Chapter 12

Conclusion: Relationships of interdependence—Making the difference together

Mere Berryman

E koekoe te tūi, e ketekete te kākā, e kū kū te kererū.

The tūi squawks, the kākā chatters, the kererū coos.

Korihi ake ngā manu. Tākiri mai te ata. Ka ao, ka ao, ka awatea!
Tihei mauri ora.

The birds call. The day begins and I am alive.

Introduction

This chapter begins by taking a brief look at New Zealand history. It then presents two different Māori whakataukī as metaphors, both to reconnect to the beginning of the book and also to make connections throughout the book as a whole. These metaphors are used to bring the chapters together and to consider how inclusion, a term that is often highly contested and poorly understood (Wearmouth, 2009), might
begin to be better understood and applied when working with Māori children and young people with disabilities, or special education needs, or both, and with their families.

**Considering our colonial past**

As has happened with other indigenous peoples around the globe, competing discourses and practices founded on unequal power relations (Bishop & Glynn, 1999) have continued to pathologise the condition of Māori people in Aotearoa / New Zealand society (Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005). These discourses and practices have continued since the initial impact of colonisation (Consedine & Consedine, 2005; Smith, 1999), generating an education system imposed on Māori by the state; or, as Walker suggests (1990, p. 10), an education system that has contributed to "a structural relationship of Pākehā dominance and Māori subjection". This has been problematic for many Māori, but especially so for Māori students and young people with disabilities, or special education needs, or both, many of whom, together with their whānau, have experienced the impact of being doubly disadvantaged, both within and by the very systems set up to provide them with access and benefits.

In New Zealand's formal education system, principles derived from colonial images have served to guide teachers' actions and explain the basis for those actions. From this pattern of images and principles, educational policies and rules of practice were developed that have required Māori students to, metaphorically, leave their culture at the school gate in order to participate in education (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Richardson, 2003; Macfarlane, 2004). In other words, Māori language, values, beliefs and practices have not been represented and legitimated within Aotearoa / New Zealand's classrooms and schools. This has resulted in the education provided by the state playing a major role in destroying the Māori language, culture and iwi identities, and replacing them with those of the colonisers.

This situation has created the need to construct new metaphorical spaces in which people from indigenous or minority cultural backgrounds can feel safe to bring their own cultural toolkit (Bruner, 1991, 1996) or prior knowledge and experiences to mainstream educational contexts so that they can more effectively relate to, interact with and
learn with and from each other. Accordingly, knowledge and understanding from te ao Māori, including the use of whakatauki, pepeha and metaphors from Māori, have all contributed to the overall theorising and shape of this book.

**Sense-making through the use of metaphors and discourses**

Heshusius (1996) describes the use of metaphor as “a deeply creative act, an act that gives rise to our assumptions about how reality fits together, and how we know” (p. 4). She explains that metaphors are used to “make sense out of reality and construct reality ... people’s lives, their thoughts, actions, and experiences, are generated by metaphorical images, the very vehicle for shaping the content of consciousness” (p. 5).

Within contexts such as these, Parker (1992) highlights the importance of the “system of statements which constructs an object” (p. 5), for these are the discourses that we draw upon to explain and understand our everyday practices. Burr (1995) asserts that a discourse refers to “a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events” (p. 48). Fundamental to discourses is power (Burr, 1995), given that the discourses within which we are positioned, or maintain as real, may see some discourses privileged over others in our development of relationships and interactions with others (Berryman, 2008).

Particularly relevant in the context of a colonial education system is Foucault’s (1972) seminal contention that when the language and metaphors from the majority discourse are able to dominate, then the minority discourse will be understood in deficit terms. Foucault suggests that discourses, rather than being understood as merely linguistic systems or texts, should be understood as discursive practices where power relations are extolled in the sets of rules and conditions that are established between groups and institutions. These power relations become embedded and are explicit in economic and social practices and other patterns of behaviour. Indeed, these assumptions of superiority are both explicit and implicit in the metaphors and discourses of the colonisers, many of which have continued to theorise Māori in deficit terms up to the present day. For example, aspects of Māori culture such as kapa haka, prowess in warfare and, today, prowess in sport were and
still are being used to reinforce the colonial metaphor of ‘savage other’ (Consedine & Consedine, 2005; Hokowhitu, 2001).

In their work, Bishop, Berryman, Powell and Teddy (2005) and Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh and Teddy (2007) have applied the concept of discourse as being the sets of ideas, influenced by historical events, which in turn influence one’s practices and actions, and thus how one relates and interacts with others and then understands and explains those experiences. They have shown that discourses are a major influence on the images and experiences that teachers and Māori students have of each other, and therefore on the relationships and interactions that exist between them. The writers in this book would contend that this is also very true for the Māori students, young people and whānau this book is concerned with.

Whakataukī as metaphor for the future

Accordingly, each chapter in this book has been prefaced by a different whakataukī or whakataukāi as the writers of this book seek to discursively position this book within metaphors that will take us more legitimately into a Māori-focused future that Māori have been able to define. The nothing about us without us discourse that provided a strong theoretical foundation for the disabilities movement (Charlton, 2000), and which has also been taken up by indigenous and other groups, underpins our support of a kaupapa Māori movement towards greater self-determination. The first whakataukī in this chapter, “E koeko te tūī, e ketekete te kākā, e kū kū te kererū”, speaks literally of three different native birds that frequent the Aotearoa / New Zealand landscape. Metaphorically, this whakataukī speaks of diversity. It recognises and values the special attributes that we each maintain: the genealogical and whānau connections, the attributes and the talents that make us who we are and that give us our own voice. As discussed in Chapter 1, it also reminds us that each individual and each whānau are different, and culturally specific information cannot be assumed to apply in every situation, or from one situation to another.

The second whakataukī, “Korihia ake ngā manu. Tākiri mai te ata.

1 According to the teachings of renowned elder and academic Wharehuta Milroy, from Ngā Tūhoe, both whakatauki and whakataukā are adages or metaphorical sayings. However, unlike whakatauki, whakataukāi can be attributed back to their original source.
Ka ao, ka ao, ka awatea! Tihei mauri ora”, again uses the metaphor of birds, but this time to speak literally of the multitude of birds—each contributes to the dawn chorus with its own voice. Metaphorically, it is from this diversity that the richness of the dawn chorus ensues. While each bird is able to determine its own voice, together they work in relationship with all others, and by working interdependently they enhance the combined result—the concept of what we can do together being more powerful than what any one of us can do on our own. It is from contexts such as these that new understanding and learning can emerge; thus, ‘Tihei mauri ora’ (Let new life and wellbeing emerge).

**Relationships of interdependence**

This concept of relational interdependence for wellbeing was first introduced in Chapter 1 of this book with the metaphor 'He kura ngā tangata' (People are precious). In this whakatauki, Mead and Grove (2003) highlight not only the value of people, but also, importantly, the added value that people can contribute to the wellbeing of the group. Likewise, it is important to acknowledge that this book represents the coming together of a group of Māori women who are mothers and nannies and who are also researchers and scholars. Members of this group have all undertaken research in the area of special education and disability, and all want to give back to the whānau and communities in which they have worked. By sharing their experiences and knowledge in this book with other educators and specialists, the intention is that more relational, culturally responsive and authentic pathways may be incorporated and applied in people’s practices. In turn, more Māori children, especially those with special education needs, and their whānau, can be provided with greater opportunities to access more of the benefits that the education system has to offer.

The Treaty of Waitangi mandated this promise to all New Zealanders: equity and social justice without compromise to one’s cultural knowledge and integrity. This is a promise that for many is still to be fulfilled.

**Cultural distinctiveness and understanding**

The centrality of culture in the contemporary world—to living and learning—continues to be very perplexing for many New Zealanders,
Māori and non-Māori alike. While there has been a plethora of research about Māori (Smith, 1999), research-based information by Māori, about Māori and for Māori has been far less common, especially research by Māori about children and young people with special education needs. This is not to say that it does not exist; rather that it has often been marginalised, overpowered and overlooked in favour of the abundance of Western research—research that is usually located offshore and undertaken with other populations and then brought to Aotearoa / New Zealand and applied in interventions to Māori and the general population. Such research is often legitimated in the name of cultural neutrality, and theorised as therefore being able to apply to people of any culture regardless of their whakapapa or genealogy.

In the first chapter, rather than simply accept interventions as capable of being culturally neutral, Jill Bevan-Brown highlights the influential role culture plays in the perception and management of special education needs. This contention is played out again and again throughout the chapters of this book. For too long special education has remained dominated by the culture of the school. Many schools continue to be challenged by the idea of acknowledging the cultural capital that families bring with them to the school setting. Failure to see the cultural knowledge of whānau as a valuable resource for the process of educating children perpetuates schools as dominant white spaces (Milne, 2013; Skrtic, 1991), with policies, approaches and protocols that continue to be informed and legitimated by Western medical models. Although many families and whānau with children who are referred to special education may not be from the dominant group, we find that their own cultural practices and customs are not seen as a source of legitimate knowledge and are often marginalised; family, whānau and parental knowledge is routinely belittled, dismissed or at best marginalised by knowledge from medical experts (Ferguson, 2008).

In Chapter 2 Sonja Macfarlane reinforces the hegemonic policies, systems and practices that continue to privilege Western perspectives over indigenous Māori knowledge, creating a default setting that regularly relegates Māori cultural practices and evidence to the margins, despite its relevance or potential to inform (Tooley, 2000). Sonja highlights the many conventional special education perspectives and policies that continue to be at odds with those held by Māori, and
respectfully suggests a more inclusive pathway for Māori students with special education needs with the whakataukī she has chosen: “Whaia kī te ara tika, whaia te kotahitanga o te wairua, mā te rangimārie me te aroha e paihere” (Pursue unity of spirit, which is bound together by peace and compassion).

From the voices of Māori researchers, special education practitioners and whānau, Sonja identifies the importance of respecting the fact that Māori are able to determine more effective responses to their own issues through the use of evidence that has meaning and relevance for them, and through their understanding and application of Māori knowledge. To support this, she provides a number of models for more effective, Māori-informed practice for Māori.

**Self-determination**

Being able to be more self-determining often requires the more powerful partner to be prepared to relinquish some of their power. This begins by their being able to understand personal agency and share power. In Chapter 3 we learn about inclusion from four kura rumaki, where the metaphor demands a focus on strengths rather than weaknesses. Rather than be distracted by weaknesses, this metaphor, “Waihoa ko ōku whengā, mauria mai ko ōku painga”, urges us to focus on and nurture our strengths. Rather than supporting the medical model that traditionally begins from the position of establishing individual need, whānau in these kura consistently identified the need for holistic and inclusive responses that are culturally located within the whānau, and that are strengths-based. The model that emerged from this research suggests a balanced and holistic approach, with the child embedded in both their whānau and their culture. This chapter explores some of the implications for learning from and engaging with such a model.

In Chapter 4 Huhana Hickey uses the metaphor “whānau haunā” to demonstrate the embedded nature of the child, nested within the nuclear and wider whānau. Not only is the culture of the child important: Huhana reminds us that if self-determination is to be a reality, then we must recognise and emphasise the importance of learning from, by listening to, Māori children, parents and wider whānau—the whānau hauā. The metaphor chosen by Huhana, “He waka eke noa” (A canoe which we are all in with no exception), reminds us that
whānau such as these do not have a choice. The challenge for others working in these contexts is how might whānau haua help them as professionals to position themselves to make a real contribution to the whānau from inside the waka, rather than engaging from outside as an objective professional, and what are the implications of both positions?

Like other writers before her, Huhana presents a number of Māori models, among them tātau tātau, which is offered as a whānau haua model of wellbeing. She links to the need for whānau haua to have greater input at the level of practice as well as policy. Huhana reminds us that if we do not include whānau haua in the setting of policy direction, we will continue to see this group suffer the consequences of marginalisation and invisibility. It seems clear that if self-determination is to be a reality for whānau haua, their inclusion needs to be sought at the local and national levels, and also at international levels through forums such as the United Nations. Again, this theme is maintained consistently throughout the chapters in this book.

In Part II of the book a number of different disability categories are examined, and new themes are considered.

**Mahi tahi—working as one**

The theme of how we can work together most effectively for whānau provides the next important theme to emerge from this book. Mahi tahi is the act of collaborating, working together as one towards the same objective or common purpose. As a metaphor, mahi tahi requires true power sharing, engendering a powerful relationship of solidarity that is known to sustain itself well after the goal has been fulfilled or the project has been completed.

In Chapter 5 Kirsten Smiler reports on her doctoral study (Smiler, 2014), which examined the experiences of whānau with deaf children. Her whakataukī, “Kua takoto te mānuka” (The leaves of the mānuka tree have been laid), extends from the key metaphors she used in her doctorate to provide a Māori way of conceptualising and framing not only the experience of deafness but also a system of supports for Māori deaf children and their whānau. She discusses how these experiences contribute to whānau constructions of the meaning of deafness, and explores whether the current system design and delivery of early intervention supports need to be adapted to be more effective for Māori.
Kirsten argues that professionals who provide Māori whānau with specialist forms of support must allow whānau decision making and ongoing evaluation of the intervention. The coming together of whānau and professionals in ways that exemplify mahi tahi does not happen in a vacuum. True power sharing is built on relationships of interdependence; it respects the whakapapa and cultural toolkit that everyone brings to the table, and the rights of personal agency and self-determination that contexts such as these can promote.

Chapter 6, by Jill Bevan-Brown and Tai Walker, begins by looking at the prevalence of blindness and vision impairment among Māori in pre-European times. The writers then move on to the present time by reporting on the implications of a number of small studies of Māori and vision impairment. The whakatauki in this chapter, “E kore tāku moe e riro i a koe” (My dream cannot be taken by you), refers to a person’s ability to define themselves and their aspirations. This has implications for kāpō Māori as well as the professionals who work with them. Jill and Tai propose a three-step approach that includes taking collective responsibility, ensuring the right attitudinal disposition and providing high-quality services. They conclude with another whakatauki, “He kīno tokomaha ki tae kainga a tā i, tēnā kia tū ki te māhi, ka aha hoki”, which reminds us that “While the task may be a challenging one, working together, as in mahi tahi, has its rewards”.

Whakapapa and whanaungatanga

As previously mentioned, whakapapa, as it connects to one’s genealogy, is important. Undoubtedly the majority of Māori who perceive themselves as Māori and/or who are perceived by others to be Māori do not generally understand themselves to be a single homogeneous group, but rather members of separate tribal groups, each with their own ancestral stories, their own dialect and their own special association with the land (Durie, 1997). The link to the land results from the specific waka or canoe on which key ancestors first travelled to Aotearoa / New Zealand from the Pacific, and from whom all members of particular iwi descend. Therefore, waka and iwi membership, together with explicit links to the land and waterways—to tūrangawaewae and marae—provide the very foundations of a Māori person’s cultural and societal identity. As understood within a Māori world view, the
whakatauki “E kore koe e ngaro, he kākano i ruia mai i Rangiatea” (Do not forget, you are a seed descended from Rangiatea) enables those with Māori blood to trace their whakapapa back to the beginnings of time and to the creation of the universe (Mead, 1997).

Closely aligned to whakapapa is whanaungatanga. When one encounters new people, whakawhanaungatanga—the act of making connections through a ritual of reciprocal introductions called mihimihi—provides a formal opportunity for people to announce their familial connections, and to make connections to other people (both living and dead), and to inanimate objects such as the canoe that brought their ancestors to this country, their mountain, and their waterway. Mead (2003) maintains that making whanaungatanga connections can reach beyond actual familial relationships to include relationships to people who are not kin, but who through shared experiences feel and act as kin. This process of establishing links, making connections and relating to the people one meets by identifying, in culturally appropriate ways, whakapapa links, past heritages, common respect for places and landscape features, and other relationships or points of engagement brings with it connections but also real responsibilities and commitments.

For many Māori, knowing who you are, where you come from and what your whakapapa is, is the important, most respectful, first step. Connections are seldom made about who one is in terms of wellbeing, work or title until whanaungatanga connections have been properly established. Therefore, anyone perceived as attempting to define these things about you before they have attempted to get to know you can be perceived as rude or even insulting. Relationships of trust and respect are most useful when they are able to be defined and determined by the individual parties themselves, when they extend both ways—between Māori and the groups seeking to engage with Māori—and when they are reciprocal.

For too long, in many Western models relationships are devalued as getting in the way of the professional response. At best they are overlooked, sometimes emerging almost by accident out of the work that is done. In Māori models, relationships precede all else. More likely, the most effective work for Māori emerges out of purposeful cultural constructs such as pōwhiri, whanaungatanga and mihimihi, at which
relationships can be clearly prioritised and deliberately established.

In Chapter 7, through a conversation between Huhana Hickey and Jill Bevan-Brown, we are privileged with an insight into disability from the authentic voice of a woman from Ngāti Tahinga. In their chapter the whakataukī provided by the late Fred Kana reminds us to treasure our own uniqueness, no matter what:

Kei tēnā, kei tēnā, kei tēnā anō.
Tōna ake āhua, tōna ake mauri, tōna ake mana.

(Each and every one has their own uniqueness, life essence and presence.)

From Huhana’s generosity of spirit we can all learn, and together we can be more powerful in our work with others.

In Chapter 8, on intellectual disability, Jill Bevan-Brown’s whakataukī, “E kore e hekeheke he kākano rangatira” (I will never be lost for I am the product of chiefs) also links back to the importance of whakapapa and whanaungatanga. Jill considers pre-European and contemporary Māori concepts of intellectual disability in order to better understand the implications for people who work with intellectually disabled Māori and their whānau. While acknowledging that evidence of progress in the area of intellectual disabilities has been considerable, the IHC Submission: Inquiry into the Determinants of Wellbeing for Māori Children (IHC, 2012) shows we still have a long way to go. The findings of Jill’s research, together with findings from the health and education sectors, provide a number of implications for people who work with intellectually disabled Māori. Rather than make assumptions, professionals must understand the importance of the beliefs and dispositions they bring to these contexts, as these will often differ significantly from those of the person or people with whom they seek to engage. Again, whakapapa, cultural identity, parental and whānau involvement and support are paramount, representing huge potential, but only if intellectually disabled Māori and their whānau are provided with culturally located, relational spaces in which they are respectfully invited to and are able to contribute.

If the work is to be culturally responsive, professionals and the people with whom they seek to work would benefit from being prepared to seek relational respect and trust with these people from the
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very outset, then listen and learn from them throughout their work. Culturally responsive contexts must remain ongoing, spiralling and dialogic throughout the entire relationship. Furthermore, to enhance the provision being offered throughout the service, culturally relevant services should also be made available as an entitlement. These themes are consistent throughout this book.

In Chapter 9, on Māori and autism spectrum disorder, Jill again uses a metaphor that connects with whakapapa, although in doing so she is making the point that even though we have a common lineage, as individuals we are likely to be quite diverse. This point is particularly important for people with autism spectrum disorder, who argue that their different ways of processing information should be appreciated as contributing to the richness of human diversity rather than be considered a negative difference. Diversity is also important for Māori who want to be seen for who they are before they are seen for what they are: “Ko Waitaha nga tāngata, ko kawe ke tō ngakau” (All men of the Waitaha tribe, but all differing in inclinations).

Ako

Pere (1982) describes ako as not distinguishing between the roles of teacher and learner. To teach and to learn are seen as reciprocal activities. Metge (1983) describes ako as a “unified cooperation of learner and teacher in a single enterprise” (p. 2). Ako suggests that in traditional times Māori understood the importance of learning in ways that were interactive, and where knowledge was co-constructed between teachers and learners. The writers in this book raise the important relevance of this type of two-way reciprocal pedagogy, both in and through the relationships, in special education settings, to this day.

In Chapter 10 Mere Berryman lays down a whaikōrero that again calls for these relationships to be conducted with respect if we are to learn from, with and for each other:

Ko ōu hikoinga i runga i tōku whariki,
    Ko tōu noho i tōku whare,
E huakina ai ōku tatau ōku matapihi.

Your steps on my mat,
Your respect for my home,
Opens doors and windows.
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Metaphorically, this whakataukī speaks of close connections and respect for our home communities if we wish to develop relationships and be invited in. This has both literal and metaphorical implications. This chapter discusses research that sought to capitalise on the strengths and knowledge available within both teachers and whānau in order to take joint responsibility for students’ learning and behaviour. What emerged was a clear reminder of the strengths to be found in the students themselves, thus demonstrating the potential effectiveness of teachers, students, whānau and community to learn from one another when they work constructively and collaboratively to address their own issues. For these Māori students, their whānau and teachers, it was clear that effective solutions stemmed from activating culturally preferred values and practices for engaging school and community, and from establishing a more equitable sharing of responsibility, expertise and accountability among these groups. While the voices and experiences of these communities defined the problems, they also generated the solutions and were able to provide contexts in which all were able to learn. How power can be maintained so that collaboration and culture can be truly determined by the very communities in which the work is being undertaken is still the greatest implication for both Māori communities and for those who seek to contribute more effectively in these communities.

**Mana tangata**

Mana tangata is the final important theme that has emerged from the chapters of this book. Mana tangata provides a specific reference to a type of authority that is bestowed upon an individual or group by others according to the other’s perception of the individual’s or group’s ability to develop and maintain integrity and/or skills. Sometimes these qualities are acquired through self-motivation, or through commitment and determination, and sometimes these qualities may be handed down. Mana tangata therefore affirms the demonstration of exceptional leadership, qualities and/or special skills. This concept is evident in the whakataukī Jill Bevan-Brown uses in Chapter 11: “Kihai i taka te parapara a ōtū tūpuna: tuku iho ki a koe”, a whakataukī that reminds us you cannot fail to inherit the talents of your ancestors: they must descend to you.
This chapter begins with a brief discussion of terminology, the concept of giftedness, and giftedness for Māori in pre-European times. It then reports, from a Māori perspective, the results of Jill's research into giftedness. The chapter concludes with a discussion about how people who work with gifted Māori children are nurturing “sturdy kauri”. Kauri is a tree that towers above all others in the forest. Metaphorically, kauri are known for their own mana or chiefly status. Today, kauri are valued not only by Māori but by all New Zealanders. Just as we protect our kauri forests for future generations, by investing in these young people we are investing in our future, for they are our future.

**Conclusion**

A Māori world view provides the foundation for this book and may well initiate the reader into greater insights into and understanding of how Māori traditionally acquired and used knowledge for all, and by all. Māori have a culture that is based on inclusion, and a collective, reciprocal approach to learning and teaching that values all students and takes responsibility for finding ways to meet their needs, be they intellectual, physical or spiritual, or their need for being connected and included with whānau. The research reported in this book strongly suggests that Māori communities must be able to contribute if effective solutions for assessing and meeting the needs of their own children, and for finding new solutions, are to be a reality. This means that we must not continue to impose solutions on to Māori communities. Within cultural models of whānau, power sharing and collaboration Māori must be able to largely determine who is invited and how they will participate. These practices are more likely to result in the goals Durie (2004) defined for success in education for Māori: all Māori students are able to live as Māori, are able to participate actively as citizens of the world, and have good levels of health and a high standard of living.

This book suggests that if we want to achieve inclusion then we must be concerned with recognising and respecting the diversity of all. Although some students come to school from very different situations and opportunities, schools need to support them, because these same students make a contribution that, by their very diversity, we can all learn from. Inclusion is about valuing and including all children for what they arrive with and for the families that stand beside them, not just on what
we might aspire to mould them into. Recognising, valuing and being responsive to the child or young person's diversity, whatever that diversity stems from, is paramount, whether their diversity be through disability, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or other. I conclude with a whakatauākī that indicates what this might look like. This whakatauākī was reportedly used by Potatau at his coronation ceremony in Ngāruawāhia in 1858 (Kelly, 1949):

\[
\text{Kotahi te kōhao o te ngira e kuhuna ai} \\
\text{te miro mā,} \\
\text{te miro pango,} \\
\text{te miro whero.}
\]

\[
There \text{ is but one eye of the needle through which passes} \\
the white thread, \\
the black thread, \\
the red thread.
\]

Simultaneously, this whakatauākī endorses cultural diversity and the path of one culture to determine its own destiny within a nation of others. In so doing, it challenges assimilation policies and practices that impose monocultural responses. Instead, the whakatauākī points to the integrity of separate but entwined pathways. The three threads, although entwined, remain separate and distinct. They do not blend, as would different colours of paint. Each strand is seen in relation to the other, representing its own unique authority and integrity, while at the same time all threads are interdependent, working relationally yet together. By recognising and respecting the diversity of Māori we are establishing the basis for a more equitable and collaborative learning and working relationships going forward, where the power to learn can be open to everyone.

References

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