

GATHERING THE AUTHENTIC VOICES OF INDIGENOUS YOUNG PEOPLE

School-based research engagement processes

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Abstract

Crucial to promoting Indigenous youth autonomy is engaging with young people in research processes in a way that promotes their voice and cultural agency. Like other young people, taitamariki Māori perceptions of their own lives and experiences provide essential input towards creating better conditions for and with them, now and in the future. In planning Harmonised, our school-based taitamariki and Māori-centred project promoting healthy intimate partner relationships that ran from 2016 to 2020, we found little literature to guide our engagement processes. In this article we share learnings from our research, how we engaged with schools, and how we worked with Indigenous young people to hear their authentic voices.

Keywords

healthy relationships, young people, Māori-centred, violence prevention, engagement

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Introduction

Engaging young people in research that concerns them is both their right and recognised as methodological best practice (Schmid & Garrels, 2025; Spriggs et al., 2010). Article 12 of the United Nations (UN, 1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child explains that children and young people have the right to have their views heard, taken seriously, and given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, especially in matters affecting them. Later, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009) and the UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights (UN General Assembly, 2007) affirmed these rights for Indigenous children. However, dominant Western adult-framed methodologies and methods may not promote an Indigenous youth voice. For example, surveys with adult predetermined structured questions and response options can oversimplify and ignore important information relevant to young Indigenous people (Eruera & Dobbs, 2010). In planning *Harmonised* (2016–2020), our school-based taitamariki and Māori-centred project promoting healthy relationships, we encountered a dearth of literature that explicitly addressed taitamariki and school-based engagement processes. To address this gap, the foundational works of Cram (2009), Hudson et al. (2010), and Smith (2012) provided essential guidance in shaping our engagement strategy.

This article shares our path to enact culturally responsive school engagement strategies consistent with our *Harmonised* team kaupapa. Our learnings might be transferable to enhance work with Indigenous young people in different contexts.

The Harmonised project

The *Harmonised* research team comprised a group of Māori and tauīwi multidisciplinary researchers whose research and practice backgrounds covered the areas of Māori health, youth health and advocacy, social work, psychology, and nursing. The overall objective of the *Harmonised* project was to develop, test, and disseminate an interactive, personalised smartphone app for young people (aged 13–18 years) to promote their healthy intimate partner relationships. Built for secondary school students with a specific focus on Māori, the app also enhanced the capacity for friends and whānau to support taitamariki in their relationship decision-making. Our kaupapa determined that the app developed as a result of a co-design process that drew on the perspectives of the multidisciplinary research team; a Community Advisory Group (CAG), comprising a range of Māori and

non-Māori youth, research, tikanga Māori, and education experts; and a Taitamariki Advisory Group (TAG). Throughout the research, we engaged with a tuakana group comprising foundation TAG members and a teina group comprising younger TAG members between 13 and 17 years old who replaced the tuakana members as they moved beyond secondary school. These talented and inspirational taitamariki were crucial to developing healthy relationship resources and the project's success. Their role was to ensure a young person's perspective throughout our mahi. As a research team, we were responsible to the CAG and TAG for manaaki and kaitiakitanga, and to whakarongo.

The project proceeded in three stages. The first stage consisted of a series of focus groups with taitamariki that aimed to

1. identify taitamariki definitions of an “intimate partner relationship” as opposed to adult-developed descriptions of taitamariki “relationships”;
2. identify what constituted healthy and unhealthy intimate partner relationships in their context by using the Indigenous wellbeing framework *Te Whare Tapa Whā* (Durie, 1985). The *Whare Tapa Whā* wellbeing domains allowed a holistic description of the individual's sense of wellbeing and aspects impacting on relationship wellbeing, including the importance of whānau—an aspect which has not been included in Western relationship measures or wellbeing frameworks to date (Dobbs, 2021); and
3. explore how taitamariki make decisions within their intimate partner relationships.

The second stage of the project involved app development and specification of the trial to test whether the app was beneficial for taitamariki following its implementation. We conducted focus groups with taitamariki to elicit their views on young people's priorities and decision-making within their intimate partner relationships. Fundamentally, this phase of the project sought to reveal a conceptualisation of their intimate partner relationship wellbeing in young people's own words. Alongside this was our interest in using an Indigenous approach to facilitate young people's voices within the discourse of intimate partner relationships. This included, for example, *whakawhitiwhiti kōrero* among the taitamariki, a form of discussion that was led by the taitamariki with minimal prompt from the research team. The TAG contributed to applying focus group data to the app's development, promoting a user-friendly

experience specific to Indigenous taitamariki. Focus groups were also convened in the first stage with taitamariki to discuss and finalise questions for a survey testing app effectiveness. The TAG also had significant input into developing the survey carried out in the pilot schools to ensure every aspect was taitamariki-centred.

The third stage of Harmonised centred on implementing the app in eight Aotearoa New Zealand secondary schools and initiating a stepped wedge trial (Koziol-McLain et al., 2021). Through the stepped wedge trial, the app was introduced to all eight schools over two school terms, with the order decided randomly. Each school completed five short online surveys across a 15-month period. This approach meant every school had access to the app, while still allowing us to see what difference it made over time. Rolling it out in stages also made it easier for schools to manage and support within their normal routines. The study protocol, outlining mixed-methods data collection, including focus groups and taitamariki surveys, is available elsewhere (Koziol-McLain et al., 2021). The schools included kura kaupapa Māori and mainstream secondary, urban, and rural schools. In this phase, we also asked schools to participate in focus groups about healthy relationships, services offered by each school, the healthy relationships curriculum, and school-based recruitment for a taitamariki survey (see Koziol-McLain et al., 2021, for further detail). This research involved significant engagement with our participating schools. The process included obtaining informed consent from school principals and school governing bodies; working through safety pathways and protocols; participating in key stakeholder focus groups to develop a bespoke implementation plan for each school; facilitating focus groups with young people; app implementation; follow-up; and responding to teacher, parent and student queries and conversations generated by our engagement with the schools and taitamariki. Each participating school identified someone in the school to serve as a liaison person for our research team.

This article focuses on the engagement processes carried out between researchers and taitamariki within schools. Our engagement methods to create strong connections with the taitamariki throughout the project may be of value to future researchers in mainstream and Indigenous settings when engaging with taitamariki.

Māori-centred methodology

In Māori-centred research, Māori keep control of the research to maintain the mana of their kōrero (Wilson et al., 2021). A defining feature of Māori-centred research is that Māori are significant participants and researchers (Mooney, 2012). Within the Harmonised team, Māori were represented equally alongside non-Māori researchers, including a bicultural leadership approach. A Māori-centred research methodology guided our processes and advocated for the voices of taitamariki to be heard. Māori-centred research enabled the construction of Māori knowledge, and, in the Harmonised project, this approach produced knowledge about relationship wellbeing for taitamariki Māori in the participating schools.

Durie (1997) explained that Māori-centred research is founded on three cornerstones: whakapiki tangata (enablement), whakatuaia (integration), and mana Māori (control). Furthermore, underpinning Māori-centred research are the expectations that the research processes and outcomes are of benefit to Māori, are inclusive of tikanga, values and needs of Māori, and privilege te ao Māori. In this article, tikanga refers to culturally grounded practices, values, and processes that guide appropriate conduct within Māori contexts. Tikanga is not fixed or universal; rather, it is relational and contextual, shaped by the people involved, the setting, the purpose, and the time. What is considered tika therefore emerges through collective understanding and shared practice rather than predetermined rules.

Māori-centred methodology was operationalised through deliberate structural and relational practices within our bicultural research team. Co-leadership between Māori and tauwiwi investigators ensured shared decision-making and accountability at all stages of the project, preventing Māori perspectives from being relegated to retrospective consultation. This model supported mana Māori by embedding Māori authority within governance, design, interpretation, and dissemination processes.

A Māori advisory group provided cultural oversight and strategic guidance, ensuring the research remained aligned with tikanga, community priorities, and te ao Māori perspectives. In parallel, a tauwiwi advisory group supported reflexive practice and critical engagement, strengthening bicultural accountability rather than defaulting to dominant research norms. Furthermore, this relational approach was supported by regular team check-ins that created space to reflect on process, power dynamics, and cultural safety (Wilson et al., 2021).

These hui were used to ensure Māori voices were not only present but centred in shaping decisions, framing findings, and determining appropriate language and dissemination pathways. Together, these structures moved the methodology beyond symbolic inclusion towards genuine partnership and Māori leadership within a bicultural research context.

Importantly, through the engagement phase of the Harmonised project, the Māori-centred approach provided a backbone for all interactions. This approach supported culturally appropriate engagement that empowered both Māori as *tangata whenua* and *tauwi*. Through this approach, the research team were able to support the needs of *taitamariki* Māori in mainstream settings as well as those in a *Kaupapa* Māori environment (Bishop, 1996; Cunningham, 2000; Smith, 2012).

Harmonised *kaingākau*, *tikanga*, and *whanonga pono*

Our planning for engaging with *taitamariki* began at the first research team hui. The team affirmed the aim to support the health and wellbeing of *taitamariki* by co-creating an app that provided a mechanism for people to get help and complemented supports provided by friends and *whānau*. The importance of having *whānau* support their relationships and seeking advice from *whānau* about their relationships has been highlighted in Dobbs (2021). At that first hui, we purposefully identified the Harmonised team *tikanga* and principles to guide our decision-making and practice as we engaged with one other, communities, schools, advisory group members, and *taitamariki* participating in the research. These principles and values supported the design and delivery of Māori health research in a way that provided a holistic approach in a culturally safe and ethical manner (Mooney, 2012). At this hui we also intentionally identified the term *taitamariki*, acknowledging that this *kupu* is commonly used within *Te Tai Tokerau* to refer to young people. As the original concept for this research emerged from *whakaaro* and community dialogue in *Te Tai Tokerau*, retaining this term honours the *whakapapa* of the project and situates it within its Northland origins. However, we recognise that in other regions young people may be referred to as *taiohi* and *rangatahi*.

The research team, CAG, and TAG members discussed the team principles to ensure the research adhered to the *kaupapa* and would benefit *taitamariki*. This process also meant that although a single research team member liaised directly with each school, through the team *tikanga*, other team

members could confidently step in and provide support or complete the data collection at any point.

Correct and culturally responsive engagement was a critical component of each recruitment stage, as providing an opportunity for *taitamariki* to share their perspectives within a school setting was a priority. It was also vital that the correct processes were in place to ensure the research remained safe and appropriate. The team principles effectively guided every aspect of engagement with *taitamariki* and allowed the establishment of positive connections.

The Harmonised *kaingākau* were developed collaboratively with the research team, *kaumātua*, and TAG members to ensure that understandings of appropriate conduct reflected shared values rather than imposed interpretations. This aligns with best practice in research with *taitamariki*, where cultural safety, relational accountability, and youth participation are central (Graham et al., 2015; Hudson et al., 2010; Ware et al., 2018). In this way, “right” and “true” were not abstract ideals; rather they were collectively negotiated through *whakawhitiwhiti kōrero* and grounded in *tikanga*, respect for *mana*, and responsiveness to the lived realities of *taitamariki*. As the values and principles were the backbone of our school engagement, it is important to understand that these were revisited on multiple occasions with all researchers and TAG members. Therefore, the final product is one that our team constructed to be culturally appropriate and *taitamariki*-centred. Table 1 lists the *kaingākau*, *tikanga*, and *whanonga pono* of the Harmonised project.

School engagement approach

As noted by Barbarich (2019), the establishment of respectful and trusting relationships plays a critical role in the effective implementation of research. In line with this, our school engagement was facilitated through relationships established prior to data collection. These existing connections with school leadership and wellbeing teams enabled safe access, trust-building, and practical implementation within busy school environments. While these relationships supported culturally grounded engagement with *taitamariki*, they did not influence the content of the *kōrero* or the subsequent analysis; participation remained strictly voluntary and was guided by consistent processes across all sites.

We acknowledge that working within established networks may introduce perceived selection bias and limit whose voices are included. To

TABLE 1 Harmonised project kaingākau, tikanga, and whanonga pono

| Kaingākau (the values that inform and guide what we do) | |
|---|---|
| Tika | Being tika always—acting in true and correct ways. |
| Kaitiakitanga | We will care for each other, and the young people associated with our research. |
| Manaakitanga | Relationships with fellow team members, young people, schools, parents, and the community must be respectful and caring at all times. |
| Reciprocity | Reciprocity will underpin all partnerships and relationships with young people, schools, parents, and the community. |
| Inclusive of young people | Our decisions and actions will be inclusive of young people. |
| Confidentiality | We will be clear about the limits of confidentiality to ensure young people's safety. |
| Safety | Safety is a priority at all times. |
| Tikanga (the right way of doing things) | |
| Adhere to health & safety protocols to optimise young people's physical, emotional, and cultural wellbeing. | |
| Implement the research to a high standard at all times, which meets ethical requirements, decision-aid science standards, research conduct standards, and team members' professional practice standards. | |
| All members will take responsibility to ensure that their actions and decisions are inclusive of young people. | |
| Whanonga pono (principles) | |
| We appreciate taitamariki within the context of their whānau and both historical and contemporary influences that they negotiate. | |
| Our decision-making and doing the best that we can will be informed by our kaupapa and the principles enshrined within human rights, the UN (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Declaration of Indigenous Peoples Rights (UN General Assembly, 2007), Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC; Graham et al., 2015), trauma-informed care, and our personal integrity. | |
| We will recognise the diversity (e.g., age, sexual orientation) within young people as a group, and the power differences that exist between them and adults. | |
| We will be culturally responsive. | |

mitigate this, we embedded reflexive team *kōrero*, bicultural advisory oversight, and transparent reporting practices throughout the research. Consequently, our findings should be understood as reflecting the specific experiences of *taitamariki* within the participating schools, rather than representing all young people. Future research should seek to extend engagement beyond existing networks to broaden inclusion.

There are two key aspects to be considered regarding school engagement:

1. For *taitamariki* to participate, issues of powerlessness and voicelessness need to be addressed as typically, adults make choices about who should and should not participate in research (Fox, 2013, p. 988). Consideration must be given to how children are given the option not to participate (Dobbs, 2021).
2. Ensuring school staff have a belief that *taitamariki* can participate in research. Therefore, the consent process is important and not seen as a one-off action but continues through the whole research project (Dobbs, 2021).

Without carrying out research ethically, the *authentic voice* of young people will not be heard. This term is understood from a mana-enhancing (human rights) framework (Dobbs, 2021).

The Harmonised project values guided our engagement with all schools and research participants. We used these helpful tools to promote a culturally appropriate experience for the researcher and research participants. The following sections provide insights into how our team incorporated our values into our “doing” of Harmonised research engagement.

Applying our *kaingākau*

Tika: Doing things the right way

Adhering to the project’s *tikanga* was crucial for *taitamariki* engagement (Hudson et al., 2010). The team sought initial consent from each principal and school board to conduct the research. Following school-level consent, the school liaison supported logistical coordination by identifying suitable classes based on timetabling and availability. *Taitamariki* were then invited to participate voluntarily and self-select into the project, consistent with the *kaupapa* of youth agency (Barbarich-Unasa, 2023; Eruera & Dobbs, 2010); individual participants were not selected by school staff. It is important to note that informed consent was continuously upheld. Although a particular class may have been identified, all *taitamariki* in

that class would individually consent or decline (Hudson et al., 2010). In three participating schools, all *taitamariki* from Years 9 to 13 were invited to participate as the school had less than 100 students in that age group.

At the *taitamariki* information hui, the team would *mihi* to everyone present and create links through *whakapapa* or the specific geographical area. This is an important process for building meaningful connections. When able, if there were research team members who came from a particular school region, they would engage with the local schools to ensure a familiar face and *tautoko* the relationship. In *te ao Māori*, the known or familiar face is integral to engagement and provides a context of knowing and trusting in processes like research (Cram, 2009). This aspect, being *tika*, meant that members of the research team were familiar with a particular school and community, which was vital to enrich the engagement further.

Another aspect of *tika* carried out through the engagement processes was allowing *taitamariki* to remain autonomous and provide direction for the *kōrero* and how they engaged with the team members. This was achieved through *whakawhitiwhiti kōrero* in the second phase of the project. The safe discussion of *kaupapa* identified by *taitamariki* was facilitated by various activities like using sticky notes. If *taitamariki* felt uncomfortable, such activities allowed them to have their questions answered anonymously.

Kaitiakitanga: Responsibility to care for and protect

Kaitiakitanga occurred during our fieldwork and in treating *taitamariki kōrero* as *taonga*. Our priority was to ensure we kept *taitamariki* and the research team safe. Respect for the school, *taitamariki*, and their *whānau* meant that the research was dutiful, and the team could authentically engage. The research team kept *whānau* informed by providing information about the research and how to seek support. Consent forms were provided, and offers made to discuss the research if they had any questions. Support for the research was obtained from every school through the principal or school board. We remained respectful at the school visits by identifying strategies to keep all participants safe and in an environment where they felt they could share their *kōrero*.

As we were dealing with a potentially triggering *kaupapa* (intimate partner relationships), respecting the stories shared and the collected research data was essential. Every part of engagement with *taitamariki* would begin with a short

kōrero to discuss the kaupapa. We acknowledged this could be heavy and uncomfortable for them, and said they could either head back to their respective classes or stay and do some of their other mahi until they felt ready to rejoin their class. Obtaining consent from taitamariki at every engagement we had with them further reiterated that at any stage they were able to withdraw from the project should they no longer be in a position to participate. This also meant we kept them safe by not adding further mahi to their busy schedules and commitments. We responded to taitamariki disclosure statements in real time because it was vital for them to be aware that the research team had created a safe environment and help was available.

Throughout the research process, it was important to be mindful of each school community's various cultures. We remained culturally safe by providing an environment that upheld the mana of all involved and empowered who they were. We also maintained a reflexive approach by collaborating with whānau, hapū, and iwi members where possible. Creating safe spaces further established our relationships across the board, supported the kaupapa of our research, and helped guide our research processes.

Safety is heightened when working with taitamariki using a social media app. We needed to ensure, as the research team, that we were able to identify an app user quickly should there be any safety concerns. We created a safety plan with each pilot school to ensure there were procedures around people to contact should the research team moderator identify a post that raised a safety concern for taitamariki. Hypervigilance regarding safety was a critical approach to take, and it was beneficial for the research team to know the ports of call if such a situation arose.

Manaakitanga: Showing respect, generosity, and care for others

Manaakitanga was essential for the research team in building relationships with the school and taitamariki participants. We engaged with the school community at staff meetings, school assemblies, and board meetings, where applicable. We also became familiar with the research participants and taitamariki through whakawhanaungatanga, hui, and class visits. Ensuring trust and communication between all parties was imperative to create authentic and safe research.

Due to the relationships built with each participating school, our in-person visits were much more meaningful as we would kōrero about the

various activities or events. This catch-up kōrero allowed us to understand better how diverse and complex the environment could be. By listening and gaining a better understanding, we could adapt our research while achieving our research goals. Taking time to listen to our taitamariki prompted us to make significant changes to our app, including the use of avatars, personalisation of profiles, the inclusion of their own relationship values, and the kinds of resources that could be posted within the app, thus promoting more taitamariki-led initiatives.

Appreciating participants' time, being present, actively building meaningful relationships, and recognising the expertise of all participants and school communities was significant. Every kanohi-ki-te-kanohi visit involved sharing kai. Kōrero over kai can become much more meaningful when you show simple gestures of appreciation—for instance, acknowledging that any time given to our research was important and valuable. Therefore, looking after the liaisons and taitamariki meant being on time for hui and connecting to the groups we were talking with.

Utū: Reciprocity

Reciprocity is a significant Māori value and an essential principle in Indigenous research (Cram, 2009). Common to Western conceptualisations of reciprocity is a sense of transactional exchange, whereby participants “give” their knowledge and time and researchers “take”. In accordance with te ao Māori, within the Harmonised project reciprocity was reflected as a relational commitment. While taitamariki shared their lived experiences and insights, their knowledge remained theirs; the research team acted as kaitiaki of that knowledge and were accountable to them in how it was interpreted and shared. Reciprocity was enacted through returning findings in accessible formats, creating spaces for taitamariki to respond to interpretations, ensuring their voices shaped outputs, and supporting schools with insights that informed practice and wellbeing initiatives. In this way, value was reciprocated through meaningful influence, visibility, and benefit rather than extraction, strengthening both the relationships and the integrity of the research.

Inclusive of young people

Taitamariki are experts in their own lived experiences, and school communities hold contextual knowledge about how their educational environments function. Recognising these complementary forms of expertise, we designed an engagement

process that valued taitamariki voices alongside the practical and relational knowledge of school staff (Barbarich-Unasa, 2023; Eruera & Dobbs, 2010). As a research team, we created structured opportunities for collaboration beyond data collection, including conference presentations, hui participation, advisory group involvement, and contributions to dissemination events. Schools were invited to nominate students to join the TAG and support the shaping of key outputs. These pathways enabled taitamariki and school stakeholders to engage more deeply with the research and, where desired, adopt leadership roles within their school contexts. Throughout the project, we continuously acknowledged that taitamariki are capable knowledge holders whose participation strengthens collective ownership and awareness of healthy relationship practices within their communities.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality remained a significant priority throughout the research carried out. Ways in which we ensured confidentiality through the app development and implementation process included every taitamariki creating a profile and username which would not be visible to any users on the app. However, we were clear that for safety reasons, the research team moderators had access to usernames and profiles should there be a need to identify an individual taitamariki immediately.

With every gathering between the taitamariki and the research team, we continuously highlighted confidentiality to ensure taitamariki were comfortable and were reminded about the importance of creating a safe space for kōrero with each other. Confidentiality ensured that taitamariki felt safe to share their kōrero and knew they could not be identified through the app.

Limitations

The Harmonised project team recognised that using secondary schools as a research site had some limitations. Understanding and navigating the school education processes required considerable time and flexibility within the planned research timeline. There were constraints in our ability to book times to meet with staff and have access to taitamariki to implement aspects of the research, such as integrating the app and completing surveys. It is essential to understand that schools fill their calendars for the following year by Term 4 of the current year. Therefore, making times for required research activities is difficult, resulting in multiple visits or delays during visits. There was also a

hierarchy to follow when scheduling visits, such as first engaging with an administrator, who would then direct you to the appropriate contact person. Engaging with senior staff was more effective in securing scheduled visits as they were in a position to approve or deny requests. However, this was not always the case and following up to confirm a date and time was often necessary through email, or even required another school visit.

Concerning following our kaingākau, tikanga, and whanonga pono, we do not mean to imply to readers that we always got it right. We did encounter rough waters along the way. Despite our best intentions, the dominant Western and adult structures and mode of being were, and continue to be, difficult to identify and overcome, particularly for recognising the privilege of successful non-Māori in academic spaces. In this article, we have shared our learning journey to stimulate discussion and move towards respectful partnerships across cultures, as Te Tiriti o Waitangi calls for.

Hamley et al. (2023) explained that whanaungatanga is at the heart of the wellbeing of taitamariki. This aligns closely with the tikanga upheld in this research and reinforces the significance of building meaningful and effective relationships. The Harmonised project has contributed towards a deeper understanding of supporting taitamariki to become aware of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Taitamariki worked hard to explain their lived realities about their relationships so we could better understand what support adults could provide. Furthermore, the whanaungatanga and engagement practices incorporated to carry out such widespread research were significant in ensuring we heard the voices of our young people and addressed their concerns. The mahi conducted and the kaupapa of this article provide initial insights into effectively engaging with our young people and highlight the importance of navigating the school environment alongside a te ao Māori approach.

Conclusion

Effective engagement processes are crucial to uphold the mana of taitamariki and provide them with the appropriate resources, space, and mechanisms to share their experiences and whakaaro in a culturally appropriate manner. Our journey to uphold and enact culturally responsive school engagement strategies was central to the Harmonised project team and research activities. The learning and experience we gained have the potential to be transferrable and help enhance

future mahi with Indigenous young people within a variety of different contexts.

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Glossary

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| hapū | subtribe |
| hui | meeting |
| iwi | tribe |
| kai | food |
| kaingākau | values |
| kaitiakitanga | guardianship |
| kanohi-ki-te-kanohi | face-to-face |
| kaumātua | elders |
| kaupapa | philosophy, belief |
| Kaupapa Māori | Māori approach, Māori ideology |
| kōrero | conversations |
| kupu | word |
| kura kaupapa Māori | Māori language schools |
| mahi | work |
| mana | prestige, authority, status, spiritual power |
| manaaki | care for |
| Māori | Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa |
| mihi | greet |
| rangatahi | youth, younger generation |
| taiohi | youth, adolescents |
| taitamariki | youth, adolescents |
| tangata whenua | the first people of Aotearoa |
| taonga | treasure |

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| tauīwi | non-Māori |
| tautoko | provide support, verify authenticity |
| te ao Māori | the Māori worldview |
| teina | younger taitamariki members |
| tuakana | older taitamariki members |
| Te Tai Tokerau | Northland |
| Te Tiriti o Waitangi | the Treaty of Waitangi (1840), signed by Māori chiefs and the British Crown |
| tika | appropriate or correct |
| tikanga | the right way of doing things |
| utu | reciprocity |
| whakaaro | thinking, planning, considering |
| whakapapa | lineage, genealogy |
| whakarongo | listen carefully |
| whakawhanaungatanga | process of establishing relationships, relating well to others |
| whakawhitiwhiti | active discussion and deliberation |
| kōrero | extended family networks |
| whānau | connectedness |
| whanaungatanga | principles |
| whanonga pono | |

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