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Ngā pūrākau o ngā wāhine rangatira Māori o Aotearoa

The stories of Māori women leaders in New Zealand

A thesis presented for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Psychology

Massey University

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2012

Whakarāpopoto: Abstract

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

Ngā Mihi: Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the women who have participated in this study for your time, your support and your faith in this study. I can only hope that I have been able to honour your stories and shine a light on the infinite work you have done for Māori throughout your lives. I would like to thank my supervisors Professor Kerry Chamberlain and Associate Professor Denise Wilson for your direction, expertise and unwavering support over the years. Your involvement in this journey has been amazing and without your guidance this study would not have been possible. To Te Rau Puawai and the kaimahi of the Office of the Assistant Vice Chancellor Māori and Pasifika, thank you for sharing this journey with me and for your constant ability to manāki me throughout this process. To Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga and Te Rau Matatini thank you for your commitment to ensuring this journey could happen and for the resources you continued to provide over the years, ka nui te mihi kia koutou. To my many friends for your faith and encouragement, arohanui kia koutou katoa. Most importantly, to my whānau for bearing with me – ahakoa kō ngā piki me ngā heke, ka nui te aroha kia koutou katoa.

E hara taku toa he toa takitahi, engari he toa takatini.

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

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