

# WALKING OUR PEPEHA

## The influence of whakapapa on health and well-being

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### Abstract

Whakapapa is the essence of health and well-being. Whakapapa is a tool, created by our tūpuna to frame our existence as Māori. By identifying the names of places and people, we create a timeline of locators of who we are, where we come from and where we exist today. The opportunity to “walk our pepeha” enables us to not only identify these places but also to engage with them, making the connection stronger. It is through whakapapa that we can identify who and where we come from; this is vital to identity and therefore to health and well-being. In this article we examine the experiences of rangatahi engaging with and learning about their whakapapa. Interviews with kaumātua contributed to developing a culturally safe and engaging case study titled “Walking Our Pepeha”. The article discusses two key emerging themes from this case study—whakapapa and identity—and explores why these two concepts are pivotal for Māori health and well-being. The lead author then explains how this case study influenced her future and how this research continues to be applied today.

### Keywords

health and well-being, identity, Ngāti Kahungunu, pepeha, rangatahi, whakapapa, whānau

### Introduction

*Ko Kahuranaki, Te Mata o Rongokako ngā maunga*

*Ko Ngaruroro te awa*

*Ko Takitimu te waka*

*Ko Ngāti Hori te hapū*

*Ko Kohupātiki te marae*

*Nō Ngāti Kahungunu ahau*

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*Kahuranaki and Te Mata o Rongokako are the mountains*  
*Ngaruroro is the river*  
*Takitimu is the waka*  
*Ngāti Hori is the subtribe*  
*Kohupātiki is the meeting house*  
*I am from Ngāti Kahungunu*

The above pepeha outlines the whakapapa of the lead author and all participants of this research in relation to the maunga, awa, waka, iwi, hapū, marae and tūpuna we connect to as descendants of Ngāti Kahungunu. By identifying the names of places and people, we create a timeline of locators of who we are, where we come from and how we exist today. According to Hakopa (2011), “Māori position themselves geographically and culturally in the world using a variety of methods such as whakapapa and pepeha” (p. 3). The whakapapa that defines our geographical and cultural centre is captured concisely in the pepeha above; it describes how we position ourselves within this world as a Ngāti Kahungunu descendant.

The aim of this article is to show how reconnecting rangatahi to their ancestral landscapes reaffirms identity and whakapapa by uplifting their voices. Kaupapa Māori theory underpinned this research, informed the methods used for this research and provided the lens for understanding the critical insights derived from the rangatahi interviews.

This research was driven by our whānau, for our whānau. At the time this research was undertaken I (the lead author) was a 24-year-old rangatahi Māori. Rangatahi in our whānau, including myself, have faced difficulties and challenges in understanding our identity and our culture. After completing a Postgraduate Diploma in Physical Education in 2014 and reflecting on the key findings from that research, I wanted to explore further how important identity is to health and well-being (Cunningham, 2014). Following that insight, I began to consider how I could apply whakapapa as a means to explore cultural identity.

Exploring cultural identity consisted of making the conscious effort to visit places expressed in the pepeha above that are foundational to my whakapapa, such as my marae, Kohupātiki, my maunga, Kahuranaki and Te Mata o Rongokako, and my awa, Ngaruroro. I also began thinking about how we were connected to these places and why they are so influential to our lives. With a growing desire to learn more, a passion for whakapapa emerged.

As the oldest mokopuna, I have always been protective of my younger cousins, and I am proud

to say that I had a hand in raising them. I have seen them really struggle as they grow into young men and women. Alongside the uncertainties of identity, their struggles were partly driven by the loss of our cousin 16 years ago to suicide. As I and my cousins grew and came to grips with the reality of what happened, I think we all found it difficult to accept. Although it took 10 or 11 years, it was reconnecting to my ancestral landscapes that helped me through the healing process of the loss of my cousin. It was here that I found my master’s topic: the influence of whakapapa on health and well-being.

This article is structured as follows. First, I explain the methods used and provide some insight into the rangatahi participants. I then discuss two key themes that emerged from the data collected: whakapapa and identity. The focus then turns to the case study, titled “Walking Our Pepeha”. This section explains what the average day during the case study looked like and how the data collected prior to the case study helped structure our days. The day we focus on in this article is the day of our hīkoi up the maunga Te Mata o Rongokako.

## Methods

For this research, six kaumātua and pakeke interviews were conducted for the purpose of acquiring knowledge from those who were experts in the field of whakapapa, identity, Ngāti Kahungunu and physical activity. The kōrero and knowledge from the kaumātua and pakeke interviews assisted to then develop and conduct a case study of reconnecting rangatahi to significant places within Ngāti Kahungunu. The significant places included Te Mata o Rongokako, te maunga o Kahuranaki, te awa o Ngaruroro, Kohupātiki Marae and Ōtatara Pā.

The rangatahi involved in this case study are first cousins to the lead author. To protect the identity of the rangatahi, they will be referred to as Rangatahi 1, 2, 3 or 4. This case study was undertaken in 2016; therefore, the following profiles describe the four rangatahi at the time of the case study and also include where they all are now at the time of writing.

Rangatahi 1 is of Ngāti Kahungunu descent. She was 18 years old at the time of interview, had

recently finished high school and was entering her first year of nursing at the Eastern Institute of Technology. Rangatahi 1 now works at Lower Hutt Hospital as a full-time surgical nurse. Rangatahi 2 is of Ngāti Kahungunu descent. She was 16 years of age at the time of interview and was attending Karamu High School. After completing high school Rangatahi 2 attended the University of Otago to study accounting. She now works for Te Tumu Paeroa as trust co-ordinator. Rangatahi 3 is of Ngāti Kahungunu descent. She was 15 years old at the time of interview. Rangatahi 3 was then enrolled with Te Kura Pounamu, a correspondence school. Rangatahi 3 now has a 2-year-old son and is a full-time māmā. Rangatahi 4 is of Ngāti Kahungunu descent. He was 14 years old at the time of interview and was attending Hastings Boys' High School. Rangatahi 4 is now in his second year of a plumbing apprenticeship with Cape Plumbing.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the rangatahi post-reconnection with all significant sites, first as a whole group then one on one. The reason for this was that some rangatahi preferred the group kōrero while others preferred the one-on-one kōrero. The same questions were asked in both processes: however, the format was flexible to permit rangatahi to explain their thoughts and discuss ideas further. University of Otago Ethics approval was granted (F15/008). Analysis of the interview data highlighted key emerging themes. The first key theme that will be discussed in this article is whakapapa, followed by identity.

### Whakapapa

Rangatahi are an important part of our society. For Māori, it is our rangatahi who are our connections to the future and are the continuation of our whakapapa, both literally and in terms of knowledge of whakapapa. This whakapapa connection is more vital than ever, with data from the 2018 Te Kupenga Survey of Māori Well-being showing that 55.5% of rangatahi aged 15–24 years know their ancestral maunga, and 28.4% know all their pepeha, which includes iwi, hapū, maunga, awa, waka and tūpuna (Stats NZ, 2020). In order for whakapapa to be expressed positively, rangatahi need explicit and intimate knowledge of who they are as Māori (whakapapa identity) linked to knowledge of where they come from (geographic and cultural centre). This research proposed to make these links to knowledge of whakapapa and identity for rangatahi through reconnection to ancestral landscapes. Specifically, this research was about our rangatahi identity, about being

Ngāti Kahungunu located within the rohe of Ngāti Kahungunu and about being connected intimately with significant sites within our tribal region.

Whakapapa is widely thought of in general terms as genealogy; yet it is more complex than tracing and reciting genealogy. Barlow (1991) describes whakapapa as “the genealogical descent of all living things from the gods to the present time; [and as the] basis for the organisation of knowledge in respect of the creation and development of all things” (p. 173). Hakopa (2011) concludes that whakapapa “is also the instrument whereby Māori derived their intimate connections to the land and how they articulate their sense of belonging to their sacred places, stretching back hundreds of years” (p. 4). Clearly, it is through whakapapa that we are able to identify who and where we come from, which forms the background to identity.

Identity is a central component in the Māori world; it is an intimate connection to who we are and where we are from. Hakopa (2011) notes that whakapapa is “the source of [Māori] rights to tūrangawaewae, their place to stand in the world, and their personal mana and tapu” (p. 4). Te Rito (2007), meanwhile, explains that whakapapa plays a significant role “in the resilience of Māori and the ability [for Māori] to spring back up” (p. 4). The relationship Māori have to the land is critical. We as Māori have grown from the land—from Papatūānuku—and having the knowledge of whakapapa keeps us grounded to the Earth (Te Rito, 2007).

Knowledge of whakapapa is where Māori derive our sense of identity. Hakopa (2011) notes that whakapapa is a central component to the Māori world because it “encompasses Māori notions of identity” (p. 4). Te Rito (2007) highlights that the act of depositing the afterbirth into a tree, which then grows out of the land, “is all part of maintaining our roots and our identity as offspring of our forebears” (p. 1). Furthermore, whakapapa “determines the cosmological connections to the heavens, the Earth and all the living things within the environment” (Hakopa, 2011, p. 4).

Following their engagement at each site, I observed that the rangatahi participants gained a strong understanding of what whakapapa means to them. The following are some of their reflections.

Rangatahi 2 reflected on what whakapapa means to her: “Whakapapa to me is my ancestors and family before me that have done certain things with their lives and made many decisions that have eventually led to me being on this Earth.”

Rangatahi 4 talked about the importance of connection to our past: “Whakapapa is important to me because it links us to our past and it is important because we need to know where we came from and what our family history is.” Rangatahi 1, meanwhile, reflected back to her pepeha to help her understand whakapapa: “If I were to define it in my own words I would say that whakapapa is my family tree which connects me to my marae, my mountain and my river.” Lastly, Rangatahi 3 reflected on what she believed whakapapa to be: “Whakapapa] lets you know who your relations are and how families are joined together.”

The quotes from the four rangatahi show that they all have an understanding of their own whakapapa connection to place and people. It is whakapapa that allows us to understand who we are, and where we come from (Graham, 2009). This connection and engagement give rangatahi a sense of identity and establish those whakapapa connections we have to people, land and atua (George, 2010). It is our history and stories that allow us to understand whakapapa and these connections. Understanding the depth and breadth of whakapapa was a fundamental learning for the case study. The rangatahi participants had some semblance of whakapapa knowledge prior to the case study, but this was bolstered once we engaged with all of the sites. The learning of this whakapapa knowledge also contributed to a deeper understanding of their identity, the second key theme that emerged from the case study.

### Identity

Identity is defined by Baumeister (1986) as “an interpretation of the self” (p. 4). From a Māori perspective, Mason Durie (1985) explains that identity “derives much from family characteristics” (p. 485). He adds that the searching question of “What do you do?” in terms of occupation is less heard in Māori society; rather it is “Where are you from?” or “Who are your people?” (M. Durie, 1985, p. 485). This idea of identity being formed from family characteristics, as a group rather than as an individual, is a stark contrast to the Western idea that an independent lifestyle is associated with good health (M. Durie, 1985).

Knowledge of identity is important to Māori and comprises a complex balance of language, knowledge systems and principles (Hakopa, 2011). However, within this complex mix, the explicit link between identity and a measure of wellness is imperative to the drive of this research. Te Rito (2007) explains that “knowledge of a sense of identity [is] very important to Māori”

(p. 4) and that a loss of such identity has been a key factor in the over-representation of Māori in health measures of contemporary society (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2011). The effects of this loss are highlighted in the many negative health, educational, crime and violence statistics (Ministry of Health, 2009; Ministry of Youth Development, 2008; Te Puni Kōkiri, 2006, 2012).

### Reconnection to whakapapa and identity

An understanding of whakapapa is an important consideration in determining identity and the connection to overall health and well-being. As noted above, Baumeister (1986) describes identity as “an interpretation of the self” (p. 4). To this, Quince (2007) adds that a secure and healthy Māori cultural identity thrives when people are able to access knowledge of the reo and “cultural norms and practices which are in turn, valued, promoted and enforced in our larger society and legal systems” (p. 3). Te Rito (2007) agrees that the importance of identity and also strong whakapapa connections is vital to health, stating that “the ‘loss’ of such identity and whakapapa connection by urban Māori has been a contributing factor to Māori being over-represented with regards to the ills of present society” (p. 4). Further to this, an understanding of one’s cultural background may enable an increase of identification within one’s cultural group, leading to enhanced well-being. However, Māori face numerous challenges in maintaining a sense of identity. For example, Māori live in a dominantly Westernised Pākehā society, which has inherently affected Māori cultural identity (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2011).

Māori identity has many factors of influence for collective and individual well-being, which include “ancestral connections through whakapapa or genealogy, combined with access to ancestral land as tūrangawaewae, bound together by ancestral language, [and] te reo Māori” (A. Durie, 1997, p. 142). Brougham and Harr (2013) discuss this further, stating that cultural knowledge, such as an understanding of ancestral links to a mountain, river, iwi, hapū and marae, as well as having te reo Māori and being able to recite this cultural knowledge in te reo Māori, is linked to an enhanced understanding of self-identity. Therefore, it is our understanding that Māori identity can only be enhanced by ancestry because “without kin, present and past we are literally nothing” (Patterson, 1992, p. 153).



FIGURE 1 Left: Whānau on a hīkoi up Te Mata o Rongokako; right: Whānau on a hīkoi at Tangoio Falls.

### “Walking Your Pepeha”

To address the disconnection of rangatahi from who they are and their sites of significance, we used Kaupapa Māori theory and reconnected whānau to their sites through a case study approach. Kaupapa Māori theory is firmly grounded in making positive outcomes for the collective of the whānau, hapū and iwi (Mane, 2009). We utilised a whakapapa approach that we developed through whenua, which is reflected in the case study and pūrākau, which in turn are used as a transmission tool of whakapapa while engaging with the whenua.

The case study involved taking four rangatahi to ancestral landscapes within the Ngāti Kahungunu region that we connect to through whakapapa. As previously mentioned, the aim of this case study was to engage with each site, share knowledge of the site, and explain the significance and how it relates to our whakapapa and identity. We visited and engaged (e.g., walked, ran or swam) in particular environments that are important and significant to all of us as Ngāti Kahungunu (see Figure 1). For example, many of the places we visited are those that the lead author and rangatahi participants all identify with when we stand and recite our pepeha (e.g., “Ko Kahuranaki te maunga”, “Ko Ngaruroro te awa” and “Ko Kohupātiki te marae”). At each site, pūrākau was shared; whether it was the knowledge that I knew, knowledge the kaumātua and pakeke knew, knowledge the rangatahi knew or knowledge that was at the site on information boards. Some of the sites we had been to before, some of the sites we visited more than once and for some sites it was our first time.

As previously mentioned, pepeha outlines our connection to the maunga, awa, waka, hapū, iwi, marae, tūpuna and whānau. A pepeha affirms our identity in terms connecting us to our ancestral landscapes and allowing us to understand who we are and where we have come from. “Walking Our Pepeha” enables rangatahi to reconnect to our ancestral landscapes. When we stand, recite our pepeha and introduce ourselves, it means so much to us because we have physically been there and experienced these places, their mana and their wairua firsthand. One participant explained further:

Knowing your maunga, knowing your awa, knowing your roto or your landmarks, your tohu whenua and having the opportunity to walk your pepeha, if you can walk it’s certainly a lot more meaningful than sort of writing and saying it not necessarily knowing where these places are. (Pakeke 1)

Having the chance, as the participant explains, “to walk your pepeha” opens up opportunities to “obtain [the] mātauranga” (Heke, 2013, p. 4) of those who personify that environment. This would give more meaning to your pepeha if you have this mātauranga and experience. Another pakeke participant spoke about how influential and powerful knowledge can be:

For me I draw strength, strength from the knowledge I get, I mean what’s in a name? It’s the character of the person that gives you the strength and it gives you the ihi to admire the genes from which you came. (Pakeke 2)



FIGURE 2 Te Mata o Rongokako

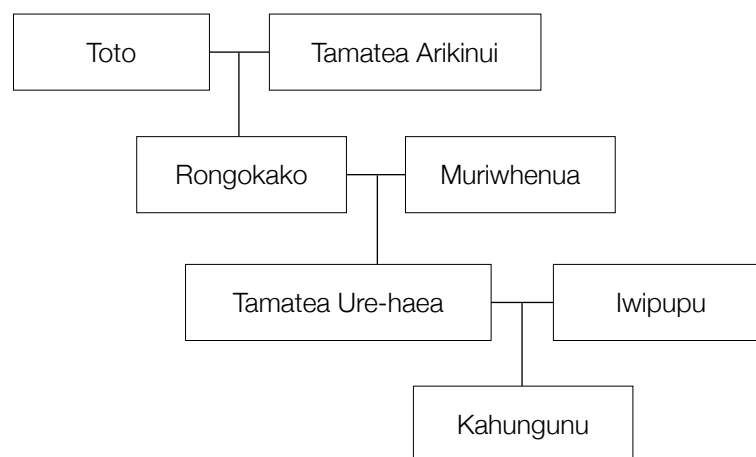


FIGURE 3 Whakapapa of Kahungunu

This quote expresses how important knowledge of whakapapa can be. One of the functions of whakapapa “is to funnel the relation between past, present and future and tie it together” (Metge, 1995, p. 90). Pakeke 2 adds to Metge’s (1995) quote by stating that “our history will tell us how strong we were and we can be strong once again, if we know the knowledge of the past that gives us the confidence”, further magnifying the importance of knowledge of whakapapa.

### Pūrākau: Te Mata o Rongokako

In the following sections we would like to bring forward the voices of the rangatahi Māori of this research who shared their experience of engaging with one of the sites, which was the maunga Te Mata o Rongokako. In doing so, we will describe a typical day of the case study.

I call each rangatahi the night before to let them know we will be heading up Te Mata o Rongokako at 9:00 am. As I am picking each one up the next morning, we are able to see Rongokako from a distance, embedded in the land as a maunga, as seen in Figure 2. Once we get to the car park, we enter the realm of Rongokako.

Firstly, an explanation of the whakapapa of Rongokako and our connection to him as Ngāti Kahungunu is given by the lead author, which had been recited to her by kaumātua in interviews. Rongokako was the son of Toto and Tamatea Arikinui, who was the captain of the *Takitimu* waka, which makes Rongokako the grandfather of Kahungunu, as shown in Figure 3.

The first question we ask the rangatahi is if anyone knows anything about Rongokako or pūrākau about how Te Mata came to be. Instantly they

reply with the well-known story of “the sleeping giant”. The rangatahi explain to me that a giant fell in love and was forced to eat his way through the maunga to prove his love, but he choked and died: this maunga was his final resting place. We then ask if they know the name of the giant or the name of his love interest. One of the rangatahi replies “Rongokako”, but they are unable to recall the name of his love, Hine Rākau. It is here that we begin to tell the story of Rongokako, as it was told by one of the pakeke participants:

Rongokako was from Waimārama and from the peak, where it sits today, he guarded the western boundary. As a guardian he often caused conflict among other hapū and iwi. The hapū from Pakipaki (a local township in Ngāti Kahungunu) sent one of their daughters, Hine Rākau, to divert him to pursue love rather than aggression. Rongokako fell in love with Hine Rākau, turning his thoughts from war to peace, but she too had fallen in love. Hine Rākau’s hapū therefore gave Rongokako impossible tasks to prove his love for Hine Rākau, the last task being to bite his way through the hills—Rongokako choked and fell to his death. [The bite can still be seen today and is referred to as Parikaranga; see Figure 2.] His body now forms the peak known as Te Mata o Rongokako (the face of Rongokako). Hine Rākau, once she covered Rongokako’s body with a cloak, leapt to her own death. Hine Rākau forms the gully base of the peak, on the Waimārama side. She too has a maunga named after her, Kohine Rākau (Mt Erin), which is slightly north from Rongokako.

It is pūrākau such as this one that can be used as a whakapapa transmission tool for rangatahi. These stories can provide motivation for positive change in our rangatahi as they learn about our past, our tūpuna and our whakapapa. This mode of learning proved to be beneficial, as Rangatahi 1 commented:

I enjoyed the stories you shared with us because they were about our whakapapa [and it] made it more interesting, especially when we were at the place of the story being told. It’s an easier form of learning whakapapa and also Māori culture because it’s more intriguing than just reading a book, also making it easier to understand the stories being told.

This quote places emphasis on the strength of pūrākau as a pedagogical tool (Lee, 2003). Rangatahi 1 identified that being “at the place of

the story being told” made it more interesting as it allowed the pūrākau to come to life, as if we entered the pūrākau itself by being at the place. Lee (2003) supports this as she describes how pūrākau were shaped in a way that appealed to the audiences’ aural, visual and emotive senses. Pūrākau can also “arouse the imagination, inform and inspire, warn and persuade, maintain relationships, protocols, rituals and rules” (Lee, 2003, p. 33), further showing that it is an ideal pedagogy to learn whakapapa.

As we near the highest point of Rongokako, the rangatahi begin to ask more questions along the lines of “If Hine Rākau was his [Rongokako’s] love and he died, how did Kahungunu come from him?” We turn to the pūrākau about Rongokako attending the whare wānanga in the Wairarapa and share it with the rangatahi:

Although Rongokako was intelligent and well built, he was still seen as a failure to many of the tohunga at the whare wānanga because of his older age. For this reason, when it came to the final tests, he did not partake. At the very last test however, he begged to join. The test was to collect a piece of rimu-rapa (kelp), which grew on the rocks of an island off the coast, without getting wet. With constant begging to join in on this last test, the tohunga decided to grant him the opportunity. To all of their amazement he succeeded. With learning complete, Rongokako now had to look for a love, the maiden of his choice, Muri-Whenua, who was from Hauraki. However, many of the students had their eye on her; his biggest rival would be Paoa, who was also from Hauraki. Paoa offered Rongokako a seat in his waka, but he declined and preferred to travel by land. Rongokako purposefully gave Paoa a good head start and when he knew Paoa would be in a specific place he then took his giant strides so he reached that place just before Paoa did. Rongokako’s footprints can be seen today, his second footstep is near Cape Kidnappers, his next near Whangawehi on the Mahia Peninsula, then in Whangarā beyond Gisborne. It was here that Paoa realised Rongokako was playing with him and if he were to succeed in getting Muri-Whenua he would have to trap Rongokako somehow to stop him. This place where Paoa made the trap is known as Tawhiti-a-Paoa (Trap of Paoa). However, Rongokako strode far over this trap and was first to the maiden’s home and secured Muri-Whenua as his bride. They went on to have a son, Tamatea Ure-haea, who then married Iwipupu and had a son named Kahungunu, thus explaining the connection between Rongokako and Kahungunu.

Although there is a pūrākau of Te Mata o Rongokako, it was still important to share other pūrākau of Rongokako because of his feats and achievements. One of the positive elements of pūrākau is that they demonstrate the strength, intelligence, determination, hard work and purpose Māori have rather than modern-day negative Māori stereotypes. A. Durie (1997) expands this thinking, explaining that “for these connections to continue to flourish family members must seek to retain the essence of narrative and storying for the benefit of our future generations” (p. 161). Rangatahi 4 shared his thoughts on the use of pūrākau:

I think the stories were a good way of learning about our whakapapa as they kept us tuned in and interested in what was being said unlike if we were learning from a book or being told like a history lesson.

This rangatahi raises the idea of the pedagogical approach used by comparing it to “learning from a book” or a “history lesson”, stating that engaging in pūrākau kept him “tuned in and interested”. There are varied ways to present pūrākau, and presentation is highly dependent on the narrator and the context and purpose (Lee, 2008). Therefore, based on the rangatahi quote above, you could assume that the narrator did well to engage the rangatahi and that being within the actual environment of the pūrākau being told not only helped to fire their imagination but also achieved the general function of pūrākau, which is “predetermined by the need to pass on knowledge in an orally based culture” (Lee, 2008 p. 64).

Both rangatahi quotes above link to the Kaupapa Māori theory principle of ako Māori. Smith (2003) defines ako Māori as “teaching and learning settings and practices that can be closely and effectively connected with the cultural backgrounds and life circumstances of Māori communities” (p. 9). The core issue is that Māori students are culturally different from non-Māori, and thus have different learning and assessments needs that need to be met in a way that is culturally appropriate (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; M. Durie, 2001; Mahuika et al., 2011). If ako Māori helps Māori learn more efficiently, then it must be utilised. Being “culturally appropriate” could also influence rangatahi cultural identity. An example of this was given by Rangatahi 1:

The stories we heard taught me a lot about my mountain and river. It taught me how I am

connected to each place as well as further allowing me to see how I am connected to my whakapapa in more ways than one. I do like the fact these stories have taught me more about my Māori culture in relation to my self-identity.

A secure identity is vital to health and well-being (M. Durie, 2001). This shows that reconnection to ancestral sites and sharing pūrākau positively impact more than just the incidental physical aspect of health and well-being; they also influence the wairua, hinengaro and whānau aspects of health. Utilising pūrākau as a whakapapa transmission tool proved to be constructive for rangatahi to learn not only because of the storytelling method but because they could understand how they were connected to each place and understand the influence of whakapapa. Furthermore, being physically present within the environment that the pūrākau were about amplified this connection; this connection and understanding, as well as the physical engagement, enhanced the health and well-being of the rangatahi.

## Conclusion

This article has put the voices of rangatahi at the forefront and demonstrated that reconnecting to ancestral landscapes has the ability to reaffirm identity and knowledge of whakapapa. The “Walking Our Pepeha” case study validates an initiative that can expose rangatahi to whakapapa, mātauranga, te reo Māori and enhanced cultural identity, which then leads to enhanced health and well-being as a result. Because this research involves collaboration with whānau, it has the potential to enhance whānau health and well-being and whānau identity. At the hapū level (Ngāti Hori), it also contributes to extended whānau pursuit of whakapapa knowledge, and reconnection to ancestral sites. Further to this, at an iwi level, it can support enhanced iwi health and well-being and also iwi environmental sustainability and awareness as more Māori begin to engage with and reconnect to ancestral sites. Outcomes of this research can also contribute more generally to rangatahi Māori across the country from all iwi by using the same application within their own whānau, hapū and iwi.

This research was highly motivated by whānau experiences; seeing the positive effects from the case study has continued my motivation to pursue more knowledge and understanding because we know that there are many other whānau who are living with the same challenges. The journey of understanding whakapapa is no easy task.



What we have come to learn is that the journey of discovering whakapapa is not about finding something that is “lost”; whakapapa is something that is within you, that needs to be rediscovered, experienced and lived. The purpose of this research journey was to deepen whakapapa connections and reinforce health and well-being for whānau. With the success of this research, after the completion of my master’s thesis I decided to continue with this growing passion of mine by advancing on this very kaupapa of reconnection to whakapapa by enrolling in a PhD.

My PhD is very much an extension of the research outlined in this article. I am currently in the last year of my PhD, and the title of my thesis is *A Kōrero with the Maunga*, which derives from the whakapapa not only of my research journey but also of my personal journey of self-discovery, identity and well-being. Whakapapa for me started with a visit to my maunga, and ever since then I haven’t stopped. I’ve been able to share those moments with my loved ones and also taken that love across to my awa and pā. This PhD kaupapa involves everything I love and am passionate about: my whānau, whakapapa, well-being and physical education. Moreover, I’ve been able to witness the influence it has had on the growth of my whānau and our pursuit to understand our collective whānau identity. My love and addiction to connection and whakapapa, particularly with maunga, has transformed and challenged my thinking, and allowed me to grow in a way in which I can express my thinking through writing. I have high expectations for myself and my whānau for the future, but for now I am invested in producing a thesis that is embedded in and guided by my whakapapa and our whānau stories of reconnection and resilience, one that my whānau, past, present and future, will be proud of.

Mauri ora.

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### Glossary

ako Māori	Māori pedagogies
aroha	kindness, affection, love, compassion
atua	deity
awa	river
hapū	subtribe
hīkoi	walk
hinengaro	consciousness, mind, thought
ihi	essential force
iwi	tribe
kaumātua	elders
kaupapa	purpose
kōrero	talk, discussion
māmā	mother
mana	prestige, status, authority, influence, integrity; honour, respect
marae	courtyard
mātauranga	Māori knowledge
maunga	mountain
mokopuna	grandchild
pā	home; fortified village
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
pakeke	adult
Papatūānuku	earth mother
pepeha	tribal saying
pūrākau	traditional stories
rangatahi	youth
rohe	tribal region
roto	lake
tapu	sacred
te reo Māori	the Māori language
tautoko	support
tohu whenua	landmarks
tohunga	expert
tūpuna	ancestors
tūrangawaewae	place of belonging
waka	canoe
wairua	spiritual soul, essence
whakapapa	genealogy
whare wānanga	university, place of higher learning; traditionally, places where tohunga taught the sons of rangatira their people’s knowledge of history, genealogy and religious practice
whānau	family
whenua	land; placenta

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