



# Whiti Te Rā: A guide to connecting Māori to traditional wellbeing pathways

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Andre McLachlan  
*WINTEC*

Waikaremoana Waitoki  
*University of Waikato*

Parewahaika Harris  
*Mauri Aio, private practice*

Horiana Jones  
*Oranga Tamariki*

## Abstract

Māori health models, introduced in the 1980s, brought needed cultural worldviews to an otherwise monocultural health system. However, minimal changes have occurred. In mainstream practice, deeper cultural understandings and action-orientations of these models can be overlooked, to the detriment of Māori wellbeing. In particular, Māori cultural concepts such as *mauri ora* (an active state of wellbeing) and a secure cultural identity are notable core wellbeing pathways that need further exploration. Using a systematic narrative literature review, 36 papers identified pathways that used core cultural activities for Māori wellbeing. A thematic analysis produced six themes or pathways towards wellbeing for Māori – *te reo Māori*: Māori language,

*taiao*: connection with the environment, *wairua*: Māori spiritual beliefs and practices, *mahi-a-toi*: Māori expressive art forms, *take pū whānau*: Māori relational values, and *whakapapa*: intergenerational relationships. Forty experienced Māori psychologists analysed the themes and offered expert examples practice pathways for Māori wellbeing. The six themes and feedback is presented in a visual image Whiti Te Rā with instructions for Māori practitioners to guide *whai ora Māori* (Māori clients) to explore their level of knowledge and comfort, and active engagement with Māori pathways to wellbeing. The model has potential for mental health policy, future research, curriculum development, and synthesising Māori knowledge towards wellbeing pathways.

**Keywords:** Māori, culture, identity, mauri, hauora, Indigenous health, wellbeing, health, mental health

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## Introduction

Māori models of health developed over the last three decades acknowledge the importance of holistic and collective wellbeing. For example, Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1994), Te Wheke (Pere,

1984), Ngā Pou Mana (Henare, 1998), Te Pae Mahutonga (Durie, 1999), and the Meihana Model (Pitama, Robertson, et al., 2007; Pitama, Bennett, et al., 2017) have identified important, inter-related cultural concepts and their relationship to health and wellbeing outcomes for Māori.

A commonly used model, Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1994), uses a *whare* (house) as a metaphor for strength and balance with the four walls representing four important concepts of health: *taba hinengaro* (mental wellbeing), *taba whānau* (social wellbeing), *taba tinana* (physical wellbeing) and *taba wairua* (spiritual wellbeing). The metaphor of the whare is proposed to “evoke notions of history, identity, connectedness and collaborative effort” (McLachlan & Huriwai, 2016, p. 11).

Despite a well-established literature base of Māori health models and their evolution, the models have been underutilised or misused in clinical practice (McNeill, 2009; Muriwai et al., 2015; Pitama, Robertson, et al., 2007). Pitama, Robertson, et al. (2007) commented that key Māori beliefs, values, and experiences become de-Māorified and that a cultural checklist approach is applied to any ethnic minority client with an assumption that a safe framework is being used.

Taking into account the development of Māori models that sought to extend the breadth of application of the earlier models (e.g., the Meihana Model), a fuller understanding of Māori-centred wellbeing pathways is needed (Durie, 2003). The demand for cultural relevance has grown: cultural identity and collectiveness, access to traditional practices and traditional lands, recognising the intergenerational impact of marginalisation and racism, and recognising the role of traditional knowledge and spirituality (Baker, 2010; Durie, 2003; Kenney et al., 2015; Ministry of Health, 2002; Moeke-Pickering, 1996; O'Hagan et al., 2012; Pitama, Robertson, et al. 2007). More recently, *mauri ora* and a secure cultural identity are two indicators of wellbeing for Māori that have been highlighted as essential to wellbeing.

## Mauri Ora

*Mauri* refers to life force or the essence of life that binds together the body and spirit (Love, 2004; Mark & Lyons, 2010; Ministry of Health, 2014). *Mauri*, as a life force, flows through all living beings from land, trees, birds, rivers, mountains, through to people—individually and collectively. *Mauri* mediates the quality of the relationships between all beings (Love, 2004; O'Hagan et al., 2012; Pohutu, 2011) and has connotations of internal balance and wellbeing, and connectivity between people and the natural elements. The term *ora* refers to being alive, well, and safe (Williams, 2006). *Mauri* and *ora* create an active state of wellbeing—*mauri ora*. *Mauri* has been proposed to occur along a continuum from weakened to strong. Kruger et al. (2004) proposed a weakened *mauri* as *kahupō* (a state of having no purpose in life or spiritual blindness). Pohutu (2011) described a weakened *mauri* as *mauri moe* reflecting rest, inactivity, or sleep, and untapped potential. *Mauri moe* can be a proactive and safe space or a place of isolation and non-participation. Kruger et al. (2004) used the term *mauri ora* to reflect a strong *mauri*, whereas Pohutu (2011) proposed a two-stage process, *mauri oho* (awake, alert) and *mauri ora*. *Oho* refers to a *spark* that inspires a willingness and commitment to participate and move forward.

Restoring *mauri ora* or wellbeing within a Māori worldview can be achieved through the application of cultural beliefs and practices, including *whakapapa* (genealogy), *tikanga* (protocols), *wairua* (spirituality), *tapu* (sacredness), and *mana* (intrinsic dignity; Moeke-Maxwell et al., 2014; O'Hagan et al., 2012). Activities to increase *mauri ora* include social cohesion, reflecting, learning, sharing, and talking about *īvi* (tribe[s]), *hapū* (subtribe[s]) and its history; *pūrākau* (stories), immersion in *whakapapa*, and re-visiting significant landmarks (Love, 2004; Mark & Lyons, 2010; Pohutu, 2011). Kruger et al. (2004) noted that the cultural states of *ihi* (being enraptured with life), *wehi* (being in awe of life), and *wana* (being enamoured with life) as accessed through engagement in cultural values, beliefs, and practices are key transformative experiences for *mauri ora*.

## Secure Cultural Identity

Positive mental health and wellbeing for Māori are associated with a secure connection to one's cultural heritage and cultural identity (Durie, 2003; Hohepa et al., 2011; Hollands et al., 2015; Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2014). A secure cultural identity acts as a protective factor for psychological distress, suicidality, adversity, and increases resilience (Durie, 2001; Houkamau & Sibley, 2015; Muriwai et al., 2015; Waiti & Kingi, 2014). When considering identity, it is important to recognise that Māori identities and self-image have been formed within a complex, colonised reality, and embedded within a *Pākehā* (Eurocentric) ecology (Koea, 2008; Maynard et al., 2013; Muriwai et al., 2015). For Māori, the effects of colonisation, enculturation, and adaption to Western values meant that Māori had to be resilient as Māori, while maintaining tenuous connections to cultural and traditional ways of living. Decreased access to cultural heritage, including tikanga Māori and *te reo Māori* (Māori language) has been argued to compound the effects of an insecure cultural identity and impact on mental health (Baxter, 2008; Baxter et al., 2006; Dyal, 1997; Mark & Lyons, 2010; Oakley-Browne et al., 2006; Rochford, 2004).

Houkamau and Sibley (2010) refer to *active identity engagement* where individuals are motivated and enthused to seek knowledge about Māori culture and engage in identity work. A secure cultural identity arguably includes a range of culture-specific markers (Durie, 1995; Houkamau & Sibley, 2010, 2015; Moeke-Pickering, 1996; O'Hagan et al., 2012). Activities designed to enhance a secure cultural identity include participation in Māori cultural, social and economic resources (e.g., *marae* [traditional meetings houses], land, and fisheries), and opportunities for positive cultural expression and cultural validation within society's institutions (Boulton & Gifford, 2014; Durie, 1995; Kenney et al., 2015; Moeke-Pickering, 1996; Panelli & Tipa, 2007). Houkamau and Sibley (2011) offered five dimensions that influence a secure cultural identity: (a) the ability to speak *te reo Māori*; (b) *whānaungatanga* - strong connection to whakapapa (i.e., associations with *whānau* [family], hapū, and iwi); (c) *paihere tāngata* - effective engagement with other Māori (i.e., through organisations and activities); (d) an understanding of *wairuatanga*

(Māori spirituality); and (e) an understanding of tikanga Māori and Māori culture.

Adding to these dimensions is the strength of relationships with tribal land markers, including *maunga* (mountains) and *awa* (rivers; Houkamau & Sibley, 2010; Mark & Lyons, 2010; O'Hagan et al., 2012; Rameka, 2016).

## Present Study

The purpose of the present study was to identify cultural pathways (activities and concepts) to wellbeing for Māori, wellbeing that incorporates both mauri ora and a secure cultural identity. This study utilised a systematic narrative literature review and subject matter expert *wānanga* (group discussion) to promote the importance of and facilitate supporting *whai ora Māori* (Māori clients) and their whānau to increase their knowledge of and comfort in cultural pathways to wellbeing, and to increase their active participation in these pathways. Durie (2003) described the process of learning about identity as a therapeutic task that promotes understanding, knowledge, and comfort. Houkamau and Sibley (2010) used the term active identity engagement to reflect the need to be active in promoting cultural identity. This paper uses a Māori language interpretation of these two terms: *maburu* (comfort—settled, soothed) and *hono* (active engagement—join, connect, add-on; Williams, 2006). The relevance of these terms is described later.

## Method

### Systematic Narrative Literature Review

A systematic narrative literature review is a robust and useful method that allows the body of evidence to be synthesised, to find common ideas and concepts, to draw conclusions, and to develop theories (Baumeister 2013; Pautasso, 2013; Siddaway et al., 2019). Systematic reviews are typically aligned with meta-analysis, although Siddaway et al. (2019) argued that using a narrative approach is equally rigorous and transparent. A narrative review is favoured when there is a collection of qualitative studies, with diverse methodologies that focus on different theoretical conceptualisations. This review process followed five steps as outlined by Siddaway et al. (2019): scoping, planning, identification, screening, and eligibility.

## Review Method

**Scoping.** The review sought to identify research that included any cultural concepts or activities that contributed to wellbeing and/or health for Māori.

**Planning.** The inclusion criteria were literature that provided descriptions of Māori wellbeing and/or a strong cultural identity, such as cultural concepts and/or activities; descriptors of the connection between cultural concepts and/or activities and health, wellbeing, or identity; and practice-based activities. Studies were excluded if they focussed solely on eliminating a health disorder or problem. Figure 1 represents the search and inclusion process.

**Identification.** An electronic database search was conducted utilising ProQuest database, selecting conference papers and proceedings, dissertations and theses, scholarly journals, and standards and practice guidelines. Search terms included Māori and culture, along with health, wellbeing, hauora, and identity. There was no set time frame.

**Screening and Eligibility.** Through the ProQuest database search 146 studies were

identified. A bibliography of Māori and psychology research (Hyde et al., 2017) provided 82 further publications. A total of 101 publications were selected for further analysis, with 36 studies meeting the study criteria. This included 25 journal articles, one conference paper, one government-commissioned working paper, and eight PhD or Masters level theses. The 36 articles and associated findings are presented in a table form (*see Appendix*).

## Data Analysis

Two methods of analysis were used in the present study. A thematic analysis to identify themes in the literature and a subject matter expert wānanga to explore if these themes (cultural pathways) are applicable to practice and, if so, to provide exemplars.

### Thematic Analysis

A thematic analysis approach was used to analyse the findings of the literature review and identify themes. Saldana (2013) recommended that data undergo a process of organising, reduction, interpretive coding, and development of themes.

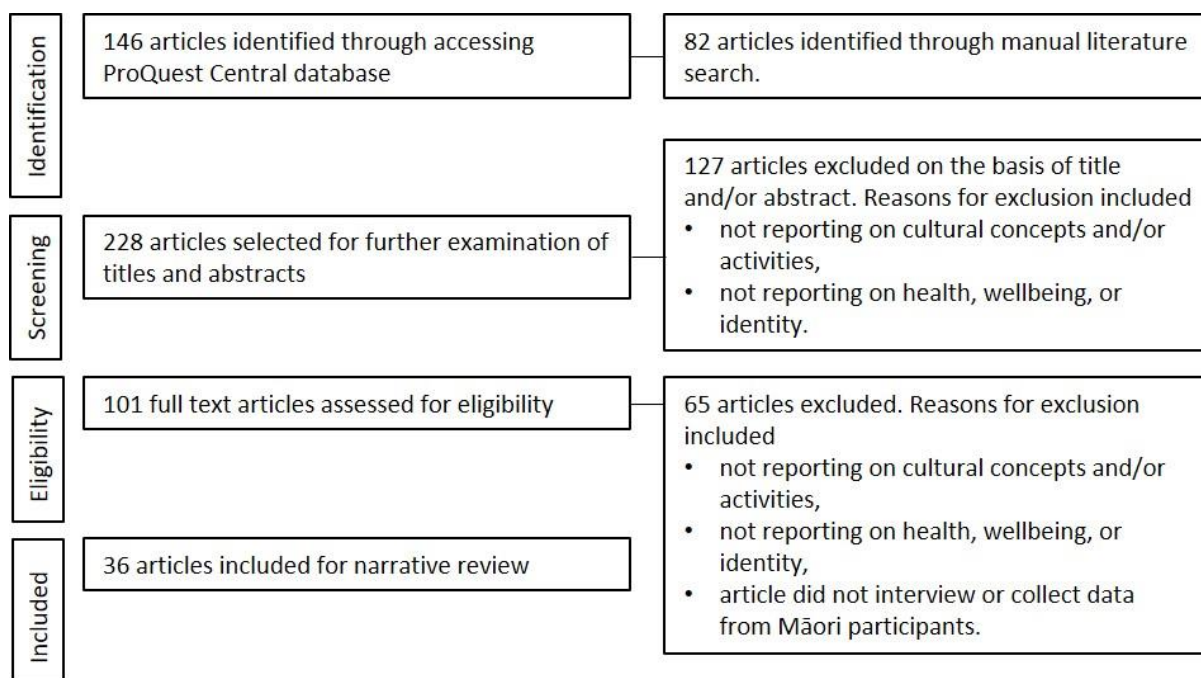


Figure 1. Literature inclusion process

Organising the data includes close and careful reading of the text (Thomas, 2006). Data reduction incorporates the creation of categories, or as Braun and Clarke (2006) term it, searching for themes. Interpretive coding and development of broader concepts included reviewing, defining, and naming themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) proposed that a theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Themes can be developed on a continuum indicating the degree of transformation of data during the data analysis process, from description (semantic or explicit) to interpretation (latent; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003). The themes in the present study focused on the semantic or explicit end of the continuum, as the purpose was to identify themes that reflected similar activities that, when grouped, reflect Māori cultural pathways to wellbeing. This process produced six descriptive themes that reflected activities that showed distinct Māori cultural pathways to wellbeing.

### Subject Matter Expert Wānanga

A wānanga format was used to discuss, debate, and explore the six themes.

### Recruitment of Participants

Participants at the National Māori Psychologists’ Symposium – He Paiaka Totara (August 2018) were invited to participate in a two-hour wānanga exploring cultural pathways to wellbeing.

### Participants

Approximately 40 practising Māori psychologists and psychology students representing different fields of psychology; including clinical, community, forensic, education, and organisational psychology; agreed to participate in the wānanga. Demographic details of participants were not collected.

### Procedure

The lead author presented the purpose of the study, the literature review process, and each of the six themes. Consent was obtained verbally at the outset of the wānanga. The concepts of mahuru and hono, and the role of these concepts in supporting whānau to engage in cultural pathways and their practitioners were also

described. Participants were randomly assigned to one of six groups, with five to seven participants in each group. Each group was facilitated by one of the study authors or a practising senior Māori clinical psychologist. A copy of the theme descriptors from the literature review and two questions were provided for discussion and debate. Participants offered exemplars of where they had used cultural concepts to enhance Māori wellbeing.

### Research Questions

1. How you, as a practitioner, could guide and/or facilitate access for whai ora in relation to mahuru (knowledge/comfort) and hono (engagement/participation) for this theme. Consider a continuum from a beginner, through to moderate and then advanced.
2. How you, as a practitioner, have guided and/or facilitated access for whānau in relation to mahuru (knowledge/comfort) and hono (engagement/participation) for this theme. Providing brief exemplars of what you /whai ora did and what you consider the outcome was.

### Data Collection and Presentation

Each group facilitator documented the participants’ responses. The examples (exemplars) of cultural pathways in practice and associated discussion were collated by the lead author and returned to each facilitator for review. These exemplars and associated discussions are presented below each of the six themes.

## Findings

The systematic narrative literature review identified six key themes. These themes are termed *ngā ara*, or dimensions. These dimensions represent pathways to wellbeing and a secure cultural identity. The terms mahuru and hono are included within each dimension. The six dimensions are

- *Ngā ara reo Māori*: Māori language,
- *Ngā ara taiao*: Connection with the environment,
- *Ngā ara wairua*: Māori spiritual beliefs and practices,

- *Ngā ara mabi-a-toi*: Māori expressive art forms,
- *Ngā ara take pū whānau*: Māori relational values, and
- *Ngā ara whakapapa*: Intergenerational relationships.

### Ngā ara reo Māori: Māori language

Ngā ara reo Māori reflects speaking the Māori language informally or formally (e.g., with family and peers, in the workplace or on the marae/ancestral home). Māori language was identified across the literature as a common marker of Māori identity (Durie, 2001; Gibson, 1999; Higgins, 2004; McIntosh, 2005; Penetito, 2011; Te Huia, 2015) and contributing to wellbeing (Dyall et al., 2014; Muriwai et al., 2015; Simmonds et al., 2014). Māori language was also linked to the concept of personal *mana* (dignity), secure identity, being a knowledge-holder, and a link to issues of social justice (Anaru, 2017; Kāretu, 1993; Ngaha, 2011).

The findings showed several studies that sought to ameliorate the effects of cultural genocide on the intergenerational systems that transmitted Māori language and customs (Durie, 1998; Pihama, 2001; Royal, 2003; Te Huia, 2015). Access and comfort with language opportunities enables the development of a secure cultural identity, to strengthen whakapapa relationships with hapū and iwi, and to have access to specific and local knowledge (Fox et al., 2018; Rata, 2012; Te Huia, 2015).

**He Paiaka Wānanga Findings.** Participants reported that they supported whānau to develop their level of mahuru in and hono in te reo Māori by listening to whai ora with ears, heart, and wairua. Some proficient te reo speaking participants used te reo Māori at all times with their whai ora. However, matching whai ora use of te reo Māori, providing bilingual resources, and providing a Māori friendly space that is reflective of te reo Māori and a Māori worldview was also important. Activities to build upon these basic language building blocks included supporting whai ora to access te reo Māori resources, online learning programs or examples of te reo Māori in use, and setting goals and plans to learn *pepeha* (traditional tribal connections). Evidence of te reo uptake involved whai ora asking for the meaning of words or using words

unsolicited. It was noted that not all whai ora were comfortable with the Māori language, and this colonial reality needed careful handling. Encouraging the use of te reo, however small, was seen as important to establishing confidence with whai ora.

### Ngā ara Taiao: Connection with the Environment

Ngā ara taiao reflects knowledge of and engagement in the environment. Engagement in te taiao has been identified as a key indicator of wellbeing (Durie, 2006, Reid et al., 2016), an important aspect of Māori models of wellbeing (Harmsworth & Awatere, 2013; T. Kingi et al., 2017; Palmer, 2004; Salmond, 2014), and an important part of the development of individual and collective wellbeing and identity (P. King et al., 2015; Moeke-Pickering et al., 2015). Taiao incorporates aspects of whakapapa, such as returning to *whenua tūpuna* (customary lands), *moana* (oceans), *awa* (rivers), *ngahere* (bush) and *maunga* (mountains), and the application of traditional Māori roles and values related to *kaitiakitanga* (stewardship, guardianship, and protection).

The intricate connection between people and te taiao is evident in the term *tangata whenua* (people of the land) and is seen in tribal idioms and stories. The Whanganui area *whakatauki* (proverb) “*ko au te awa; ko te awa ko au*” (I am the river, the river is me), relates to the reliance of people on te taiao for sustenance and the elevation of natural resources as a living being—an ancestor and as a deity. Engagement in te taiao also reflects participation with mauri, the element of life that resides in all aspects of nature (Harmsworth & Awatere, 2013; Moeke-Pickering et al., 2015).

**He Paiaka Wānanga Findings.** Participants commented that they encouraged their whai ora to increase their mahuru of and hono in Māori cultural pathways related to taiao activities. Activities included discussing and guiding whai ora to return to traditional maunga, awa, and ngāhere as sources of healing. Whai ora were encouraged to learn about and explore *urupā* (hapū graveyards) and battle sites, and to use natural resources (e.g., harakeke[flax]) in craftwork or weaving. Growing food was also encouraged: planting gardens and traditional

plants for medicines. Exploring tribal stories related to the environment and learning about the *maramataka* (phases of the moon) were activities used to guide whai ora to reflect on mood and energy levels.

A participant offered an example of taiao in the therapeutic space where they had taken their whai ora to the ngahere for a walk. The participant explained that the therapeutic space of the environment enabled the whai ora to discuss their trauma experience. The taiao space also provided an opportunity to identify and discuss Māori medicine within the forest that the whai ora was able to share with the practitioner.

### **Ngā ara Wairua: Māori Spiritual Beliefs and Practices.**

Ngā ara wairua reflects beliefs and practices related to Māori spirituality. Wairua is described in the literature as strongly linked to cultural identity (Houkamau & Sibley, 2010; Moeke-Maxwell et al., 2014; Rameka, 2016; Simmonds et al., 2014) as it encapsulates the connections and relationships with esoteric dimensions, deceased ancestors, the natural environment, and ancestral customs and traditions (Houkamau & Sibley, 2010; Mark & Lyons, 2010; Waiti & Kingi, 2014). “Wairua is our...kind of like the cement between everything. If we don’t have that then we become disjointed” (Valentine et al., 2017, p. 67).

*Wairuatanga* also includes traditional cultural beliefs or religious practices that function to enhance whai ora and whānau resilience by “fortifying relationships, growing morale, influencing meaning-making, strengthening identity and uplifting the mauri of ... the whanau” (Moeke-Maxwell et al., 2014, p. 148). With regard to wellbeing, particular ceremonies and rituals can assist in the healing and recovery process (Ihimaera, 2004; O’Hagan et al., 2012; Paenga, 2008). For example, the use of *karakia* (traditional incantation) to connect to the esoteric spiritual realm and our *atua* (gods; Rameka, 2016). Ngā ara wairua is an important pathway to wellbeing that offers guidance for whai ora in practices that uphold the mana and connection with te taiao and relationships, past and present.

**He Paiaka Wānanga Findings.** Across the participants, support was found for activities that encourage whai ora to increase their mahuru of

and hono in Māori cultural pathways related to wairua activities. Suggestions included returning to ancestral lands; learning *karakia*; and discussing family memories, stories, and oral histories. A participant provided an example of using wairua in the therapeutic space to assist in the grieving process. The whai ora was supported to create and perform an *oriori* (a traditional chant for the dedication of a child) for their child.

### **Ngā ara Mahi-A-Toi: Māori Expressive art Forms**

Ngā ara mahi-a-toi reflects the different arts and practices that transmit a range of physical skills, Māori knowledge, Māori values, and historical narratives (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2014; Paenga, 2008; Rawson, 2016). Evidence of culturally congruent pathways to wellbeing for Māori was found in the role of *kapa haka* (Māori performing arts) and its contribution to a culturally specific pathway to physical health, identity, and wellbeing (Hollands et al., 2015; Huriwai et al., 1998).

*Kapa haka* is a Māori tradition involving the expression of emotion through *waiata* (song), *mōteatea* (traditional chant), *haka* (war dance), *poi* (a percussion instrument), and *waiata-ā-ringa* (action song), performed in a group (Hollands et al., 2015; Paenga, 2008). Participation in *kapa haka* was linked to enhanced wellbeing for Māori; particularly with its collective nature; relationship building; physical benefits; and processes of re-acculturation to tribal history, spirituality, and genealogy, and identity (Henwood, 2007; Hollands et al., 2015; Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2014).

The review also showed the importance of *whakairo* (Māori carving), *tukutuku* (Māori weaving; Huriwai et al., 1998), *taonga Pūoro* (traditional Māori instruments; Anderson, 2009), and *tā Moko* (traditional Māori tattoo; T. Kingi et al., 2017; Nikora et al., 2007). Creative arts are used to transmit ancestral voices, strengthen identity, and impart traditional artistic skills. For example, weavers are thought to be endowed with the essence of the spiritual values of Māori people and the spirituality of the gods through the intimate connection to ancient weaving traditions and practices (Puketapu-Hetet, 1989). Māori sports such as *waka ama* (outrigger canoe) and *kei-o-rubi* (a traditional ball game), particularly

as part of inter hapū or tribal games, were noted to contribute to wellbeing and a secure cultural identity (Mato, 2011).

**He Paiaka Wānanga Findings.** Participants engaged their whai ora to increase mahuru of and hono in Māori cultural pathways related to mahi-a-toi activities. Suggestions included providing written resources to guide opening sessions with a karakia and waiata; and providing *rāranga-harakeke* (flax weaving), whakairo, or *tī rākau* (traditional Māori stick games) in session. As whai ora developed their comfort and engagement, practitioners guided them to incorporate their learning at home and to engage in learning opportunities or *wānanga* (facilitated traditional learning) when they arose.

A participant shared an example of mahi-a-toi in the therapeutic space, in which a whai ora was supported to engage in *whakairo rākau* (wood carving). The whai ora carved traditional patterns that represented important factors that contributed to their wellbeing and safety, to represent a relapse prevention plan.

### Ngā ara Take Pū Whānau: Māori Relational Values

Ngā ara take pū whānau reflects the values (*take pū*) that underpin and are actioned within tikanga Māori that strengthen *whānau wellbeing* (family/collective wellbeing; McLachlan, 2018; Waitoki et al., 2014). Tikanga Māori is the term often used to represent the *right way of doing things* — *tika* (correct), *ngā* (plural). When one speaks about tikanga Māori, they are often speaking about applying *take pū Māori* (Māori values).

Many whai ora Māori and their whānau are disconnected from their wider culture as a result of colonisation and lack the resources needed to actively engage in *mātauranga Māori* (Māori knowledge/episteme), such as whakapapa and wairua (Kenny et al., 2015; Paenga, 2008). Despite this, they may demonstrate many Māori values, such as *manaakitanga* (caring, nurturing, and hosting) and *kotahitanga* (joining together for a collective purpose).

Tikanga Māori embody traditional messages and knowledge which has been passed down from generation to generation through customs, norms, protocols, and lore (Baker, 2010; Boulton et al., 2013; Kenny et al., 2015; Love, 2004;

Paenga, 2008; Rawson, 2016). The findings show that Māori cultural identity, wellbeing, and cultural knowledge is enhanced through the practice and understanding of tikanga Māori (Henwood, 2007; Kenny et al., 2015; Paenga, 2008).

Boulton and Gifford (2014) referred to values such as kotahitanga and whakapapa as pivotal to the successful growth of each individual within the whānau unit. Love (2004) explained that tikanga associated with *whanaungatanga* (building/maintaining relationships), *aroha* (love), and *manaakitanga* are integral to the development of wellbeing of the individual and the whānau. Kaitiakitanga was another cultural concept related to the social obligation to provide a safe environment for the wider community and the environment (Kenny et al., 2015; Panelli & Tipa, 2007).

Ngā ara take pū whānau, as a pathway to wellbeing reflects important behaviours for both individual and collective wellbeing that have been passed down through generations to those who have the means to access *ngā taonga tuku iho* (knowledge passed down through generations).

**He Paiaka Wānanga Findings.** Across the groups, participants engaged their whai ora to increase their mahuru of and hono in Māori cultural pathways related to take pū whānau activities. Practice exemplars included exploring whānau structures and relationships through genograms; engaging in *whakapapa kōrero*, exploring historical whānau narratives to identify values and practices; exploring present whānau roles and practices; identifying values within these roles and how they are expressed in whānau rituals and the actions of different roles within the whānau.

A participant shared an example of take pū whānau in the therapeutic space, in which a whānau was supported to explore whānau values and practices by asking *momeā patai*, questions by which whānau were asked about the vision and aspirations for the future of their whānau, and individual roles and actions required to achieve this vision.



### Ngā Ara Whakapapa: Intergenerational Relationships.

Ngā ara whakapapa reflects the importance of mahuru of and hono in whakapapa. The literature review found that whakapapa is integral to a secure cultural identity and strongly connected to Māori wellbeing (Durie, 1999; Houkamau & Sibley, 2010; Mark & Lyons, 2010; O'Hagan et al., 2012; Panelli & Tipa, 2007; Rata, 2012; Waiti & Kingi, 2014). Embedded in whakapapa is a sense of belonging and connectedness to whānau, hapū, and iwi—past, present, and future, and connection to the taiao (*see* also theme two). *Whakapapa connections* (family networks) were drawn on in times of distress for manaakitanga and support to enhance recovery and promote healing (Henwood, 2007; Moeke-Maxwell et al., 2014).

A consequence of colonisation is that some Māori find it difficult to connect with their identity and continue to face challenges identifying positive characteristics associated with being Māori (Houkamau & Sibley, 2010). Whakapapa is a key protective factor that binds Māori as a part of a larger collective. Returning to and engaging in activities on one's traditional spaces was seen as an important pathway to wellbeing and a secure cultural identity (Henwood, 2007; Jahnke, 2002; McCormack, 2014; McLachlan, 2018; Muriwai et al., 2015; Panelli & Tipa, 2007). Traditional places include *kainga* (home), *marae*, *mahinga kai* (places where food is produced or procured), *urupā* (burial place), and *pā tawhito* (ancient *pā* [fortified village] sites). Knowledge and use of pepeha were seen as providing a deeper connection to *Te Ao Māori* (Māori world/culture) by enhancing an individual's ability to communicate their whakapapa, their shared stories, the stories of their ancestors, and their connections to people, places, events, and the spiritual (McCormack, 2014).

**He Paiaka Wānanga Findings.** All of the participants endorsed the importance of whakapapa connection to fostering a secure collective identity and connections to intergenerational knowledge. Whai ora who presented with low levels of mahuru of and/or hono in whakapapa activities were encouraged to develop their knowledge within their immediate

family. Participants used genograms with whai ora to explore strengths and challenges, and to contextualise presenting issues. As whai ora knowledge and comfort developed, they were guided to engage with knowledge holders (i.e., within hapū and iwi) either online or via tribal organisations.

A participant shared an experience where a whai ora was supported by an elder whom they had met at their father's funeral. The elder, although not directly related to the family, took them “under her wing”, and helped them to understand their wider familial connections, attending iwi meetings, family events, and graduation ceremonies. The example shows the complexities and values of familial obligation passed through whakapapa and relationship building.

### Whiti Te Rā: An Interactive Guide to Exploring Cultural Pathways to Wellbeing

A therapeutic model Whiti Te Rā incorporating six Māori cultural concepts and pathways was developed. In line with the continuum noted above, the model highlights activities that individuals and families could use to shift from a state of kahupō or mauri moe, to mauri oho and mauri ora.

The relevance of the term *Whiti Te Rā* as the name of this guide symbolises the importance of Māori flourishing beyond the well-known Māori models. Based on *pūrākau* and *whakapapa kōrero* (tribal traditions) derived from a Māori worldview, Whiti Te Rā exudes potentiality, warmth, and new horizons. As a guide, Whiti Te Rā enables exploration and discussion of Māori cultural concepts that underlie the search for wellbeing, or mauri ora. The Whiti Te Rā guide presents the six themes/dimensions as *ihi* (sun rays)—reo Māori: Māori language; taiao: connection with the environment; wairua: Māori spiritual beliefs and practices; mahi-a-toi: Māori expressive art forms; take pū whānau: Māori relational values; and whakapapa: intergenerational relationships. Each *ihi* is separated down the middle to enable discussions about mahuru with culture and also hono. Houkamau and Sibley (2010) term this process active identity engagement. Each side of the *ihi* (mahuru and hono) has five *poutama* (ascension

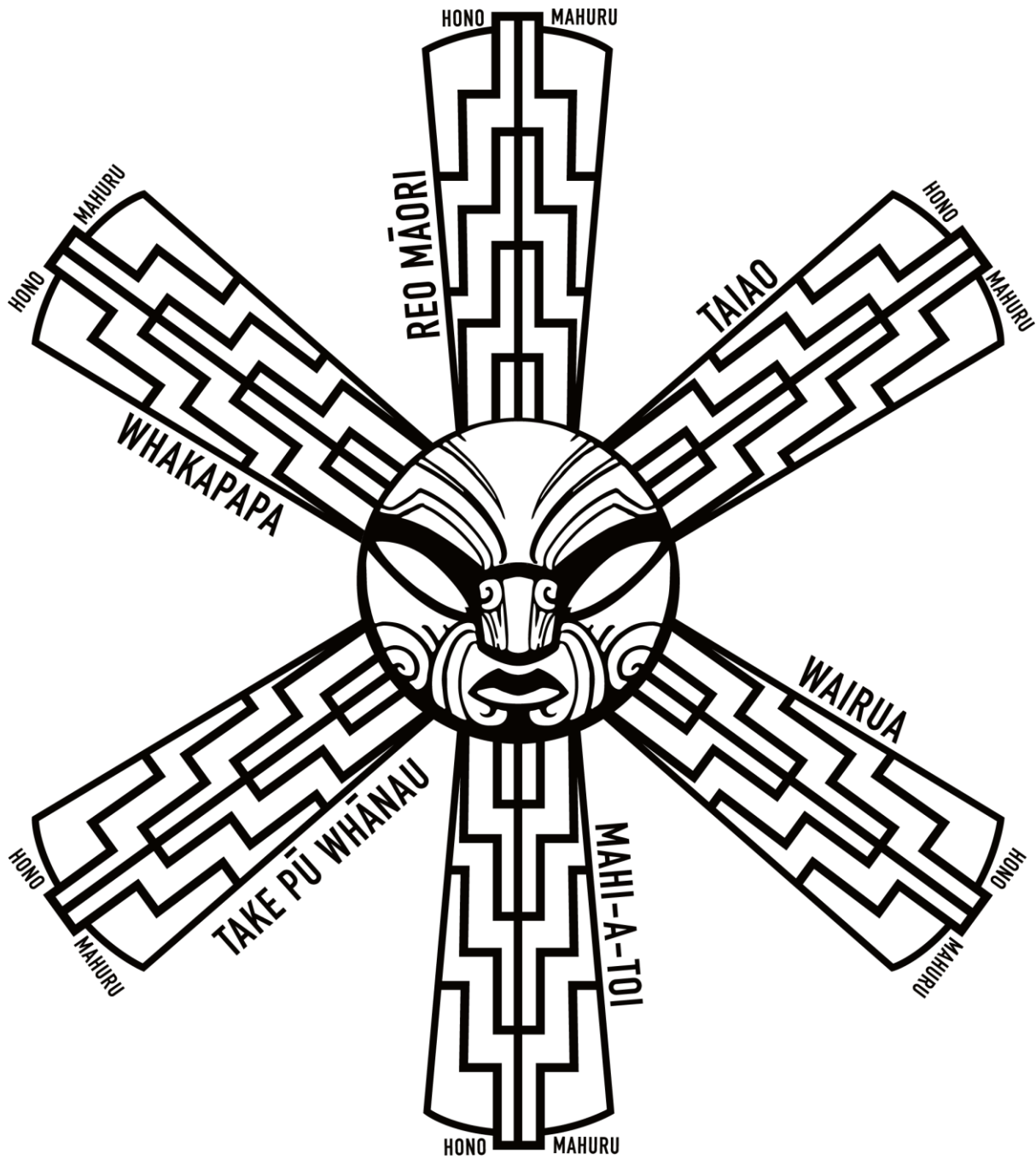


Figure 2. The *Whiti Te Rā* interactive guide

lines) representing the pūrākau of Tane (god of the forests, birds, and people) and his ascent to the heavens to bring down the three baskets of knowledge (Waitoki, 2016). The poutama journey provides a mātauranga metaphor of actively seeking wellbeing, enhanced by active engagement in learning and participating in culture.

In Figure 2, *Te Rā* (the sun) represents a state of

mauri moe, a proactive state of reflection and potential, by which engagement in cultural practices facilitates a journey outwards towards safety and wellbeing (mauri ora and a strong cultural identity). This active engagement is the spark, or mauri oho; a transformational process which leads to culture-bound experiences of *ibi* (being enraptured with life), *wehi*, and *wana*. As each *ibi* (sunray/dimension) burns brighter, the increased mahuru and hono strengthens the

cultural wellbeing of the person. By active engagement in these cultural pathways, Māori are encouraged to connect and locate themselves in terms of belonging: fulfilling roles, participating in the transmission of intergenerational knowledge, and developing a strong cultural identity.

## Discussion

This study is a response to the proliferation of Māori health models used across treatment modalities that lack deep understanding of Māori cultural concepts. This study illuminates the internal concepts of Māori health models beyond simplistic understandings to uncover the complex interactions needed for Māori wellbeing. Recognition that Māori models have undergone little change in the past 30+ years (however, *see* Pitama, Bennett, et al., 2017) also prompted a needed examination of wellbeing pathways. While some changes have occurred, wellbeing outcome indicators need to match the diverse and deeply complex cultural needs of Māori. As the capacity of Māori health research has increased, wellbeing indicators related to secure identity and mauri ora are more evident, signalling the need to shift towards an action-oriented pathway (Hollands et al., 2015; Houkamau & Sibley, 2010; Huriwai et al., 1998; Muriwai et al., 2015).

The systematic narrative literature review used in this study provided a valuable framework to examine, synthesise, and analyse the extant Māori health research. The review expanded on the known inter-relationships between Māori cultural concepts and pathways towards wellbeing that, at their core, privilege a connection to being Māori, whether through genealogical knowledge or cultural knowledge. A further goal of the study was to explore transformative learning opportunities that privilege Māori cultural worldviews and offers pathways to reverse the deleterious effects of colonisation and marginalisation.

The six themes termed *ngā ara* (dimensions) developed from the narrative review and confirmed by experienced Māori psychologists, uncovered the exciting potential of Māori knowledge of wellbeing. The need going forward is to present these dimensions in a culturally

meaningful way for individuals and whānau. To understand the interconnections of Māori wellbeing the six dimensions are arranged graphically into a representation of a sun (Rā) within *Whiti Te Rā* (The shining of the sun; *see* Figure 2), along with the concepts of mahuru and hono.

The Whiti Te Rā interactive guide provides the opportunity for Māori practitioners and whai ora Māori to explore cultural aspects of wellbeing pathways in an interactive and dynamic process. Whai ora are introduced to the six dimensions, and understandings and recollections of each dimension are shared. The practitioner can then orient whai ora to the concept of mahuru and hono, and invite them to self-identify where they see their level of knowledge and comfort, and active engagement on each ihi (sunray/dimension). Whai ora are invited to indicate where they sit on a line from the edge of the sun out to each side (mahuru and hono) of the ihi. Lines close to the sun's face reflect low levels of mahuru or hono, whereas lines further out along the poutama towards the end of each ihi reflect higher levels of mahuru and/or hono. Practitioners can then invite whai ora to reflect on the balance, the strengths, the low ebbs, and their aspirations and goals for each cultural pathway. This can form the basis of planning learning, addressing barriers, and active engagement in culturally-based pathways to wellbeing.

## Limitations and Implications

The authors acknowledge that the Whiti Te Rā interactive guide is a work in progress and has yet to be utilised in practice. Planning is underway for further resource development and training to support the application of Whiti Te Rā, including examples of activities that could inform wellbeing pathways. Further research is also needed to explore the usability of the model in different practice settings and to inform mental health policy development. There is also scope to do further research on the impact and outcome of Māori cultural pathways on wellbeing. The authors advise caution in using the model, as there are clear issues of cultural safety and a need to protect the psychological welfare of whai ora Māori when engaging with cultural practices. Māori experience and live within diverse realities, with different levels of understanding and

exposure to Māori language, cultural practices, environments, and family and tribal structures. The model needs to be used with respect and understanding to avoid diminishing or embarrassing a whai ora, and to achieve the best results possible.

Mauri ora, or a strong cultural identity, are crucial protective factors when whai ora have to navigate life in the presence of inequities in access, quality of health, social opportunities, and socio-economic status. We argue that without cultural pathways to wellbeing, current approaches are limited, may not be appealing to Māori, and in many cases, continue negative intergenerational experiences of inequities in health and social outcomes.

Outside of the Whiti Te Ra interactive guide, the six dimensions are useful in planning and evaluating the inclusion of Māori pathways to wellbeing within individual and group treatment programmes. This ensures practice references Māori models, terms, or concepts and that they connect with Māori resources and cultural facilitators to provide Māori pathways to wellbeing. This aligns strongly with Durie's (2003) notion of a Māori-centred approach.

Across the literature review, a particular theme uncovered was Māori models of health are developed with the express intent of empowering Māori worldviews and Māori strengths. To avoid using simplistic understandings of Māori cultural concepts, Whiti Te Rā offers innovation, as it builds on mātauranga Māori, incorporates a robust research enquiry, includes community validation, and importantly, is contextualised within a wholly Māori worldview.

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#### About the authors:

**Andre McLachlan** (Ngāti Apa, Muaūpoko) is a clinical psychologist who has worked in forensic mental health, addictions, and child and adolescent mental health. Andre is focused on teaching and resource development which bridges academic literature and Indigenous practice. Previous resource development have included the Whai Tikanga Values Card Sort and the Whai Tikanga Pleasant Events Schedule within *He Puna Whakaata: Therapeutic Activities to Guide Change*. Andre is a Principle Academic Staff Member at WINTEC and practising clinical psychologist.

**Waikaremoana Waitoki** (Ngāti Hako, Ngāti Mahanga) is a clinical psychologist who has worked in adult mental health, and child and adolescent mental health. Waikaremoana is keenly interested in Indigenous solutions to everyday issues to validate and affirm our peoples' realities and strengthen their wellbeing. She is the president of the New Zealand Psychological Society and a senior lecturer at the University of Waikato.

**Parewahaika Harris** (Te Arawa, Ngati Whakae, Ngati Raukawa ki te Tonga) is a proud wahine Māori, born and raised in Te Arawa, who loves to immerse herself in her culture and share the beauty of Māori performing arts. She is a registered clinical psychologist with experience in community mental health, child and adolescent mental health, and correctional settings. She enjoys consultation mahi and providing cultural supervision and training to non-Māori staff. Her current mahi is focussed on trauma-related therapy, and she is passionate about



incorporating tikanga and mātauranga Māori in her work.

**Horiana Jones** (Tuhourangi, Ngati Wahiao, Ngati Tuwharetoa, Ngati Raukawa ki te tonga) is a clinical psychologist working with Oranga Tamariki doing front line assessment, intervention, and consultation work. Her interests are working with tamariki and whānau to establish better pathways toward well-being. Horiana is also passionate about supporting tamariki and whānau to reconnect with their cultural identities through understanding our past, its impacts on the present, and how we can use that knowledge to inform future practice.

## Appendix

Table 1. Concept matrix of key themes

Author, date, study title	Te reo Māori: Māori language	Taiao: Connection with the environment	Wairua: Māori spiritual beliefs and practices	Mahi-a-toi: Māori expressive art forms	Take pū whānau: Māori relational values	Whakapapa: Intergeneration al relationships
1. Boulton and Gifford (2014). Whānau Ora; He whakaaro ā whānau: Māori family views of family wellbeing.			1		1	1
2. Dyall et al. (2014). Cultural and social factors and quality of life of Māori in advanced age. Te puawaitanga o nga tapuwae kia ora tonu - life and living in advanced age: A cohort study in New Zealand (LiLACS NZ).	1				1	1
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