
Whānau Mentoring, Māori Youth and Crime:

Possible Ways Forward



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Abstract

This article will discuss how the whānau was the traditional institution for teaching and nurturing children through (among other things) effective mentoring, and how children were taught tikanga, or the 'right way' to think, speak, act and become. Traditional leadership development, whānau dysfunction and whānau renewal are also discussed, followed by my conclusions. This article will not be discussing the place of colonisation, high unemployment, lower education rates and other socio-economic disparities among Māori that play a part in the causes and perpetuation of Māori youth and crime. A discussion on the Treaty of Waitangi, indigenous rights, and Māori development is also omitted although the importance of each of these areas is acknowledged. As the theme of this issue of Childrenz Issues is 'seeking pathways beyond colonisation', the focus of this article is on Māori dealing appropriately with the problems of Māori youth and crime through effective mentoring within the institution of the whānau.

Introduction

The need is urgent for effective Māori mentoring within whānau to appropriately and effectively address contemporary problems and challenges of Māori youth committing crime. Mentoring and coaching has been recognised as a way to address the needs and problems of youth. Various people commented at the national Māori summit, Hui Taumata 2005, on the need to develop a Māori mentoring system in terms of developing people through a Māori business mentoring and coaching strategy; developing/enhancing the pool of exceptional Māori mentors available to Māori business; establishing mentoring and coaching clinics on the model of sports clinics, and linking tertiary alumni networks to mentoring networks (Hui Taumata 2005: Summary Report, 2005, p. 8).¹ The Taumata referred to whānau development in terms of focusing on healing the whānau; investing in mana tane (individual strength) to achieve mana whānau (family solidarity); ensuring educational reinforcement from parents/whānau; providing balance between education and other competing interests, and providing mentoring/whakawhānaungatanga and positive role models. Additionally, the Taumata emphasised the need for Māori to take responsibility for their own health and for being better role models for rangatahi (youth), as well as developing inspirational leadership among rangatahi (Hui Taumata 2005: Summary Report, 2005). The Hui Taumata 2005 findings on Māori mentoring may provide an appropriate option for addressing the needs and increasing problems of Māori youth committing crime. There is a need to adapt, enhance and develop mentoring models for Māori that better reflect Māori community values, tikanga and institutions within the framework of the whānau.

Contemporary whānau reality – overrepresentation in crime and dysfunction

The disproportionate number of Māori offenders and Māori youth tried by the

justice system is a sad but well-known statistic, with Māori comprising approximately half of the prison population (Doone, 2000; Jackson, 1988; Kruger *et al.*, 2004; McFarlane-Nathan, 1999; Te Puni Kōkiri, 1998). The breakdown of the whānau as a functional social institution within Māori society is also discernable. John Tamihere, for example, commented in 2003:

Too often the whānau is not representative of the positive characteristics we traditionally associate with whānau. In the ideal world, the whānau is nurturing, supporting, loving, protecting, teaching, guiding, sharing and strengthening. Unfortunately, in the real world, that is too often not the case. Too many whānau in New Zealand are dysfunctional. Rather than reaping the rewards that a whānau should give them, too many Māori children live among whānau where lessons they learn from their whānau are the lessons of violence, neglect, drug and alcohol abuse, lack of aspiration and responsibility, and welfare dependency. More than half of all reported child neglect and abuse cases in the last year were Māori children. That is a tragedy and a disgrace. (Tamihere, 2003a, p. 2)

Similarly, in April 2006 a Ministry of Social Development Report stated:

As with any ideal of a family, the model of caring, nurturing whānau does not always reflect reality. Māori children referred to CYF are almost twice as likely to be assessed as abused or neglected as non-Māori children; Māori children are significantly more likely to be hospitalised as a result of non-stranger violence than non-Māori; Māori women are more likely to be hospitalised as a result of non-stranger violence than non-Māori, but non-Māori women are more likely to report family violence to the police. Māori are more likely to be separated from their whānau by imprisonment than non-Māori. (Ministry of Social Development, 2006, p. 106)

A poignant example is the murder, on 18 June 2006, of the three-month-old Māori twins, Chris and Cru Kahui, allegedly by their father Sonny Chris

Kahui in South Auckland. The wider Kahui whānau in this situation refused to co-operate with the police investigation, blankly refusing to name the whānau member responsible for the homicides. Minister of Māori Affairs, Parekura Horomia, stated that those whānau members who were covering up the truth were as 'gutless' as those who perpetrated the violence (Young, 2006), thus highlighting the dysfunction of the whānau institution among some Māori.

As a result of urbanisation, many Māori whānau struggle, and, for various reasons, many cease to work effectively, fading out of existence or becoming dysfunctional, fostering instead of checking behaviour that breaches both tikanga Māori and the law. Significant contemporary changes to the whānau institution that affect its well-being include the structure of the parent-child family; a decrease in the number of children per mother; increases in the proportion of de facto as opposed to de jure marriages; multiple partners and civil union recognition of new marriage forms; the frequency of marital break-up; the proportion of one-parent families or children moving between two parental homes, and the increase in Māori life expectancy with implications for relations between the generations and leadership. Each of these (and other) changes to the traditional whānau perhaps highlight the dysfunctional breakdown in whānau institution and traditional mentoring processes. The following sections will shed light on the strength of traditional whānau structures in order to challenge the assertion that dysfunctional whānau have become the rule rather than the exception, and caring whānau more a romanticised myth, as alluded to by John Tamihere above.

Functional whānau historically

Māori society is generally perceived as being traditionally organised along a framework of kin-based descent groups. The continual division and fusion through an increase of numbers in the extended family groups formed larger groupings held together by common descent. Eddie Durie characterised traditional Māori social organisation by the 'atomisation and reformation of autonomous groups, or hapū, and by the absence of centralised regional authorities' (E. Durie, 1994a, p. 12). The literature characterised these 'traditional' kin-based corporate structures

as consisting of four major social classificatory units ranging in size from the whānau (immediate and extended family), to hapū (clan, sub-tribe), to iwi (confederation of hapū, tribe) and finally to waka (tribal confederation) (Best, 1925; Buck, 1950; Firth, 1959; Papakura, 1938; Walker, 1990).

The whānau, the smallest social and economic unit, represented the primary household, which usually extended beyond the biological family to include kaumātua; patriarch koroua and his wife (or wives), and matriarch kuia and her husband(s); their single children or sometimes married children and their families (Hazelhurst, 1993; Law Commission, 2001; Ministry of Justice, 2001). The free members of a household were described collectively as the whānau of its kaumātua. But whānau seems also to have been used to describe a kaumātua and his descendants, a bilateral descent-group including persons who were no longer members of his household, but excluding affines (Metge, 1976, p. 6). Buck (1950) used the term 'biological family' for the whānau, although Winia-ta (1956) held that it was a term 'better restricted to the individual family forming the constituent units of the whānau' (p. 218). Firth (1929) noted that the whānau consisted of three or four levels, including grandparents, parents, children and grandchildren and numbering as many as thirty persons. Best (1924) provided an example of a whānau of two brothers, a sister, their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren – ninety-two persons in all.

Mentoring precedents, social control and cultural checks and balances

Schwimmer (1966) commented on early observations of the behaviour of Māori children:

[E]arly European travellers noticed how little the children were corrected by their elder yet children were so well behaved. They were well trained by older generations in what they had to know. ... The Māori child also learnt from his elders the history, geography, religion, arts, and above all the rules of behaviour of his people. ... He would be told the Māori proverbs and gradually learn the rules of proper behaviour. (pp. 39-40)

Parents were the traditional mentors of Māori children, but there is no word that translates the English 'parent' exactly. 'Mātua' properly refers to all relatives of the same generation as a child's parents. Ranginui Walker noted that

while all adults in a whānau had some part in the nurture and education of children, their particular mentors were grandparents, who were the repositories of mythology, folklore and traditions. The old people were revered not only for their wisdom, but also valued for their own contribution in minding the young and performing tasks useful to the livelihood of the group, hence the elders fulfilled a socially useful role right up to the time of their death (Walker, 1987).

To try to understand traditional Māori child-raising practice, then, it is necessary to recognise that it was developed in the days when parent-child families were embedded in whakapapa-based whānau in situations where they had ready access to other relatives in the same or adjacent households. Metge (1997) noted that:

Underlying Māori child raising practice through all its modifications are two propositions: first, that children are the treasure (taonga) and responsibility of the whole whānau, not of parents only, and, secondly, that parents have both a right and a responsibility to share the care and control of their children with other relatives. Parents are neither expected nor allowed to assume complete control. (p. 6)

While, in most cases, parents were recognised as the primary caregivers, other relatives supported them in that role by carrying out the same functions of feeding, clothing, instructing in social and practical skills, tending when sick, and so on, in a supplementary way in the parents' presence as well as in their absence, these relatives also monitored the relationship between parents and children and, from time to time, received or took one or more children into their own care in order to allow parents to cope with crises in the family unit (such as illness, economic hardship or marital disharmony), or simply to give parents and children a break from each other.

The traditional Māori pattern of child-raising within the whānau was a set of taken-for-granted underlying principles, such as referring to children as taonga: treasures given by God and the ancestors, to be held in trust and cared for as members of a whānau, hapū and iwi, and as inheritors of ancestral names and gifts. Another principle was that children did not belong to their parents exclusively, but to each of the whānau to which they had access through their parents. A further principle was that the rights and responsibilities of raising chil-

dren were properly shared by the adult members of the whānau concerned, and, in some cases, reserved to particular senior relatives. A fourth principle was that children also had rights and responsibilities: they had the right to their genealogical identity, to love, to support and to socialisation in tikanga Māori from other members of their whānau, as well as, and sometimes instead of, their parents. Indeed, Professor Hirini Mead (1998) discussed a child's extensive rights within a whānau as follows:

The act of whakawhānau (giving birth) produces a newborn child, a whenua (placenta) and eventually a pito (umbilical cord). The whenua and the pito are buried or placed within the land of the whānau and that establishes a spiritual link between the land and the child. Once born the child inherits a number of rights called a birthright. The birthright includes:

- *the right to be Māori and the attributes that come with it including mauri, wairua, mana, tapu, whenua and whānauangatangā;*
- *the right to an identity and whakapapa as a member of the whānau, the hapū, the iwi and the waka;*
- *the right to share in the tribal estate, including the rights to succeed to the interests of the parents;*
- *the right to use the marae;*
- *the right to be buried in the urupa;*
- *the right to be listed on a hapū and iwi beneficiary roll; and*
- *the right to share in the benefits of any settlement to the hapū or iwi.*

When the child matures the birthright can be exercised. These rights are automatic and have become the foundation of rights in the hapū and iwi. (Mead, 1998, pp. 7-8)

Children were also expected to honour reciprocal responsibilities to their parents, ancestors and the whānau as a group, including upholding the integrity and mana of the whānau (Metge, 1995). Social control was maintained by collective responsibility. Whānau had to accept the consequences for a member's wrongdoing. Joint responsibility made communities watchful of their recalcitrant members, and offenders conscious of their communities. There were also widely accepted expectations respecting good or appropriate conduct and personal achievement, and a strong sense of whakama (shame) in the event of personal failure. Child discipline inculcated the sense of community responsibility from an early age. Within the kinship group, defaulters were tra-

ditionally punished by the withdrawal of community assistance, demands for compensation, beating, and, more rarely, by execution. The individual was simply a representation of the social groups that constitute Māori society beginning with the whānau, and the behaviour of an individual was carefully observed as their actions affected the mana of the group.

Eddie Durie noted that kinship bonds compelled support for whānau during a crisis without reference to cause or blame, which involved respect for mentors such as tuakana (elder siblings), mātua (parents, uncles, aunts etc), kaumātua (elders) and tupuna (ancestors), and for the decisions and admonitions passed down from antecedents (E. Durie, 1994a). Quarrels were rarely private and the keeping of one's problems to one's self was not a virtue.

When the traditional pattern was at its strongest, there seems also to have been a complementary division of labour with respect to certain important aspects of childraising. Parents, who spent much time and energy making a living to support their family, concentrated on basic skills and discipline, while it appears that grandparents in particular fostered language skills and self-esteem. This childraising practice relied heavily on continuous access to relatives, especially grandparents. When a child's grandparents took over the primary care of a child (whangai tamariki or atawhai), they did so as adoptive parents, especially if they were relatively young themselves, or, if older, they could choose to maintain their status as grandparents. This traditional mentoring process was 'shared childraising'.

Over the last 70 years, however, the traditional Māori approach to childraising has come under increasing pressure from many directions: from the scattering of whānau households by migration, lengthy residence in urban areas, the struggle to make an adequate living, and assimilative pressures from official agencies emphasising individualism and nuclear family patterns. Consequently, some have discarded the traditional pattern in favour of the nuclear family model: some successfully, many at serious cost. Some, released from the supervision and support of whānau relatives, have proved unwilling or unable to carry out traditional parental functions, let alone assume total responsibility for their children. Many, perhaps most, have gone on doing what comes naturally, unconsciously relying on other kin for support or to take charge of certain

aspects of child care, without realising that these kin are no longer available due to distance or competing commitments. Under such circumstances, children can miss out on some of what they need for full development. At least part of what is often interpreted as parental failure can be attributed to a lack of suitable mentors and effective leadership, and to a failure to adapt practise to changed circumstances, or, rather, a failure to recognise the need to do so.

Tikanga Māori and whānau mentoring

Tikanga Māori, or Māori customary laws and institutions, are the traditional body of rules and values developed by Māori to govern themselves. Professor Hirini Mead's recent work is an authoritative and accessible introduction to tikanga Māori and provides understanding of the correct Māori ways of doing things both traditionally and in contemporary society (Mead, 2003). Dr Cleve Barlow also provides a very useful discussion on key tikanga Māori concepts, with some implicit and explicit analysis on specific concepts applying in contemporary Māori life, and includes references to his parents, aunts, uncles, and tupuna mentoring him (Barlow, 1994). Barlow refers to three specific tikanga concepts that are relevant to whānau mentoring, including matua whangai, mana tangata and ūkaipō. Barlow (1994) defined matua whangai as:

... the custom of grandparents raising and taking care of their grandchildren. In days of old, it was a general custom amongst the Māori for the grandparents to take care of the first-born of their grand-children, and the practice continues today, for many grandparents, aunts, and uncles take care of their grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. (p. 81)

Mana tangata refers, inter alia, to the personal power men and women have with respect to their role in taking care of children (Barlow, 1994, p. 62). Ūkaipō refers to a woman breastfeeding someone else's baby during the day, if need be, while at night the mother would look after and nurture her own child. It is not just the physical nurturing of the child, but also the spiritual and emotional nurturing which serves to eventually make the adult. The expression 'kua hoki mai nei ki te ūkaipō' extends the meaning of 'ūkaipō', because it relates to when the pito is buried in the whenua (land), or Papatuanuku. When one uses the expression they are recognising that the

child is also being nurtured in a spiritual and emotional sense as a tangata of that whenua.

Furthermore, the whānau as an institution was, and continues to be, seen as the major arena in which to learn the fundamental values and procedures of tikanga Māori. These values include aroha, where a person expresses genuine concern toward another and acts with their welfare in mind no matter what their state of health or wealth; spiritual awareness, including respect for God, ancestors, the mana of people and the natural world; utu (reciprocity) and kotahitanga (unity). When functioning properly, these values are expressed in mahi-a-ngakau (heart works): providing financial and moral support (awhina), generous care (manaaki) and protection (tiaki) for each other and for visitors, working together (mahi tahi), and being responsible for each other, building up each other's mana, checking behaviours that breach whānau values (such as arrogance, physical, verbal or sexual abuse, crime), sharing blame and reparation (Metge, 1997, p. 4).

One final word on tikanga: historically, Māori tikanga was precise but essentially pragmatic and receptive to change. Major changes were initiated in response to changing circumstances but with consistent adherence to principles of whānaungatanga, other norms and basic values. What was 'tika' was not a 'rule' but was that which was fair or likely to succeed, and was consistent with broad principles or ideology. Hence, the tikanga surrounding whānau mentoring and parenting lends itself to be updated in a contemporary twenty-first century context in terms of both form and function.

Contemporary whānau forms – whakapapa and kaupapa

In contemporary times and as listed above, significant changes to the whānau as an institution that affect its well-being are numerous. John Tamihere, in his characteristic manner, discussed the demographic realities of contemporary whānau in urban centres:

Even though I know my whānau, hapū and iwi, I do not live in the social, cultural, economic or political day-to-day reality of it. ... The reality is that Māori society has changed ... I would suggest that there is just as much whānau reality between members of a good well-run city based kapa haka group, touch team, netball team or league team as there is in some whānau structures. ... This is not about competition; it is about cultural

evolution. (Tamihere, 2003b, p. 59)

The net result of such changes in the whānau structures has been an increase in the diversity of whānau forms – whakapapa (genealogy) and kaupapa-based (specific purpose) whānau. A 2002 Sir James Henare Research Centre Report analysed the institution of the whānau in the Auckland region to include both whakapapa and kaupapa forms:

For many ... the institution of the whānau can contract to exclude certain blood relations or expand to accommodate friends, colleagues and people unconnected by blood or descent. In developing policy for urban Māori well-being which takes account of whānau and whānaungatanga as key cultural institutions, it is also important to recognise that many whānau include both Māori and 'non-Māori' members. (Benton et al., 2002, p. 40; see also Metge, 1964)

Notwithstanding whakapapa and kaupapa whānau forms, Professor Mason Durie asserted that they share more mutual commonalities than differences – they both exhibit behaviours and functions that enforce mutuality, reciprocity and shared responsibilities within a Māori cultural context (M. Durie, 2003a). What is important is collective action and acknowledgement, particularly with addressing challenges of Māori youth and crime through, inter alia, effective leadership and mentoring.

Still, if the costs begin to outweigh the benefits of whānau (whether whakapapa- or kaupapa- based), if participation is too much of a burden, individuals and nuclear families can, and do, opt out of active participation. The whānau outlasts its individual members but the whānau survives as long – and only as long – as it has a core of committed members and can hold most of its new recruits. Hence, the whānau is not static but dynamic, always in process. Careful examination of whānau and hapū history suggests that leadership in those groups was traditionally as much a team effort as an individual one, with siblings or spouses contributing different expertise, as leaders, organisers and repositories of knowledge and spiritual guidance. Spouses also are vitally important to the whānau, as parents of its new recruits, workers and as links and go-betweens with other whānau. If not treated with respect, there is always the risk that they may transfer their loyalty to their natal whānau, taking at least some of their children with them (Metge, 1999).

Māori leadership and mentor attributes

The traditional leaders (mentors) within Māori society included a number of specific categories. Rangatira ('leaders' or literally 'those who hold the group together') led and represented the hapū, either regularly, or sometimes for the purpose of a particular project (for example, war and migration). Rangatira were the most significant functionaries in community affairs as the community organisers and representatives, and they were not necessarily older persons (E. Durie, 1994b). Kaumātua (or literally 'senior parents') were whānau heads who represented the whānau at hapū meetings. The word 'Kaumātua' was usually synonymous with 'elders', and were also referred to as rangatira (E. Durie, 1994b). Whānau members tended to live together under a kaumātua, or family head. While political commitment was to hapū, emotional commitment was to one's immediate kin – the whānau (E. Durie, 1994b). Women, as well as men, were tohunga (experts), toa (warriors), kaumātua (elders) and rangatira (chiefs). Indeed, Dr Wi Repa, in an obituary to his wife as a 'wahine rangatira', provided a useful synopsis of a rangatira in 1926:

The chief is someone who can bind the people at both hapū and iwi level in their endeavours. She is a leader. She starts and finishes tasks and is followed by the people. She is described as a chief whose chiefly lines are held in regard, increased and distinguished, by other tribes. (Repa, 1926, p. 400)

Hence, traditional leaders and mentors were both men and women, older and not so old whānau members, but what specific qualities did whānau members need in order to become leaders and mentors?

Leadership and mentoring criteria

The literature lists specific criteria required for effective mentoring and leadership, both historically and in contemporary times. Hirini Mead's criteria for a leader's mandate and legitimacy included whakapapa (genealogy); talents; acceptance and confirmation by the people; being known by other iwi (tribes); Turangawaewae (one's place to stand); gender; mana (authority, prestige) and tapu (spiritual sanctity) (Mead, 1992). Mead also listed the specific talents required of a leader (mentor), namely: knowledge and industriousness; mediation and dispute-resolving abilities;

courage and being a good strategist in war; knowledge of the art of carving; skills in looking after the people; command of the knowledge and technology necessary to build large canoes or houses, and a sound understanding of the boundaries of tribal lands.

The possession of mana was deemed to be revealed through the possession of such mana-enhancing traits as bravery, hospitality, eloquence, generosity, honesty, integrity, fearlessness, honourableness and scrupulous adherence to promises. The mana of a rangatira was identical to the mana of the people. It was the duty of rangatira to protect those living under them and to protect their own mana, for it was by the mana of the rangatira that a group was protected and united (E. Durie, 1994a). Generally mana rangatira was founded in leadership, care of the people and the ability to engender consensus (E. Durie, 1994a).

Neil Grove also referred to traditional Māori leadership criteria for chiefly (mentoring) qualities, and included abilities in resource management, especially food production; courage and military leadership; expertise in construction matters; hospitality, kindness and liberality; artistic talents; astuteness in mediation; oratorical skill and expertise at conducting various discussion at meetings (Grove, 1985). Similarly, Mahuika (1992), Te Ua (1955) and Winiata (1956) discussed the requirements and credentials for traditional (and implicitly contemporary) Māori leadership selection and effectiveness based on ascription and achievement. In an obituary to the Ngāti Porou rangatira, Ihairaira of Wharekahika, in 1875, some of the qualities that characterised the deceased and his elder brother as rangatira were identified:

Hata was the elder brother, by right of ancestry, and Ihairaira was the younger brother – they were both of equal birth. The power, influence and rank of their ancestors descended to their parents, and to them. By them the people were kept united and drawn together; they were a resting place and shelter for the people; in stormy and troublesome times they were a refuge and a shelter for the people. If a fire of discord broke out in any place, they were the men to extinguish it and settle dissensions and disputes among their people. (Ihairaira, 1875, p. 229)

Furthermore, Mason Durie highlighted at least six primary attributes which Māori expect of whānau leadership, namely: the capacities for caring, sharing, for guardianship, empowerment,

planning ahead and growth (M. Durie, 2003b). Mason Durie's Te Whare Tapa Wha model, although a health model, also has resonance for leadership and mentoring. Durie compared health to the four walls of a house: taha wairua (the spiritual side); taha hinengaro (thoughts and feelings); taha tinana (the physical side), and taha whānau (family). The sides are interrelated as dimensions of each other, so that a concentration on one ought to bring in aspects of the others. Interestingly, not tinana but wairua is seen as basic, providing the foundation for the others. Underlying the whole scheme are the concepts of ora (wholeness of life) and mana (personal power), deriving from a secure relationship with God and the universe (M. Durie, 1994). Each dimension is necessary for the individual's and the whānau's overall health and well-being. The Te Whare Tapa Wha model shows how self-mastery, mana, ora and effective leadership advocate balance and discipline between the spiritual, emotional, physical and whānau dimensions.

Another useful model is provided by Rose Pere's use of the simile Te Wheke – the octopus – with each of the eight tentacles of Te Wheke representing a different health dimension: namely, wairuatanga (spirituality); hinengaro (mental health); tinana (physical health); whānau (extended family across the universe); mana ake (the uniqueness of the individual and extended whānau); mauri (life-sustaining principle in people and objects); ha a Koro ma a Kui ma (cultural heritage), and whatumanawa (emotions and senses) (Pere, 1997). The body and head of the octopus represent the whole whānau unit, and the eyes are referred to as waiora (total well-being of the individual and the whānau). Both M. Durie's and Pere's models illustrate the approach to self-mastery and whānau leadership and mentoring that advocates balance.

Traditional (and contemporary) Māori leaders and mentors, therefore, developed numerous attributes, skills and talents in a balanced, holistic manner that required the self-discipline and self-mastery necessary to maintain their legitimacy. They were taught to lead and govern themselves and then the whānau when the particular need and time required. Contemporary leadership ought to do likewise. Leadership could be negated, however, by younger siblings taking over the role of leader, a fall from grace due to misdeeds or by the cunning actions of others. Furthermore, Ranginui Walker (1992) traced the changing model

of Māori leadership from ascription and achievement to State and self-appointment. Walker specifically noted how Christianity and the forces of capitalism and British imperialism undermined the mana of Māori leadership and effective mentoring.

Whānau renewal

When managed wisely, the tikanga values of the whānau, whether whakapapa- or kaupapa-based, work together to increase its solidarity and its ability to achieve its aims. Whānau need to be strong so they can achieve their full potential and the potential of their tamariki and rangatahi. Unfortunately, too many whānau are isolated and left to sink or swim on their own. Many whānau need to confront serious issues within themselves to become healed and restored before they can fully take control of decisions affecting them. If whānau are dysfunctional, the challenge is to find ways for the whānau to strengthen itself and empower all its members and take more control of their own well-being and development. The whānau renews itself and should be best placed to deal with with conflict or disharmony.

Many Māori words and concepts have dual or multiple meanings, depending on context. In addition to family, whānau also means to cross thresholds or to move from one state to another. Every day we go through life in a constant movement across thresholds, from anger to peace, conflict to resolution, happiness to sadness, and darkness to light. When a whānau member faces conflict and dysfunction, a good whānau ensures that they understand the state that they are in and helps them to cross the threshold, to move from one state to a more appropriate one. Whānau is ever present throughout life and is an entity that should support its members to move from one state to another. Dr Charles Te Ahukaramu Royal discussed the notion of whānau as a birthing process:

Whānau means to [also] give birth ... hence through the act of giving birth we share in the one life. ... The birth that takes place in the whānau is not only the physical birth, but also the intellectual and spiritual birth as well. But we must honestly and seriously ask each other, what kind of spiritual and intellectual whānau is taking place in our physical whānau? Physically we may belong to one particular whānau but what is the spiritual makeup? ... Birth is tremendously important and a key concept inside the traditional Māori world view. It says to me that we only look to the organic and natural

world to find the models that are appropriate for us. (Royal, 2003, p. 45)

As a vehicle, then, the whānau is the best positioned grouping within New Zealand society to effect change through, inter alia, renewal and, as such, it is the greatest resource as Māori pull themselves out of the trenches of colonialism and renew and re-establish themselves as viable cultural, social, political and economic leaders in society. When whānau are functioning in positive and meaningful ways internally, they are likely to be positive contributors externally to the community, hence, the significance of whānau renewal.

Conclusions

Factors impacting on the place and efficacy of the whānau include the stresses of colonisation, modernisation, rapid urbanisation and globalisation, as well as the immense pressures on whānau to make a living. This has resulted in a neglect of the whānau as an institution and its membership, an undermining of ancient and effective tikanga norms and social controls, and a breakdown of the various support systems and networks within whānau. These breakdowns include interruption in inter-generational relations, and dislocation of the right and effective place and roles of whānau members, including elders, parents, spouses, non-tribal members, children and grandchildren.

The whānau as an institution, whether whakapapa- or kaupapa-based, is at the core of Māori social structure, and it has a crucial role in promoting human development and the general well-being of all Māori and, therefore, of New Zealand. There appears to be some uncertainty over the actual rights and responsibilities (traditional as well as contemporary) of whānau membership from grandparents to mokopuna, including rights and responsibilities to draw on whānau resources and reciprocal obligations, such as stewardship over whānau members, leadership development and mentoring. Leadership starts, and is nurtured, from within the whānau, the quantity and quality of healthy whānau will determine the quality and quantity of Māori leadership, which will in turn determine the overall momentum of Māori as a people. No other success can compensate for failing whānau. Whānau is, or ought to be, an immense reservoir of concern and sense of group obligation and the central place for dealing with whānau members who break the law. The whānau, moreover,

has a role to play in preventing offending, in sentencing and in rehabilitation of Māori offenders, and mentoring is a key to achieving these roles.

If Māori are to maintain their place in the world as tangata whenua with functioning and effective whānau, and to if they are to halt the epidemic of Māori youth committing crime, then Māori must make a conscious decision to retain traditional principles and values that imbue the institution of whānau with their character, particularly shared parenting and effective leadership and mentoring. Māori have ignored that which they know best, and have instead succumbed to the hegemonic seductions of materialism, neo-assimilationism and modernisation. An intellectual, spiritual and cultural renewal or re-birth needs to take place individually and collectively within whānau. It appears that Māori need to learn how to be Māori; whānau members need to learn how to be whānau, kaumātua (elders, grandparents) need to learn how to be kaumātua, mātua (parents, aunts and uncles) need to learn how to be mātua, and even tamariki (children) and mokopuna (grandchildren) need to learn their roles, rights and responsibilities. Whānau members and the whānau as a social institution are inherently able to fulfil age-old roles and responsibilities despite the inevitable tensions of modernisation. It is acknowledged that none of this is easy (raising a family is never easy), but for many Māori, and non-Māori for that matter, shared parenting and mentoring should come naturally, only needing further refinement.

Finally, the physical, social and spiritual well-being of a Māori child (and parent and grandparent) is inextricably linked to the sense of belonging to a wider and functional whānau group, hence the whakatauki (proverb): 'E kore au e ngaro, he kākano i ruia mai i Rangiatea' – 'I shall never be lost for my seed was sown at Rangiatea' – the abode of the Gods. If whānau do not get their act together and effectively teach, nurture and discipline their tamariki and mokopuna as they did traditionally, then the state will teach and discipline them in a manner that is foreign, costly and totally ineffective, as is the present case. Traditional processes such as shared parenting and leadership development through mentoring within the whānau therefore require urgent attention.

Tenā koū tou katoa.

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Note
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- 1 The Rt. Hon. Helen Clark and the Hon. Parekura Horomia emphasised the need for strong leadership for Māori development. Rod Oram, Graham Pryor, Hinerangi Edwards and others emphasised the need for Māori mentors who are exceptional role models and developing a best practice tool kit that included a coaching/mentoring system using the sports model; while Mason Durie discussed the need for Māori to focus future goals on

enhanced whānau capacities, governance and leadership. The Hui Taumata 2005 speeches can be retrieved from <http://www.huitaumata.maori.nz>.

Dr Robert Joseph recently completed his PhD at the University of Waikato in 2006. His thesis examined Māori governance in an international and corporate law context where he compared the Waikato-Tainui, Ngāi Tahu and Nisga'a (Canada) post-Treaty settlement governance models as case studies. Dr Joseph is also a research Fellow at Te Mātāhauariki Institute, University of Waikato, which explores possible ways in which the legal system of New Zealand can appropriately accommodate for the best of both Māori and non-Māori laws and institutions. Dr Joseph is also a solicitor, lecturer and facilitator of Treaty of Waitangi, Māori health and governance workshops.