

Te Hokinga ki te Pā Harakeke

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Oral panel presentation

Tiakina te Pā Harakeke: A Knowledge Exchange Symposium on Māori Childrearing

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E rau rangatira ma tena koutou katoa. He mihi kau ana ki a Taupiri maunga, ki a Waikato iwi, ki a Waikato awa. Ka mihi hoki ki a Kīngi Tūheitia, ki tona whānau me te Kahui Ariki.

E Te Mata Punenga o Te Kotahi, e ngā kaiwhakahaere o tenei huihuinga, tena koutou. Tena koutou tae noa ki a tatou katoa mai i ngā hau e wha kua tae mai ki konei.

He uri tenei o Te Mahurehure o Ngapuhi nui tonu, o Te Atiawa, o ngā moutere o Airangi, o Ingarangi hoki. He honore nui kia tu whakaiti ki mua i a koutou i tenei ata, i te taha o ngā kaikorero nei, e te tungane Danny tena koe, e te whaea Kaa, tena koe. Tena tatou katoa.

It really is an honour and a pleasure to be here at this symposium. I think Te Kotahi Research Institute has done a wonderful job bringing us altogether. And I want to acknowledge all the wonderful speakers we have heard yesterday and today. Each of you has given me so much food for thought, so much to ponder on, to consider in relation to my own experiences of whānau, childhood and childrearing, of te pa harakeke.

Tiakina te pā harakeke is a great research project that I've been lucky to have been involved with as part of the advisory group. I have had the privilege of being in on the early thinking and hearing about the ongoing development of the project. Of seeing all the different parts come to life and come together, the raranga, the kōrero, whakatauki. It has been magic. The kaupapa, Māori childrearing, of tamariki growing up Māori, has been something dear to my heart, it has been a passion for such a long time. I wasn't sure what was wanted when I was asked to be part of this panel. And when I followed this up with Tammy the thought was that I would talk about my own growing up based on a piece called 'Us Kids' that I wrote for a journal of Māori women's writing that Linda and others started back in the 1990s called Te Pua. The piece also ended up in Witi Ihimaera's collection 'Growing up Māori'. The journal 'Te Pua' was started essentially as a way for Māori women who were mainly based

in university as students or as academics to publish what we wanted to write about and what we wanted to read about, what was important to us as Māori women in academia. Thinking about it now Donna, it reminds me of how we used to joke about forming Te Amorangi womens group in the late 70s cos no-one else wanted us as Māori women at university. You might say Te Pua also came into being cos so-called academic journals weren't that interested in what we had to write as Māori academic women.

Te Reo Māori has played a fundamental part in the story of my growing up. And I am still growing up, and when I finally do grow up I want to be like Whaea Pare, and Whaea Kaa, and all the other wonderful whaea and kuia that are such great role models of mana wahine for me. It has also had a key role in my passions relating to Māori childrearing.

Tiakina te pā harakeke involves recognising, it involves confronting, challenging the consequences of colonisation. It is also about coming to terms with the consequences of colonisation and moving on. For many whānau those consequences have included a move that I can best describe as from **te pā harakeke** to **the flaxbush**, a move from being Māori speaking whānau to becoming monolingual English speaking families.

For me an essential dimension of Tiakina te pā harakeke has been our efforts as whānau to leave the flaxbush and return to te pā harakeke.

A significant part of Tiakina te pā harakeke for me has been reconnecting to te reo Māori. It has been about reinstating te reo Māori as the language of intimacy of our whānau, it has been te hokinga mai o te reo Māori hei reo whanaungangatanga mo tō mātou whānau or should I say whāmere. Hera talked yesterday about the importance of mita. Our mokopuna call us karani and koro. We were at my Dad's with our second moko Karauria-Lima, and my stepmum said to Karauria haere ki to koro. My dad spun around and went to Karauria then burst out laughing. Koro is used at home for a young boy. In our mita my Dad is not Koro and has never been Koro to our tamariki. He is karani or karanipa.

Yesterday Leonie spoke about making the 'Te Taonga o Taku Ngakau' documentary for Māori Television with Tere, and that my Dad and I were among the people they interviewed. Being part of the programme was a hugely emotional experience. It was a bit of a surreal experience, it was a watershed experience. There I was as 40 something year old, sitting with my Dad in front of cameras. We were

discussing Māori childrearing practices of the past and the present. We were sharing stories about growing up. We were doing this in te reo Māori, a language that the 5 year old me had never had the opportunity to learn or speak with my Dad, even though my Dad is a native speaker. Even though he is seen as an expert speaker. And I kind of lost it, and we had to stop filming for a bit. Tiakina te pā harakeke in te reo, through te reo, with te reo.

Moana talked about imagining yesterday. Back in the early 80s my husband Richard, well he wasn't my husband then but will have been for 30 years this August. Like many of our generation, our whanaunga, our friends, we were both English-speaking children of native speakers of Māori. We imagined having Māori speaking tamariki. We made a commitment to speak Māori to our tamariki if and when they arrived. And for us Māori speaking mokopuna were going to be the proof of the pudding. If our mokopuna spoke Māori, then we believed we would be able to say we were on our way to regenerating te reo Māori in our whānau.

So when our first tamaiti arrived, as young parents we spoke only Māori to him, often very badly at least at first. And our next two tamariki were born and then a niece came to live with us, and we spoke Māori to them as well. I'm not sure if it was because of our own developing reo or despite our own developing reo, our tamariki are all Māori speakers. Four of our 5 mokopuna are Māori speakers, and we are working on the fifth! He became ours because he is the tuakana, the big brother of our moko – how can he not be ours? However, personally I believe the hardest reo shift for me wasn't about becoming a te reo speaking mama with our tamariki, it isn't about becoming a reo speaking karani with our mokopuna. The biggest shift, the hardest shift has been the one that's happening with me and my Dad, becoming a reo speaking daughter. It has been replacing English with te reo Māori as our language of intimacy - that has taken over 40 years.

Dad and I now talk to each other, email each other in Māori first and foremost. Texting hasn't come into it yet, cos there's no cellphone coverage where he is in the Hokianga. English now tends to come into our conversations either as a result of the limits of my second language capabilities or because we are in the company of non-Māori speakers.

I think its significant that back in 1994 I used the waiata 'Te Taonga o taku ngakau' by Te Manakore Leach to round off that piece in 'Us

Kids'. In Us Kids I described growing up in the 60s as an urban Westie Māori kid along with brothers and cousins in West Auckland. It included kōrero about my experiences, or rather lack of experiences of physical discipline in our family. I have no memory of our dad ever hitting us. I have the odd memory of a spoon across the knuckles when mum was baking and we were trying to sneak our fingers into the mixing bowl. Hitting, bashing, smacking didn't have a place in our home. At times like many Māori urban whānau an auntie, uncle and their tamariki lived with us as well. And I have no memory of any hitting then either. I do know that it was not all perfect and that physical violence did raise its ugly head at times in our wider whānau. But when I was a child as Moana said it should be, when it was known, it was known to be unacceptable, and I remember my dad and some of his sisters grabbing an aunty with a black eye and whisking her off on holiday with us one Christmas. Today it might be called a whānau intervention.

In Us Kids I also wrote about experiences of physical discipline as a kōhanga mum.

My oldest son started kōhanga in 1984. We were young and we moved around a bit – we were a transient kōhanga whānau, and he went to four different kōhanga before he was four. In two of the kōhanga physical discipline raised its ugly head as an issue for our kōhanga whānau.

The justifications given back then for violence against our babies still make me want to cry. I remember one being that the perpetrator was only hitting a tamaiti from her only whānau so what were we other parents worried about, our kids were okay, they weren't being hit. Well our kids weren't okay. They saw the hitting and worse still, some started hitting that tamaiti as well. Our tamariki were becoming abusers as a result of seeing abuse. The issue ended with the adult being removed from our kōhanga, the tamaiti stayed.

In the other kōhanga after a long late night hui where we demanded, we pleaded, we begged, we cried for hitting tamariki as a practice to stop in our kōhanga, it didn't till a father threatened to come in and smack anyone who hit his child – I can still see and hear him, in his words "if you hit any of my kids again I'll come here and fucken smash you". He had grown up with the bash and had no intention for his tamariki to do the same. The irony is that the threat of violence was the tipping point. We have campaigns saying violence is not

okay – but we don't get the same amount of information about how to handle situations non-violently.

In both cases physical discipline was more or less presented as 'the Māori way' and if parents had a problem with it we were probably not Māori enough, or we were too middle-class or too Pakeha or both. These experiences started me on a search, cos pretty much how Ngahuia spoke about her disbelief of so-called Māori views of menstruation, me mihi ki a koe ki to kaha, ki to mana wahine. He tino taonga ā pukapuka. Like Ngahuia, I just couldn't believe what I was hearing – that smacking our kids was normal in te ao Māori.

I asked my Dad whether disciplining kids physically, harshly was 'the Māori way'. He didn't answer my question directly, he answered I guess now I would describe it by way of purakau, by recounting what when tamariki were treated harshly when he was growing up. How tamariki would cross the maunga that bound Waima to whānau from another part of Hokainga, who would come and sort the situation out. Pā harakeke means that while mama and papa are the nearest to the rito, to the child, there are others, grandparents, then out to other whanaunga from other fans in that harakeke who are there to step in and care for the rito. I also looked for tauwiwi observations of childrearing. Ironically, I found that it was the lack of discipline, physical or otherwise that was identified as a Māori problem. Many of you may have heard this before – an 1862 Native Schools official commenting on the Māori problem with physical discipline. And I want to acknowledge Judith Simon whose passion was Native Schools for showing me this one -

And another favourite of mine an observation from 1827 made by a guy called Augustus Earle.

I think I will finish here, with the image of our tupuna matua, our papa of the 1820s in our minds, our tupuna matua showing the tenderest care to his tamaiti. and undoubtedly doing so i roto i te reo Māori.

E hoa mā me mutu au i konei, tēnā tātou katoa.