Research Article

MĀORI MEN RENEWING CULTURAL EMBEDDEDNESS THROUGH ENGAGEMENTS IN TANGIHANGA

Mohi Rua[*], Darrin Hodgetts[**], and Ottilie Stolte[***]

Research on Māori (Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand) men have been predominantly deficit-focused and reliant upon negative stereotypes relating to crime, anti-social behaviour, and poor parenting practices. There has been little research on the positive contributions Māori men make to their whānau (immediate and extended family), communities, and broader society. This research draws on Kaupapa Māori research (KMR) and elements of ethnographic and case-based methods to study men's contributions *during a series of tangihanga (traditional Māori funeral process of grieving) held on* a marae *(ceremonial arena specific to the socio-cultural history of a Māori sub-tribe and/or tribe). Our approach was guided by Kaupapa Māori research principles and included Pūrākau (narrative) interviews with five men who were working to support the tangihanga, and direct go-along observations by the first author who worked with participants at the marae where tangihanga were being held. By participating in collective practices of work, grief and mourning during tangihanga, these men embraced opportunities to reflect on their lives and ways of being Māori men, and to share their emotions in positive ways rarely considered in literature on contemporary Māori masculinities. By contributing positively to tangihanga, participants were able to renew themselves within culturally patterned ways of being Māori men both within the Māori world and broader settler society of Aotearoa New Zealand. The cultural institution of tangihanga contributed positively to participants' sense of cultural continuity and self as Māori.*

Keywords: *Māori men, tangihanga, marae, practice, collective grieving*

1. Background

In Aotearoa New Zealand, research and media representations of Māori men typically depict them as engaged in anti-social activities and from a deficit lens fixated on poverty, crime, and illness trends (Ashdown et al, 2019; Hokowhitu, 2004, 2007; King & Robertson, 2017; Ministry of Health, 2015; Oetzel, 2020; Warbrick, Wilson & Griffith, 2020). Scholars have rarely considered the everyday cultural practices and contributions of Māori men who are engaged in constructive relationships within their whānau (immediate and extended families) and communities (Hamley & Le Grice, 2021; Hodgetts & Rua, 2010; Hodgetts, Nikora & Rua, 2011; King, Hodgetts, Rua & Te Whetu, 2016; Rua, Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017; Warbrick, Wilson & Boulton, 2016). Adopting such a broader perspective also involves drawing on participants'

[*] University of Auckland, New Zealand.
[**]Massey University, Aotearoa New Zealand.
[***]University of Waikato, Aotearoa New Zealand.

own psychological understandings of themselves and traditional Māori notions of human interconnectedness, interdependence, and the importance placed on enactments of care for self and others (Durie, 2002; Rua, Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017; Waitoki & Levy, 2016). Such work is necessary for understanding and supporting indigenous efforts to respond to the devastation of continued colonisation on Māori communities and their very being, and to advance contemporary efforts to decolonise the discipline of psychology within Aotearoa New Zealand (Hodgetts et al., 2020; Rua, et al., 2021).

Correspondingly, this article contributes to an emergent literature on the dynamics of Māori men's interconnected selves that take "…form through ongoing interactions with other people, the environment, cultural practices, physical and spiritual domains, history and the present…" (Rua, Hodgetts, & Stolte, 2017, p. 55). The approach to identity that underpins this research stems from Māori scholarship on the interconnected self (King et al., 2017; Marsden, 2003; Rua et al., 2017; Sadler, 2007; Sinclair, 1990), which approaches people as mutually constituted beings who emerge from within socio-cultural and material relations in the world. This approach also resembles Gergen (2009) who similarly considers human subjectivities as emergent through various material social practices and processes that are in themselves constitutive of the cultural spaces we inhabit together. Accordingly, we see Māori men as relationally constituted beings within a dynamic world, which reflects Māori culture, but also the power relations of ongoing colonisation processes that disrupt Māori ways of being. This world also features men's agentive efforts towards maintaining Māori cultural traditions of being and for reminding themselves of who they are and can be on their own terms (Sadler, 2007; Marsden, 2003). In this context, participation in cultural institutions such as tangihanga (Māori process of grieving the death of a loved one), offers spaces for renewal and sharing in participants' sense of self as Māori. In documenting how these men contribute to the reproduction of tangihanga and themselves as Māori men, offers potential for opening up our collective knowledge to other men who may be less connected to cultural traditions and ways of being.

Also relevant here are the often-mundane socio-cultural practices through which Māori men participate in the cultural institutions through which they come to be and see themselves as social actors (King et al., 2017). In the everyday context, socio-cultural practices are approached as the normative shared actions that Māori engage in, often habitually in spaces such as marae (ceremonial arena specific to the socio-cultural history of a Māori sub-tribe and/or tribe). These practices within tangihanga often relate to the gendered allocation of roles, specific tasks for gathering and butchering food, and grieving collectively. As such, socio-cultural practices are comprised as the contingent, dynamic, and relational ways that 'we do things around here' (Hodgetts et al., 2020). It is these routinised or normative acts, which enable groups to contribute to the reproduction of their shared ways of being, traditions, familial legacies, and the renewal of cultures. Correspondingly, social practices exist concurrently at personal and collective levels as bearers and reproducers of cultures (Blue, 2019; Engeström et al., 1999; Halkier & Jensen, 2011). As such, documenting and interpreting the social practices evident in cultural institutions, such as tangihanga at marae, afford foci for exploring the contemporary reproduction of Māori culture and related identities. Focusing on social practices we can explore how men contribute to the temporal, rhythmic, and social organisation and reproduction of culture and the interconnected self (Blue, 2019; Halkier & Jensen, 2011; Hodgetts et al., 2020).

Central to the notion of the interconnected self is the Māori concept of 'whakapapa' (ancestral genealogy or lines of descent), which is at the core of traditional Māori ways of being, knowing, and relating to others. Whakapapa literally means "the process of layering one thing upon another" (Mahuika, 2019, p.1). From a genealogical perspective, whakapapa is a cultural institution where each Māori person belongs to a geographical locale, and the people that dwell there, through whakapapa (ancestral genealogy). These connections ensure that the individual and the group are inextricably linked. The person becomes the manifestation of the group's identity, and is afforded legitimate rights to ancestral lines, tribal lands and resources (Mead, 2003; Rua et al, 2017). A Māori sense of self and whakapapa is also situated within Māori creation narratives. Here, the Māori self is cosmologically linked to Papatūānuku (primal Earth Mother) and Ranginui (Sky Father) and their children who make up the various elements of nature including the land, sky, forests, water, winds, and foods (Mahuika, 2019). Consequently, whakapapa is a deeply spiritual conceptualization of human beings as part of life's natural order and thus connected to all life forms, animate and inanimate objects, time, and space.

Contrasting with the dominant fixation in psychology on the decontexualised self, with its individual motives, interests, goals, achievements, and status (Dudgeon & Walker, 2015), from a Māori worldview a sense of being and purpose is sustained by knowing and enacting one's cosmological, ancestral and cultural whakapapa (genealogy). Therefore, a Māori sense of self involves prioritising the needs of, and maintaining caring relationships with, the whānau (immediate and extended family); enacting roles as caretakers of tribal resources and the environment; and passing on cultural knowledge and customary practices that ensure whakapapa is understood in its broadest sense as a cultural practice. Drawing on this understanding of the Māori self, we examine men's participation in the cultural institution of tangihanga (traditional Māori process of grieving the death of a loved one), as an exemplar for how participants realise themselves as interconnected beings who emerge from within positive relationships with others.

2. Tangihanga: traditional Māori process of grieving the death of a loved one

Tangihanga offer an appropriate context for this study because the human experience of losing people we love and care for is fundamentally relational and culturally patterned. Correspondingly, the primary purpose of tangihanga, is to provide stability during the bereavement process through engagement in prescribed Māori cultural practices that ensure grief is shared, aroha (unconditional love and commitment) and manaakitanga (care) are discharged, and tikanga (cultural etiquette and best practice) is followed (Sinclair, 1990; Dansey, 1995). As a ritualistic process, tangihanga are communal in nature, involving relational practices where people are reconnected, memories are shared, and comfort is taken in each other's company (Dansey, 1995; Edge, Nikora & Rua, 2012).

There is considerable variability today in relation to the extent and frequency of Māori men engaging with tangihanga (Māori death rituals), their whakapapa (genealogy), their marae and Māori cultural generally. This variability reflects the destructive nature of colonisation on indigenous peoples where access to Māori cultural spaces and knowledge as a cultural right is often beyond the reach of many Māori today (Hodgetts, Rua, King, & Te

Whetu, 2016). Although some Māori rarely experience the traditional ways outlined in this article (Durie, 2006; Gagne, 2013), exploring how they continue for Māori men like those in this research who are culturally connected, can help us to consider how we include more people in these practices. It has been argued that our potential as Māori is compromised through continued dislocations from our cultural practices, lands, and marae traditions (Durie, 2006). Hence, it is a responsibility of those who do have access, such as the men in this study, to share this cultural knowledge with others. Relatedly, a core intent for our writing this article is to help demystify aspects of the operation of tangihanga on marae and men's roles within these cultural institutions especially for Māori who have less access to these cultural spaces and related social practices.

Despite the variable cultural connectedness for many Māori today, institutions like tangihanga remain as crucial anchor points for the reproduction and articulation of Māori men's identities and pro-social relationships (King et al, 2018; King et al 2015; Hodgetts et al, 2016). Our focus on tangihanga is also important because tangihanga constitute the most enduring, readily accessible, and resilient bastion of Māori cultural life that has largely escaped colonial influence. Tangihanga provide socio-cultural enclaves within which a wide range of Māori men can often find a sense of cultural reconnection and belonging, respite and reciprocal care. Tangihanga, and associated cultural practices, have also survived the incursion of colonialism via Māori resistance to assimilationist practices, and remain as crucial anchor points for contemporary ways of being Māori.

Most tangihanga still occur on marae (ceremonial courtyard and ritual arena specific to the socio-cultural history of a Māori sub-tribe and/or tribe)[1] for the simple reason that marae are culturally intense, anchoring locations where whānau (extended families) can connect readily through whakapapa (genealogy). As noted above, whakapapa constitutes more than ancestral links, since it is central to the Māori interconnected self where each person is rendered an embodiment of an ancient tradition of belonging, kinship, tribal ancestral lines, and cosmology. Through whakapapa each Māori person belongs to a marae, and holds the same rights to familial and tribal resources, whether they maintain their customary connection to these places and people or not (Mead, 2003). We document how men's collective identities are replenished and strengthened through enactments of whakapapa on the marae where most tangihanga occur (Marsden, 2003). It is also important to note how the culturally rich space created for tangihanga emerges through enactments of te reo Māori me ōna tikanga (the Māori language and its customs) that engulf participants in the familiar cloak of the Māori world. Evident cultural practices include formal rituals that are often, but not solely, associated with the paepae tapu (sacred speaking area for the cultural orators of the marae) and marae ātea (open area in front of the sacred meeting house) as well as the wharepuni (sacred meeting house) (see Figure 1). Briefly, as a key cultural space the marae affords opportunities where, "…cultural continuity, connectedness and reproduction" can occur in ways that affirm a Māori sense of self (King, Hodgetts, Rua & Morgan, 2018, p.1197).

Cultural practices implicated in tangihanga extend beyond formal ceremonies and into the everyday and mundane roles and back-of-house support activities in the wharekai (marae kitchen/dining hall) that ensure that all people are cared for. Routine support practices are crucial to sustain tangihanga that typically take place across three days. Each day, the marae may welcome up to ten visiting groups, comprising of 10-100 people per group, which adds

[1] See Figure 1 for an illustration of a marae

up to significant numbers of people to feed and house over those three days of the tangihanga.

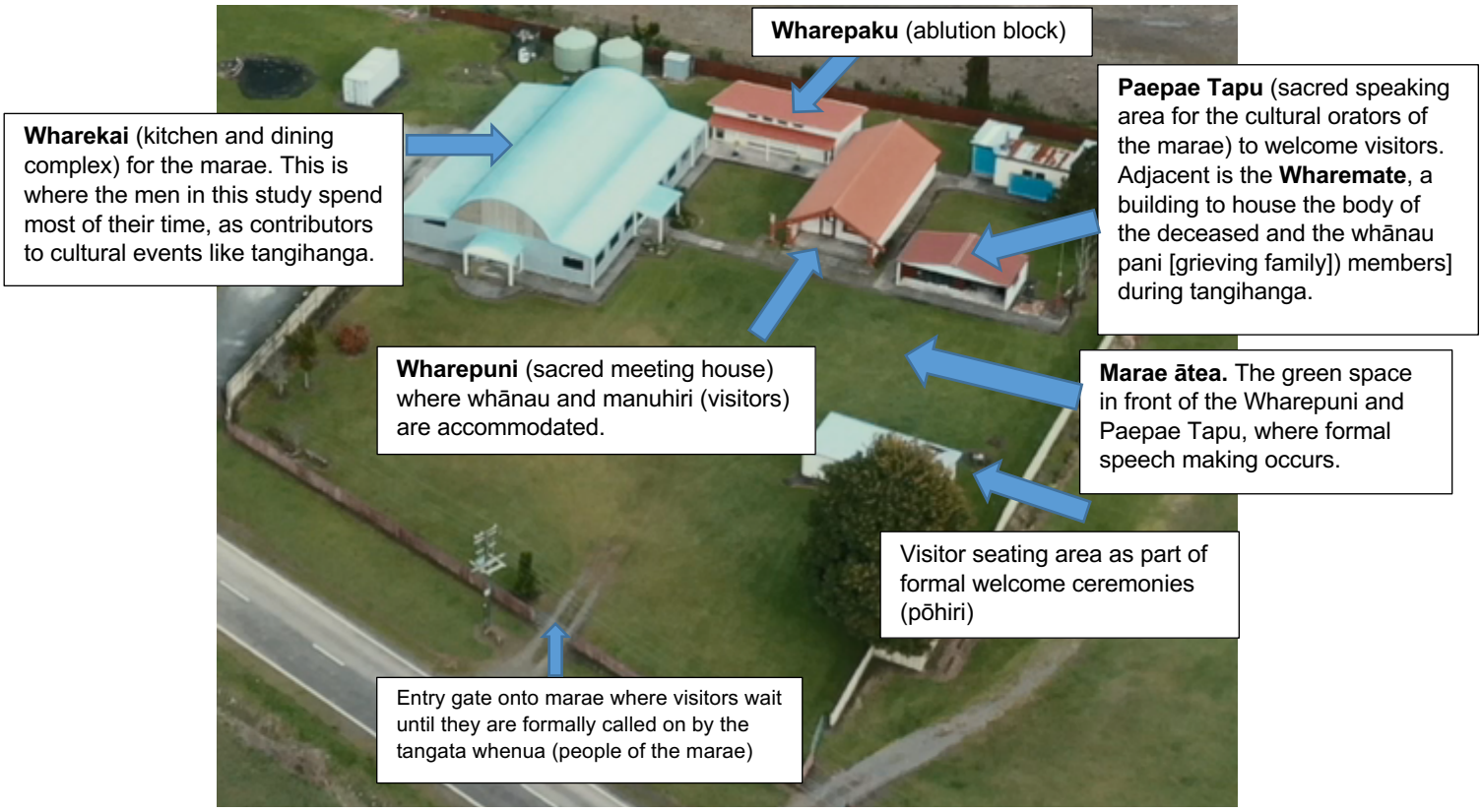

Figure 1. Marae complex (to which some of the men in this study are affiliated)

Visiting groups can arrive at the marae from 8am in the morning and throughout the day up until sunset. The marae kitchen often draws on its volunteer 'ringawera' (whānau workforce) who whakapapa to that marae. Work often begins at 4.30am as volunteers begin catering preparations for the day's proceedings, and the influx of multiple visiting groups during a daily 16-hour period of mourning. This requires high levels of cultural commitment, cooperation, organisational skills, and flexibility from those people involved in facilitating the tangihanga, including the men of this study.

The importance of contributing to the wharekai (marae kitchen/dining hall) to support the ritualised and sacred practices of the tangihanga, is reflected in the Māori whakatauki (proverbial saying), 'Ka tika ā muri, ka tika ā mua' (if the back i.e., kitchen, is operating well, then the cultural practices at the front will operate well). The marae leaders (elders/experts within customary practices) enact the cultural protocols at the front of the marae. Simultaneously, the ringawera (whānau workers) operate at the 'back' (or kitchen) to prepare meals for the visitors. The two groups work in tandem and are equally important, and one (the front) cannot operate without the other (the kitchen). Any lack of coordination between the back (kitchen) and front (paepae) risks damaging the mana (cultural integrity/authority) of the marae and the associated whānau.

3. Focus of the article

This article focuses on the men who are engaged as 'ringawera' (whānau workers) in the back (kitchen) of the marae. We offer insights into the everyday relationships of five of these men as evident through the everyday practices of the marae kitchen, such as washing dishes and cooking meals for manuhiri (visitors) that actively contribute to the wellbeing of whānau (immediate and extended families) and the tangihanga. Contemporary scholars have focused on the reified cultural rituals at the front of the marae that can only be conducted by a select few men and women, and usually those men and women are more senior in years, expertise, and leadership. The front of the marae requires high levels of formal cultural competency in Māori language and practice that is on display to visitors. It is now time to explore the work that goes into the back-of-marae that makes activities at the front possible. The back-of-marae is also where men, alongside their female relations, can contribute to the health and wellbeing of the whānau during tangihanga. Here, the men in this article can reconnect as 'ringawera' (whānau workers) with their whānau in more culturally informal ways.

Our focus on 'ringawera' (whānau workers) in tangihanga is an exemplar of a distinctly Māori community of practice (Wenger, 1998) that takes shape within the Māori world, and which involves specific cultural practices that contribute to the reproduction of the marae as a space for aroha (unconditional love and commitment) and manaaki (care). It is through the functioning of whānau as a community of practice working in concert on tasks both ritualistic (the front) and more mundane (the back) that tangihanga is 'produced' as a cultural institution. More specifically, this article documents how tangihanga continue to offer some Māori a sense of place and continuity of their interconnected selves, which allows them to achieve a state of 'mauri tau' (be composed, deliberate, serene, or without panic), renew culturally significant relationships, and to re-member[2] themselves as positive contributors to the cultural life of being Māori (Nikora et al., 2012; Sinclair, 1990). Our interpretative focus extends outwards from the men's conduct of specific tikanga (Māori customary) practices to the general reproduction of these collective aspects of the Māori world. This focus is important because the cultural practices considered pertain not only to the observance of tangihanga, but also to participants' very sense of self as Māori.

Here, the concept 're-membering' moves beyond cognitive or emotive processes inside a person's mind and extends to engagements in shared material practices that make up cultural traditions (Fortier, 1999; Streek, Goodwin & Lebaron, 2011). It is through practices of re-membering (taking on roles in the kitchen and out the back of the marae) that men come to re-enact their positive place in the marae space, community, whānau (extended family) and whakapapa (genealogy). As we will demonstrate, the men in this article 're-member' family and cultural connections through tangihanga practices that provide them with order, structure, and sense of belonging and location in the Māori world. It is also important to note that during tangihanga, ways of being Māori men are not simply enacted individually. Shared practices are central to participants' sense of well-being, connection, and solidarity. Men of various ages and levels of expertise are assigned responsibilities. Through the enactment of

[2] Re-membering denotes how memory processes extend beyond processes of cognitive recall and are interwoven with material practices via which people renew themselves within legacy ways of being and acting in the world (Hodgetts et al., 2020).

these responsibilities, each contributes to the reproduction of the institution of tangihanga, but also to the marae as a core Māori cultural enclave of care within a broader colonised landscape (cf., Durie, 2003; Hodgetts et al., 2016). Through documenting and interpreting these socio-cultural practices, we can engage with contemporary articulations of Māori men's sense of self as ongoing cultural projects that are negotiated through work and familial interactions (Rua et al., 2017).

4. Kaupapa Māori research approach

As is considered ethical within the collectivist foundations of Kaupapa Māori research, this study was embedded within a community and drew upon Māori cultural protocols of engagement that also feature there (Smith, 2000; Smith, Hoskins & Jones, 2012; Rua et al., 2021; Hodgetts et al, 2021; Heinrich, 1999). The first author's ethnographic approach is therefore guided by the needs and aspirations of Māori communities, rather than the procedural demands from our Western psychological training. The first author who conducted the fieldwork is an 'insider' to the marae where the research took place and is familiar with the localised realities of the participants. It is extremely difficult to conduct research within the Māori world without sharing whakapapa (genealogy) or some source of relational connectedness between researchers and participants. Relational connectedness in the Māori world is the foundation for any sense of trust, understanding, and cooperation. Such connectedness also increases obligations for the researcher to be accountable to the research participants, and their whānau (immediate and extended families).

It is this culturally patterned network of relationships that we activated in the conduct of this research and to gain access to Māori men's identity-building practices at this marae. Existing affiliations with participants meant that when engaged in fieldwork observing the conduct of the tangihanga in real time, the first author did not disrupt the cultural flow of the event and the research did not appear out of place (Hodgetts et al., 2016). The first author connected readily with participants having grown up with three of the participants and spent over 40 years working together on the marae. All five participants are middle-aged Māori men, raised primarily in rural to semi-rural tribal territories, with strong connections to their tribal identities, marae, hapū (sub-tribe), and whānau. At the time of the research, John and Paora were employed in blue-collar jobs. Waka was studying for a university degree. Tame and Awa had white collar careers. All had partners and only one did not have children.

The first author embedded himself within the marae setting alongside the male participants as they worked together to assist with the operation of the marae and tangihanga. Here, Māori cultural protocols require the researcher to respond to processes and events as these developed during the fieldwork. Rather than structured sit-down interviews, conversations arose at appropriate times. This dynamic orientation was necessary so that the research did not disrupt the flow of the tangihanga at the marae, rather than trying to follow a rigid series of procedures (Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton, 2001). Throughout, Māori ways of being, interacting with and valuing others was legitimated as being foundational to our shared knowledge production engagements (*cf*., Hodgetts et al, 2021; Rua et al., 2021; Smith, 1999; Smith, et al, 2012). Kaupapa Māori theory (Smith et al, 2012), and recent scholarship on the interconnected Māori self (Rua et al, 2017) orientated us to approach participating men as relationally and collectively situated within each other's

whakapapa, lifeworlds, and being. Culturally, the first author and participating men comprised part of the same collective, as whānau, hapū (sub-tribe) and iwi (tribal) members assembled at marae for tangihanga. Attending tangihanga was a familial and cultural obligation to each other and to reaffirm bonds of whakapapa when grieving a lost loved one.

The first author's engagements were informed by Pūrākau or a traditional form of Māori narrative inquiry that enabled participants to tell their selves or stories in ways that incorporated Māori ways of being, storying, and knowing within contemporary society (Lee, 2009; Smith, Xiiem, Lee-Morgan & Santolo, 2019). Particularly relevant is how Pūrākau is central to the reproduction of our cultural traditions and selves. Through Pūrākau (storytelling), participating men were able to talk beyond the negative colonial stereotypes of one-dimensional Māori men (Hokowhitu, 2004; 2017; Hamely & Le Grice, 2021; Rua et al, 2017). Pūrākau often feature researchers and participants engaging in shared work as a way of facilitating open dialogue. As such, this study included go-along narrative conversations that enabled 'thick' accounts from the participants of what was transpiring, and how it related to their sense of self and place (Carpiano, 2009; Moran et al, 2020). Similarly, Duedahl and Stilling-Blichfeldt (2020) also approach 'go-alongs' as a dynamic 'spatialized journey', where the interview process engages with participants in their physical and social environments. Accordingly, the first author and participants engaged in whakawhanaungatanga or shared relational activities, such as reciting whakapapa (genealogical) links over a meal or preparing food for each other and guests and discussing the broader cultural significance of such practices. During these interactions, other whānau members, including children would sometimes involve themselves in the conversations and this helped the men articulate their relational sense of self as fathers, partners, sons, nephews, and uncles within this marae setting. For example, in one engagement, a participant's partner was cooking in the background. This participant would often defer to his partner for help in not only recalling specific events significant to his story, but also in retelling and re-interpreting particular cultural practices. These interpersonal instances also reflect the co-construction of self in relation to significant others where the retelling of aspects of personal stories occurred in partnership with significant others (Hodgetts et al., 2020).

The Pūrākau varied in format depending on how the engagements with each participant unfolded. Each conversation generally took an hour and was conducted primarily in English, although Māori words would be used particularly when discussing culturally nuanced practices and issues. These conversations were recorded, and transcribed, which the men then got to review. Direct observations also featured in the fieldwork as the first author worked with participants on various tasks. Moments in this collective effort were captured through photographs, fieldnotes, via a voice recorder and journal reflections. Such research engagement reflects a basic principle that Kaupapa Māori Research (KMR) is conducted by Māori-for-Māori, and through researchers and participants engaging in shared cultural practices and ways of being together.

KMR also embraces forms of open encounter between researchers and participants that enact principles of Tino Rangatiratanga (self-determination and sovereignty) and relational ethics in the production of knowledge (Pihama, 2010; Rua et al., 2023). Such cultural values often feature in research between known persons who share whakapapa or ancestorial ties, and who have the necessary trust and familiarity to explore topics together and in ways that can resemble an ethnographic impulse (Adam et al., 2015). As researchers, we embraced the need for a cultural insider (first author) to engage with and document the social practices

engaged in by participants. In drawing on aspects of ethnography, the first author focused in his fieldnotes on moving interpretively out from the interactions and practices to the broader cultural norms and principles being reproduced during the conduct of the tangihanga. For example, it became apparent that the 'back of marae' work articulated the core cultural principles of whanaungatanga (positive relational networking) and manaaki (care towards others in this case in a situation of shared grief). Participating in these practices and associated cultural values enabled the preserving of trust and reciprocity between the first author and participants as partners in the knowledge production process. The field engagements were deliberatively open ended and patterned by these cultural principles that are culturally ingrained in the ways of being together shared by the lead author and participants.

The fieldwork strategy served to weave the research into the marae space in a way that contributed to, and did not disrupt, the tangihanga proceedings. Much of the first authors time was spent in and around the wharekai (marae kitchen/dining hall, see Figure 1) at the back of the marae, where food was prepared for visitors. All the research participants had been socialised throughout their lives into the work of the wharekai (by parents, siblings, cousins, uncles, aunties, and grandparents) to care for visitors, to be humble and generous to others, and to show initiative. Often, the men already know what is required in the kitchen and during the tangihanga. Such socialisation in these spaces is also a key stepping stone for future leadership within the whānau and hapū (sub-tribe associated with the marae). As such, this locale made for an appropriate primary setting for this study. Emphasis was on engaging openly with the men and producing material that could inform a joint interpretation of their lives, rather than simply mining for information to be analysed solely by researchers (Kvale, 1996). It was important that the observations, conversations, interviews, field notes, transcripts and emerging insights were discussed with the men as well, and that permission was granted for us to draw on these materials for the purposes of writing this article.

Reflecting etic and emic approaches to qualitative inquiry and the collectivist orientation of Kaupapa Māori Research, we worked as a team of authors to make further sense of the empirical materials. We did not seek to produce a definitive or replicable analysis that was tidied into logical categories. Rather, we worked together as colleagues with considerable experience of research in the Māori world and different levels of Māori cultural competency to negotiate a shared 'polysemic impression' of the empirical materials (Hodgetts et al., 2022). Central to the construction of this impressionistic interpretation was the process of bricolage (Kincheloe, 2005) via which insights from observations, fieldnotes and transcripts were brought into dialogue with relevant insights from theory and previous research. This iterative and non-replicable process of collective interpretation was driven by our abductive reasoning (local inference) and ongoing dialogue through a series of wānanga (collective reading and writing sessions). Our analysis was also shaped by our ongoing scholarly conversations as members of a Māori-led and diverse collaborative group of scholars. Our inquiry began with all authors reviewing the empirical materials and then joining in a series of wānanga (collective reading and writing sessions). The ensuring discussions within these wānanga started with our initial thoughts regarding the content of the empirical materials. We then discussed exemplars that intrigued or puzzled us, or that we thought offered useful insights into how particular cultural practices, related to issues of identity and cultural reproduction. All three authors looked for similarities and differences in the accounts of the five men before considering these in relation to existing Māori scholarship on the self, marae and tangihanga. We considered key cultural values, roles, and practices invoked by

participants in relation to the overall functioning of tangihanga. Next, we explored the varying opportunities the men had to participate and build relationships in settings that are critical to their sense of place and wellbeing as Māori. From this collective process our inquiry narrowed, and we refined and agreed on the shape and focus of this article. Working as bricoleurs, we then started writing the findings sections presented below, populating these with exemplars and points of interpretation that were informed by relevant scholarly literature. Our approach was also informed by arguments in qualitive research in psychology for the preservation of iterative, abductive, and open-ended intuitive readings of materials rather than a mandated recipe for 'coding data' (Brinkmann, 2014; Hodgetts et al., 2021, 2022).

5. Findings and discussion

The interpretation that developed through our collaborative process, and further conversations with whānau, is presented in two interrelated sub-sections. The first sub-section focuses on participant efforts to reconnect through tangihanga and reciprocal acts of support that reproduce the marae as an indigenous enclave of care for the conduct of tangihanga. The second sub-section considers specific material practices within tangihanga and how these relate to participants' sense of self and place through affective communal mourning practices and outward displays of emotion. More broadly, the findings sections focus on the men's identity-building practices through participation in specific, situated cultural practices with a shared history. Here, we reflect upon key cultural practices, or 'tikanga' (Māori cultural etiquette; best practice; correct procedure, methods, ways of doing), through which participants re-immerse themselves within tangihanga and renew their sense of emplaced connection with the Māori world. We conceptualized tikanga as 'ideal practices' that are thoughtful, creative, and often routinized everyday acts. Many of these practices have been alive for generations, remain central to the smooth conduct of tangihanga and the renewal of Māori interconnected ways of being, and are well known to whānau members. In keeping with a focus on shared practices, we document how mundane acts of material support can carry broader cultural significance in sustaining links between the past, present and future reproduction of culture (*cf*., Blue, 2019; Hodgetts et al., 2020).

5.1 Reconnection and renewal through participating in tangihanga

All participants singled out tangihanga as a key institution for reconnecting with whānau, and as an opportunity to enact and deepen one's cultural knowledge and community bonds. Community in this regard is important in the sense that people come together in their ancestral home (marae) for a common endeavour that involves engaging in culturally patterned practices that contribute to their sense of home-place and cultural continuity. The following extract from a conversation with Waka reflects how taken-for-granted these aspects are for the participants:

> *When you go home to the marae, you go to a tangihanga and catch up with what everyone's doing…That's where all the community is, actually.*

With reference to where the 'community is, actually' the marae is inferred as an emplaced set of relationships that can be returned to, and which offer an intense sense of belonging as relationally interconnected community members. This is important, as these men mostly live outside the marae in a colonized societal landscape, which features experiences of cultural difference and whānau dislocation. Tame further recounts the importance of reconnecting by coming back to the marae:

> *When you're living away and you hear people have passed away, you go back home* [marae] *to rekindle those connections and to remember those times you were with them. Because you're so far away you don't get the chance to spend time with them… So, it's really important coming back* [to the marae and tangihanga] *and to renew those connections.*

Acts of returning home can be read as enactments of the Māori interconnected self that is experienced through a sense of similarity, continuity, and belonging to the marae space (Rua, Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). Home is where their shared whakapapa is directly related to their tūrangawaewae (ancestral lands and place to stand) that nurtures them and their whānau both culturally and materially. It was not lost on the participants that tangihanga are as much about socio-cultural support as grieving the loss of whānau members.

Spending time with the 'home people' was also evident in Māori metaphoric expressions, such as 'kanohi kitea' (the seen face/being seen) where Mead (2003) suggests that "Nothing can really replace the fact of a relative or visitor actually being seen at the tangi[hanga]" (p.133). 'Being seen' contributing to such events demonstrates connection, respect, and care, as John relates, "If they see you there, they'll think, well, this person cares". Care through the cultural process of engaging with tangihanga is multidirectional since it is received and given to others as people work together to care for the bereaved whānau and visitors. These caring practices constitute a dynamic network of relationships that are entwined within physical, spiritual, and affective experiential dimensions. Relatedly, research has shown that caring for others is just as beneficial for the person providing care (Le, Impett, Kogan, Webster, & Cheng, 2013). This point was emphasised by Paora:

> *Yeah, it's good to know you're all on the same path. That you're there* [*tangihanga*] *for the same cause, that you're all about whānau. That's a beautiful thing*.

By caring for others in a communal setting these men experience positive interpersonal opportunities to renew their relationships, and to see their care reciprocated through mutual grief and support. Engaging in acts of care constitutes the reproduction of positive relations that render the event and marae as a key cultural enclave of respite and renewal. Such reconnecting promotes resilience among attendees during times of loss and contributes to broader experiences of support and belonging. Also evident is how practices of care extend beyond notions of dependency, and include practical, material, emotional, cultural, and spiritual acts of support and connection (Milligan & Wiles, 2010; Reckwitz, 2002). These interrelated modalities of care enable participants to do more than mark the passing of a loved one. Participation in tangihanga contributed to a sense of cultural continuity and resilience in terms of the marae and broader indigenous milieu.

Tangihanga was also constructed by participants as a 'space for care' and respite from life in the settler society where cultural marginalization is experienced. In returning to tangihanga at the marae, participants feel valued and connected within the Māori world in ways that they may not always experience when engaged in work and educational settings in the settler society. For Waka it is:

> *…Rejuvenating to go home* [marae and tangihanga] *and reminisce and remember things that have happened.*

Such reminiscing is often located in the wharekai (marae kitchen/dining hall), which is typically a hive of activity that provides many informal opportunities for engagement. In particular, the 'aunties' are significant in this locale as they are well-versed in whānau matters and hold considerable authority over this space. Waka explains the importance of 'aunties' when he returns to the marae and reconnects with whānau:

> *Mainly the aunties really, all the uncles are doing the speaking* [formal orator roles at the front of the marae]*; it's really their wives, the aunties, because they remember you. I really catch up with the aunties. Because they're also milling around the marae kitchen and all that and they're easier to catch up with and the uncles they're controlling whatever's happening on the paepae* [sacred oratory 'front' of the marae], *welcoming groups of people…*

Waka's account reflects how the aunties have a nourishing role in helping whānau members re-enter the Māori cultural world of the marae. In Māori communities, the "aunties" are often matriarchs, community leaders and key repositories of Māori cultural knowledge and inclusive practices (Mikaere, 1999). The relational nourishment invoked above enables Waka to feel part of the whakapapa (genealogy) and community's extensive fabric. A sense of wellbeing, connection and place is realised by these men when catching up with the aunties whilst preparing meals for visitors. In these moments, their identities are re-embedded within the marae community of practice.

Renewing positive relationships with such significant others also enables these men to renew their spiritual connections to the marae, which they have emerged from, and which remain a fundamental part of their being. Thus, being a member of this community of practice renews the men's dialogical selves (Hermans & Gieser, 2012), which are made up of psychological, relational, ancestral, and material elements (Hodgetts et al., 2020). As exemplified by Awa:

> *…It's easier for me to sit down with an aunty, '…aunty, who are they again? How am I related to them?' And that's been mind-blowing. I can't really explain it, the feeling of connecting and raising my self-esteem in Māoridom*[3] *has been huge because I've got high self-esteem in the Pākehā*[4] *world* (Awa).

[3] Common reference to the 'te ao Māori' (Māori world/communities).

[4] Aotearoa's settler society characterised by colonial institutions and laws.

Here, Awa divulges how learning more about his Māori whakapapa from the aunties is profound for his sense of connectedness, meaning, value, belonging and iwi (tribal) membership within this ancestral space. The marae space is also contrasted here as a place to 'recharge one's Māori cultural sense of self' whilst gaining respite from the challenges of the 'Pākehā world' (settler society).

An insight raised by all the participants was the construction of the marae as a kind of cultural enclave that pulsates with the life presence of such interconnectedness. Returning to this space allows these men to deepen their sense of belonging to ancestral whakapapa and to bring those links to life through their interactions with the aunties, and other whānau in the back (kitchen) of the marae. The notion that these located interactions can serve therapeutic functions and provide personal nourishment (Gesler, 2003; Milligan & Wiles, 2010), attunes us to the significance of cultural spaces within which acts of recognition and support can cohere and renew relational aspects of one's very being (King et al., 2017). This often occurs informally through material practices involving collective work in the wharekai (kitchen/dining hall), which underpins the more formal traditions on the *paepae tapu* (sacred speaking area for cultural orators, see Figure 1) that are integral to the cultural performance of tangihanga. For Awa, the marae space for care assists him in gaining respite and perspective in response to the stressors that many Māori experience within the broader settler Pākeha society:

> *Mentally, I've been a lot more stable. I've got quite a pressurised job so this* [tangihanga and marae] *has helped me feel a lot better mentally because I have something other than mahi* (*paid employment*) *to focus on and the return, the warm fuzzies I get from going through that process all the time gives me perspective on how lucky I am. So, for years I'll soldier away in the corporate scene, feel like I'm hard done by because of this and that. And it's quite humbling to go back to my whānau and make me realise how lucky I am. So that brings everything back into perspective for me. So, it's made me mentally a lot more stable.*

By re-entering the tangihanga, these participants reconnect and strengthen their ancestral connections and sense of who they are as Māori. In these narratives, returning is not presented as a visit, but rather as an articulation of the willingness to engage in deceptively simple and culturally nuanced cooperative acts, such as washing dishes and preparing meals with loved ones, and for visitors to the tangihanga. Through these practices of care, the marae space is imbued with enactments of cultural etiquette that encourage relational affiliation and cooperation. As such, these men are hailed by the marae space, event, and cultural etiquette into the embrace of shared cultural practices of care and ways of being together. Once emplaced they are more able to express their grief that extends well beyond the loss of a loved one and into the renewal of cultural connections and tradition.

5.2 Enacting mundane yet culturally significant material and affective practices

Through material practices central to tangihanga, participants realise their community ties and selves, as well as their related cultural and practical obligations to care for others (Rua, Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). The men involve themselves in shared activities as a basis for whānaungatanga (relationship renewal) and in doing so become re-grounded within shared

cultural traditions of reciprocal support and affiliation. These central aspects of Māori culture are articulated through seemingly mundane or taken-for-granted tikanga practices that are inclusive of a hug and kiss on the cheek, preparing the marae grounds by mowing lawns, cleaning bathrooms, sweeping sidewalks, gathering food, and preparing animals for feasting. As suggested in the following extracts, both Waka and John are quite clear about their material roles during tangihanga. Waka explains:

> *I know my role at home* [marae] *is to do the kitchen role because I know I'm not up to that calibre of my uncle and all the rest at home* [who conduct formal speeches out the front]*…In fact, I haven't graduated from the tea towel and the dishes yet back home…*

Waka recognises that he has not yet achieved formal cultural leadership, but still contributes practically to the tangihanga back-of-marae 'in the kitchen'. Also acknowledged are how people's responsibilities on the marae follow a progression over time from supporting roles preparing food and catering for the manuhiri (visitors) to the more ritualized cultural *tikanga* practices, such as whaikōrero (oratory) on the paepae tapu (out front sacred speaking area for orators, see Figure 1). Similarly, John comments:

> *Nothing at the front of the marae…unless I'm mowing the lawns. Mainly at the back, washing dishes, peeling potatoes, all the kitchen work… You can never forget how to use a butcher's knife.*

Front-of-house ritualized roles require the extensive cultural knowledge and experience of the tribal elders who have also spent their time as younger men in the kitchen. Nonetheless, the more mundane activities of peeling potatoes and washing dishes are also recognized as having significant meaning and contribution in terms of the hosting and care of the whānau pani (bereaved family) and manuhiri (visitors). The kitchen is also where future cultural leaders are developed, initially with a tea towel in their hands. What we see in such extracts is the entanglement of the more mundane background support roles and the leading of rituals out front. Combined, both sets of practices render the marae functional and culturally meaningful in terms of the conduct of tangihanga.

To participate in tangihanga in these ways is to involve oneself in the rendering of the marae space as one of care, belonging and to solidify marae sustainability and tradition. In other words, the culture is enacted, renewed, and sustained via shared practices that centralise interconnection through service to others. Along similar lines, Paora and Awa reflected on their distinct yet inter-connected support roles and activities that reflect the often taken-for-granted, routinized, yet culturally significant contributions these men make to tangihanga:

> *I'll put my hand up and say, how many crayfish* (lobsters) *do you want? How many bags of kina* (sea urchins) *do you want or how many bags of mussels* (bivalve molluscs) *do you want, and I'll go get it* (Paora).

Paora has skills for sourcing food prior to tangihanga, including foraging for seafood and butchering animals, which traditionally embody manaakitanga (caring hospitality and

generosity). Relatedly, Awa referred to the renovation work he conducted for the marae wharemate (building to house the deceased and female members of the grieving family) that is adjacent to the paepae (culturally sacred speaking area) (see Figure 1):

> *For instance, the wharemate was previously a tarpaulin with no walls. The concrete was all broken up and today it's now enclosed. Still no front doors though but the roof's not leaking, no tarpaulin required and a nice tidy wharemate… Now the kuia* (elderly women) *are much warmer and our paepae looks a bit more professional for our kaumātua* [elders].

Caring for the tūpāpaku (deceased person), whānau pani (bereaved family), kuia (elderly women) and kaumātua (elderly men) through renovation work on the wharemate is a practice that can encompass spiritual, emotional, and practical forms of care simultaneously (Rua, Rua, Te Awekotuku & Nikora, 2010). The sense of professionalism, participation, contribution and care for self and others that manifests from such acts also enables marae operations and associated cultural rituals and collective wellbeing (Durie, 2006; Pere, 1991; Pitama et al, 2007). The renovated wharemate (building to house the deceased) embodies a sense of positive contribution by the literal 'building' of a cultural space for close family to grieve openly and support one another (*cf*., Hodgetts et al., 2016; Milligan & Wiles, 2010).

Conversely, all participants were aware of colonially constructed stereotypes of Māori men as self-serving tough criminals or silent warriors who only display violent emotions and lack care and concern for others (Davis & Crocket, 2010; Hokowhitu, 2004). The diminishing and damaging misconceptions of Māori men arise from the onslaught of colonisation and imposition of British individualized gender norms of the settler society (Hokowhitu, 2004; Jackson, 2009). Yet this research highlights Māori men engaged in familiar roles and practices that contribute significantly to personal and community wellbeing. The institution of tangihanga provides a cultural enclave within which the sharing of grief and loss is experienced and openly displayed normatively by men who are invited to share their grief as they contribute to the care of others. As John states:

> *Uncle told me when his father died, he cried. So, a lot of staunch Māori men up here do cry, but not often*.

John has been socialized to accept that Māori men crying is normative during tangihanga and is also compatible with notions of stoicism or their remaining strong (staunch) as pillars of support for others by embodying Mauri tau (composure and serenity). The 'but not often' clause can be read as an in-group acknowledgement that such expressions of emotion and loss have become less normative for Māori men outside the marae space due to the dominance of the 'stiff upper lip' norm of restraint in settler society (Ritchie, Morrison, Vaioleti & Ritchie, 2013). Within the broader settler society, ongoing processes of colonisation have inhibited the emotional range of expression that was evident pre-contact for Māori men as open nurturers, caregivers, and grievers (Hokowhitu, 2004; Jackson, 2009). For example, Tame expresses the concerns Māori share regarding the colonial male archetype and 'stiff upper lip':

I think one of the things we need to get over as Māori men is this [colonial] *idea that it's manly not to cry. That it's manly not to shed tears when your best mates are there, you staunch it out.*

Such statements reflect the importance of tangihanga as a space in which it is acceptable for men to outwardly express their emotions and to ask related questions of themselves and others. The intimate sharing of grief was also evident during the research process, such as when Awa reflected upon the importance of public expressions of grief:

I'm actually doing it [crying] *now because I've got no issues with that. So hopefully, if I role-model that behaviour enough they'll* [Māori men] *normalise to it.*

Like Awa, Paora is aware of the colonial expectation for Māori men to assert emotional control over themselves. Yet, he is encouraged by the Māori men he has seen embody their emotions as markers of strength at tangihanga:

You can see by their looks and expressions on their face that they're hurting and they're crying, and they openly express that... I think that's a beautiful thing. To have a man actually cry and feel your pain. That's a sign of a strong man and I really admire that… I like to be open, and I try and express what I'm feeling.

Likewise, John is comfortable with men crying at tangihanga and thinks it should be supported:

If they want to cry, they cry.

John is open about his grief when his grandparents who had raised him passed away:

When Koro (grandfather) and Nanny (grandmother) died, I cried.

Awa also understands the importance of Māori men's self-expressions for their moving through grief. His account offers further insights into how the therapeutic space of the marae and tangihanga provide a collective and supportive enclave for the traditional grieving processes and emotional expression to occur:

I'm trying to get them [men] *to express their compassionate side. It actually makes you feel better once you've got it out. Leave it behind and go again bro* (Awa).

For Awa, 'going again' invokes the need to grieve as a part of the rhythm of tangihanga where one can release and work though sadness to collectively renew supportive connections and continue with life. When death occurs, those close to the deceased experience a disruption to their 'mauri tau' (composure and serenity) (Edge, Nikora & Rua, 2011; Jacobs, Nikora, & Ritchie, 2012). Shared expressions of emotion offer a culturally recognisable means for regaining 'mauri tau'. Small displays of grief by participants also contribute to the co-construction of tangihanga as a cultural enclave for ensuring the bereaved do not become engulfed which is detrimental to a positive recovery to a state of mauri tau.

Beyond the outward expression of emotions or engaging in intimate dialogue with others, there are other valid ways for Māori men to process their grief. For example, Paora points out that men also express loss and emotion through practical efforts to help others:

> *Not just looking sad faced…And not just being there, but also, 'what would you like me to do?' Sometimes you don't even have to ask, you just do it.*

During tangihanga the work these men do enables the space and time for all attendees to grieve. But, in working in the kitchen, these men are not simply preparing food or the space for others. The physical practices they engage in afford cultural and psychological opportunities for participants to process what has occurred and what it means for oneself and the collective. This observation reflects how, "men are generally more willing to report emotions nonverbally rather than verbally" (Wong & Rochlen, 2005, p. 64). Even when talking, men often do not speak directly about their feelings. They share emotion by talking around issues they have in common, or as John noted, "*…not necessarily about the funeral, maybe talking about hunting".*

Such hunting talk is not unrelated to the funeral as it also invokes the expression of care and emotion through the provision of wild foods from hunting, for tangihanga. Such indirect talk is also engaged in as a recognised form of therapeutic dialogue (Buitenbos, 2012) where discussions between trusted friends or whānau members reinforce a sense of familiarity and emotional support through shared endeavour.

To recap, tangihanga offer a cultural enclave within which the participants found respite and space to express their grief in ways that transcend the hegemonic colonial stereotypes that restrict the plurality of Māori traditional articulations of multi-masculinities in their care and protection of others. Participants' expressions of grief were multifaceted, including intimate conversations, hugs, and tears as well as manual work in the wharekai (kitchen/dining hall) collecting and providing food, and ensuring that the whānau pani (bereaved family) and manuhiri (visitors) are comfortable and cared for.

6. Conclusions

As a cultural institution, tangihanga can provide men with a form of Māori cultural expression unencumbered, at least directly, by narrow settler society constructions of what it means to be a man today. During tangihanga, practices of care are performed and 'te reo Māori' (Māori language) and its customs are privileged and prioritised, providing a positive sense of self for participants as interconnected Māori men who care for others. Tangihanga offer these men a culturally patterned sense of place and a community of practice that allows them to reconnect, re-member, sustain relationships, and grieve. Through their work 'out the back of the marae', the men take the opportunity to spend time with whānau and friends engaged in mutual support and care. Their actions contribute to the co-creation of tangihanga as a space for communal mourning and cultural preservation and reproduction.

For these men, tangihanga also provide the strongest call for them to return to their marae and legacy ways of being in the Māori world. Through their participation, they become embroiled within cultural imperatives to manaaki (care) and aroha (affection) themselves and others. Their contributions provide the basis for whanaungatanga (relationship

building/affirming) and re-membering their heritage and whakapapa. 'Kanohi kitea' or being present and seen at tangihanga, reduces the sense of dislocation these men often feel in the colonial settler society, and nourishes their sense of belonging and cultural continuity. By participating in collective grieving practices at tangihanga, these participants become more secure in their Māori selves as men who are open nurturers, caregivers, and grievers. They can realise opportunities for pro-social bonding and engage in shared practices that are conducive to intimacy. In reconnecting themselves physically, emotionally, and psychologically within the Māori world during tangihanga, these men also contribute to much more than their own grieving and meeting the immediate needs of others. They also become embroiled in the cultural reproduction of the core cultural values and practices of manaakitanga (caring relationships), whanaungatanga (relationship building/affirming), and kōtahitanga (solidarity). Future research could explore these processes across a range of cultural events and tribal groups to deepen our understandings of what it means to be a pro-social Māori man today.

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Appendix

Glossary of Māori terms

- Aroha (unconditional love and commitment)
- Hapū (sub-tribe)
- Kanohi kitea (the seen face/being seen)
- Kaumātua (elders)
- Kōtahitanga (solidarity)
- Kuia (elderly women)
- Mana (cultural integrity/authority)
- Manaakitanga (care, caring and hospitality)
- Marae (ceremonial courtyard and ritual arena specific to the socio-cultural history of a Māori sub-tribe and/or tribe)
- Marae ātea (open area in front of the sacred meeting house)
- Mauri tau (to be composed, deliberate, serene, or without panic)
- Paepae tapu (sacred speaking area for the cultural orators of the marae)
- Pākehā (Aotearoa's settler society characterised by colonial institutions and laws)
- Papatūānuku (primal Earth Mother)
- Ranginui (Sky Father)
- Ringawera (whānau workers)
- Tangihanga (the traditional Māori process of grieving the death of a loved one)
- Te reo Māori me ōna tikanga (the Māori language and its customs)
- Tikanga (cultural etiquette, practice, correct procedure, methods, ways of doing)
- Tūrangawaewae (ancestral lands and place to stand)
- Tūpāpaku (deceased person)
- Whakapapa (Ancestral genealogy)
- Whānau (immediate and extended family)
- Whānau pani (grieving family)
- Whanaungatanga (relationship building)
- Wharekai (marae kitchen/dining hall)
- Wharepuni (sacred meeting house)
- Whakatauki (proverbial saying)