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Te Reo o Ngā Kaumātua \ Voices of the Elders

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Abstract

This study explores and discusses the concept of kaumātua and their roles. Key questions are from a Māori perspective. Discussed are the concept of kaumātua, what the role of kaumatua entails, and the role's importance to Māori society. The makeup of kaumātua is also studied to ascertain qualities, attributes, skills and mannerisms towards 'kaumātuatanga', that is, 'being kaumātua'. Kaupapa Maori research and western research methodologies are used throughout this study.

The findings of the study show that kaumātua are people who have been recognised by whānau, hapū and iwi for the leadership roles they undertake. They are the elders of the iwi, respected and acknowledged for their knowledge and wisdom, and are in constant demand as mentors, advisors and teachers. Kaumātua roles are many and diverse, and are underpinned in the values of tikanga Māori. Crucially, kaumātua are committed to working for their whānau, hapū and iwi. They also have strong supportive whanaungatanga relationships with other kaumātua and build and gain from each others strengths while striving towards the same goals. Kaumātua have specific aspirations and goals, with the bigger picture being to build platforms contributing towards a better world for Māori, and bringing people together in unity. Furthermore, as kaumātua think towards the future wellbeing of their people, they are constantly searching for younger people to follow in their footsteps.

He Mihi \ Acknowledgements

<i>Ki ōku kaumātua kua wheturangihia</i>	<i>To my esteemed elders who have passed on</i>
<i>ka tukuna te aroha kia rere</i>	<i>love is let go to flow</i>
<i>ka tukuna te roimata kia maringi</i>	<i>tears are let go to pour</i>
<i>moe mai e ōku mātua</i>	<i>sleep my esteemed parents</i>
<i>kia aio te takotoranga me ō tūpuna i te pō</i>	<i>so in peace as you lie with your ancestors.</i>

<i>Kia tātou ngā waihotanga o rātou mā</i>	<i>To those of us who are left</i>
<i>He mihi ki a koutou</i>	<i>salutations to you also</i>
<i>i runga i te āhuetanga o te wā.</i>	<i>at this time.</i>

(T. Carkeek, personal communication, November 5, 2010).

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