, 1999). The rise of Indigenous psychologies (Allwood & Berry, 2006; Gray & Coates, 2010; Waitoki et al., 2018) is synonymous with a larger postcolonial agenda among researchers to decolonise the social sciences by legitimising Indigenous research methods that “prevent the prioritisation of western ways of knowing” (Drawson et al., 2017, p. 13). Indigenous research processes are politically transparent; they intentionally pursue healing, mobilisation, transformation, and decolonisation for Indigenous groups (Smith, 2012). At the same time, they resist attempts to debunk, devalue, suppress, or commodify and lay claim to Indigenous customary knowledge (Stewart-Harawira, 2013).

### *Indigenous principles and approaches*

While acknowledging the diverse historic, cultural, linguistic, and geo-political experiences of Indigenous groups around the world, Indigenous researchers assert a set of shared principles that distinguish an Indigenous psychology from its Western counterpart. One such principle is to oppose North American psychology (Allwood & Berry, 2006). Others include: the holism, relationality, and interconnectedness of all living and inanimate things (Archibald, 2008; Martin, 2003; Stewart-Harawira, 2013; Wilson, 2008); Indigenous self-determination and autonomy (Nikora, 2007; Smith, 2012; Waitoki et al., 2018); prioritisation and protection of the integrity of Indigenous knowledge (Archibald, 2008; Drawson et al., 2017; Stewart-Harawira, 2013; Wilson, 2008); respect and reciprocity between researchers and communities (Archibald, 2008; Wilson, 2008); researcher reflexivity (Martin, 2003); spiritual-physical-emotional alignment (Archibald 2008; Stewart-Harawira, 2013; Wilson, 2008); accountability and transparency (Archibald, 2008; Drawson et al., 2017; Martin, 2003; Smith, 2012; Stewart-Harawira, 2013; Wilson, 2008); and Indigenous communities as informed, active decision makers in the research process who benefit from its outcomes, and maintain guardianship and connection to the work (Archibald, 2008; Drawson et al., 2017; Martin, 2003; Smith, 2012; Stewart-Harawira, 2013; Wilson, 2008).

The principles that drive Indigenous inquiry generate research aims that are inductive

and exploratory (Adair, 1999), leading to qualitative methods that are applied, pragmatic, and holistic (Adair, 1999; Gray & Coates, 2010). While research design is guided by Indigenous research principles, the actual methods can be Indigenous, Western, or a combination of both (Gray & Coates, 2010). For example, Indigenous researchers might apply linguistic methods, concerned with sense making through language/semantic meaning, or empirical methods that focus on the cultural distinctiveness of phenomena (Gray & Coates, 2010). Indigenous research is thus open to dynamic and interdisciplinary approaches that integrate art, science and religion, and which privilege knowledge that is embodied and a product of experiential knowing (Wilson, 2003); these features align Indigenous research approaches with the methods employed in arts-based research.

#### *Arts-based research with Indigenous groups*

As a system of inquiry that straddles the nexus of creativity and scientific exploration (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Eisner, 2003; Leavy, 2018), arts-based research (ABR) is a term given to a growing range of artistic tools and processes suitable for qualitative research in the social sciences—a discipline argued as both an art and a science (Eisner, 2003). Although ABR remains underutilised in psychological research (Chamberlain et al., 2018), it has a well-documented history in community-based programmes, creative arts therapy, education programmes, and as a platform from which marginalised groups have voiced their struggles and aspirations to mainstream society. Recently, ABR has become a popular approach in Indigenous-centred participatory action research, as it allows communities to study phenomena of their choosing in their ecological context (Hammond et al., 2018). The creative practices used for gathering, analysing, and disseminating data can also align with a global decolonising agenda to facilitate knowledge sharing between Indigenous groups instead of restricting it to academic audiences and journal articles (Gergen & Gergen, 2018; Hammond et al., 2018; Napoli, 2019; Smith, 2012).

A tenet of ABR is to actively work against the researcher-participant power imbalance which has been a feature of previous social science research. A primary strategy is to privilege other forms of communication, such as dance, visual art, photography, theatre, collage, and music over the written word (Coemans & Hannes, 2017). Creative,

performative, embodied techniques can open different channels for meaning-making that promote diversity over generalisability and amplify alternative stories over the dominant narrative. In this way, ABR might seem an attractive option to both researchers who are disillusioned with the constraints of mainstream methods (Gergen & Gergen, 2018), and hard-to-reach communities who have traditionally shied away from engaging in research (Coemans & Hannes, 2017). The use of Indigenous art and performance traditions in a research setting not only enriches the development of Indigenous psychologies overall, but breaks new ground in academia whereby Indigenous art is located as a legitimate research method alongside other qualitative approaches. As such, this is ideal territory in which to locate Theatre Marae.

### **Theatre Marae: conceptual framework**

In this article I outline a conceptual framework for Theatre Marae as a research methodology. This article does not seek to provide a historiography of Theatre Marae nor a guide to the nuances of its practice —these aspects will be addressed elsewhere — however some brief context is useful to situate Theatre Marae in time and place.

Theatre Marae emerged in the 1990s as a means for Māori theatre practitioners to claim space in the Wellington theatre scene (Kouka, 2007; Peterson, 2007; Warrington, 1994). It was first employed during the 1990 New Zealand International Festival of the Arts in an event called *Live at The Depot* (Glassey & Welham, 2003; Warrington, 1994). During the festival a group of Māori artists transformed The Depot Theatre into a temporary marae space and rolled out a non-stop programme of contemporary Māori plays, poetry, visual art, and music. *Live at The Depot* provided a space to showcase the works of Bruce Stewart, Rangimoana Taylor, Rowley Habib, Apirana Taylor, Hone Tuwhare, John Broughton, Tina Cook, Whetu Fala, Te Rākau and Taiao Dance (Glassey & Welham, 2003; Te Rākau Hua o Te Wao Tapu, 1990; Warrington, 1994). It introduced the concept of Theatre Marae to mainstream theatre audiences as “essentially a hui —a gathering of people to share in a whole of life experience” (Moriarty & Broughton, cited in Warrington, 1994, p. 40). Subsequently, the Theatre Marae concept of invoking marae protocol and symbols in the theatre has been employed by both Māori and tauīwi theatre companies, production houses and independent practitioners on mainstages around the country. As the name suggests, the philosophical foundations

of Theatre Marae are to be found in both the secular and sacred traditions of theatre and the marae complex.

### *Marae*

In Te Ao Māori the marae is a centuries-old institution that is a tangible link to traditional ways of living, learning, and identifying as tangata whenua (Rangihau, 1975; Tauroa & Tauroa, 2007; Walker, 1975). The term marae is drawn from marae ātea, the sacred space of encounter in front of the carved ancestral house (Buck, 1949), but is nowadays more often used to describe the entire *pā*<sup>99</sup> (Mead, 2003). The modern marae complex that we see in Aotearoa is the tangible result of a drawing together of the sacred ceremonial sites of East Polynesia and the gathering spaces for social events in West Polynesia (Barlow, 1991; Buck, 1949; Mead, 2003).

The relationship between the esoteric and the everyday is a constant on the marae; it may be physically demarcated, for example, the *tapu* and *noa*<sup>100</sup> sides of the meeting house, or invoked through the performance of certain *karakia*, *waiata*, or processes such as *kai* to signal transition between activities. Boundaries are redrawn, relationships between hosts and visitors are reconfigured, and the marae ātea that in the morning served as the sacred space for the *pōwhiri*,<sup>101</sup> later becomes the playground for children (Walker, 1975).

Alienation from traditional lands and resources has influenced the compression of Māori activity onto the marae, so that it hosts all manner of social gatherings from baptisms to funerals and the milestones in between (Curry et al., 1979). It also hosts practices that traditionally would have occurred in other institutions, such as the whare *tapere*. For many, the marae has become a refuge, the last bastion of Māori sovereignty, and a space for resistance against the coloniser and the pressures of Western living (Mead, 2003; Rangihau, 1975). It is where, for a time, one can engage in the day-to-day practices of Māori communal life (Rangihau, 1975; Walker, 1975), and participate in performances that assert a collective Maori identity, sovereignty, and world perspective

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<sup>99</sup> *pā* = fortified village, stronghold

<sup>100</sup> *noa* = secular, not sacred

<sup>101</sup> *pōwhiri* = a formal ceremony of welcome onto a marae

(Rangihau, 1975; Tauroa & Tauroa, 2007).

The marae is a confluence for the ancient and modern, a storage facility for traditions and knowledge that may still lie dormant, and a laboratory where old customs can be interrogated and adjusted, and new practices may be created (Mead, 2003). Under the auspices of Tūmataunga, the marae ātea invokes a forum for public displays of political dissent, debate, challenge, and dissonance, whereby the arts of Māori oratory, literature, and performance are given free rein to acknowledge, honour, grieve (Dansey, 1975), entertain, and convince (Dewes, 1975). It is here that novel ideas may be tested out against enduring Māori principles, values and world views, and either taken on or rejected (Walker, 1975).

### *Theatre*

Ancient performances and ceremony have been documented throughout the world—all cultures identify some form of performance tradition: song, dance, ritual, puppetry or storytelling (Schechner, 2006). Nevertheless, the formal origins of modern theatre are commonly attributed to the ancient Greeks, where it emerged in the city state of Athens in the late 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC (Boal, 1985; van der Kolk, 2014; Wickham, 1992). Between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Centuries BC, Greek drama was codified into three genres: tragedy, comedy and satyr-play (Wickham, 1992). With the threat of war ever present along its borders, the theatre was the focal point for asserting Athenian identity and civic life through festivals, celebrations, competitions, poetry and political debate.

Alongside compulsory military service, to attend or participate in the theatre was an Athenian's civic duty (van der Kolk, 2014; Wickham, 1992). Whether through Athens' colonisation of other states or through appropriation by the Romans, the philosophies, political systems, scientific ideas, and art of this period spread throughout the ancient world. Much later, scholars and artists would rediscover, revive, and build upon these traditions, in what would become known as the European Renaissance, the grandparent of Western knowledge production. Ancient Greek knowledge is thus embedded in the very fibre of the modern Academy, the arts, sciences, and humanities—including psychology and modern theatre. In the latter it becomes visible in the physical layout of playhouses, and in terminology for playwriting, stagecraft, performance, and critical

analysis.

### *Building the framework*

As communal sites for ritual, festival, philosophical debate and political engagement, the marae and the theatre share qualities that enable their amalgamation into an environment suitable for Māori creative research. Such a space is characterised by exploration, risk-taking, liminality, and cultural hybridity. It facilitates a type of dramaturgy —the theory and practice of theatre making —that centralises Māori ways of sensing, being in, relating to, and performing the world. As such, Theatre Marae remains central to a kaupapa Māori creative encounter that does not reject mainstream theatre conventions outright but repositions them to the side, as useful tools to be used when aesthetic choice dictates. With this in mind, practitioners are able to draw upon a diverse range of performance-based traditions and perspectives, in particular, te whare tapere and performance studies.

### *Te Whare Tapere*

In pre-European times, whare tapere were standalone structures or designated clear spaces where community members gathered to socialise, participate in formal performances, festivities, and amusements and, in some cases —to meet potential romantic partners or to arrange marriages for others. Its origins are to be found in ancient pūrākau set in the Māori ancestral homeland of Hawaiki, specifically, the famous pūrākau of Tinirau and Kae (Brown, 2008; Karetu, 1993). The tale revolves around the death of Tinirau's pet whale, Tutunui, at the hands of the greedy Kae, and how Tinirau's act of revenge is achieved, not via traditional warfare but by a troupe of female performers who capture Kae through beguilement (Alpers, 1996; Karetu, 1993). While the pūrākau of Tinirau and Kae is a celebration of *wāhine toa*<sup>102</sup> who best their enemy through trickery, on further inspection it lays out the blueprint of the whare tapere (Karetu, 1993).

According to Royal (1998, 2007) the activities of the whare tapere can be categorised

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<sup>102</sup> *wāhine toa* = warrior women

under ngā mahi a te rēhia as thus: kōrero, haka, waiata, taonga pūoro, taonga-o-wharawhara, and ngā tākaro. These activities correspond well with theatrical conventions of narrative, dance and movement, singing, music and soundscape, costume and makeup, improvisation, props, and puppetry. While there still remains some mystery around specific details of whare tapere and, to a greater extent, the traditional traveling performance troupe, the whare karioi (Royal, 1998), there is enough recorded knowledge of the activities and underlying cultural concepts of these institutions to further advance contemporary Māori performing arts, and to inform a Māori theatre pedagogy for creative research.

### *Performance Studies*

While academia, government, local regulatory bodies, and the media privilege text as the standard means of communication and process, for marginalised communities the written word is a reminder of an authority that excludes, scrutinises, displaces, and subjugates undesirable groups (Conquergood, 2002), reproducing a master narrative of colonial superiority over its Indigenous subjects (Smith, 2012; Stewart-Harawira, 2013). In response, marginalised cultures will subvert or negotiate the dominance of text through coded performances that simultaneously enable communication among their group and avoid detection by the powers that be, including the Academy and researchers (Conquergood, 2002).

Complementary with other arts-based research approaches and Indigenous research principles, performance studies challenges the traditional research preference for text as the final, master interpretation of psychological phenomena and experience. Through research activities that integrate art, scholarship, and activism (Conquergood, 2002), a performance studies perspective offers a space to reveal previously subjugated, coded knowledges (Schechner, 2006). Performance studies does not have a unified system and rejects universalism and truth claiming (Gergen & Gergen, 2018; Schechner, 2006). Instead it applies an interdisciplinary focus to bring together legitimated and devalued knowledges into the space of performance inquiry (Conquergood, 2002). Key approaches include theories of embodiment (Cromby, 2015; Snowber, 2018; Varela et al., 1991), and cultural hybridity and liminality (Bhabha, 1994).



Furthermore, performance studies examines cultural products — including texts —not as static, bound objects but as live practices or performances that are ongoing and embedded in relationships (Schechner, 2006). Within the research setting, a performance studies lens imbues cultural products with an essence or presence that transcends their stillness and material constraints. This opens up a channel for relationality, dialogue, and connection to occur between the work and the researcher. From a Māori research perspective, this concept speaks to the principles of mauri, whakapapa, and whanaungatanga of all living and inanimate things. This inverts any problematic appropriation of Indigenous knowledges by Western performance studies scholars: in Theatre Marae, the agency and lens are Māori, and performance studies is a tool, rather than an organising principle.

### **Theatre Marae and space**

Whare tapere and performance studies are two performance-based lenses through which researchers may see beyond the frontiers of conventional theatre and invoke creative research spheres imbued with mātauranga Maori: Te Kore, Te Wheiao, Te Ārai, and papa kōrero.

#### *Te Kore: empty space*

Theatre Marae is contingent on a physical space in which performers can speak, play, argue, debate, present, create, and perform different realities. An ideal space in which to investigate new practice is the black box studio —a simple rectangular room painted black and devoid of the usual architectural features of the proscenium style playhouses in mainstream theatre. The lack of designated seating auditorium, performance and backstage areas simulates an empty space, a limitless, frameless nothing or chaos, known in te reo Māori as Te Kore: the void (Barlow, 1991). Acknowledging the existence of Te Kore also calls into being a latent potential, a something in the nothing, a double negative called “Te Korekore” (Marsden, 1975, p. 215). This anticipatory state of “the realm between non-being and being” (Marsden, 1975, p. 216) is a long-standing principle in theatre analysis, which regards the empty space as “the visual equivalent of ‘Once upon a time’” (Alfreds, 2013, p. 36), and where the simple act of a person entering that space “is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged” (Brook,

1968, p.11).

For the workshops and rehearsal we gain access to Massey University's theatre lab in Wellington. It is a classic black box —a void contained within four inky black walls. We spend the first few weeks doing an exercise in world-making —when we play with body shapes, movement, lighting states and sound to create and dissolve different worlds in the play: the jungle, a bar in Vung Tau, a war memorial, a video game.

In a research context, the empty space afforded by the black box is closest to a hermetically sealed theatre laboratory for artist-researchers to draw out, frame, analyse, and play out a myriad of storied realities —and at the same time minimise background noise:

We want to theatrically realise the internal worlds of the veterans reflected in the data: their feelings of helplessness, worthlessness, anger from being scapegoated, and of their mana being trampled on when applying for their war pensions. And the distress of having to bring up old memories to prove they were there, and struggling to put them back when their case assessment is over.

We clear the floor to work out how we are going to do this. We listen to a recording of the veterans talking about being made to feel like beggars asking for handouts. Their words are forthright and defiant, their voices soft, laboured, and raspy. We discuss how hard it must be for them to still carry the burden of war, and the difficulty with which some of them breathe. We establish a blackout, wait awhile, then set a dim blue lighting state. One of the performers silently walks into the space then improvises a manawa kiore — the last gasp before death: she audibly exhales and gently collapses to the ground. One by one, each performer follows the same pattern: walk, perform manawa kiore, and collapse. The centre piles up with bodies and the dim blue light cross fades into an intense red spill. An actor playing a veteran enters with an entrenching tool and mimes digging through the pile of bodies. A soundtrack of the veterans' voices accompanies the scene, and is underscored by the repetitive clang of a hammer against steel to highlight their frustration.

### *Te Wheiao: liminal space*

Since Homi K. Bhabha's foundational piece on liminality and hybridity theory (Bhabha, 1994), drama theorists have been quick to apply these notions to theatrical practice, specifically, the power of live theatre to invoke a third space for culturally diverse voices (Greenwood, 2001). This third space nurtures innovative practice, creates

alternative realities, and amplifies the voices of the oppressed (Schechner, 2006). It also legitimises anti-essentialist practice, positioning Indigenous cultures and performance methodologies as fluid, modernising and able, like any other culture, to use a variety of tools (Bhabha, 1994). As mentioned earlier, liminality naturally occurs on the marae, as demarcating thresholds between tapu and noa areas, or as performances of transition between activities. Theatre practitioners can apply this same notion of liminality to deviate from well-known conventions like Aristotle's Three Unities (of time, place and action):

While the plot unfolds over a 24-hour period in a bunker, scenes intermingle with the veterans' memories of patrolling the jungles of Vietnam and Borneo, of helicopter insertions, and ANZAC dawn parades. In order to help audience members suspend their disbelief and buy into the required shifts between timeframes and locations, we establish the set as liminal space—a "no man's land" that is unsettled and ever shifting. Scenes are constructed and dissolved through movement, lighting changes, and repetitive sound cues that the audience learn to associate with a particular setting. The veterans in the audience connect with these sounds on a deeper level, recognising them as radio chatter from the Battle of Long Tan and a Morse code message from their old unit.

Some versions of the Māori Creation Story identify the first liminal state as Te Wheiao, a tiny shaft of light that sparked the curiosity of the children of Ranginui and Papatūānuku, leading to the decision to separate them (Pere, 1994). Other versions describe Te Wheiao as the first light that dwells at the edge of darkness, that heralded the rendering apart of the sky and earth to bring forth Te Ao Mārama, the world of being (Barlow, 1991). Te Wheiao is uttered in tauparapara that prepare the marae ātea for the next speaker, and is the term given to the difficult transition phase of childbirth when a baby travels through the birth canal (Barlow, 1991). The merging of Māori and tauīwi notions of liminal space evokes an investigative approach that is naturally curious and seeks to push boundaries in order to illuminate new possibilities and knowledge:

The chorus members perform a range of individual roles to realise the veterans' stories and to support the drama between the two main characters. As a united rūpū they manifest as a swarm of *pūriri*<sup>103</sup> who symbolise the spirits of the dead. We run an intensive two-day wānanga on pūriri, wairua,

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<sup>103</sup> *pūriri* = ghost moth

*kēhua*,<sup>104</sup> and *tūpāpaku*.<sup>105</sup> The chorus cobble together a movement palette drawn from their various backgrounds in kapa haka, ballet, hip-hop, flow work, contemporary dance and mau rākau. With this new language they start experimenting with excerpts from the transcripts; they fashion a helicopter, a jungle patrol, a menagerie and a health clinic.

### *Te Ārai: the veil*

From the ancient Greeks through to the present day, dramatists have traditionally offered the stage to the gods, ancestors, and supernatural forces to roam, play, and meddle in the lives of mortals. This tradition manifests in classical plot-lines that include ghostly visitations, fairy mischief or divine intervention, and in the retention of theatre superstitions such as ghost-lighting an unused stage, not whistling in the theatre, and never, ever saying the correct title of a certain Scottish play. Situated between the spiritual and corporeal realms, Te Ārai is the veil-like threshold through which our ancestors are invited to permeate the creative space. It is aligned with the notion of Te Ao Mārama and Te Ao Wairua as interconnected worlds that are able to penetrate and affect each another (Marsden, 1975).

Whiro functions as a *deus-ex-machina* —to simultaneously complicate the story, increase dramatic tension, and provoke the characters into re-evaluating their purpose in life. As the patron of war veterans, Whiro’s appearance near the end of the play clears a space for the audience to hear the chorus perform the veterans’ *kōrero* about the ever-present threat of death: “Fear with constant attention. It keeps you on your toes. When I feel it my hands go tight, real tight on the gun. And in the chopper, just as we lift up and go over the wire, the guts feel awful....I’ve never felt so exposed and so lonely.” Whiro is not played by an actor but realised by an amalgamation of technical effects meant to stimulate the senses of the audience. The lighting operator heralds Whiro’s approach as a pulsing red light, while the sound designer creates Whiro’s character sound by mixing together a wobble board, the rotor thump of a Huey and a round from a M60. He then maxes out the bass on the speakers so whenever we trigger Whiro’s sound cue the floor vibrates beneath the audience’s feet to suggest that Whiro is approaching from below.

In Theatre Marae, Te Ārai signifies and normalises the concept that our *atua* and *tūpuna* walk among us. It is expressed in the daily recitation of *karakia* that call upon ancestral presence and support for the project and in *wānanga* that explore ancient *pūrākau*,

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<sup>104</sup> *kehua* = ghost

<sup>105</sup> *tūpāpaku* = corpse

family stories and tribal histories. Te Ārai is invoked in routines and exercises that ground the actors into a focused discipline, so they continue to apply technique and carry out the creative decisions found in rehearsal, yet remain open and available to creative guidance from beyond. Such reverence emphasises the sanctity of the work being undertaken, and reifies our connection with those who went before us and the ancestral knowledge that may yet be revealed in the investigation. Te Ārai demands humility and sensitivity from researchers, and brings a sharpened focus onto our responsibilities, researcher ethics, and our place in the scheme of things.

*Papa Kōrero: talking place*

Theatre Marae calls on the concept of world-making when co-opting a venue for a theatre production. Through everyday performances of sacred and secular rituals, and the privileging and normalising of te reo Māori, the building is re-established as a Māori theatre. Theatre Marae routines emphasise a kāinga mentality where every member is valued and has a place, and every task, no matter how small, contributes to the greater whole.

We want the company to feel safe and supported to explore, to create, to play, to offer ideas —and to not fear failure or rejection. Workshops for exploring and improvising new material are interwoven with formal rehearsals —in a daily schedule sign-posted by karakia, mihi, warm up routines, reflection rounds, shared kai, and clean up. Everyone shares the load —there are no stars in this rōpū.

This aims to nurture whanaungatanga, *tuakana–teina*,<sup>106</sup> and to discourage the discord and elitism that can develop between factions of a theatre company.

In the theatre world, the stage is the closest version of the marae ātea; however, to avoid issues associated with cultural appropriation and transgression of tikanga through the misuse of terminology, the stage is not referred to as a marae ātea (nor as “atamira” which is in common usage these days). Instead, it is redefined as a papa kōrero that hosts the performance narrative, production meetings, karakia, creative wānanga, research, and the airing and talking through of contentious issues. During a performance the papa kōrero is the physical manifestation of Te Ao Mārama, where human

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<sup>106</sup> *tuakana–teina* = elder sibling–younger sibling; a mentoring relationship

endeavours, foibles, failings, tragedies, and triumphs are played out in the airspace between earth and sky. Guided by the playscript and framed within the dimensions of the papa kōrero, the performers work on behalf of their characters to hunt down objectives, claim territory, advance the plot and, with their bodies and voices, carve out the story in the airspace between.

This carving of the air is not taken lightly, but intentionally mapped in order to cultivate a rise in dramatic tension. Theatre prizes dramatic tension for its contribution to advancing the plot to its climax and denouement; in a similar vein, a Theatre Marae approach values tension, conflict, and challenge as necessary for transformation, growth, and problem solving. This value underpins the feedback sessions or matapaki that are facilitated between audience and performers. Here, at the end of a performance, the house lights are brought up to eliminate any remnants of a fourth wall between stage and auditorium, and the audience and performers may choose to add further analysis, critique, interpretation, and questions about the research and its outcomes:

A veteran of the Korean War stands up and thanks his mokopuna for bringing him to the show. Although he did not serve in Vietnam he recognises the story and the similarities between his experiences and those of the soldiers who came after him...A woman approaches the tech desk and points to a young man standing near the exit, “My son was in Afghanistan. He told me that what the veterans said in the play is still true today —the same thing is going on for him and his mates”...On another night, a gentleman who protested in the 1960s says that the script should include an apology to the people of Vietnam.

For researchers, the end-of-show matapaki session is valuable for gauging the resonance or validity of the work from the perspective of the community. From this analysis, and if required, further work can be done to edit the script and/or refine the performance. This is a particularly valuable exercise if the play is then invited to present in arts festivals, community gatherings, and conferences for special interest groups or government agencies. To present research findings in these spaces —the government space in particular —allows for an unencumbered transfer of community knowledge to policy makers and can help establish relationships between community members and officials. More important, however, is the ethical requirement to *koha*<sup>107</sup> the play back to the community, who are the guardians of the knowledge, who could stand to benefit

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<sup>107</sup> *koha* = lay down a contribution, gift, presentation

the most from the research, whose members may have collaborated in the project, and who gave their permission for the research to take place in their rohe. It is here where Theatre Marae is truly in its element, when the play is taken on to the marae or into the main house, without the usual trappings of stage lighting, screen projectors, elaborate costumes, and backdrops —and is stripped back to a bare space upon which an actor stands and speaks.

## **Conclusion**

The theatre and the marae originated as two separate ancestral spaces for the community to gather and participate in performances of ritual, identity, conflicting politics, celebration, and commemoration. As sites for the secular and sacred, both the marae and theatre were ideal places in which the ancients could consider and debate the deeper meanings of existence, human activity, and experience. Drawn together as Theatre Marae, they permit access to a wellspring of dramatic tools, techniques, and philosophies that are invaluable for applied theatre making, education, group therapy, and now, arts-based research. By unpacking the conceptual building blocks of the framework, this article has aimed to show that it is possible to centralise, foreground, and privilege mātauranga Māori throughout research design, and yet still apply western tools in a way that will not recolonise the framework. Theatre Marae does this by assuming Māori knowledge and practices that are embedded in language and performed on the marae as its central tenet, then inviting the addition of tools that promulgate the performative, embodied, liminal, and situational —tools that do not threaten but align with Māori ways of being, knowing, relating, and doing in the world.

### **Chapter 3 Staking a claim onstage: Methods for a decolonising practice**

In chapter 2, I presented Theatre Marae pedagogy as an authentically Māori contribution to the development of Indigenous arts-based research, and situated it against the backdrop of a global agenda to decolonise those institutions, structures, and practices that continue to oppress, silence, and undermine Indigenous peoples. The decolonising project is in no small way supported by the ongoing efforts of Indigenous academics, researchers, and advocates to create space for the legitimisation of Indigenous psychologies and the development and implementation of Indigenous principles and methods in social science research. Theatre Marae enacts this same premise in the theatre. Its core framework is founded upon Māori attitudes, world perspectives, and values that reside in the storehouse of te reo Māori and are given their fullest expression in the daily practices and formalities of a community marae. In performances that celebrate Māori resistance and endurance, while at the same time, demanding the right to collective self-sovereignty, Theatre Marae draws similarity with Waitoki et al.'s (2018) description of Indigenous psychology “as a form of cultural reclamation and cultural survival” (p. 164).

Indigenous artists worldwide appreciate the power of live theatre to stage Indigenous realities, and reflect Indigenous faces and voices back to their communities. This holds true in Aotearoa/New Zealand, where, since the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the theatre has —to an extent —become an agreeable host for authentic performances of Māori world views and concerns. Māori thespians nevertheless take to the stage and practice their craft at their own peril; for just as academia and psychology are saturated with the ideologies and knowledge systems that champion Western hegemonic power, so too is the theatre. A descendant of 19<sup>th</sup> century English theatre, mainstream theatre in Aotearoa/New Zealand retains at its very core a colonial doctrine of British imperialism, expansionism, and cultural superiority. This ensures that New Zealand theatre remains resistant to efforts by Māori and Tauīwi artists to fully reclaim and decolonise the stage, an enduring stance that is supported by funding models and resourcing that traditionally favours Eurocentric theatre companies, venues, and art-forms. It was for this reason that in the first two decades of its existence, Te Rākau purposefully developed and honed the company's vision of Theatre Marae in applied theatre, community theatre, and theatre-



in-education —anywhere that allowed for the presence of Indigenous and diverse voices that would have otherwise been dismissed, denigrated, or appropriated and commercially exploited by the mainstream arts sector.

Chapter 2 introduced Theatre Marae as a confluence of the complementary sacred beliefs and pragmatic practices of Te Ao Māori and the theatre world, that in turn invokes the research spheres of *te kore* (potentiality in nothingness), *te wheiao* (liminal space), *te ārai* (the connection between matter and spirit), and *te papa kōrero* (expression and deliberation). When enacted in the theatre studio, they are as *pou*, markers that demarcate the rehearsal floor as reclaimed territory so that Māori expressions of the world and reality can be revealed, explored, performed, and reflected back to Māori audiences and communities in a culturally authentic, accessible, and enduring way. These four *pou* were critical to my research process, ensuring that the studio inquiry remained grounded in *mātauranga Māori*. However, their constant presence in the work was not guaranteed, but contingent upon the deliberate and regular practice of Theatre Marae core processes which kept *kaupapa Māori* integral to the work and any outside forces in check. In chapter 3, I present these key methods within an article about the establishment of Te Rākau Theatre and its work to reclaim space in contemporary New Zealand theatre for Māori representation. I then account for Theatre Marae processes as a decolonising strategy in actor training and theatre making. For the purpose of this thesis, this chapter expands upon and contextualises the research methods that were introduced in chapter 1. As an article published in an international journal on performing arts training, this chapter shares an example of how an Indigenous informed creative practice can issue a potent challenge to Eurocentric traditions in rehearsal studios and training institutions around the world.

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# **Decolonising theatre and ensemble training in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Te Rākau Hua o Te Wao Tapu Theatre**

## **Abstract**

This article discusses the work of Māori theatre company Te Rākau Hua o Te Wao Tapu, and its approach to decolonising theatre in Aotearoa/New Zealand through its Theatre Marae programme. First, I locate the establishment of Te Rākau and Theatre Marae as a response to Māori being excluded from mainstream theatre, then present a summary of Te Rākau's contribution to the development of contemporary Māori theatre, theatre-in-education, and applied community theatre over the past thirty years. Finally, I describe the core processes of Te Rākau's Theatre Marae programme as an example of embedding Indigenous customs and philosophy in the ensemble as a decolonising strategy in actor training.

**Keywords:** Indigenous; actor-training; decolonising theatre; New Zealand

## **Introduction**

Established in 1989 by Jim Moriarty, Rangimoana Taylor, Gabe Giddens, and Rameka Cope (Glassey & Welham, 2003; Williams, 2007), Te Rākau Hua o Te Wao Tapu is the longest serving Māori community theatre trust operating in Aotearoa/New Zealand. More commonly referred to by its shortened name, Te Rākau, the group fuses the therapeutic encounter, *ngā mahi a te rēhia* (traditional Māori performing arts), and Western theatre conventions within a “bicultural theatre practice” (Scott 2006, para. 1) driven by kaupapa Māori principles. A kaupapa Māori stance foregrounds The Treaty of Waitangi (1840) as the country's founding document and a template for Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations, and legitimises Māori culture, knowledge, and language in activities that promote conscientisation and transformation (G. Smith, 2003). Kaupapa Māori strategies are political and designed to reclaim territory within colonial spheres and maintain these spaces through everyday practices that privilege the Māori world view (L. Smith, 2012). Over the past three decades, Te Rākau has taken a decolonising principle to inform how the group creates and presents live theatre in spaces where the

country's reputation as an egalitarian, racially harmonious society is undermined in daily performances of Māori dissent against colonial authority: schools, prisons, tertiary institutions, youth justice residential centres, marae (communal gathering places), and mainstream theatre.

Te Rākau's artistic outputs have included televised docudramas, films, live performances at conferences and international arts festivals, and commissions for national commemorations. While some of Te Rākau's alumni have gone on to establish successful careers in the entertainment industry —locally and internationally —the organisation itself continues to operate largely on the margins of society. While this position is consistent with Te Rākau's commitment to produce theatre that promotes decolonisation, social equity, and Māori self-determination (Te Rākau Hua o Te Wao Tapu, 2019), this often leads to its formidable output going unnoticed by the mainstream arts sector. In addition, thirty years of community-based art residencies and schools' tours have created some confusion among commentators over the organisation's identity and purpose; Te Rākau has been erroneously described as a 'defunct drama school', an 'alternative education programme for Polynesian teenage boys', and a 'rural health camp' (Henare & Ehrhardt, 2004). These inaccuracies call for a definitive narrative of Te Rākau that can only be conveyed by the theatre company itself.

In this paper I present Te Rākau as a kaupapa Māori theatre company dedicated to creating live performance that is unapologetically political, socially challenging, emotionally charged, and therapeutic. I describe the background to the founding of Te Rākau, and then provide a brief chronology of Te Rākau's creative outputs over its thirty-year history thus far. Finally, I lay out the fundamental processes that make up Te Rākau's style of creative practice called Theatre Marae.<sup>109</sup> In doing so this paper affirms Te Rākau's significant contribution to the development of contemporary Māori theatre, and presents Theatre Marae as an exemplar of decolonising theatre practice.

First however, it is appropriate that I locate myself in this paper as a Māori theatre

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<sup>109</sup> Theatre Marae is a fusion of the performance traditions of theatre and the rituals and daily customs observed at traditional Māori gathering spaces called marae.

practitioner and psychologist with tribal connections to the Far North, West, and East coasts of the North Island of Aotearoa/New Zealand. This paper informs my current research on the performance of ancient Māori creation narratives as a blueprint for healing from trauma, a project that will add to a long-standing agenda to legitimate Māori storytelling as a research method (Archibald et al., 2019; Lee, 2009), and decolonise psychological practice in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Waitoki et al., 2018; Waitoki & Levy, 2015). In 1996, I graduated from the national drama school Toi Whakaari, and since then I have worked steadily in the arts as a writer, tutor, and actress. In 1999 I met Jim Moriarty and joined his group Te Rākau Hua o Te Wao Tapu; I therefore write about Te Rākau based on my membership spanning the last two decades and from my knowledge of the company's history in the years prior.

### **Background and context**

The founding of Te Rākau is simultaneous with the banding together of Māori artists to reclaim Indigenous representation in the arts, and is a natural progression from the early days of the Māori Renaissance. Emerging in the protest movements of the 1970s, the Māori Renaissance is a term given to a conscious (and ongoing) effort to challenge colonial attitudes in New Zealand society that undermine Māori aspirations for autonomy and self-expression —particularly in the arts, media, health, education, and politics. This period was characterised by an increased visibility of Māori in the media, politics, and popular culture. The creative philosophies of Te Rākau were steeped in the political activism of this time,<sup>110</sup> and heavily influenced by early expressions of contemporary Māori and community theatre. Te Rākau's founding members were aligned with activist-artist groups including He Ohu Whakaari, Te Ika a Māui Players, Amamas Theatre, Ngā Tamatoa and the highly regarded Māori Theatre Trust.<sup>111</sup> Founding member Jim Moriarty approached his elders to grant a name and blessing to the group; the full name, Te Rākau Hua o Te Wao Tapu (The blossoming fruit tree of our sacred grove) was gifted by Harata Horomona, a kuia (female elder) from Moriarty's tribe and former member of the Māori Theatre Trust. According to Moriarty

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<sup>110</sup> Activism in the 1970s–80s included protests for the return of ancestral land, official recognition of Māori language and the Treaty of Waitangi, and attempts to stop New Zealand from playing rugby against Apartheid era South Africa.

<sup>111</sup> The Māori Theatre Trust (1965–1970) was established by internationally renowned opera singer Inia Te Wiata. It was the first Māori run theatre company and became a training ground for a generation of respected senior Māori artists and performers, including founding members of Te Rākau.

(personal communication, October 22, 2018), his Auntie Harata chose a name that reflected the following:

There is a sacred grove which pertains to Wairua Māori (the Māori spirit), that which is forever and cannot be destroyed. In this sacred grove of Wairua Māori, there is a wellspring which nurtures the rākau (trees) of human endeavour. One of these rākau is Creativity; one of its branches is the Performing Arts; one of the fruits on this branch is Te Rākau. This story emphasises that we (Te Rākau) are not the definitive Māori theatre company, but just one of many ways that Māori may express our cultural identity, tell our stories and, most importantly, be in control of our stories. To have control over our stories and how we as Māori were represented onstage was an objective of the Māori Theatre Trust and a legacy that Auntie Harata wanted passed down to Te Rākau, so we were not only given a name that reflects our interconnectivity and shared whakapapa (genealogy) with the Trust—and the ancestral knowledge that underpins both entities—but in a practical sense we were also given some of the IP, photos, documents from the Māori Theatre Trust—including its Trust deed, upon which we modelled our own.

Although this description portrays an image of a wise woman blessing the group simply by gifting its name, Moriarty goes on to say that what occurred was more in line with customary processes of acquiring knowledge:

I was already known to her as a relative, a junior member of the Iwi (tribe), and professionally as an actor—we were connected through bloodline whakapapa and through our membership of The Māori Theatre Trust—so there was also a shared intellectual or artistic whakapapa. But I still had to go through the tikanga (custom) of whakawhanaungatanga (re-establishing connection). On top of that I had to share my vision for Māori theatre and performing arts, the future going forwards from The Māori Theatre Trust. That was when I brought in my political and social justice kaupapa that had been nurtured in my schooling and later through Ngā Tama Toa, and the lack of authentic Māori voices in theatre—at that time the majority of plays about Māori and with Māori characters were written, directed, and produced by Pākehā.<sup>112</sup>

By instructing Moriarty to articulate his vision for the future of Māori theatre, his Auntie enacted a custom that was used to examine students in the whare wānanga (traditional house of learning). Marsden (1975; Royal, 2003b) reveals how the elders of the whare wānanga would appraise a candidate's expertise in their subject area by their ability to

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<sup>112</sup> *Pākehā* is the Māori term for New Zealanders who descend from British/European settlers.

learn and integrate traditional knowledge with new theories for innovative practices. In his meetings with the kuia, Moriarty played out a modern version of the examination: reconnecting through shared genealogy, revealing his depth of knowledge of traditional and contemporary Māori performing arts and, finally, proposing the as-yet-untapped political and creative potential of a kaupapa Māori theatre.

Following the necessary traditional blessing, Moriarty and his co-founders worked to establish Te Rākau as a vehicle with which to pursue their creative and social objectives: to provide a space for the voices of “the dispossessed” (Scott, 2006, para. 1), to present plays that tell “Māori perspective stories from a Māori base” (Williams, 2007, p. 5), and to work in a creative environment that prioritises “Māori aspirations, Pākehā decolonisation, and a transformed Māori–Pākehā relationship” (Williams, 2007, p. 57). From the outset, it was envisaged that the ideal format for Te Rākau’s artistic endeavours would encompass both the sacred and worldly features of theatre practice and marae processes, and this idea quickly took form as Theatre Marae.

### **The emergence of Theatre Marae**

Theatre Marae combines the complementary spiritual, secular, and socio-political concepts of the theatre and marae into a framework useful for creating theatre that fosters collective and individual reflection, healing, education, and change. It is a uniquely New Zealand form of live performance that first appeared in mainstream theatre during the 1990 New Zealand International Festival of the Arts. In response to the festival organisers excluding Māori theatre from its 1988 programme, a group of Māori theatre practitioners approached the organisers with their intention to run a Māori performance event alongside the 1990 festival (Glassey & Welham, 2003). With Moriarty in an executive director’s role, the group designed an event called *Live at The Depot*. The Depot Theatre was cleared of its auditorium seating and refurnished with carved posts and artworks to emulate the interior of a marae meeting house. Sacred rituals and communal practices typical on a marae complex were practiced throughout the season. The esoteric and material features of Māori society were thus intentionally employed to establish and then fortify a live performance site that was intrinsically Māori. *Live at The Depot* presented a non-stop series of music, performance poetry, visual art, and plays from a group of Māori artists —many whose works are nowadays considered classics in New Zealand theatre. The event was seen as a high point of the

entire festival programme, and theatre practitioner-academic Lisa Warrington noted the emergence of Theatre Marae “made a significant contribution to the Festival” (Warrington, 1994, p. 8). Since 1990, Māori theatre has been a constant of the New Zealand International Festival of The Arts (Glassey & Welham, 2003).

Over the next decade, the Theatre Marae practice of converting theatre spaces into marae (whether through creating the physical dimensions and symbols of an ancestral meeting house or invoking marae etiquette during a performance) would become a standard characteristic of contemporary Māori theatre (Peterson, 2007). The initial “creative zenith” (Kouka, 2007, p. 237) however, was short lived. Although Māori theatre continues to be made and presented, it has yet to recapture the intensity, variety, and risk taking that was employed and enjoyed in the 1990s. A combination of political and economic factors has contributed to this state of affairs, not least, inequitable funding for Māori theatre companies and the “embarrassing” (Dewes, 1975, p. 62) non-existence of a national Māori theatre company. In 1998, the Depot Theatre (by now trading as Taki Rua) chose to relinquish its theatre venue to become a production company (Kouka, 2007). Although the decision made economic sense to guarantee Taki Rua’s survival into the new millennium, Wellington City lost its only kaupapa Māori theatre venue, which effectively rendered professional Māori theatre companies and practitioners homeless.<sup>113</sup> In the case of Te Rākau, however, any potential impact was already mitigated by the group deciding to tour its brand of Theatre Marae across Aotearoa/New Zealand.

### **Te Rākau’s creative output**

Between 1990–2010, the company embarked on a national theatre-in-education tour that would take two years for the ensemble to present a play and carry out a workshop in every intermediate (middle) and high school in the country. The plays they performed were written by established Māori playwrights, and specially commissioned to include social themes that would resonate with Māori students. The tour was then expanded to include prisons, marae, youth residential centres, universities, and drug and alcohol

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<sup>113</sup> The closure of Taki Rua Theatre led to an exodus of Māori creatives from Wellington, the significance of which has never been fully appreciated by local government. In subsequent years, and in a bid to re-establish a vibrant and sustainable Māori artistic presence in the capital city, Māori theatre practitioners, including the author, have made several unsuccessful approaches to local and regional government and arts funders to help establish a national Māori theatre venue and creative hub.



treatment centres. At the same time, the company established another group of actor-facilitators to work in a 14-week process theatre programme delivered to inmates in adult and youth prisons. The process was designed as a kaupapa Māori driven therapeutic programme that applied methods from narrative therapy, AA 12-step and group therapies, and ngā mahi a te rēhia. It resulted in a group-devised work that was performed for inmates, staff, families and the general public. Concerned with the disproportionate number of Māori children and youth being taken into state care, Te Rākau entered into a partnership with the government to establish an intensive, therapeutic, cultural, and arts programme that would be carried out in a 24/7 residential care situation. The programme, *Theatre for Change*, ran in Wellington between 2003 and 2011, and used principles from theatre craft, Māori models of holistic wellbeing, the extended whānau (family), behaviour analysis, and drama therapy to help youth develop coping skills, identify a vocation pathway, maintain sobriety, and refrain from criminal activity. Over time, the company was exposed to cynical policies and procedures that were dismissive of Māori cultural processes and diluted the prescribed rehabilitative needs of Māori youth in care.<sup>114</sup> Increasing bureaucratic and financial pressure on Te Rākau to conform its operations to the status quo made working in the social services untenable, and in 2011 the company decided not to renew its contract.

The challenge of operating as a social service provider nevertheless enhanced Te Rākau's capacity to deliver creative experiences beyond the mainstream arts sector. The company established a 14-week extra-curricular programme that young performers could use to achieve assessment credits at their respective schools. To meet a growing demand from educators for creative ways to introduce Māori cultural competency and Treaty issues to students, Te Rākau initiated an intensive one-day Theatre Marae workshop; through group devising processes and facilitated matapaki (discussion) the session aims to promote decolonisation and teach traditional Māori philosophical concepts and customs. In an effort to re-connect urban, marginalised Māori youth with ngā mahi a te rēhia, and use theatre pedagogy to teach local history,<sup>115</sup> Te Rākau started

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<sup>114</sup> The concerns held by Te Rākau staff about systemic racism in our child protection and youth justice sector were later confirmed in reports on the disproportionately high rates of Māori youth transitioning through the country's state care-to-prison pipeline (Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor, 2018).

<sup>115</sup> New Zealand's education system has a very poor record for the teaching of New Zealand history in schools. The Education Department's early school journal publications were responsible for generating

a competitive high school kapa haka (concert party) and began producing historical plays that would accommodate a large chorus of young performers. These included *The Battalion* (a story set in World War II of the famous 28<sup>th</sup> Māori Battalion) and *The Undertow* (a four-part epic that reflects on Māori–Pākehā relations and the building of a New Zealand national identity through conflict). In 2017, *The Undertow* series was performed in repertory at the national museum, filmed, and then later broadcast on Māori Television in 2019.<sup>116</sup> These projects allowed senior Te Rākau facilitators to observe how Theatre Marae could be successfully applied as a uniquely New Zealand approach in actor/ensemble training.

## **Theatre Marae in practice**

### *Decolonising theatre*

“The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”  
(Lorde, 1984, p. 110)

Mainstream New Zealand theatre is derived from 19<sup>th</sup> century English theatre that, in its time, was a means to promote British imperialism and cultural superiority over its colonial subjects (Edmond, 2014; Stafford & Williams, 2006). Theatre in colonial New Zealand was dominated by pantomimes and melodramas that portrayed settler life against elaborate backdrops of native flora and fauna, and “celebrated a romanticised and backward version of Māori, who, at the time, were widely predicted to fade away” (Edmond, 2014, para. 4). Like the exotic landscape, Māori people and culture were there to be exploited. Pākehā playwrights incorporated Māori language and dance into their plays without consideration for consulting with Māori. Māori characters were rare, usually silent, and relegated to the background. This patronising attitude towards Māori still exists in the arts sector and beyond. Pākehā and Tauīwi artists, fashion houses, tourism businesses and film production companies appropriate Māori words, stories, products, and performances for commercial profit (Ngata, 2019). Processes of colonisation endure through theatre degree programmes that cling to a curriculum

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falsehoods that justified colonisation and reinforced British superiority over the Indigenous population. In 2019, The Ministry of Education (formerly the Education Department) acquiesced to substantial public and student pressure and agreed to include the New Zealand Wars in the school curriculum.

<sup>116</sup> Established in 2004, Māori Television is a state funded channel committed to revitalising Māori language and culture through its broadcasting.

modelled on the English drama school and expose students to minimal content from *ngā mahi a te rēhia*. Official policy to increase Māori participation in the performing arts is stymied in a theatre industry still dominated by Pākehā run companies and venues (Bootham, 2014a, 2016; Jackman, 2013). These in turn are supported by a government arts funding model that induces Māori theatre practitioners to compete against one another while vying for space in Pākehā venues. In sum, Māori representation in the theatre is not determined by Māori, but by the Treaty partner and its agents: for they own the buildings, control the finances, and make the creative decisions (Bootham, 2014b; Kouka, 2007). Contemporary New Zealand theatre still dwells in the house of the coloniser.

In reply, Te Rākau aims to respectfully repurpose the theatre (“the master’s house”),<sup>117</sup> its tools and techniques to construct and maintain a Māori-informed creative encounter. Within this environment the company enlists Theatre Marae to sow the seeds of a decolonised theatre in the bodies and minds of practitioners. This occurs through core processes that are enacted, repeated, and privileged as the norm in all Te Rākau undertakings —regardless of the social environment, physical location, and artistic objectives.

### *Core processes*

“Those who build the house, are built by the house.”<sup>118</sup>

This section describes the processes that have emerged over time to become fundamental to Te Rākau’s Theatre Marae practice. Commonplace in Māori ritual settings, they are intentionally chosen to establish, privilege, and sustain a kaupapa Māori social environment. This is done to dignify, order, and modify the collective behaviour of all who choose to join Te Rākau —regardless of whether they are Māori, Pākehā or Tauīwi. Within this setting, the company aims to grow culturally flexible

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<sup>117</sup> Lorde (1984, p. 110).

<sup>118</sup> This was often quoted by Bruce Stewart (1936–2017), a Māori playwright, social justice campaigner, environmentalist, and supporter of Te Rākau. Using recycled material discarded from Wellington building sites, he built Tapu Te Ranga, a community marae for urban Māori who were dislocated from their lands and culture.

theatre practitioners who can apply a kaupapa Māori lens to their daily theatre practice. Through this they may better recognise the invisible forces of colonisation inherent in the language and tools of their chosen vocation and understand the potential for Western theatre to diminish cultural norms and aesthetics specific to Māori performance (Young & Hansen, 2009).

#### *Takahi whare: Tramping the house*

The takahi whare is undertaken by bereaved families to reclaim the deceased's house for the living, or as part of ceremonies to open a new building. The takahi whare as practised by Te Rākau occurs as a means to invoke the benevolence of the host theatre while the company is in residence. It consists of the company making their acquaintance with the bricks and mortar by walking through every room and touching the surfaces, furnishings, and artefacts. The company then gather on the stage and greet the house, its heritage, and underlying traditions, and remember the spirits of performers whose artistic legacies are aligned with the building. At the end of the season, the company will gather again to give final thanks to the venue. The takahi whare is not mediated by the building's owner/landlord; rather it is a contract between Te Rākau and the building itself that promises to honour the host–guest relationship.

#### *Mihi whakatau: Welcome*

Visitors to Aotearoa/New Zealand who have visited a marae may have been welcomed through a traditional pōwhiri, a formal welcome consisting of calling, challenges, speeches, songs, and a shared feast. The pōwhiri is a process of rituals to unite visitors and hosts under the auspices of the host tribe. In a similar vein, the mihi whakatau is an informal ritual of encounter that can be used in non-traditional settings such as the first day of rehearsal. Here, everyone is invited to stand and provide their pepeha or, if they do not speak Māori, to declare any familial or professional links with those gathered and their connections to the land. The ability to make one's genealogy and tribal allegiances known to others is of utmost importance in Māori social settings (Makereti, 1986) and is sacred currency. Members might also declare any previous experiences with Te Rākau or what they hope to contribute to the project. In this way the mihi whakatau allows each person to present a self that is simultaneously autonomous and interdependent and, furthermore, provides the senior staff with their first view of the group dynamic. The mihi whakatau concludes with a hongi (the pressing of noses), which symbolises the

mingling of the breath and a shared intention not to do harm to one another. The way in which new company members comply with unfamiliar rituals such as hongi provides an early indicator of their readiness to engage in Theatre Marae and their willingness to challenge their own assumptions of theatre practice.

#### *Karakia: Invocation*

Often mistranslated into English to mean “prayer”, a karakia is an invocation or chant to settle or effect a ritual or activity. Some may be spiritual and invoke unseen, higher powers, while others may be practically offered to help focus people into collective daily activity. Different karakia are performed throughout a Theatre Marae project to: safely bookend the day (opening and adjourning rehearsal); prepare and focus the company into an appropriate level of performance readiness (or bring them back out again); sanctify and then release the stage for different purposes; settle and re-bind the group at the end of a challenging process.

#### *Kai tahi: Eat together*

For many cultures the sharing of food is a social act that celebrates new relationships, reinforces communal bonds, and commits the shared, exclusive experience of a community to collective memory. Drawn from a proverb “Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourou ka ora ai te iwi” (with your food basket and my food basket the people shall thrive), the custom of kai tahi ensures all of the above and habituates group members into contributing to each other’s sustenance as a norm. Theatre Marae projects—in particular, the theatre-in-education and therapeutic programmes—are all-encompassing and demanding of group members, their energy, creativity, and commitment. In response, some performers may become overly attached to the theatre programme, to the point of neglecting or withdrawing from their important external relationships. The termination of a programme can be traumatic for these performers, therefore kai tahi becomes an intervention to reinforce kinship bonds and remind the person of their roles and responsibilities that will continue to exist beyond the project. For example, all birthdays and other personal milestones that occur during rehearsals are celebrated; these celebrations acknowledge the person and remind them that they are equally valued as an ensemble member and as a unique, autonomous individual who has an identity and important social relationships external to Te Rākau. In these events, family members are encouraged to attend a rehearsal and kai tahi to celebrate alongside their

relation. For families who are unfamiliar with Māori culture, kai tahi is a gentle introduction to manaakitanga, the rule of hospitality, which must always be provided — even to one's enemy (Makereti, 1986). It also serves to demystify the theatre project and cultivate buy-in and support for the family member to continue in their chosen vocation; this has been especially valuable for young performers whose parents/caregivers have been resistant to them pursuing a career in the performing arts. Members who return from a bereavement are formally welcomed back into the project (and the world of the living) with a mihi whakatau followed by kai tahi. Closer to a performance season, kai tahi and rest breaks are carefully scheduled and managed to help company members synchronise their energy to reach the necessary level for performance.

### *Mahi tahi: Work together*

Laziness was frowned upon in traditional Māori society, and all members of a community — regardless of rank — were expected to join in the communal work (Makereti, 1986). Te Rākau employs the principle of mahi tahi whereby all members are expected to contribute their skills, resources and labour to the creative process and everyday maintenance of the theatre, and swap effortlessly between the roles of leader–follower and mentor–novice. The working collective is likened to a kāhui (flock) — in particular, the murmuration — a stunning aerial display that starlings perform by weaving their individual intelligence into a collective mauri (life force). Early in a production, Te Rākau establishes a group mauri by concentrating the bulk of the rehearsal schedule around chorus work. Ensemble members partake in a daily workblock: an intensive and repetitive mix of group fitness, movement vocabulary, vocal work, dance, weaponry, and games drawn from ngā mahi a te rēhia. The group must work chronologically, cumulatively, and repetitively, always evaluating their progress against that of the least experienced member. The initial investment in collective mauri can give the impression that Te Rākau rehearsals are slow, indecisive, and laborious; in some cases, the first half of an eight-week rehearsal might be focused entirely on the workblock with little or no scene work. Naturally this delay might bring about an increase in impatience or anxiety for those actors with speaking roles. However, by the time the company turns its focus to the script, the investment has paid off; a collective knowing, momentum, and common performance vocabulary imbue a body of performers who can now swing between chorus and lead roles. Consequently, scene work becomes tighter and more efficient, allowing the ensemble more time to

improvise and play.

The principles of collective intelligence and mauri permeate the creative paepae (bench), a space for collaborative debate and creative decision making that eschews the notion that the director is solely responsible for the artistic vision and treatment of the play. During workshops and rehearsals, company members can leave their stations and join the director at the creative paepae to analyse the work, identify issues, and explore potential opportunities for innovation. Individuals are able to exchange parts and reveal other skills and talents that might otherwise remain hidden had they remained in their contracted role. The creative paepae enables communication flow between the different departments of a functioning theatre company, disrupting a mainstream theatre hierarchy that traditionally separates actors from stage crew, the core cast from the understudies and chorus, and the playwright from everybody.

#### *Porowhita: Group circle*

Theatre making is an all-consuming process that compels actors to submit—in varying degrees—their emotions, intellect, physicality, voice, memories, and imagination as building blocks for a character. Subsequently, this increases the potential for actors to reconnect with trauma stored in their bodies while rehearsing a role or exploring a technique in the studio. These moments are powerful to witness and can lead to insightful, creative breakthroughs, and stand-out performances that bring about catharsis for performers and audiences. If left unresolved, however, they can also adversely affect the mauri of the actor and generate disharmony in the group. Additionally, a gruelling rehearsal schedule can induce some actors to withdraw from their relationships and familial responsibilities, or neglect their own self-care. This promotes an unhealthy work-life imbalance that, combined with fatigue and mounting performance anxiety, creates the ideal conditions for an actor to become overwhelmed and have an emotional outburst—commonly known in the industry as the rehearsal meltdown.

As an integral part of pastoral care, any member of Te Rākau can invoke the porowhita (circle), an intervention designed to help the group address issues that, if left unattended, might threaten group cohesion, individual well-being, and project integrity. A porowhita can occur as a scheduled group health check or be invoked as an impromptu response to a rehearsal meltdown, misunderstandings between scene

partners, personal problems, creative disagreements between departments, and similar events that can arise at any time during a production. When this happens, everyone will gather in a circle for a discussion facilitated by Te Rākau staff who are registered health professionals and are tasked to “follow the mauri of the group” (Jim Moriarty, personal communication, October 22, 2018). The rehearsal is suspended for as long as it takes for group members to identify the issue and consider any causative factors, share personal reflections, offer comfort to anyone who is distressed, and discuss possible solutions. Once the group has committed to a course of action, the porowhita will close with a karakia, and at times a group song to help re-establish cohesion, then everyone will either eat together or reset the rehearsal. Although driven by core Māori values including aroha,<sup>119</sup> manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, and mauri, the porowhita also draws upon the compatible philosophies that underpin group psychotherapy (Moreno, 1953; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005), empowering community settings (Maton, 2008), and group dynamics (Lewin & Gold 1999). Senior members apply these lenses to notice early signs of resistance, discourage group deviancy, promote plurality and minority influence as counter measures to groupthink,<sup>120</sup> and at the same time, highlight positive group experiences that promote universality, belonging, and cohesion.

### *Matapaki: Discussion*

At the end of every show, the house lights are brought up and the audience is invited to partake in kai tahi and a facilitated matapaki, or discussion. The addition of nourishment ensures manaakitanga and helps lessen (but not completely banish) any distressing thoughts or feelings that audience members may experience as a result of watching the performance. Instead, having the audience eat alongside the performers (who have de-rolled but might still be wearing all or part of their character wardrobe) works to demystify the theatre, reconfigure the audience and performers into a cohesive group, and allow emotional distancing to occur. This brief collegial setting allows the gathering to analyse the work, discuss its subject matter and underlying themes, and reveal its resonance through the sharing of personal reflections and memories. The matapaki addresses a challenge often faced by therapeutic theatre productions which is how to gather and gauge audience responses, especially from members of the public who are

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<sup>119</sup> *Aroha* is the Māori word for love, compassion, empathy.

<sup>120</sup> Groupthink is when a group of people make a critical decision without considering alternatives nor risks, out of a common desire to not destabilise the collective.



newcomers to the genre (Johnson & Sajnani, 2014). It also becomes an opportunity for performers' families and friends to publicly acknowledge their efforts; such validation is particularly rewarding for those who have never participated in live theatre before. Consequently, this reinforces kinship bonds and softens the grieving process that inevitably occurs when the season closes. A karakia is performed to formally close the evening and bid a safe farewell to the audience.

### *Poroaki: Farewell*

A poroaki is a traditional farewell comprising formal speeches, personal reflections, offers of gifts or affirmations to others, songs, thanks to the hosts and other supporters, and a closing karakia. A one-day workshop will offer this as a means for participants to reflect on their experience and offer feedback to the company. During intensive Theatre Marae projects, the company carries out daily informal poroaki to share final reflections, check on whānau well-being, and then close the rehearsal. Initially, this is managed by senior members and role modelled to younger or less experienced members who will all take turns facilitating poroaki. At the close of the season, an extended poroaki is planned and rolled out over a three-week period; it will often include a final acknowledgement to the host building, a closing night party, a formal dinner, gift giving, and group outings. The extended poroaki draws out the separation to lessen the shock that some company members have when they return to their “normal lives” and experience varying degrees of absence, difference, restlessness, growth, boredom, and loss. Therapeutically, the poroaki is a container allowing for company members to gently process and express grief as it wells and subsides, and slowly loosen the binding that has woven them together over the project.

## **Conclusion**

“I know what you’re all doing —you’re inoculating our children against racism.”<sup>121</sup>

Te Rākau’s appearance in contemporary New Zealand theatre in the closing decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was no accident, but one of many deliberate and political acts by Māori

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<sup>121</sup> Family member of Te Rākau actor, personal communication, June 2018.

leaders, artists, and educationalists to disrupt the country's preferred but inaccurate narrative of itself as a global leader in racial tolerance, and assert Māori political sovereignty, language, customs, and self-representation. Although the 1990s saw a marked increase in the numbers of Māori artists and audience members engaging in live performance, New Zealand theatre nevertheless remains a predominantly Pākehā domain and activity. This is reinforced by a local media that constantly looks to The Northern Hemisphere for an appraisal of what constitutes good art, and by the actions of a Treaty partner that appears to value Māori performance only when the country is on show and hosting a royal tour (Māori Affairs Department, 1953; Phillips, 2018) or global sporting event (Editorial: With Culture, 2011; Manhire, 2011; MBIE, 2012; Springwood, 2018). Sadly, this local example of cultural imperialism and appropriation is mirrored elsewhere in the plight of Indigenous Australian artists (Bleiker & Butler, 2016) who are denied equitable access to arts funding and performance spaces (Dow, 2020), and First Nations practitioners in Canada who are expected to tolerate their plays being produced, directed, and in some cases performed in brown-face by non-Indigenous practitioners (Lachance, 2018).

Recent events such as the Christchurch mosque attacks and the global Black Lives Matter protests against police brutality have placed this country's colonial past in the foreground, inducing New Zealanders to reflect upon our own problematic history of race relations. Today, government ministers are admitting to their failure to address institutional racism in their agencies and are committing to changing the system. Local councils are removing the monuments of infamous colonial figures before they are vandalised or removed by the public. Although well meaning, such public performances are superficial if the state and local body actors are not prepared to dismantle the very system that grants their authority to act: a system that from the outset was intended to rein in Māori bodies, language, customs, land, narratives, and art forms under the control of the coloniser. Almost entirely dependent on government funding, New Zealand theatre occupies a unique position in society, possessing the artistic licence to critique the very system that bestows its privilege. It is the mirror with which to reflect back society's mood, ills, and aspirations, yet fails to turn the mirror back on itself. Such self-interrogation would require a concession that New Zealand theatre benefits from the status quo and denies its own complicity in reinforcing cultural imperialism. Government policies and funding to increase the representation of Māori practitioners

and administrators in the arts sector will not lead to a local theatre scene that authentically represents the country's aspiration for a racially just society. Like the tearing down of statues, these top-down acts are momentary, symbolic, and ultimately ineffectual in bringing about meaningful cultural change in the New Zealand theatre scene. However, substantial gains can be made by decolonising the ways in which theatre is practised and taught.

A commitment to decolonise theatre in Aotearoa/New Zealand necessitates a paradigm shift throughout the sector, not only at the policy level, to advance equity between Māori and Pākehā practitioners. It would require a willingness on the part of the established and privileged theatre companies to advance Treaty equity in the arts by relinquishing power, resources, opportunities, and performance spaces to their poorer Māori counterparts. In performing arts training, it would entail our drama programmes giving full due to Māori ways of realising, organising, expressing, and performing the world that may contradict Pākehā performance traditions and narratives. In practical terms, this means embedding kaupapa Māori: language, customs, philosophies, and performing arts as a daily norm in the curriculum, and not as an exotic adjunct. It also means creating a safe learning space in which the next generation of actors can access and process a full and uncompromising history of their homeland and ensuing narratives of intergenerational trauma—the remnants of which may still lie dormant within their own bodies. To do so performs basic duty of care for students and presents them with the option to begin a self-reflective journey towards decolonisation as part of their professional training. The prospect of a decolonised theatre and ensemble presents exciting possibilities for the future of theatre in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the performance of a national identity that seeks to reconcile the wounds of the past. Te Rākau's Theatre Marae programme illustrates one way of advancing this vision.

## Chapter 4 Performing pūrākau as method

At the close of chapter 3, I described the evolution of Theatre Marae and its key methods as part of Te Rākau theatre's strategy to invade and claim performance space in "the master's house" (Lorde, 1984, p. 110), but nonetheless remain alert to the potential of inadvertently activating and reproducing dominant narratives of Western hegemony through our work. Such discourses reside within the structural bones of the theatre house, in the political forces that regulate the arts sector, in the play script, and in the practice, language, and bodies of performers and technicians —waiting to be enacted in the rehearsal. I then proposed that a decolonised theatre could be accomplished by centralising Māori language, philosophies, and performance styles in the training curriculum —a stance that I endeavoured to carry through into the studio component of this research project.

In turning to the primary focus of this thesis, chapter 4 draws together the threads of Theatre Marae, arts-based research, and pūrākau in the theatre studio, in a report on the research project itself. Produced as an article for an Indigenous health journal, this chapter gives an account of our mission to explore the therapeutic potential of the pūrākau of Hineahuone and Hinetiāma/Hinenui Te Pō in activities that were simultaneously artistic, conducive to knowledge production, and ameliorative for the research whānau. During both phases of the research we seeded the concept of decolonising the body via deep, non-verbal somatic techniques chosen especially to reconnect us to the goodness and worthiness of the tinana. Through the learning and routinised performance of these exercises, we created new memories to counter internalised narratives of deficit and pathology, enhance the tapu of the body, restore our mauri and mana, cultivate healthy relationships with our peers, and reconnect to our wairua. Across psychological, relational, physical, and spiritual dimensions, we developed a fitness and readiness to take to the rehearsal floor and engage our curious and creative beings in a performative exploration of the pūrākau, the plot, and its characters.

Pūrākau connect us to the past but do not belong in the past (Pihama et al., 2019); rather, they endure as trees of life sustaining knowledge that we can repeatedly analyse,

reshape, regenerate, and harvest new learnings and protocols from —so long as we have the means with which to both access this wisdom and to comprehend it. This chapter illustrates how Theatre Marae pedagogy can facilitate a kaupapa Māori performance-based analysis of pūrākau so that knowledge seekers from the community may extract the *hua*,<sup>122</sup> or life enhancing messages contained within. In so doing, it situates performing pūrākau as a viable, culturally legitimate alternative to Western forms of literature analysis. Beyond the scope of this thesis, chapter 4 contributes to the field of Indigenous psychology and Indigenous arts-based research methods by showing what is possible when two tenuous, colonial spaces — theatre and research —are recalibrated to privilege Indigenous ways of knowledge making, and of perceiving, experiencing, and performing the world.

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<sup>122</sup> *hua* = fruits, benefits.

# **“Hinenui Te Pō is a light in the darkness”: Performing pūrākau in research on incest and childhood sexual abuse**

## **Abstract**

This article describes the use of Māori performance methods to recover and analyse ancestral perspectives on incest and childhood sexual trauma. A research team of community members and Māori performing artists drew upon pūrākau theory, arts-based research, and a Māori theatre pedagogy called Theatre Marae to investigate the story of Hinetītama, the Dawn Maiden, who unwittingly married her father Tānemahuta. The researchers explored the pūrākau and shared their personal narratives during marae-based hui and an intensive creative workshop in the theatre. Their findings were then incorporated into a play called *The Swing* which was performed and further analysed in facilitated audience discussions. This analysis suggests that incest and childhood sexual abuse are perpetuated in societal processes that enable absent fathers; the silencing of mothers; the objectification of others for self-gratification and creativity; the disconnection of children from their whakapapa; and the Western-prescribed nuclear family. Furthermore, it proposes that the tale of Hinetītama and her transformation into Hinenui Te Pō, the Guardian of Death, is not merely a Māori version of an incest taboo, but an endorsement for traditional Māori child-rearing practices that authorised the extended whānau as the basic social unit and dignified men as nurturers.

**Keywords:** Kaupapa Māori; Theatre Marae; performing pūrākau; Indigenous arts-based research; survival narrative; Hinenui Te Pō; historic sexual trauma

## **Introduction**

Findings from family violence research acknowledge colonisation and historical trauma as contributing factors to Māori experiences of family and sexual violence (Balzer et al., 1997; Cavino, 2016; New Zealand Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2017; Pihama et al., 2014) and further, call for a systems-focused response (Action Station,

2019; Carne et al., 2019; Ministerial Group on Family Violence and Sexual Violence, 2017; Safe Families Team, 2017). Additionally, the literature advocates for the unhindered development of culturally appropriate interventions for abuse survivors and their *whānau* (family) that are founded upon Māori understandings of trauma and healing (Kruger et al., 2004; Pihama et al., 2017; Pihama et al., 2019). In this article, I report on a community arts-based research project that explored traditional Māori understandings of incest and healing from sexual trauma as embedded in the *pūrākau* (ancestral story) of Hinetītama, the Dawn Maiden, who became Hinenui Te Pō, the Guardian of Death. A research team comprising Māori therapists, theatre practitioners, *kaihaka* (Māori performing artists), and community members investigated this ancient *pūrākau* and the research team's own survival narratives using a Māori theatre pedagogy called Theatre Marae (Pearse-Otene, 2020). I describe how the team analysed the story and then wove their interpretations into a theatre piece that was performed and analysed further in the ensuing audience *matapaki* (discussions).

## **Background**

I begin this article by locating myself in the research context and acknowledging those life threads that inform my work. On my mother's side, I am a descendant of Rongomaiwahine, Ngāti Kahungunu, and Ngāti Pahauwera from Northern Hawkes Bay. On my father's side, I am from Ngāpuhi, Te Rarawa, and Ngāti Kuri in the Far North, and Ngāti Ruanui in Taranaki. I work as a theatre practitioner, programme facilitator, and psychologist. The idea for this project materialised while I was co-facilitating anger management and family violence programmes at Kōkiri Marae in Seaview, Wellington. My co-facilitator and I noticed an increase in the numbers of survivors of child sexual abuse attending these groups, which were not designed to address historic sexual trauma. The participants' overwhelmingly positive responses to the *pūrākau* content of the programmes and their claims that they would have experienced better outcomes from a kaupapa Māori (Māori philosophy) informed intervention became the primary drivers for the research project.

## **Theory and Methodology**

### ***Pūrākau Theory***

Pūrākau theory aligns with the notion that we use stories to make sense of and give meaning to our lives (Elkington, 2011; Lee, 2005, 2009). Collected by early European ethnographers who viewed them as quaint fairy tales or myths, pūrākau were a traditional system for preserving esoteric and practical knowledge (Lee, 2005; Parahi, 2020), and are nowadays appreciated as keys to understanding the inner psychological worlds of our ancestors (Cherrington, 2002). Pūrākau are rich resources for research that inquires after ancient Māori ontological and epistemological concerns (Pouwhare, 2016; Pouwhare & McNeill, 2018) and lay out a prescription for how one can identify as Māori through the expression of certain behaviours and characteristics (Rameka, 2016). The pūrākau of Hinetītama and her transformation into Hinenui Te Pō has been covered in previous kaupapa Māori research on pūrākau in therapy (Taitimu, 2016; Tamanui 2016), Māori sexuality (Pihama et al., 2016), intergenerational trauma (Pihama et al., 2014), and Māori child-rearing practices and learning styles (Jenkins & Harte, 2011; Pere, 1994). In my therapy work and research, I have encountered it as an incest taboo, a description of stages of depression, a story of the first suicide, and as a survival blueprint for survivors of sexual abuse. I shall also add here that I have heard folks refer to it to justify inappropriate sexual acts on the marae and incestuous marriages in isolated Māori communities.

Regardless, these different interpretations of Hinetītama's story lend weight to the concept of pūrākau as rich sources of a multiplicity of meanings. Just as our *tūpuna* (ancestors) knew what, when, and how to harvest from which trees in Tānemahuta's forests, the *hua* (fruits or benefits) that we derive from pūrākau are determined by what knowledge we seek, the types of analytical tools we are using, the version (or versions) of the pūrākau we engage with, and our own positionality and bias. In recent years, kaupapa Māori researchers have reimagined pūrākau as a method to: decolonise Western forms of knowledge production (Smith, 2012) and education (Elkington, 2011); legitimise Māori informed therapies (Cherrington, 2002, 2016; Hall, 2013; Kopua, 2018; Piripi & Body, 2010; Taitimu, 2016); develop a Māori psychological practice and workforce (Cherrington 2002; Waitoki & Levy, 2015); inform creative research practice (Pouwhare, 2016; Pouwhare & McNeill, 2018) and; record the personal, everyday experiences of Māori living in the here and now (Lee, 2005, 2009). Lee (2005, 2009) theorises pūrākau as a legitimate method for qualitative research that is critical, interdisciplinary, and cross-cultural. Pursuing this thread prompted the idea



of an arts-based exploration of the pūrākau of Hinetītama within the domain of the *whare tapere* (communal house of entertainment), which is the original home base of pūrākau (Karetu, 1993; Royal, 1998, 2007) and the philosophical ancestor of contemporary Māori theatre. I decided to design the research as a therapeutic, kaupapa Māori community arts project, and analyse the pūrākau via a Māori performance pedagogical lens called Theatre Marae.

### ***Theatre Marae methodology***

Linda Smith (2012) advocates for the decolonisation of academic and creative sites through the establishment of Indigenous informed spaces like Kaupapa Māori Theory and Praxis (Bishop, 1999; G. Smith, 1997, 2003; L. Smith, 2012). Theatre Marae is another such site where mātauranga Māori can be reclaimed, reframed, celebrated, and shared through performances that assert *tinio rangatiratanga* (Māori sovereignty) and resist the colonial hegemony that dominates New Zealand mainstream theatre. Theatre Marae emerged in the late 1980s as a means for Māori artists to reclaim performance space (Glassey & Welham, 2003) and present works that were unashamedly political (Scott, 2006) and anti-colonial (Williams, 2007). As a theatre pedagogy it is a confluence of theatre craft, *ngā mahi a te rēhia* (Māori performing arts), *tikanga* (Māori customs), and creative therapies suitable for undertaking creative inquiry that privileges Māori ways of being, knowing, relating, and doing in the world (Pearse-Otene, 2020).

A Theatre Marae approach repurposes the theatre as a wānanga to undertake a kaupapa Māori performative analysis. Both complementary and contradictory philosophies from Western theatre craft are kept in check through the enactment of four research spheres or *pou* (markers) drawn from Māori metaphysics.

- Te Kore (The void): Aligning with the theatrical principle of *the empty space* (Alfreds, 2013; Brook, 1968), Te Kore is the limitless potential for creativity that is not yet revealed (Marsden, 1975; Royal, 2003b).
- Te Wheiao (The liminal space): Te Wheiao refers to the shaft of light preceding the new day and the transition phase of childbirth (Barlow, 1991). The in-between, emergent quality of Te Wheiao is similarly expressed in creative notions of liminality, diversity, and cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1994; Greenwood, 2001).
- Te Ārai (The veil): The threshold between the spiritual and physical realms

(Marsden, 1975; Royal, 2003b), Te Ārai is the means through which the ancestors and other psychic phenomena connect with us. It is analogous with theatre's preoccupation with religion, metaphysics, and sacred ritual.

- Te Papa Kōrero (The talking place): From this standpoint, the stage is appropriated to fulfil the conventional role of a rehearsal/performance space, with the additional requirements of a marae, research space, and therapeutic setting. To that end, the papa kōrero plays host to Māori expressions of welcome, creative inquiry, debate and deliberation, group therapeutic processes, storytelling, acknowledgement, and farewell (Pearse-Otene, 2020).

These four pou circumscribe a culturally safe space for creative research. Here, Māori notions of relating, knowing, and being can emerge and be afforded their fullest expression, impervious to the pathologising, deficit laden language inherent in Eurocentric research paradigms.

## **Method**

Upon receiving the blessing of the *rangatira* (leader) of Kōkiri Marae and gaining ethical approval through Massey University, I began an advertising campaign at Kōkiri Marae Hauora and Māori Women's Refuge through staff email, posters, and word of mouth. The recruitment process was styled as an invitation to community members to join as co-researchers and artists, rather than study participants. Twelve people joined the research whānau (10 women, 2 men) which included survivors of incest, child sexual abuse, adult rape, and domestic violence, and family members of survivors. The name *Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai* was bestowed upon the project to symbolise the collaborative relationship between Kōkiri Marae and the whānau that would blossom into creative and well-being outcomes for the community. The project ran from September 2019 to February 2020, and was split into two phases.

### ***Phase One: Marae based hui***

For 11 weeks, the research whānau met weekly at Kōkiri Marae in a three-hour *hui* (meeting) set along the lines of a community support group and co-facilitated by me and director, Jim Moriarty. Caring for the well-being of each individual and the group were

of paramount concern, leading to the construction of protocols that held us to ethical, safe practice. I maintained regular clinical supervision, and formulated a whānau care plan that accounted for risk assessment and the host marae's overarching tikanga, its code of conduct, and key operating procedures. As part of our orientation, Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai was welcomed by a senior staff member of the social services division, who provided information about available on-site support and wrap-around services, including a women's health service, nurse's station, counsellor, budgeting and legal advice, and *kaiarahi* (support worker/navigator). Before embarking on the research proper, we formulated a group agreed *kawa* (protocol for engagement) that included the *porowhita* (circle) a Theatre Marae process for addressing inter-personal conflict and caring for someone in distress (Pearse-Otene, 2021). Our *kawa* was intended to stay relevant and responsive to the progress and changing needs of the group. Informed consent was not taken for granted either; like the *kawa* it was constantly revisited throughout the journey.

In phase one of the project we engaged in *kōrero pūrākau*, a distinctly Māori approach to a growing body of scholarship in Indigenous storywork (Archibald et al., 2019). This type of research entails people crafting their lived experiences or reinvigorating ancestral stories to relate to present day issues and circumstances (Lee-Morgan, 2019). To that end, we carried out *mahinga kōrero pūrākau* (storytelling sessions) and shared our life journeys of hurt and healing alongside the tale of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō and her whānau.

Everyone received a journal (in which to record their research experiences and produce creative work) and copies of the pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō and Hineahuone (Hinetītama's mother). My choice to include Hineahuone's story in the research came from an idea to contextualise Hinetītama's pūrākau within her *whakapapa* (genealogy), and was cemented after my review of incest focused research revealed a dearth of literature detailing the experiences of the non-offending parent, who is usually the mother. This appeared to mirror the silencing or absence of Hineahuone from her daughter's story. I felt that the pūrākau of Hineahuone warranted more investigation and wondered how Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai might respond to it.

As there were no other Māori language speakers in the team, the final versions of these

pūrākau were written in English and comprised the common plot points of the texts that were available to us. This rendering was undertaken with full awareness and appreciation of the cultural injuries already inflicted on our stories through the processes of selective recording, translating, and editing by early *Pākehā* (European) ethnographers and publishers (Lee-Morgan, 2019; Mikaere, 1994). A way for the group to acknowledge and problematise this inescapable damage was to look at other interpretations of the pūrākau through paintings, sketches, short stories, and *whakairo* (carvings), and seek out and analyse other texts that resonated with them.

At the close of phase one, some members disclosed that they would withdraw from the group due to overriding family commitments and health issues. To ensure that their contribution would not be lost from the remainder of the project, we carried out a final kōrero pūrākau session to formally record everyone's responses to both pūrākau that had emerged over the preceding weeks. We launched into an animated matapaki about the pūrākau where we noted down key scenes, themes, and unanswered questions that everyone agreed should be analysed further in the theatre.

### ***Phase Two: Theatre based workshop and performance***

In phase two the group moved into working directly with Te Rākau theatre at Massey University. Of the original 12 members from Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai, six attended the first week of the studio process to represent the *mana* (authority) of the research whānau and connect with the theatre company. We reintroduced the pūrākau of Hineūtama and Hineahuone, presented the group's responses from our final matapaki, then had our first read-through of a play I had written called *The Swing*. Set in a rural community in *Te Waipounamu* (The South Island), *The Swing* is about a whānau struggling to heal from intergenerational child abuse and the death of a *mokopuna* (grandchild). The play had never been performed before and seemed a suitable vehicle through which we could present the research team's analysis of the pūrākau. Importantly, the Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai whānau found both the plot and the characters to be realistic and relatable.

In an intensive three-week rehearsal, we rehearsed the play and simultaneously applied ngā mahi a te rēhia to devise a second piece that would interweave with the scripted scenes, thus having two performance narratives play out together. Due to other life

priorities, two of the research whānau retired from the production but visited when they could to support the rehearsals, offer feedback, and maintain the mana of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai. Another joined the stage management, preparing the actors for rehearsal and advising them on their characters and dialogue.

The remainder became actors working across two groups, a cast who would perform the lead roles in the scripted scenes, and a *kāhui* (chorus) who would further explore the pūrākau in a performance-based analysis using ngā mahi a te rēhia and character study techniques drawn from acting methodology. Theatre Marae invokes Te Ārai to refashion pūrākau as the means through which we reconnect spiritually and genealogically to the *atua* (gods). The revelation of our whakapapa connection to the creator reminds us of our own divinity and sanctity, and its inverse —the humanity and fallibility of the *atua* (Cherrington, 2002). The performers embraced this whakapapa connection to create, develop, embody, and play out the psychology of their allocated characters; they generously gave over their beings and tools (physicality, emotional range, voice, intellect, and creativity) as conduits for the characters to reveal their presence on the papa kōrero and convey their story to the research team and later, the audience.

Our analysis comprised a cyclic process where the company first discussed the questions, themes, and plot points initiated by Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai, then the *kāhui* expressed these elements by devising vignettes, composing waiata, or choreographing movement. Next, the material was blocked and made rehearsal ready for a show-and-tell session on the papa kōrero before the rest of the company. This was followed by a deliberation and debriefing session, where everyone could share their responses to the work, ask questions, and offer suggestions for further exploration. Taking these new learnings and queries on board, we returned to the start of the process and, if necessary, repeated the cycle again and again —sometimes distilling, sometimes amplifying the performance material —but always interrogating. This process continued until we reached a consensus on the themes and the aesthetic quality of the piece in which they were being presented. Only then was the final product designated as a scene and integrated into the play.

Performative, embodied ways of analysis open a channel in pūrākau research that

transcends the material constraints of written text. Emboldened by the theatre's assurance of artistic freedom, we can engage all of our senses and the dramatic potential of the tinana to dialogue with the pūrākau, and draw out from the depths of Te Kore previously subjugated, hidden, or discounted knowledge that is nonetheless significant to us. In sum, by performing pūrākau we can defy the last two centuries of literary distortions that have infiltrated our ancestral stories and worked to contaminate our cultural beliefs.

*The Swing* was performed in front of invited audiences drawn from the arts, health, academia, justice and social development sectors, as well as community advocates, whānau, and members of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai. In keeping with Theatre Marae tradition, the event was framed as an opportunity for public servants, front line workers, and community members to hui under one roof, watch the play, and then, over a light supper, share their reflections about their engagement with the performance and its themes. This allowed for further analysis but more importantly provided a platform for Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai to press home their message to those who are in a position to affect policy.

### **Key themes from the research**

The pūrākau of Hinetītama and that of her mother, Hineahuone, offered a window into the views of our tūpuna about the ideal family unit and its maintenance, by presenting the fate that befalls its dysfunctional opposite. Our arrival at this outcome is illustrated below with excerpts from the production diary (a journal used to track the making of a theatre, television or film project) and my reflection journal (a process for recording my notes, analysis, creative ideas, and personal journey within the project).

#### ***Hineahuone: blaming the silenced, non-offending parent***

From the outset, the group was troubled that Hineahuone was characterised as silent and passive in her own pūrākau and then was either absent from her daughter's story or was present but complicit. Mothers whose children were abused speculated that this literary detail produced an implicit directive to the audience to scapegoat Hineahuone. They expressed an affinity for her and perceived her silence as representative of their own

experiences of injustice, powerlessness, social isolation, betrayal, and rage.

The *kāhui* lie in a heap on the floor, and Tānemahuta enters, brandishing his *rākau*.<sup>123</sup> The SM plays softly on the guitar while Tānemahuta mimes carving Hineahuone out of the earth with his *rākau*. One by one the performers roll away, leaving Hineahuone on her own. As Hineahuone takes her first breath, I trigger the heartbeat sound effect and the rest of the company perform a communal *whakahā*<sup>124</sup> to signal *tihei mauri ora*,<sup>125</sup> but also to remind the actors that we are supporting them in this space. Tānemahuta stands away from Hineahuone and takes up a position of contemplation. Then he approaches her. He stabs at her face with the *rākau* and her eyes flick open in shock. She looks like a store mannequin. The guitar recoils as Tānemahuta's *rākau* pokes, carves, and pierces Hineahuone. Finally, he mimes his *rākau* entering her *tara*<sup>126</sup> to find the *uha*.<sup>127</sup> Tānemahuta offers his hand to Hineahuone and helps her to her feet. He circles her in wonderment. She places her hand to her belly —*kua whakaira tangata*.<sup>128</sup> He exits and she starts to transform...

(*The Swing* production diary, January 2020)

We explored various ways to interpret Hineahuone's emergence from the earth to establish her and Tānemahuta as equals. However, no matter how the actor used his hands and *rākau* or altered his energy and movements, we could not avoid creating the impression of Hineahuone as an outcome of Tānemahuta's handiwork —she is the last of an exhaustive list of experiments to generate human life. Furthermore, we associated Tānemahuta's subsequent exploration and penetration of Hineahuone's orifices with the sexual objectification of women and their body parts, and then appraised her physiological response to his actions as an example of how victim's bodies are groomed by their perpetrators to accept abuse. Some survivors, whose own *tamariki* (children) fell prey to sexual exploitation, related to Hineahuone as a victim of psychological abuse, incapable of protecting Hinetūrama. We speculated that Tānemahuta's creation and subsequent treatment of Hineahuone (Alpers, 1996; Pere, 1994; Whatahoro, 1913) might be an ancestral perspective on how family violence and sexual abuse can impair a trauma survivor's capacity to nurture and safeguard their *tamariki*.

Gender equality is a key ingredient in safe, nurturing, cohesive families. From our exploration we derived that Tānemahuta coveted Hineahuone for her creative power but

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<sup>123</sup> *rākau* = staff

<sup>124</sup> *whakahā* = exhale

<sup>125</sup> *tihei mauri ora* = the breath of life

<sup>126</sup> *tara* = vagina

<sup>127</sup> *uha* = female element

<sup>128</sup> *kua whakaira tangata* = she is with child

did not respect her as his equal, setting in place the conditions for a patriarchal family unit that he could control. While taking into account colonisation's hand in producing damaging narratives of Māori men (Hokowhitu, 2004), the research team acknowledged the presence of negative gender norms in our society that devalue wāhine and induce *tāne* (men) to subjugate their partners and tamariki (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2020). We resolved to challenge this discourse by performing an uplifting *waiata ā-ringa* (action song) that celebrated the sanctity of motherhood and reminded us that a woman is our preeminent common ancestor. We wanted Hineahuone to have the final say:

I have half an hour to come up with a waiata... I sit still, close my eyes and quieten my mind so that only the ticking of the kitchen clock anchors me to the present. I turn my thoughts to my *karani*,<sup>129</sup> Marata the songwriter... A tune starts to trickle in, and I open my eyes. I play the tune on the guitar and the opening lyrics start falling in...

*I te tīmatanga ko Papatūānuku, te whaea o te whenua,  
te kaitiaki o te puketapu: Te One i Kurawaka.  
Ko te ahunga o te kanapu o te hunga ora, ko Hineahuone;  
ko te ira tangata tuatahi he wahine —kia mau ki tō ūkaipō!  
Ko te hī, ko te hā,  
ko tihei mauri ora!*

*(In the beginning there was Papatūānuku, the earth mother and guardian of the sacred mound: the red earth at Kurawaka. Hineahuone is the originating source of the spark of the living; the first human being was a woman —do not forget that! The drawing in, the breath; the sneeze of a living soul!)*

(Author reflection journal, January 2020)

By separating the earth and sky, Tānemahuta simultaneously brings about our world and causes eternal heartbreak for his parents. Unperturbed, he exercises his creative power by establishing his dominion: the *ngahere* (forest) and the creatures that dwell within it, followed by Hineahuone. From our analysis of Hineahuone's story, we perceived Tānemahuta's objectification of her as a warning against the dangers posed by unbridled talent that is self-serving, lacks empathy, and pursues creativity at all costs. In the wake of this learning, we turned to the events in Hinetītama's story as a terrible lesson for Tānemahuta, whose descendants now pay the price for his failure to overcome this character flaw.

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<sup>129</sup> *karani* = nana, granny



### *Hinetītama: the protective power of the extended whānau*

In the pūrākau of Hinetītama, tragedy ensues when our heroine realises that her husband, Tānemahuta, is also her father. From this we may assume that Tānemahuta has been an absent parent, leaving Hineahuone to raise their daughter alone, thereby replicating a patriarchal norm that assumes childcare as a woman's domain. The potential for child sexual abuse and incest can be restricted by protective factors in the physical and social environments of prospective victims and offenders (Smallbone et al., 2013), as demonstrated in the tikanga of the pre-European *kāinga* (village). This traditional social eco-system comprised multigenerational whānau units that assumed all tamariki as belonging to everyone, which therefore demanded a collective responsibility from all adults to nurture and protect them (Hohepa, 1994; Jenkins & Harte, 2011). Abuse against women and children was a spiritual assault on the *tapu* (sanctity) of the *whare tangata* (womb), and a social transgression against the extended whānau and *kāinga* (Jenkins et al., 2002; Mikaere, 1994; Milroy, 1996), which necessitated a community-wide response (Durie, 2001; Jenkins & Harte, 2011; Mikaere, 1994).

We leave the floor set to the previous scene where Kath has swept a pile of leaves into a tidy border around the edges. The SM<sup>130</sup> improvises on the guitar as the *kāhui*, Hineahuone, Hinetītama, and Tānemahuta mark through a choreography that depicts Hinetītama's birth, growth, and chance meeting with Tānemahuta. We light up the floor in warm tones and fade in a recording of the dawn chorus. Hinetītama performs a double short poi<sup>131</sup> and we take sentiments from various whakataukī to improvise a short waiata that we sing alongside the guitar:

*Ko Hinetītama, ko te haeata o te rangi  
(Ko Hinetītama) me te mea ko Kōpū  
Matawai ana te whatu i te tirohanga  
(It is Hinetītama, the dawn of heaven, who is like the morning star.  
The eyes fill with tears upon seeing her)*

As we sing, Tānemahuta spies on his daughter then turns back to hear his mother reprimanding him for what he is about to do. He rebuffs her by swinging his *rākau* with such force that the displaced air causes the leaves to scatter across the floor — the movement startles Hinetītama. She locks eyes with Tānemahuta, then he offers her his hand. They exit.

*(The Swing production diary, January 2020)*

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<sup>130</sup> stage manager

<sup>131</sup> "double short poi" is a colloquial term for an upbeat poi dance that uses two poi attached to short plaited strings.

Hinetītama and Tānemahuta’s mutual sexual attraction is enabled through the absence of an established father-daughter relationship. The Westermarck hypothesis (1921) holds that people who live together in their early years develop sexual disinterest or repulsion towards each other; this is supported by later research suggesting that fathers who are active caregivers develop protective feelings that can counteract potential incestuous urges (Parker & Parker, 1986; Williams & Finkelhor, 1990, 1995). Tānemahuta’s apparent dereliction of his parental duties appears to verify these claims and is at odds with early accounts of our *tūpuna tāne* (male ancestors) being doting fathers who were actively invested in raising their tamariki (Jenkins & Harte, 2011; Salmond, 2016). The research whānau discussed absent fatherhood as symptomatic of a patriarchal culture that resists gender equality in the workforce (Ministry for Women, 2019), emasculates men in caregiving roles, and discriminates against stay-at-home fathers through subtle public messages like gendered signage (Alves, 2020). Furthermore, some of our team members reflected on their current roles as sole mothers and absent fathers as normalised via their own childhood experiences in broken homes and sustained through social policies that promote long-term benefit dependency.

### ***The burden of whakamā***

The word *whakamā* (shame) appears for the first time in the pūrākau of Hinetītama (that is, we did not see it in any of the earlier creation narratives) and so it was the subject of deep discussion throughout the research. Because Hinetītama is the first human being to encounter whakamā, we imagine that she experiences it as a deeply disturbing phenomenon that penetrates every cell of her being. The research whānau accounted for whakamā in embodied experiences that included: a draining sensation, a sinking feeling in the body, a hollowness, a choking in the throat, a drooping head, a burning face, eyes to the floor, a sickening and twisting of the guts, and a constant nag that pounds the head. These descriptions show that whakamā encompasses far more than the dictionary’s basic translation of shame, shyness, and embarrassment. We drew on this visceral imaging to devise the pivotal “ask the posts of the house” scene:

Hinetītama’s world is falling apart. I trigger an earthquake/landslide sound effect which cues the performers (who have stood frozen as the carved posts of her whare) to come to life, dismantle the scene, and tipatapata to one end of the stage behind Hinetītama. They sing:

*He aha tēnei hūkiki o roto te puku? He mate e ngūngū nei.  
Auē, te whakamā me te pākatokato! Hinetītama tū tahanga, paketai.  
(What is this violent shivering of the belly? A sickness is gnawing at me. Alas,  
it is shame and anguish! Hinetītama stands bereft as discarded driftwood.)  
(The Swing production diary, January 2020)*

Recurrent whakamā borne out of abuse is a curse, a constant reminder that overwhelms the tinana, shocks the mauri, distresses the wairua, and triggers a desperate need to avoid re-living painful memories. Members of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai recounted that the failure to find permanent relief was compounded by a sense of ongoing injustice, anger, resentment, misplaced self-blame and hatred for allowing the abuse to happen, and self-sabotaging behaviours that added more weight to the burden of whakamā. The literature indicates that, left unaddressed, this burden might be expressed in extreme risk-taking, self-harm, criminal activity, imprisonment, addiction, mental health issues, and suicide (Ministry of Women’s Affairs, 2009; Niland & Fernando, 2016; van der Kolk, 2014). The inevitable fallout creates long-term effects that seep into the next generation (Frazier et al., 2009; van der Kolk, 2014), thereby locating sexual trauma as an insidious public health issue (Basile, 2005; Basile & Smith, 2011; Campbell & Townsend, 2010; Golding, 1999; van der Kolk, 2014).

By changing her identity, Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō neutralises the potential of this curse to generate unending suffering; more than that, she rejects whakamā by gifting it back to her abuser:

We discuss the question “why doesn’t Tānemahuta feel whakamā?” and conclude it is because he created the world and has naturally set the environment and its rules to suit himself. He is a god. But in timeless stories such as this, the villain—even if he is a god—must have his comeuppance and pay a price, there must be a lesson to learn from it—otherwise, why would the ancestors bother ensuring the survival of this pūrākau through the generations? We find this lesson at the plot point where Hinetītama recites a karakia to form the Adam’s apple in her father’s throat as a final gift to differentiate tāne from wāhine. While it could be construed as a dignified and compassionate act, Whatahoro (1913, p. 39) writes “Ko te pona-whakahorokai a Hinetitama i ponaia rā i te kakī o Tāne, mō te hara o Tāne ki a ia tēnei” = The laryngeal prominence that Hinetītama knotted in Tāne’s throat was a consequence of Tāne’s violation against her. The language here suggests force and retribution.

(Notes from phase one final matapaki, author reflection journal, December 2019)

The research team's curiosity around Hinetītama's gifting of the Adam's apple to Tānemahuta carried into the studio where we constructed an analysis around the word *tenga*, the word for both the Adam's apple and the crop of a male bird. This highlighted a connection between Māori men and male birds —both descendants and representatives of Tānemahuta. Male birds are the singers of the *ngahere* and are immortalised in *whakataukī* and *mihi* that emphasise the importance of speech-making as a desirable attribute of a chief. Therefore, to lack this ability contravenes an expected norm of *mana tāne* (men's dignity, power, agency) and *rangatiratanga* (leadership). Some of the men in the group related this to an internal tension they experienced when they stopped themselves from expressing their thoughts and emotions due to not possessing the vocabulary, the belief that strong men should not talk about their feelings, and their fear of being belittled and rejected. In rehearsal, we explored what we saw as a plausible connection between embodied experiences of *whakamā* and *globus sensation*, a psychological phenomenon where people experience a choking feeling in their throat when they become highly anxious or stressed (Selleslagh et al., 2014; University of Iowa Health Care, 2019).

Some of the actors explore ideas like gulping, choking, sharp intake of breath, hand gestures, and sudden body movements to signify this powerful moment when Hinetītama knots Tānemahuta's throat with the *tenga*. In this action, she will telegraph to the audience that she has reclaimed her voice and her *mana*. We decide to apply *mau rākau* in the stage blocking, so while Tānemahuta is speaking Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō enters holding a weapon and strikes at his *kakī*,<sup>132</sup> which immediately silences him. The actors must sell the choreography, so it appears as if she has magically speared him in the throat and pinned him to the centre of the stage like a stuffed exhibit. He remains frozen, rigid, and silent, while she slowly circles him with her weapon and delivers her final lines:

*Ānei he taonga mōu, he tohu whakamaharatanga mō tāua. Kaua koe e whai mai i a ahau, ā, kaua hoki koe e tangi mōku. E noho koe ki Te Ao Mārama, ka tiaki ai i tō tāua whānau. E noho rā.*

*(Here is a gift for you, a token to remind you of us. Do not follow me, and do not weep for me. Remain here in the world of light and take care of our family. Farewell.)*

When she exits, Tānemahuta exhales with relief, breathes again, then gulps. He draws his hand to his throat —to something strange lodged there. He looks out into the darkness and farewells his daughter.

*(The Swing production diary, January 2020)*

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<sup>132</sup> *kakī* = throat, neck

## **Implications for practice**

As with any research methodology, health professionals and researchers need to consider their own skill set and knowledge base before undertaking a performance approach like Theatre Marae. They should have a solid grasp of te reo, tikanga, ngā mahi a te rēhia, dramaturgy (the theory and practice of drama), and group facilitation. Alternatively, they could reach out to the community to establish a facilitation team of community members who possess one or more of these skills. Theatre making is a communal activity and a costly process, requiring a company of cast, crew, and administrators to produce the creative work. Researchers should factor production overheads into their funding applications, and would do well to partner with experienced artists in the community who are able to source arts grants, production related resources, and community funding pools that fall outside the scope of conventional research funding.

Therapeutic theatre processes can induce performers to experience personal catharsis, or conversely, they could reconnect with old trauma stored in their tinana and become distressed. Given the immediacy of this type of event, the researcher has a duty of care that goes beyond providing people with the contact details of local health services. Robust protocols for pastoral care should be developed and, as illustrated earlier in this article, these can be strengthened by researchers partnering with local Māori health professionals and social services providers, all of whom will still be serving their community long after the completion of the project.

All research methods come with potential risks and limitations; however, the associated constraints and unknowns of arts-based research should not serve as barriers to Indigenous researchers wanting to take such an approach. Weighted against the challenges of applying an arts-based framework like Theatre Marae are just as many, if not more, benefits that might support communities in their long-term objectives involving collective healing, decolonisation, capacity building, and reclaiming guardianship of Indigenous knowledge and forms of representation.

## Conclusion

Did Hinetītama go to the night because she knew that Tāne would not follow her there?

He is the one responsible for causing Te Ao/The daylight —so maybe he doesn't like the dark

Te Pō is not bad

The dark is a safe place, it is a nurturing place of potential

Hinenui Te Pō is a light in the darkness.

(Members of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai, December 12, 2019)

As community members whose lives have been affected by incest and child sexual abuse, Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai explored but rejected the notion that Hinetītama's irreversible decision to retire from her father's domain and transform into Hinenui Te Pō was a suicide. Such an ending does not promote a restoration of mana, but traps Hinetītama in eternal victimhood, condones a self-destructive message that suicide is the only honourable way out, and too easily absolves Tānemahuta of his wrongdoing. Through the collective participatory research lens of Theatre Marae, Hinetītama's choice was instead decoded as a deliberate act of resistance and autonomy. She chose to reassert her mana on her own terms, denounce the conditions of her life with her father, and send a clear message to Tānemahuta and all of their descendants that incest is wrong (Jenkins & Harte, 2011). Her rejection of whakamā, and journey to take up the mantle of Hinenui Te Pō and claim the spirit world as her domain, is the definitive performance of survival, healing, and transformation.

In light of this project, Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai came to the conclusion that a kaupapa Māori sexual abuse intervention should contain at its heart the pūrākau of Hinetītama and Hineahuone and core ancestral messages that elevate men as nurturers, ensure women's autonomy and dominion over their bodies, endorse the protective influence of the extended whānau, and, most importantly, instil hope and mana for survivors. While some of the findings presented here might not be new to Māori academics and social service providers who work in the family and sexual violence sector, it is significant that these learnings have been encountered, analysed, and validated as meaningful by a community using the undeniable wisdom of lived experience.

## **Chapter 5 Discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This study originally set out to explore the pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō for ancestral notions of ngau whiore and taitōkai tamariki in a quest to better inform Māori sexual violence services and therapies. As I noted in chapter 1 of this thesis, however, the revelation that such an inquiry might simply reinforce the existing literature on this very topic forced a reorganisation of the project. As a result, the study was recalibrated to carry out a performance analysis of the narrative as a means to explore the little known research potential of Theatre Marae pedagogy. Subsequently, this meant that the healing potential of both Theatre Marae and the pūrākau could be scrutinised, so that the therapeutic concerns of the original research aim would remain intact.

To reiterate, the study would:

- Unpack Theatre Marae as an Indigenous arts-based approach to carrying out psychological research as well as producing and disseminating knowledge directly to the community (Research Area 1);
- Report on the use of Theatre Marae as a decolonising strategy in actor training and theatre making (Research Area 2); and
- Analyse the pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō as a survival narrative and blueprint for healing from sexual trauma (Research Area 3).

For this final chapter, I begin by reintroducing each research area within the context of their corresponding publication and in the order they appear in this thesis. I comment on the themes and insights that manifested as a result of these explorations, and interpret their wider implications. This is followed by a discussion on the strengths and limitations of this project, and recommendations for future research. I then close this chapter with a final reflection.

### **5.2 Research Area 1**

Chapter 2 worked to introduce the methodology of my study, Theatre Marae, and assert it as a uniquely Māori creative contribution to the field of Māori psychology and kaupapa Māori research. This was done in appreciation of a longstanding global commitment among Indigenous scholars to validate and legitimise Indigenous research

methods in the Academy (Allwood & Berry, 2006; Archibald, 2008; Dawson et al., 2017; Gray & Coates, 2010; Martin, 2003; Smith 2012; Stewart-Harawira, 2013; Wilson, 2003), and to champion the sovereign right of Indigenous peoples to their own Indigenous psychologies and solutions for well-being (Adair, 1999; Allwood & Berry, 2006; Nikora, 2007; Waitoki et al., 2018).

Prepared for a journal with a critical focus on innovations in Indigenous research, this was the first time that Theatre Marae pedagogy would be scrutinised for its potential as an Indigenous research methodology, and so I arrived at this chapter with the intention of appraising Theatre Marae against current understandings in the literature. According to Sinha, an Indigenous psychology and its activities “should (a) arise from within the culture, (b) reflect local behaviours, (c) be interpreted within a local frame of reference, and (d) yield results that are locally relevant” (1997, cited in Adair, 1999, p. 405). In addition, Wilson (2003) emphasises that Indigenous research methods: 1) integrate art, science, and religion; 2) are for and by the people; and 3) privilege experiential knowing and the embodied experience. In their review of Indigenous research methods, Dawson et al. (2017) contend that Indigenous inquiry reprioritises Indigenous knowledge systems, and aims to relegate Western methods to the side, the background, or entirely out of the picture. Nevertheless, they also maintain that Western research methods may still be utilised, so long as the community agrees with the approach taken, and the research design itself remains driven by Indigenous principles (Dawson et al., 2017). Throughout this thesis, I make a case for Theatre Marae as an Indigenous research methodology that meets these specifications, and it is in chapter 2 where I started this process by laying out its theoretical framework.

### ***5.2.1 Theatre Marae methodology: A summary***

As indicated by the name, Theatre Marae is a confluence of the dual worlds of the theatre and the marae, a performance paradigm unique to Aotearoa/New Zealand that draws on both Māori and Western forms of dramatic expression. In chapter 2, I described the ancient philosophical foundations of Theatre Marae that have informed the last 30 years of its therapeutic processes and creative outcomes, and used this as the basis on which to prescribe Theatre Marae as an Indigenous approach to arts-based research. Going further, I drew upon these genealogical threads as the conceptual basis for four research spheres or pou that, like the supporting posts of a house or boundary



fence, delineated the studio as a kaupapa Māori creative research space. These four pou: Te Kore, Te Wheiao, Te Ārai, and Papa Kōrero were key factors in protecting, guiding, and supporting the cultural integrity of the research that took place in this study.

*Te Kore*. Described as an infinite, limitless void of creative potential (Marsden, 1975; Royal, 2003b), Te Kore envisions the frameless emptiness from which Māori understandings of the cosmos and our world originated. In the theatre, Te Kore aligns with experimental processes where alternative realities, characters, stories, and worlds are drawn from the creative potential of the empty space contained within the dimensions of the rehearsal studio (Alfreds, 2013; Brook, 1968).

The principle of limitless potential allows for worlds to be dismantled and rebuilt, characters to disappear and re-materialise in another form, and for devised material to be recycled to serve other dramatic purposes. In this study, members of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai experienced this first-hand in the exercise *te wākāinga* [see chapter 1, methods section, p. 41]. Drawing from the wellspring of their imaginations, the whānau extracted a series of images that represented their true, peaceful home in which they felt safe and authentic. They externalised these images through mime, then compressed and choreographed them into a soothing movement meditation for personal use. Later, during the devising process, Te Rākau members also carried out this exercise and then, together with those members of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai who performed in the show, they used the content of their movement sequences as building blocks to construct the pre-show setting that the audience walked through when they entered the auditorium. This otherworldly, eerie dimension was deliberately crafted to unsettle the senses and invoke the curiosity of the audience as they sought their way to their seats through a dim forest comprising blue-lit bodies swinging fluorescent white *poi*.<sup>133</sup> At the same time, distinctly Māori performance tools and forms of *poi*, *hue rarā*,<sup>134</sup> *wiri*,<sup>135</sup> *haka whakaeke*,<sup>136</sup> and *pao*<sup>137</sup> were used to connect with audience members familiar with ngā mahi a te rēhia and to privilege te reo as the first spoken language; the net result was an expression of the presence of a Māori world that runs counter to the mainstream.

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<sup>133</sup> *poi* = a ball on a plaited string

<sup>134</sup> *hue rarā* = rattle; shaker

<sup>135</sup> *wiri* = quivering hands

<sup>136</sup> *haka whakaeke* = a dance that denotes the entrance of the group

<sup>137</sup> *pao* = a short song or ditty

The arts have long been identified as an amenable space for Indigenous creatives striving to reclaim, revitalise, remember, represent, re-assert, and re-tell our indigeneity (Smith, 2012). Te Kore is an exciting addition to the promise of a decolonised stage that facilitates performances of resistance that challenge the dominant colonial narrative. Here, the space becomes ours in which we can make and remake worlds —distinctly Māori worlds —and have curatorial control over the stories we tell, the way we are represented, and the realities, hopes, and aspirations that are reflected back to our communities (Adair, 1999; Gray & Coates, 2010; Waitoki et al., 2018).

*Te Wheiao.* The liminal, emergent qualities of Te Wheiao facilitate innovative practices that celebrate cultural fluidity and hybridity (Bhabha, 1994; Greenwood, 2001), and amplify voices of the excluded and oppressed (Schechner, 2006). As the transitional period in childbirth (Barlow, 1991) and the shaft of light that precedes the day, Te Wheiao exists at the border between the predictable and the unknown, where boundaries are tested and traditions are challenged for their utility in Te Ao Hurihuri. As a lens for creative research, Te Wheiao defies traditionalist, essentialist notions that might assume Māori culture and its products as static, singular, and fixed. Instead, it champions curious experimentation, adaptation, and inventiveness —so long as those who work at the edge of their practice do so with a deep understanding of their choice of methods, their knowledge base and skill set, as well as their own personal limitations. By contrast, the creative potency of Te Wheiao will more likely remain hidden from those who are *kūare*<sup>138</sup> of their craft and of mātauranga Māori; these artists will either struggle to create or contribute anything new to the field, or worse, produce work that is Māori in name only. Likewise, it will abandon those who are *pokerenoa*<sup>139</sup> or *whakahīhī*<sup>140</sup> as Tānemahuta and, much later on, Māui failed to accept (and at the cost of his own life)<sup>141</sup> *there are some boundaries that are not meant to be crossed*.

In the study, we entered the devising sessions with our notes from Kōkirihiā Ngā

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<sup>138</sup> *kūare* = ignorant

<sup>139</sup> *pokerenoa* = reckless, thoughtless

<sup>140</sup> *whakahīhī* = vain, arrogant, smug

<sup>141</sup> Like Tānemahuta, Māui the daring, inventive hero of many pūrākau failed to heed the warning of his elders to leave Hinenui Te Pō in peace; in return for attempting to defeat mortality by violating the Great Lady he was killed by her instead.

Puāwai and the pūrākau as the core material, and a sobering respect for the requirement to avoid dangerous, culturally ignorant, or meaningless practice. To enable the performers to feel fully permitted to test their limitations, explore the content, and risk failure without the fear of being rejected, judged or held responsible, we brought experts into the session to both train and guide the performers. For example, when constructing a choreographic sequence about Hinetītama's birth and that of her sisters, the performers were led by individuals trained in hip-hop, kapa haka, and cultural dances from neighbouring Pacific islands. These leaders ensured that the choreography that resulted from this fusion would be innovative, that the chosen moves best expressed the research themes, and that neither the exploration nor the final creative product would undermine the cultural values and fundamental principles of the contributing dance forms. Engaging experts in a mentoring capacity allows talented novices to safely engage in their craft and encounter new techniques; while learning to push artistic boundaries, they are being protected from committing a cultural offence.

*Te Ārai.* Western psychology pathologises communication with the other sentient beings that inhabit the earth and the spirits beyond the veil, but Indigenous psychologies encompass and make space for it (Archibald, 2008; Martin, 2003; Waitoki et al., 2018), as does the theatre. Existing between the spiritual and physical realms (Marsden, 1975; Royal, 2003b), Te Ārai is the threshold through which the ancestors and other psychic phenomena connect with us. Te Ārai makes landfall with the theatre's reverence for the stage as sacred geography appearing at the dawn of storytelling circles and ritual performances in which the ancestors sought to commune with benevolent gods (Schechner, 2006). Theatre's acceptance of the supernatural is normalised to the point of invisibility —embedded in longstanding performance traditions, actors' superstitions, and technical terminology —and taken for granted in the dialogue, characters, and storylines of numerous plays.

Te Ārai manifested throughout this research project and in different ways —first, as routine karakia that signalled transitions between different activities, and helped prepare, centre, and focus the performers in their roles. Secondly, envisaging Te Ārai as a porous channel through which we can make contact with the spirits of our ancestors, and all the way back to our common pre-eminent ancestor, Hineahuone, enabled team

members at different stages of their cultural recovery to think critically about inherited trauma and therefore be open to the notion of speaking to their tūpuna —whether in private acts of mindful contemplation, karakia, or through trying out the ACT-based thinking tool, *nā wai tērā* [see methods section, chapter 1, p. 39]. Third, informed by the shared whakapapa link to Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō, Hineahuone, and Tānemahuta, those actors who played these roles were encouraged to see the humanity in these deities, and vice versa, the divine in themselves (Cherrington, 2002). This allowed them to prepare their performances with aroha and *atawhai*<sup>142</sup> for these atua, and in the process, invited a fresh analysis into the psychology of these characters that, in turn, produced new insights [see chapter 4, pp. 85–103]. Later, during the performance season, the post-show reflections of some of the actors would include sensing “the presence of their tūpuna” on stage, or feeling transported beyond the edge of their practice and into a rare “flow state” of heightened performance.

When applied to creative research, Te Ārai is a reminder to enact appropriate rituals such as karakia to add a layer of sanctity and protection, ensuring that we the researchers and our work align “with the highest good” (Stewart-Harawira, 2013, p. 45). In addition, Te Ārai works to reawaken us as spiritually reintegrated selves woven into the greater fabric of the universe, and to shield our wairua from the isolating and despairing effects of the modern world’s preoccupation with individualism and materialism. This standpoint is consistent with previous Indigenous research that aims for decolonisation and spiritual recovery through the restoration of cultural practices such as traditional song (Rostenburg, 2020), weaving (Smith, 2020), and group ceremony (Young & Nadeau, 2005).

*Papa Kōrero.* In Theatre Marae, the papa kōrero is a manifestation of both the stage and the marae ātea; a performance space for dialogue, deliberation, tension, debate, and resolution that extends beyond the fictional world of the play script and the rehearsal process. That is, the papa kōrero is a flexible, all-purpose staging area for activities that range from company hui, experimentation and analysis, shared meals and celebrations, training sessions, to the conventional production activities of a theatre company —the rehearsal, performance, and post-show matapaki (community feedback and discussion

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<sup>142</sup> *atawhai* = kindness

sessions).

By invoking the communal, sacred and secular concerns of everyday marae practice, the papa kōrero disrupts a tradition in mainstream theatre to erect *the fourth wall*, an invisible barrier between the performers and audience members who become passive, silent witnesses to the play. Although there is a longstanding tradition in community and applied theatre programmes to facilitate post-show fora and feedback sessions, the Indigenous principles and familiar tikanga processes that frame the matapaki ensure that audience members who are at ease in Māori social environments feel equally comfortable with participating in the discussion. The matapaki has proven vital for Māori theatre companies such as Te Rākau to help familiarise and increase Māori participation in live theatre, but more so to hear the voices of community members affected by the show's themes and subject matter, and whose opinions are vital if we are to find ways to keep our well-being in our own hands.

In the study, the papa kōrero served as a valuable testing ground for our performance-based analysis of the pūrākau, and as a welcoming, intimate venue suitable for disseminating the research findings and measuring the resonance of the work via community feedback. Over a cup of tea and other refreshments, survivors in the audience stood to offer their support to one another, give their blessing for the show, and share their solutions with the representatives of state agencies and the social services. In this way, the community were able to access, analyse, and comment upon knowledge that might otherwise remain inaccessible behind the paywalls of academic journals or be rewritten as unintelligible policy. Furthermore, the matapaki facilitated a safe environment for individuals and whānau to share their testimonies of survival and to *tangi*<sup>143</sup> tears of healing, again illustrating the transformative and therapeutic potential of theatre, which is a central argument in the literature (Garcia, 2010; Jones, 2007; Leveton, 2010; Sajnani & Johnson, 2014; van der Kolk, 2014; Volkas, 2014).

Indigenous researchers work to formalise and validate Indigenous ways of knowledge production within academia as well as to engage with and transform the Academy (Stewart-Harawira, 2013; Waitoki et al., 2018). In recent decades, their efforts have

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<sup>143</sup> *tangi* = to cry

opened new vistas for an Indigenous theorising of the world, and informed the emergence of decolonising research frameworks like Kaupapa Māori Theory and Praxis (Smith, 1997, 2003), methodologies such as Indigenous storywork (Archibald et al., 2019), and also theories of collective suffering and psychological distress like Historic Trauma Response (Danieli, 1998; Duran, 2006; Duran et al., 1998; Brave Heart, 1998, 2003). These innovations in turn go on to inform culturally responsive therapeutic interventions and also reinvigorate Indigenous pockets in the Academy. Chapter 2 introduced Theatre Marae to this decolonising agenda as an example of how Indigenous methodologies can open new channels for culturally authentic meaning making in arts-based research. Academically speaking, Theatre Marae is a recent entrant on the research scene, however, as a Māori theatre pedagogy it has a rich practice history spanning 30 years of producing decolonising and therapeutic theatre works. In chapter 3, I explored this history further with the view to analysing the decolonising and transformative potential that Theatre Marae brings to both research and theatre practice.

### **5.3 Research Area 2**

Theatre Marae defies the elitism that has existed for a long time in the arts sector and in academia by bringing knowledge production and theatre making together in one space, and then directly sharing the knowledge with those who would benefit most from seeing their “world views reflected back to them” (Waitoki et al., 2018, p. 178), and in a culturally enhancing way. Moving on from the conceptual platform laid out in chapter 2, chapter 3 documents the emergence of Theatre Marae as a practical, community driven response to advocate for more Māori representation in the arts and across all sectors of New Zealand society. In the opening paragraphs of this chapter, I described the socio-political environment of the 1970s and 1980s that gave rise to the Māori Renaissance, protest movements, and the establishment of activist-artist theatre companies, including Te Rākau Hua o Te Wao Tapu (Te Rākau). In as much as this history was written to introduce Te Rākau Theatre to the publishing journal’s largely international audience, it also served to reclaim the company’s story from a small pool of previously published material peppered with inaccuracies.

From there, the chapter aligned the development and shaping of Theatre Marae’s core processes in line with the history of Te Rākau and its creative outputs spanning 30 years of working in prisons, schools, marae, theatres, psychiatric units, youth residential

facilities, and treatment centres. In sharing this history, the chapter revealed the elitist, racist context of the local arts scene in which Theatre Marae emerged, and where today Māori artists and theatre companies continue to struggle for parity with their Pākehā colleagues. At the same time, it situated Theatre Marae as a worthy methodological framework for community-based research due to already being stress tested at the brutally honest coal face of theatre-in-education and prison theatre. I then progressed to describing and explaining the activities that make up the core processes of Theatre Marae; these processes not only provided support to the specific methods chosen for this study, but underpin all of Te Rākau's theatre productions, and are key elements in the company's training regimen. Te Rākau's efforts to train future generations of practitioners as part of a long-term agenda to reclaim and hold space for a self-sustaining Māori theatre is synonymous with the efforts of Indigenous academics and psychologists to develop an Indigenous psychology that is robust, reflective of the culture, and relevant to local needs (Adair, 1999; Allwood & Berry, 2006; Cherrington, 2002; Nikora, 2007; Waitoki et al., 2018; Waitoki & Levy, 2015).

By locating Theatre Marae as a direct descendant of the artistic activism occurring in the 1970s and 1980s, chapter 3 attested to Theatre Marae's validity as a sound research framework that has already been tested for its relevance and resonance to the local context in which it emerged and continues to develop and mature. In describing Theatre Marae's core processes and culture, which in turn supported the chosen methods used in the research project, chapter 3 provided the conceptual link between the methodology outlined in chapter 2 and its practical expression in chapter 4, that is, the performance analysis of the pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō.

### **5.4 Research Area 3**

Reclaiming and repurposing academic spaces in which to undertake Indigenous research and champion an Indigenous psychology are small acts of resistance against the forces of colonisation and imperialism which remain embedded in the Academy, the social services, the health and justice sectors, and, as shown in chapter 3, in the performing arts. Chapter 3 described the daily routines that Te Rākau Theatre carry out to repurpose theatre venues as a kaupapa Māori strategy for decolonising theatre and practitioner training in Aotearoa/New Zealand. These same core processes were fundamental to the

success of the study reported on in chapter 4, ensuring the theatre studio and its adjoining rooms were maintained as safe cultural spaces in which to simultaneously introduce the research whānau to the performance potential of their tinana, build the collective performance vocabulary of the ensemble, and carry out our exploration of the pūrākau. These spaces were enacted and sustained through daily customary practices incorporating the concept of *tiaki marae, tiaki tangata*,<sup>144</sup> and furthermore ensured that the central idea and framework would remain Indigenous—even while we borrowed from Western theatre craft (Drawson, et al., 2017).

In chapter 4, I leveraged off the platform set up in chapter 3, by reporting on the case study that was the original focus of this thesis. Written for a journal dedicated to Indigenous well-being, the chapter contributes to a healthy commentary on Indigenous storytelling methods and kaupapa Māori research that emphasise the status of pūrākau as repositories of ancestral knowledge. The chapter attaches the study to this conversation by introducing current approaches in Indigenous storywork (Archibald et al., 2019); pūrākau theory (Lee, 2005, 2009); the use of kōrero pūrākau as a therapeutic tool (Cherrington, 2002; Kopua, 2018; Waitoki, 2016; Waitoki & Levy, 2016); and the reimagining of our ancestral narratives through modern techniques including digital and “diverse media” (Pouwhare, 2016, p.16), “waiata, haka, poetry, drama, sculpting, painting” (Cherrington, 2002, p. 118), and “body adornment, or traditional tattoo” (Waitoki et al., 2018, p. 170). Against the backdrop of these initiatives, I then went on to describe how we invoked the traditions of the whare tapere, the original storehouse of pūrākau and, using Theatre Marae pedagogy, reframed this ancient communal performance site as a fitting space in which to undertake a performance analysis of the pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō and Hineahuone.

#### ***5.4.1 Key Themes and Learnings***

In unpacking the process of this study, chapter 4 recounted how performance-based methods enabled Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai to engage with their physicality in a novel way, connect with others to collectively reinterpret the commonality of their experiences, and draw new learnings from the pūrākau that would have otherwise remained obscured.

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<sup>144</sup> Caring for the marae and caring for the people. This is a cyclic, ongoing, and informing relation between people and space. In taking care of the marae, the people are also taken care of and are sustained, and they in turn look after the marae, and so on.



Taken together, these factors appear to both validate and respond to the group's earlier conceptualisations of trauma, which I revisit here:

*Historical Trauma.* Kōrero pūrākau has been previously identified as an emancipatory tool ideal for researching Māori narratives of survival and healing from intergenerational historic trauma (George et al., 2014; Te Atawhai o Te Ao, 2018). The performance aspect of this study added another lens through which the research team could speak back to a colonial ideology that positions Māori within a discourse of toxic masculinity, family violence, criminality, and social deficiency. When adopted as internalised oppression, these racist narratives operate like a psychological IED,<sup>145</sup> a weapon set to detonate when the host makes contact with a situation that invokes and reinforces their internalised anti-Māori messages. This further damages an individual's trust in their culture and discourages them from engaging with it. This was a common phenomenon for nearly every member of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai, most of whom had had little or no connection with their whakapapa or culture until excruciating life challenges drove them to seek health and social services support at Kōkiri marae.

Although this study was not intended as a psychological intervention, the marae and group setting offered potential ameliorative benefits. The urban marae setting at Kōkiri encouraged Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai members to reconnect with Te Ao Māori and have new experiences that worked to disrupt previously held and —perhaps, given their past traumas —rightfully earned negative beliefs about their culture. Tikanga Māori expressions of mauri (life force), manaakitanga (hospitality), aroha (love), and whanaungatanga (relationships) that are embedded in the day-to-day practices of the marae co-mingled with complementary principles underpinning empowering community settings (Maton, 2008), group psychotherapy (Moreno, 1953; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005), and group dynamics (Lewin & Gold, 1999) in group activities aimed at fostering a trusting, caring, and creative research environment. The holistic, culturally, and spiritually restorative potential of the marae setting cannot be underestimated for undertaking this kind of emancipatory cultural work and, furthermore, cannot be replicated in a Pākehā clinical setting. The marae was a key factor in the success of the project and, along with other dedicated Māori communal spaces, should be the only

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<sup>145</sup> Improvised explosive device

environments considered to host kaupapa Māori family and sexual violence services.

The mahinga kōrero pūrākau (storytelling sessions) that occurred on the marae involved the sharing of deeply personal experiences that, in the retelling, were re-storied as narratives of survival and resistance. This process of re-storying carried into our exploration of the pūrākau, which was initially marked by palpable anger, grief, and confusion that manifested in our discussions. For some members, these feelings were in response to the realisation that they had been denied access to important cultural knowledge that could have better informed them in their life journeys. For others, the discovery that many of our pūrākau had been contaminated by Pākehā ethnographers was akin to an indecent assault, and another piece of frustrating evidence of the coloniser meddling in Māori minds. These expressions soon gave way to kōrero that reflected people's various experiences of patriarchal families, sole parenting, absent fatherhood, and gendered violence against the ancient setting of both pūrākau. The result was a new appreciation for pre-European societal traditions as protective factors that were established well after and in response to the tragic events of the pūrākau: communal child-rearing practices; fathers occupying care-giving roles; women having agency and guardianship over their bodies and reproductive rights; the importance of knowing whakapapa; and the vital matrilineal principle that connects all Māori whakapapa to a common pre-eminent ancestor (Hineahuone), and through her, reinforces our identity as tangata whenua. As chapter 4 points out, these interpretations will not be new to kaupapa Māori specialists who work in the field of family and sexual violence. However, the experiences and responses of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai as they unpacked and re-storied these pūrākau to better understand their journey to restoration, is reflective of a systems-wide issue of inequitable resourcing that stunts the development of kaupapa Māori interventions and services, and channels *mōrehu*<sup>146</sup> towards seeking support from mainstream services. The findings of this study support the current recommendations in the literature to establish and strengthen kaupapa Māori sexual trauma services and interventions (Te Wiata & Smith, 2016; TOAH-NNEST, n.d.; Wharewera-Mika & McMillan, 2016), with the additional proposal that these pūrākau are embedded as core content.

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<sup>146</sup> *mōrehu* = survivor/s

*Psychological Trauma.* Advances in neuroimaging techniques and the growth of the disciplines of neuropsychology and neuropsychiatry have in part contributed to an increase in trauma studies that focus on how sexual violence complicates an already complex relationship between physical well-being, brain function, and behaviour. While this study was not at all set up to deal with the intricacies of this field of study, it was important to identify a shift in the literature (and therefore in the discipline) towards somatic approaches that are a mainstay of drama therapy (Garcia, 2010; Johnson & Sajnani, 2014; Jones, 2007; Leveton, 2010), trauma-informed yoga (van der Kolk, 2014), and dance therapies (Gray, 2019).

The whakataukī *mauri tū*, *mauri ora* correlates with the saying, “a healthy soul dwells within a healthy body” and is reflective of an Indigenous approach that targets the body as a site for decolonisation through reconnecting with traditional food sources such as *māra kai*,<sup>147</sup> *rongoā*,<sup>148</sup> *mirimiri*,<sup>149</sup> *romiromi*,<sup>150</sup> revitalising traditional exercises and games, and learning te reo—which is a container for the world views and values of Te Ao Māori. In chapter 4, I highlighted this concept by sharing the team’s engagement with language and the insights that certain words might reveal about how our ancestors experienced and explained psychological phenomena like emotions. This led to enthusiastic discussions around the meaning of the words *tenga* (Adam’s apple; crop of a male bird) and *whakamā* (shame, embarrassment), which were carried into the theatre studio for an exploratory analysis that involved breaking down people’s experience of *whakamā* into smaller units of observable action. Through this exploration, Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai members experienced the therapeutic benefits of embodiment processes that include a) becoming aware of subtle shifts in physiological sensations that signal distress so that they can learn how to regulate them (van der Kolk, 2014), and b) developing agency over their bodies to inhabit and use them more effectively (Jones, 2007). Theatre based therapies have much to offer in the way of somatic approaches to trauma; despite the growing support for them in the literature, however, they remain under developed in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

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<sup>147</sup> *māra kai* = gardening

<sup>148</sup> *rongoā* = traditional medicine

<sup>149</sup> *mirimiri* = massage that targets muscle tissue, bones, and blood

<sup>150</sup> *romiromi* = massage that targets internal organs

As discussed in chapter 3, the theatre is a space for tension and drama, and can be applied as a therapeutic tool to intervene with the colonised body and its outward expressions of stored trauma. This same decolonising principle was brought into the study, where we played games to cultivate whanaungatanga, spontaneity, and fun, engaged in guided meditation and mindfulness exercises to re-engage with our wairua (spirit) and reflective inner selves, and explored *mahi-a-aroā-nekeneke* (movement awareness exercises) to help us make contact with the performance potential of our own tinana. This also informed the creation of the exercises *nā wai tērā* (a thinking tool to disrupt distressing internal patterns that can increase hyperarousal in the body), and *te wākāinga*, a movement meditation to re-connect with the tapu and goodness of the tinana, and re-construct it as a haven for an unsettled wairua. While chapter 4 did not refer to these exercises, they are important to mention here as an illustration of the potential for Māori psychological interventions to be developed that, because of the barrier of language and philosophical differences, are beyond the reach of Western psychology.

*Relational Trauma.* Trauma gives rise to social isolation by attacking the very internal mechanisms that hardwire us for socialising and cooperation (van der Kolk, 2014), hindering our ability to nurture healthy relationships, and stopping us from experiencing our potential as fully engaged, contributing, and valued members of our community. Relational trauma refers to the deep betrayal that occurs for children who have been violated and /or neglected by their family members, and which distorts their ability to develop safe, loving, and trusting relationships with others (Gray, 2019). Group processes such as Alcoholics Anonymous 12-step meetings, special interest groups, and communal performances (for example, theatre, choral singing, and kapa haka) can help stimulate feelings of belonging, cooperation, and trust. This in turn can bring meaning or purpose to our existence (van der Kolk, 2014), helping us respond in healthier ways within our key relationships (Jones, 2007; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

For the members of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai, the healthy whānau environment that was first initiated through the *whakapapa* exercise [see methods section, chapter 1, p. 37] and then reinforced over the ensuing weeks through routinised performances of manaakitanga, aroha, and whanaungatanga created a safe, therapeutic space in which

people no longer felt isolated, unworthy, or defective. The knowledge that they were in the presence of others who had similar stories presented a sense of relief and belonging that could not be experienced in one-on-one therapy. This sense of a shared, universal understanding encouraged them to grieve for lost childhoods, reassert their determination to protect their tamariki, and make an assessment of the family dynamics of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō and her whānau by analysing the interactions between the characters and the major plot points of the pūrākau. It was here in this forum that Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai reiterated their interpretation of Tānemahuta as a creative narcissist who defies the warning of his mother, and abuses both Hineahuone and Hinetītama to gratify his creative urges. At the same time, the group also expressed aroha and understanding towards Tānemahuta and his behaviour, connecting his shortcomings to his experience of being trapped alongside his siblings in the cramped, dark embrace of Ranginui and Papatūānuku—which they reframed as a form of parental neglect.

Furthermore, by repositioning the characters as part of our common whakapapa we then went on to discuss how we, as descendants of Tānemahuta, also possess some of his tendencies; for in our own drive to create technological advances and build material wealth we have turned on our creator and the life-sustaining environment that he produced for us. Our prevailing attitude towards the land, rivers, and forests as property to economically exploit has come back to haunt us in the form of climate change, increasing food insecurity, and the mass extinction of life forms from this fragile planet. Although the subject matter is bleak, and is not reported in chapter 4, for the members of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai, this kōrero in particular was a profound and liberating experience in which they located themselves within the fabric of the universe and in doing so began to subvert years of social isolation caused by their past hurts. Through recognising and embracing their shared Māori whakapapa, they enacted a process of restoration and reintegration with a world that is interconnected and defined by its intricate relationships—the stuff of Māori cosmogony and of being (Marsden, 1975; Royal, 2003b).

## **5.5 Limitations and Strengths**

This section of the study details its limitations and strengths. Together, they produce a

fuller picture of the unique contribution that this study makes to the field of kaupapa Māori research and the growing body of literature on Māori and Indigenous psychologies.

#### **5.5.1 Limitations**

*Attrition.* One limitation of the study is the small number of community members who took part in the study as members of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai (n=12), which, in a conventional study would make the findings difficult to generalise to the larger population. On the other hand, collecting data to generalise to the wider population was not an intention of this exploratory study, which was to gain understanding of Māori people's interpretations of ngau whiore/taitōkai tamariki through kōrero pūrākau and its expression through Theatre Marae. However, due to overriding health issues and family commitments, half of the original group withdrew before completing both phases of the study.<sup>151</sup> This meant that in the end, only four of the original members were able to provide deep and detailed feedback about their combined experience of the marae sessions and the theatre production.

*Compromised sources.* In the process of being collected and edited by Eurocentric ethnographers, many of our pūrākau were contaminated by Christian influences that in turn produced distorted messages about Māori culture that have been insidiously relayed back to Māori audiences ever since (Lee-Morgan, 2019). In recognition of this issue, it was decided at the beginning of the study to not rely on one single version of the pūrākau, but to widen our exploration to as many interpretations as were available, including different art-forms. Due to the dearth of reo speakers in the group, however, the majority of the collected works ended up being from English textbooks and children's storybooks.

*Consultation.* Developing and carrying out a performance-based research methodology required extensive and ongoing consultation with stakeholders, community members, potential funders, the theatre company, and the marae; naturally, this was time consuming and incurred personal and financial strain to secure a common

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<sup>151</sup> For health reasons, two others could not participate in the production but attended some rehearsals and provided valuable feedback from their unique perspective as researchers and audience members.

agreement. The additional provisions required by the ethics committee generated more demand on the consultation process, as three of their itemised requirements, although well intentioned, were not realistic for the community context, and in one case was regarded by an important community leader as being treated as a box ticking exercise. This exercise took over a year to bring to fruition, and it became necessary to make up for the time lost to this process by reducing the time allocated towards carrying out the actual study. In future, this type of pressure could be minimised or avoided if a) communities are given sign off privileges after the ethics committee; and b) students whose research hinges on the engagement and agreement of multiple partners are granted more time to undertake the consultation process or, alternatively, do not attract penalties should this necessary process adversely impact on their overall time to completion.

*Recording issues.* Therapeutic theatre aims to provoke the audience or passive bystander into action, that is, to intervene —when in real life situations there was no one to intervene and stop the trauma from unfolding (Johnson, 2010). The combined qualities of ephemerality, immediacy, and liminality in live theatre act to intensify the audience's experience as they work to comprehend the performance they have witnessed, and try to formulate a response to the performers and the rest of the gathering that is both heartfelt and intelligible. The post-show *matapaki* enacts an encouraging therapeutic space for audience members to process and share their here-and-now experiences (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005), and can generate valuable research data regarding the validity and resonance of the piece. In this study however, the ethics committee's stipulation that no filming and stills images could be taken of the show, while intended to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the research *whānau*, also meant that I could not accurately capture valuable audience feedback and analysis of the research. More importantly, members of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai who could not take part in the theatre production and were unable to attend a performance, were also left without a souvenir or recording of their efforts. We (Te Rākau Theatre and I) set out to address this issue by organising a performance for them and the *hau kāinga* at Kōkiri Marae that

would be played by professional actors, however this was scuppered by Covid19.<sup>152</sup>

*Insider-researcher.* It could be construed that the various roles I occupy as a Māori researcher, playwright, psychologist, community member, and programme facilitator locates me as a liability to the integrity of this study. That I, as an insider-researcher, might lack critical distance due to my relationships in the community, and that my analysis could be negatively affected by my subjectivity and bias. The same concern holds in my profession as a registered psychologist where, in the delivery of responsible caring, I am obliged to avoid dual relationships (New Zealand Psychological Society, 2002). However, my professional identity as a Māori psychologist is predicated upon my belonging to and connecting with my hapori, hapū, and iwi. Furthermore, as all Māori researchers undertaking field work in their communities will contend, avoiding dual relationships in a Māori social environment is virtually impossible and counter-intuitive to the cultural mores of Māori society and Indigenous principles that underpin our work. Besides, given the sensitive subject matter of the kaupapa, this study was dependant on my engaging the relationships that I have cultivated through my family violence work in the Hutt Valley and my theatre work in Wellington City. This research would never have taken place had I not been able to do so.

*Audience safety.* While we did all that we could to ensure the well-being of the theatre company and research team, we could not be 100% sure if this was the case for the audience. We tried to minimise the likelihood of audience members being traumatised during the show, and then manage possible incidents by: a) keeping the show as an invite-only event; b) making the subject matter explicit on the invitations and marketing; c) adding trigger warnings and the contact details of local mental health supports on the programme brochure; d) ensuring that one person from the front of house staff remained outside the auditorium to look after anyone who felt compelled to exit the show early; and e) at the end of the evening, performing karakia to formally clear the space and wish everyone a safe journey to their homes. In addition, as everyone made their way out of the theatre, both Jim Moriarty and I remained at the exit

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<sup>152</sup> Despite the disappointment of this outcome, we still plan to remount the show so that we can fulfil our responsibilities to koha back to Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai and Kōkiri Marae. At the time of writing this thesis, we are in the process of securing funding.



to personally thank each person for attending, as well as to make ourselves available as registered health professionals should anyone appear to be in distress.

### 5.5.2 Strengths

*Innovative practice.* An important strength of this study is that this is the first piece of research to be undertaken on the development and implementation of Theatre Marae pedagogy as a research methodology in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It demonstrates how Theatre Marae facilitates a performance-based analysis of pūrākau that not only allows for previously obscured knowledge to surface, but presents us with a creative skillset and lens with which to elude or confront the noxious presence of colonial doctrine that endures in publications of our cultural narratives.

*Knowledge dissemination.* It is imperative that Indigenous researchers endeavour to share research findings and learnings with the community; to not do so would be failure “to act in an Indigenous manner” (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 7). Together, the theatre performance and post-show matapaki presented the research team with an opportunity to share their experiences and findings with the wider community, in an alternative approach to academic journals that was more impactful and accessible. The event also established a platform for advocacy where mōrehu (in both the research team and in the audience) could voice their suggestions for improvements in sexual violence services directly to an invited audience drawn from the government/public services, Māori social services, academia, and the health and arts sectors. Additionally, the setting enabled *whakawhanaungatanga*<sup>153</sup> to take place between representatives from statutory agencies and non-government organisations.

*Cultural restoration.* The study introduced the combined research whānau of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai and Te Rākau to the tradition of kōrero pūrākau and a knowledge source that they had never encountered before. The marae setting provided an opportunity for people to re-engage with tikanga Māori and establish valuable relationships with other mōrehu as part of reconstructing their identity as tangata whenua. These relationships still continue.

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<sup>153</sup> *whakawhanaungatanga* = establish connections/relationships/networks

*Healing outcomes.* Although it was not intended as a therapeutic intervention, the process did produce therapeutic outcomes for members of Kōkirihiā Ngā Puāwai, as attested to in the message that was left in the programme brochure. In addition, they were able to build efficacy in their own selfcare and healing, through creating and personalising their own self-soothing techniques.

*New meaning making.* The arts-based research methodology of Theatre Marae opened up new channels for meaning making that brought together Western and Māori techniques that were informative of each other but nonetheless retained kaupapa Māori as the immovable bedrock. The immediacy of social justice theatre challenged sections of the audience to identify and reflect upon any preconceived and misplaced ideas they might have held about the topic and the artist-community (Malchiodi, 2018). At the same time, and at a deeper level, some themes were presented through ngā mahi a te rēhia (waiata ā-ringā, haka, mōteatea, kōrero) and left untranslated as esoteric messages for those in the audience who *kōrero Māori*.<sup>154</sup>

## 5.6 Conclusion

Indigenous psychology in Aotearoa is connected to Māori aspirations for collective inclusion, development, and flourishing in Te Ao Hurihuri, while maintaining our cultural heritage and identity (Waitoki et al., 2018). These aspirations are being reflected elsewhere; across multiple spaces, and against an increasingly bleak back-drop of irreversible climate change, Indigenous psychologists, academics, researchers, and social justice advocates are calling for a reimagining of Indigenous–Settler relations, theorising that the ongoing well-being of a healthy nation state is entwined with its commitment to securing the health and well-being of its Indigenous communities (P. Dudgeon, personal communication, September 25, 2020). This study is one example of an Indigenous activity to invoke cultural restoration and healing for *iwi taketake*,<sup>155</sup> in this case, for Māori impacted by historic sexual trauma and whose efforts to recover are

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<sup>154</sup> *kōrero Māori* = (colloquial) speak Māori language

<sup>155</sup> *iwi taketake* = Indigenous peoples

complicated by unrelenting socio-economic disadvantage that is fuelled by the enduring legacy of colonisation.

Emerging from a perceived need for kaupapa Māori sexual violence services across the *motu*,<sup>156</sup> this project soon evolved into a journey to participate in the global conversation on decolonising psychology and research, by engaging a Māori performance pedagogy as an analytic tool to investigate the therapeutic potential of our ancient repositories of knowledge. The outcomes of this study revealed insights that are significant for the development of Māori sexual violence services as originally intended, but furthermore make a noteworthy contribution to the pursuit of innovative ways of Indigenous knowledge creation.

#### ***5.6.1 Indigenous arts-based research***

Adair (1999) encourages Indigenous researchers to be problem oriented, rather than method orientated in their work as it “encourages researchers to solve a problem; not to demonstrate their methodological rigour” (p. 412). This stance suits applied research contexts where the goal to solve a local problem can lead to the development of research methods that are accessible to the community, and are validating of their experiences and belief systems. For Indigenous researchers who use arts-based methods, this is a timely reminder to avoid succumbing to methodolatry<sup>157</sup> (Chamberlain, 2000; Janesick, 1994) in an attempt to secure academic legitimacy, lest they end up replicating previous research, or worse, reinforcing the status quo (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Prilleltensky, 1989).

It is right to note however, that over the years, ABR has attracted its share of criticism, including lack of methodological rigour. For example, in their scoping review of arts-based research over the past 20 years, Coemans and Hannes (2017) identified factors that contradict the utility of ABR and its validity in community research, including marginalised populations and Indigenous groups. In particular, they question the extent to which community members are genuinely involved in decision making, note the lack of representation amongst women, and express frustration at the lack of methodological

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<sup>156</sup> *motu* = country

<sup>157</sup> Methodolatry is the overly devout and uncritical adherence to methods.

reflection among researchers, as well as a tendency to privilege interview transcripts and texts as data —rather than the content of the creative work and the artistic process itself. If such uncertainties remain unaddressed, it raises doubts over the suitability of ABR to advance Indigenous aspirations and make a genuine contribution to a decolonised research agenda.

I argue that the research project documented in this thesis is a significant case in point for the potency of Indigenous arts-based research in fulfilling Indigenous research interests when: a) Indigenous ontological and epistemological frameworks are embedded at the centre of the research design; b) the rationale for the research project emerges from an identified community need as opposed to a study imposed from the outside world; c) the chosen art-form is recognised by the community as a valid means of knowledge production and communication of their interests, and; d) Indigenous artist-researchers/community members with expert knowledge of the art-form have key decision making roles in the research team. While the items mentioned here are closely aligned with the existing literature, there is greater emphasis on Indigenous communities and insider-researchers as the *kaitiaki*<sup>158</sup> of ancestral knowledge, and as creatives and knowledge makers in their own right. Their responsibility to the community and the mauri of the collected data should be reflected in their capacity as leaders, decision makers, and quality control specialists whose stewardship of the research findings includes being able to access the institution.

### ***5.6.2 Decolonising methodologies***

This study is transdisciplinary, it sits in an intersectional space between psychology and theatre but is not intended to take apart these disciplines. Nor is it intended to reiterate what is already known in these fields, but to redirect and focus on Māori knowledge, which is best served through a kaupapa Māori lens. Kaupapa Māori is an Indigenous theoretical framework that prioritises Māori knowledge systems and strategies at the core of activity for supporting Māori objectives. Thinking in a kaupapa Māori way is thinking against the grain of what is accepted as normal in the Academy, which has traditionally stripped away cultural integrity for the sake of appearing objective and without bias. As a result, this thesis acknowledges the existence and presence of

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<sup>158</sup> *kaitiaki* = steward, guardian

Western tools and techniques such as dramaturgy, in its capacity to support, add value to or be utilised in Theatre Marae, but not to the extent that it risks taking over as the overarching analytical lens of this work.

That being the case, this study is significant as an example of a transdisciplinary approach in Indigenous research that can lead to the creation and successful implementation of decolonising methodologies and new techniques for Indigenous meaning making. Theatre Marae is an amalgamation of the complementary principles of the marae and theatre worlds but maintains Māori culture and philosophies at its core. Theatre Marae methodology was used to establish a space for creative inquiry that drew on dramaturgy, whare tapere traditions, and pūrākau theory to incorporate performing pūrākau as a viable method of analysis. This approach was noteworthy for its careful mining of potentially compromised source materials to reveal a counter-narrative that elevates the balanced gender relations and collective child-rearing of traditional Māori society as protective factors against family and sexual violence.

#### ***5.6.3 Decolonising psychology***

The same transdisciplinary approach allowed for the combination of current theories in language and cognition, trauma studies, drama therapy, and mātauranga Māori, leading to the development of new therapeutic exercises *te wākāinga* and *nā wai tērā*, which group members customised to meet their personal requirements. The creation of these tools during this project demonstrate the untapped potential of Māori informed interventions that become available to us when we privilege Māori philosophies and kaupapa Māori principles in our therapy work.

#### ***5.6.4 Seeding change***

Another significant finding from this research, is that it demonstrates the enduring power of social justice theatre to make inroads through competing media to reach and create impact on government. The performance season of *The Swing* was framed as an invite-only occasion and was specifically tailored to bring Māori and community NGOs, statutory agencies (in health, justice, social development) and funding bodies together in the studio. This led to the cultivation of new relationships and ongoing

communication across the sector.<sup>159</sup>

### **5.6.5 Decolonising theatre training**

And finally, this project contributes to conversations in decolonising theatre in Aotearoa/New Zealand, by sharing the unique Theatre Marae processes developed by Te Rākau Theatre in its creative practice and training regimen. In doing so, this study sets down a challenge to the enduring Eurocentric philosophies that underpin the arts sector, and is illustrative of the resistance and systemic racism that Māori initiatives face across all sections of society when in pursuit of social justice.

## **5.7 Implications for practice and future research**

Theatre Marae is a robust theatre pedagogy that can offer creative research techniques for projects pursuing Māori aspirations in economic development, self-determination, and community well-being. Possible applications include: a) creating a Māori performance-based group therapy programme; b) exploring *kare-ā-roto*<sup>160</sup> and *hinengaro*;<sup>161</sup> c) codifying Māori theatre practice; d) producing theatre performances for regional tourism and iwi/hapū commemorations; e) applying theatre principles as strategies for learning and teaching te reo Māori; f) investigating Māori understandings of health and embodiment, and; g) researching ancestral pūrākau. To that end, more research should be undertaken to further examine the utility of Theatre Marae pedagogy as a research methodology, and deepen our understanding of the four research pou — especially in relation to the crucial role they play in devising new work and informing a performance analysis of pūrākau.

It would be mischievous to recommend a unique methodology such as Theatre Marae without also accounting for potential issues or barriers. As well as the standard expectations for ethical decision making in Indigenous research design (an excellent description is provided by Archibald, 2008), the following areas specific to Theatre Marae need to be considered prior to implementation:

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<sup>159</sup> Negotiations are currently take place with representatives from Iwi, government departments and at a ministerial level to take *The Swing* and its community messages into statutory agencies and marae.

<sup>160</sup> *kare ā-roto* = emotions, feelings

<sup>161</sup> *hinengaro* = mind, consciousness, intellect

### ***5.7.1 Researcher competence***

Researchers who wish to apply a Theatre Marae framework should be competent in the most basic components of Theatre Marae: te reo, tikanga Māori, dramaturgy, ngā mahi a te rēhia, or establish a research team comprising members who together provide the necessary cover for these skills. After all, an ethically aware and reflective researcher would not carry out a study using psychometrics, factor analysis, randomised controlled testing, or any type of technique if they do not understand its purpose and underlying properties, and are not competent to use it. Art is no different. Theatre is particularly tricky because accomplished practitioners make it look so easy to do—but that is a fundamental aim of the art form: to conceal the systematised pre-planning, theory, and repetitive efforts that work to make the dramatic moment seem natural and in the moment—as if it just happened that way. Future research could follow the training of practitioners as part of a long-term undertaking to establish, spread, and reinforce Theatre Marae pedagogy across different practice contexts, including kaupapa Māori research, drama therapy, community psychology, Māori health and social services, professional theatre, and in performing arts training establishments.

### ***5.7.2 Cost***

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, a live theatre production is extremely expensive to mount, and the full project from inception to closing night can run into tens of thousands of dollars. It is little wonder that theatre has not been a popular choice for Indigenous arts-based research projects so far, with researchers tending to opt for more cost effective methods like Photovoice (Hammond, et al., 2018). Artist-researchers need to factor in production overheads as well as research costs in their funding applications; alternatively they can partner with established theatre companies or work in the co-operative “shared investment and risk” format used by fringe/independent theatre collectives. The possible down side is that researchers must be prepared to share decision making with others who might not possess the same research interests, ethics, or artistic tastes. Naturally, this can bring up the dreaded “creative differences” monster that sabotages many collaborations. On a positive note, however, creative collaborations can also support the researcher to develop skills in communication, cooperation, and management, and increase their professional network for future arts-based research projects.

### 5.7.3 *Pastoral care*

Unless the resulting play is a solo show performed by a researcher happy to forgo high-end production values, theatre production requires a company of cast and crew, administrators, and core creatives to enable the researcher to explore and experience the dramatic possibilities afforded by the art form. Added to the financial cost of appropriately remunerating everybody (whether professional actors or community members), as the person who has designed the study and whose career stands to benefit the most, the researcher is responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of their company. Being situated inside the project, the researcher is also not immune to being triggered by the work. Researchers need to plan for this well in advance of the project, setting appropriate mechanisms and professional supports in place that meet ethical and legal responsibilities. This extra layer of accountability is another reason why researchers might shy away from theatre; however, this can be managed through seeking regular cultural and professional supervision, and including community supports such as local health professionals and organisations as part of pastoral care. Future research relevant to this area includes the development of ethical practices to accurately gauge audience feedback and analysis while also accounting for their safety and well-being.

## 5.8 **Hei whakakapi: Concluding remarks**

As I begin this final reflection, I do so with the awareness that one of the initial concerns of this research was around the lack of kaupapa Māori informed sexual violence interventions within the wider family and sexual violence sector, which I return to now. This study evolved in response to a call in the community for kaupapa Māori sexual violence services, as the government's funding arm for service delivery favours those whose work conforms to expert knowledge and best practice models imported from overseas. This in turn impedes and constrains the tikanga, *mahi*,<sup>162</sup> and organisational resilience of kaupapa Māori services (Te Wiata & Smith, 2016; TOAH-NNEST, n.d.; Wharewera-Mika & McMillan, 2016), which are poorly resourced to relieve the suffering of Māori women and children, and unable to make a significant contribution to reversing the disproportionate swell of Māori victimisation in sexual

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<sup>162</sup> *mahi* = work, job, activity



violence statistics (Fanslow et al., 2007; Mayhew & Reilly, 2007; Te Wiata & Smith, 2016). This project started at the same time as the government established the Joint Venture for Family Violence and Sexual Violence (known henceforth as the joint venture), a partnership of government agencies, Māori and other non-government community services (NGOs) who work in the family and sexual violence space. Since its creation three years ago, however, the joint venture has so far failed to make inroads into fulfilling the purpose for which it was established. This can be directly linked to compromised relations between the joint venture's member agencies, specifically, the resistance among the government agencies to share power with Māori and community NGOs; this has since been highlighted in a critical report released by the Auditor-General:<sup>163</sup>

“To achieve transformational change, everyone involved, from Ministers to agency staff, needs to have a clear and shared understanding of what they are seeking to achieve, their respective roles, and accountabilities. The joint venture also needs to agree with Māori what their partnership means in practice. In our view, the joint venture's partnership with Māori can be successful only when government agencies and the responsible Ministers are realistic and clear about what a partnership means.”

(Controller and Auditor-General, 2021, para. 6–7)

In chapter 3, I explored the issue of power imbalance within the context of this country's arts sector, a contested space where, on the international stage, Māori art and artists are lauded by the government for the cultural value and unique identity they bring to the bicultural brand of Aotearoa/New Zealand, and yet on home ground, struggle to achieve equal footing with better resourced Pākehā artists and companies. This same atmosphere of inequality pervades the family and sexual violence sector, and is facilitated by duplicity within the public services that, on one hand espouses the need to invest in kaupapa Māori solutions to family and sexual violence (Ministry of Social Development, 2017), and on the other is dismissive of these very efforts (Johnston, 2020; Kruger et al., 2004).

Conventional rehabilitative measures continue to focus on punitive arrangements where

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<sup>163</sup> The Auditor-General is the government's mechanism for improving its accountability through auditing and reporting on its agencies and services.

the perpetrator might access rehabilitation as part of a prison sentence, and victims access one-on-one therapy under the ACC sensitive claims programme (Accident Compensation Corporation, 2021). These services are retrospective, based in Western best practice models, and do not consider the wider therapeutic needs, resources, and responsibility of the wider social ecosystem/collective. A kaupapa Māori strategy takes a systems approach that acknowledges the impact of colonisation and historical trauma on intergenerational family and sexual violence, and then, in addition to supporting the individual, also looks to enhance the collective's already existing protective factors to assist individual, whānau, and communal healing (Kruger et al., 2004; Pihama, et al., 2019). Support for this approach is also starting to emerge in the literature on strategies for perpetration prevention (Assini-Meytin et al., 2020; Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2020), but has yet to develop any real traction in government that will lead to transformational change going forward.

Securing alignment between government, academia, health, social services, and the community is a vital, foundational ingredient if this country is to advance anywhere meaningful in addressing this destructive social problem. These segments of the family and sexual violence sector remain disconnected, and the bulk of the work still rests with overburdened communities and under-resourced NGOs. Over the decades, there has been a gradual increase of Māori frontline health workers, policy analysts, ministerial advisers, and department heads in key statutory agencies; however, they are part of a system that was established to disenfranchise Māori and today continues to play a part in the ongoing disparities experienced by our people. It is hard to make change inside the belly of the beast (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

On the other hand, Māori psychologists and researchers who navigate across all these spaces can be valuable conduits to develop the required critical mass of support for kaupapa Māori services. They can protect the integrity of community knowledge as it flows through academic channels and onwards to government and policy, and bear influence on government bodies to reciprocate in the form of appropriate funding, the removal of bureaucratic barriers that reinforce inequity, and the creation of policy that actually enforces the Treaty. While lacking the job security and career advancement opportunities that often draw Māori psychology graduates into the public services or mainstream clinical settings, the community-focused, transformative interests of

kaupapa Māori psychology and research engender a space abound with opportunities to work at the edge of professional practice. In this exciting space of tension and uncertainties, we can contribute to innovations in Indigenous knowledge production, and serve in an authentically Māori way to advance the people's pursuit of collective healing and flourishing.

Beyond the scope of this project, this thesis has been a thinly veiled invitation to Indigenous researchers to consider the prospect of Indigenous performance-based methods as part of their repertoire. In bringing this thesis to a close I hope that, by sharing my research experience, current and future Māori students of psychology might consider engaging in the equally humbling and enriching challenge of kaupapa Māori psychology and research, and invoke their own creative potential to reveal the realms that lie beyond the horizon. *E kore e piri te uku ki te rino.*

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## Appendices

### *Appendix A— Pānui (by helen and powley)*




**PŪRĀKAU CREATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT  
- AN INVITATION**


**We are running storytelling hui, interviews and theatre workshops to explore the pūrākau of Hinefītama and her transformation into Hinenui Te Pō. Our research will help create a live theatre performance of this ancient story that will form part of a community hui on family violence and childhood sexual abuse. We invite people who are interested in contributing to this project as survivors or whānau in recovery from the effects of family violence and childhood sexual abuse, or as community members who are concerned about this issue in our society.**

**If you want to take part in all or part of this research or are curious to know more, please contact Helen at:**

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Theatre  
Since  
1999  
**TE RĀKAU**





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# AN INVALUABLE KAUPAPA THAT IS TOTALLY ENGAGING AT EVERY LEVEL

## THE SWING

Helen Pearse-Otene: Kaituhi, Kaitito Waiata, Kaihuawaere | Writer, Composer & Facilitator

Jim Moriarty: Kaitohu, Kaihuawaere | Director & Facilitator

Aneta Pond: Kaihautū | Producer

Presented by Te Rākau

at Massey University Drama Lab, Wallace St, Entrance A, Block 5, D14, Wellington

From 7 Feb 2020 to 9 Feb 2020

[Approx. 1hr 30min]

Reviewed by John Smythe, 11 Feb 2020

As a Theatre Marae play being presented in a short development season to an invited audience only, this iteration of *The Swing* was not to be reviewed. Then on the day of its premiere, its makers decided it was ready to take its place in the written record of Te Rākau plays by Kaituhi/ Playwright Helen Pearse-Otene, brought to life by Kaitohu/ Director and their Paepae Auaha/ Creative Team and Kaiwhakaari/ Performers (most recently *The Undertow* quartet). Yes indeed, it most certainly does cry out to be acknowledged, celebrated and supported – on behalf of all those it seeks to serve. But first, an awareness of its cultural context and evolution will help us understand how profoundly important and powerful this work is for multiple levels of our social infrastructure.

“Theatre Marae applies the complementary spiritual, social and political concepts of the Greek theatre and Marae into a performance hui,” a programme note reminds us. *The Swing* has evolved from Helen Pearse-Otene’s two decades of working with survivors, perpetrators and family members as a programme facilitator, group therapist, researcher and now as a registered psychologist. It “has come about as a community led response to current thinking in sexual abuse services and therapy practices,” Pearse-Otene notes.



“For most Māori drawn to group settings that I have worked in, they have reported experiences of 1:1 talk therapies being negative, retraumatising, judgemental and culturally irrelevant. Kaupapa Māori group-based therapies and holistic services that are provided in Māori communities such as iwi social services are effective but underfunded (or not funded at all), and do not meet the standards for ACC sensitive claims services.

It appears, then, that while *The Tohunga Suppression Act, 1907* – introduced by James Carroll (known to Māori as Timi Kara) and supported by Apirana Ngata, both later knighted – was repealed by the Maori Welfare Act, 1962, a residue remains that continues to impede the efficacy of tikanga Māori.

“More recent studies in what works best in trauma therapies is complementary with traditional Māori practices that invoke body oriented and group-based approaches to healing,” Pearse-Otene concludes. “This has informed my current research on applying the healing and cultural potential of pūrākau in the context of the whare tapere (traditional house of entertainment).”

The ancient legend (pūrākau) she brings to *The Swing*’s contemporary story of a whānau struggling to recover from the shadow of ngau whiore (incest; sexual abuse) and whakamomori (suicide) recalls the coupling of Tānemahuta – the god of forests and birds – with his daughter Hinetītama, to become the progenitors of humankind. When she realised he was her father, Hinetītama fled in disgust to the underworld and became Hinenuitēpō, the goddess of death. Thus was death brought to mortal beings. (Intriguingly there are resonances here with the Greek legend of King Oedipus and the Christian lore of original sin.)

And so to *The Swing* and this ‘in development’ presentation.

The audience, chatting and waiting in a corridor, is silenced and riveted by the karanga and steady advance of a kāhui of rhythmic poi-wielding wāhine toa (Arihia Hayvice, Nova Te Hāpua and Paige Wilson) led by Hariata Moriarty, who will embody the spirit of Manea in the story to come. Their call is simultaneously a summoning of the life force, a welcome, a challenge and an assertion of mana; of agency reclaimed.

They lead us into the studio space and huddle at the centre as Kaitito/ Ringa Pūoro (composer/musician) Haami Hawkins plucks his guitar and we find our seats on either side of the traverse space. The titular swing takes centre stage, a woman is hoisted onto it and a disembodied male voice seductively croons the old 1918 pop song ‘K-K-K-Katy’ – which Kath (Maria-Rose MacDonald) hates. And the Kāhui and Manea remain watchful, as they do throughout, a-tremble with tāwiri.

The posturing, taiaha-brandishing man who advances on Kath turns out to be Rewa (Manuel Solomon). A blend of stylised and relatively realistic action evokes the past

and present, the living and dead, the ancient pūrākau and two much more recent cases of sexual abuse.

Ingeniously crafted to avoid expository dialogue, linear narrative and any hint of simplistic moralising, the action – enhanced by the choreography of Kimberley Skipper and Manuel Solomon, and Hawkins’ music – swirls and spirals moko-like (or like a twisting, swaying swing?) to encapsulate the stories.

Thus it emerges that Rewa, the protective older brother of Kath, left their apparently happy childhood and home to be with his Pākehā partner Jen (Angie Meikeljohn), with whom he fathered Manea and Luke (Tamati Moriarty). But Kath had been subjected to sexual abuse by their father, and by old Mr Goff (a local Town Councillor) and their mates. And Rewa has since gone on to abuse his own daughter, Manea. The sins of the ancestors and father have been visited on new generations.

And Manea has taken her own life.

The ‘present’ action, two years on, sees Jen and Luke bring Manea’s ashes to Kath so they can be interred at the urupā – via the marae for a proper tangihanga, Kath insists. When Rewa arrives, unwelcome, having completed a sexual offenders treatment programme that has earned him early release, his redemption is by no means a foregone conclusion; nothing will bring back Manea. Any inclination we might feel towards giving Rewa a break – especially given Solomon’s compelling performance – is brought up short when Luke blames his mother, Jen, for “not being a proper wife”.

There is still lots to be resolved and much healing work to be done in this community.

More prosaically, Brendan Goff (Noel Hayvice), the small-town lawyer, and Mike (Saul Kolio), the local cop, drop by to convey the council’s concerns about the safety of the swing on the old macrocarpa tree. I see this as a metaphor for the issue or problem many would just like to go away; to be consigned to darkness and forgotten. But of course it doesn’t work that way.

Humour born of insight and truth offsets the pain, anguish and inevitable confrontations. MacDonald and Meikeljohn especially bring deep feeling and great strength to their interactions with Solomon’s utterly human Rewa. And the whole cast is powerfully aligned to the purpose of this mahi – which doesn’t end when the play concludes.

While many people’s experiences over many years have informed the making of *The Swing*, its presentation as marae theatre opens a space for “Bringing this talk into the world of light,” as Jim Moriarty puts it, “that we may help to unravel the hurt and support safer pathways forward for everyone affected by ngau whiore and whakamomori.”

Helen Pearse-Otene is a registered and practising psychologist pursuing her PhD and Jim is a registered psychiatric nurse. They have spent the last few months working

therapeutically with a group of women who were sexually harmed by family members, in response-based practices, exploring ways of moving forward. And here they make themselves available to anyone who needs support or who wants to be connected with the appropriate support communities.

The creative mahi of Lisa Maule (Kaiwhakahaere Whakaaturanga/ Kaihoahoa Tūrama: Production Manager & Lighting Designer), Tony De Goldi (Kaihoahoa Pai Whakaari: Set Designer), Cara Louise Waretini (Kaihoahoa Kākahu: Costume Designer) and Aneta Pond (Kaihautū: Producer) must also be acknowledged, along with everyone else in the Te Rākau whānau.

As theatre, *The Swing* is totally engaging at every level. As a kaupapa for ‘breaking the silence’ it is invaluable. It deserves unstinting support and a long life on marae, in community halls, on campuses – and in theatres and at festivals that see their roles as truly serving the interests of their communities.

The Swing

by

Helen Pearse-Otene

## CHARACTERS

**REWA:** *(sometimes adult, sometimes child). Has been in jail and a treatment programme for sex offenders.*

**JEN:** *Rewa's wife. Wherever she goes, she carries a woven box covered by a baby blanket.*

**KATH:** *(sometimes adult, sometimes child). Rewa's sister. Is caring for their elderly father, Syd.*

**LUKE:** *(Teenage boy). Rewa and Jen's second child.*

**MIKE:** *The local community constable.*

**BRENDAN:** *A neighbour and rūnanga member.*

**MANEA:** *(A ghost). Rewa and Jen's daughter.*

**PAPA SYD:** *(60s–70s). The unseen patriarch of the family; Rewa and Kath's father. He is represented by an empty wheelchair.*

## SETTING

*A run down, rural town called Te Maruāpō or Marupo. There are shops, a marae and a new hotel. On the outskirts of the town is an old cottage. Down its gravel driveway is a giant macrocarpa tree with a tyre swing suspended from a branch.*

## TIME

*The Present — a day in the life of a New Zealand family; and the past — what happened to bring them to this day.*

## ACT I

## SCENE 1

*Prelude. REWA stands alone on the marae, preparing to deliver a speech. The others gather nearby. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out his cue cards. He prepares to read, then changes his mind and puts the cards away.*

**REWA :** Let me tell you the story of when death came to the world of people, the reason why one day we all must die. In days past when the earth and sky were newly ripped apart and still grieving for one another, there was a beautiful girl borne from the union of the Forest God and the Red Earth Woman. Her name was Hinetitama, the Dawn Maiden; and her father loved her so....

*The others join with REWA, facing outwards with arms outstretched —like a tree....they begin to sway with the sound of a swing moving to and fro in the breeze....*

*END PRELUDE*

## SCENE 1

*Everybody is entangled together, then one by one they free themselves from the tree and exit, leaving REWA and KATH still fused back to back, swaying. A bell rings.*

**V/O:** “Katie! Katie! Where are you girl?”

*REWA and KATH freeze, and grab for one another. They look around for the source of the voice. The bell rings again.*

**V/O:** *(Sings)* “K-K-K Katie, beautiful Katie; you’re the only G-G-G girl that I adore. When the moon shines over the cow shed, I’ll be waiting by the k-k-k kitchen door.”

**KATH:** *(Attempting to kiss REWA)* Rewa, sweetheart, no.

**REWA:** Get off me! Ya retard!

*REWA pushes KATH to the ground and she tries to reach out for him as he backs away.*

What’s wrong with you?

**KATH:** No, no. I’m sorry. Don’t leave —please —you promised you wouldn’t leave me —Rewa!

**REWA:** I gotta get outta here. Sorry Katie.

**KATH:** But you promised! Rewa!

*REWA exits, closely followed by the sound of a door slamming. KATH curls up into a ball. The bell rings. KATH uncurls herself and stretches. She has been sleeping. She checks the time and sighs, stands up and dusts herself off. She is different somehow. Older. The bell rings again.*

**KATH:** Yeah, yeah. I heard ya the first time. I'm coming, you old bastard.

*Then she starts walking to the house. Exits.*

*END SCENE*

**ACT I**

**SCENE 2**

*LUKE is playing his X-Box game in the hotel room. JEN enters, carrying a woven box covered with a blanket. She is closely followed by MANEA.*

**JEN:** This is nice, isn't it? Now where shall I put you?

**LUKE:** *(Looking up)* I'm sorted already, Mum, and I put your bags in the double room —

**JEN:** Sorry, darling, I didn't mean you.

**LUKE:** *(Grunts and goes back to his game)* Whatever.

*JEN places the box in a prime spot in the room, and MANEA sits next to it.*

**JEN:** There you go, baby girl. *(Looking around)* So much space. From the road it looks smaller, doesn't it? Are you sure this is the right room?

**LUKE:** Hm-hm.

**JEN:** Just seems a bit extravagant for two people, that's all. Oh my gosh, look at that gift basket.

**LUKE:** I did. There's some tickets for a bungy jump and a girly day spa.

**JEN:** Really? Real French champagne! *(Starts to exit)* It must be a mistake. I'll check with that Brendan guy later.

*She exits. Then LUKE hears a squeal of delight and JEN rushes back in.*

**JEN:** Or maybe I'll have a bubble bath in that ginormous tub and then check with Brendan. I hope it's not too expensive. Thank goodness we're not paying for it. Or we'd be eating marmite and toast for a month.

**LUKE:** It'd be a nice change from two minute noodles.

**JEN:** Now, toilet bag...toilet bag...

**LUKE:** It's in the red suitcase.

**JEN:** I know —red suitcase...Where's the red suitcase? Luke did you bring in the luggage like I told you?

**LUKE:** Yes.



**JEN:** Luke...Luke Te Pōhatu —

**LUKE:** Yes, I said. The double room, Mum —faaah —

**JEN:** Ok, ok —no need to over react. I'm just asking you a question. You spend too much time on that game —all hours of the day and night — wake up cranky in the morning, just like your — *(She checks herself)*

**LUKE:** My what? Go on, Mum, say it.

**JEN:** No. because you're nothing like him. *(Kissing him on the forehead)* I don't want you being on that game all week.

**LUKE:** What else am I gonna do —we're in the wops.

**JEN:** We didn't come all the way down here to feed your gaming habit. If we have visitors, you put that game away and you talk to them. And I better not see you playing it on the marae.

**LUKE:** Hm—hm.

**JEN:** Luke.

**LUKE:** Yep.

**JEN:** Luke. Look at me.

**LUKE:** *(Looks at her)* Yes, Mother.

**JEN:** I know it's been hard going for you, but we're nearly there. We're nearly there, Son. All I need is for you to hold on for a few more days, that's all. After this week, it'll just be you and me.

**LUKE:** I know.

**JEN:** You're the man of the house, my rock —

**LUKE:** You promised you wouldn't say that anymore.

**JEN:** Yes, I did. I'm sorry. I'm tired from the driving. How about you go out and get some fresh air —walk around a bit and check out the village.

**LUKE:** That'll only take thirty seconds.

*There is a knock at the door.*

**JEN:** *(Exiting)* You're not wrong there. Still, it might be good for you.

**LUKE:** *(Calling after her)* Na, I'm alright here.

*JEN re-enters with MIKE.*

**JEN:** Look who's come to visit.

**LUKE:** *(Barely looking up)* Hey Mike, how's it?

**JEN:** Luke, what did I say before?

*LUKE grunts then stands. He and MIKE hongi and harirū. MANEA stands and approaches, then stands at LUKE'S shoulder.*

**LUKE:** Kia ora Matua Mike *(Hello Uncle Mike)*.

**MIKE:** Kia ora e tama *(Hello lad)*. Jeez you're turning into a brickhouse. What's your Mum been feeding you?

**LUKE:** Two minute noodles.

**MIKE:** Yeah, right.

*LUKE and JEN share a look.*

**LUKE:** Are you still a cop?

**MIKE:** Are you still a hamburger freak?

**LUKE:** Yep.

**MIKE:** *(Gives LUKE some money)* Go on. Five doors down your left. They make a mean as double cheese and bacon burger. And they've got two proper species games.

**LUKE:** Which ones?

**MIKE:** *Defender and Phoenix*. Real old school.

**LUKE:** Antiques, more like. Well Mum, you got your wish. I'm going for a feed. Cheers, Mike. See ya, Mum.

*LUKE starts to exit, closely followed by MANEA.*

**MIKE:** Luke. Kei tērā atu o te tatau he ipu wai māori *(There is a water container on the other side of the door)*.

*LUKE and MANEA turn back.*

**LUKE:** Eh?

**MIKE:** Me whakanoa koe ki te wai (*You should do a cleansing with water*).

**LUKE:** Oh yeah.

*LUKE exits. MANEA reaches for him, then retreats to the box.*

**JEN:** Thanks. He was starting to make a dent in the couch.

**MIKE:** How are you, Jen?

**JEN:** I'm good, I'm good. Want a cuppa?

**MIKE:** No, I can't stay long. I was checking in to see if you've settled in ok —

**JEN:** Yeah, we're all packed in. That —what's his name —Brendan. He's organised everything for us. They're spoiling us actually —I mean, look at this place —it must be costing them a packet.

**MIKE:** It is. But you let that committee spoil you as much as you want. If you want anything, anything at all, you ring Brendan and he'll sort it.

**JEN:** But Mike —

**MIKE:** I'm serious. It's all taken care of. You guys deserve the best. The very best. (*Spying the woven box*) There she is.

*MIKE approaches the box and gently taps it. MANEA reacts. As he speaks to the box in te reo, MANEA begins to fold in on herself and go to sleep.*

**MIKE:** E hine, kua roa tō hokinga mai ki te kāinga. Ākuanei, ka okioki koe ki te taha o ngā tūpuna me ngā whanaunga. Auē, ka pupuke noa ake te pōuri i roto i a ahau. Moe mai rā (*Girl, you've taken ages to return home. Soon you will be sleeping beside your ancestors and relatives. Such sadness welling up within me. Sleep on*).

*MIKE removes his hand from the box, and as the others begin to speak in English, MANEA stirs and becomes alert again.*

(*To JEN*) This has been a long time coming.

**JEN:** Two years. A lifetime really.

**MIKE:** Thank you for making the decision to bury her here. For letting Rewa be part of it.

**JEN:** He's still her father, and this is his home. And to be honest, Luke chose to bring her back, not me.

**MIKE:** I heard about the coroner's findings. Dredging it all up again. That was cold.

**JEN:** He was just doing his job, Mike. I was numb by then, anyway. It was nothing I didn't already know —just that I'd been trying to shield Luke from it, you see. He didn't know the full story. I didn't want my son covered in all that muck. But that day, when he sat in the office and heard the Coroner describe how Manea killed herself, and why, and all the things her father had done to her since when she was a wee girl —his face. The rage and hate in his face. But not at his father —no, not towards Rewa. But to me —me, for lying to him. And that's when I knew that I'd lost my little boy. I let both of my children down.

*They hug then separate.*

**MIKE:** Manea's home now, Jen. We'll take care of her. You can make time for you and Luke.

**JEN:** That's what I told him. And I want to believe it. But there'll always be a void. And it's too big for me and Luke to fill it.

**MIKE:** Don't stop trying.

**JEN:** Hell no, I'll never stop trying. You know what? I'm going to have a long soak in the bath, then catch up on some bad tv.

**MIKE:** You do that. I'm going to hang out with Luke for a while.

*MIKE exits. JEN picks up the box and begins to exit the other way. MANEA follows her.*

**JEN:** Come on darling girl. You can't stay out here by yourself.

*They exit.*

*END SCENE*

**ACT I****SCENE 3**

*The sitting room of the old house. KATH enters, pushing an empty wheelchair. She stops and looks out the window.*

**KATH:** How's that then Dad? Dad? You deaf bugger —DAD, ARE YOU COMFY? Good... Yeah, you're right, it's gonna be a cracker of a day. I might get out the back today and clean up the section before Jen and Luke turn up... Yes, I told you they were coming today... Yes I did... I did so! Oh, whatever Dad... Why don't you ask her when they come for tea? ... Yes they are, I'm doing a bolognaise for Luke... You told me to invite them. You don't remember do you? *(She smashes her fist into the chair)* No one around here bloody remembers... What was that?... You remember now. Good. Right, I'm going out the back, ok Dad? You stay there and watch the day go past, and if you need me, just use the bell ok? OK. And you tell me if you see anyone coming up the drive ok? *(Kisses the chair)* Love ya. *(Starts walking away)* I'm going to the shops later on if you want me to get anything for ya —I'll make a list.

*The sound of a car pulling up the gravel driveway, and a car door opening and closing.*

Who the hell is that? *(Looks out and then lowers herself down to the level of the chair)* Bugger, it's your bloody neighbour, Raymond Gough's boy. Jeez Dad, I told you to tell me if you see anyone... Dad... DAD... WELL USE THE BELL *(Mimes ringing a bell)* THE BELL. *(Sniffs)* Ugh, have you crapped yourself again?... *(She hits the chair)* Don't lie, you did, didn't you? That's all I need. Well you're going to have to sit in it till after I've sorted out the Gough boy... No, it's the eldest one — Brendan, I think his name is... I don't know. He came round last week with some fullas from the Residents' Association. They wanted to talk to you about taking down the swing from the old macrocarpa... Yes, your tree... Well, some Jack Nohi kid from down the road tried out the swing and fell off —broke his collarbone... Good job alright. Touching things that don't belong to them... No, they don't make kids like they used to, eh Dad? Not hard mongrels like me and Rewa. Don't worry Dad. I'll sort him out for ya —what's he doing now? He's untangling the swing. The bugger's getting on it! Oh no you don't *(Straightens up and shakes her fist)* Hey! Get off it you fat bah —oh he can't hear me. Don't you worry, Dad, I'll get rid of him... *(Starts pushing the wheelchair)* No, I'll clean you up later —it's back in the room for you... Yes, the room... Well you shoulda thought about that before you went and crapped yourself, eh. Go on, off you go.

*KATH exits with the wheelchair. The scene switches to the tree at the end of the driveway, where BRENDAN has been playing on the swing. He is elated and breathing heavily. He turns around to face an angry KATH who is wielding a broom. She swings it at him and he ducks.*

**KATH:** Get off my property!

**BRENDAN:** Hey —what gives? Katie —

**KATH:** Don't call me that! (*Hits him*)

**BRENDAN:** What's wrong with you?

**KATH:** I told you last time, you and your Marupo residents-association-whatever-mates are not welcome here. (*Advances on him with the broom*) You keep away from my swing!

**BRENDAN:** I'm not here about that —bloody dangerous thing.

**KATH:** It's not dangerous. You've just been away too long, you've turned into a bloody townie wuss.

**BRENDAN:** Have not. Actually I —I just had a go on it.

**KATH:** I know. I saw you.

**BRENDAN:** Yeah well, like I said, I just had a go on it and —well, it brought back all these memories —

*Kath swings the broom at BRENDAN and he catches the end of it and they fight over it.*

Now look here Katie —

**KATH:** How many times do I have to tell ya, don't call me that!

**BRENDAN:** You're crazy!

**KATH:** You're trespassing!

**BRENDAN:** This isn't your property —the title's in your father's name.

**KATH:** You bloody sneaky bugger. Using your connections and the council to snoop on us are ya?

**BRENDAN:** I didn't come here to talk to you. I want to talk to your dad. Where is he? Where's Syd?

**KATH:** Who's asking?

**BRENDAN:** What are you on about?

**KATH:** I mean, is it Brendan Gough, the treasurer of the Marupo Residents Association, or Brendan Gough the volunteer firefighter, the community youth worker, the newspaper editor, the mayoral candidate — I'm not voting for you, by the way —

**BRENDAN:** I'm here on behalf of the rūnanga.

**KATH:** What? That load of old windbags. What do they want?

**BRENDAN:** Well it's a sensitive issue and we want to speak in person to Syd.

**KATH:** We? You're not on the rūnanga.

**BRENDAN:** Didn't you read the pānui?

**KATH:** No.

**BRENDAN:** I was voted on last month.

**KATH:** You're not even Māori.

**BRENDAN:** Yes I am.

**KATH:** Since when?

**BRENDAN:** I am a little bit. On my mother's side. You're surprised. See, you don't know everything.

**KATH:** You don't even act Māori.

**BRENDAN:** I'm taking night classes in te reo.

**KATH:** Great. That's all we need around here: a born again hori for a neighbour. I can't wait to see your Pākehā mates from the city come out to your place for a boil up and a sing-along in the woolshed. Your father would be turning in his grave.

**BRENDAN:** Make fun of me all you want. Not that I have to explain myself to you. According to the rūnanga, my journey to know who I am is the story they want to spread to other Māori in Te Maruāpō, people who we want to draw back to the marae. Like your whānau.

**KATH:** That'll be a cold day in Hell.

**BRENDAN:** You're not keen —

**KATH:** And for good reason.

**BRENDAN:** Ok, so I don't know much about how things were done before. Maybe there was some financial mismanagement here and there —

**KATH:** I'd say it was a bit more than that.

**BRENDAN:** Well, unlike you, instead of moaning about it, I'm picking up the wero to change things around here.

**KATH:** You're dreaming. You're only one person. That lot will never change.

**BRENDAN:** People can change.

**KATH:** Really? How do you know? Have you seen that happen?

**BRENDAN:** What do you mean?

**KATH:** What you just said. Can people change —I mean, *really* change?... You don't even know.

**BRENDAN:** What I do know is that the rūnanga welcomed me with open arms. And I am honoured to be doing my bit for our people.

*MIKE enters.*

**KATH:** Listen to it: "our people". That rūnanga's never done anything for us —rotten to the core. And as for that marae... Never mind, good luck with it anyway. (*Advances on Brendan in a threatening manner*) See you round, or should I say, ka kite anō cuzzie-bro. (*She spots MIKE and immediately starts sweeping the ground*) Hello Constable Huaki, Te Tuarua (*The Second*), you're just in time to escort this dreamer away.

**MIKE:** Sorry Kath, I'm on annual leave.

**KATH:** Nice for some. Why are you here then?

**BRENDAN:** (*Extending his hand*) Mike. Kia ora e hoa (*G'day mate*).

*They shake hands.*

**MIKE:** Sorry I'm late.

**BRENDAN:** Kei te pai, kei te pai (*That's alright*).

*They hongi.*

**KATH:** Kua whakaruaki ahau (*I feel nauseous*).



**BRENDAN:** Sorry what was that?

**MIKE:** Kath, kia atawhai tō ngākau ki a ia. Kei te mōhio ahau ka nui tō mauāhara ki tana whānau (*Kath, be kind to him. I know you bear great ill feeling to his family*) —

**KATH:** Tika tēnā (*You're right*).

**MIKE:** Engari, he tangata pai ia (*But he is a good person*).

*Brendan gets out his phone and starts tapping into his Māori language app.*

**BRENDAN:** Aroha mai (*Forgive me*), you're going a bit fast for me —

**KATH:** Nērā? Kua wareware i a koe ko wai tana pāpā (*Is that right? Have you forgotten who his father is?*)

**MIKE:** Kāo. Kei te maumahara tonu. Ahakoa tērā, ko Brendan he tangata rerekē —he rerekē atu ia i tana pāpā (*No. I still remember. Despite that, Brendan is a different person —he's different from his dad*).

**BRENDAN:** (*Tapping into his phone*) Re-re-kē.

**KATH:** Āe, he kūare nōna (*Yes, because he's ignorant*).

**MIKE:** Āe —pea (*Yes —maybe*).

**BRENDAN:** “Rerekē: different.” So I am different. Well, yes. I suppose I am.

**KATH:** Why are you here, Mike?

**MIKE:** I came to tautoko (*support*) Brendan.

**BRENDAN:** Kia ora (*Thanks*).

**KATH:** Typical! You're back in town for what —five minutes —and already you got an old boys' network going on. You're gonna keep the police in your pocket by getting onside with the only cop in the district, eh Gough?

**BRENDAN:** What?

**KATH:** You learn that off your old man did ya?

**MIKE:** Kath!

**BRENDAN:** Just what have you got against my father?

**KATH:** Where shall I start?

**MIKE:** Kath, no —don't. We're here to talk to Syd.

**KATH:** He's not here.

**BRENDAN:** I saw his ute parked around the back.

**KATH:** You sneaking around our house now? *(To MIKE)* Officer, arrest this pervert.

**MIKE:** Kath, we need to speak to your father.

**KATH:** You can't.

**BRENDAN:** Why not?

**KATH:** Because he's dead.

**MIKE:** Syd's dead?

**KATH:** That's what I said.

**BRENDAN:** You're lying.

**KATH:** Don't believe me then. I'm used to it.

**MIKE:** Kath —

**KATH:** Kaua e āwanga *(Don't worry)*. I'm just messing with ya. Syd had a fall a couple of days ago and the doctor's put him on bed rest. He'll be right in a few days and back to his old self. Till then, can I pass on a message?

**BRENDAN:** It's a request for a hui: Syd, you, the rūnanga —

**KATH:** I told you, we don't want nothing to do with the rūnanga!

**MIKE:** And Rewa.

**KATH:** Rewa? What about Rewa?

**MIKE:** You know he's out now, don't you?

**KATH:** Yeah. Jen called me. She and Luke are bringing Manea's ashes back. We're gonna put them with my Nan in the urupā.

**BRENDAN:** Yes, now about that —

**KATH:** What about *that*? *(To MIKE)* Mike, what's going on?

**MIKE:** That's why we're here. The rūnanga —specifically the marae committee —want to discuss how to do things right by your whānau. And under tikanga.

**KATH:** What?... Oh, I see. They're not going to let her into the urupā are they?

**MIKE:** Not without going onto the marae first.

**KATH:** Bloody hypocrites! Since when did the marae committee start giving a toss about dead teenagers, eh? That urupā's crammed with car wrecks and teen suicides —and I don't remember any of them getting a proper tangi. Why us all of a sudden?

**BRENDAN:** Because it's time we stepped up to the plate to take responsibility for our community.

**KATH:** More like take control.

**BRENDAN:** We want to do things properly. We're going to welcome Manea and the whānau back to the marae. We'll do a proper tangihanga. Three days.

**KATH:** We can't afford it.

**BRENDAN:** The rūnanga's looking after the costs.

**MIKE:** And before you ask, yes, both Jen and Rewa have agreed to it.

**KATH:** Since when does Rewa get a say in all this?

**MIKE:** Come on Kath, he's still her father.

**KATH:** It's his fault she's dead. Hei aha te pono (*Never mind the truth*). You've got it all worked out then. You don't need a hui with Syd. He didn't really know his mokos anyway.

**BRENDAN:** Rewa's asked to have a meeting with him on the marae.

**KATH:** What's he up to?... No. No, he wouldn't. Rewa wouldn't do that. He hates that marae as much as I do.

**MIKE:** To be fair, Kath, you haven't been there for a while. Things are different now.

**BRENDAN:** Rerekē.

**KATH:** Is that right? (*To MIKE*) So when does my precious brother arrive?

*MIKE and BRENDAN look at each other.*

**MIKE:** Rewa's been here since last Friday.

**KATH:** And no one bothered to tell me.

**BRENDAN:** He said he didn't want to cause you any trouble.

**KATH:** How would you know? You mates with him now —no, don't even answer that. *(To MIKE)* Why didn't he call me? Why didn't *you* call me? And if you're on leave, who'll be keeping tabs on him?

**BRENDAN:** We will be.

**KATH:** Who's *we*? Not your neighbourhood watch group. Tell them not to bother —their children are safe. Rewa's not your typical kiddy fiddler —he only shits in his own nest. And look what happened. His family's fucked. Forever fucked!

*Pause.*

Where's he staying then?

**BRENDAN:** Next door to the marae, in one of the papa-kāinga flats.

**KATH:** I don't believe this.

**BRENDAN:** Rest assured, our social services people are looking after him. Rewa's being supported.

**KATH:** Not by family. He's my brother. In spite of what he's done —of everything that's happened —he should be here with us. Tell him —tell him from me —to come over. There's plenty of room. Tell him he can stay for as long as he likes. It would be good to see him.

**BRENDAN:** Sure. *(Offering Kath a business card)* Here's my number —when Syd's better he can give me a call.

**KATH:** *(Taking card and reading it)* "Brendan Gough, member, Marupo Pet Rock Appreciation Society." You don't say.

**BRENDAN:** Sorry, wrong one.

*BRENDAN takes back the card, reaches into his pocket, pulls out a small deck of business cards then shuffles through them until he finds the one he wants to give to KATH.*

**KATH:** *(Taking new card and reading it)* “Brendan Gough, kaitakawaenga, mema-poari mō Te Rūnanga o Ngā Manawhenua o Te Maruāpō.” How did you fit all those words into such a tiny space? Flash alright. Always wondered where our Treaty Settlement money was going.

**MIKE:** Come on Kath. It’s not like that anymore.

**KATH:** I’ll believe it when I see it.

**BRENDAN:** And you will, when you come to the hui.

**KATH:** Hey I didn’t say I was coming —

**BRENDAN:** *(Exiting)* Ka rawe *(Awesome)*! Call me and I’ll give you a personal tour. Ka kite anō *(See you later)* Katie.

*BRENDAN exits.*

**KATH:** *(Calling after him)* How many times do I have to tell you. The name’s Kath. Idiot.

**MIKE:** Kia ngāwari *(Take it easy)*, Kath. He’s trying —which is more than we can say for a lot of folks around here.

**KATH:** I liked him better when he was white.

**MIKE:** Me haere ahau *(I’d better go)*. Give my regards to Syd.

*MIKE exits, leaving KATH alone looking at the card. She walks over to the swing and pushes it, then catches it on the return. She pushes it again, and again....*

*END SCENE*

**ACT I****SCENE 4**

*... One summer's day in the distant past. KATH is a girl. She half-heartedly pushes the swing and catches it on her return, while reading the card. When the swing doesn't return she looks up to see a boy, her brother REWA holding the swing. She tucks the card into her top.*

**KATH:** Rewa! About time. I've been waiting for ages.

**REWA:** Oh yeah.

**KATH:** Where've you been?

**REWA:** None of your business. You're not my mother.

**KATH:** Tell that to Dad.

**REWA:** Retard.

**KATH:** You're the retard. So where'd you go?

**REWA:** I was down the creek with Michael Huaki.

**KATH:** Doing what?

**REWA:** Nothing.

**KATH:** *(Sniffing him)* You had a smoke.

**REWA:** No I didn't.

**KATH:** Liar, liar, pants on fire!

**REWA:** Where's Dad?

**KATH:** Inside.

**REWA:** Is he drunk?

**KATH:** Yep. Michael's dad brought him and Mr Gough home and left them on the couch. And then Mr Gough woke up and —

**REWA:** Did he touch you?

**KATH:** No.

**REWA:** Katie...

**KATH:** No Rewa.

*REWA grabs hold of KATH'S hair.*

**REWA:** Don't lie –

**KATH:** I said *no*! He woke up and went home. Don't!

*He lets her go and she hits him.*

But he said if I ever need help, then I should ring him.

**REWA:** No, you ring the cops.

**KATH:** No smarty, he said Constable Huaki's too busy, and we should go next door. See?

*KATH pulls out the card and gives it to REWA who reads it.*

**REWA:** He's the lawyer for the council and the marae.

**KATH:** And sometimes he works at the court too. That means he knows how to put people in jail. So there.

**REWA:** I don't like how he looks at you.

**KATH:** Looking doesn't mean anything.

**REWA:** And he's mates with Dad.

**KATH:** So? One day I'm going to put Dad in jail.

**REWA:** Doubt it.

**KATH:** I will. He's not allowed to do what he's doing to us. One day, I'm going to tell, and he's gonna go to jail —you just watch me.

**REWA:** Oh yeah, then social welfare will come and get us. Nah, we should run away again.

**KATH:** But my idea's better.

**REWA:** We'll run away —and we won't stop till we get to a big town —like Greymouth. And we'll hitch-hike up the coast to the ferry. We'll need money.

**KATH:** Mr Gough's got heaps of paper money in his wallet. He dropped it all on the floor and asked me to bend over and pick it up for him.

**REWA:** Did he now?

**KATH:** Yep, and then he let me count it for him. He's rich as.

**REWA:** I've gotta get outta here.

**KATH:** Promise you won't leave me here.

**REWA:** Promise.

*They share a pinkie handshake. The bell rings. And a voice starts singing the K-K-K-Katie song.*

**KATH:** He's awake. And he's angry. He wants to see me first.

**REWA:** Hide that card. Katie—I said, hide that card.

*KATH is about to put it back in her top but REWA stops her.*

No. He'll find it there.

*KATH thinks for a second then tries to put it down the front of REWA'S trousers but he stops her.*

**REWA:** No. Not there.

*The bell is ringing. KATH bends down and tucks the card into REWA'S pocket. They hold hands for a moment and she kisses him.*

**KATH:** Coming Dad! *(Exits)*

*REWA pushes the swing, then catches it on the return. He pushes it again, and again....*

*END SCENE*



**ACT I****SCENE 5**

*...The Present Day. Adult REWA is pushing and catching the swing. He is memorising a speech written on cue cards. MANEA enters and screams in silence at him. Then she approaches him and attacks him. REWA falls to the ground.*

**REWA:** *(Standing up)* What the —

*MANEA knocks him to the ground and attacks him again. REWA curls up in a foetal position. MANEA exits towards her grandfather's house as LUKE enters.*

**LUKE:** *(Seeing REWA)* Dad! Dad! Are you ok?

**REWA:** Hey is that Luke? Luke my boy.

*LUKE helps REWA to his feet and REWA puts his cards away.*

Thank you, Son. Don't know what happened there. I was trying to memorise my kōrero and... hei aha *(never mind)*.

*Pause.*

Well, got a hug for your old man then?

**LUKE:** Yeah. Hi Dad.

*They hug, then separate into a handshake. REWA pats his son on the shoulders and arms.*

**REWA:** My boy, look at you. Jeez, you're getting taller.

**LUKE:** Nah, I think you're getting shorter.

**REWA:** You reckon? It's good to see you — good to see you, Son. How's your mother?

**LUKE:** She's good. Are you staying at Papa Syd's?

**REWA:** No. I'm by the marae. I was just stopping in to see your Auntie Kath.

**LUKE:** True? We're having dinner there tonight.

**REWA:** Oh. Is your mum around?

**LUKE:** Nah. She's about five minutes away.

**REWA:** Right. *(Making to leave)* Hey, I just forgot something I was supposed to do back at the marae. Tell Auntie Kath I'll be over tomorrow.

**LUKE:** We're staying at the new hotel. You should come 'round.

**REWA:** I don't think that's a good idea.

**LUKE:** We can go out for a burger.

**REWA:** No Son.

**LUKE:** Why not? Mum doesn't have to come.

**REWA:** I said *no*.

**LUKE:** You mean, Mum said no. She won't let me do anything.

**REWA:** She's just trying to keep you safe.

**LUKE:** From what? You never hurt me.

**REWA:** I could've.

**LUKE:** But you're different now. I can tell.

**REWA:** Can you? Luke, you were only four when I went away. You can't remember.

*JEN enters unseen, carrying the woven box. When she recognises REWA she freezes, then turns away to leave. But then she thinks better of it and remains to witness the exchange.*

**LUKE:** I remember some things. Like going to the beach... coming out here... you pushing us on the swing, and taking us to the woolshed.

**REWA:** I never took you to the woolshed.

**LUKE:** Yes you did. You let me ride on your shoulders and I hit my head on the door.

**REWA:** That was Manea, not you.

**LUKE:** Weird. I'm sure it was me.

**REWA:** No Son.

**LUKE:** Really?

*REWA nods his head. The truth dawns on LUKE.*

Oh... Is that one of the places where you... where you two...

**REWA:** Yes.

**LUKE:** I guess I heard so many stories over the years, I must've got it mixed up with my own memories. My bad.

**REWA:** No. My bad.

**LUKE:** Matua Mike told me you did a special programme for sex offenders. Did it cure you?

**REWA:** I wish. I don't know. I mean, I feel better, but... I've still got a long way to go, Son.

**LUKE:** But you'll be able to come home soon, eh?

**REWA:** No. It doesn't work like that.

**LUKE:** But you've done your time!

**REWA:** Son —

**LUKE:** It's Mum, isn't it? She said you can't come back.

**REWA:** I haven't spoken to your Mum —

**LUKE:** Well, you should, Dad. You need to snap her out of it. You know, she doesn't have a life, she doesn't even have a boyfriend.

**REWA:** Luke, I don't want to talk about your —

**LUKE:** All she does is cry and go on and on about Manea. Manea this, Manea that —everything's about bloody Manea. I'm still here — I'm alive, but I might as well be a ghost the way she carries on — I'm sick of it!

**JEN:** *(Making herself visible to the others)* Luke, I'm so sorry, Luke —

**LUKE:** You only feel sorry for yourself. You know what you should be sorry about? For not looking after Dad like a proper wife — useless cow!

*REWA grabs on to LUKE.*

**REWA:** Don't you bloody talk to your mother like that!

**JEN:** *(Getting in between them and pushing REWA away)* No! Rewa! Let him go! I'm sorry, Luke! Please!

**LUKE:** But Manea knew how to look after him, eh Dad? Only six years old and she knew what to do —

*REWA freezes. JEN slaps LUKE, and the box tumbles to the ground. JEN and LUKE stare at each other, then LUKE backs away.*

**JEN:** Luke! I'm sorry —I'm sorry!

*LUKE exits the way he entered. Pause. The parents look at each other, then REWA sees the box.*

**REWA:** Manea...

*They both make to retrieve the box. JEN reaches it first and snarls at REWA.*

**JEN:** Get away! Keep your hands off her! You can wait in line with everybody else at the tangi.

**REWA:** *(Backing away)* Sorry.

*REWA maintains his distance as JEN cradles the box.*

I had no idea you'd be here.

**JEN:** We were going to have to meet sooner or later. Might as well be where it all started. It was here, wasn't it?

*REWA nods his head.*

You know, I truly thought that you going to jail and being out of the way would fix it. Out of sight, out of mind. Stay away and rot in Hell, and let the rest of us breathe and get on with our lives and heal our girl. And after a while, Manea's night terrors dropped away and we all got a full night's sleep... and the counsellors signed off, and she had her friends and her singing —oh, she had a great voice —strong and clear and true... like it was the only part of her that you weren't able to get to. It was hers and hers only. And every time I heard her voice swirling through the house I thought, "We're gonna beat that evil bastard. We're gonna be a normal family —like nothing ever happened. Because this was all a horrible dream." How wrong... how stupid and wrong I was.

**REWA:** I'm sorry.

**JEN:** I don't want to hear "sorry". I want to know *why*. You betrayed our marriage, you wounded Manea's soul, and you broke Luke's heart. Why, Rewa? *Why?*

*Pause as Rewa reaches into his pocket and pulls out his cue cards. He offers them to JEN.*

**REWA:** This is my speech I'm going to say to the rūnanga. It's my story that I had to write in the treatment programme —about what I did.

*JEN takes the cards and begins to read.*

Anyway... When I was in jail I read the story of Tānemahuta and his daughter who becomes Hinenui Te Pō, the Goddess of Death. And it explains a few things —why men have Adam's apples and why none of us live forever —it made a lot of sense to me, because ... what I did —what's in me —it's been around forever... So, I thought I'd start off with that first and then... well, and then you see it goes back to my life growing up here in Te Maruāpō... and some of the things that I never told you about —but if I want to change, I have to tell. And I reckon the best place to do it is on the marae —like they did in the old days. And yeah... it's going to hurt some people when they hear what I have to say, but I've been carrying a whole lot of shit in me, Jen, and I know some of it ain't mine —I've got to hand it back and —and try to forgive —try to forgive him. That's what I'm doing, see?... Some of the other guys write letters and don't send them, but as you know I never was too good with the old letter writing and I get a bit outta my depth, so I thought I'd try a speech... So... what do you think? I know it's a bit amateurish using cue cards, but I'm having trouble memorising it you see and...(Falters)

**JEN:** “The Sins of the Father.” I used to wonder what that saying meant, and now I do. (*Returning the cue cards*) This doesn't make it go away for me. I still hate you for what you did. I just understand now. That's all. (*Makes to exit*)

**REWA:** Ok... Jen, thank you... thank you for bringing her home. It means a lot to me and her whānau, and the marae.

*JEN stops and turns back.*

**JEN:** Rewa, how are you paying for your flat?

**REWA:** What?

**JEN:** Your flat —the rent. Your power, food, and all that. Are you working?

**REWA:** No one will hire me. I was struggling for a while, but then Mike sorted it all out for me. He had a kōrero with some of the old people from the marae —who knew me when I was a kid, and they set me up with Brendan from the rūnanga. They've been

awesome. They said I don't have to pay them back. But I'm keeping a record. I'll square it one day.

**JEN:** Don't bother. They won't accept it. I know why they're making a fuss over Manea's tangi. Why they're treating me and Luke so well and paying for everything.

**REWA:** It's tikanga. They're practising manaakitanga.

*MIKE and BRENDAN enter.*

**JEN:** No, Rewa. This is what Mike meant when he told me to make them spoil us, that we deserved the best. It's guilt money. They're paying out guilt money. Because you told Mike what happened.

**REWA:** No Jen, I was too ashamed. I didn't breathe a word —not until I started the programme. That's why I'm standing on the marae —so I can face them... face Dad.

**JEN:** But then who —

**MIKE:** It was Kath. She came to our house a couple of months after you ran away. She told me about everything and everyone —not just Syd. She told me about some of the other kids that were getting done over by their parents —or by their parents' mates —the babysitters —the older cousins.... At first, I didn't believe her —my head was spinning —how could that happen here? For Chrissakes, it's Te Maruāpō —not the ass end of Auckland. But now I know better. These isolated places, with their one road in and no way out —these small blink-and-you-miss-it towns —they're perfect for keeping secrets. And New Zealand's full of them. I tried to help her, Rewa —truly I did. But I only made it worse. Much worse.

**REWA:** We were kids, Mike. What could you do?

**MIKE:** You don't understand. I made her tell Dad. She didn't want to, because Dad was friends with them, but I said she could trust him — “He's a policeman, Katie, it's his job to catch the baddies.” So she told him. And you know what he did? He told her to stop wearing short dresses, showed her how to block her door with a chair, and then he took her down to the pub and told Syd to stop being a ratbag. And that was it. Child protection —small town styles.

**REWA:** You said Kath told you there were others —other men.

**MIKE:** With you gone, she was fair game.

**JEN:** Poor Kath. But who?

*REWA and JEN look at MIKE who returns their look, then looks at BRENDAN. They follow his gaze.*

**BRENDAN:** What? Not me, I'm younger than you.

**MIKE:** No, not you, e hoa.

*The truth dawns on BRENDAN.*

**BRENDAN:** You mean my... na, no mate, that can't be. Kath's lying. *(To MIKE)* You saw her this morning —she's bloody crazy! Dad wouldn't have done that. He worked his guts out for this community! *My family is not like that!*

**JEN:** Like what, Brendan? What exactly to you mean by that?

**BRENDAN:** Well, you know, we're not —

**JEN:** What —poor? Dysfunctional? Dumb? Māori? Brendan, this disease, this rot, it's everywhere.

**BRENDAN:** But Dad wasn't like that. I'm his son —I would've known — Mum would've known.

**REWA:** No, you wouldn't've. Because he was an expert in covering his tracks, and hiding in broad daylight —being ordinary —a good mate, a helpful neighbour, a friendly grown up. He wouldn't do such a thing —that's done by sick fucks, by perverts and monsters. Because you become so good at lying to your friends, your family, and to yourself... the whole world becomes a lie and —I don't know...some of the guys in the programme said that after a while, they didn't know what was up or down, true or false —that they didn't know who or what they were anymore —did I really do that? I can't have —I love my children —I'm the Dad, and my job is to protect them —not hurt them. How could you think that about me! I'm not my father —that asshole and what he put us through —I would never do that to her. Never... But I did. I did it. And all along I knew who I was: *I was The Man* —more than that —*I was God*. I made her, I put her on this Earth, she was a part of me, my blood, my DNA, so why shouldn't I do what I want?

**JEN:** *(To REWA)* Finally —the truth. *(To BRENDAN)* I know that look. It's dawning on you, isn't it? And you're wondering "where was I when all this was happening?" Because when it all comes out and your world falls apart, you start going over your life and looking for clues —for signs that things weren't quite right from

the start —things I should've paid attention to, but didn't. Every waking hour I was consumed by trying to work it out —but you know what, after a while I had to give up on that or I'd have gone crazy.

**MIKE:** *(To BRENDAN)* I'm sorry mate.

**BRENDAN:** That's... that's why Kath can't stand the sight of me, isn't it? Oh God, I feel sick.

*MIKE makes to touch BRENDAN on the shoulder, but BRENDAN recoils.*

*(To MIKE)* And you knew all along. Who else knows? Does the rūnanga know? What about the marae committee?

**MIKE:** Some of them were around at the time.

**BRENDAN:** Jesus... I must be a bloody walking joke to them! I gotta get out of here. I need to think. *(Exits)*

**JEN:** Being alone is the last thing he should be doing right now. *(To REWA)* They told me that for my own good I have to forgive you. And that's why I brought our girl back here to be buried —so I could stand up, look you in the eye and say, "Rewa, I forgive you." But I can't do it. One day I might, but today...I don't want to. *(Exits)*

**REWA:** *(Making to exit towards the house)* I'm going up to see my sister.

**MIKE:** Rewa.

*REWA turns back.*

When we saw Kath this morning, she said Syd fell over two days ago and saw the GP. But I called in at the doctors' surgery and the receptionist reckons they haven't seen him for over a month.

*REWA looks up at the house, acknowledges MIKE, then exits. MIKE watches him leave, and then decides to follow him.*

*END SCENE*



**ACT I****SCENE 6**

*KATH stands by the window in the sitting room of the house, and watches the action unfolding by the swing. Beside her is the wheelchair. MANEA is nearby.*

**KATH:** Look at them down there, in their hui, tramping around like that. Why is it that families need so much drama? Maybe the drama reminds them that they're alive and worth something—or maybe not. *(Turning to face MANEA)* You're awfully quiet. Come on, what do you think, Manea? Manea. Why can't people just leave each other alone to get on with their lives?

**MANEA:** Poor people.

**KATH:** Āe mārika. Indeed. I wonder what they're talking about. It must be very important.

**MANEA:** Nothing matters anymore.

**KATH:** You matter, Manea. We all love and miss you. Your family's heart is broken. Beyond repair.

**MANEA:** Mine broke first. And it was an endless pain, so black and heavy—I couldn't see past it. Too late now. I'm going to say good-bye to them all.

**KATH:** Even to your father? You tried to hurt him before. I saw you.

**MANEA:** Yes. But then I stopped because I couldn't remember why. You start to forget things after a while. I guess it's part of the untethering from this world. You'll know soon enough.

**KATH:** I wonder how long it'll take for them to work out that Syd's long gone. Dead and buried. And that if they want to find him, they don't even have to go far—just stop...for one moment stop blaming each other for what happened, and look down beneath their feet—under that tree—and start digging for Syd and that stupid bell he used to train me with.

**MANEA:** The night he died you enjoyed putting him under there.

**KATH:** Āe. Yes I did. It was worth breaking out in a sweat. Were you watching me? You know, when I see the children from down the road using the swing I imagine that he's down there, looking up, trying to get at them, and he can't because they're stomping all over him just like he stomped all over me. And whenever I see a roaming dog—or a drunk man for that matter—pissing against that tree, I laugh and laugh.

**MANEA:** If it's funny, how come you look sad?

**KATH:** Do I? I suppose because I thought that when he died that would be the end of it. I would be relieved —finally free of having to be for him. The years of being trapped in here —I wasn't me —how could I be? I didn't know who I was. He took everything: my body —and all the things I tried to hide inside me: my dreams, my soul —he found them and twisted me into whatever he wanted. If he couldn't get the real thing, then Katie will do. I was the stand in —I played everyone: the mother, the wife, the mistress, the punching bag, the cook, the cleaner, the dirty sex toy —you know, I would sit in that bath for hours and hours trying to scrub his stink off me —sit in there till the water went all grey and grimy with his filth —but it never worked. And then I thought, "I know, I'll stop washing, I'll make myself smelly and fat and ugly —and no man, not even Syd and his drunk mates will want to stick their things in me anymore." But they still kept coming —slopping their stale nicotine sweat all over me and talking shit in my ear —and afterwards some of them even had the gall to thank me and drop me off at school. And the kids in my class —God they were cruel — "Watch out, here comes K-K-K-Katie, Crazy-Crusty-Katie —ew, block your nose!" I couldn't wait for the day when I would be a grown up and get outta here and make a life far away from Syd and the rest of them. But I wasn't going to sneak out in the dead of night like Rewa. Na, I was gonna stand up to the bastard —and tell it to his face —spill all my rage at him for making me like this —and then walk out the door and not look back... But I didn't. Even when he had a stroke and ended up in the chair —a dribbling, babbling, shitting mess —I could've left him then. But I didn't...because I was ruined and no one out there could fix me. No one can take away this pain.

**MANEA:** God can.

**KATH:** Really? And where is this God?

**MANEA:** Everywhere.

**KATH:** I never saw him. Not when it counted.

**MANEA:** The God I've seen isn't a wise old man on a throne, but a pure light made up of never-ending love —the love of all the ones who went before us. And there's so much aroha for all of us —calling you in. The pull's so strong one day I'll walk into it and never come back.

**KATH:** Then why are you still here?

**MANEA:** Kua tipī haere ahau, engari —ināianeī, ka tatari ahau ki a koe.  
Kia hikoī tahi tāua (*I was roaming, but now I am waiting for you.*  
*Shall we go for a walk?*)

**KATH:** I'm not sure. You haven't seen Syd, have you? Kore rawa ahau  
mō te kite anō i a ia (*I never want to see him again*).

**MANEA:** Would it matter? It doesn't bother me over there. Nothing  
touches you.

**KATH:** That sounds nice.

**MANEA:** It is. I feel like a wisp sometimes.

**KATH:** Will I miss this place.

**MANEA:** Only for a while.

**KATH:** (*Looking out the window again*) What are they doing now? Oh,  
your Mum's leaving, and your Dad's looking at the house. (*She*  
*waves at him*) Hello, darling Brother. (*To MANEA*) Oh, look at  
him. He knows. (*To REWA*) You know, don't you? (*To MANEA*)  
He's coming over. (*She prepares herself to receive him*)

**MANEA:** Me haere tāua (*We should go*). Auntie Kath, let's go.

**KATH:** But why? I haven't seen him for years. It's about time the three  
of us had a decent talk. Don't worry, I'll look after you.

**MANEA:** But I've come to look after you. You don't remember what  
you've done, do you?

**KATH:** (*Walking towards the door*) What did you say, dear?

*REWA enters, flustered.*

**KATH:** There you are. About time!

**REWA:** (*Walking straight past her*) Kath! Kath!

**KATH:** Rewa —jeez, mate, are you blind now? You silly bugger—I'm  
over here.

*KATH reaches out for REWA but he walks past her to the wheelchair and touches it.*

**REWA:** Kath? Kath are you here? Katie!

*REWA starts walking away to their father's bedroom and KATH follows.*

**KATH:** Ok, so I was angry because you pissed off on me —but I forgive you now. You're back and we can start again. Now stop mucking around. Rewa —sweetheart —what's wrong?

*REWA exits.*

**KATH:** Manea, why can't he see me? Manea.

**MANEA:** *(Approaches her, extending her hands)* Waiho ia ki runga nei, haere mai. Kua taka te wā kia rere atu tāua ki Te Pō *(Leave him here above, come. The time has come for us to depart to the night).*

**KATH:** Eh, what are you saying? Manea —what's going on?

**MANEA:** Well, are you coming or not? Child, I haven't got all day.

**KATH:** No. I don't think so. *(Starts backing away from MANEA)* Auē, ehara koe i a Manea —ko wai koe *(You're not Manea — who are you really)?*

*KATH exits to look for REWA. MANEA waits. REWA re-enters, running to the front door.*

**REWA:** No, no, no! *(Calling out past the door and waving)* Mike! Mike! Call an ambulance! Quick —help me!

*REWA exits to the bedroom and MANEA observes MIKE entering.*

**MIKE:** Rewa! Rewa where are you?

*REWA enters, trying to hold up KATH'S limp body.*

**REWA:** Help!

**MIKE:** *(Starting to help REWA with KATH)* Jeez Kath!

**REWA:** She was on the bed. I don't know what she's done. There's no blood.

**MANEA:** She's OD'd. *(Trying to rouse her)* Kath. Kath! Can you hear me? Come on Kath! *(To REWA)* We can't wait for the ambulance. We'll take my car. Here.

*MIKE grabs the wheelchair and the men place KATH in it and push her to the door.*

**REWA:** Don't die, Katie. Hang on.

**MIKE:** I'll get her in the car. You go back and find the bottle —the pillbox —so the doctors know what she's taken, and they'll know what to do.

*MIKE exits with KATH and REWA starts heading towards the bedroom but stops in his tracks when he senses that he is not alone.*

**REWA:** Who is that?... Manea? Baby girl —is that you? Manea? I'm so sorry —did you hear me?... I am sorry for hurting for you and if I could change it —take it all back —or take your place —I would, believe me I would... You've come to take Katie haven't you? No, don't let her die. Please, Manea, make her stay. Tell her I'll look after her, I promise to look after her and I won't leave. Please. Don't take her away. What do I have to do for you to let —

*MANEA still invisible to REWA silences him by striking at his throat.*

**MANEA:** Ānei he taonga mōu, he tohu whakamaharatanga mō tāua. Kaua koe e whai mai i a ahau, ā, kaua hoki koe e tangi mōku. E noho koe ki Te Ao Mārama, ka tiaki ai i tō tāua whānau. E noho rā.  
*(Here is a gift for you, a remembrance of us. Do not follow me, and do not grieve for me. Remain in the realm of daylight and look after our family. Goodbye.)*

*MANEA exits. REWA recovers his voice.*

**REWA:** Āe. Kua mārama ahau. Nō reira, haere rā e Te Kahurangi. Haere atu koe ki tua o Te Ārai, ki Te Pō Nui, Te Pō Roa, Te Pōtangotango *(Yes. I understand. Therefore, farewell precious one. Go beyond the veil, to the great night, the long night, the pitch black night).*

*REWA stands alone, then reaches into his pocket....*

*END SCENE*

**ACT I**

**SCENE 7**

*REWA pulls out his cue cards from his pocket. He is on the marae preparing to deliver his speech. The others gather nearby. He prepares to read, then changes his mind and puts the cards away.*

**REWA:** Let me tell you the story of when death came to the world of people, and the reason why one day we all must die. In days past, when the earth and sky were newly ripped apart and still grieving for one another, there was a beautiful girl borne from the union of the Forest God and the Red Earth Woman. Her name was Hinetītama, the Dawn Maiden; and her father loved her so....

*The others join REWA in a waiata.*

*END SCENE*

*CURTAIN*