

“IT’S GOOD FOR ME AND MY WHĀNAU”

Marae participation as a springboard for oranga

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Abstract

The Atiawa ki Whakarongotai Charitable Trust recently instigated qualitative research to better understand the notion of iwi connectedness and the link with oranga. This paper reports of the findings of that research, which examined how connectedness is understood by iwi and identified implications of connectedness on oranga. Thirty Atiawa ki Whakarongotai iwi members were interviewed between February and June 2015 using a semi-structured interview guide. Questions related to multiple aspects of connectedness, including their participation in iwi and marae activities, barriers and enablers to participation, and advantages and disadvantages of participation. Thematic analysis was used to identify the key issues and themes from the research data. Analysis revealed that participants described ahi kā roles in three ways: intergenerational, assimilated and multifunctional. Passion and commitment to ahi kā roles was clearly demonstrated and participants described enhanced wellbeing as a component of connection with and participation in marae activities. This study confirms previous findings demonstrating a positive association between cultural attachment and wellbeing, and further defines the role of ahi kā, providing a framework for iwi planning by describing the intergenerational, assimilated and multifunctional nature of ahi kā.

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Keywords

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Introduction

The iwi of Atiawa ki Whakarongotai, represented in the study described in this paper by members of Atiawa ki Whakarongotai Charitable Trust (the Trust), define oranga as an individual or whānau experiencing full and complete wellness encompassing the physical, emotional and spiritual elements being in balance. A common Māori perspective of health is widely accepted and described as a four-sided concept: “te taha tinana” focuses on care and treatment of the body, “te taha hinengaro” encompasses styles of thinking and the way in which emotion is expressed, “te taha whānau” denotes an extended kinship system and “te taha wairua” includes spiritual beliefs and practices (Durie, 1985, 1998, 2001).

Within te ao Māori, knowing your place in the world, being familiar with your whakapapa, participating in activities at an iwi or hapū level and being able to converse in te reo Māori are all advantageous to your overall oranga (Jansen & Jansen, 2013). A review of the literature confirms that terms like “cultural identity” are critical to one’s wellbeing (Durie 1998, 2011; Jansen & Jansen, 2013; Kara et al., 2011; Stevenson, 2001). Cultural identity is often reinforced through participation in iwi affairs, and Nikora, Te Awekotuku and Tamanui (2013) argue that connectedness diminishes when “being Māori” is not part of our everyday lives.

While the literature describes connectedness or cultural identity as strengthening oranga, this research investigated whether being connected with your marae and being strongly connected with iwi development may have negative impacts on oranga due to intensive time commitments, stress associated with heavy demands, and the resulting impacts on wider

whānau members, especially for whānau with tamariki or mokopuna. The Trust believes that as iwi leaders they have a commitment to tautoko the wellbeing of iwi members who are participating in iwi development at both individual and whānau level. Their role as iwi leaders includes supporting iwi members to be resilient, healthy, economically independent and actively engaged in life’s opportunities, including participating in marae and iwi activities.

Atiawa ki Whakarongotai, based around the Waikanae rohe of the Kāpiti Coast, rely heavily on their ahi kā. Ahi kā are present to awhi manuhiri and work the marae kitchen, grounds and urupā, as well as take up the important roles of kaikaranga, kaikōrero and kaiwaiata. Their role extends outside of marae grounds to act as kaitiaki to the whenua, awa and moana. With a registered iwi database of just over 620 members, of which approximately 460 are over 18 years old, the various roles performed by their ahi kā are paramount to this iwi upholding its mana. At a strategic and governance level the iwi need to support their skilled whānau who lead their people. All these roles are important, but sadly members sometimes witness their whanaunga being “burnt out” and needing to take temporary leave from marae and iwi activities.

With this challenge in mind the iwi undertook research to better understand the notions of connectedness. Connectedness in this context means having a sense of responsibility or desire to be actively participating in marae and iwi activities, or being involved in anything that promotes their cultural identity. The aims of the research were to (a) examine how the notion of connectedness is understood by iwi members, and (b) identify what the implications of connectedness or lack of connectedness are on oranga.

Research design and methods

The qualitative research, conducted during the first half of 2015, was initiated by the Trust and conducted by iwi using independent expertise and academic support from an external Māori research group, Whakauae Research Services. The researchers worked in close partnership with the trustees, consulting and gaining input on each stage. The study adopted a kaupapa Māori approach, meaning the focus was Māori and the research methods and practices employed took full cognisance of local tikanga. Specific iwi knowledge was utilised to inform the research. The He Oranga Hāpori study (Māori Economic Development Taskforce, 2010) was a wellbeing indicators project that was developed by several communities, including Kāpiti, and defined Māori wellbeing as a state of being that is characterised by an abundant expression of kaupapa tuku iho. Kaupapa tuku iho, the inherited values and principles for living as expressed by Te Wānanga o Raukawa, with which Atiawa ki Whakarongotai is closely affiliated, were used to guide the research. These principles are manaakitanga, rangatiratanga, whanaungatanga, kotahitanga, wairuatanga, ūkaipōtanga, pūkengatanga, kaitiakitanga, whakapapa and te reo (Te Wānanga o Raukawa, 2016).

We used a purposive sampling approach (Jupp, 2006) to recruit to the study. An email was sent to all iwi members on the Trust database, which contained approximately 300 email addresses for the 460 registered adults, advising of the project and seeking interest in the research. This was followed up by a kanohi ki te kanohi presentation at the marae, which was attended by approximately 100 whānau. There was strong interest in the study, with many coming forward to participate. As recruitment proceeded, we used purposive selection to promote diversity to ensure participants varied by age, gender, geographic location and whakapapa lines. Where we had two or three members from the same whānau offering to participate, we declined some to

maintain diversity. Gaps in the sample (e.g., whānau living in other regions of New Zealand) were filled by approaching whānau directly. All those who were contacted directly agreed to participate in the study. We ultimately achieved a diverse sample that included a range of age groups, gender balance, varied geographic locations and representation from all whakapapa lines.

The majority of the study's 30 participants were in paid employment, including a large number of whānau working in management positions (8), a number of retired whānau (8), those working in administrative roles (5), whānau employed in the education sector (3), a student (1), a caregiver (1), a research consultant (1) and a policy analyst (1). Two participants were unemployed at the time. Twenty-five participants were living with whānau, one with friends, and four lived alone. Table 1 summarises the participant characteristics.

The participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide to explore how iwi members were currently participating in iwi development, how participation had changed over time, barriers and enablers to participation, the advantages and disadvantages of participation, and how participation impacted (both positively and negatively) on them as individuals and wider whānau. Interviews were carried out by Māori interviewers between February and June 2015 and lasted between 30 and 90 minutes, with the average length of interview being 55 minutes. Interviews were carried out using the English language although there were many occasions when te reo Māori was used interchangeably by the researcher and the participants throughout the interviews. The interviews were held at the place of choice of each participant. This included within their own homes, on the marae, at their workplace, and in one instance on whānau whenua. With participants' permission, each interview was audio recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Ethics approval was obtained from the New Zealand Health and Disability Ethics

TABLE 1 Participant characteristics

Percentage of participants interviewed	Place of residence
56%	Kāpiti Coast Region
18%	Wellington Region or within 1 hour from Waikanae
13%	Regional New Zealand
13%	Australia
Percentage of participants interviewed	Gender
56%	Female
44%	Male
Percentage of participants interviewed	Age range
14%	20–35 years
40%	36–50 years
46%	51+ years

Committee, Southern Committee, which undertook a full review of the proposed research (approval reference No 14/STH/163).

The research team used a thematic approach to identify the key issues and themes from the research data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Analysis of qualitative data involved searching for themes or patterns across all interviewees in relation to their perceived notions of iwi connectedness and its impact on one's oranga. The research team carried out the analysis in three stages: (a) initially the principal investigator undertook an intensive review of each interview transcript and reviewed themes emerging from the data, (b) these initial themes were then discussed with other members of the research team and the external academic advisor (who had reviewed a selection of the transcripts independently) and (c) the themes were discussed with the trustees and an explanation was provided about how these themes were arrived at from the data using illustrative quotes. The themes reported below reflect a consensus reached by the authors. We make extensive use of participants' own comments, and signal each participant's gender (F-female, M-male) and age group. Note that where we have quoted different participants

from the same age range they are referred to as, for example, M(a), 51+ years; M(b), 51+ years; M(c), 51+ years to differentiate them from each other.

Results

Significance of Whakarongotai

For most participants in the study (95 per cent), Whakarongotai Marae in Waikanae was recognised as their marae matua, their main marae, despite some of the people having a connection to many iwi and marae. As one participant commented, "My tino marae, closest to my heart would have to be Whakarongotai, here in Waikanae" (F(a), 20–35 years). Another stated, "Well I affiliate with others [iwi and marae] but I don't consider them mine in the same way that I consider Whakarongotai" (M(a), 51+ years).

Ahi kā

Levels of participation varied greatly; however, for ahi kā participants in the research the majority were actively involved on a daily or weekly

basis in some type of iwi or marae activity. These roles included maintenance and upkeep of marae and two whānau urupā, the bookings for use of facilities, fundraising activities, maintenance of whānau taonga, communications with whānau and iwi about events, hui and tangihanga. Outside of the marae a large number of the iwi ahi kā were engaged in supporting wider community developments and ensuring mana whenua interests and whenua were protected. These roles include significant engagement with various transport and land agencies as a large motorway is being developed passing through the rohe, and there are conservation considerations relating to whenua, awa and marine and birdlife, with Kāpiti Island Nature Reserve lying just off the Kāpiti coastline.

Participants engaged in iwi and marae activities did so willingly and with passion and commitment. Apart from only one or two in paid administrative positions for the iwi, most other mahi is done on a voluntary capacity. As one participant commented, “We’re all volunteers, we’re coming in the gate because we love this place” (F(a), 51+ years). Those involved also encouraged wider whānau members to contribute to ahi kā, such as this participant:

... our whānau are heavily involved, very active, and that’s the thing, when I was employed, I don’t think it was just about employing me, they know I come with strings attached, which is parents and siblings and nieces and nephews who will all roll their sleeves up and help out when duty calls. (F(a), 20–35 years)

One participant spoke about the importance of the work from a collective perspective: “I think that the benefits for all of us as a collective is a really important thing because the opportunity for growth is significant” (M(a), 51+ years).

Maintaining ahi kā requires a significant range of skills and knowledge. Participants identified roles such as gathering kai, preparing

the marae and wharehau for hui, maintaining grounds and urupā, and having a commitment to te reo Māori in order to maintain kaikaranga, kaikōrero and kaiwaiata roles within the iwi. Some also described governance roles, including kaitiaki roles maintaining healthy waterways and acting as conservationists within the rohe. One participant commented:

... the roles that our siblings and our parents take are varied ... looking after the urupā, kai ringawera, gatherers of kai for particular hui as well as governance ... there have been quite a few of us that have spent time in governance aspects of our iwi, whether it through fisheries or health or business opportunities. (F(a), 20–35 years)

Members of a whānau took on varied roles, depending on skills and knowledge, as noted by another participant:

I suppose Dad and I are kind of good administrators and we’ve stepped into governance roles and represented iwi on various boards, brother is great with te reo and whakapapa and holds the role within our whānau of maintaining and sharing those matters, Aunty is on the ground at Whakarongotai maintaining ahi kā for our whānau, doing the karanga ... (F(a), 36–50 years)

One participant described utilising his specific business skills to support whānau to achieve best returns for leases on Māori freehold land:

Working out how to do that in a way which is meaningful, and what I mean by meaningful, cognisant of the people involved, the history that’s gone before, the delicate nature of negotiation which is beneficial for us now so that we can be worthwhile in the future. (M(a), 51+ years)

For some whānau, the particular roles they played that were associated with marae life

and tikanga were intergenerational. As one participant stated:

We had to work in the kitchen with Nan, but also I remember walking down to Waikanae River, with my cousins and whoever else was there, and if it was a tangihanga, the whānau that had come with the tūpāpaku and the kids we'd take the kids down with us, we'd always manaaki those kids . . . (F(b), 36–50 years)

Another participant described being encouraged and groomed for the paepae by his uncle when he was a teenager:

. . . so Uncle (name) would, not always, but often say, “here boy it’s your turn, you stand here and you mihi to the people”, or, “you close us off”, or “here do you want to stand up and say something?” . . . certainly between the ages of fifteen and seventeen I was being tested, my confidence was being tested and starting to carry a particular role potentially. (M(a), 36–50 years)

Passing on the values associated with ahi kā was an important part of parenting and being parented. One participant commented:

I suppose Mum and Dad’s involvement with the marae, they raised us that that’s an important connection to have, that the marae is only as strong as the people who look after it . . . there is a sense of responsibility . . . part of it is also because of my interest in whānau, I suppose you could say, whānau, hapū, iwi development. Part of it is also to ensure that my kids have that connection, that their connection with Whakarongotai is strong. (M(b), 36–50 years)

For the majority of ahi kā who participated in the study, being actively engaged was described as part of their everyday life and something that cannot be separated from other things they do. As one participant commented, “I think living

nearby, it’s there all the time, you know. And I think we’re more the richer for it” (M(b), 51+ years). Another stated, “As a kid, marae life was intertwined with my childhood and our everyday life, even now really, still the same, Love it, love it!” (F(b), 36–50 years).

Participation for those living outside the rohe

There was a sense that whānau were committed to the marae despite living far away from the rohe. A number of participants spoke of feelings of warmth and connectedness and shared memories of growing up being closely engaged in marae life. As one commented:

We were brought up in the Kāpiti area, and Whakarongotai was sort of like just part of who we were as a whānau, it was just there, any gathering we were there, and as a child you don’t think anything other than it’s there and you just go there. You don’t think that it’s a building, it’s part of who you are. (F(b), 51+ years)

Another whānau member spoke of “being grounded” by early connection with the marae and the impact on her identity throughout her lifetime:

. . . for that short time I had at home, the depth of those memories and the effect it has in life, you know it’s forever, and yet you spend the majority of your time away but that grounding and that time and those memories and just everything that makes you who you are just stays with you. (F(c), 36–50 years)

Feelings of reconnection to the marae were expressed by many who lived away from the rohe. Connectivity was maintained through technology advances, whereby email pānui were shared regularly with people on the iwi database. Social media activity and sharing of photographs and events was described as more

far-reaching than ever before. As one participant commented:

Yeah, yeah that’s been fantastic (social media). It sort of reconnected me in a lot of ways. And just knowing so many things, and you know you might think the house is just standing there all alone, and nothing’s happening, and there’s been a lot of stuff that’s gone on. (F(b), 51+ years)

Connection through email was described by another participant as “really good”; however, she seemed to be unsure whether to describe this as “participation”:

[It’s good] just to know what’s happening really with the distance thing with us now living in Australia I do get the email updates from the office which is really good because you know it keeps us updated and lets us know what’s happening and actually I only read one this morning that come through so yeah . . . if you call it participation. (F(b), 20–35 years)

Another participant talked about living away from the rohe and that therefore iwi issues were not at the forefront of her thinking. However, she said the regular emails and whānau updates did help:

. . . every time an email would come in I would go back there [in my mind] so I think that yes that’s one way of staying connected is just by getting the emails because you’re thinking about it . . . and also I mean Mum quite often fills me in on different things that are happening down there . . . (F(c), 51+ years)

Changes in participation over time

Kaumātua and some whānau in governance roles described the changing pattern of participation as the iwi is increasingly being called

upon to be involved in matters relating to the management of waterways, land developments, rangatahi educational attainment, and wider health and social areas, including Waikanae community development. One participant outlined the challenges of iwi participation in matters of central or local government and broader community consultation:

. . . well increasingly our iwi is asked to comment or be involved in a range of activities from outside organisations. Some of the requests are relevant to our core business so where we can, we engage. Some of the requests from government and non-government agencies feel more like they are ticking a box regarding consultation with iwi. These might be pieces of work where we choose not to put our energies. We are small, our capacity is limited and while we love to help and support, it’s challenging on our people, our trustees and kaumātua are all volunteers and if we call upon other iwi members, there’s often a financial cost to participation . . . you know petrol to get to meetings, rescheduling other commitments to enable participation. I’m not sure if people in paid positions understand that we are not resourced to fully engage in the way they would like to see us doing. (F(a), 20–35 years)

While the above participant outlined the challenges of iwi consultation with communities, another cautioned that broader iwi involvement in decision making was critical to exercising kaitiakitanga:

We need to be involved, these guys [local and central government] are making decisions that directly impact our whānau. As custodians of the whenua and as we exercise our role of kaitiaki, we are willing to engage. We want councils to better understand our needs and our priorities and give us the space to self-determine our own pathways. (M(a), 36–50 years)

One participant described his role changing as he matured and graduated from kai ringawera to his involvement in governance positions:

Right from that age [teenage years] basically, all of us, we've all been drafted into that kind of role to either help out at the back, in the kitchen, at the sink or whatever, so I think that probably at that age I became involved, and then it's not until I got to my mid-twenties that I started to have a formal role in governance type or higher level engagement and representation on bodies until now, and I'm nearly forty. (M(a), 36–50 years)

The importance of having the support and backing of the older generation was noted by the same participant: "It was those guys [the supportive uncles] that recognised the need for succession and to build and support the young ones to kind of take a responsibility or just build their confidence in being able to speak on the marae" (M(a), 36–50 years).

Participation can change over time depending on where people are living and what other events and priorities are taking place in their lives. One participant spoke about competing priorities (in this case tamariki) when it came to involvement at the marae:

. . . we had three [children] under five and I think that's probably a really good point to make, cause I feel, we are blessed with an abundance of talent in terms of being able to assist [at the marae], but you only have so much time. And also, the kids are young for such a short amount of time and while you'd like to kind of be a bit more involved, sometimes it's not just, it's an hour up the road, it's not just next door, so you, you've got school sport, we're involved in the kura, quite heavily involved in the kura. (F(a), 36–50 years)

Another participant chose to reorder priorities in their life to enable participation, and moved

to part-time work: "I started working part-time twenty hours a week so that freed up my time to be able to tautoko and support different events and hui and gatherings at the marae" (F(a), 20–35 years).

Motivators and barriers for participation

As previously described, one of the key motivators for ahi kā participation was a sense of responsibility and a commitment to fulfil the wishes of their tīpuna:

I felt like I was doing what my granduncles and aunts, grandmother and great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother might have done before, so a sense that I was building on that knowledge and I had my tamariki running around, so they were learning too. (F(a), 36–50 years)

Others talked about a responsibility to the collective of iwi members, with one participant commenting:

I think we have a responsibility for our people, I think we've got a responsibility to make sure that they're looked after, you can talk about deed and constitution but actually when it comes to down to it, it's a passion for your whānau . . . (F(d), 36–50 years)

Having a background in te reo and tikanga and working in Māori organisations often motivated participation, as expressed by this participant:

. . . growing up going through bilingual [education], working for iwi and Māori organisations and having that schooling and the education around tikanga and Raukawatanga at Ōtaki, but it's definitely been a strong flavour in my working life and so it was probably always going to happen, and I do feel a bit of responsibility to it as well. (F(a), 20–35 years)

Living close to the marae was viewed as a great enabler for participation and a contributor to wellbeing, with one participant commenting:

... so yes for me being involved, living locally does contribute to my wellbeing but also knowing that my whānau or my kids at least know that Whakarongotai is their marae. Te Ati Awa’s their iwi, this also contributes to our whānau wellbeing. (M(d), 36–50 years)

Distance from marae, however, was seen as the major barrier for participation and the loss was keenly felt by one participant:

On a personal level it’s heartbreaking because I can’t be there when I want to be there, I can’t feel or maintain the close connections that I know are really important for me personally but for my family as well. (M(a), 36–50 years)

For another even living within an hour’s drive felt distance was a barrier when combined with competing priorities:

It is a challenge, although I’m only a forty minute drive away from Waikanae, it’s always been a challenge [not living locally], primarily because I’m juggling whānau commitments, my immediate whānau commitments, and work commitments. And there’s other iwi commitments which I’m a part of, which are not necessarily directly related to Whakarongotai ... (M(d), 36–50 years)

Having commitments to kura and communities outside of Kāpiti meant that the connection to Whakarongotai was not as strong. As one participant commented:

... at the moment my kids are entrenched in the community here, and that’s starting to form a part of their identity, and at some point in time, in the near future, I want my kids to be able to be immersed in that community at home, in Waikanae. Although the

kind of intermittent visits back home to visit friends and family does reinforce that sense of identity back there, there’s nothing like being immersed in that community to have influence by all of your uncles and aunties. (M(a), 36–50 years)

Participation on marae and its impact on oranga

Participating at Whakarongotai was described as a positive experience by all participants. Those with ahi kā roles and who were actively engaged in iwi and marae life said it supported their wellbeing. The terms oranga and hauora are used interchangeably in the following section; hauora being the term more commonly used by participants to refer to health and wellbeing. The following participant clearly linked cultural connectedness with oranga:

... the key thing for me in terms of our hauora is that my kids understand their identity, their connection with people, their connection with place and their connection with the responsibility that will at some point will be passed on to them. (M(a), 36–50 years)

Many participants were able to explain what oranga meant to them and their whānau and shared that participating in marae and iwi life had a positive impact on oranga. As one commented:

The positives are just knowing where you’re from ... I’ll describe how I felt last weekend just being at Whakarongotai, at my marae, hosting people who had come from away but had a connection there. Honestly just feeling so at home, I remember hanging the tea towels out and thinking there is no place I need to be right now, except for right here! Which is sometimes a feeling you get at a tangi, you know when you’re really, really busy in your life and you go to a tangi and it’s like the only

place I need to be is right here right now. It's the same feeling you might get when you've got a newborn baby, you know like, nothing else matters. (F(a), 36–50 years)

The same participant spoke of spiritual and cultural competence gained from participation as complementing other knowledge:

As a Māori person your education and qualifications are only going to take you so far, there's a spiritual and cultural level of competence that you need to be able to participate fully, and I'm still acquiring that confidence and that knowledge. (F(a), 36–50 years)

Many were actively engaging to provide their tamariki with a sense of belonging, with a sense of whānau. As one participant stated, "I want them [our children] to have memories like I did, I want them to have first cousins as their best friends like I did" (F(b), 36–50 years). The same participant identified the importance of marae as a place of nurturing and being "at home": "I make sure it's part of my children's life as well. I love seeing these kids in the kitchen, doing cups of teas, ringing the bell and setting the tables, you know, they're at home" (F(b), 36–50 years).

Wellbeing or oranga was clearly aligned with a sense of whānau or whanaungatanga, and this was strengthened through marae participation. As one participant commented:

Oh look the great side of being engaged is the whanaungatanga, makes you feel awesome, that self-identity, to be a part of something bigger than just me, and being with your whānau, your beautiful whānau, and you know we're all different, and you really get the best taste of that at a tangihanga, as sad as it might be, the beautiful whanaungatanga and manaakitanga experiences that come out of that are often really filling. (F(a), 20–35 years)

Roles and responsibilities assigned to a person as part of their ahi kā duties were clearly aligned to a sense of wellbeing for the same participant:

I feel really good after that (doing karanga) and I actually sort of, usually if I know I've got it coming up I'll put myself into a kind of um a space where I haven't got, I don't eat, and I focus, and I do my karakia, and I'm in that zone for the morning beforehand, and then when I do my karanga I feel really, really connected to my Nana, yeah to the tīpuna, to the marae, to our culture and to the kaupapa . . . that brings a great feeling for my hauora. I feel a real privilege to be able to do that. (F(a), 20–35 years)

Many of the participants spent significant amounts of time at the marae and duties were often very tiring; however, for one participant the feelings of connectedness far outweighed any immediate physical side effects of participation: "In terms of hauora I came away from last weekend tired, absolutely exhausted, very long days, but feeling that I reaffirmed my place within our family" (F(a), 36–50 years).

Participants were aware of tensions and negativity associated with being at the marae or participating in iwi events; however, any negative impacts were again outweighed by feelings of personal satisfaction and achievement. As one participant stated, "When I was going to hui I was feeling good even if negative things were said . . . walking away I felt like I'd achieved something . . . so involvement yes was definitely positive" (F(c), 51+ years).

One participant utilised the marae and the connection with tīpuna as part of healing and maintaining oranga:

If there's a dark side coming towards me, you'll see me on that mahau really early one morning and that's when I'll be talking to aunt . . . I can see them [tīpuna] coming in the gate . . . I go there [to Whakarongotai] to keep myself safe. (M(d), 51+ years)

Another participant defined the marae as a pivotal part of oranga and a critical component in collective identity and wellbeing:

. . . the marae has to be and should be a critical part to our hauora, it becomes a rallying point for various kaupapa—good and bad, well you know, preferably good, but there are always challenging kaupapa that become part of the marae, and it becomes a shared place where we can all be a part of. There are so many things that the marae can be used for . . . a foundation for or a platform for us to be able to come together in a positive way to start to bridge and reconcile and springboard from, for us into the future. (M(a), 36–50 years)

Impact of participation on whānau

When asked about the impact of participation on wider whānau, the majority felt that participation had very little negative impact. As one participant commented:

It’s good for me and my whānau, what little I can give back to the marae is always important. I primarily focus on cultural and education initiatives, social initiatives, where I think whatever it is that I have to offer is of a positive benefit. (M(d), 36–50 years)

However, another participant did describe the time away from his whānau as negative:

The negative impact on a father or a mother involved heavily in iwi life is loss of time with your own kids. I look at my son and I think where the hell have I been for the last five years of his life? Because it’s taken me away from being an active father. (M(a), 36–50 years)

Having whānau support was important for another participant, especially when participation was challenging: “It can be very challenging at times and there are particular people within

our iwi that make our jobs challenging . . . So having that whānau support is important” (F(a), 20–35 years).

Most participants who lived away from the Kāpiti rohe acknowledged the importance of looking after those doing the mahi, the ahi kā. They recognised that there are time commitments associated with supporting iwi development. As one participant stated, “Ahi kā, keeping the home fires burning, it’s quite relevant for me living away from home and having that disconnection from the marae, it’s important to acknowledge our whānau who are at home (doing the mahi)” (F(b), 20–35 years).

Discussion

Research participants described ahi kā roles in three broad ways: intergenerational, assimilated and multifunctional. Ahi kā roles were clearly passed on from one generation to the next through role modelling and active parenting, with roles being learnt from parents, grandparents, aunties and uncles. Obligations and expectations were passed down through whānau and there was evidence of the intergenerational transmission of values and a heightened sense of responsibility and commitment among the participants. The notion that ahi kā is passed on intergenerationally bodes well for the sustainability of iwi development and provides a positive example of Māori values being transmitted to future generations through not only direct parenting but also wider whānau nurturing.

For participants in this study the roles associated with ahi kā were clearly assimilated or incorporated into everyday life, becoming part of normal behaviours. This integration of ahi kā roles into everyday life denotes the importance placed on cultural connectedness and participation for participants in the study. Participants described feelings of love, at-homeness, connection, passion and commitment to marae and iwi as providing the necessary impetus for

prioritising marae and iwi activities in their daily lives.

Ahi kā roles can also be complex and multi-functional, with one person potentially taking on multiple tasks and roles on behalf of the collective. Such roles can include governance or leadership, support with operational functions associated with the marae, and broader community engagement. However, this was not the case for all participants; some limited their involvement to speciality areas, taking on particular roles such as the maintenance of an urupā, or being a key holder for the marae, or helping out in the kitchen. Some whānau considered that as long as one or two members were able to participate they were maintaining ahi kā for the wider whānau. However, utilising the support of wider whānau when required was guaranteed through the principle of whanaungatanga.

Specific skills and knowledge were recognised by whānau members and people were encouraged to take on particular roles that utilised their skills, such as karanga, business development, conservation and project management, and so on. The idea that roles are multifunctional and change over time, moving from support roles initially to leadership roles as one gains experience, knowledge and confidence, is useful when thinking about future planning. Many iwi have rangatahi leadership programmes to formalise some of the learning and nurturing taking place already in more informal whānau networks.

As members of a small iwi, participants identified a number of challenges to participation in iwi and marae activities. Currently Atiawa ki Whakarongotai are choosing to not only respond to their own developmental needs but also contribute more broadly to community development needs by working closely with local and central government and other community agencies. Decisions regarding wider participation take into account relevance to iwi goals and strategies and are balanced with the need to participate as kaitiaki. Community-wide

participation places a significant demand on iwi leaders and governors in terms of both time and the sundry costs associated with participation; this demand is only able to be met by iwi members who have the time, skills and resources required for participation. This is most challenging for small iwi when there is a limited pool of people to call on that have both the prerequisites for participation and the will to undertake the variety of ahi kā roles.

However, the challenges of community mobilisation and participation are not limited to small iwi. Keeping everyone informed, developing an agreed strategic vision and pathway, contributing to both iwi and community development, working across sectors, and undertaking the variety of ahi kā roles required to operate effectively as a contemporary collective remains problematic for many iwi, regardless of size. Solutions and models are constantly reviewed and debated in multiple fora around the motu. An example of this is the Iwi Leaders Forum, which has utilised the report *Māui Rau: Adapting in a Changing World* (KPMG, 2016) to define future development options. The report presents a number of issues and strategies relevant to this paper, including growing whānau cultural capability and strength, leadership styles that encourage innovation and empowerment, generating energy through a shared kaupapa, maintaining an intergenerational focus, and planning for wellbeing in all things. Atiawa ki Whakarongotai are clearly focused on a shared kaupapa, and are planning for succession and sustaining cultural competence and wellbeing in their whānau.

Passion and commitment to ahi kā roles was clearly demonstrated by all participants involved in this study, with a strong sense of responsibility felt not only to the iwi as a collective but also to the marae as the personification of what it means to be Atiawa ki Whakarongotai. This finding is not surprising considering the sample was focused on those who already clearly identify as Atiawa ki Whakarongotai; however, the

strength of passion and commitment and the overwhelmingly positive contribution that participation and connectedness to iwi makes to the lives of participants and their respective oranga did surprise the researchers. We expected to unearth some sense of negative impact due to stress associated with multiple roles and time commitments, which would exclude a focus on personal wellbeing. However, in most cases we found the opposite, with participants not only prioritising commitment to iwi and marae activities but also gaining a significant sense of oranga or wellbeing from this involvement.

Oranga was found to be enhanced through a range of mechanisms. Whanaungatanga or connection with wider whānau members creates and strengthens social support networks. Wairuatanga or a sense of spiritual wellbeing is experienced through enacting roles such as kaikaranga and a sense of connection with tīpuna is gained from being present at the marae. A strengthened identity as Atiawa ki Whakarongotai and the sense of belonging or “being at home” at the marae were repeated themes throughout the interviews and strongly associated with oranga. For those living far away it was more difficult to participate regularly in iwi activities; however, strong memories of times at the marae or with whānau had an ongoing impact on participants’ sense of identity. The iwi maintains regular contact with those members living away, helping to maintain the kinship networks necessary for enhanced oranga.

Our research has confirmed previous research findings demonstrating a positive association between cultural attachment and wellbeing (Durie, 2001; Kingi et al., 2014; Ratima, Durie, & Hond, 2015). While previous research has identified that “interconnected cognitive, behavioural, social and spiritual elements are important for Māori identity” (Houkamau & Sibley, 2010, p. 10), this research has confirmed that the ability to implement these elements through the role of ahi kā enhances oranga. We have further defined the role of ahi kā,

providing a useful framework for iwi planning by describing the intergenerational, assimilated and multifunctional nature of ahi kā.

We have also confirmed that iwi outcome frameworks such as those outlined in the He Oranga Hāpori study (Māori Economic Development Taskforce, 2010) are a useful tool for not only conducting research but also understanding research results. For example, whakapapa or kinship networks were key to the transmission of values and knowledge regarding ahi kā roles. However, they also drove participation in the research, which was indicated by the good attendance at the research dissemination hui and hui ā-tau. The high level of volunteerism demonstrated by those undertaking ahi kā roles links with the value of manaakitanga but was also demonstrated by the researchers when providing support and acknowledgement back to participants. The ability to undertake whaikōrero, karanga and waiata demonstrates preservation of te reo by those in ahi kā roles. This was further reinforced by the researchers through the use of te reo in research interviews. The leadership of and engagement in the research demonstrated rangatiratanga; however, the continuous expression of rangatiratanga is maintained through ahi kā.

Conclusion

This study is an example of iwi-based research achieving three key outcomes: enhanced research capacity for Atiawa ki Whakarongotai, provision of research-based information on which to carry out future iwi planning and iwi members being enabled to experience research positively and as active partners. The study has confirmed previous research findings demonstrating a positive association between cultural attachment and wellbeing. We have further defined the role of ahi kā, providing a useful framework for iwi planning by describing the intergenerational, assimilated and multifunctional nature of ahi

kā. In addition, we have confirmed that kaupapa tuku iho, as identified in the He Oranga Hāpori study, can be used in complementary ways. In this study kaupapa tuku iho guided the implementation of the research but was also used in the interpretation of the research results.

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Glossary

ahi kā	burning fires, home people
Atiawa ki Whakarongotai	tribal group in Kāpiti
awa	river
awhi	embrace
hapū	subtribe
hauora	wellness, health
hui	gathering
hui ā-tau	annual meeting
iwi	tribal group
kai	food, meal
kai ringawera	kitchen worker
kaikaranga	female caller
kaikōrero	speaker
kaitiaki/ kaitiakitanga	custodian, guardianship
kaiwaiata	singer/s
kanohi ki te kanohi	face to face
karakia	incantation
karanga	call, to call
kaumātua	elder
kaupapa	topic, issue

kaupapa Māori	Māori ideology
kaupapa tuku iho	inherited values
kotahitanga	unity
kura	school
mahau	porch, veranda
mahi	work, to work at
mana	prestige
manaaki	show respect or kindness, entertain, care for
manaakitanga	care and respect for others
mana whenua	jurisdiction over land
manuhiri	guest, visitor
marae	gathering place
marae matua	primary or chief meeting place
mihi	greet, thank
moana	sea, ocean
mokopuna	grandchild/ren
motu	island, country
oranga	health, wellbeing
pānui	notices
paepae	orator's bench
pūkengatanga	knowledge
rangatahi	youth
rangatiratanga	chieftainship
Raukawātanga	Ngāti Raukawa ideology
rohe	region, area
tamariki	children
tangi/tangihanga	weeping, rites for the dead
taonga	treasure
tautoko	to support
te ao Māori	the Māori world
te reo Māori	the Māori language
te taha hinengaro	mental side
te taha tinana	physical side
te taha wairua	spiritual side
te taha whānau	family side
tikanga	custom, lore
tino	main
tīpuna	ancestors
tūpāpaku	deceased
ūkaipōtanga	behaviours of home and community
urupā	burial ground

waiata	songs
wairuatanga	spirituality
whaikōrero	formal speech
whakaaro	thought, opinion
whakapapa	genealogy
Whakarongotai	principal marae of tribal group Atiawa ki Whakarongotai
whānau	family
whanaunga/ whanaungatanga	relative, interconnectedness
whareniui	meeting house
whenua	land

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