Te Ipu Mahara

The Chanting Memories of an Indigenous People

A thesis

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by

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Aria | Abstract

Whakatōhia te kākano,
Kia puaawai i te ao mārama.
He ipu mahara,
Hei oranga mō ngā uri whakatipu.

Plant the seed,
That it may blossom in the world of light.
A vessel of memory,
For the wellbeing of generations to come.

Te Ipu Mahara – The Chanting Memories of an Indigenous People explores how Māori knowledge systems have been retained, transmitted, and adapted across generations. Guided by kaupapa Māori methodology and framed within Indigenous research paradigms, this thesis examines the resilience of Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) as both a living inheritance and a dynamic practice. While Māori knowledge systems are well established within Indigenous scholarship, this thesis contributes to that body of work by centring Māori voices to articulate how knowledge is retained, transmitted, and renewed through embodied, spiritual, and relational practices.

The study investigates three central pou (pillars): Retention, Transference, and Survival & Innovation. Drawing on a combination of literature review, participant interviews, and oral histories, it identifies whakapapa as the architecture of memory; chanting, waiata (song), and karakia (prayer) as vital mnemonic and spiritual technologies; and wānanga (discussion) as enduring pedagogical spaces. It highlights the role of knowledge holders as kaitiaki mahara, whose responsibilities extend beyond preservation to adaptation and creativity.

Findings demonstrate that Māori knowledge has survived not by remaining static, but through continual renewal. Colonisation disrupted traditional pathways, yet

communities have responded with resilience - composing new oriori (lullaby), embedding mātauranga in classrooms, revitalising te reo Māori, and harnessing digital tools to sustain intergenerational transmission. Knowledge retention is shown to be holistic and embodied, encompassing spiritual, relational, and physical dimensions of learning.

Academically, this research contributes to Indigenous scholarship on memory, pedagogy, and decolonisation. Culturally, it is an offering of utu - returning kōrero and reflections to the communities who sustain them. The metaphor of the ipu (vessel) captures the essence of this work: memory as something carried, chanted, embodied, and continually replenished.

Ultimately, the thesis affirms that the survival of Māori knowledge systems is inseparable from the survival of Māori futures. Each chant, whakapapa, and act of wānanga binds past, present, and future together, ensuring that the wisdom of tūpuna (ancestors) endures as a pathway for the generations to come.

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Mauri ora ki a tātou katoa.

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Karakia tīmatanga | Opening karakia

Te Reo Māori

Whakatuwhera te rangi,

Whakatuwhera te whenua,

Whakatuwhera te ngākau,

Whakatuwhera te hinengaro.

E rere ana ngā kupu a ngā tūpuna,

Hei rākau whakapakari mō ngā uri whakatipu.

Whakarauora, whakamānawa, whakakaha,

Kia ū ki te mana o te mātauranga.

Haumi ē! Hui ē! Tāiki ē!

English

Open the heavens,

Open the land,

Open the heart,

Open the mind.

The words of the ancestors take flight,

As strengthening trees for the generations to come.

Revive, inspire, empower,

That we may hold firm to the authority of knowledge.

United, as one!

Taku pepeha

Ko Taupiri me Puhanga Tohora ngā maunga

Ko Waikato me Tahekeroa ngā awa

Ko Tainui me Ngaotokimatawhaorua ngā waka

Ko Ngāti Mahuta me Ngāti Pakau ngā hapū

Ko Waikato me Ngāpuhi ngā iwi

Ko Te Kooraha, ko Aruka, ko Maketu ko Te Mahuri ngā marae

Nō Tahaaroa me Taheke ahau

Ko Ivan Kana tōku ingoa

E rere ana ngā mihi ki ngā maunga kōrero, ngā awa tuku iho, me ngā kaitiaki o te mātauranga i tū mai rā i mua i ahau. He uri ahau nō Waikato me Ngāpuhi. Nō mātou ngā kōrero kua pupuru, ngā whakaaro kua rangona, me ngā moemoeā hei kawe mā ngā uri whakatipu.

Taku Tūranga ki te Kaupapa nei

“E kore au e ngaro, he kākano i ruia mai i Rangiātea.” - I will never be lost, for I am a seed sown from Rangiātea.

I grew up a Māori boy raised in an urban world shaped by colonisation. My father is fluent in our native tongue, yet he made the decision not to pass the language on to his children. I was the only one of my siblings to attend a kōhanga reo, but the rest of my education took place in mainstream schools where te ao Māori appeared only in fragments - scattered lessons, token acknowledgements, brief performances. I knew I was Māori, but for much of my youth I could not see its value. I disconnected from it, unsure how it fitted into the world I was being taught to succeed in.

For years, that distance felt normal - until I began teaching, and later when I had children of my own, I felt the pull to return, to reclaim what I had been distanced from. In reflecting on my relationship with identity and culture, I realised that one of the most consistent threads throughout my life was karakia.

My father would always begin and end each day with karakia, alternating between English and te reo Māori, though mostly in te reo Māori. As children, we didn’t

understand the words, but we knew their rhythm. The sounds would echo through the house each morning and night until, without even trying, we could recite them by heart. If it wasn't karakia, it was waiata. Though we grew up in an English-speaking, urban environment, sometimes teased for our "towny" ways these two things remained constant in our home: daily karakia and waiata.

In hindsight, these practices shaped how I came to understand memory, language, and learning. We could memorise karakia and songs effortlessly - through repetition, rhythm, and wairua, even when we didn't know the literal meanings. This realisation drew me to this kaupapa. It reminded me that there are many ways of learning and remembering beyond the conventional Western approaches that dominate education today.

My vision for this work is to reach others like myself. Those who wrestle with identity, language, and memory, and to show that pathways back to knowledge already exist within us. For Māori and Indigenous communities, these pathways are embedded in our everyday practices. For non-Indigenous peoples, they offer opportunities to listen, learn, and become better Treaty partners by understanding that knowledge retention is not only intellectual but deeply spiritual and relational.

Chapter 1: Te ara o ngā karakia | The karakia thread

1.1 Introduction

In the writing of this thesis, I have chosen to weave a series of karakia (incantations or prayers) throughout the document. Each one has been composed in te reo Māori, with English renderings provided to make the text accessible to all readers.

To guide the flow of kōrero (discussion), an opening karakia is used at the beginning of the thesis to clear the space and set the tone. Each chapter begins with a karakia to weave the thesis together, ensuring continuity and spiritual grounding throughout the work. At the end of the thesis, they are brought together and shared as one. This structure reflects the living nature of karakia – as vessels of memory, methodology, and creative continuity - and affirms their role in both intellectual and spiritual dimensions of Māori research. The decision to create and include original karakia arises from several interrelated reasons, each rooted in the kaupapa of knowledge retention and transference.

1.2 The role of karakia in this thesis

Karakia as a vessel of memory

Karakia have always been central to Māori ways of remembering. They are rhythmic, poetic forms that rely on repetition, imagery, and cadence – qualities that aid retention and recall (Karetu, 1993). For generations, karakia have preserved genealogies, histories, and tikanga by carrying them in the voices of those who recited them (Marsden, 2003; Royal, 1998). In this sense, karakia are not only prayers or invocations but also intellectual and cultural archives. They are vessels of memory (*ipu mahara*) in themselves, and their survival is a testament to Māori systems of knowledge transmission (Shirres, 1997). By composing new karakia for this thesis, I am both acknowledging this tradition and enacting it, demonstrating how chanting and composition remain living practices of retention and transference.

Karakia as methodology

This thesis is framed within Kaupapa Māori research, which emphasises relationality, integrity, and accountability to whānau, hapū, and iwi (Smith, 2012; Pihama, Cram, & Walker, 2002). Within such a framework, the methods chosen are never neutral; they are cultural acts. Jenny Lee (2009) has shown, through her articulation of pūrākau as methodology, that Māori narrative and oral traditions are themselves valid and rigorous research methods.

Karakia are a natural extension of this. In traditional contexts, karakia open and close spaces, ensure safety, and set the spiritual tone for engagement (Marsden, 2003). Within this thesis, they perform the same function: they open the body of work, guide the reader into each chapter, and close the space once the kōrero is complete. In this way, karakia are not supplementary to the research but part of its methodological structure, protecting the intellectual and spiritual journey of the thesis (Wilson, 2008; Mika, 2017).

Tuaupiki (2011) extends this understanding by describing *waerea* as both a spiritual and epistemological process - a ritual act that prepares the researcher and the space for safe passage between realms. His insights emphasise that karakia are not simply cultural formalities but technologies of engagement, creating balance between the seen and unseen. As Roa (1987) asserts, the knowledge carried through tikanga including the language that expresses it, is genealogical, linking each utterance to the ancestors who first held it and to the atua from whom it originates. When we speak karakia, we do not simply recall knowledge, we activate its whakapapa.

In this sense, the use of karakia throughout *Te Ipu Mahara* represents an embodied research practice, aligning with Murphy's (2011) discussion of karakia as spiritually grounded forms of engagement that shape how Māori think, feel, and relate. Through karakia, the thesis acknowledges that knowledge creation is not merely intellectual but also wairua-based, an act of remembering, invoking, and protecting.

Originality and creative continuity

The karakia used to weave together the chapters in this thesis are my own compositions. While they draw on the imagery and structures of traditional forms, they are not reproductions of existing karakia. This decision was deliberate. There are many beautiful and ancient karakia preserved in collections such as *He tuhi Mareikura* by Pei Te Hurinui Jones (2013), but these often carry specific ritual purposes or sacred contexts that may not align comfortably with a thesis. By creating new karakia, I honour tradition while also continuing it, embodying the fact that karakia were always dynamic, creative, and responsive to the needs of the time. Just as our tūpuna composed oriori for their mokopuna or incantations for journeys, these karakia have been composed for the kaupapa of this research. They represent continuity, innovation, and the right of Māori to generate knowledge in our own forms.

Thematic alignment

Each karakia has been written to align with the kaupapa of the chapter it introduces. For example, the karakia preceding the *Introduction* clears pathways and calls for clarity of thought, while the karakia embedded in the *Key Themes* chapter weaves strands together into a korowai. Read individually, each karakia reflects the kaupapa of its chapter; read collectively, they form a single long chant that echoes the overall journey of *Te Ipu Mahara* – from planting seeds, to opening space, to weaving insights, to releasing the work. This structure allows the thesis itself to become a chant, demonstrating in form what it argues in substance: that memory is retained and transferred through rhythmic, poetic, oral practice.

Enacting the kaupapa of Te Ipu Mahara

The title of this thesis, *Te Ipu Mahara – The Chanting Memories of an Indigenous People*, draws together two kupu that are both deeply rooted in te ao Māori and the wider Polynesian world: ipu and mahara.

The word ipu refers literally to a container, vessel, or bowl. Traditionally, ipu were crafted from wood, gourd, or clay and were used to hold water, food, or precious taonga. Yet their significance was not limited to the practical. As Mead (2013) observes,

containers such as ipu and kete operate as enduring metaphors in Māori epistemology: they symbolise the holding, safekeeping, and transfer of knowledge. To speak of an ipu in this way is to acknowledge it as a vessel not only of sustenance for the body but of sustenance for the mind and spirit (Best, 1924). This metaphor is consistent with Polynesian cognates, such as the Hawaiian ipu - both a container and a musical instrument accompanying chant, and the Tahitian ipu, meaning vessel or calabash (Greenhill, Clark, & Biggs, 2011). Across the region, the ipu is thus a container not just of food or water but of rhythm, sound, and memory.

The kupu *mahara* carries deep layers of meaning that extend beyond a simple notion of thought or memory. In te reo Māori, *mahara* refers to the act of thinking, remembering, or recollecting (Williams, 1975; Moorfield, n.d.). Yet within the whakapapa of creation, *mahara* occupies a sacred position in the genealogy of consciousness. In the cosmological karakia attributed to Te Kohuora o Rongoroa, the unfolding of awareness is described as: *Nā te kune te pupuke, nā te pupuke te hihiri, nā te hihiri te mahara, nā te mahara te hinengaro, nā te hinengaro te manako, ka hua te wānanga* - “from conception comes swelling, from swelling comes energy, from energy comes thought, from thought comes mind, from mind comes desire, and from desire comes knowledge” (Salmond, 2017; *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, n.d.). Here *mahara* represents the spark where spiritual energy (*hihiri*) crystallises into conscious reflection (*hinengaro*). As Shirres (1997) notes, such states of thought and memory are not purely cognitive but spiritual, relational, and embodied.

Together, ipu and mahara frame this thesis as a vessel of memory. The ipu safeguards what is placed within it, while mahara speaks to the active process of remembering and holding knowledge. This union symbolises the purpose of the thesis itself: to gather, protect, and give voice to the chanting memories of Māori and Indigenous peoples. In this sense, the thesis is not simply a written account but an ipu mahara a vessel of living memory carried forward through karakia, waiata, pūrākau, and kōrero tuku iho.

On a personal level, *Te Ipu Mahara* also reflects my own journey. It acknowledges that I stand within a lineage of memory: my tūpuna who composed chants and oriori, my whānau who carried stories forward, and my tamariki who will inherit these words. This

thesis is itself a vessel of knowledge, not just a written document for assessment, but a vessel of living kōrero that can continue to resonate, be remembered, and be retold.

Balancing wairua and hinengaro

Another reason for weaving karakia throughout this work is to ensure balance between wairua and hinengaro. Tuaupiki (2011) notes that waerea act as protective karakia, harmonising the physical and spiritual domains so that both researcher and research space are grounded, safe, and in balance.. This process acknowledges that the pursuit of knowledge in Māori contexts is not purely intellectual, but deeply spiritual. Marsden (2003) makes this point strongly, arguing that Māori knowledge systems never divorce the spiritual from the intellectual. Similarly, Shirres (1997) highlights that thought and memory are always bound to wairua and relationship. Pohatu (2003) also affirms that *wairua* is a vital dimension of Māori thought and culture. Karakia restore that balance. They remind the reader and the writer alike that knowledge is not only cognitive but spiritual, relational, and embodied, thereby protecting the *mana* of the kaupapa and upholding the dignity of those whose voices and insights are represented in this thesis.

A gift for the future

Finally, the karakia woven throughout this work are offered as a taonga for the future. They were composed with the hope that they may be useful beyond this thesis – whether as recitations in wānanga, inspirations for teaching, or chants that live in the memories of *whānau*. Mead (2013) notes that knowledge itself can be understood as a form of *koha*, an offering that binds people together in reciprocity. Royal (2005) similarly describes Mātauranga Māori as living knowledge, always gifted forward rather than held still. According to Archibald (2008), Indigenous storywork must always be composed with future generations in mind, carrying memory across time. Durie (1998, 2001) adds that intergenerational responsibilities are central to Māori frameworks of wellbeing and identity. In this light, the karakia created here enact the cycle of retention and transference: born from this research, but gifted back to the wider community as koha.

The process of composition

Composing the karakia has been as much a personal journey as it has been an academic exercise. In the quiet spaces of writing, I listened for echoes of the chants of my tupuna, oriori composed for mokopuna, mōteatea lamenting the past, karakia calling for protection or light. These forms are not only poetic but repositories of memory. As Ngata and Jones (2004) show in *Ngā Mōteatea*, waiata and chants preserve whakapapa, histories, and tikanga through rhythm and cadence. McRae and Jacob (2011) likewise describe them as "living memory houses" that carry ancestral knowledge forward. Such rhythms remain within us, sustained in our reo, our whakapapa, and our breath. My task was not to invent something entirely new, but to attune myself to these patterns and let them guide the flow of language.

The imagery of the karakia - the vessel (ipu), the seed, the cloak (korowai), the canoe (waka), and the weaving of strands are not random but central markers of Māori epistemology. Marsden (2003) emphasises that such metaphors are intrinsic to Māori thought, while Mead (2013) and Royal (2005) note that ipu and kete are often used to symbolise the containment and transmission of knowledge. These images also emerge from my own life: from raising tamariki and composing oriori for them, from standing around the marae and hearing the chants of kaumātua, and from teaching in lecture theatres where students realise that Mātauranga Māori belongs at the centre, not the margins.

In composing the karakia woven throughout this work, I also sought to find balance between te reo Māori and English. The Māori versions stand on their own as rhythmic and poetic chants, while the English renderings are not intended as literal translations but as interpretive companions. This reflects my role as a teacher: to privilege Māori ways of knowing while also opening pathways of understanding for readers less familiar with te reo Māori. As Smith (2012) argues, research that is grounded in Kaupapa Māori must remain accountable to both cultural integrity and accessibility. Mika (2017) extends this point, noting that Māori and English worldviews are never fully equivalent, and translation always involves philosophical tension. Indeed, Venuti (2012) reminds us that "translation is never neutral"; it always interprets, guides, and frames. In this

sense, the English versions serve not as the karakia themselves but as guides that allow the reader to walk alongside.

Karakia as personal practice

This process has deepened my appreciation for karakia not only as cultural artefacts, but as daily practice. Marsden (2003) reminds us that karakia are not frozen rituals but lived engagements with the spiritual world, and composing these chants became, in a way, a form of karakia in itself, grounding me, reminding me why this thesis matters, and carrying me through the challenges of writing. When I felt overwhelmed, I would return to the cadence of the lines and find strength in their rhythm. They became part of my own retention of memory: every word carrying a seed of mātauranga, every repetition embedding it more deeply.

As a father, this process has also made me reflect on how knowledge is carried forward. The oriori of our tūpuna were both lullabies and libraries, storing ancestral knowledge in a form that could be sung to children. By writing karakia for this thesis, I have been reminded that research, too, should be an offering to mokopuna. Archibald (2008) describes Indigenous stories as always being composed for future generations, and Smith (2012) affirms that Kaupapa Māori research must remain accountable to those yet to come. These words are therefore not only for examiners or academic readers – they are for my tamariki, my whānau, and the generations to come. If even one of these karakia is remembered and recited in future, then this thesis will have done its job as an *ipu mahara*.

A living tradition

What this process affirms is that karakia are not frozen relics. They are living, adaptable, and responsive to their time. As Ka'ai-Mahuta (2010) has shown in her study of waiata and haka, these oral forms continue to be composed to address new situations and challenges, demonstrating the resilience and adaptability of Māori traditions. By creating new karakia, I am not stepping outside tradition but standing within it – following the example of generations who composed chants for new journeys, new kaupapa, and new horizons. My contribution may be small, but it is a continuation of that living tradition.

The karakia therefore carry multiple functions. They are part of the academic structure of the thesis, framing each chapter. They are part of its methodology, embodying retention and transmission. They are also part of my personal journey, grounding me as a Māori researcher, a father, and teacher. And finally, they are an offering – a koha back to the people and communities that sustain me, and forward to those who will inherit this work.

1.3 The flow of the karakia thread

The karakia included in this thesis follow a natural progression that aligns with the structure of the work:

- Abstract (Aria): planting the seed of knowledge.
- Introduction (Whakatakinga): clearing the pathways and preparing the mind.
- Literature review (Arotake pukapuka): raising up the foundations of thought.
- Methodology (Tikanga rangahau): affirming correct practices and pathways.
- Voices of participants (Ngā kōrero a ngā kaitiaki): listening to the guardians of memory.
- Comparative insights (Ngā tirohanga whakataurite): joining with other Indigenous canoes.
- Key themes & insights (Ngā kaupapa matua): weaving strands into a cloak of understanding.
- Conclusion & reflections (Whakakapinga): releasing the words to the horizons.

Together the karakia form a chant that is both intellectual and spiritual, academic and personal. They are the ipu mahara of this thesis – the chanting memories that hold, protect, and release knowledge. As Marsden (2003) reminds us, weaving together threads of thought and spirituality is central to Māori worldviews, and Royal (1998) argues that such metaphors are not merely symbolic but epistemological, shaping how knowledge is held and transmitted.

In the end, the reasoning behind using these original karakia is simple: because they belong here. They belong in a thesis that is about chanting memories, vessels of

knowledge, and the survival of Indigenous thought. They belong in a work that seeks to honour the voices of knowledge holders and to carry those voices forward. And they belong in a life where research, teaching, and whānau are interwoven.

By weaving karakia throughout this work, the thesis becomes more than words on a page. It becomes a chant – a chant that plants seeds, clears pathways, raises up ancestral voices, weaves insights into cloaks, and finally releases the work back into the world with peace. The karakia are my contribution to the great chant of our people. They are original, yet they are part of a much older rhythm, a rhythm that began long before me, and will continue long after.

Chapter 2: Whakataki | Introduction

2.1 Karakia

Whakatikahia te ara,
Whakawāteahia te rangi.
Kia puare te whakaaro,
Kia rere te kupu,
Hei waiata mō te iwi.

Straighten the path,
Clear the heavens.
Let thought be opened,
Let words take flight,
A chant for the people.

2.2 Introduction

Māori knowledge systems are living, breathing taonga, carried through the voices of our *tūpuna*, embedded in the *whenua*, and sustained through intergenerational practice. This thesis, *Te Ipu Mahara – The Chanting Memories of an Indigenous People*, emerges from a deep commitment to the survival and flourishing of these knowledge systems, particularly the ways in which they are retained and transmitted across generations. It asks not only how Māori have historically safeguarded mātauranga, but also how those practices continue to adapt, endure, and inspire in contemporary contexts.

Mātauranga Māori is not a relic of the past, frozen in time, but a dynamic system of thought, spirituality, and practice (Royal, 1998). It is expressed in pūrākau, in whakapapa, in waiata and mōteatea, in karakia and ritual, and in the lived experiences of whānau, hapū, and iwi. As Marsden (2003) reminds us, Māori ways of knowing do not separate intellect and spirit but hold them as interwoven threads. Colonisation disrupted, suppressed, and at times distorted these systems; yet Māori communities have consistently shown resilience, creativity, and determination in regenerating their intellectual traditions (Smith, 2012). Every act of remembering, whether through oratory

on the *paepae*, chants performed in *kapa haka*, or the revitalisation of *te reo Māori*, is an assertion of *tino rangatiratanga* (Durie, 1998).

2.3 Research aims and questions

This thesis is guided by three central pou:

1. Retention – what strategies, practices, and methods have Māori traditionally used to retain knowledge, and how do these continue to operate in contemporary contexts?
2. Transference – how is knowledge passed intergenerationally, and what role do cultural forms such as chanting, whakapapa, and wānanga play in this transmission?
3. Survival and innovation – how have Māori adapted to the challenges of colonisation, assimilation, and mainstream education, while still nurturing Indigenous pedagogies and frameworks for memory?

From these pou, specific research questions arise:

- What are the central methods by which Māori knowledge has been retained across generations?
- How do chanting, karakia, whakapapa, and oral histories function as tools of knowledge retention and memory?
- In what ways have Māori pedagogical practices evolved in response to colonial disruption and contemporary educational contexts?
- How do knowledge holders today understand their roles as kaitiaki of memory, and what insights do they offer for sustaining mātauranga into the future?

As a researcher, teacher, and *uri* of Waikato and Ngāpuhi, I write from within the communities that I seek to serve. My whakapapa and life experience are interwoven with the kaupapa of this work. This positionality informs the methodological choices of the thesis, which are unapologetically rooted in Kaupapa Māori, privileging relationality, accountability, and cultural integrity (Smith, 2012). By centring Māori voices through

interviews, oral histories, and pedagogical reflection. This thesis affirms the *mana* of knowledge holders and honours their role as kaitiaki of memory.

The methodological approach aligns with what Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) terms "decolonising methodologies," where research is not extractive but reciprocal, ethical, and transformative. Lee (2009) likewise shows how pūrākau including chants and oral narratives, operate as legitimate research methods, affirming oral traditions as vehicles of transference. The wider aim is survival and innovation: as Durie (1998) observes, Māori have continually adapted while maintaining mana motuhake, ensuring that knowledge systems are not only retained but reshaped to serve present and future generations.

2.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised into a series of chapters, each contributing to the wider kaupapa:

- Chapter 1: Karakia thread – Explains the use of karakia throughout the thesis to guide the flow of kōrero.
- Chapter 2: Introduction (Whakataki) – Establishes the purpose, rationale, research questions, and methodological foundations of the thesis.
- Chapter 3: Literature review (Arotake pukapuka) – Explores foundational concepts including Mātauranga Māori, kaupapa Māori, decolonisation, indigenisation, and Māori pedagogies, situating the research within Indigenous and academic scholarship.
- Chapter 4: Methodology (Tikanga rangahau) – Outlines the methodological framework, grounded in Kaupapa Māori principles and Indigenous research paradigms, with a focus on ethics, relationality, and reflexivity.
- Chapter 5: Case studies and oral histories (Ngā kōrero a ngā kaitiaki) – Presents participant kōrero and oral narratives, honouring their *mana* and insights as knowledge holders.

- Chapter 6: Comparative insights (Ngā tirohanga whakataurite) – Brings Māori knowledge retention practices into dialogue with other Indigenous contexts, including reflections drawn from international Indigenous collaborations.
- Chapter 7: Key themes and insights (Ngā kaupapa matua) – Synthesises the voices of participants and the literature to identify recurring themes and strategies of knowledge retention and transmission.
- Chapter 8: Conclusion (Whakakapi) – Draws together the threads of the research, reflecting on its contributions, limitations, and implications for future Māori and Indigenous knowledge work.

This introduction, therefore, sets the stage for a journey that is both academic and personal: one that engages critically with theory, but also speaks from the lived realities of whānau, hapū, and iwi. It is a weaving together of literature, oral tradition, and participant *kōrero*, bound by the conviction that the survival of Indigenous knowledge is inseparable from the survival of Indigenous futures. In retaining and transmitting mātauranga, we not only honour the wisdom of our tūpuna but also carve pathways for our mokopuna to walk with confidence, pride, and clarity.

Chapter 3: Arotake Pukapuka | Literature Review

3.1: Karakia

Whakairia ngā kōrero,
Hei pou, hei tūāpapa.
Ngā kupu o te ao tawhito,
Hei ara mō te ao hou.

Raise up the words,
As posts, as foundations.
The voices of the ancient world,
As pathways for the world to come.

3.2 Introduction

This literature review lays the conceptual foundations for my thesis, *Te Ipu Mahara – The Chanting Memories of an Indigenous People*. The title itself positions memory as both vessel (*ipu*) and retention (*mahara*), foregrounding the ways Māori have historically sustained knowledge through oral traditions, pedagogy, ritual, and relational frameworks. Central to this thesis is the recognition that knowledge is not static information to be stored but a living, relational, and often sacred practice, carried through chants, genealogies, ceremonies, and pedagogies. This review gathers together scholarship on Mātauranga Māori and kaupapa Māori, decolonisation and indigenisation, Māori pedagogies, oral histories, chanting traditions, ritual institutions such as the whare wānanga, and whakapapa. Each body of literature contributes to understanding how Māori have developed and sustained complex systems of retention and transmission, even amid the pressures of colonisation and modernisation. The following paragraphs outline how this chapter is structured.

3.3 Structure of literature review

Mātauranga Māori and Kaupapa Māori

The first section situates two interconnected yet distinct pillars: Mātauranga Māori - the corpus of Māori knowledge systems, and kaupapa Māori - the methodological and political stance that protects, enacts, and mobilises that knowledge. Mātauranga Māori embodies the collective intellectual, spiritual, and experiential traditions developed by Māori through generations of interaction with the environment, ancestors, and the spiritual realm *(Marsden, 2003; Royal, 2009; Mead, 2012; Maxwell, 1998)*. It encompasses the content, form, and relational depth of Māori knowing, a living system of thought that locates knowledge within whakapapa, wairua, and oral expression.

In contrast, kaupapa Māori provides the principles and strategies through which that knowledge is asserted, validated, and defended within contemporary contexts (Smith, 2012; Pihama, 2001; Tuaupiki, 2011). As Smith (2012) reminds us, kaupapa Māori is not merely a methodology, but a transformative movement grounded in tino rangatiratanga, seeking to realign research with Māori aspirations and worldviews. Tuaupiki (2011) further illustrates that spiritual practice and ritual, such as waerea, function as both method and philosophy - maintaining balance and ethical engagement between researcher, participants, and the unseen. By differentiating and connecting these frameworks, the review establishes the epistemological base of this thesis. For a study concerned with knowledge retention and transfer, this distinction is crucial: it illuminates both what is retained, the knowledge itself and how retention is safeguarded, enacted, and made purposeful through culturally grounded practice.

Decolonisation, Indigenisation, and the ethic of restoration

The second section turns to the wider intellectual and political context, outlining how colonisation disrupted Indigenous systems of knowledge and memory, and how Māori scholars and communities have responded through decolonising critique and indigenising practice. Frameworks articulated by Smith (2012), Laenui (2000), and Jackson (1998, 2019) demonstrate that reclaiming knowledge retention practices is inseparable from reclaiming authority over the conditions of learning, teaching, and research. *Smith* (2012) advances decolonisation as a process of reframing research

and power relations through Indigenous control of knowledge production. *Laenui* (2000) extends this by describing decolonisation as a continuum - from rediscovery and recovery to vision and commitment, while *Jackson* (1998, 2019) locates indigenisation within a wider pursuit of constitutional and epistemic sovereignty.

The ethic of restoration, anchored in tikanga, whakapapa, and relational balance, speaks directly to this thesis's focus on memory: to chant, to recite whakapapa, or to engage in ritual pedagogy is not only to recall the past, but to restore right relationships in the present and future.

Māori pedagogies

The review then moves to Māori pedagogies, which provide the teaching frameworks that ensure knowledge is transferred effectively and ethically. Concepts such as ako, whanaungatanga, wairua, and manaakitanga underpin these pedagogies, while formal structures like Te Aho Matua set philosophical and practical guidance for kura kaupapa Māori. By exploring how learning is embedded in ritual, collective action, and identity, the literature shows that retention is not only about content but about belonging, embodiment, and cultural continuity. This resonates with *Te Ipu Mahara*, where chanting and recitation are not simply mnemonic devices but pedagogical practices that cultivate memory in body, spirit, and community. In the second half of this chapter, I include some personal lived experiences to add to the kōrero.

Oral history and chanting

The following sections centre on oral history and chanting as highly developed Māori technologies of memory. Oral histories situate whakapapa and lived experience within performative and purposeful contexts such as the marae, where knowledge is activated through kōrero, waiata, and ritual encounter (Mead, 2012; McLean, 1996). Mōteatea and waiata, in particular, function as embodied archives of cultural, spiritual, and political knowledge, what Maxwell (1998) describes as oral forms that carry and transmit the living memory of iwi. Scholars such as Mead (2012), McLean (1996), Harrison (2007), and Papa (2015) have demonstrated how rhythm, repetition, and ritual ensured that these oral forms remained both reliable and durable across generations.

Building on this foundation, Tuaupiki (2011) highlights how chant and karakia serve not only as vehicles of transmission but as protective and epistemological practices that balance wairua and hinengaro in the act of remembering. Similarly, Murphy (2011) emphasises that the endurance of Māori knowledge is inseparable from the performance of language, that the sound, cadence, and collective participation embodied in karakia are central to how knowledge is carried and transmitted. Together, these traditions epitomise the "chanting memories" at the heart of this thesis, illustrating how Māori retained and transferred knowledge not by writing it down, but by embedding it in sound, body, and collective consciousness.

Karakia, tapu, and the whare wānanga

The whare wānanga and its associated rituals of *karakia* and *tapu* provide another vital context for knowledge retention. Here, learning was framed as a sacred responsibility, where mistakes could carry spiritual rather than academic consequences. Knowledge was treated not as neutral content but as a divine inheritance, entrusted to tohunga and carefully structured through protocols, ritual architecture, and spiritual guardianship. These institutions represent some of the most rigorous Māori approaches to retention—approaches that still shape contemporary practices, even as they are adapted into new educational contexts. In relation to *Te Ipu Mahara*, the whare wānanga demonstrates how memory is sanctified and ritualised, emphasising the ethical and spiritual dimensions of remembering.

Whakapapa

Finally, the literature review explores whakapapa as the structural and mnemonic backbone of Māori epistemology. Whakapapa functions as both genealogy and intellectual framework, enabling memory to be retained with precision and validated across generations. Its cadence and relational structure provided a "living document" that organised knowledge, ensured consistency, and situated individuals within their wider histories and cosmologies. Whakapapa thus encapsulates both the form and the ethic of knowledge retention demanding accuracy, respect, and accountability. For this thesis, whakapapa is the organising principle that binds chanting, oral history,

pedagogy, and ritual into a coherent whole, reinforcing the ipu mahara as a collective vessel of memory.

3.4 Conclusion to the introduction

Taken together, these literatures illuminate the multiple dimensions of Māori knowledge retention and transfer. They reveal a knowledge system that is holistic, embodied, and deeply relational one that treats memory as a sacred responsibility as well as a communal practice. They also reveal the disruptions caused by colonisation and the resilience of Māori strategies of revitalisation and adaptation. By engaging with Mātauranga Māori, kaupapa Māori, decolonisation, pedagogy, oral history, chanting, karakia, whare wānanga, and whakapapa, this review provides a comprehensive foundation for *Te Ipu Mahara*. It frames chanting memories not only as cultural artefacts but as living, adaptive technologies of remembrance, continuity, and transformation. Ultimately, it demonstrates that Māori knowledge retention is not just about preserving the past, but about actively shaping Indigenous futures through the vessel of memory.

3.5 Mātauranga Māori and Kaupapa Māori – distinct, intertwined foundations of Māori knowledge and practice

In the growing field of Indigenous research and education in Aotearoa, two interrelated yet distinct concepts - Mātauranga Māori and Kaupapa Māori stand as critical pillars. Each represents a unique strand of Māori thought and practice. Mātauranga Māori is the body of Māori knowledge itself—holistic, intergenerational, and grounded in whakapapa, tikanga, and the natural world. Kaupapa Māori, on the other hand, is a methodological and political framework that draws on Mātauranga Māori to challenge colonial power structures and assert Māori self-determination in research and education. While their purposes differ, their connection is foundational to Indigenous scholarship and transformation.

This chapter explores what each concept means, the distinctions between them, and how they interact in ways that affirm Māori sovereignty over knowledge, learning, and research.

Mātauranga Māori is more than a collection of ancient wisdom or tribal stories—it is a dynamic, living system of knowledge rooted in whakapapa, place, and spiritual responsibility. As Hirini Moko Mead (2003) and Dan Hikuroa (2017) emphasise, it is both ancient and evolving, encompassing the full spectrum of human experience—cosmology, ethics, ecology, medicine, language, art, and more. Unlike Western paradigms that often separate science, religion, and culture, Mātauranga Māori integrates these domains, guided by values and relationality.

Hikuroa (2017) argues that Mātauranga Māori is not simply cultural or anecdotal knowledge, it is a method of understanding and explaining the world, much like Western science, but framed through a Māori worldview. He offers the example of pūrākau such as the taniwha of the Rangitāiki Plains not as myth to be dismissed, but as sophisticated environmental science communicated through story. In this worldview, values are embedded in knowledge. The land, cosmos, and people are all interwoven, and learning is a sacred process shaped by tapu and wānanga (sacred learning spaces).

Mead (2003) describes this sacredness in traditional whare wānanga, where students were selected carefully and placed into an area by atua and trained under the guidance of tohunga. Knowledge retention and spiritual accountability were central. Mistakes were not academic failings but spiritual transgressions, reinforcing the depth of care and respect embedded in learning.

Today, Mātauranga Māori continues to shape the practices of iwi, hapū, and whānau, including in areas such as environmental management, health, and education. Despite historical suppression, it remains a source of innovation, insight, and identity for Māori.

If Mātauranga Māori is the knowledge, then Kaupapa Māori is the process and purpose by which that knowledge is asserted, protected, and mobilised. Emerging from the struggles of Māori communities in the 1980s and 1990s for tino rangatiratanga (self-determination), Kaupapa Māori is a political and methodological approach that centres Māori voices in education, research, and social development (Smith, 2022).

It challenges the dominance of Western paradigms that have historically excluded or distorted Māori perspectives. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2022) argued, research has often

been a tool of colonisation, extracting information for the benefit of Pākehā institutions while marginalising the people studied. Kaupapa Māori responds by reasserting Māori control over knowledge production. It asks: *Whose knowledge is this? Who benefits? Who decides what counts as truth?*

As a research methodology, Kaupapa Māori is not fixed to any one method. Instead, it is defined by its intent and relational ethics. It prioritises whānau-centred approaches, reciprocity, cultural safety, and accountability to Māori communities (Moewaka Barnes, 2015). The methods used may vary from storytelling to statistical analysis but the underlying purpose and values remain distinctly Māori.

In education, Kaupapa Māori has inspired initiatives such as kura kaupapa Māori and kōhanga Reo educational spaces built by Māori, for Māori, grounded in Māori pedagogy and epistemology. These spaces exemplify what Barbara Harrison and Rahui Papa describe as the integration of cultural authenticity with academic excellence, where waiata, mōteatea, and kapa haka are not extracurricular, but core pedagogical tools.

While deeply interconnected, Mātauranga Māori and Kaupapa Māori are not interchangeable. Understanding their differences is key to applying them appropriately in research and practice.

Aspect	Mātauranga Māori	Kaupapa Māori
Core focus	Knowledge system grounded in Māori worldview	Political and methodological framework for transformation
Orientation	Holistic, spiritual, empirical	Activist, strategic, decolonising
Application	Cosmology, language, ecology, ethics, spiritual life	Research, education, policy, community change
Source of authority	Whakapapa, tikanga, ancestral wisdom	Māori values and community priorities
Relationship to power	Cultural and spiritual authority	Explicit challenge to colonial power structures

(Moewaka Barnes, 2015; Royal, 2012; Hikuroa, 2017)

Mātauranga Māori represents the knowledge itself - what is known and how it is known within te ao Māori. It encompasses the collective intellectual, spiritual, and experiential understandings developed by Māori through generations of living in relationship with the whenua, atua, and one another. As a knowledge system, Mātauranga Māori is inseparable from whakapapa: knowledge is validated not only by evidence but by its genealogical connections, its origins, and the relationships through which it is transmitted. It includes the principles, values, practices, and interpretations that shape Māori ways of perceiving, organising, and engaging with the world. Kaupapa Māori, on the other hand, is the process of reclaiming, applying, and protecting that knowledge within contexts shaped by colonisation and power imbalance. It is the means by which Māori researchers ensure that Mātauranga Māori is not appropriated, misinterpreted, or tokenised, but instead serves Māori needs and aspirations.

The relationship between Mātauranga Māori and Kaupapa Māori is synergistic. Kaupapa Māori draws its legitimacy and ethical grounding from Mātauranga Māori, while also serving as a vehicle to revitalise and apply that knowledge in transformative ways. As Royal (2012) notes, Kaupapa Māori may be seen as a praxis within the broader domain of Mātauranga Māori - one that is explicitly strategic, political, and responsive to the lived conditions of colonisation.

This dynamic plays out in research settings, where Māori scholars use Kaupapa Māori frameworks to navigate the complexities of academic expectations while remaining accountable to their communities. It is also evident in educational initiatives where Mātauranga Māori is taught and experienced not as content to be mastered, but as a living practice shaped by karakia, whakapapa, and collective responsibility.

Importantly, while Kaupapa Māori often centres research and education, Mātauranga Māori can exist outside of those domains - embedded in whānau knowledge, seasonal practices, or spiritual traditions that may never enter institutional spaces. Recognising this helps avoid the temptation to instrumentalise Mātauranga Māori solely for institutional goals.

Understanding the distinction and interplay between Mātauranga Māori and Kaupapa Māori is vital for any researcher, educator, or policymaker committed to Indigenous

self-determination in Aotearoa. Mātauranga Māori provides the depth, richness, and spiritual grounding of Māori knowledge. Kaupapa Māori provides the lens and mechanism through which that knowledge is protected, mobilised, and enacted in contexts of resistance and transformation.

Together, they are not only intellectual tools but declarations of identity and survival. They remind us that knowledge is never neutral - it is always political, relational, and cultural. In embracing both, Māori scholars reclaim the right not only to know, but to define what knowledge is, how it is created, and for whom it serves.

3.6 Decolonisation, indigenisation, and the ethic of restoration

Colonisation is often mistaken as a historical event, yet as Alfred and Corntassel (2005) argue, it is more accurately understood as an ongoing structure of control. It operates not only through explicit domination but also through policies, education systems, and social institutions that undermine Indigenous autonomy while appearing to act in the interests of equity. These subtle mechanisms of control are frequently invisible to those who benefit from them, and sometimes even to those most affected. They are embedded in systems designed without Indigenous leadership or worldview, often under the guise of "support."

This resonates with Illich's (1968) warning in *To Hell with Good Intentions*: that so-called support, without a commitment to listening and sharing power, may reproduce the very inequalities it claims to solve. As a Māori lecturer, I have seen how programmes meant to assist Māori learners often operate under Eurocentric assumptions, limiting their transformative potential.

Decolonisation, then, is not just about reversing colonialism - it is about unsettling the epistemological, cultural, and structural dominance of colonial paradigms. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2022) argues in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, research itself has been a tool of colonisation, used to classify, control, and dehumanise Indigenous peoples. Far from being neutral, the traditional research process has often served colonial interests by reinforcing narratives of Western superiority.

In response, Smith (2022) calls for Indigenous peoples to reclaim the research process through community-driven, culturally grounded methodologies. Decolonisation, in this context, involves a radical shift: from extractive research to relational, ethical, and reciprocal practice rooted in Indigenous worldviews. It demands the right to name, define, and prioritise our own knowledge systems and research agendas.

In Aotearoa, this movement is embodied in Toitū Te Tiriti–aligned narratives and scholarship that reassert Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a living covenant for decolonisation and constitutional transformation (Jackson, 2016; Moewaka Barnes, 2020; Penetito, 2010; Mutu, 2021). These thinkers emphasise that indigenisation cannot occur without honouring Te Tiriti's guarantees of Māori self-determination and partnership. Toitū Te Tiriti advocate Eru Kapa-Kingi (personal communication, 2023) reinforces this position, arguing that "Toitū Te Tiriti" requires institutions to move beyond inclusion toward structural change - where Māori knowledge, governance, and authority shape the system itself. Such approaches align closely with this thesis's ethic of restoration: the reclamation of balance, reciprocity, and right relationship.

The ethic of restoration, anchored in tikanga, whakapapa, and relational balance, speaks directly to the kaupapa of memory. To chant, to recite whakapapa, or to engage in ritual pedagogy is not only to recall the past, but to restore right relationships in the present and future.

The five phases of decolonisation

Poka Laenui (2000) offers a useful framework for understanding decolonisation as a cyclical journey made up of five overlapping phases:

1. Rediscovery and recovery: Reconnecting with Indigenous languages, values, and knowledge systems. For many Māori, including myself, this means reclaiming narratives passed down by our tūpuna and rejecting colonial misrepresentations of our history and identity.
2. Mourning: Acknowledging the loss - of land, language, lives, and sovereignty, as a result of colonisation. This phase honours our ancestors and the resilience of those who resisted.

3. Dreaming: Visioning alternatives. Dreaming asks: What might our futures look like when shaped by Māori values and aspirations? What does Māori-led education look like when it is no longer measured against colonial benchmarks?
4. Commitment: Making intentional, strategic decisions to prioritise Indigenous values and systems. In my work, this involves privileging Māori pedagogies over comparative frameworks.
5. Action: Taking practical steps toward transformation, whether through research, education, community activism, or language revitalisation. My research contributes to this phase by centring kaupapa Māori approaches in education.

Crucially, Laenui emphasises that this process is not linear but circular, echoing Wilson's (2008) Indigenous research paradigm, which foregrounds relationality and circularity in both thinking and action.

The academic research process itself is deeply influenced by colonial norms - linear logic, objectivity, hierarchy, and impersonal language. These conventions can marginalise Indigenous approaches that prioritise relationships, story, spirituality, and collective experience. Wilson (2008) argues that research in Indigenous paradigms is not just something we *do*; it is something we *are* - a way of being in relationship with people, ideas, land, and ancestors.

I have often questioned why research must conform to rigid Western formats. Why must we use terms like "ontology" and "epistemology" when te ao Māori offers conceptual frameworks that more accurately reflect our reality? My adoption of Kaupapa Māori methodologies, storytelling, and relational ethics is a deliberate act of decolonisation within a system still dominated by colonial assumptions.

While decolonisation focuses on critique and dismantling, recent scholarship has called for a shift toward *Indigenisation*, the active re-centring of Indigenous values, processes, and leadership within institutional spaces. Hoskins and Jones (2022) propose that indigenisation should not be seen as the "inclusion" of Indigenous knowledge within pre-existing colonial structures, but as a transformational

reorientation guided by Māori values like whanaungatanga (relationships), manaakitanga (care), and rangatiratanga (authority).

Indigenisation is not a fixed destination; it is an ongoing process that focuses on the *how* rather than just the *what*. It involves questioning who leads, whose knowledge is prioritised, and how relationships are built and maintained. For education, this means moving beyond tokenistic gestures toward structural changes that place Māori knowledge at the centre of teaching and learning.

Importantly, Hoskins and Jones (2022) suggest that indigenisation is not just beneficial for Māori, it holds the potential to positively transform the experiences of non-Māori educators and students by offering new, relational ways of engaging with knowledge, people, and place. It invites all participants to decentre themselves and engage in learning that is ethical, reciprocal, and place-based.

Moana Jackson (in *Imagining Decolonisation*, 2020) speaks of an *ethic of restoration* grounded in tikanga and whakapapa -a framework not simply of resistance but of reconnection and rebalancing. According to Jackson, tikanga is not a set of rigid rules but "the first law of Aotearoa": a relational system of values designed to uphold collective well-being and restore harmony. It is restorative, not punitive; collective, not individualistic.

This ethic extends the decolonisation journey by rooting it in six interrelated values: the value of place, of tikanga, of community, of balance, of conciliation, and of whakapapa. These values call for restoring kawa (custom) and rebuilding iwi and hapū independence as prerequisites for interdependence.

Stories, what Jackson calls the "archive of belonging"- are central to this ethic. "To be a mokopuna of an iwi or hapū was to know the stories in the land." These stories are not simply historical; they serve as constitutional, political, and spiritual frameworks that affirm responsibilities and guide future generations. Restoration, then, is not just about recovering what was lost,it is about remembering who we are and how we relate to each other, to whenua, and to the cosmos.

Colonisation is not a closed chapter in history; it is an active structure that continues to shape our institutions, identities, and relationships. But Indigenous peoples are not passive recipients of colonial impact - we are thinkers, dreamers, and doers. Through frameworks such as Laenui's five phases of decolonisation, Smith's critique of colonial research, Wilson's Indigenous paradigm, and Jackson's ethic of restoration, we are carving out pathways for recovery, resurgence, and renewal.

Decolonisation offers the necessary critique. Indigenisation offers the tools for transformation. And the ethic of restoration offers a map for relational healing and future-building. My research is one contribution to this broader kaupapa: a commitment to our ancestors and a responsibility to future generations.

3.7 Be wary of good intentions

A powerful theme that emerges in both Māori and global decolonisation discourse is the caution against relying on "good intentions" alone. In *Imagining Decolonisation* (2020), one critique centres on Pākehā participation in Māori spaces, such as te reo Māori classes - and how, despite the best of intentions, these actions can inadvertently reproduce colonial power dynamics. A poignant example from the book describes Māori being denied entry to limited-enrolment reo courses while Pākehā are welcomed and, in some cases, positioned as language experts. The effect is deeply unsettling: some Māori experience shame when hearing fluent Pākehā Reo speakers, while they themselves, as tangata whenua, feel disconnected from their own language -a consequence not of individual failings, but of generations of systemic erasure.

As the authors of *Imagining Decolonisation* (2020) remind us, well-meaning intentions "aren't enough if we don't think very carefully and deeply about the politics and power relations involved." Decolonisation is not a matter of kindness or charity; it is a structural and relational process that requires confronting historical injustices and dismantling entrenched hierarchies.

This critique is echoed in the work of Ivan Illich, whose 1968 address to American volunteers in Latin America, *To Hell with Good Intentions*, remains a searing indictment of Western "aid" and its underlying assumptions. Illich (1968) warns that the desire to help, especially when unexamined, can mask a deeper cultural imperialism. For him,

aid often becomes a vehicle for the imposition of foreign values, disrupting local practices and reinforcing dependency. He calls on would-be helpers to interrogate their own motives: *Why do you want to help? Who asked you to help? What cultural assumptions are embedded in your idea of service?*

Illich's message resonates strongly in Aotearoa. In Māori contexts, Pākehā or international actors seeking to support Māori initiatives whether in education, research, or community development - must be acutely aware of the risks of interference. Without cultural humility and an understanding of *tikanga*, such interventions can fracture relationships, override Indigenous leadership, and impose external frameworks that do not align with Māori aspirations.

This aligns with Kaupapa Māori theory, particularly as articulated by Smith (1999), which asserts the centrality of Māori self-determination and cautions against research and policy that, however well-meaning, ultimately serve non-Māori interests. Illich's critique adds a global dimension to this warning: that the instinct to "do good" is not neutral, but often shaped by histories of privilege, affluence, and colonial entitlement.

The deeper question, then, is not *"How can I help?"* but *"Whose vision is being prioritised - and why?"* This shift in framing is essential. Rather than focusing on how outsiders can assist Māori, the emphasis must be on how Māori can lead, define, and direct their own futures, with others learning to listen, support when invited, and - most importantly - step back when necessary.

3.8 Māori pedagogies

While this thesis centers on the retention of knowledge, it is important to briefly acknowledge the close relationship between retention and pedagogies, the teaching practices through which knowledge is shared and sustained. Pedagogies in Māori contexts are deeply interconnected with memory, as they involve methods such as oral recitation, ritual, and communal learning that actively support the embedding and preservation of knowledge. Exploring these teaching practices provides essential context for understanding how knowledge retention operates within Indigenous frameworks.

Foundations of Māori pedagogy

The term 'pedagogy', with its roots in Greek, French, and English, as defined by Oxford Languages, encapsulates the method and practice of teaching, especially within academic or theoretical contexts. Although 'pedagogy' does not originate from Māori tradition, extensive research delves into 'Māori pedagogy', which draws from a rich history of Tikanga Māori, as noted by Pihama et al. (2004). The exploration of Māori pedagogy is propelled by the historical context of colonisation, which led to the marginalisation of Māori culture and language within education systems, necessitating efforts towards decolonisation.

Kaupapa Māori in pedagogy

Understanding the roots of Māori pedagogy provides insights into its fundamental principles. Kaupapa Māori, as illustrated by Smith (2022), forms the cornerstone, representing a conceptualisation of Māori knowledge that underpins Māori pedagogy. Kaupapa Māori permeates various aspects of Māori life, transcending sectoral boundaries imposed by Western philosophies, as emphasised by Pihama et al. (2004). This holistic approach influences contemporary thinking on Māori pedagogy, particularly within the education sector.

Smith (1996) argues there are a set of principles which should underpin the way research involving Māori is thought about, these principles include; Whakapapa, Te Reo, Tikanga Māori, Rangatiratanga and Mana Wahine: Mana Tane. Barnes (n.d.) describes it beginning as a challenge to the dominant culture's views and how knowledge is contructed, and continues as a search for understanding with a Māori worldview.

Ako

'Ako' is a term that appears in most of the literature – both new and old – and is often used to define Māori pedagogy, although it encompasses a broad range of concepts that fall under its umbrella. Concepts such as learning through whanaungatanga, wairua, the whānau unit, whakapapa, whakataukī, kōrero tāwhito, waiata, and karakia. Learning through te whare wānanga where language and culture are key. Ako is a

holistic approach with values, identity and belonging being important education aspects (Nepe, 1991, as cited by Nock & Crombie, 2009, p. 26).

In Pihama et al. (2004), Ako is considered a pre-colonial pedagogy. This is why it plays such a central role in today's world, because it forms a core of our past – one that we can still practice and incorporate today. 'The ability and commitment to look to the past for answers to present (and future) Māori educational developments is perhaps the most critical factor to Māori educational achievement' (Pihama et al., 2004, p. 53).

Te Reo and Tikanga

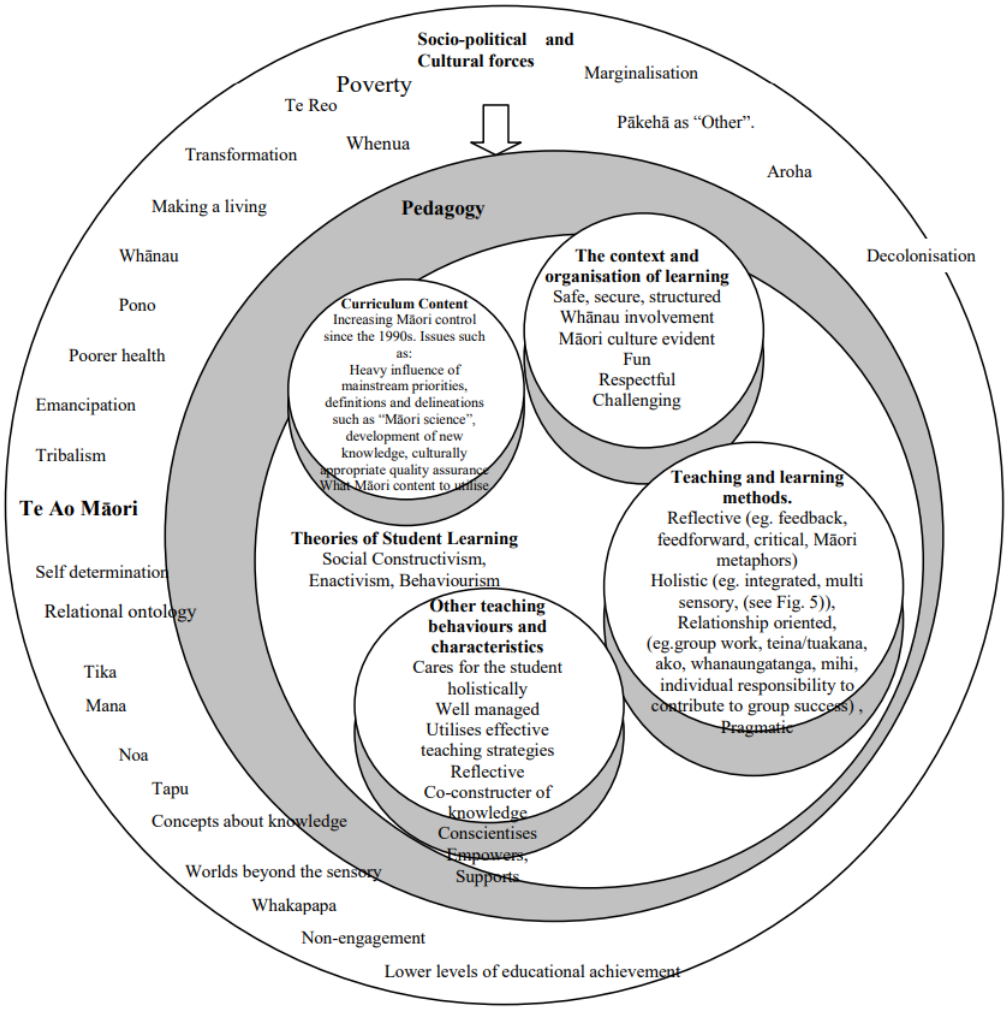
Central to Māori pedagogy is the revitalisation of te reo Māori. Te Reo Māori is not just a subject to be learned, it is the vehicle through which knowledge is transmitted and cultural identity is affirmed. Integrating te reo Māori into all aspects of the curriculum ensures its survival and strengthens students' connection to their heritage (Taura Whiri i Te Reo Māori, n.d.).

Tikanga Māori, encompassing cultural protocols, values, and practices, serves as the bedrock of Māori pedagogy, affirming the significance of Māori language, worldview, and indigenous knowledge systems (Royal, 2000). Through the integration of te reo Māori and traditional cultural practices, Māori pedagogy seeks to revitalise language and culture, promoting cultural pride and self-determination (Ministry of Education, 2011).

Principles and practices of Māori pedagogy

Contemporary frameworks such as those articulated by the Māori Education Commission and academic figures like Graham Hingangaroa Smith contribute additional dimensions to Māori pedagogy (Pihama et al, 2004). These frameworks introduce concepts such as Te Reo me ona tikanga, Tino rangatiratanga, taonga tuku iho, ako Māori, kia piki ake i nga raruraru o te kāinga, whānau, kaupapa, and decolonisation, each reflecting distinct principles and values integral to Māori pedagogy. Kaupapa Māori is woven through each of these principles and is a foundation of Māori pedagogy.

Stucki (2010) extends the understanding of Māori pedagogy beyond conventional teaching methods to incorporate content, context, student learning theories, and socio-political and cultural influences. This expanded view recognises the multifaceted nature of pedagogy, acknowledging its broader implications and contextual nuances.



As shown in the figure above, the model draws on Stucki's (2010) framework alongside insights from research participants.

Macfarlane's frameworks, namely 'The Educultural Wheel' and 'The Hikairo Rationale,' offer structured models aimed at embedding a Māori perspective within educational settings. 'The Educultural Wheel' (Macfarlane, 2004) delineates five core concepts: Whanaungatanga (relationship-building), Rangatiratanga (self-governance), Manaakitanga (cultivating a culture of care), Kotahitanga (fostering unity), and

Pumanawatanga (sustaining vitality). Each concept serves as a cornerstone for fostering a culturally responsive environment within schools.

Meanwhile, the 'Hikairo Rationale,' devised by Macfarlane (1997), addresses strategies for engaging students exhibiting challenging behaviours. Rooted in Durie's (1994) Te Whare Tapa Whā model of holistic wellbeing, this rationale emphasises the comprehensive nature of individual wellness. It comprises seven interrelated domains: 'Huakina mai' (facilitating pathways), 'Ihi' (assertiveness), 'Kotahitanga' (collective unity), 'Awhinatia' (supportive interventions), 'I runga i te manaaki' (nurturing pastoral care), 'Raranga' (integrative processes), and 'Oranga' (a vision for holistic wellbeing). These domains collectively underpin a holistic approach to addressing behavioural challenges while nurturing the overall wellness of students.

Hemara (2006) also discusses the importance of a holistic approach with the curriculum itself becoming a living tapestry woven with Māori knowledge systems. Traditional narratives (waiata), proverbs (whakatauki), and artistic expressions (whakairo) are integrated into learning activities. This holistic approach connects abstract concepts to concrete experiences within a cultural framework, making knowledge acquisition meaningful and relevant (Hemara, 2006).

Moreover, legislative documents like Te Aho Matua which forms part of the Education Act 1989 (s. 155A), serve as foundational frameworks for Māori education, providing guiding principles for Kura Kaupapa Māori. These principles, articulated in Te Ira Tangata, Te Reo, Nga Iwi, Te Ao, Āhuatanga Ako, and Te Tino Uaratanga, emphasise holistic development, bilingual competence, socialisation, cultural identity, teaching practices, and outcome evaluation.

“Te Aho Matua is the philosophical base for Kura Kaupapa Māori education for the teaching, learning and development of tamariki and their whānau. Where as alternative Kura and mainstream schools focus on child centre education, although important, Te Aho Matua Kura Kaupapa ensure the development and growth of the entire whānau…Te Aho Matua provides for six core guiding principles: Te Ira Tangata, Te Reo Māori, Ngā Iwi, Te Ao, Āhuatanga Ako and Te Tino Uaratanga. Each part of Te Aho Matua provides for a special focus on what, from a Māori world view, is absolutely crucial in providing

an environment that best suits the learning, development and growth of tamariki, their whānau and their communities." (Te Aho Matua, 1999)

Despite the richness of principles underlying Māori pedagogy, practical implementation remains a challenge. While the guiding principles offer overarching ideals, translating them into actionable strategies requires careful consideration of contextual factors and innovative approaches. The need for practical guidance is underscored by the acknowledgment within Te Aho Matua of the importance of realising these principles in practice.

Contemporary perspectives and applications

In contemporary educational contexts, Māori pedagogy continues to evolve and adapt to changing needs and circumstances. The principles of Te Aho Matua, the Māori Education Strategy, provide a framework for culturally responsive practice in schools and educational institutions (Ministry of Education, 2011).

Furthermore, initiatives such as Kura Kaupapa Māori, Māori immersion schools, exemplify the application of Māori pedagogy in formal education settings, where language and culture are central to the curriculum and pedagogical practices (Royal, 2000). These schools serve as sites of cultural revitalisation and academic excellence, demonstrating the efficacy of Māori pedagogy in improving educational outcomes for Māori learners.

Walker (2016) highlights the historical disparities between Māori and non-Māori in the education system and the different approaches tried by those that have come before us to better these statistics by reclaiming Māori education. Walker finishes by acknowledging where we are at today with Kaupapa Māori education settings such as kohanga reo, kura kaupapa and wānanga. In Pihama, Cram and Walker's (n.d.) exploration of Kaupapa Māori in an education system they also outline the push by Māori to reassert Kaupapa Māori practices in the education setting. They finish by saying 'Kaupapa Māori education is exemplary in that it is allowing Māori children to be educated in an environment that affirms, validates and nurtures them as Māori while providing them with more than enough tools to survive in a Pākeha dominated society.' (Pihama et al., n.d., p. 41).

Despite the advances in Kaupapa Māori education initiatives, Smith (1997) presents social, economic, political and cultural challenges. The dilemma or the 'thrust and parry' between the state and Māori freedom. One example of the financial challenges is that Māori need to be able to afford financially the upkeep of such schooling systems to be as they sit outside the system. If they were to get support through government funding this comes at a 'cost' as it entails an immediate transition into a more economically dependent existence that is structurally predetermined. And herein lies the struggle amongst our Indigenous communities worldwide – fighting or fitting into a system of colonialisation (Smith, 2022).

Nock & Coombe (2009) extensively explore the pedagogical approach known as communicative language teaching (CLT). They underscore its widespread endorsement by Ministries of Education globally, positioning it as a pivotal component of the shift towards student-centered instructional methodologies. Synthesising diverse scholarly works, Nock & Coombe (2009) assert that CLT facilitates learners' meaningful engagement in communication within the target language, transcending mere linguistic acquisition to encompass broader functional dimensions. They emphasise the imperative for such communication to resonate personally, socially, and culturally for learners.

At the heart of CLT lies its adaptability to diverse educational contexts worldwide. Nock & Coombe (2009) contend that CLT's principles can harmonise effectively with various pedagogical frameworks, including indigenous approaches like Māori pedagogy. Specifically, they highlight the resonance between CLT and the overarching concept of 'Ako' within Māori pedagogical discourse, suggesting a compatibility that spans cultural and contextual boundaries.

3.9 My personal reflections on pedagogies

Before sharing the interviews I conducted based around knowledge retention strategies, I would like to share my own teaching and learning experiences that have shaped not only my pedagogical approach but also my understanding of Indigenous knowledge retention. Across diverse contexts - schooling, tertiary education, and group

fitness, this reflection explores the ways in which Mātauranga Māori has been nurtured, sidelined, and at times revitalised in my learning journey.

By grounding my narrative in these contexts, I aim to highlight the strategies that have contributed to the transmission of Indigenous knowledge, the preservation of cultural identity, and the importance of relational pedagogy.

Learning as knowledge inheritance

Primary, Intermediate, and High School

In my early schooling years, I was fortunate to be immersed in rūmaki (total immersion) classrooms. At the time, I did not fully distinguish between Māori and mainstream pedagogy - it was simply a way of life. Upon reflection, however, it's clear that many of the knowledge retention strategies unique to te ao Māori were at work: repetition through waiata, embodied learning through kapa haka, ritualistic practices like karakia, and learning through relationships. These weren't just activities; they were pedagogical tools designed to imprint cultural knowledge in our bodies, memories, and collective experiences.

Knowledge in this context was not confined to written texts or the walls of the classroom. It lived in our pronunciation of names, our shared stories, our collective actions on class trips and fundraisers - an intergenerational, relational model of learning that echoes traditional Māori education systems.

Transitioning to high school, the dominant pedagogy shifted dramatically. Faced with the binary choice between a 'mainstream' or 'Māori path', I chose the former, not realising then how that decision would reorient my relationship with knowledge. The mainstream system presented a fragmented, individualistic approach to learning focused on content delivery, rather than context or connection. The absence of whakawhanaungatanga, manaakitanga, or recognition of identity contributed to a sense of dislocation. I now understand this shift as a form of knowledge erasure where Indigenous epistemologies are sidelined in favor of efficiency and standardisation.

Tertiary learning: navigating alien spaces

Entering university felt like stepping into a foreign world—a space structured around institutional knowledge systems that often lacked cultural resonance. The lecture theatres, PowerPoint slides, and academic jargon left little space for cultural knowing, let alone Indigenous frameworks.

Yet, in the more interactive or performative papers, I encountered glimpses of relational pedagogy that aligned more with Mātauranga Māori. The human connection, the valuing of oral expression, and the collective nature of learning were evident—highlighting the importance of context in Indigenous knowledge retention. These moments reminded me that knowledge does not exist in isolation; it is co-constructed, shared, embodied, and lived.

Group fitness as whakapapa of teaching

My two-decade journey in group fitness has deeply influenced my teaching style. Though not traditionally considered a site for knowledge retention, I argue that it is precisely that: a space where values of whanaungatanga, kanohi ki te kanohi engagement, and repetition as learning are central.

Instructors who knew names, acknowledged effort, and adapted to their participants reminded me of kaumātua passing down knowledge on the marae - not through formal lecture but through action, presence, and care. These transferable skills, especially relational adaptability, mirror traditional Indigenous teaching methods. The energy shifted from performance to connection, a key pillar in retaining not just information, but cultural meaning.

Teaching: reindigenising the classroom

High school

My early years of teaching in high school were grounded in university-learned templates. However, I quickly realised that prescriptive plans often missed the most important elements of Indigenous pedagogy: connection, relevance, and collective identity.

As I gained experience, I reclaimed Māori pedagogical structures - beginning classes with karakia and whakawhanaungatanga, embedding waiata and kēmu as learning tools. These weren't just cultural 'add-ons' - they were Indigenous strategies for knowledge retention: activating memory, anchoring identity, and affirming group learning.

The shift from teacher-centred to student-centred approaches mirrored the Indigenous idea that knowledge is co-created. I saw greater engagement, stronger classroom cohesion, and deeper learning when Māori values were centered.

Group fitness: practice-based pedagogy

In the fitness studio, I discovered early what many Indigenous knowledge systems have long known: that repetition, relationship, and embodiment are key to learning. Much like te reo Māori learners repeat kupu and waiata to gain fluency, fitness participants repeat movements and cues until muscle memory takes over.

This space also taught me the importance of adaptability—something kaumātua do naturally when sharing knowledge with tamariki of different abilities. Teaching here honed my ability to adjust content in real time, hold space for emotional needs, and uphold the mana of every individual in the room.

Tertiary education: a return to the collective

Teaching in the Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies has been a homecoming. In this environment, Indigenous knowledge is not only acknowledged—it is central. I work alongside colleagues who embody cultural integrity and uphold the collective responsibility to ensure that our knowledge systems are passed on.

Here, I draw heavily on Indigenous pedagogical practices: Whakawhanaungatanga as the foundation, wānanga as a model of knowledge co-creation, ako as reciprocal teaching and learning. These aren't theoretical add-ons—they are strategic methodologies that ensure the survival of Indigenous knowledge.

My classroom becomes a space of *tapu*, where learners are respected as knowledge holders, and their mauri is nurtured through interactive, safe, and meaningful learning

environments. I have introduced initiatives like *Waahi Āwhina* to ensure that cultural and academic support are integrated, not separate.

Through this journey, I have come to see pedagogy not just as a method of teaching, but as a living practice of cultural continuity. Every waiata sung, every karakia shared, every learner acknowledged is a step towards reclaiming and retaining Indigenous knowledge.

Whether in the classroom, the gym, or the lecture theatre, the strategies I use are grounded in the knowledge passed down by my tūpuna. And in doing so, I am reminded that the purpose of teaching is not just to inform, but to transform - our learners, our communities, and ourselves.

3.10 Oral history

Oral history, as a method of preserving and transmitting memory, is deeply embedded in human societies around the world. While often dismissed in the past as “unreliable” or “subjective,” oral traditions have proven to be a vital and sophisticated form of historical record. The book *Remembering, writing oral history* (Green & Hutching, 2004) highlights this complexity, tracing the evolution of oral history as a legitimate method in historical research, from its early roots in nineteenth-century Europe to its modern resurgence during the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Within Aotearoa, this global resurgence parallels long-standing Māori practices of oral transmission - most notably through whakapapa, or genealogical recitation, which remains a powerful tool for cultural memory and identity.

Jules Michelet, the French historian, once described the memories of ordinary people as “living documents,” a description that resonates with how Māori knowledge is passed down from generation to generation (Green & Hutching, 2004, p.1). Although oral history was historically marginalised by Western academic disciplines, often critiqued for being subjective, it has gradually gained legitimacy. Especially as the humanities began to explore the influence of language and culture on human understanding, oral history re-emerged as a method that could capture the nuance, emotion, and lived experience often missing from written records (Green & Hutching, 2004, p.2).

In Aoteroa, oral history has remained less visible in university departments than in some overseas contexts (Green & Hutching, 2004, p.4). However, this does not reflect a lack of value or use - particularly among Māori communities, where oral tradition has always been central. As *Remembering* outlines, oral history contributes uniquely to our understanding of the past, functioning not only as a methodology but also as a cultural practice with its own systems of theory and transmission (Green & Hutching, 2004, p.6). It is within this space that whakapapa emerges - not merely as a list of ancestors, but as an intellectual, spiritual, and mnemonic framework through which Māori engage with their past, validate their identity, and shape their future.

Danny Keenan's chapter *The Past from the Paepae* (p.145–151) draws attention to the oratory traditions heard on the marae, particularly from the paepae during formal speechmaking. These traditions are not only performances but powerful moments of cultural remembering. In this context, Māori oral history is not simply a reflection of the past but an enactment of it - living, fluid, and highly contextual. Kaumātua (elders), as keepers of these narratives, command vast storehouses of tribal knowledge, and their delivery in forms such as whaikōrero (formal speech), tauparapara (chants), and waiata (songs) embodies a collective historical consciousness. The authority of such histories lies not in their compliance with Western notions of objectivity but in their relevance, mana, and intention.

Importantly, Māori oral traditions are deeply relational and purposeful. The significance of a story is closely tied to who is telling it, for what reason, and to whom. This reveals a more dynamic understanding of history not as static fact, but as active, living knowledge that serves communal and political ends. The delivery of history on the marae, for instance, may be shaped deliberately to support tribal claims, assert identity, or reinforce social cohesion. This purposeful fluidity is not a weakness but a strength, allowing oral history to evolve and remain relevant (Keenan, 2004, p.149).

Oral history was the primary medium through which Māori transmitted their cultural, spiritual, and political knowledge. It consisted of stories, chants, songs, speeches, and place-based narratives passed down from generation to generation. This form of transmission was not casual. It was deliberate, disciplined, and performed with accuracy and care.

Anderson (2014) highlights that oral tradition served both philosophical and practical functions. It honoured ancestors and carried forward essential information about rights to land, status, and social roles. Because Māori lived in societies without writing systems prior to European contact, oral history had to be crafted and repeated in ways that ensured longevity and consistency. As Walter Ong observed (as cited in Anderson, 2014), in oral cultures, knowledge must be "said over and over again" to be retained. This necessity cultivated a conservative but rigorous approach to memorisation and recitation (Anderson, 2014, p. 45).

Techniques used to retain oral history included the use of formulaic language, poetic structure, rhythm, repetition, and mnemonic devices. Stories were anchored in specific places and attached to named individuals, creating what Anderson (2014) calls “immutable, tangible markers of tradition” (p. 45). Observers such as Father Servant and William Wade, writing in the 1840s, were impressed by the extraordinary memory of Māori orators, who could recall generations of ancestral details and land claims with remarkable precision (as cited by Anderson, 2014).

Importantly, oral history was validated through widespread agreement across different iwi. Edward Shortland observed that oral accounts from people in distant parts of the country were surprisingly consistent, even without written records. This demonstrated not only the strength of oral memory, but the cultural value placed on accuracy and collective coherence (as cited by Anderson, 2014, pp. 45–46).

3.11 Chanting as a tool for knowledge retention in Māori culture

Traditional Māori knowledge transmission is firmly rooted in oral epistemologies, with chants (*mōteatea*), proverbs (*whakataukī*), genealogies (*whakapapa*), and stories (*pūrākau*) serving as central conduits of information across generations. These oral forms are not merely pedagogical tools but living vessels of historical, spiritual, ecological, and social knowledge. Far from being outdated, these practices continue to play a critical role in Māori education today.

Harrison and Papa (2005) highlight how Māori-language immersion schools like Te Wharekura o Rākaumangamanga prioritise traditional forms of transmission, particularly chants. Chants within this context are not only artistic expressions but are

deeply pedagogical, containing “significant content” such as tribal histories, place names, customary rules, and iwi-specific language (Harrison & Papa, 2005, p. 66). Embedding *mōteatea* in curriculum ensures that students engage with authentic cultural knowledge that reflects their whakapapa and geographical belonging, thereby reinforcing identity and belonging.

In addition to *mōteatea*, kapa haka - a performance-based amalgam of chant, movement, and song, serves as a holistic form of education. It is described as “conditioning the mind, body and spirit,” fostering “children’s holistic development, including their academic achievement” (Harrison & Papa, 2005, p. 67). Through its multisensory, embodied format, kapa haka bridges the realms of intellect, emotion, and spirit, making it a powerful context for memory retention and cultural engagement.

The significance of chanting in Māori society can also be illuminated through early ethnographic studies, albeit critically. For instance, while colonial accounts such as George Pitt-Rivers (1924) must be approached with caution due to their eurocentric and often patronising tone, they nonetheless offer glimpses into pre-colonial practices and their transformation under colonial pressure. Pitt-Rivers observed that Māori artistic traditions—particularly carving and chant—were imbued with deep socio-religious meaning, describing them as “highly charged with the socio-religious values of the community” (Pitt-Rivers, 1924, p. 64). He lamented that many such traditions had been eroded by colonisation and the desacralisation of Māori life, including the removal of *tapu*, which governed much of Māori epistemology.

In parallel, Mead’s (1969) ethnographic work provides a more respectful and robust account of the cultural function of chants. He emphasises the diversity of *mōteatea*, encompassing laments, lullabies, love songs, and incantations, each containing layered symbolism, metaphor, and social commentary. Mead (1969) notes that chants were tools of instruction not only for children but for entire communities, transmitting mythology, ethics, and social rules. In his words, “a great deal of mythological and traditional material could be taught not only to the child for whom the lullaby was composed but also to those who sang it and listened to it” (Mead, 1969, p. 393). Chants thus acted as both pedagogical frameworks and repositories of communal memory.

The poetic structure of *mōteatea* also aided memory. The repetitious rhythm, sound patterns, and linguistic cadence made them both memorable and performable. As Mead (1969) explains, “the sound is Māori,” reinforcing that the structure of the chant itself is a cultural identifier - language, content, and form are interwoven to affirm identity and epistemological authority.

In this way, chanting not only helped retain information but also preserved the very structure of Māori society. Chants reinforced hierarchies, celebrated ancestors, and articulated spiritual cosmologies, serving as a holistic system for transferring knowledge that included intellect, emotion, and spirit.

Still, the damage inflicted by colonisation including language suppression, cultural marginalisation, and the erosion of tapu cannot be overstated. Pitt-Rivers noted this loss with the phrase “the devouring tooth of time,” acknowledging a cultural erosion accelerated by colonial agendas (1924, p. 64). His framing, though problematic, indirectly reveals the systemic pressures that disrupted Māori modes of knowledge transmission.

Despite the devastation of colonisation, Māori have continually demonstrated epistemological resilience. In recent decades, there has been a powerful resurgence of traditional oral practices in contemporary settings. Carving schools have reopened, *reo Māori* revitalisation movements have gained momentum, and kapa haka has flourished as both a cultural and competitive art form. Today, chants are used in schools, community *wānanga*, and digital platforms not only as performance pieces but as educational texts rich in spiritual and historical meaning.

This revitalisation reflects a movement towards Māori self-determination in education and knowledge production. The integration of *mōteatea* into formal curricula and qualifications such as NCEA exemplifies the growing recognition of Indigenous epistemologies as legitimate and essential. As Mead (1969) and Smith (2022) both argue, reclaiming traditional knowledge is not a nostalgic act, it is a radical affirmation of identity and autonomy.

The transmission of waiata in particular showcases both continuity and transformation. McLean (1977) notes that although rural depopulation and urban migration disrupted

traditional transmission pathways, urban groups have worked to revitalise *waiata*, albeit in hybridised forms. He observes that "such groups are currently transforming *waiata* style by the imposition of European norms... The result is a hybrid which may nevertheless foreshadow the appearance of a fully integrated new system" (McLean, 1977, p. 33).

This hybridity need not be seen as cultural loss. Instead, it can be understood as an adaptive response, shaped by historical pressures yet grounded in continuity. Traditionally, waiata were performed within sacred contexts, with strict controls on who could teach and learn them. Today, they are more widely shared, especially through kapa haka and festivals such as Te Matatini, which have become vital spaces for intergenerational teaching and cultural celebration.

McLean (1965) documents the extraordinary memorisation skills of pre-literate Māori societies, where tohunga, experts trained in whare wānanga could memorise hundreds of songs, sometimes after a single hearing (McLean, 1965, p. 299). This ability was not innate but the result of rigorous training, using repetition, rhythm, and ritual. These skills were often socially stratified: certain chants were restricted to those of high status, and misuse could carry spiritual consequences (McLean, 1965, p. 300).

The move towards written and digital media has altered these dynamics. While access to *waiata* has broadened, the depth and ritual precision associated with traditional learning have often diminished. This shift raises important questions about the future of Māori knowledge systems: how can they balance accessibility with cultural integrity?

Despite this, Māori communities have found innovative ways to retain and transmit knowledge. Kapa haka remains a powerful force, combining orality, performance, and communal learning. While the competitive focus sometimes shifts emphasis from ritual precision to aesthetics, it nevertheless sustains language, values, and intergenerational engagement. Digital tools, meanwhile, offer new opportunities for teaching and preserving mōteatea, although they require thoughtful integration with tikanga.

McLean (1965) and Ngata & Ngata (2019) argue that traditional knowledge systems were built on oral precision, cultural responsibility, and social stratification. Today's

contexts demand new approaches. The challenge is not to return to the past, but to honour its principles in modern forms reviving memorisation, restoring *tapu* protocols where appropriate, and re-embedding oral knowledge in educational practice.

A particularly revealing example of misinterpretation is found in Suzanne Youngerman's (1974) *Māori Dancing Since the Eighteenth Century*, which reflects the distortions imposed by colonial observers. European accounts described haka performances as "stamping and shouting," "grimacing," and "lolling out their tongues" terms that reflect misunderstanding and racialised bias. These observers often reduced haka to spectacle, ignoring its purpose, protocol, and *wairua* (spirit). This exemplifies what Hikuroa (2017) critiques: the invalidation of Indigenous knowledge through Eurocentric epistemologies.

Yet, Youngerman (1974) also acknowledges revitalisation movements, particularly the efforts of Sir Apirana Ngata, whose work in preserving Māori performing arts helped lay the foundation for the thriving kapa haka scene we see today. Events like Te Matatini reflect not only cultural survival but innovation demonstrating that chants, songs, and performances are not static relics, but evolving systems of knowledge transmission.

In conclusion, *mōteatea* and other oral forms are not simply cultural artefacts; they are sophisticated systems of knowledge retention, adaptation, and regeneration. From pre-literate memorisation in *whare wānanga* to contemporary kapa haka competitions and digital archives, chanting remains a living, evolving expression of Māori epistemology. It is a method of transmitting not just words, but wairua, tikanga, and mana. These forms of knowledge are deeply relational - rooted in land, genealogy, and community, and they demand a level of engagement that transcends wrote learning or passive reception.

Chanting facilitates retention by embedding knowledge in rhythm, sound, and ritual. The mnemonic power of *mōteatea* has sustained complex genealogies and oral histories across centuries, even amid the disruptive forces of colonisation and modernisation. As researchers like McLean (1965, 1977), Mead (1969), and Harrison and Papa (2005) demonstrate, these practices are not static or nostalgic; they are dynamic and continually recontextualised. While the contexts have changed from

marae to classrooms, from face-to-face learning to digital dissemination - the underlying principles of oral transmission endure.

However, the revitalisation of chanting and related practices must be accompanied by a reawakening of the tapu and kawa that traditionally governed them. Accessibility and inclusion are vital, but they must be balanced with cultural responsibility, particularly when it comes to sacred or restricted knowledge. As Ngata and Ngata (2019) emphasise, knowledge in te ao Māori was never democratised in the Western sense—it was relational, earned, and often protected.

Ultimately, chanting serves not only as a mnemonic device but as a means of cultural regeneration. It reconnects Māori with their histories, landscapes, and ancestors, offering a deeply embodied and affective mode of learning. In doing so, it asserts the legitimacy of Māori ways of knowing and being in the world. As this chapter has shown, the resilience of *mōteatea* and other oral traditions lies not just in their survival, but in their ability to adapt without losing their essence. They remain vital to the retention and revitalisation of Māori knowledge, offering powerful tools for education, identity, and resistance in the face of ongoing colonial legacies.

3.12 Karakia, tapu, and the Whare wānanga

The transmission of Mātauranga Māori - the corpus of traditional and contemporary Māori knowledge has historically been embedded in highly ritualised, sacred institutions known as *whare wānanga*. These were not educational settings in the Western sense, but spiritual and intellectual environments in which knowledge, identity, and cosmology were inextricably interwoven. Within these institutions, the process of learning was governed by tapu, and guided through karakia, embodiment, and strict protocols of oral memorisation. This chapter explores the ways in which whare wānanga served as places of deep learning, and how the ritual and spiritual aspects of their practices played a critical role in knowledge retention.

The whare wānanga functioned as elite institutions in which sacred knowledge mātauranga tapu was passed down with care and discipline. Best (1986) describes them as sanctuaries for ancestral wisdom, accessible only to selected individuals who met criteria of spiritual readiness, intellectual aptitude, and genealogical legitimacy.

Traditional *whare wānanga* functioned as highly specialised institutions of advanced learning, responsible not only for transmitting knowledge but for shaping the intellectual, spiritual, and political leadership of iwi and hapū. Their curriculum was extensive and esoteric, encompassing cosmology (Te Ao Mārama), tribal and cosmic whakapapa, ritual and ceremonial practice (karakia, pure, tohi), histories, performing arts, environmental reading (tohu, matakite, celestial navigation), warfare, political strategy, and spiritual philosophy (Best, 1924; Royal, 1998; Marsden, 2003). Instruction was delivered orally and experientially, grounded in disciplined pedagogies of repetition, recitation, memory training, symbolic practice, and collective performance (Mead, 2003). Knowledge was not treated as a neutral commodity: learning within the whare wānanga was an embodied, relational, and sacred undertaking, requiring spiritual preparation, ethical conduct, and adherence to the tapu protocols that safeguarded both learners and the knowledge itself (Marsden, 2003; Royal, 1998).

The educators within these institutions were tohunga highly trained experts who held not only intellectual authority but spiritual guardianship over the knowledge they transmitted. Best (1986) emphasises that tohunga were expert practitioners and spiritual authorities who mediated the forces of tapu, ensuring the integrity of both the knowledge and the environment in which it was taught. Tohunga were individuals recognised by iwi and hapū for their specialised expertise - whether ritual, healing, carving, celestial knowledge, or esoteric learning and for their ability to access, interpret, and transmit knowledge inherited from the atua (Best, 1924; Marsden, 2003; Royal, 1998). Every aspect of the learning process within the *whare wānanga* was governed by tapu, with strict ethical, spiritual, and behavioural protocols. Knowledge was viewed as a divine inheritance and treated with reverence. Any failure to uphold these protocols such as forgetting a recitation, misapplying ritual, or violating tapu - was not merely an intellectual lapse but a spiritual breach with significant consequences (Best, 1986; Marsden, 2003). As Mead (2003) observes, these transgressions could result in whakamā or even invoke spiritual consequences (Mead, 2003, p. 319). Such frameworks positioned learning not as an individualistic or utilitarian pursuit, but as a sacred responsibility embedded in collective identity.

Central to the process of learning in whare wānanga was the use of karakia - ritual incantations used to invoke divine protection, mark transitions, and sanctify knowledge itself. These prayers were performed at key moments: before and after lessons, at the beginning and end of courses, and during assessments. They were pedagogical in nature, serving as mnemonic devices while also reinforcing the ethical and spiritual dimensions of the learning process (Mead, 2003, pp. 307–314). Each discipline of knowledge had its own associated atua and learners were ritually aligned with these deities through karakia. A student of agriculture, for example, would be dedicated to Rongo and Haumia; one learning weaving would invoke Hine-te-iwaiwa (Mead, 2003, p. 307). This practice signified an entry into a sacred covenant with both knowledge and the spiritual world.

Ritual extended beyond words into the spatial and performative structures of learning. The architecture of the whare wānanga was designed to reflect and reinforce sacred protocols. Important physical elements such as the ahurewa and the whatukura were integral to the pedagogical process. Mead (2003) recounts how, upon completion of their training, students would ceremonially swallow small stones to symbolise the internalisation of what they had learned (p. 308). During final assessments, students stood on whāriki while tohunga recited karakia and laid hands upon them to secure the knowledge within their memory. These rituals reflect a system where learning was inherently multisensory and metaphysical, not simply cognitive.

The system of oral transmission was grounded in whakapapa, which served both as a structural framework and as a mechanism for verifying authenticity. Anderson (2016) notes that whakapapa provided a consistent cadence that facilitated memorisation and narrative coherence (pp. 42–45). Oral histories, when anchored in genealogical and geographical reference points, were considered reliable and authoritative. The credibility of oral tradition, long dismissed by Western scholars, was eventually confirmed by early ethnographers who recognised its internal consistency and historical value (Anderson, 2016, pp. 64–65). Within this framework, memory was not a passive function - it was a social, ethical, and political tool that preserved sovereignty, rights to land, and connections to the divine.

In addition to prior statements, Mātauranga Māori itself is best understood not as a static body of facts, but as a living epistemology that shapes and is shaped by the relationships through which knowledge is generated, protected, and transmitted. In this sense, the practices of the whare wānanga, the role of the tohunga, and the governance of tapu are not simply components within Mātauranga Māori, they are expressions of it. Mead (2003) describes Mātauranga Māori as a “tool for thinking,” a conceptual system that evolves through lived experience, whakapapa, and intergenerational relationships (pp. 305–306). It is therefore a dynamic, relational, and context-dependent way of knowing, grounded in the ethical, spiritual, and communal principles that guide Māori engagement with the world. Marsden (2003) offers a complementary view, describing the "woven universe" in which humans, ancestors, atua, and the natural world are interconnected through relational knowledge. In this worldview, to know something is to be in a sacred relationship with it. Knowledge is not stored for utility but honoured through practice, ritual, and care.

These frameworks have remained relevant even in the face of colonisation. The Tohunga Suppression Act 1907 attempted to dismantle Māori spiritual authority by criminalising traditional healers and spiritual teachers, thereby undermining institutions like whare wānanga. Yet the principles that underpinned those learning spaces have endured. Today, many Māori educational institutions maintain sacred protocols that mirror traditional practices - opening sessions with karakia, maintaining noa (food-free) environments for learning, and closing with rituals that reaffirm collective learning journeys (Mead, 2003, p. 313). These adaptations speak not only to the resilience of Māori knowledge systems but to their adaptability in contemporary contexts.

Contemporary learning environments, however, differ sharply from the communal and embodied learning traditions of pre-colonial Māori society. McLean (1965) documents the way in which traditional knowledge - particularly through song, was taught through immersion in communal life: at hui, during tangihanga, or through continuous proximity to elders (p. 299). These were emotionally resonant spaces where learning was contextual, social, and immediate. Memory was anchored in experience, rather than detached from it. The loss of such spaces, especially due to rural depopulation and the

fracturing of intergenerational contact, has led to a decline in traditional modes of learning and memory (McLean, 1965, p. 303). Urban kapa haka groups have attempted to fill this gap, but even they are shaped by Western performance values and competitive structures that can dilute traditional forms.

This shift has significant implications for how Māori knowledge is retained and transmitted today. Digital technologies and Western pedagogies prioritise accessibility, speed, and individualism - often at odds with traditional Māori values of slow, ritualised, communal learning. McLean and others have pointed to the risk of losing not just content but the deeper methods of cognition and memory embedded in Māori tradition (McLean, 1965, p. 303; Ngata & Ngata, 2019). Yet this need not result in a binary choice between tradition and modernity. Rather, the goal may be to harmonise oral fluency, ritualised learning, and sacred protocols with the tools of the present.

Reframing memory as a cultural and cognitive strength is essential. The fact that *tohunga* could once recite hundreds of chants or deliver lengthy genealogies from memory is not just a reflection of the past, but a benchmark of Indigenous intelligence. Ngata and Ngata (2019) write that “we have much to learn if we are to gain even the smallest of insights into our own traditional ways of thinking and doing” (p. 20). Their observation underscores the urgency of returning not only to the content of Indigenous knowledge, but to its methods, to the modes of embodied learning, oral performance, and ritual sanctity that once defined Māori intellectual life.

The legacy of *whare wānanga* endures in contemporary Māori education, not only in formal learning institutions but in community *wānanga*, kapa haka, research ethics, and even online learning forums. Wherever karakia is spoken, tapu is honoured, and knowledge is treated as a sacred relationship, the spirit of the *whare wānanga* lives on. These traditions are not relics; they are revitalised practices that continue to shape Māori ways of knowing and being.

3.13 Whakapapa as a tool for knowledge retention

Whakapapa occupies a foundational role in Māori epistemology, functioning simultaneously as an intellectual framework, a relational map, and a system of accountability. Rather than operating as a simple genealogical record, whakapapa serves multiple interconnected roles. It is an architectural tool, providing the structural scaffolding through which stories, histories, and teachings are organised and remembered. It is an epistemological device, determining how knowledge is categorised, validated, and connected across generations. It is an ontological framework, locating people, places, and phenomena within a wider network of relationships that extend to atua, whenua, and the cosmos. Whakapapa also functions as a mnemonic system, enabling the retention of large bodies of knowledge through patterned sequencing, repetition, and oral recitation. At the same time, it operates as an ethical guide, shaping responsibilities and obligations based on one's relationships to people, land, and atua. Through these combined functions, whakapapa becomes a powerful mechanism for intergenerational knowledge transmission - embedding narrative, identity, and memory within a system that is precise, relational, and communal.

Within Māori society, whakapapa is instrumental in recalling waka traditions, tribal genealogies, and territorial affiliations. These narratives are not isolated fragments but rather meticulously structured accounts upheld through oratory, ceremonial recitation, and collective participation. The apparent spontaneity of oral tradition belies the high standards of memory and precision cultivated over centuries. As Buck and Agathe Thornton (as cited by Keenan, 2004, p.150) observed, Māori developed exceptionally refined skills in speech and memory, preserving complex genealogical and mythological information entirely through oral transmission, committing these narratives to writing only in relatively recent times.

Thus, whakapapa operates not merely as a genealogical record but as a sophisticated Indigenous epistemological system - a living repository of knowledge and memory. It connects individuals intimately to their ancestors, the land (whenua), and wider community, establishing a dynamic interface where past, present, and future intersect.

Through whakapapa, knowledge is animated as a “living document,” one that breathes life into identity and cultural continuity (Mead, 2003).

In exploring oral history within both Māori and international contexts, it becomes evident that oral traditions are invaluable methodologies for understanding historical processes and cultural continuity. Despite initial marginalisation by Western historiography, oral history has increasingly gained recognition for its ability to capture voices and narratives often excluded from written archives (Anderson, 2014). Within the Māori worldview, oral history is not a mere record-keeping exercise but a vibrant, communal process rooted fundamentally in whakapapa. It is through this genealogical structure that memory is retained, identity affirmed, and the past continuously brought into dialogue with the present (Anderson, 2014).

Whakapapa, therefore, functions as the structural backbone of oral traditions. Genealogy was not a simple record of descent; it was the organising principle through which knowledge was categorised, memorised, and authenticated. Anderson (2014) articulates this clearly, stating, “All Māori and Moriori knowledge about the past was handed down…in the form of oral traditions attached to genealogies, or whakapapa” (p. 40). This underscores whakapapa’s role not only as lineage but as a crucial tool for sorting, validating, and transmitting information with remarkable fidelity.

One of the key ways whakapapa safeguarded knowledge was through its imposition of cadence and formality on oral narratives. By embedding information within genealogical structures, narratives were shaped and sequenced to ensure consistency across generations, thus discouraging improvisation or selective memory (Anderson, 2014, p. 42). This ritualised recitation functioned as a form of internal peer review, protecting oral history from distortion and fragmentation. It guaranteed that individual stories were always contextualised within the wider historical and genealogical framework, preventing any one narrative from overriding collective memory.

Moreover, whakapapa mediated social and political relationships, acting as a foundational element for asserting mana, legitimising land claims, and arranging marriages (Anderson, 2016, pp. 64–65). The critical importance of whakapapa meant that only individuals trained in the art of genealogical arrangement those with rightful

authority to whakapapa-tupuna were permitted to interpret and recite these records (Anderson, 2016, p. 47). This privileged knowledge underscored the tapu nature of whakapapa, reinforcing its sacred status within Māori society.

Importantly, whakapapa could be independently tested and verified, granting it a unique internal logic. A narrative detached from whakapapa lacked the necessary credibility for historical validation (Anderson, 2016, p. 46). This distinction became particularly salient in the nineteenth century when Māori increasingly recorded whakapapa in written form to support land claims and political negotiations. The reliability of these genealogical records stemmed from the long-standing Māori commitment to accuracy and consistency within oral tradition rather than colonial validation (Anderson, 2016).

Even political motivations to emphasise certain lineages did not undermine whakapapa's historical integrity; rather, they revealed its dynamic and strategic nature. Whakapapa served simultaneously as a living archive and a flexible tool, deployed to assert rights and responsibilities amid shifting social and political contexts (Anderson, 2016, pp. 46, 49).

This dynamic extends to the methods of whakapapa transmission. Apirana and Wayne Ngata (2019) explain that oral recitation was the sole means of transmitting genealogies prior to written records, a task reserved for highly trained tohunga. These experts embodied the living archives of tribal knowledge, memorising complex intergenerational genealogies with exactitude and authority. The authors note that Western educational models have since supplanted many of these traditional cognitive practices, outsourcing knowledge retention to digital databases, charts, and genealogy software (Ngata & Ngata, 2019, p. 20).

While such technological tools offer convenience and accessibility, they risk reducing whakapapa to mere information, stripping it of its embodied, relational, and sacred dimensions. Ngata and Ngata lament the resulting loss of the human capacity to harness memory's "incredible potential," highlighting that whakapapa was never simply a list of names but a living narrative situating individuals within the cosmos and community (2019, p. 20). The intellectual, spiritual, and emotional labour required to

learn and recite whakapapa imbued it with profound significance, fostering cognitive discipline and cultural identity that digital tools cannot replicate.

The mental organisation and oral fluency demanded by whakapapa also positioned tohunga as living embodiments of tribal memory and wisdom. Recitation was more than rote learning; it was an intellectual performance requiring deep engagement and mastery (Ngata & Ngata, 2019, p. 21). This oral tradition sustained a mode of knowledge transmission that integrated memory, identity, and spiritual obligation.

However, the shift toward modern genealogical software represents a profound epistemological transformation. As Ngata and Ngata (2019) argue, these externalised technologies, while impressive in their visual representation, often weaken internal cognitive capacities. This shift is not purely cognitive but cultural: the reverence, tapu, and protocols traditionally associated with whakapapa recitation risk being lost when knowledge is detached from embodied oral performance.

In sum, whakapapa remains an essential epistemic tool that anchors Māori knowledge systems. It is more than lineage; it is a sophisticated mnemonic device, a method of knowledge organisation, and a spiritual practice. Whakapapa shapes how histories are told, remembered, and validated, securing cultural continuity across time. Recognising and revitalising these oral traditions, alongside respectful engagement with modern technologies, is critical for sustaining Indigenous memory and identity in a rapidly changing world.

3.14 Wrapping up the literature review

This literature review has explored the many strands that together form the fabric of Māori knowledge retention and transfer. Through the lenses of Mātauranga Māori, Kaupapa Māori, decolonisation and indigenisation, Māori pedagogies, oral history, chanting traditions, ritual learning in whare wānanga, and whakapapa, a complex yet coherent picture emerges: Māori knowledge systems are deeply relational, holistic, and enduring, even in the face of sustained colonial disruption. The review demonstrates that Māori memory is not a passive repository of the past, but an active, embodied process—one that continually reaffirms identity, accountability, and collective survival.

At the centre of this review is the relationship between Mātauranga Māori and Kaupapa Māori. The literature establishes that Mātauranga Māori is the knowledge itself—the cosmologies, genealogies, ethics, and observations that guide Māori life—while kaupapa Māori is the framework through which that knowledge is protected, mobilised, and enacted. Their interdependence provides the foundation for Indigenous research and education in Aotearoa, ensuring that knowledge is not only retained but retained under Māori authority and for Māori purposes. For my thesis, this relationship is vital: retention is never only about what is remembered, but also about whose terms, whose tikanga, and whose benefit guide the remembering.

The discussion of decolonisation, indigenisation, and restoration has further highlighted the political and ethical stakes of knowledge retention. Colonisation is revealed not as an event of the past, but as an ongoing structure that continues to undermine Indigenous autonomy. Yet Māori scholars and communities have developed responses that emphasise critique, reclamation, and transformation. Decolonisation provides the necessary critique of colonial frameworks, indigenisation re-centres Māori values and leadership, and restoration anchors this work in tikanga, whakapapa, and the ethic of balance. This scholarship directly informs *Te Ipu Mahara*, which understands chanting and memory as acts of both remembrance and resistance—mechanisms for restoring disrupted relationships and ensuring cultural continuity across generations.

Māori pedagogies, as the literature shows, are not simply teaching strategies but living practices of cultural survival. Concepts such as ako, whanaungatanga, and manaakitanga emphasise that learning is reciprocal, relational, and ethical. Frameworks like Te Aho Matua and the Educultural Wheel provide philosophical and practical guidance for embedding Māori knowledge at the centre of education, while contemporary examples such as kura kaupapa and kōhanga reo embody these principles in action. For this thesis, such pedagogies illustrate that knowledge retention is inseparable from the contexts and practices through which knowledge is shared. Memory is cultivated through relationships, rituals, and the embedding of learning in everyday life.

The literature on oral history and chanting demonstrates the sophistication of Māori mnemonic systems. Far from being "unreliable" or "mythical," oral traditions are highly structured, deeply purposeful, and remarkably durable. Mōteatea, waiata, and kapa haka operate as embodied archives, embedding complex genealogies, histories, and ethical lessons within rhythm, repetition, and performance. These chanting practices are central to my thesis: they are the *Ipu mahara*, the vessels through which memory is not just preserved but enlivened, carried across generations in ways that engage intellect, spirit, and emotion.

The role of karakia, tapu, and the whare wānanga adds another dimension to understanding Māori retention strategies. Here, learning was sanctified, governed by spiritual protocols, and facilitated by tohunga who held both intellectual and spiritual authority. Knowledge was not abstract content but a sacred inheritance, its transmission regulated by ritual and accountability. Such institutions highlight the spiritual gravity of remembering, reinforcing that retention in te ao Māori was never merely cognitive but also ethical and cosmological.

Finally, whakapapa emerges from the literature as the organising structure that underpins all other domains. More than genealogy, whakapapa is a sophisticated epistemological framework that orders memory, validates knowledge, and binds individuals to ancestors, land, and cosmos. Its cadence and relational architecture ensured both accuracy and accountability, preventing distortion and situating memory within wider collectives. For *te Ipu Mahara*, whakapapa represents the ultimate structure of retention: it is the architecture that holds chanting, pedagogy, ritual, and oral history together, allowing knowledge to be both remembered and re-activated.

Taken together, the literature demonstrates that Māori knowledge retention is multi-layered, resilient, and adaptive. It operates through chant and ritual, pedagogy and whakapapa, critique and restoration. It is at once intellectual and spiritual, collective and personal, ancient and contemporary. Colonisation attempted to fragment and suppress these systems, yet the persistence of mōteatea, the revitalisation of kura kaupapa, the continued authority of whakapapa, and the resurgence of kaupapa Māori research all testify to the strength and adaptability of Māori epistemologies.

This literature review therefore provides the conceptual and historical grounding for my thesis, *Te Ipu Mahara – The Chanting Memories of an Indigenous People*. It positions chanting memories not as cultural artefacts frozen in time but as living technologies of remembrance, innovation, and identity. By tracing the interplay of knowledge systems, pedagogies, rituals, and oral traditions, the review establishes that Māori memory is both vessel and practice: an ipu that holds ancestral knowledge, and a mahara that brings it to life in the present. In doing so, it affirms that the future of Māori knowledge lies not simply in what is retained, but in how it is remembered, transmitted, and reimagined under Māori authority for generations to come.

Chapter 4: Tikanga rangahau | Methodology

4.1 Karakia

Whakatūria ngā tikanga,
Hei poutama mō te hinengaro.
Kia tika, kia pono,
Kia ū ki te mana o te kaupapa.

Establish the practices,
As a stairway for the mind.
With integrity and truth,
Upholding the mana of the kaupapa.

4.2 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework that underpins my research, which is grounded in Indigenous paradigms and guided by Kaupapa Māori principles. Rather than incorporating Indigenous methodologies as supplementary to Western frameworks, my approach privileges Māori ways of knowing, being, and doing as central to the research process. This chapter discusses how these methodologies align with my positionality as a Māori researcher, the ethical commitments they require, and the transformative potential they hold for both research and community.

As a Māori researcher and lecturer, I bring with me lived experiences that span both Indigenous and mainstream worlds. While I have navigated Western education systems, my identity, values, and knowledge systems are deeply rooted in *te ao Māori*. Like Shawn Wilson (2008), who speaks of "walking in two worlds," I too have had to move between Indigenous and mainstream academic spaces. My research initially sat within both Māori and mainstream traditions, but I have since chosen to centre Māori perspectives. This decision reflects my commitment to contributing to the restoration of Indigenous knowledge and practice.

My position as an insider researcher within Māori communities offers unique strengths, such as shared cultural understanding and trust - what Kanuha (2000) describes as the advantage of "insider" status. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) reminds us, however, that insider and outsider roles are never fixed or straightforward; researchers continually move between these positions, negotiating relationships, obligations, and power. From this perspective, insider research requires heightened reflexivity, as assumptions and familiarity can obscure critical insight just as easily as they can enrich it. I therefore approach this research with aroha, humility, and a deep commitment to upholding the mana of those who share their knowledge with me, recognising that reflexivity is not an afterthought but a continuous practice embedded within Kaupapa Māori research.

4.3 Indigenous methodologies and research paradigm

This research is rooted in an Indigenous research paradigm, informed by the works of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, 2012), Jo-ann Archibald (2008), and Shawn Wilson (2008). This paradigm is fundamentally relational, grounded in Indigenous worldviews that see research not as a neutral or extractive process, but as a living relationship involving people, land, ancestors, and knowledge.

Wilson (2008) outlines four interconnected elements that shape Indigenous research paradigms:

- Ontology (Ways of being): Reality is relational, spiritual, and collective. We are intrinsically connected to one another, to the land, and to our ancestors.
- Epistemology (Ways of knowing): Knowledge is held in relationships, transmitted through story, experience, and whakapapa. It is not owned but shared and carried with care.
- Methodology (Ways of doing): Research is carried out through culturally grounded practices such as hui, wānanga, and relationship-building with participants.
- Axiology (Values and ethics): Research must be guided by values such as manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, and tikanga Māori, ensuring it is respectful, reciprocal, and protective of community knowledge.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2022) further offers a powerful framework of 25 Indigenous projects or methodologies that align with Indigenous goals of healing, resistance, and renewal. Several of these resonate deeply with my own research aims and commitments. They are not merely culturally appropriate—they are transformative in intent. In particular, I draw upon:

- Storytelling: Honouring oral traditions and the power of narrative in preserving and transmitting Indigenous knowledge.
- Intervening: Using research as a proactive tool for social change, especially in addressing inequities and historical trauma caused by colonisation.
- Revitalising and regenerating: Restoring Indigenous languages, practices, and identities that have been eroded by colonial systems.
- Connecting: Emphasising the importance of relationships—between people, land, and knowledge systems—as foundational to research.
- Discovering the beauty of our knowledge: Celebrating Indigenous knowledge as profound and beautiful in its own right.

These methodologies mark a deliberate shift away from extractive, colonial approaches to research and toward relational, ethical, and community-centred practices. As Smith (2022) argues, *Decolonizing Methodologies* is both a critique of Western research and a call to reclaim research as a site for Indigenous resurgence.

Grounded in these paradigms, the following outlines how the research design and interview process were structured to give effect to these principles in practice.

4.4 Research design and interview process

This research employs a qualitative, kaupapa Māori design, shaped by relational ethics and the centrality of storytelling within te ao Māori. The primary method of data collection was semi-formal interviews with four Māori knowledge holders who have been involved in intergenerational learning and cultural leadership. The goal was not to extract knowledge, but to engage in whakawhiti kōrero - conversational exchanges rooted in mutual respect, trust, and relationality.

Participants were chosen based on their lived experience, recognised roles within their communities, and engagement with Mātauranga Māori in various forms—whether through whānau, education, spiritual leadership, or cultural transmission. All four participants are known for their contributions to the retention and transmission of Māori knowledge.

Sampling was purposive and relational. Rather than recruiting through anonymous calls or institutional channels, participants were approached kanohi ki te kanohi or via whakawhanaungatanga pathways. These methods honoured tikanga Māori, allowing the research to proceed through trust and shared kaupapa. Interviews were framed not as interrogations but as hui - collaborative spaces where stories, reflections, and insights could be shared in a natural and respectful way. This aligns with Indigenous methodologies that privilege yarning (Archibald, 2008; Smith, 2012), whereby conversation flows organically and is shaped by the rhythm and comfort of the speaker.

While a semi-structured question framework guided each interview, room was made for diversions, stories, and spontaneous reflections. Sessions were flexible in length, ranging from 30 minutes to over an hour. Participants chose the setting—whether at home, on a marae, or in a community space—reinforcing their mana and autonomy.

Karakia often opened and closed kōrero, affirming the spiritual and relational dimensions of the research. Recording was done with full consent, and participants were reminded they could withdraw or revise any part of their kōrero if they wished.

Ethical approval was obtained through the university's research ethics committee. Yet this research also abides by deeper, culturally grounded ethics: manaakitanga, aroha, tapu, and whakaiti. These principles were not abstract obligations - they actively shaped every stage of the research.

Reciprocity (utu) was central. Participants received koha and were informed they would have access to the final thesis, related articles, and the opportunity to contribute to community presentations or wānanga. Following Smith's (2022) kaupapa of connecting and intervening, this research aims to be a contribution, not a consumption.

Analysis was guided by Kaupapa Māori methodology, emphasising relationality, respect, and responsiveness to participant kōrero. While thematic analysis was employed, it was adapted to honour the integrity of participants' voices rather than fragmenting them into decontextualised codes. This aligns with Archibald (2008), Smith (2012), and Wilson (2008), who advocate for approaches that reflect Indigenous ways of making meaning.

Rather than imposing a rigid thematic framework, I engaged in an iterative process of listening, re-listening, and deep reflection with transcripts and recordings. Themes surfaced organically from participant kōrero, guided by Māori cultural intuition and what Graham Hingangaroa Smith might call "issues of significance to Māori." These themes were then grouped into broader pou, which structured Pane 7 of this thesis.

Throughout, I maintained a reflexive research journal to capture interpretations, emotional responses, and cultural cues that shaped my understanding. I also engaged in peer wānanga with trusted Māori colleagues - kanohi kitea - which served as a form of cultural peer review, grounding analysis in both academic and community wisdom.

Participants' words are quoted verbatim wherever possible. This affirms the mana of their kōrero and positions them as the central sources of authority. As Archibald (2008) reminds us, stories hold not only content but rhythm, metaphor, and relational meaning. My role as researcher has been to weave, not dissect.

4.5 Wrapping up methodology

This chapter has outlined the methodological framework underpinning this research - an approach unapologetically Indigenous, relational, and transformative. Centring kaupapa Māori methodologies has meant privileging Māori voices, epistemologies, and ethics at every stage of the research process, from design to analysis to dissemination.

Rather than forcing Māori knowledge systems into Western academic moulds, this research carves out space for Mātauranga Māori to stand on its own terms. Guided by Smith (2012), Wilson (2008), and Archibald (2008), the methodology reflects a commitment to accountability, reflexivity, and service to community.

By embedding kaupapa Māori thematic analysis, reflexive journaling, and storytelling, I have sought to ensure the mana of participants remains intact and that their knowledge contributes meaningfully to whānau, hapū, iwi, and Indigenous futures.

Ultimately, this chapter reflects a broader decolonising commitment: not only in content but in form and intent. The chapters that follow build on this foundation, presenting the voices of knowledge holders and tracing the enduring practices, spaces, and values through which Māori knowledge continues to live, evolve, and flourish.

Chapter 5: Ngā kōrero o ngā kaitiaki mahara | Voices from the knowledge holders

5.1 Karakia

Whakarongo ki Te Reo,
Ko ngā kaitiaki mahara e kōrero ana.
He taonga tuku iho,
He oriori mō ngā uri.

Listen to the voices,
The guardians of memory speak.
Treasures handed down,
Lullabies for descendants.

5.2 Introduction

This chapter opens the ipu of this thesis - bringing forward the voices, insights, and lived experiences of four respected kaitiaki mātauranga: Ahorangi Tom Roa (Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato), Shirley Tuteao (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato), Les Kana (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato), and Naianga Tapiata (Te Arawa, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Awa, Waikato). Each of these participants contributes a distinct perspective to this kaupapa, representing a breadth of intergenerational experience and depth of commitment to Māori knowledge, practice, and identity.

Ahorangi Tom Roa and Shirley Tuteao bring with them decades of experience in the likes of language revitalisation, cultural leadership, and Māori education, while Les Kana grounds the discussion in community-based practice and lived whānau transmission of knowledge. Completing this collective is Naianga Tapiata, who offers the rangatahi voice, a younger generation raised within te ao Māori and immersed in kaupapa Māori initiatives. His kōrero provides an invaluable intergenerational lens, demonstrating how mātauranga continues to evolve, adapt, and find expression in new contexts while remaining anchored in ancestral teachings.

This chapter marks the first sustained presentation of my research findings and serves as a pivotal hinge between the conceptual groundwork laid in earlier chapters and the analytic synthesis that follows. Guided by Kaupapa Māori principles and the methodological commitments outlined previously, the chapter privileges participant voice, relational accountability, and cultural safety. Here, knowledge is treated not as data to be extracted, but as a taonga to be carried, honoured, and returned.

In keeping with the kaupapa of *Te Ipu Mahara – The Chanting Memories of an Indigenous People*, this chapter frames participant kōrero as living technologies of memory - embodied, spiritual, place-based, and intergenerational. The emphasis is on how knowledge moves: how it is cultivated, remembered, and passed forward through wānanga, mōteatea and waiata, whakapapa, karakia and tapu, and the everyday practices of whanaungatanga and manaakitanga. These voices demonstrate that retention is not merely a cognitive act but a relational and ethical process - one that binds people to each other, to whenua, and to atua.

Participants were invited through whakawhanaungatanga pathways for their recognised roles in intergenerational learning and cultural leadership, and for the diversity of iwi, hapū, and generational perspectives they bring. Their kōrero appears in te reo Māori and English, depending on the language they chose to express themselves in. Wherever possible, their original phrasing is retained to preserve the integrity and *wairua* of their expression.

All four participants –Roa, Tuteao, Kana, and Tapiata - gave permission for their names and affiliations to be published in this thesis. Their kōrero is presented with deep gratitude and respect, acknowledging their mana, generosity, and shared commitment to the ongoing life of Mātauranga Māori.

5.3 How this chapter is organised

The chapter is organised around the key themes that emerged during the kōrero, with each theme treated as a pou - a structural post within the wider whare of the thesis. This approach reflects the interpretive logic of thematic analysis, which seeks to identify patterned meaning across participant accounts while remaining grounded in their lived experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Rather than presenting the findings pātai-by-pātai, the thematic structure honours the relational and woven nature of the insights shared, acknowledging that participants did not speak in isolated answers but in interconnected narratives. The only pātai that stands alone as its own pou is the warm-up question, which elicited foundational reflections that shaped the orientation of the subsequent kōrero. This thematic approach allows for comparison across participants while holding space for difference, ensuring the analysis is both coherent and responsive. It also aligns closely with Kaupapa Māori commitments to relationality, whanaungatanga, and coherence: themes are woven rather than ranked, and participant voices are situated within their whakapapa and context rather than standardised or reduced to discrete data points (Smith, 2012; Pihama, 2015). In this way, thematic analysis becomes not only a methodological tool but a relational process consistent with Māori ways of organising and interpreting knowledge.

Across the pou, a consistent pattern emerges:

- Mātauranga Māori as limitless and relational: Knowledge is framed as expansive, inclusive, and inseparable from whakapapa, people, time, and place.
- Wairua and tikanga as foundations of learning: Karakia, tapu, humility, and manaaki are not “add-ons” but conditions for genuine transmission.
- Orality and performance as archives: Mōteatea, waiata, pūrākau, whaikōrero and kapa haka operate as chanting vessels of memory.
- Whare wānanga and everyday spaces as sites of learning: From formal ritual settings to casual kōrero by the fire, learning travels through multiple, intersecting spaces.

- Roles, readiness, and intergenerational strategy: Selection, grooming, and modelling are deliberate, ethical processes that distribute knowledge across people and whānau lines.
- Adaptation and technology: Digital tools are embraced cautiously - as waka, not tumu - useful when steered by tikanga, kaitiakitanga, and collective benefit.

5.4 Weaving in the methodology

Presenting these findings is itself a methodological act. The interviews were conducted kanohi ki te kanohi using a semi-structured approach that prioritised whakawhiti kōrero - reciprocal conversation over interrogation. Karakia opened and closed our hui. Participants chose settings that upheld their mana and comfort, and consent was treated as a continuing relationship rather than a single signature. In textual presentation, I quote participants verbatim where appropriate and avoid over-fragmenting their kōrero into decontextualised codes. Themes are allowed to breathe alongside the words that gave birth to them.

Translation is approached as cultural mediation, not replacement. English summaries aim to support comprehension while acknowledging that some meanings, metaphors, and spiritual resonances are best apprehended in te reo Māori. Where concepts resist tidy equivalence, I have chosen to retain Māori terms and provide succinct guidance through context.

If earlier chapters established that Māori knowledge retention is holistic, ethical, and enacted through praxis, this chapter shows *how* - in the voices of those doing the work. The participants' kōrero confirms the thesis claim that memory is a living vessel (ipu), and that chanting broadly conceived as vocal, embodied, and ritual performance is a persistent and adaptive means by which knowledge travels. Their insights also surface critical tensions that later analysis takes up: balancing openness with the protection of tapu knowledge; navigating institutional expectations while upholding Māori authority; and engaging digital tools without surrendering relational depth, context, and control. Each pou begins with a brief framing of the area of discussion, followed by research findings shared through selected excerpts from participant interviews.

- Commentary is woven around these excerpts to support the participants' voices and highlight the kaupapa carried by the kōrero.
- Responses are presented in the language chosen by each participant - either Te Reo Māori or English. Where Te Reo Māori is used, an English rendering is provided alongside.
- Following the research findings, each pou concludes with further kōrero that connects the insights back to the thesis and explores their relevance to Te Ipu Mahara.
- At the end of this chapter, there is a summary of research findings before beginning the thesis wide discussions that follow in the next chapters.

In the spirit of *utu* and manaakitanga, this chapter is offered back to the participants and their communities as a heke of the *Ipu mahara* they helped to fill. The findings will be shared in accessible formats, and the quotes remain attributable to the anonymised kaitautoko only with their ongoing assent. Where tapu boundaries arise, they are respected; where silence is appropriate, it is kept.

In summary, this chapter positions the voices of the kaitiaki mahara at the centre of the whare. Their chanting memories - sung, spoken, enacted form the living evidence for the thesis' core argument: that Māori knowledge is retained and transferred through relational, spiritual, and performative practices that are as adaptive as they are ancient. What follows are their words, carried with care.

5.5 Warm up question, Ngā mea nui i tō ao – The things that matter most to you

To introduce the four participants, I'm sharing their responses to the warm-up question, which was asked at the start of each interview. This question alone offered some unique insights and serves as a meaningful entry point into their kōrero.

"I tēnei wā, he aha te mea nui ki a koe i roto i tō ao?" "At this time, what is the most important thing to you?"

This seemingly simple prompt offered profound insight into the values, motivations, and worldviews of each participant. Though not a direct question about knowledge retention or transference, their answers revealed the essential foundations upon which such knowledge is built: whānau, reo, whenua, wairua, and aroha.

Their responses reaffirm that Māori knowledge systems do not exist in isolation - they are intimately linked to the people, places, and priorities that give life to mātauranga. The things that matter most are not abstract ideals, but lived realities that sustain the purpose of *Te Ipu Mahara* as both a kaupapa and a vessel.

Professor Tom Roa – Whānau, whenua, and oriori as anchors

> "Kia tere tonu taku whakautu ki a koe ko taku mokopuna. Kei tō mātou whare. Anā mātua a ia, mātou katoa e noho tahi ana. Mō roto o tēnei mahi *Te Ipu Mahara*, kua titoa e ahau tētahi oriori mō te mokopuna nei. Āna tohu whenua ngā mahi a ōna tūpuna ki aua tohu whenua, me te whakahau i te mokopuna kia mahara mai ki ēnei āhua ōna."

Professor Roa's response centres mokopuna, home, and intergenerational legacy. His kōrero reminds us that *Te Ipu Mahara* is not only a metaphorical container but also a literal intergenerational act — captured in the composition of *oriori*, in the presence of ancestral landscapes, and in the intentional instruction of descendants.

The mention of tohu whenua (landmarks) and ancestral deeds grounds knowledge in place and whakapapa. It also exemplifies the purpose of retention: not for storage's sake, but to empower mokopuna with connection, identity, and purpose.

Shirley Tuteao – Reo, tikanga, and the wairua of mātauranga

> "Te mea nui, kia rua pea ngāku. Ko te mea tuatahi, kia ora tonu tā tātou reo me ōna tikanga, tō tātou, āe, kia kaua e warewaretia, kia āwhina, kia hāpaingia… Pērā me te mātauranga, nō reira, kia kaha tātou ki te hiki i tērā… engari ko te mātauranga Pākehā hoki kia haere ngātahi. Ā… te mea tuarua, kei te hiahia au kia taea e te iwi Māori te mirimiri i ngā tāngata kūare i waho rā… kia rongo rātou i te wairua reka, tō tātou ao Māori."

Shirley Tuteao identifies two key pou that shape her world: the survival and flourishing of te reo Māori and its associated tikanga, and the ability of te ao Māori to uplift and influence those beyond its immediate boundaries. Her kōrero reflects both an internal and external orientation — revitalising language and cultural practices within whānau, while extending the warmth of Māori values to those who have yet to experience their depth and beauty.

Importantly, she positions reo, tikanga, and Mātauranga Māori as mutually reinforcing, not separate strands. To uplift one is to uplift all. Her expression, "kia rongo rātou i te wairua reka" - so that they may feel the sweetness of our Māori world — encapsulates the emotional and spiritual resonance that lies at the heart of *Te Ipu Mahara*. It is this quality of wairua that gives chanting, storytelling, and oriori their enduring power as vessels of memory and connection.

Les (Tui) Kana – Oranga and aroha in the whānau sphere

"Ki ahau, te oranga pai o tōku whānau me au, me te aroha hoki ki waenganui i a rātou. Mātou katoa." Les (Tui) Kana's response is clear and grounded in the present: whānau wellbeing and aroha. These priorities, though expressed simply, are deeply rooted in Māori values. They reflect the foundational conditions under which knowledge is best retained and transferred — not in isolation or trauma, but in environments where aroha, safety, and collective wellness are nurtured.

This emphasis on oranga and aroha helps us understand the everyday relational environments in which mātauranga is passed on — around kai, within homes, in both the mundane and the sacred. His kōrero reminds us that knowledge retention is not a separate pursuit from daily life; it is deeply embedded within it, sustained through care, connection, and the rhythms of whānau living.

Naianga Tapiata – Home, Hau, and the Call of the Marae

> "Āe, pātai pai, tēnā pātai. i a au e noho nei i … i Rotorua. I runga tonu i te mōhio kei… kei Kirikiriroa e noho ana i te nuinga o te wā. Tika ana pea ko taku whānau, te hoki mai ki te kāinga, kia purea e ngā hau o Tāwhiri, kia rongo i ngā manu

> kōrero i runga i aku marae, ērā āhuatanga. Me pēhea e kore ai te… te kī ko taku whānau i tēnei wā.”

For Naianga Tapiata, the heart of knowledge retention lies in whānau and the return to place. His language is poetic, invoking Tāwhirimātea and the manu kōrero — symbols of cleansing, reconnection, and ancestral voice. His reflections remind us that place is not static but active, alive, and resonant with memory. The marae, the hau, and the birds all form part of the living chorus of *Te Ipu Mahara* — the chanting memory.

Naianga’s kōrero reinforces the central argument of this thesis: that knowledge resides not only within people but also within place. Retention, therefore, is a process of reconnection — of returning to those environments where memory is encoded in land, sound, and spirit. His use of natural imagery embodies how mātauranga is felt as much as it is known, bridging emotion, environment, and intellect in a way that continues to evolve through younger generations grounded in te ao Māori.

He Kupu Whakakapi – The essence beneath the question

The answers to this warm-up question reveal that the foundations of knowledge retention are not necessarily technique or method — they are values, relationships, and responsibilities. Whānau, reo, whenua, and wairua emerge not just as context, but as central pou to how Māori locate themselves and their knowledge in the world.

These are the things that matter most — not just to these individuals, but to the broader kaupapa of this thesis. *Te Ipu Mahara* does not exist in isolation. It is formed by love for mokopuna, commitment to language, reverence for place, and the will to share the sweetness of te Ao Māori with others.

In the words of the participants, the vessel of chanting memory is nourished by:

- Mokopuna being gifted oriori linked to tohu whenua,
- The heartbeat of te reo Māori pulsing through whānau lines,
- Whānau wellbeing upheld by aroha,
- The spiritual cleansing of Tāwhiri and the songs of the marae calling us home.

In that light, the chanting continues — not just from past to present, but from the heart of what matters most.

5.6 Pou Tuatahi: Mātauranga Māori: He kōrero tuku iho, he ao hurihuri

Framing Mātauranga Māori

In the heart of Māori knowledge systems lies a complex, expansive, and ever-evolving worldview known as Mātauranga Māori. Far from being a static body of facts, Mātauranga Māori is a living, breathing expression of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. It is embodied in practice, embedded in relationships, and transmitted through generations by kōrero tuku iho (oral histories), wānanga (learning spaces), observation, participation, and wairua (spiritual awareness).

In this pou I draw directly on the voices of research participants to explore how Mātauranga Māori is defined, understood, embodied, and expressed. Their kōrero reveals not only the depth and breadth of Mātauranga Māori but also how it continues to thrive despite ongoing colonial disruption. Importantly, this chapter honours participant voices in full, quoting them exactly and preserving their Reo, cadence, and mana.

Te whānuitanga – the limitlessness of Mātauranga Māori

One of the clearest and most profound understandings offered by participants is that Mātauranga Māori is limitless. Professor Tom Roa (Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato) begins by framing it expansively “Mātauranga Māori is, in my mind, to my thought, everything that is known about everything. Everything according to our Māori understandings. It has no bounds. It has no time. It is everything.”

This statement captures a worldview where knowledge is not categorised or compartmentalised but interconnected and holistic. Mātauranga Māori encompasses the tangible and the intangible, the physical and the spiritual, the past and the future — all held together within whakapapa.

Roa continues:

> "Mātauranga Māori is inclusive, and it goes wherever the mana and asserting this mana… It's not just about the mana of the person; it's the mana of the people. It's the mana of the space. It's the mana of the time — wherever that might wish to travel."

This framing challenges dominant Western paradigms, which often seek to define and delimit knowledge. In contrast, Mātauranga Māori allows for flexibility, context, and change. "I think that Mātauranga Māori, in its inclusiveness, describes something so that there's room for movement… with this audience, respectful of all the mana and the tapu that are part of this description."

The emphasis here is on relationality — knowledge is never abstract but always situated within people, time, and space. As Roa further asserts, Mātauranga Māori provides "space for Western science," but the reverse is not always true: "Western science excludes Mātauranga Māori. However, Mātauranga Māori is inclusive."

Roa's reflections position Mātauranga Māori as a living, relational, and all-encompassing philosophy. It is not a body of information but a dynamic system of relationships — a framework for understanding existence that refuses to be confined by linear or hierarchical thinking. Te wairua o te mātauranga – The spiritual embedding of knowledge

Most participants highlighted the spiritual dimensions of Mātauranga Māori — aspects often neglected or dismissed in Western educational systems. Les (Tui) Kana (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) notes, "ko te wairua, te whakaaro o te tangata, ko te hāhi. The individual's connection to spirituality, you know — one may call a god, one may call a higher being…"

This connection to wairua — to unseen realms, to atua, to the mauri of all things — is not a side note, but fundamental. For Shirley Tuteao (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato), this manifests in the way we relate to one another with humility and care "kia tū Māori ai te tangata, kia tū aroha te tangata ki roto i te… tōna ao Māori. Kia hūmārie tōna… tōna tū. Kia manaakihia te tangata. He akoranga, he akoranga."

Her understanding of Mātauranga Māori centres on aroha, manaaki, humility, and integrity. These are not theoretical values, but lived principles "koirā te ao Māori kia tūturu i te kōrero, kia mau ki ngā kōrero."

And yet, she observes a disconnect between Māori ways of being and institutional practice, "kāore rātou te hiki i ērā momo āhua o te tamaiti… he mau tonu ki ngā ture… kāore he wairua o roto… me āta whakarongo ki te tamaiti."

Tuteao critiques the rigidity of Pākehā frameworks that fail to recognise the wairua of the tamaiti (child), contrasting them with Māori approaches grounded in holistic listening, observation, and relational care. This is Mātauranga Māori in *action* — a living practice where wairua, aroha, and manaaki guide both teaching and learning.

Kōrero tuku iho – the transmission of knowledge through being Māori

Naianga Tapiata (Te Arawa, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Awa, Waikato) offers a powerful and grounding perspective on Mātauranga Māori. For him, the academic term only arrived later "I au e tupu ana i te kura, kārekau mātou i paku rongo i tēnei mea te… te Mātauranga Māori."

Instead, knowledge was passed through kōrero tuku iho, "It wasn't until I got to Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato. It's the words that we sort of grew up with was kōrero tuku iho." He contends "Mātauranga Māori, I think to me is just being Māori… he kōrero tuku iho tērā āhuatanga, tērā mātauranga… I think it's just he mahi Māori ki a au nei."

This reframing is vital. Mātauranga Māori is not something one learns about from the outside — it is something one lives from the inside. It is, as he says, "just being Māori." There is no separation between knowledge and identity, between knowing and doing. He adds "ko te nuinga te katoa o ngā mahi Māori, tika ana kia kī ai Mātauranga Māori."

This view challenges academic compartmentalisation and calls for a deep honouring of lived Indigenous experience.

Te taiao me te tangata – Environment and people as one

Les (Tui) Kana (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) reiterates the relational nature of Mātauranga Māori, especially in the connection between environment and human existence, “ko te āhua o ngā mea katoa… e pā ana ki te tangata whai ora… Mātauranga Māori… Being linked as one.”

Mātauranga Māori does not see the environment as separate from people — it understands humans as part of a wider web of life. The land, sky, waters, flora, and fauna are not objects of knowledge, but kin. This worldview aligns with traditional frameworks in which Papatūānuku and Ranginui form the foundation of relational knowledge systems.

Kana’s kōrero reinforces that well-being and understanding emerge from these reciprocal relationships between tangata and taiao, between breath and being. This is knowledge that breathes, moves, and responds to the natural rhythms of the world.

Time and transformation – Mātauranga Māori as evolving

Professor Tom Roa (Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato) cautions against static definitions, reminding us that Mātauranga Māori is deeply tied to a different conception of time “perhaps the last one, leaning on from that, is it's timeless… I’m in total agreement with Rangi Mātāmua when he talks about time being the greatest coloniser.”

Western linear time, with its rigid past–present–future divisions, limits Māori ways of knowing. In contrast, Mātauranga Māori is recursive, cyclical, and expansive “our old people… looked at it… as where we as human beings might want to visit that limitless space and time.”

This framing allows mātauranga to adapt and grow — a living continuum rather than a fixed doctrine. As Naianga Tapiata reflects “you'll never stop writing about these things when it comes to Mātauranga Māori because of the way our world continues to evolve.”

This flexibility contrasts sharply with Western science, which Roa critiques as extractive and self-serving, "Western science, I think, is extractive and is done for personal gain… whereas Mātauranga Māori is inclusive… trying to build a better future for everybody."

Together, these perspectives reveal Mātauranga Māori as timeless and transformational — a dynamic system that evolves with its people, its places, and its stories, carrying the past forward into new expressions of being and knowing.

Leadership, power, and mana – a different structure of knowing

The differences between Western and Māori approaches extend deeply into the structures of leadership and knowledge production. Naianga Tapiata (Te Arawa, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Awa, Waikato) reflects on a metaphor shared by Sir Derek Lardelli:

> "He talks about Pākehā leadership… as a triangle… you have your lead up the top and he says to everyone what to do — sort of that hierarchical system. And then he turned it around into an upside-down triangle. And he said, *ko te rangatira kei raro ko tana iwi e tohutohu ana ki a ia*."

This inverted model aligns with Mātauranga Māori principles of collective decision-making, humility, and service-based leadership. It shows how even the transmission of knowledge is guided not by *power-over* but *power-with*, reinforcing inclusivity and interdependence.

Whakakapi – Mātauranga Māori as a living tohu ora

Mātauranga Māori, as articulated by the participants in this research, is a living body of knowledge that refuses to be colonised, compartmentalised, or confined. It is all-encompassing, relational, spiritually grounded, and deeply responsive to its environment and people. It is not simply a body of facts but a way of life — encoded in stories, enacted in practice, and evolving across generations.

As Shirley Tuteao (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) reminds us, "Mātauranga Māori is inseparable from integrity and accountability "Ka mahia i tēnei mahi, ka kōrero ia… koirā te integrity… me whakatutuki i aua kōrero."

And as Naianga Tapiata concludes "...inclusive and trying to build a better future for everybody."

Mātauranga Māori cannot be reduced to a single definition or moment. It is, instead, a flowing awa — fed by the tributaries of whakapapa, whānau, whenua, and wairua. It travels through us, transforms with us, and will continue long after us.

5.6.1 Pou tuatahi: Te hononga ki te kaupapa matua – relevance to Te Ipu Mahara

The kōrero shared by participants in this study sits at the very heart of *Te Ipu Mahara* – the memory vessel. Their reflections not only affirm the living, dynamic nature of Mātauranga Māori, but also embody the very strategies by which Māori knowledge is retained, transferred, and transformed across time and space. This aligns directly with the kaupapa of this thesis: to explore how Indigenous peoples, specifically Māori, remember, recite, and renew knowledge for present and future generations.

Mātauranga Māori as a vessel for memory and identity

A core theme echoed throughout the participant interviews is that Mātauranga Māori is not simply a body of knowledge — it is a lived identity, a way of being. As Naianga Tapiata (Te Arawa, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Awa, Waikato) articulates "Mātauranga Māori, I think to me is just being Māori... I think it's just he mahi Māori ki a au nei."

Knowledge retention does not happen in abstraction; it happens through living as Māori — through everyday practices, relationships, and cultural participation. Retention, then, is not solely about preservation, but embodiment. Mātauranga Māori is carried in the body, the spirit, and the whakapapa of the people — it is the *ipu mahara*, the vessel of memory.

Oral transmission and kōrero tuku iho as key strategies

The emphasis placed on kōrero tuku iho - oral histories passed down - reinforces the importance of intergenerational knowledge transmission as a central strategy of retention. Tapiata reflects that "the words that we sort of grew up with was 'kōrero tuku iho'... that in itself has its own knowledge."

Indigenous knowledge is often retained not through written texts, but through spoken word, story, waiata, whakataukī, and embodied teaching. The act of remembering is communal and continuous, as knowledge is chanted - spoken, performed, sung - across time. This aligns with the metaphorical framing of this thesis title, where memory is activated and transferred through sound, rhythm, and voice.

Fluidity and timelessness of Mātauranga Māori

Professor Tom Roa (Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato) speaks to Mātauranga Māori as both timeless and adaptive “It has no bounds. It has no time. It is everything… Mātauranga Māori in its inclusiveness describes something so that there's room for movement.”

This conception resonates strongly with this research’s focus on transference. Unlike rigid systems that require fixed forms, Mātauranga Māori allows for movement, flexibility, and responsiveness to context. This adaptability is a vital strategy for survival and resilience, allowing Māori knowledge to evolve while maintaining its core essence. Such flexibility ensures that knowledge transfer remains relevant and grounded, particularly when passed across generations or shared among other Indigenous peoples.

Relationality and spiritual integrity in knowledge transmission

Shirley Tuteao (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) and Les (Tui) Kana (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) emphasise the importance of *wairua*, *manaakitanga*, and humility in the way knowledge is shared and received. Tuteao explains, “he akoranga mōku… he mōhiotanga ki roto i tō pane, tukuna ki te ao, te ao i tupu ai koe.”

This reflects a deep ethic of care and accountability in the transmission of knowledge. Knowledge, in this view, is not something possessed or exploited — it is gifted and must be carried with integrity. These findings support the understanding that relational ethics — respect, humility, and spiritual connection — are not just cultural values but foundational strategies for knowledge transfer. Without these values, the memory vessel cracks.

Resistance to Western models

Participants also highlighted the challenges posed by Western epistemologies. Roa contrasts Mātauranga Māori with Western science "Western science excludes Mātauranga Māori… whereas Mātauranga Māori… is inclusive."

Likewise, Tapiata observes "Western science I think is extractive… Mātauranga Māori is inclusive and trying to build a better future for everybody."

These insights reinforce the decolonial stance — that Indigenous knowledge systems have always resisted extractive, hierarchical models. Instead, they rely on reciprocity and collective responsibility as mechanisms of retention and transfer. The resistance is not only political but epistemological, and the strategies of remembrance used by Indigenous peoples are also strategies of reclaiming space, time, and voice.

Decentralised leadership and knowledge anchored in community

The metaphor shared by Sir Derek Lardelli and reiterated by Tapiata is significant "ko te rangatira kei raro, ko tana iwi e tohutohu ana ki a ia."

This inversion of power and knowledge positions the community — not the individual — as the source and centre of wisdom. It directly supports the vision of *Te Ipu Mahara*, where knowledge retention is not an elite academic pursuit but a whānau-based, hapū-based, and community-centred practice. It also informs this thesis's methodology, which honours Indigenous modes of collective storytelling and shared authority.

Integrating wairua, whānau, and environment

Finally, participants describe Mātauranga Māori as integrative — encompassing environment, spirituality, genealogy, emotion, and community. Kana expresses this view succinctly, "placement — mankind and its surroundings. Being linked as one."

This holistic integration supports the broader thesis claim that Indigenous knowledge retention cannot be separated from holistic wellbeing. Retaining knowledge requires retaining the health of people, land, language, and relationships. Knowledge, in this sense, is ecological and embodied — it is hauora, whenua, whakapapa, and wairua all at once.

Whakakapinga – Weaving the threads of memory

The kōrero from my participants powerfully affirms that knowledge retention and transference within Mātauranga Māori is not a singular act, it is an ongoing relationship with memory, whakapapa, wairua, and whenua. It affirms the thesis kaupapa that Te Ipu Mahara - the memory vessel - is not only a metaphor but a lived reality. It holds not just content but connection. It chants the voices of the past into the ears of the future.

By anchoring my research in participant voices and Indigenous concepts, I challenge colonial knowledge hierarchies and bring forth a deeply grounded understanding of how Māori and other Indigenous peoples remember, retain, and pass on knowledge. These findings show that Indigenous knowledge is not only surviving - it is breathing, evolving, and chanting still.

5.7 Pou tuarua: He puna mahara: The depths of Māori knowledge retention

Whakataki: Retaining indigenous memory

Māori knowledge retention is not a singular process, but a complex, multilayered expression of whakapapa, wairua, and relationality. It is shaped by both ancestral practice and contemporary challenges, and is actively lived, remembered, and transmitted by individuals, whānau, hapū, and iwi. Through the voices of the research participants in this study, we gain insight into how knowledge is held, protected, and passed on in a uniquely Māori way.

Flexible foundations – adaptability as a core strategy

Professor Tom Roa (Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato) offers a foundational thought that challenges rigid Western views of knowledge, “he aha te mea nui nā rātou i kawe mai ki Aotearoa? Quick as a flash. He says, flexibility, flexibility.”

He links this concept to the atua Tāne Mahuta, who demonstrated flexibility in separating his parents “he laid on his back and pushing his feet. Flexibility. If you do what you always know, you'll get what you've always got.”

The retention of knowledge, then, is not static — it requires the capacity to adapt teachings to new contexts. Roa recalls how the shift from being an iwi moana (people of the sea) to tangata whenua (people of the land) altered cosmological narratives, “we are tangata whenua. They revisited their cosmology and Tāne Mahuta became a very important atua.” Flexibility, in this sense, is not a compromise, but a method of resilience, innovation, and cultural survival.

Intergenerational transfer – feeding the vessel early

Retention is deeply linked to early life learning. Roa shares the example of his uncle “before he was seven, tāna kōrero nō mua taku tau tuawhitu i roto i a au, aua kōrero a ō tātou tūpuna… he was specially chosen to be the receptacle of these things.”

The concept of “feeding the memory vessel early” is echoed by Shirley Tuteao (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato), “kia noho tahi o te tuakana me te teina, mēnā kei te hiahia aku mokopuna ki tēnei ao… kia tika anō… tō waha i a rātou.”

Early exposure, especially within intergenerational relationships, builds deep-rooted knowledge that persists across a lifetime.

Ritual, story, and song – anchoring memory

Many participants highlight specific mechanisms for retaining knowledge: karakia, waiata, pūrākau, and whakapapa.
Les (Tui) Kana (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) reflects, “growing up… retaining of our knowledge was through practising waiata… every waiata had a story… something powerful that happened.”

Similarly, Naianga Tapiata (Te Arawa, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Awa, Waikato) emphasises the significance of pūrākau, “when I think knowledge retention… I think pūrākau… how our tūpuna used pūrākau as a way to understand and pass that down to our tamariki.”

The act of storytelling is not only cultural — it is cognitive. It embeds knowledge within the whatumanawa of the listener.

The wānanga space – time, place, and practice

Knowledge is retained not only in what is said, but in how and where it is taught. For Tuteao, this occurs through intentional return to traditional learning environments, “me noho wānanga, me hoki atu pea ki… ki ngā wā… Pai au ki ngā mahi o mua… ki te waiata i ngā oriori.”

Wānanga, in its many forms, brings repetition, observation, and embodied practice together. Tapiata adds “ko te pō, I think te ako i te pō is something… everything got taught in the night except for ngā mahi a Tūmatauenga… there's a different muscle that comes into play when you're learning [at night].”

This reveals the layered dimensions of wānanga, where time (day or night), space (marae or papakāinga), and ritual all shape the learning environment.

Language as repository: reo as memory

Kana positions language as central, “what we hear and what we gain… It’s not always retained but as a child we retain everything, so to me, the language is the thing.

Te reo Māori, especially in oral forms, contains not only grammar and vocabulary, but values, histories, and cosmologies. Tuteao supports this “ngā waiata, tētahi waiata made up, you know, pērā. Kei roto tonu taku pane, aua kupu.”

When these are recalled, they are tied to emotion, whānau memory, and place. *Reo* and retention are inseparable.

Dual worlds – navigating multiple epistemologies

Roa acknowledges the tension between Māori and Western paradigms, “taku whakaaro Māori e mea ana, āe. Taku whakaaro Pākehā. How can that be? You wanna bob each way. And I said, yes, please.”

This statement captures the duality many Māori navigate. Retention strategies today must bridge both worlds. As Tapiata notes “ko te mea nui ko te whakarongo, ko te titiro, ko te kōrero… Western science is now putting it into their own tombs.”

Informal learning – the power of everyday encounters

Some of the most enduring lessons occur not in classrooms but around the fire, the table, or in casual conversation. Roa recalls “somebody would say something and there's a learning in that informality… very informal. Ēnei o ngā kōrero, e kore e warewaretia.” He describes these moments as having the power to “grab your heart and grab your mind.” For knowledge to be retained, it must engage both intellect and emotion.

Whānau roles and inherited responsibilities

Tuteao identifies how roles within whānau influence the retention and practice of knowledge, “I think every family was given a kete. Mai rā anō, you know, mai i te whakapapa… our family were given… peacemakers.”

Remaining within one’s inherited role or “lane” can enhance focus and memory, “If I stand my lane, noho au kia tau ai taku noho ki tāku e mōhio, I can retain better.” This does not imply exclusion, but rather a commitment to depth over breadth. Skills and responsibilities handed down intergenerationally strengthen retention.

Role-modelling, passion, and aroha

Ultimately, all participants affirm the importance of authenticity and modelling. Tuteao encapsulates this beautifully, “we deliver with passion and authenticity… role modelling is also a resource.”

She continues “tukuna ērā mea ki te taha, engari kia mau ki tāu… ki roto i te ngākau… you're gonna get to the stage where you're gonna be so passionate, you’ll cry if you miss it.” Knowledge is retained not only because it is taught, but because it is loved.

Whakakapi: He Mahara, He Taonga

Māori knowledge retention is a living, relational, wairua-filled process. It occurs in the oriori sung to a baby at dawn, in the stories told beside a fire, in the practiced art of karanga and whakairo, in the echoes of mōteatea at midnight. It is embedded in whānau lines, ancestral lanes, and the deep breath of a waiata.

As these participant voices reveal, retention is not only about holding on to knowledge, but about holding it properly – with care, context, humility and heart. This is what makes Māori knowledge a vessel that endures.

E kore e mimiti, e kore e ngaro. Ka mau tonu, ka tukuna tonu. Koia te ipu mahara o te iwi Māori.

5.7.1 Pou tuarua: Te hononga ki te kaupapa matua – Relevance to te Ipu Mahara

The findings shared in this pou weave closely with the overarching kaupapa of this thesis: *Te Ipu Mahara* – the chanting memories of an Indigenous people. This metaphor of a vessel of memory is lived and embodied in the testimonies of the research participants, whose kōrero affirm that Māori knowledge retention is not a passive or static act, but an active, relational, intergenerational, and creative process. The strategies they describe – both formal and informal, ancient and contemporary – provide a rich map of Indigenous methods for holding and transferring memory.

He ipu aroha – the role of whānau, wairua, and emotional embedding

A major theme across the findings is that knowledge is best retained when it is emotionally embedded. Professor Tom Roa (Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato) shared that when kaumātua like his uncle spoke and gestured from the heart – “grabbing my heart and grabbing my mind” – the lessons were unforgettable

This aligns with the “chanting” in this thesis title, where sound, emotion, and rhythm imprint memory deeply. The idea that learning is stored not just in the mind but in the whatumanawa echoes throughout participants’ kōrero. Shirley Tuteao (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato), in her reflections on oriori, waiata, and karanga, reinforces that memory is inseparable from wairua and aroha: “You gotta deliver with heart

These insights affirm that Māori knowledge systems rely on affective memory – memory tied to emotion, voice, and connection – and that this must be recognised as a powerful knowledge transference strategy.

Te reo, te tinana, te taiao: embodied and sensory knowledge

Participant kōrero strongly support the thesis argument that Indigenous knowledge is sensory and embodied. Les (Tui) Kana (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) stated plainly that "language is the thing, while others emphasised the importance of learning through waiata, karakia, and physical practice. Naianga Tapiata (Te Arawa, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Awa, Waikato) spoke of learning "mā te ako ā-tinana" – through the body – rather than rote memorisation.

This reinforces the kaupapa that retention is not only oral or cognitive, but physical. Knowledge is retained in hands (as with whakairo), in feet (through haka and movement), in the land (through mahinga kai and customary practice), and in the environment (as noted in kōrero about whānau who inherit skills like kai gathering and healing). These are not just cultural expressions – they are methods of retention and transmission.

Te aka o Tāwhaki – non-linear learning as strategy

Roa's metaphor of Tāwhaki ascending the aka matua (sacred vine) offers a powerful analogy for this thesis. His assertion that learning is not linear – that one must climb, pause, be tested, reflect, and sometimes return – speaks directly to Indigenous epistemologies.

Learning is not about upward progress alone, but about cyclical growth, humility, and readiness. In *Te Ipu Mahara*, this image supports the idea that memory is layered, iterative, and spiritual. It affirms an emphasis on *wānanga* and *ako i te pō* as times for deep reflection, testing, and preparation. These are strategies for long-term knowledge retention, rooted in ancestral practice.

Kōrero tuku iho – oral histories as living archives

The kōrero consistently highlight the centrality of *kōrero tuku iho* as both concept and method. Tapiata puts it simply "when I think knowledge retention… I think pūrākau."

This is crucial to this thesis. The *ipu mahara* is filled and refilled through story – through pūrākau, whakapapa, mōteatea, and hui. It is not a library in the Western sense, but a

living, breathing network of voices and memories transmitted through time via people and performance.

Participants such as Tuteao and Kana reinforce that songs and stories are coded with history, ethics, identity, and place. They also remind us that these forms adapt to their context – meaning that retention involves creativity. As Tapiata noted, retelling pūrākau in ways that engage tamariki – with imagination and warmth – ensures that the memory is not only passed on but understood.

Whānau roles and generational purpose

Participants expressed that knowledge was distributed along whakapapa lines, with whānau members holding and transmitting different pieces. Tuteao described this as each whānau receiving a kete – a gift or responsibility.

This resonates deeply with the kaupapa of *Te Ipu Mahara*, as this thesis explores not only what is remembered, but who remembers what, and why. This framing reinforces the argument that knowledge retention is interdependent and not individualistic. Māori do not assume that everyone must know everything; instead, communities share the memory load, ensuring collective resilience.

Informal learning as valid strategy

A vital contribution to this kōrero is the distinction between formal and informal learning spaces. Roa explains that “there’s a learning in that informality which is just as important as the formality.”

This supports the position that Indigenous knowledge is retained not only through structured learning environments but also through wharekai kōrero, pub chats, fireside conversations, and everyday life. These informal settings are often overlooked in academic discourse, yet they play a central role in the transmission of memory and values. Such spaces are legitimate sites of knowledge production and retention – integral parts of the broader *ipu mahara* of the people.

Role modelling and integrity as transfer tools

Role modelling was highlighted by most participants – particularly Tuteao – as a key mechanism of transfer. Her reflection, “you are a model. Ko koe te tauira,”

When people live their values and pass them on through action, this becomes an embodied pedagogy. This thesis acknowledges that hauora, manaaki, and integrity are essential to the transmission process. The *ipu mahara* is filled not only with content but with practice, principle, and presence.

Whakakapinga – the ipu is full, the ipu is open

The voices in this pou confirm that Māori knowledge retention is a richly layered, wairua-based, community-embedded practice. It cannot be reduced to storage or memorisation. It is enacted through aroha, waiata, whakapapa, and pūrākau. It is held in spaces both sacred and casual. It is shared with intention, flexibility, and humility.

This aligns fully with the kaupapa of *Te Ipu Mahara*. These findings demonstrate that knowledge transference in Indigenous settings involves multimodal, intergenerational, and emotionally resonant strategies. From the aka of Tāwhaki to the marae ātea, from the reo of our tuakana to the silent gestures of our kaumātua – memory is retained through lived relationship.

Māori knowledge is not only retained – it is performed, lived, and chanted forward. And in that chanting, it lives.

5.8 Pou tuatoru: He mauri tuku iho – the transmission of Māori knowledge

Whakataki: The living flow of knowledge

In te Ao Māori, knowledge is not a commodity to be stored and retrieved, but a living taonga passed from generation to generation. It is carried in the breath of waiata, the hands of kaihōhoka, the rhythm of whakapapa, and the wairua of a place. This pou draws from participant narratives to examine how Māori transfer knowledge across generations, whānau, hapū, and iwi. The pou explores roles, methods, environments,

rituals, and relational practices that support knowledge transmission, weaving direct participant voices to maintain the mana and integrity of their insights.

Whakauru wairua – embedding knowledge with integrity

Shirley Tuteao (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) emphasises the importance of passion, presence, and *wairua* in the act of sharing knowledge:

> "Whakauru tērā wairua ki roto. I ngō kōrero, but you make sure, e mōhio ana koe ki ngō kōrero. Me mau tonu, me mōhio tonu ki ngā kōrero, pēnei a koe e tuku ana ki roto i taua ao. Māhaki."

For Tuteao, transfer requires more than repetition or instruction; it requires authenticity, integrity, and connection. This aligns with a Māori worldview where knowledge is relational and spiritual, and where the transmission process must honour both the giver and the receiver.

Tangible carriers – art, space, and place

Naianga Tapiata (Te Arawa, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Awa, Waikato) reflects on the material and environmental anchors of knowledge transfer, "whakairo whare and the kōrero that is within that, you know, physical things, tangible things that you can touch. Koirā te tāra a ō tātou tūpuna was whakairo… Location has energy and time has memory."

These tangible expressions — carvings, buildings, geographic markers — hold stories, codes, and instructions. Places themselves are imbued with *mauri* that trigger memory and encourage learning. Knowledge is transmitted not only by people but through landscapes, objects, and structures.

Whānau responsibility – roles within the collective

Knowledge transmission is interwoven with *whānau* structure and inherited roles. Tapiata comments on enduring responsibilities within the *Kīngitanga*:

> "This marae provides the marae. This marae, this whānau does the cooking, this whānau does this. He mea tuku iho tērā. Mai i te wā i a Kingi Pōtatau, tae rawa ki te wā o tō tātou ariki nui i tēnei wā."

Tuteao reinforces that these responsibilities must be shaped by skill and passion, “ko te whakaaro au ki aku tamariki. They have a skill. So moulded so that it's transferable. Not only to our own but to other Māori out there.”

Responsibility is not arbitrarily assigned but drawn from observation, gifts, and inherited tohu. When done well, the knowledge becomes transferable and sustainable.

Oral traditions – waiata, mōteatea, and pūrākau

Across the interviews, participants highlight *orality* as a primary mode of transmission. Tapiata points to mōteatea “ko te mōteatea… the future is the transference of mōteatea and the revitalisation of mōteatea as well.”

Tuteao elaborates:

> “Ahakoa kāre au i tipu ia kei te rata mō rātou, mō ngā tupu, mō ngā reanga whakatupu, ngā uri whakatupuranga, kei reira he oranga mō rātou ki roto i ngā pūrākau, kei roto rā I te Mātauranga Māori nei.”

Oral forms are rich vehicles for encoded knowledge, values, cosmology, and identity. They can shift with time and still remain embedded in *tikanga* and *whakapapa*.

Ritual and gathering as teaching spaces

Les (Tui) Kana (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) points to simple yet powerful rituals, “the morning and a night karakia, seven o'clock *paimārire* is one [example]. That transfers knowledge.”

Both Kana and Tapiata identify tangihanga and poukai as spaces where values, whakapapa, and historical narratives are conveyed. Tapiata recalls a Whanganui kōrero, “ko te kura kāhuna, ko te kura ka whākina… whākina mai rā hei kura mō te tangata.” These spaces are multi-dimensional, housing both the seen and the unseen, the spoken and the withheld, waiting for the right moment or person to unlock them.

Tamariki as the purpose and pathway

A recurring theme is the role of *tamariki* as both recipients and drivers of knowledge transfer. Tapiata reflects “ko ā tātou tamariki i runga tonu i te mōhio ko rātou ka kawe ēnei āhuatanga ki mua… Ka tamariki tonu te haere o ngā whakaaro.”

Children learn simply by being present — through *waiata*, *kapa haka*, or storytelling. This aligns with the tikanga of ako: to teach and to learn simultaneously. The presence of tamariki shapes the method, language, and energy of transference.

Selectivity and grooming

Knowledge is not given to all equally or at once. Tapiata reflects on traditional selection processes, “their koroua, kuia saw pitomata in them. And they didn't take them away but they just paved their ara… they would be inside the whare learning away from mates.”

This deliberate guidance reflects older practices of identifying potential knowledge holders and nurturing them within curated environments of learning. Time, readiness, and *wairua* determine the moment of transfer.

The home as framework

Tuteao reminds us that some of the most enduring knowledge is what is modelled at home, “My life at home is my framework to life… If they want to know the knowledge and it to be transferred, what is it that I modelled to them?”

She anchors her thinking in place “Waipounamu, Mitiwai, that's my framework. And my whānau.” In her view, transfer is not just formal teaching; it is embodied consistency, relational care, and environmental presence.

Decentralised transfer – everything is knowledge

Finally, a powerful observation from Tapiata “I think everything can be… is knowledge for attention and knowledge, transference… whakairo mai, waiata, mōteatea, pūrākau, whatever.”

This reflects a fundamental principle of *te ao Māori*: knowledge is not confined to an institution or artefact. It exists in everything. The challenge is not only to retain it but to tune into its many forms.

Whakakapi – e tuku Ana, e mau ana

Knowledge transfer in te Ao Māori is multi-sensory, multi-generational, and multi-dimensional. It exists in ceremony and simplicity, in song and silence. It travels not only from old to young, but back again, and sometimes sideways.

This pou has shown that Māori knowledge is not only held by individuals but dispersed across communities, places, and practices. The transfer of this knowledge is relational, intentional, and, at times, sacred. Like the movement of wai through a puna, knowledge in te Ao Māori is not stagnant but flows continually - carried by those who are ready to receive, grounded in the values of aroha, manaaki, and tika.

Koia te mauri e kawe nei i ō tātou taonga tuku iho.

5.8.1 Pou tuatoru: te hononga ki te kaupapa matua – relevance to te Ipu Mahara

The voices in this pou affirm and enrich the overarching kaupapa of this thesis: that Māori and Indigenous knowledge is not merely retained but channeled, activated, and passed forward through purposeful and sacred acts of transference. *Te Ipu Mahara* — the memory vessel — is not symbolic alone, but an active, living metaphor for how Māori knowledge flows intergenerationally, within whānau, across hapū, and through place, art, and orality.

Knowledge transfer is a wairua-based act

A consistent thread throughout participant kōrero is that knowledge transference is not merely a cognitive transaction — it is deeply spiritual. Shirley Tuteao (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) reminds us that effective transfer requires presence, humility, and spiritual integrity, “whakauru tērā wairua ki roto… me mau tonu, me mōhio tonu ki ngā kōrero, pēnei a koe e tuku ana ki roto i taua ao. Māhaki.”

This resonates with the theme of “chanting memories” in this thesis — suggesting that knowledge moves not only through the head and mouth, but through the heart and wairua. Just as oriori and mōteatea are sung with spiritual force, so too must knowledge be passed with mana and aroha. This reflects a uniquely Māori model of relational transmission that values the emotional and metaphysical dimensions of learning.

Transfer is anchored in tangibility, place and time

Participants such as Naianga Tapiata (Te Arawa, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Awa, Waikato) spoke about carvings, spaces, and whenua as repositories of knowledge, “whakairo whare and the kōrero that has within that… location has energy and time has memory.”

This reinforces that Māori knowledge is embedded in whenua and taonga — not separate from them. Knowledge transfer is spatial, embodied, and sensory. The *ipu mahara* is filled not only by words but by presence in place, by holding a taonga, by walking ancestral lands.

This also affirms that transference happens through encounter — with carvings, with landscape, and with moments that stir memory. It underscores that the process is not passive or limited to language but includes deep felt experience and wairua resonance.

Transfer is purposeful and role-bound

Knowledge retention and transference are often deliberately assigned responsibilities. This is strongly reinforced by kōrero from both Tuteao and Tapiata “this marae, this whānau does the cooking. He mea tuku iho tērā, says Tapiata. They have a skill. So moulded so that it’s transferable, says Tuteao.”

These insights support the argument that Māori knowledge systems are scaffolded by collective responsibility, and that whānau roles are designed to uphold and transfer knowledge purposefully. Whether it is cooking, karanga, mōteatea, or oratory, these responsibilities are carried with whakapapa and passion.

Here, the *ipu mahara* is distributed — not one vessel, but many — with each individual and whānau holding their own *kete* to sustain the whole.

Orality remains central to transmission

This reveals again the critical role of *mōteatea, waiata, pūrākau,* and storytelling in transferring knowledge. It directly supports the thesis theme of "chanting memories." The act of remembering and sharing through voice — whether in formal *pōhiri* or casual kōrero is a deliberate tool of transmission. As Tuteao beautifully reflects "kei reira he oranga mō rātou ki roto i ngā pūrākau, kei roto rā te Mātauranga Māori." And from Tapiata "tukuna ngā tamariki kia mahia wā rātou mahi… they'll pick up our songs just by running around, just by listening."

These findings affirm that orality remains one of the most enduring and adaptable Māori methods of transference, often activated through exposure, repetition, and embodiment — especially for tamariki.

Tamariki as the vessel and the audience

A major theme that speaks directly to this thesis is that knowledge transference is not simply about what is transferred, but who it is transferred to. *Tamariki* are not passive recipients; they are central to the entire kaupapa of knowledge survival. Tapiata explains "ko ā tātou tamariki i runga tonu i te mōhio ko rātou ka kawe ēnei āhuatanga ki mua."

This reinforces the thesis concept of *Te Ipu Mahara* — the chanting memories are sung forward not just to preserve the past, but to equip future generations with tools to navigate their world. Participants made it clear that these transmission strategies are not only practical but intergenerationally strategic — with elders grooming certain tamariki early or tailoring environments to encourage both passive and active learning.

The home, the marae, and informal spaces are crucial

Tuteao's comment that "My life at home is my framework to life" repositions the everyday home environment as a valid and powerful site of knowledge transference. Similarly, Tapiata's reflections on kura and wharenui settings where some tamariki are deliberately positioned inside while others play outside illustrate how knowledge is distributed intentionally, often in informal or fluid ways.

This supports the thesis assertion that transference occurs in diverse and non-institutional spaces, and that Māori knowledge systems intentionally blur the line between formal and informal, sacred and mundane.

Transfer is both ancient and adaptive

The kōrero gathered speaks to both long-standing Indigenous practices and modern expressions. Tapiata references data sovereignty and the revitalisation of mōteatea, while Tuteao refers to hauora-based pūrākau told in urban Māori health collectives. These contemporary examples show that the vessel of memory is not fragile — it is evolving.

This thesis calls attention to the adaptability of Indigenous memory systems. These findings uphold that claim, showing that transference continues through new forms — digital spaces, iwi development projects, reo revival — while remaining grounded in tikanga and Kaupapa Māori.

Whakakapinga – the transference is the chant

The participant reflections gathered in this section animate the kaupapa of *Te Ipu Mahara*. These are not simply stories about how Māori once transferred knowledge — they are living examples of how the chant continues.

From karakia at dawn, to the coded rhythm of mōteatea, to the silent transmission through observing a grandparent's hands — knowledge in te ao Māori moves like waiata: echoing, evolving, and carried on the breath of those willing to sing it forward.

In essence, these findings confirm that Māori knowledge is not only retained within the vessel - it is released, ritually and relationally, as a sacred and communal act of remembering, honouring, and passing on.

Koia te ipu mahara - e pupuri ana, e tuku ana, e ora tonu ana.

5.9 Pou tuawhā: He hangarau, he taonga, he tūmatakahuki: the impact of modern technology on Māori knowledge retention and transference

Whakataki – te ao hurihuri, te ao hangarau

As the digital world accelerates, the question of how modern technology influences the transmission of Mātauranga Māori has become more pressing than ever. In this chapter, the voices of the participants explore both the possibilities and the perils of digital tools, artificial intelligence, and social media in relation to Indigenous knowledge. They affirm that technology is neither inherently good nor bad, but its impact depends on how it is wielded - whether with tikanga, with mana, and with collective benefit in mind.

He rauemi, he taonga – technology as a useful tool

All participants agree that technology can enhance the retention and transference of knowledge if used thoughtfully. Professor Tom Roa (Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato) frames this with a historical lens, “whakamahia. Ki taua ngāwari nā anō, taua māmā… he rauemi.”

He likens the impact of today’s digital tools to the arrival of the pen and paper in earlier generations:

> “Pai ēnei, when we were taught about technology ko pēnei me te pepa i te wā i ō mātou tūpuna… te ngaru nui i tae mai. But our tūpuna didn’t say, oh no, we’re not gonna write about ourselves.”

Naianga Tapiata (Te Arawa, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Awa, Waikato) agrees “I think it can be helpful… definitely be a tool that’s useful for us, a tool that can be used for our betterment.”

Modern technology can preserve, store, and disseminate knowledge widely and quickly. It enables visual, auditory, and interactive engagement, allowing knowledge to be accessed across oceans, generations, and time zones.

He whakaaro tūpato – navigating risk and appropriation

However, participants also express concern about the misuse and misappropriation of Māori knowledge in digital spaces. Roa warns "I have a problem if somebody makes a commercial… takes commercial advantage for themselves or for a small grouping… it's something that all of us can benefit from."

This points to the risk of Indigenous knowledge being commodified or removed from its tikanga context. Shirley Tuteao (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) offers a whakataukī-based response to managing risk, "kei a koutou kete, whakakī ō kete i te mātauranga o te mōhiotanga, shake it! What stays in there, stays. What falls out, let it go… Tangohia ngā mea pai."

Her approach aligns with a selective adoption strategy: keep what is useful, discard what is not, and always review against Kaupapa Māori values.

He kanohi ki te kanohi – the challenge of replacing face-to-face learning

Both Tapiata and Les (Tui) Kana (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) stress that while technology enables broader access to knowledge, it must not displace kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face) learning. Tapiata notes "the importance of kanohi ki te kanohi… how do you balance that with the times that we live in today?" Kana adds "It's more accessible. It's available. But it can be dangerous if it's given the wrong things… the wrong meaning."

These reflections highlight the importance of nuance, wairua, and context — elements that can be diluted or lost when knowledge is shared without physical or spiritual presence.

He whakahaere tikanga – protecting integrity in the digital space

Roa reflects that technology, if not guided by principles, can be dangerous "he aha ngā mātāpono? He aha ngā kauparenga? Kei whara katoa tātou."

This concern speaks to the need for collective guardianship and governance over digital repositories, platforms, and tools that house Māori knowledge. His *whakatūpato* is not a rejection of technology, but a call for clear tikanga and kaupapa to guide its use.

He āta tuku – being deliberate about what we share

Participants emphasised intentional sharing. Tapiata notes "we're just more careful now… what we share to Facebook, what we share on social media about kōrero tuku iho, about our own whānau as well."

The ability to instantly share, screenshot, and distribute has made knowledge both more accessible and more vulnerable. Māori communities are learning to navigate this landscape by maintaining boundaries and being vigilant about context.

He tauira – iwi and whānau-led digital innovations

Despite the concerns, participants shared examples of iwi-led digital projects designed to reclaim and revitalise knowledge. Tapiata describes an initiative led by their iwi:

> "Our iwi Tūhourangi… they put like our iwi and things, heaps of our iwi stuff on the maps… names of our lakes, our iwi boundaries and stuff like that. Cos we're not gonna wait for anyone else to do it."

This proactive approach reflects a broader movement across Aotearoa where hapū and iwi are reclaiming digital space. These projects serve both to educate their own uri and to assert mana whenua and mana motuhake in the public domain.

He mātauranga, he mana – the struggle over control and ownership

Roa raises a central issue of Indigenous digital sovereignty, "that kind of guarding… it's not just about our knowledge being appropriated… it's something that all of us can benefit from with property cards."

Ownership, attribution, and control over digital Mātauranga Māori remain contested spaces. The emergence of platforms such as *Te Mana Raraunga* and the wider movement for Indigenous data sovereignty offer new frameworks — yet they rely on ongoing community engagement to protect and advance collective knowledge.

He hangarau o āpōpō – preparing for the next wave

Tapiata encourages proactive engagement "if we don't use it or if we don't get in front of it, it's going to take over us anyway… we're not going to get anywhere. We're always going to be three steps behind."

They suggest that ignoring technology is not an option. Māori must enter these spaces with confidence and strategy — understanding AI, machine learning, and the ways in which Indigenous knowledge can be digitised and protected.

Whakakapi – he taonga hangarau, he taonga whakaaro

The reflections in this pou reveal a deeply considered relationship between Māori and modern technology. Technology is not rejected; it is re-evaluated, reshaped, and realigned with tikanga and kaupapa.

For every tool, Māori communities ask: does this uphold our mana? Does this enhance our collective future? Does it echo our karanga, waiata, and whakapapa?

Like the pū (gun) of the colonial past, digital tools are powerful. But as Roa reminds us, the key lies in their kaupapa-driven application "treating it as a tool… to advance progress requires us to ensure that we have sacred… support that kind of guarding."

The task ahead is not only to embrace innovation but to guide it with the memory of our tūpuna and the aspirations of our mokopuna.

He hangarau te waka. He mātauranga te hoe. Me rere tahi ai.

5.9.1 Pou tuawhā: Te hononga ki te Ipu Mahara – Relevance to the thesis kaupapa

The kōrero shared in this pou affirm that modern technology is now firmly part of the wider vessel of *Te Ipu Mahara* - a contemporary current flowing alongside ancestral streams of knowledge. While the thesis seeks to understand how Māori retain and transfer knowledge across generations, this pou reveals that today, the vessels of transmission include not only oriori, pūrākau and marae kōrero, but also satellite maps, smartphones, online archives, and AI platforms. Participants clearly articulate that

modern technology is not a replacement for traditional practice , it is another waka in the fleet, and like any waka, it must be paddled with care.

Technology as tool, not tumu

Participant reflections consistently affirm that technology is a tool, not the source echoing the proverb: “Ko te hangarau he waka, ehara i te tohunga.”

Professor Tom Roa (Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato) puts it plainly “there’s so much good in technology and treating it as a tool… to advance progress requires us to ensure that we have sacred… support that kind of guarding.”

This kōrero supports the argument that the transference and retention of Indigenous knowledge must be guided by Kaupapa Māori principles — regardless of the platform. In the context of *Te Ipu Mahara,* technology becomes a means of amplification, storage, and accessibility but only when paired with tikanga, kaitiakitanga, and whanaungatanga.

The waka analogy – navigating the risks of modern tools

A major insight in this section is the caution expressed by participants regarding appropriation, misuse, and commodification of mātauranga. This aligns with the thesis claim that knowledge, once transferred, must still be protected. Roa likens the arrival of digital tools to the arrival of the musket, “he pai hei karo. Engari, mō te whakaekenga, taihoa pea… ngā whakatūpatotanga i te whakamahinga o ngā rauhanga o ēnei rā…”

His warning affirms that the vessel of memory - *Te Ipu Mahara* is not inherently safe when placed in the digital domain. It becomes vulnerable without ethical guardianship. The earlier emphasis on mana motuhake, data sovereignty, and collective control is directly supported by this kōrero.

Mōhiotanga selectivity – retaining the right kete

Shirley Tuteao (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) expresses an approach to technology that echoes her wider philosophy on knowledge retention, “kei a koutou kete? Whakakī tō kete i te mātauranga o tō mōhiotanga, shake it… Tangohia ngā mea pai.”

Her metaphor aligns perfectly with the notion of the *ipu mahara* as an active, living repository. It must be continuously filled, shaken, re-evaluated, and curated. This reinforces the argument that retention is not passive it involves constant decision-making, discernment, and wānanga.

Kanohi ki te kanohi vs digital access – the balancing act

A key tension raised by participants is the challenge of balancing *kanohi ki te kanohi* learning with the speed and accessibility of digital platforms. Naianga Tapiata (Te Arawa, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Awa, Waikato) asks "how do you balance kanohi ki te kanohi with the times that we live in today?"

This question reflects a wider theme explored throughout this thesis — that retention and transference strategies must respond to modern realities without losing ancestral grounding. This is especially important in the context of "chanting memories," where tone, cadence, presence, and wairua are crucial.

Digital tools offer scale, but face-to-face interaction offers depth, resonance, and mauri. Thus, *Te Ipu Mahara* acknowledges that knowledge must travel in both ways via the fibre-optic cable and the korokoro of the kaikaranga.

Iwi-driven innovation – mana motuhake in the digital realm

Participant examples, such as the Tūhourangi initiative to add iwi place names to Apple Maps, support Indigenous-led models of knowledge transference. Tapiata explains "heaps of our iwi stuff on the maps… names of our lakes, our iwi boundaries… Cos we're not gonna wait for anyone else to do it."

This innovation demonstrates that Māori are not simply adapting to technology they are indigenising it. This thesis highlights such proactive examples as models of knowledge retention and transfer that uphold mana whenua and whakapapa in the digital realm.

These initiatives signal that *Te Ipu Mahara* is being reimagined not just as a metaphor, but as a living digital archive, curated by iwi, whānau, and hapū themselves.

He reo, he wairua – the sacred nature of shared knowledge

Multiple participants spoke to the sacredness of knowledge, even in modern formats. Roa raises the issue of data misuse and intellectual property, “that reassurance that you have control over the keeping of these understandings… I have a problem if somebody makes a commercial… advantage for themselves.” This concern echoes the thesis kaupapa — that retention and transfer must always serve collective wellbeing, not individual gain. The challenge is to carry the *ipu mahara* with integrity, especially in digital spaces where sharing can so easily become extraction.

Whakakapinga – te ipu hangarau, te ipu mahara

This section affirms that the digital world is a new tributary into the ipu mahara. Technology — when used with tikanga, when guided by kaupapa, when protected by iwi — can help us carry and transfer our mātauranga. It can help us chant our memories louder, further, and longer.

Yet, the caution offered by participants reminds us: an ipu that leaks, or is carried carelessly, risks losing everything inside. The future of Māori knowledge retention and transfer lies in balancing innovation with integrity, scale with wairua, and openness with protection.

Modern tools can amplify the chant — but only we can ensure it is sung with mana.

5.10 Pou tuarima: Processes, places and people involved in knowledge retention and transference

In the evolving narrative of Māori knowledge retention and transference, three pillars emerge with consistency across generations: the processes through which knowledge is transmitted, the physical and spiritual places that anchor learning, and the people selected to hold and pass on this knowledge. Drawing on the rich testimonies of participants in this study, this pou explores how these three elements intertwine to sustain the whakapapa of knowledge in te Ao Māori.

People – the carriers of knowledge

The selection of individuals to carry knowledge was never random. It was deeply grounded in observation, whakapapa, and intuition. Professor Tom Roa (Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato) recalls that the process began for him at a young age:

> "Ka tae mai tēnei kaumātua Pakimanga tana ingoa… ka mea mai ki taku whaea, e Ura, pīrangi ana au ki tō tamaiti… ka karangatia ai e taku whaea ki a au… kuhu ki roto i a rāua kōrero…"

Though he ultimately resisted this calling at the time, his recollection affirms a traditional process where kaumātua recognised potential in tamariki through spiritual, behavioural, and intellectual markers. Chosen children were often raised in environments that prioritised immersion in wānanga and mātauranga.

Shirley Tuteao (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) elaborates on her own pathway, reflecting on how her parents nurtured what they saw in her "tērā pea he tangata mōhio au… ka whai au i tērā huarahi… ka āhua ka ngoikore haere, engari i roto i taku awa ake… ka kore au e… puta tonu atu au."

Les (Tui) Kana (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) adds a similar experience about his brother:

> "I would say my brother was one of those who was selected… only cos he's like being the older son I suppose, and this was traditional. He was selected by his own father… surrounding uncles and aunties got drawn to him because of the way he took it on board."

These accounts reinforce that knowledge retention was not about academic merit, but whakapapa alignment, whānau foresight, and intergenerational strategy — the weaving of roles within a collective tapestry of learning.

Processes – how knowledge was transmitted

Traditionally, the process of knowledge transference involved immersion, repetition, and spiritual readiness. Roa recalls being taken to *tangihanga* and *hui* not to participate, but to observe, “ka haere au ki tēnā tangi, ki tēnā hui me te noho ki ngā rekereke… he kōrero nui tēnei haere me mau pā…”

This deliberate exposure was experiential learning — ako by proximity. Sitting at the heels of elders (ngā rekereke o ngā kaumātua) was not passive but a method to absorb wairua, tikanga, and reo by osmosis.

Naianga Tapiata (Te Arawa, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Awa, Waikato) reflects on how roles shaped this process, “ko te rārangi tuakana in our tūpuna’s time… the tuakana would be usually the ones that would be taken to learn different things.”

Knowledge was also encoded within names, whakapapa lines, pūrākau, and mōteatea. As Tapiata explains “I think about names… and how that tells a story of a time and why they were named… oh, so that’s when the time when Pākehā arrived…”

Naming served as a time marker — embedding history and context directly into identity. Importantly, knowledge transference was always bound by responsibility. Tapiata notes “he haepapa tō tērā tangata… the responsibility of carrying out that mahi… everyone understood.”

Yet, he laments how some of this has diminished in modern contexts “now all I see is people wanting to be in front of the camera, me te kore mōhio.”

Places – sacred sites and spaces of learning

The physical landscape of Aotearoa has always played a central role in the transmission of knowledge. Places are not simply geographic; they are storied, imbued with mauri and layered histories. Tapiata offers an evocative description “where Mā lives now, Hinemoa Point… kei konei tonu te toka i noho ai a Hinemoa… there’s heaps around we just don’t know where they are.”

These are more than landmarks — they are repositories of memory where kōrero tuku iho can be activated by presence. He continues “our lakes, our maunga… we have tangible things that still exist… like our Ngāwhā.”

The significance of tuahu (sacred altars or platforms) was also highlighted — traditional sites for karakia, atua acknowledgement, and ceremony “koia ko ngā toka, ko ngā wāhi rānei i haere ai ngā tohunga… te tuku karakia ki ō tātou atua.” Even in their neglected or forgotten state, these sites remain potent with potential for revitalisation and reconnection.

The whare wānanga - formal or informal - served as a core place of advanced learning. Tapiata explains “ko te whare wānanga ki a au nei te… tētehi o ngā tino wāhanga… tā te whare wānanga, tā te wānanga he maioha.”

These spaces were not simply schools but spiritual institutions where knowledge was curated, contextualised, and consecrated. Carvers, kaikōrero, tohunga, and weavers were trained within these learning communities.

Kana reinforces that learning could happen anywhere. “he taught him the whakapapa and that own surroundings in his own home… waiata… lived it on the way.”

The home, marae, maunga, and even the natural world itself were — and remain — valid classrooms.

Atua and spiritual dimensions

Atua were central to how knowledge was understood, transferred, and retained. Roa recalls “Tāwhaki is of the generation of Tāne Rongo… atua o te mātauranga pērā i a Tāwhaki, Rēhua.”

These atua embody intellectual pursuit, spiritual ascension, and enlightenment. The story of Tāwhaki climbing to the heavens to retrieve the baskets of knowledge mirrors the aspirational nature of mātauranga itself - the continual striving toward deeper understanding.

Roa further explains the layered nature of pūrākau “ko te pū o te rākau… not just a story. Koinei te pū o te rākau.”

This idea speaks to the root, the pū, of understanding the origin and essence of a knowledge system that continues to nourish generations.

Whakataukī and wisdom lines

Whakataukī remain potent vessels of knowledge, often condensing entire pedagogical frameworks into poetic form. Tapiata shares one from Te Arawa, "tā te whare wānanga, he maioha… tā te tapere, he tūmanako… tā te tangata, he whai."

Each space, each role, each person has a purpose - harmonising like a symphony. This whakataukī illustrates that knowledge transference is a system of collective choreography, not individual achievement. It perfectly aligns with the kaupapa that the *ipu mahara* - the vessel of memory is relational, dynamic, and sacred.

5.10.1 Pou tuarima: Te hononga ki te kaupapa matua – relevance to te Ipu Mahara

The kōrero shared by participants in this pou brings into sharp relief the living threads of Māori knowledge retention and transference. These threads are not separate strands but interwoven elements in the whāriki that supports *Te Ipu Mahara*, the metaphorical vessel holding the chanting memories of an Indigenous people. The processes, places, and people described here are not passive carriers of information, they are dynamic, relational, and deeply situated in whakapapa, tikanga, and Mātauranga Māori.

At the heart of this thesis is a call to recognise how Māori knowledge lives - not solely in books or classrooms, but in voices, in waiata, in places imbued with memory, and in the deliberate shaping of people who are chosen, raised, and guided to carry it forward. This pou affirms that retention and transference are not abstract tasks but relational obligations enacted through aroha, mahi, and time.

Process – rhythm, repetition, and ritual

Participants repeatedly spoke to the importance of wānanga, mōteatea, karakia, and oral repetition as core methods for knowledge retention and transfer. These are not arbitrary practices — they are processes shaped by centuries of ancestral refinement.

As Shirley Tuteao (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) expressed, knowledge is not passed on by chance but through the deliberate embedding of wairua into kōrero — by remembering, and by being intentional, “Me mau tonu, me mōhio tonu ki ngā kōrero, pēnei a koe e tuku ana ki roto i taua ao.” Her reflection illustrates the active agency required in transmitting knowledge, where clarity, mauri, and passion are essential ingredients.

In this way, process is not merely a means to an end — it is an enactment of values. Repetition and immersion are not pedagogical techniques in isolation; they are spiritual practices, cultural affirmations, and political assertions of mana motuhake.

They maintain integrity by prioritising lived engagement over static documentation, aligning with the kaupapa of *Te Ipu Mahara,* which champions Indigenous ways of knowing and doing — kia mahara, kia manawa, kia ora.

Place – memory, mauri, and the sacredness of space

The kōrero of Naianga Tapiata (Te Arawa, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Awa, Waikato) illuminate the power of place-based memory as a critical site of knowledge transference. Their reflection that “location has energy and time has memory” implies that knowledge is not only spoken — it is embedded in the land.

Their whakaaro about the *mauri* of a place triggering ancestral memory signals a deeper understanding: *whenua* is not simply a setting for knowledge — it is a co-creator of it.

This insight is central to this thesis. If chanting memories are to be held and transferred, they must be anchored not only in bodies but in whenua. The ātea, wharenui, urupā, and awa are repositories in their own right, encoded with the presence of *tūpuna* and layered with the stories of generations.

In *Te Ipu Mahara,* these are not passive backdrops — they are active agents in knowledge preservation and transmission.

People – carriers of mātauranga and generational responsibility

As participants describe, the retention and transmission of knowledge often hinge on intentional succession, intergenerational relationships, and specific *whānau* roles.

Tapiata spoke of “those that were raised by their koroua, kuia,” noting that “they were the ones that had all the kōrero.”

This reinforces the critical point that knowledge lives in people. The process of selecting and shaping knowledge holders — through observation of pitomata (potential), through restriction from general play, or through deep wānanga in the whare — aligns with traditional Indigenous models of succession and stewardship.

This resonates with the kaupapa of *Te Ipu Mahara,* which seeks to understand not only the mechanics of how knowledge is retained and passed on, but the people who embody and enact those strategies. It is not merely content that is being transferred, but an entire way of being, thinking, relating, and remembering.

Importantly, participants like Les (Tui) Kana (Ngāti Mahuta ki Tai, Waikato) and Tuteao remind us that role-modelling is key — what is seen and felt daily shapes future behaviour. Tuteao provocatively asks “what is it that I modelled to them? Will I be their framework?” These questions speak to the lived nature of knowledge retention — it is not only what is taught, but what is witnessed, embodied, and repeated across lifetimes.

Fragmentation to whakapapa

This section validates that knowledge retention and transmission are deeply relational, embedded in the tikanga of whānau, hapū and iwi. The processes, places, and people that hold and transfer knowledge are not isolated fragments—they are deeply interconnected by whakapapa. In this way, the participant kōrero affirms that Māori knowledge retention is not only about preserving information but preserving intergenerational relationships, cultural protocols, and ancestral memory.

Ultimately, *Te Ipu Mahara* is not a static container. It is a living, breathing, chanting vessel—sounding the voices of the past, grounding the bodies of the present, and preparing the vessels of the future. The findings in this pou support that kaupapa and offer lived evidence that our knowledge endures not just because it is remembered, but because it is loved, protected, enacted, and gifted on.

5.11 He Rangahau, He raupapatanga – summary of research findings

Whakataki – the kaupapa of retention and transference

This chapter draws together the key findings from the participant kōrero and situates them within the overarching kaupapa of *Te Ipu Mahara* — the chanting vessel of Indigenous memory. Through the stories, insights, and reflections shared, this research affirms that Mātauranga Māori is not static knowledge preserved in archives, but a living, breathing continuum carried by people, shaped by place, and activated through process and relationship.

The central goal of this thesis — to explore how Māori knowledge is retained and transmitted across generations — finds its resonance here. The findings demonstrate that knowledge is not merely stored or remembered; it is embodied, relational, and enacted through deliberate acts of transmission that carry wairua, whakapapa, and tikanga.

Processes of knowledge retention and transmission

Participants identified repetition, ritual, wānanga, karakia, and mōteatea as foundational processes that ensure the continuity of knowledge. These are not simply pedagogical techniques — they are spiritual technologies of remembering. Through rhythm and ritual, knowledge becomes layered into wairua and tinana, turning learning into an act of devotion and identity.

This cyclical process aligns directly with *Te Ipu Mahara:* just as a vessel is continuously filled and poured, so too is knowledge revisited, renewed, and reactivated through time. Retention, therefore, is not about preservation in stasis, but about movement — the ongoing flow between generations.

People as carriers and vessels of knowledge

The research confirms that people are central to Mātauranga Māori. Knowledge is sustained through intentional succession, careful observation, and intergenerational mentoring. Individuals are not chosen at random; they are recognised through whakapapa, spiritual alignment, and the discernment of elders.

Participants' stories reveal that transmission occurs not only through teaching but through modelling — *by living the knowledge*. The knowledge holder becomes *te ipu* (the vessel) themselves. Their voice, actions, and values become the medium through which mātauranga flows.

This finding reinforces a key aim of the thesis: that retention and transference are embodied and enacted, not abstract. The vessel of memory is alive — it walks, speaks, and breathes among us.

Places as repositories and triggers of memory

The findings also reaffirm that whenua is an active participant in knowledge retention. Places — marae, maunga, awa, tuahu, and urupā — act as living archives that hold, protect, and release knowledge. Memory is triggered by presence, by footsteps upon the land, by proximity to the sacred.

This insight grounds *Te Ipu Mahara* in a spatial dimension. Just as the vessel holds and protects what is precious, whenua acts as the ultimate vessel of ancestral knowing. It ensures that knowledge remains anchored to place and people, resisting dislocation and loss.

Orality and embodied knowledge practices

Oral and embodied practices — waiata, mōteatea, pūrākau, whaikōrero, karanga — remain the most enduring and adaptive forms of transmission. Participants described these as repositories that carry both wairua and whakapapa. When knowledge is sung, chanted, or performed, it moves beyond words to become a living vibration — a karanga across time.

This echoes the thesis metaphor of "chanting memories": the rhythmic act of remembering through sound, voice, and movement. Each oral form contributes to the continuity of *Te Ipu Mahara,* ensuring that memory is not only retained cognitively but felt viscerally and spiritually.

Wairua and relational ethics

The participants' reflections reveal that transmission is a sacred act. *Wairua* underpins every exchange, making the act of sharing knowledge both spiritual and ethical. Knowledge is tuku — gifted, not given — and therefore carries responsibilities of care, humility, and readiness.

This reciprocal dynamic — where teachers and learners continually exchange roles — reinforces that Te Ipu Mahara is not owned but collectively tended. The vessel is communal, filled by many hands, guided by tikanga and sustained by aroha.

Contemporary challenges and the role of technology

In the modern era, new tools have emerged as extensions of *Te Ipu Mahara*. Digital technologies — from iwi-led mapping projects to online archives — are being embraced as new vessels for Indigenous memory. Participants viewed these as useful waka when guided by Kaupapa Māori principles.

However, concerns about misappropriation and decontextualisation highlight that technology must serve the collective, not the commercial. The findings affirm that while the form of the vessel may change, the integrity of the *ipu mahara* depends on tikanga, manaakitanga, and community governance.

Knowledge distribution and collective memory

A central insight is that knowledge does not reside in one person but across many. Every *whānau, hapū,* and *iwi* contributes a fragment to the collective *ipu mahara*. This distributed model ensures resilience — when one vessel is emptied, others remain full.

This finding speaks directly to the thesis goal: knowledge retention and transference are collective enterprises. The vessel of memory is plural — woven across bodies, stories, and generations. It is not a singular object, but a network of living relationships.

He whakarāpopototanga – summary and significance

This research set out to understand how Māori knowledge is retained and transferred — how *Te Ipu Mahara* lives, breathes, and endures. The findings affirm that Mātauranga

Māori survives not by chance, but through intentional, relational, and spiritually grounded practices of remembrance.

Each process, person, and place described in this study contributes to the architecture of *Te Ipu Mahara:*

- *Processes* are the rhythmic chants that activate memory.
- *People* are the vessels who carry, shape, and transmit knowledge.
- *Places* are the sacred containers that hold the mauri of those memories.

Together, they form a living system of retention and transference that embodies both continuity and transformation.

Ultimately, *Te Ipu Mahara* represents more than a metaphor — it is a methodology. It is a way of seeing, doing, and being that affirms Māori knowledge as dynamic, embodied, and eternal. The chant continues because the vessel is never empty — it is constantly filled by those who remember, those who teach, and those who receive.

Chapter 6: Hononga i waenga i ngā ahurea | Comparative analysis

6.1 Karakia

Raranga ngā whenu,
Whiria ngā aho.
Kia kotahi ai te korowai,
Hei ārai, hei hāpai, hei whakamana.

We are all in the canoe together,
Indigenous peoples bound as one.
Though the lands are different,
The heartbeat of the world is the same.

6.2 Introduction

Mātauranga Māori, grounded in ancestral connections to whenua, whakapapa, and wairua, is part of a wider constellation of Indigenous knowledge systems that span the globe. As this research journey unfolded through engagements with Indigenous communities such as the Muisca and Wayuu of Colombia, and the Abenaki of Vermont, clear parallels began to emerge. Though each culture is shaped by its own history and geography, they share deep commonalities in how they retain and transfer knowledge. This chapter explores those connections, highlighting both the diversity and the unity of Indigenous epistemologies.

6.3 Relational knowledge – whakapapa and ancestral memory

Central to Māori understandings of mātauranga is whakapapa - the intricate genealogical web that binds people, atua, whenua, and cosmos. As Marsden (2003) describes, whakapapa serves as both a metaphysical and practical framework that links all things through time and space. A similar philosophy exists among the Muisca people, who refer to *memoria ancestral* - ancestral memory - as a living source of guidance and knowledge embedded in sacred sites and landscapes. Among the

Abenaki, stories of kinship between humans, animals, and celestial beings reveal their own genealogical approach to knowledge.

These systems reject the idea of knowledge as detached or objective. Instead, knowledge is seen as a relational inheritance, embedded in one's identity, responsibilities, and connection to the living and spiritual world.

6.4 Oral traditions and sacred transmission

For Māori, oral tradition remains a foundational pillar for the preservation of mātauranga. Kōrero tuku iho, mōteatea, karakia, and waiata all act as dynamic vessels for knowledge. These forms are not merely symbolic; they hold epistemological weight. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2022) asserts that oral traditions must be recognised as legitimate texts that encode generations of knowledge and experience.

In Colombia, the Muisca and Wayuu similarly pass down knowledge through collective storytelling, spiritual chants, and ceremonial gatherings. Their stories are encoded with ecological wisdom, ethical teachings, and cosmological patterns. The Abenaki share stories in seasonal cycles, often aligned with star paths and natural events. Elders speak of how these traditions prepare the next generation to live in right relationship with their environment, ancestors, and responsibilities.

These oral practices are rarely isolated; they are almost always housed within ceremonial, communal, or intergenerational gatherings, further enriching their significance and emotional impact.

6.5 Learning environments – context-based and embodied

In all three Indigenous contexts, learning is not confined to classrooms or formal institutions. It takes place in context—on the marae, by the river, in the forest, or at the fireside. For Māori, marae-based learning and tangihanga offer potent spaces for intergenerational exchange. As participants in this study shared, tangihanga are moments when whakapapa is reactivated and sacred kōrero resurface in response to grief and remembrance.

The Muisca and Wayuu foster learning during community rituals, spiritual offerings, and sacred encounters with the natural world. The Abenaki, too, conduct learning in

seasonal camps, where tamariki and rangatahi are immersed in ancestral practices, language, and environmental knowledge. In these contexts, pedagogy is holistic, place-based, and deeply embodied—students learn through doing, observing, feeling, and being part of a wider collective.

6.6 Knowledge custodians – nurtured by whānau and spirit

Knowledge holders are often recognised not just by skill, but by intuition, character, and spiritual calling. In Māori communities, it is common for certain tamariki to be identified early for their ability to carry kōrero tuku iho, whakapapa, or specific taonga. These individuals are nurtured within whānau or hapū and are exposed to wānanga and cultural practices that deepen their expertise.

Similarly, the Muisca recognise *sabedores* (wisdom keepers) who are often marked by visions, dreams, or ancestral encounters. The Abenaki value the accumulation of wisdom through experience, and the title of knowledge holder is bestowed through community trust, not through formal qualifications.

There is no single path to becoming a knowledge custodian, but across all three contexts, the process is marked by time, service, integrity, and deep relationships.

6.7 Technology – a modern tool or a disruptive force?

The impact of modern technology on knowledge retention and transfer is deeply ambivalent. Māori participants acknowledged that digital tools such as podcasts and online wānanga have made mātauranga more accessible to dispersed whānau. Archiving oral histories and developing digital repositories offer exciting new ways to protect knowledge for future generations.

Yet, concerns were raised around the risks of decontextualising mātauranga, stripping it of its wairua, tikanga, and relational grounding. Similar reflections arose among Muisca communities, who worry about sacred knowledge being extracted or shared without cultural consent. Abenaki elders emphasise that while they support digital storytelling, they insist that protocols and boundaries must remain in place.

As Smith (2022) reminds us, Indigenous knowledge systems cannot be treated as data. They exist within a constellation of spiritual, relational, and environmental factors that must be respected, even in digital formats.

6.8 Cosmological anchors – atua and the stars

For all three communities, the cosmos is a classroom. Māori participants spoke of atua like Tāne Mahuta, who climbed the heavens to retrieve the baskets of knowledge, and Hiwa-i-te-rangi, the star of aspirations and learning. Whetū like Puanga and Matariki are not only seasonal markers but also knowledge guides.

Among the Muisca, solar and lunar deities are revered as the bringers of time and wisdom, their cycles determining planting, rituals, and storytelling. The Abenaki connect teachings to constellations like the bear and turtle, using the night sky as a living curriculum to track seasons, morality, and collective identity.

In each case, cosmology is not myth—it is a navigational system that informs when and how knowledge is transmitted.

6.9 He awa whakatere mātauranga

What connects Māori, Muisca, Wayuu, and Abenaki knowledge systems is not uniformity, but resonance. Each community has developed frameworks for retaining and transferring knowledge that are unique to their geography, language, and history. Yet, they all view knowledge as a sacred gift, to be passed on not only with accuracy but with mana and aroha.

The strength of Indigenous knowledge systems lies in their intergenerational continuity, their respect for spiritual and environmental balance, and their insistence that knowledge must serve the collective.

Whakataukī:
“Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini.”
My strength is not that of a single warrior, but that of many.

This whakataukī captures the essence of mātauranga retention: it is not the burden of one, but the responsibility and legacy of many.

Chapter 7: Ngā kaupapa matua me ngā māramatanga | Key themes and insights

7.1 Karakia

Rarangahia ngā whenu,

Whiria ngā aho.

Kia kotahi ai te korowai,

Hei ārai, hei hāpai, hei whakamana.

Weave the strands,

Twist the threads.

So the cloak may be one,

To shelter, to uplift, to empower.

7.2 Introduction

The kaupapa of this thesis, *Te Ipu Mahara – The Chanting Memories of an Indigenous People*, has been to explore how Māori knowledge has been retained and transferred across generations. This chapter draws together the insights from the literature and the kōrero of participants, weaving them into a set of key themes that illuminate both the resilience and the transformation of Māori knowledge systems. What emerges is a picture of memory as both practice and philosophy: a living archive embodied in chants, stories, genealogies, and pedagogical methods that continue to sustain Māori identity and tino rangatiratanga.

7.3 Whakapapa as the architecture of memory

A recurring theme across both literature and participant kōrero is the centrality of whakapapa as the structural backbone of Māori knowledge. Scholars such as Anderson (2014, 2016) and Ngata & Ngata (2019) emphasise whakapapa not simply as lineage, but as an epistemological system for organising, verifying, and transmitting knowledge. Participants reinforced this, describing whakapapa as a tool that grounds kōrero, legitimises claims, and provides continuity.

Ahorangi Tom Roa, for example, linked his role as a grandparent and knowledge holder directly to whakapapa, crafting oriori for his mokopuna that embed ancestral narratives into their identity. In this sense, whakapapa operates as both method and outcome: it retains knowledge through genealogical sequencing and transfers it by inscribing memory into the lives of descendants.

7.4 Oral transmission: chanting, waiata, and karakia

The literature demonstrates that oral transmission - through mōteatea, karakia, and pūrākau - has long been a sophisticated mechanism of Māori knowledge retention (Mead, 1969; McLean, 1965, 1977; Harrison & Papa, 2005). These forms use rhythm, cadence, and repetition as mnemonic devices, embedding knowledge into the collective memory of the community.

Participant kōrero echoed this. Several emphasised the importance of wānanga and chanting not only for memorisation but for spiritual and cultural alignment. Shirley Tuteao described repetition and balance as vital, underscoring that retention is not just cognitive but holistic - encompassing taha tinana, wairua, hinengaro, and whānau.

These insights affirm that chanting is not ornamental; it is a pedagogical and spiritual technology. *Te Ipu Mahara*, the vessel of memory - therefore becomes audible and embodied in every chant, sustaining knowledge across time.

7.5 Wānanga and pedagogical spaces

The whare wānanga traditions described by Mead (2003) and Best (1986) reveal that Māori learning was embedded in highly structured, sacred contexts. Participants also spoke of the importance of wānanga in contemporary times - spaces where repetition, conversation, and collective reflection allow knowledge to be transmitted and retained.

These findings highlight a continuity between traditional and modern practices: while the settings may differ, the pedagogical principles remain constant. Wānanga are places of deep learning where knowledge is not fragmented into subjects but interwoven through whakapapa, karakia, and ritual. This is consistent with Kaupapa Māori pedagogies that prioritise ako, whanaungatanga, and collective responsibility (Pihama et al., 2004; Smith, 1996, 2022).

7.6 Decolonisation, Indigenisation, and the ethic of restoration

The literature review situated knowledge retention within broader frameworks of decolonisation (Smith, 1999, 2022; Laenui, 2000), indigenisation (Hoskins & Jones, 2022), and restoration (Jackson, 2020). These frameworks provide critical lenses for understanding the ongoing struggle to protect Mātauranga Māori from colonial erasure while also re-centring it in educational, cultural, and political spaces.

Participant voices resonate with these themes. Their kōrero acknowledged both loss and resilience—the mourning of language suppression, but also the resurgence of reo, kapa haka, and wānanga as sites of renewal. This aligns with Moana Jackson's ethic of restoration, where knowledge retention is not simply about survival but about reconnecting with whenua, whakapapa, and tikanga as a foundation for future flourishing.

7.7 The role of the knowledge holder

A significant insight from the interviews is the role of individuals as kaitiaki mahara - guardians of memory. Participants described the responsibility of carrying, shaping, and transmitting knowledge not as an individual choice but as a collective obligation. This is consistent with Wilson's (2008) Indigenous paradigm of relational accountability, where knowledge is inseparable from relationships and responsibilities.

What stands out is that knowledge holders are not static vessels. They are creative agents who adapt forms of retention to meet the needs of their communities—whether composing new oriori, using digital platforms, or embedding mātauranga in contemporary classrooms. Their work ensures that *Te Ipu Mahara* is not only preserved but continually refilled and reshaped.

7.8 Embodiment and holism

Another theme is the embodied nature of memory. Literature on Māori pedagogy (Hemara, 2006; Macfarlane, 2004) and participant reflections both emphasise that knowledge is retained through body, spirit, and environment—not just the mind. Waiata, kapa haka, and karakia embed memory in physical movement, emotion, and spirituality.

This holistic approach reflects Durie's (1994) whare tapawhā model and aligns with participants' insistence on balance. Knowledge retention requires attention to taha tinana, hinengaro, wairua, and whānau. Without this balance, memory is fractured. With it, memory becomes a source of resilience and wellbeing.

7.9 Adaptation and innovation

While much of the thesis has focused on continuity, it is equally important to acknowledge adaptation. As McLean (1977) observed, waiata and haka have evolved under colonial influence, often becoming hybrid forms. Participants too recognised the necessity of adapting knowledge practices to contemporary contexts, whether through classroom teaching, kapa haka competitions, or digital tools.

Rather than being signs of cultural loss, these adaptations can be understood as acts of resilience. They demonstrate the capacity of Māori to protect the essence of mātauranga while reshaping its forms to meet the realities of today.

7.10 Weaving back to Te Ipu Mahara

The themes outlined above - whakapapa, chanting, wānanga, decolonisation, knowledge holders, embodiment, and adaptation, collectively illuminate the kaupapa of this thesis: *Te Ipu Mahara*. The metaphor of the ipu (vessel) captures the idea of memory as something carried, chanted, and refilled. Knowledge is not static; it moves through time, passed from one generation to the next, enriched and transformed along the way.

The voices of participants, woven together with the literature, affirm that Māori knowledge has survived not simply because it was preserved but because it was lived, sung, recited, embodied, and adapted. *Te Ipu Mahara* is therefore both container and process: a vessel of chanting memories that continues to sustain Māori identity, authority, and hope.

Chapter 8: Conclusion and reflections

8.1 Karakia

Unuhia ngā kupu,
Kia rere ki ngā pae tawhiti.
Hei māramatanga mō te iwi,
Hei rongoā mō te wairua.

Release the words,
Let them fly to distant horizons.
As enlightenment for the people,
As healing for the spirit.

8.2 Weaving the threads

This thesis has travelled through the landscapes of *Mātauranga Māori*, guided by the kaupapa of *Te Ipu Mahara – The Chanting Memories of an Indigenous People*.
At its heart, it has asked how Māori knowledge is retained and transferred across generations, and what these practices reveal about the endurance and adaptability of Indigenous memory systems.

The literature traced a deep genealogy of thought: from the *whare wānanga* to *kapa haka*, from *pūrākau* to *karakia*, Māori knowledge has always been a living, relational, and sacred inheritance. *Kaupapa Māori* methodology ensured that this work remained accountable to whānau, hapū, and iwi, while resisting colonial framings of knowledge. Thinkers such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Poka Laenui, Te Kawehau Hoskins, Alison Jones, and Moana Jackson provided the theoretical foundations of decolonisation and restoration that anchor this study.

The voices of participants carried the kaupapa further. Their kōrero illuminated *whakapapa* as the architecture of memory, chanting and repetition as technologies of retention, and *wānanga* as sacred pedagogical spaces. They also confronted the realities of colonisation - the silencing of language, the marginalisation of tikanga, and

the fractures in intergenerational transmission. Yet their testimonies also sang of renewal: composing new *oriori* for mokopuna, embedding Mātauranga Māori in classrooms, and re-imagining chants within digital and performative forms of mātauranga.

8.3 Key insights

Across literature and interviews, several themes were constant:

- Whakapapa is the organising principle of knowledge, structuring memory as a living genealogy linking people, land, and atua.
- Chanting, waiata, and karakia function as pedagogical and mnemonic systems that embody knowledge in sound, rhythm, and wairua.
- Wānanga remain central as communal, spiritually grounded sites of deep learning.
- Decolonisation and indigenisation are continuing acts of reclamation and authority over how knowledge is taught and remembered.
- Knowledge holders as kaitiaki mahara shoulder both preservation and innovation.
- Embodiment and holism anchor memory in body, spirit, and relationship.
- Adaptation and innovation safeguard continuity by reshaping expression without compromising essence.

Together, these insights show that Māori knowledge has survived not by remaining static but by being lived, sung, and re-embedded in new contexts.

8.4 Returning to the research goals

This thesis began by asking how Māori knowledge has been safeguarded, transmitted, and adapted across generations. The findings affirm that:

- Retention is achieved through *whakapapa*, chant, and ritual. The acts are spiritual as well as cognitive that weave learning into collective life.

- Transference occurs through intergenerational covenant, not simple hand-over. It is enacted by kaitiaki mahara who teach, guide, and model through presence and wairua.
- Survival and Innovation emerge from creative adaptation: *oriori* for new generations, integration of mātauranga in education and digital spaces, and the re-awakening of traditional methods within modern contexts.
- In every instance, Māori pedagogies demonstrate resilience through flexibility grounded in tikanga. The vessel of memory remains full because it continues to flow.

8.5 Contributions and significance

This thesis contributes in two intertwined ways. Academically, it extends Indigenous scholarship on memory and pedagogy, demonstrating the complexity and sophistication of Māori systems of retention and transmission. Culturally, it is an act of utu - a return of the kōrero and wisdom gathered back to the communities and ancestors who sustain them.

The metaphor of the *ipu* (vessel) has been transformative throughout this research. Memory is not simply stored but carried; not preserved but enacted. *Te Ipu Mahara* is both vessel and process - a living archive sustained by relationships, ritual, and rhythm. It frames Māori knowledge as a continuum where remembering is itself an act of creation.

8.6 Reflections on practice and identity

Writing this thesis has been both scholarly and personal. As a descendant of Waikato and Ngāpuhi, a teacher, husband, and father, I stand between generations - carrying the voices of my tūpuna while preparing space for my *tamariki* and *tauira*. Through my teaching at Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao, I have witnessed the power of centring Māori knowledge in learning: when whakapapa, waiata, and pūrākau are treated not as tools but as affirmations of identity and mana.

This research therefore extends beyond academia; it informs practice. It reminds me that retention is not an archive on a shelf but a conversation at a wharekai , a waiata

shared to calm a child, a story retold in class to reconnect ākonga to whenua. These everyday acts are the truest *ipu mahara* of our people.

My experiences alongside Indigenous communities in Colombia and Vermont have further revealed the universality of this work. Listening to the Muisca, Wayuu, and Abenaki affirmed that every Indigenous people tends their own vessel of memory. The forms differ, but the essence is shared: knowledge as relationship, as survival, as song.

8.7 Looking forward – The continuing chant

Ultimately, *Te Ipu Mahara* is not a finished project but a living covenant. It will continue to be filled, emptied, and refilled by those who teach, learn, and remember. The survival of Māori knowledge systems is inseparable from the survival of Māori futures. Each *whakapapa recited*, each *wānanga held*, each *karakia spoken* is both remembrance and investment - an affirmation that the chant still carries.

This thesis closes not as an ending but as a commitment:
to keep the *ipu mahara* flowing,
to nurture relationships that sustain learning,
and to honour the voices that entrusted their wisdom to these pages.

The chant continues - echoing across marae, classrooms, and whānau homes, binding past, present, and future together in rhythm, voice, and memory.

8.8 Research contribution and future directions

This thesis contributes new insight into how Māori knowledge systems function as dynamic, self-renewing frameworks for memory. It positions *Te Ipu Mahara* not only as a metaphor for retention and transference, but as an Indigenous methodology that integrates *whakapapa*, orality, embodiment, and spirituality into a cohesive model of knowledge continuity. By combining participant voices with *Kaupapa Māori* analysis, the study extends existing scholarship on Indigenous pedagogy and memory by showing that survival and innovation operate simultaneously within living cultural systems. Future research might explore how *Te Ipu Mahara* can inform curriculum design, inter-iwi collaborations, and digital repositories that honour tikanga and data sovereignty. In doing so, this work invites ongoing dialogue about how Indigenous

peoples worldwide can sustain the chant of their own vessels of memory in an ever-changing world.

8.9 Karakia

Whakakapia ngā kōrero nei,
Kia tau ai te rangimārie.
Hei taonga mō te whānau,
Hei oranga mō ngā uri.

Close these words now,

Let peace be upon us.

A treasure for the whānau,

A wellbeing for the generations.

8.10 Karakia whakamutunga | Closing karakia

Te Reo Māori

Whakakapia ngā kupu,
Whakakapia ngā mahara.
Kia hoki ki te whenua,
Kia rere ki ngā rangi tūhāhā.
Hei taonga mō te iwi,
Hei oranga mō ngā uri.
Kia tau te mauri,
Kia tau te rangimārie.
Haumi ē! Hui ē! Tāiki ē!

English

Close the words,
Close the memories.
Let them return to the land,
Let them soar to the distant heavens.
As treasures for the people,
As sustenance for generations.

Let the mauri settle,

Let peace rest upon us.

United, as one!

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Appendix 1: The full karakia thread

Here is the full karakia combining all the verses weaved throughout the chapters of this thesis:

Te Reo Māori

Whakatōhia te kākano,
Kia puaawai i te ao mārama.
He ipu mahara,
Hei oranga mō ngā uri whakatipu.

Whakatikahia te ara,
Whakawāteahia te rangi.
Kia puare te whakaaro,
Kia rere te kupu,
Hei waiata mō te iwi.

Whakairia ngā kōrero,
Hei pou, hei tūāpapa.
Ngā kupu o te ao tawhito,
Hei ara mō te ao hou.

Whakatūria ngā tikanga,
Hei poutama mō te hinengaro.
Kia tika, kia pono,
Kia ū ki te mana o te kaupapa.

Whakarongo ki te reo,
Ko ngā kaitiaki mahara e kōrero ana.
He taonga tuku iho,
He oriori mō ngā uri.

He waka eke noa,
Ngā iwi taketake e hono ana.
Ahakoa ngā whenua rerekē,
Kotahi te manawa o te ao.

Rarangahia ngā whenu,
Whiria ngā aho.
Kia kotahi ai te korowai,
Hei ārai, hei hāpai, hei whakamana.

Unuhia ngā kupu,
Kia rere ki ngā pae tawhiti.
Hei māramatanga mō te iwi,
Hei rongoā mō te wairua.

Whakakapia ngā kōrero nei,
Kia tau ai te rangimārie.
Hei taonga mō te whānau,
Hei oranga mō ngā uri.

English Rendering

Plant the seed,
That it may blossom in the world of light.
A vessel of memory,
For the wellbeing of generations to come.

Straighten the path,
Clear the heavens.
Let thought be opened,
Let words take flight,
A chant for the people.

Raise up the words,
As posts, as foundations.
The voices of the ancient world,
As pathways for the world to come.

Establish the practices,
As a stairway for the mind.
With integrity and truth,
Upholding the mana of the kaupapa.

Listen to the voices,
The guardians of memory speak.
Treasures handed down,
Lullabies for descendants.

We are all in the canoe together,
Indigenous peoples bound as one.
Though the lands are different,
The heartbeat of the world is the same.

Weave the strands,
Twist the threads.
So the cloak may be one,
To shelter, to uplift, to empower.

Release the words,
Let them fly to distant horizons.
As enlightenment for the people,
As healing for the spirit.

Close these words now,
Let peace settle upon us.
A treasure for the whānau,
A wellbeing for the generations.