Whakaoranga taiao, whakaoranga tangata: The restorative, healing, and decolonising potential of environmental restoration

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the ways in which Māori who are involved in environmental restoration are able to use their experiences to reconnect with Te Ao Māori. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three Māori who have been involved in environmental restoration in and around Kirikiriroa. These research participants were also able to speak to what they have observed in other restoration projects at their respective marae and comment broadly about this work as it is taking place across Aotearoa. It became clear through this research that the impacts of history and colonisation are still felt heavily by Māori in the environmental space today. For Māori involved in environmental restoration, this is a place where they are able to learn and share knowledge and reconnect with their Māoritanga. Environmental restoration can help restore wairua relationships with the whenua and strengthen Maori wellbeing through strengthening relationships with the whenua. Engaging in environmental restoration supports decolonisation as, for the aforementioned outcomes of doing so, being in these spaces supports the affirmation of an Indigenous identity.

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PREFACE

I am assuming the Māori words that I will use in this thesis to be common knowledge in Aotearoa. I initially intended to not provide any translations of Māori words, as I am similarly not providing Māori translation of my English words, considering this to be an expression of my Mana Māori Motuhake. However, for the sake of readability and to further universalise the accessibility of this thesis for other Indigenous readers, I have provided a glossary and some in text definitions for readability.

I use the term ‘environmental restoration’ rather than ‘kaitiakitanga’ throughout this thesis. This is because it suits as a better umbrella term for the range of restoration projects that my research participants speak about. Some projects like those that are marae-based or have been instigated by Māori more clearly stand out as kaitiakitanga, but I have not wanted to ascribe this term universally across the restoration projects in this thesis.

Throughout this thesis I use personal pronouns such as 'we' and 'us' to refer to, and position myself as Māori.

I will be primarily using Māori names for places to resist the colonial renaming of our spaces and places, in particular Kirikiriroa rather than Hamilton.

I use the term ‘Māori’ for the tangata whenua of Aotearoa. In doing so however, I acknowledge that an assumed universal ‘Māori’ experience is problematic and colonially applied to us, discounting the mana that is the rich diversity of our unique place-based polities and identities of hapū and iwi, who maintain their respective rangatiratanga in their respective rohe.

I use the term ‘Pākehā’ for those non-Māori who alongside Tauiwi are in Aotearoa by right of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Claiming Pākehā identity is a political act that states an identity based in and of Aotearoa, generally of Western European ancestry, but formed as an identity in relationship with Māori as mana whenua in these islands.

Although I am based in Waikato and my whakapapa is Waikato, I am not making use of the Waikato convention to use double-vowels in words where other Māori would use a tohutō (macron). For the sake of wider readability, I will be using tohutō in Māori words throughout this thesis.

I will capitalise Indigenous Peoples as an act of political solidarity with the myriad of Indigenous Peoples surviving and thriving colonisation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Ko wai au

My only direct Māori forebears alive during my lifetime have been my mother, Ngaire, and her mother, Eleanor. My father, maternal grandfather, and both paternal grandparents are Pākehā, a mix of Irish, Scottish, English and some Scandinavian. My Māori grandmother was the matriarch of my Mum's side of the family. She is still to me the strongest connection I have back to a Māori world. I refer to my grandmother here to introduce and personalise the experiences of Māori in Aotearoa and to hold my whakapapa at the forefront of my own experiences of how I came to this kaupapa.

I don't know if I ever went to our marae, Poihākena in Whāingaroa (Raglan), before the death of my grandmother, if I did I either have no memory of it, or my memories from that time have blurred with later trips out there. The earliest memories I do have with my marae were with the tangi of my grandmother. I remember as a child sitting with her outside the wharenui during the day. I remember playing with my cousins and the other children, exploring, and making tunnels and forts in the toitoi and gorse in the paddocks around the marae. I remember the freedom that we children seemingly had while the adults were occupied with adult things. I remember those ubiquitous multicoloured Carnival soft drinks put out for us kids. I remember watching my uncles digging their mother's grave the morning that we buried her. It was so big that my mother described it as them 'having poured all of their grief into digging that hole'.

I remember how after her tangi we seemed to go back to the marae a lot more. We would be at different tangi of people I didn't know. Our whānau seemed to be down at the urupā a lot, where parts were overgrown with thick gorse. I remember sawing branches - although what contribution I could have made

could not have been much. I remember the bonfires that cleared the heaped piles of plants and branches. I remember the wrought iron half-fences reemerging from the overgrowth like ancient history being rediscovered, still standing, outlining their body-sized plots where some whanaunga lay. I remember the rubbish on the other side across from the urupā, old mattresses, whiteware, and cars. That rubbish is all long gone now and the urupā now remains cleared and tidied.

Whāingaroa is a special place to me. It was potentially special to the Japanese during WW2, making it particularly special to the Crown. My grandmother was born and raised in a one-room dirt-floored ponga whare on the shores of that harbour. I grew up with the stories from my grandmother as a child watching the Government bulldozers come to take our old marae when they wanted space for an airfield in case of a Japanese invasion. I always thought this was a tragedy and an outrage. I only learned much later in life that of the eleven potential sites for this airfield, ten were owned by Pākehā. That is how our land was chosen. That is how we lost our marae. This raru would entrench Whāingaroa as noteworthy in Māori political activism. I remember Aunty Eva from my childhood days in Whāingaroa. Bumping into her on the street, I remember her long hair and her warm smile. Again, it was only as I grew up that I learned of her arrest and activism, and of my grandmother joining her, sitting on our whenua, culminating in the return of that land, forever putting the Raglan Golf Course into the annals of Māori activism. It was only much later again as I became attuned to issues of political racism and activism, that I learned in my mother's childhood she was in Whina Cooper's hīkoi walking from Johnsonville to Parliament in 1975, and that she had also been at Bastion Point, describing these things with the almost throwaway remark, "We just went where Aunty Eva sent us."

I've never really talked to my mother's generation about their relationships with our marae when they were growing up. But after my grandmother's tangi and her return in rest to our marae, it seemed fitting that our whānau gave back to the marae and to that land, by way of land restoration down at the urupā. I am fortunate to have been a part of this as a child, especially as an urban Māori

who has since largely grown up away from my marae, and who still barely returns, other than for tangi. But these experiences of my grandmother's tangi and the weeks we spent clearing the land were formative for me and the world-shaping of my youth, planting the seeds for my conscientisation into broader issues of social and environmental justice from these experiences of being Māori.

I see in the kōrero from my research participants, that they too are creating similar experiences and opportunities for themselves and their whānau. They are reconnecting and overcoming a sometimes traumatic disconnection of the tangata-whenua relationship. And they are doing this for their children and for the countless generations to follow, to be able to grow up grounded in their places, their hands dirty and rough from physically nurturing and tending to the reciprocal relationships with whānau and whenua, with marae and identity, and with whakaaro and whakapapa.

Subjective positioning

I acknowledge an inclusive view of my subjective positioning as a researcher. I cannot separate from myself my Māori whakapapa and my Pākehā ancestry. Save for the occasional poorly constructed ethnicity question, I have never had to be exclusive. I am an expression of the natural environment that formed the identity of my tūpuna and of myself. I can't go somewhere and not be an expression of my whakapapa. Understanding this to be true necessitates my understanding of the whakapapa relationships between myself and everything else in the universe, in Te Ao Mārama (the world of life and light that we live in), and my familiar relationship extending backwards and across space and time. This will always be my starting place. Wilson (2008) discussed that, in Indigenous understandings, being in relationship with something is more important than the thing itself, and that, "Rather than viewing ourselves as being in relationship with other people or things, we are the relationship that we hold and are part of" (p. 80).

Acknowledging privilege

It is an immense privilege that I have been fortunate to have been born into and raised with the opportunities that have been afforded to me. I was fortunate to have been raised by parents who owned their own home. We were stable and able to garden, which my parents always did a lot of. I was raised with a passion for gardening which has stayed with me, although I have been limited in being able to practise this while living in various rented accommodation. I am similarly privileged to have been raised in a family that stressed the importance of education, and by parents who were able to support my sister and I to study, whether financially or through words of encouragement. I was fortunate to have grown up knowing my whakapapa, to have a developed understanding of where I am from, both my Māori ancestry and Pākehā alike. I have been raised with an awareness of my place in the world and have had the resourcing to support me to explore that world.

How I came to this thesis

I have largely committed the entirety of my adult life to being engaged in a variety of environmental and social justice issues. I have been fortunate to have been employed in the social justice space with Mahi Mihinare Anglican Action in Kirikiriroa. Here I have been able to agitate and advocate, using research and community organising, across a range of issues that have been related to our work as a 'justice through service' Mission in Waikato. Part of this time was also assisting with Poverty Action Waikato on similar community-based issues. We were advocating for a greater provision of resources and opportunities to be shared by all, and also striving to stop the further retreat of responsibility on the part of the state to provide meaningful and dignified support to those who may need it. I have also until very recently been involved at a governance level with the several other community organisations in the social and environmental spaces.

This thesis topic for me is the result of having engaged and recommitted to issues related to my Māori identity, in particular after years of often being the only Māori in the room, being asked to offer karakia, and being asked to offer

perspectives from a way of life that I will feel forever inadequate to speak on behalf of. These experiences will not be uncommon for many Māori. I returned to Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato in 2018 to undertake Te Tohu Paetahi, a full immersion Te Reo Māori programme. This reignited my passion for Te Ao Māori, and for framing the issues I was passionate about in community, social, and environmental justice through my own experiences and as Māori, and the responsibility I felt to do right for my people. This culminated in my commitment to continuing to study while returning to work, to undertake this Masters of Māori and Pacific Development.

Writing in the time of COVID

I have been enrolled in my Masters throughout the interruption of COVID in Aotearoa. This experience placed increased demands on my workload in the community sector and, coupled with the transition to remote working, took a toll on my thesis headspace and productivity. COVID highlighted issues related to this thesis; the consequences of a way of living that is out of balance with natural systems, our utter interconnectedness, the need for inclusive global collectivisation over individualised responsibilities, and the legacy of colonially produced and perpetuated inequities.

> Like nothing else, the fragility Covid brings has shone a beacon on the interconnectedness of some of the deadliest sins of our time… It [COVID] has highlighted the deadliness of the values of corporate capitalism, state socialism, war economies, spiritual bankruptcy, rampant consumerism and the stupidity and barrenness of pursuing the 'golden calf' of materialist expansion alone. Yet most countries are still wedded to these goals. (Consedine, 2021)

The Government could make funds available to subsidise businesses to keep workers employed. Perhaps they could do this to sunset the fossil fuel industry and seed fund countless greener transitions? The Government introduced an extra benefit payment for workers who found themselves out of their jobs. Perhaps the Government could just increase the unemployment benefit for all New Zealanders not in work?

After this first lockdown, however, the sense of collectivism faded fast. The subsequent spread of COVID, the return to lockdowns, and the vaccination rollout and mandates became mired with fatigue and exhaustion. These things independently and together, would become catalysts for political opportunism from a confluence of conspiracy theorists; far-right extremists, conservative evangelical Christian fundamentalists, anti-state activists, and Trump-ites, to gather and rally, espousing misogyny and eschewing science and reason in favour of magical thinking to cope with and take advantage of the times. Some of these groups and movements globally have associations and funding from far-right racist groups and individuals (Mahdawi, 2022).

Radicalised throughout this movement were many Māori. Many of whom have been victims of the disadvantage inherited and maintained by successive governments since the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s, atop the imposition of the settler Crown over our ancestral lands and customs since the 1840s. It has been a challenging time for Māori, to watch as many of our collective whānau participated in movements counter to traditional values of kotahitanga and speaking out against the leadership of Hapū and Iwi Rangatira. It is in fact Indigenous People, by resisting land use changes globally, who are actually helping to prevent pandemics. Land use changes have been identified as the leading cause of emerging infectious diseases (National Food Strategy, 2021; Patz et al., 2004).

> It's clear "learning to live with virus" is the same paradigm thru which we will be conditioned to live with climate crisis – as the structural effects of capitalism are obscured by calls for individual resilience amidst a supposedly natural (and thus unresolvable) catastrophe. (@tsengputterman, 2022)

The interruption of COVID served as another example of the precarity of our current economic system and how counter our predatory, extractive, greed-based system of economic growth has become to our relationship with the natural world. It is to our natural world that our wellbeing and survival as humans, and our future as descendants of the earth, so depends upon.

Research aims

This research aims to explore the relationship for Māori working in environmental restoration and experiences of improving wellbeing; their identity as Māori; and the relationship they see this work having with decolonisation.

The main question this thesis sought to explore was 'What are the experiences of Māori involved in environmental restoration?' To answer this question, several sub questions were also posed:

1. How does the wellbeing of the taiao relate to your wellbeing?
2. How does this mahi relate to your identity as Māori?
3. How does this mahi relate to ideas of decolonisation?

The purpose of this research is to contribute to a body of knowledge about the value of environmental restoration and kaitiakitanga as it supports Māori to reconnect with Te Ao Māori. My intention for this research is to add value to the many individuals and whānau who are employed, or give freely, their time and energy towards restoring our taiao and, in so doing, are restoring ourselves, our communities, and our connection with whenua.

Chapter overview

Chapter One is an introduction to myself and my whakapapa, as a way to identify myself as a Māori and Pākehā researcher, and share what experiences and opportunities from my life have brought me into the academy and to this particular topic.

Chapter Two is a review of the literature, presented as historical background information. As this thesis is concerned with Māori land relationships, Chapter Two includes definitions of some key concepts that help position Māori within celestial and spiritual forces bigger than ourselves, which need to be respected and maintained in balance. The arrival of Europeans to Aotearoa disrupted the relationships that Māori had with their lands and the impact of this disruption will be discussed. This moves into some of the actions to redress wrongdoings

and explores the growth in conservation work and how aspects of Te Ao Māori have been incorporated into these. I conclude this chapter with a discussion on some of the ideas of decolonisation, restoration and healing, and what justice might look like in this space.

Chapter Three is my methodology chapter, where I discuss kaupapa Māori research and the political rationale for the significance of Indigenous research and why in particular this relates to experiences of Western science by way of environmental science. This chapter also includes a description of my ethics and my research participants.

Chapter Four is my analysis and presentation of data. This chapter describes the thematic analysis I used to create and collate my data into themes and presents this through descriptions and direct quotes from my research participants. This is organised into the four themes of: the legacy of colonisation, environmental restoration as a place for sharing knowledge, environmental wellbeing and human wellbeing, and, environmental restoration as a decolonising space.

Chapter Five discusses my research findings in terms of how these themes relate to the relevant literature reviewed in chapter two. The findings discussed here are arranged again in the four themes identified through my data analysis in Chapter Four. These themes are arranged and presented chronologically moving from the past, the present, and towards the future, looking at Māori aspirations.

Chapter Six presents my conclusion to my initial research questions and how my research participants have helped to answer and support responses to those questions. The strengths and limitations of my research are discussed here, so are some suggested future research topics to support this research kaupapa to be further developed.

CHAPTER TWO

A review of the literature

This chapter will present a chronology of the arrival of Māori in Aotearoa and will introduce core concepts of significance to Māori relationships with nature, before and after the arrival of Europeans. The resulting conflict and experiences of colonisation will also be described in terms of how these have impacted on relationships with nature in Aotearoa. There will be an overview on what decolonisation might look like with an examination on how this could contribute to a redress and to healing for our people and the land.

I te timatanga

It is important for me to begin exploring the literal groundwork of my research, that being the whenua. The role of land in identity creation is important throughout this thesis so it is important to start at the beginnings of the universe, the land, and the people.

Ko Te Kore

The void, energy, nothingness, potential

Te Kore-tē-whiwhia

The void in which nothing is possessed

Te Kore-tē-rawea

The void in which nothing is felt

Te Kore-i-ai

The void with nothing in union

Te Kore-tē-wiwia

The space without boundaries

Nā Te Kore Te Pō

From the void the night

Te Pō-nui

The great night

Te Pō-roa

The long night

Te Pō-uriuri

The deep night

Te Pō-kerekere

The intense night

Te Pō-tiwhatiwha

The dark night

Te Pō-tē-kitea

The night in which nothing is seen

Te Pō-tangotango

The intensely dark night

Te Pō-whāwhā

The night of feeling

Te Pō-namunamu-ki-taiao

The night of seeking the passage to the world

Te Pō-tahuri-atu

The night of restless turning

Te Pō-tahuri-mai-ki-taiao

The night of turning towards the revealed world

Ka puta ko ngā Pō, ka puta ko ngā Ao

Ka puta ko Ranginui e tū iho nei, ko Papatūānuku e takoto nei

Ka piri rāua ka puta ko ā rāua tamariki

Then came the Night, then came the World

Then came Ranginui standing here, Papatūānuku is laying here

They joined together and then came their children

Ki te Whai-ao

To the glimmer of dawn

Ki te Ao-mārama

To the bright light of day

Tihei mauri-ora

There is life

This thesis discusses human-whenua relationships so it felt appropriate to begin this with the above karakia. This statement of progression recalls the whakapapa of creation, from Te Kore (the void, nothingness, potential), to Te Pō (night), to Te Ao Mārama (the world of life and light) (Harmsworth, 2020). The significance of whakapapa is highlighted throughout this thesis. I also offer this karakia by way of whakawhanaungatanga (the process of creating connectedness and relations based on sharing of whakapapa and identity), to you, the reader, to begin an understanding of the Māori epistemological perspectives I am bringing forward through this thesis.

I ngā wā o mua

Some of the key terms and concepts that I will use require a greater explanation than a simple translation can meaningfully or appropriately do justice to. I will now introduce these concepts as they fit into this next phase of the world of Māori in Aotearoa.

Again, beginning with whenua, the land, is an important and literal grounding of these ideas. Whenua is an important concept in terms of understanding a Māori identity being place-based. Mead (2003) offers a three-fold definition of, "whenua as placenta, whenua as ground and whenua as land" (p. 286). Whenua applies discretely to each of these definitions respectively, but also to a collective, relational understanding between humans and earth. The most basic and common translation of whenua as 'land' oversimplifies the nuance of the human-land relationship that is deeply imbued in the term. A useful definition needs to acknowledge placenta, ground, and land together to usefully conjure the conceptual understanding of the significance of whenua -as each of these- for Māori. Here also then we can begin to frame whenua in a birth-life-death relational cycle. The nourishing, life-sustaining role of whenua as the fetus-supporting placenta. After a child is born the whenua as placenta is returned to the earth and buried, grounding the child in relationship to both place, where that child's people are from, and to Mother, Papatūānuku.

Whenua as land includes the role of land as having capacity for people to reside upon, to cultivate kai, and natural resources with which prosperity and in turn, the ability to provide manaakitanga can be derived from (Tamihere, 2021). So whenua is a source of pride and status for a community. It is the basis for economic activity and determinants of wealth and health that the land provides. For Māori, land was a powerful "source of identity, belonging and continuity, shared with the dead, the living and the unborn" (Rameka, 2018, p. 371). In the practice of pepeha, the naming of geographic features from where you are from is another way that Māori reinforce identity as being derived from the natural environment in how we introduce and make connections with each other. Further emphasising the connection between humans and the land, other words also have a duel meaning: iwi meaning a nation or tribe of people, and kōiwi meaning bones (which were usually returned to the earth after death), and hapū meaning sub-tribe and also pregnancy (Harmsworth, 2020; Mead, 2003; Walker, 1990).

Whenua is of such defining importance for Māori. "You can't be tangata whenua without whenua" (T. Tuiono, personal communication, November 27, 2021). Genealogical links spanning back through creation stories link Māori as being with, and of the land, but also, 'as the land' (Te Aho, 2011). It is knowledge of whakapapa that sustains, "mana tangata, mana whenua or Māori land ownership" (Jones, 2018, p. 13). Maintaining control over land was by those who had a physical presence on the land. The idea of ahi kā was that those who maintained the 'home fires' kept the hearth alive to provide hospitality and livelihood in a place (Ministry of Justice, 2001). This idea of being physically on the land to assert ownership would come to feature heavily in post-colonial political actions seeking the return of land, at places such as Bastion Point, the Raglan golf course, and more recently at Ihumātao, and Pukeiāhua (Te Ara, 2012; Rowe, 2021).

The next key term is whānau. Whānau is the term for birth, and the name for the family. It is "the basic social unit of Māori society, the extended family. Thus, the birth unit is a close knit, relatively small group into which new members are received" (Mead, 2013, p. 286). The importance of whakapapa

and familial relationships emphasise that for Māori we were organised more through a ‘common bond’ of relationships rather than a ‘common cause’ or identity as the basis for our sense of unity or relationship (Tamihere, 2021). Metge (1990, as cited in Bishop, 1998) describes that:

> …to use the term whānau is to identify a series of rights and responsibilities, commitments and obligations, and supports that are fundamental to the collectivity. These are the tikanga (customs) of the whānau; warm interpersonal interactions, group solidarity, shared responsibility for one another, cheerful cooperation for group ends, corporate responsibility for group property, material or nonmaterial (e.g. knowledge) items and issues. These attributes can be summed up in the words aroha (love in the broadest sense, i.e., mutuality), awhi (helpfulness), manaaki (hospitality), tiaki (guidance). (p. 204)

Supporting those whom we have bonds with entails the ideal of manaakitanga. Manaakitanga is often misused as simply a translation to the Pākehā word ‘hospitality’, but it is far broader and more holistic. Tamihere (2021) describes manaakitanga as:

> … it is also a very practical and pragmatic action. Manaakitanga doesn’t just relate to extending welcome and hospitality it also related to everything that is required, physically, pastorally, emotionally, spiritually, to provide protection and nurture towards your whanaungatanga relationships and your whakapapa relationships… Manaakitanga means you have to know how to put food on the table, or keep the lights on, or how to provide fuel for the car to use to take your kids to school or to go to work. (Tamihere, 2021, 17:36)

We have now established how whenua, whānau, and manaakitanga relate to establish a system that provides for the wellbeing of people in a society. Māori society was complex, where, “social control in Māori society was maintained by an interlocking system of rank, mana, utu, and spiritual beliefs pertaining to tapu, mauri and makutu.” (Walker, 1990, p. 67). Māori ideals of social harmony were collective, and existed within a dynamic kinship-based society (Tomas and Quince, 1999). Māori law was a values-based system with appeal

to principles, in comparison with the rules-based Pākehā system of law which would be imposed upon Māori (Ministry of Justice, 2001). Tikanga were the rules of how Māori acted:

> In simple terms tikanga is a values system about what 'ought to be' that helped us sustain relationships, and whaka-tika or restore them when they were damaged. It is a relational law based on an ethic of restoration that seeks balance in all relationships, including the primal relationship of love for and with Papatūānuku. Because she is the Mother, we did not live under the law but rather lived with it, just as we lived with her. (Jackson, 2020, p. 140)

Whakapapa in a literal translation is the act of layering or creating a base. This term is commonly understood in English as genealogy. However, this translation misses the relational nature of this concept. Whakapapa supports a kincentric ecology compared to the direct lineal relationships of genealogy. Kincentric understandings of the world are rooted in creation narratives that reveal a clear family tree using taxonomy or whakapapa, configuring the relationships of all things in the universe going backwards through common ancestors, and in this there is an innate sense of care and responsibility for all of those in our family (Salmón, 2000). Whānau and hapū are important for maintaining the knowledge of their respective whakapapa (Jones, 2018). Māori understandings of the natural world are based on whakapapa relationships in a holistic, whole-of-system approach, with balance across the entire system being necessary to maintain the order of the universe (Harmsworth and Awatere, 2013). Central to Te Ao Māori is the protection of Papatūānuku (He Puapua, 2019). The life-sustaining continuum then included the role of whānau and hapū, the community and social system, practising kaitiakitanga to maintain a balance of wellbeing for themselves and to support their environment's ability to provide for them. The obligation, as Māori, to protect the environment is understood as the concept of kaitiakitanga. Walker et al. (2019) define kaitiakitanga as "a practical philosophy of environmental guardianship" (p. 1), and is for the purpose of, "protecting reciprocal relationships between people and the environment" (p. 3).

The next concept is the idea of mauri, the key essence or life force of something. The protection and promotion of mauri is, “a key outcome and responsibility for kaitiakitanga… to restore balance back to a whole system” (Harmsworth, 2020, p. 35). Townsend et al. (2004) describe the protection of mauri as, “the primary management principle for Māori” (p. 1). For example, water as understood by Māori contains mauri, a lifeforce, sourced from the pain and separation of Ranginui and Papatūānuku (Ministry of Justice, 2001). This spiritual, holistic understanding of the value of water versus the Western understanding of water as a resource, is at the root of the ontological challenges in addressing environmental degradation in Aotearoa. For Māori, “the mauri, the vital essence, is the same spiritual stuff as vivifies and enlives human beings and all other living things. To violate the purity of water is therefore to violate your own essential purity.” (Ritchie 1988, as cited in Ministry of Justice, 2001, p.45). These are not simply spiritual phenomena or experiences. In a very real sense, the imperative to ensure the quality of your water supply is healthy is crucial for humans to drink and cook with, but also so the plants and animals that live in and depend on that water, which humans also depend on, are kept healthy. This is the holistic whole-of-system thinking, as understood through kaitiakitanga.

These concepts and understandings of the universe and our place, as Māori, in the system, including what our obligations and responsibilities are, would ultimately be impacted violently by the arrival and interactions with Europeans in Aotearoa.

I te taenga mai o te Pākehā

I will briefly outline some of the events in relation to the colonisation of Aotearoa and the impact of these actions on Māori. However, I will not offer this summary as an exhaustive description as I consider the realities of colonisation to be common knowledge in Aotearoa.

For Māori, iwi were the largest of the organised political entities. There was no single polity in arrangement for the entirety of islands we now refer to

collectively as Aotearoa. The many Iwi were the respective Nations within these islands. The arrival of Europeans however began to develop the need for pan-Iwi collectivity in negotiations with the Europeans. The constitutional foundations of Aotearoa as a national polity, are, He Whakaputanga o Te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni 1835 (The Declaration of Independence of New Zealand), and Te Tiriti o Waitangi 1840 (The Treaty of Waitangi). He Whakaputanga o Te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni 1835 was an international declaration asserting the sovereignty of the Independent Tribes of New Zealand in a way that would be understood by the international community under the witness of the Crown Resident (Network Waitangi Otautahi, 2018, Tapsell, 2021). Te Tiriti o Waitangi 1840 was subsequent to He Whakaputanga o Te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni 1835 and is between the Crown and the many hapū, it states that "Kawanatanga was granted to the Crown… Tino Rangatiratanga was retained by Māori… assured Māori access to the same laws and customs as the people of England, and guaranteed Crown protection of religious freedom" (Network Waitangi Otautahi, 2018). The fact that the English language version of Te Tiriti o Waitangi offered 'sovereignty' rather than 'governorship' as what the Rangatira had granted to the British Crown in Article One, was used by the Crown to justify their hegemonic ambitions. Yet for Māori, expectations were that their tino rangatiratanga outlined in Article Two would be upheld, understanding fully well the difference in terms with their Biblical understandings of Pontius Pilate as governor to Caesar as sovereign (Moxon, 2021). However, following the 1863 invasion of Waikato, in what Wiremu Tamihana described as the 'great war for New Zealand' it was clear which claim would manifest its future (O'Malley, 2016). Around the 1860s the British population would forever exceed that of Māori, and this population differential would become "colonisation's key delivery mechanism" (Tapsell, 2021, p. 79).

Māori had seen how Europeans had treated other Indigenous Peoples across the globe, and more locally in Australia (Burger, 2011). Despite the best of intentions expressed, Māori were fully aware of the potential future that awaited them. Māori were also aware that the French had a genuine interest, and that a relationship with the British Crown was preferable as they were the

biggest and most powerful player at the time. Due to the influence of missionaries, Māori had a deep understanding of the moral obligations of Christianity and understood this to be the moral code by which the British conducted themselves both in a spiritual and also, a temporal lived-sense. Māori wanted a moral document that should wrongs occur they could appeal to the moral grounds, where should the British transgress they could be held to account against their own Christian understandings of behaviour and conduct (Moxon, 2021). Eventually moral obligations to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi were put aside as the settlers' desire for land and resources continued to increase. The commodification of land in Aotearoa was taking place as the number of new settlers continued to increase rapidly. As the settlers expanded and built what we know as the nation, 'New Zealand', nature was 'raw material' for economic growth of the country. In the building of 'New Zealand', Governor Grey, framed the widespread land confiscations and that a military invasion to undermine the Kingitanga and other Māori unwilling to meet the increasing demand to sell more and more land, was the only way to achieve peace and security for the colony (Walker, 1990).

Colonisation

Liboiron (2017) defines colonisation as, "a process where governments and/or settlers claim sovereignty over lands already occupied by Tribal and Indigenous peoples" (cited in Nesmith et al., 2021, p. 108). However, colonisation was not simply for land for the sake of land, but rather as Nesmith et al. (2021) provides in this expanded definition, colonisation is about wealth:

> … western colonization is generally described as beginning in the fifteenth century with European expansion to the Americas, African, India, Asia, and Oceania. The ultimate goal of colonization was private profit: enrichment of the colonizers. This was accomplished through the enslavement of humans, natural resource extraction, and cash crop production. It resulted in social, economic, and environmental exploitation that led to ecological degradation, climate change, and injustice. (p. 108)

Tapsell (2021) explains colonisation as a phenomenon of economics, whereby it is the, "economic engine that has attacked, evicted, exploited, extracted, exported, assimilated, capitalised and consumed the wealth – tangata/people + whenua/estates + taonga/resources – of kāinga/Indigenous local communities the world over" (p. 174). This as the goal of colonisation was not always immediately obvious. Plumwood (2002) describes the hegemonic nature of the European colonial system being, "disguised as universal and mutual, but in which the colonizer actually prospered at the expense of the colonized" (p. 51). For the colonisers and their descendents who would inherit the benefits of an imposed world that reflected themselves, they would be insulated from an awareness of their comparative hegemony through colonial narratives. Reid et al. (2017) describe a colonial narrative as a powerfully formative collective of stories that reinforce the justification of settler conquest and hegemony through the formal and informal institutions of the settler society. The premise of this narrative is that Western and settler society being superior to that of the Indigenous and colonised, sustains the subjugation and ongoing trauma experienced by the Indigenous and colonised. The hegemonic power of these narratives also suppress and block other narratives from being heard (Smith, 1994/2012). Where relationships with land are concerned, this colonial narrative promoted a belief that the Indigenous People were inefficient with their land use practices; they weren't maximising outputs or profitability, and therefore the coloniser is justified in taking that land to provide greater economic outputs. This argument may or may not have included illusory suggestions that taking this land would either directly or indirectly benefit the Indigenous People as flow on beneficiaries of this increased profitability.

In Aotearoa, by the time of the signings of firstly, He Whakaputanga o Te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni, and then five years later, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Māori population had already declined by an estimated 40,000 (between 1769 and 1830) due to the dual European introductions of diseases and firearms into Aotearoa (Tapsell, 2021). Land in Māori ownership was reduced from 100% in 1840 to only 8% by 1920 (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2021). The 1863 invasion of the Waikato and subsequent New Zealand Settlements Act 1863, oversaw the widespread confiscation of Māori land in the region that I call home. The

change in land ownership has seen, “the alienation of Māori lands, coupled with rapid destruction of forests, conversion to pasture, wetland drainage and other development activities, transformed whenua, disrupting its critical role in hauora” (Moewaka Barnes and McCreanor, 2019, p. 23). This impacted widely on Māori wellbeing at a micro level of individualised health outcomes, but also, importantly, at a macro level, critically impacting upon identity and culture, crucial elements in maintaining lived Māori epistemologies. The resulting change in authority and power structures removed Māori from their capacity to protect the awa, the namesake of our region, and Māori authority and tikanga were ignored (Te Aho, 2011). Over this time the Waikato River catchment saw significant land use intensification, deforestation, the introduction of exotic pest fish and plant species, the decline in endemic fish and plant species, the disruption of fish migrations by the imposition of hydroelectric dams, upstream land erosion and sediment silting, and the discarding of sewage and waste products from mining, farming and manufacturing into the river and its tributaries (Waikato River Authority, 2022).

The lived memories pass from generation to generation retelling the loss of lands through invasion and forced confiscation, and lamenting the environmental degradation caused. Reid et al. (2017) use the concept of the ‘colonising environment’ to describe wherein a settler society has established itself through traumatic physical and psychological violence and injustice, and that this past violence and the psychological threat of present and future violence sustains itself. These traumatic events can become part of collective memory, and be maintained through storytelling across generations.

> The historical record shows a continuous flow of aggressive, denigratory, racist, oppression of Māori in word and deed, as power and control of the country were established in the colonial state. The lived experience of injustice, brutality, deprivation and marginalisation has been transmitted across multiple generations, aggravated by land loss, economic disempowerment, poverty, disease and racism that are reflected in diverse statistics of disparity and particularly as we have argued, in health and wellbeing. While it is likely that the

> trauma experienced changes generation by generation… land loss has been a continuous and cumulative process along with racism, discrimination and marginalisation. (Moewaka Barnes and McCreanor, 2019, p. 23)

Walters et at. (2010) speaks of the importance of land for the wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples, in that, "what happens to the land happens to our bodies" (p. 173). The significance of land impacting on our bodily wellbeing is obvious through the impacts of land alienation on health outcomes. For Māori, "The oral histories and the statistics tell the same story: Loss of whenua has had, and continues to have, material effects on the health and wellbeing for many Māori" (Grimes, 2022, para. 11). Walters et al. (2010) continues with, "what happens to our bodies happens to our spirits" (p. 173). For Māori, the body-spirit relationship is deeply interrelated. In Te Ao Māori, the body is tapu (sacred). Violating a person's body is to breach that tapu, and, as tapu is derived from the gods, failure to uphold tapu would result in spiritual interference (Sullivan, 2017; Gallagher, 2008). But also, a relationship between Māori and the environment is part of what underpins Māori spiritual awareness and wellbeing (Durie, 1985). The wellbeing of land, body, and spirit, are each dependent on the wellbeing of each other. This deep interdependence means that when one is out of balance or is violated, it creates cascading physical and spiritual trauma. This trauma has roots in colonisation. Tuck and Yang (2014) refer to the trauma experienced by Indigenous People through disconnection with land as "epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence" (p. 5). This is total violence on all fronts; attacking and undermining science and knowledge, realities, and positionalities in the universe. Brave Heart (2000, as cited in Reid et al., 2017) defines historical trauma as, "the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, over the lifespan and across generations emanating from massive group trauma experiences" (p. 13). The impacts of colonial legacy on Māori are felt heavily. Māori continue to experience significantly higher rates of trauma in Aotearoa (Pihama et al., 2014).

Colonisation of nature

Colonisation was and still remains a violent act perpetuated against nature. Adams and Mulligan (2002) in 'Decolonizing Nature' describe the impact of

European naming and classifying nature, as a "critical element in the rationalizing gaze of colonialism: the 'othering' of nature in science, art and society is the ideological practice that enables us to plunder it" (p. 24). The Western discipline of ecological science has a history in colonialism and benefited from the expansion of colonisation onto 'new' lands and ecosystems, new economic benefits could be realised through the extraction and appropriation of those lands, ecological science was used to justify the control and dispossession of Indigenous lands and knowledge (Trisos et al., 2021; Adams and Mulligan, 2002). Whereas for Māori, the relationship between humans and the natural world is understood to be a familial interconnected relationship of intrinsic mutuality, Europeans' views differed significantly. The colonisation of nature resulted from making non-humans into the 'Other', separating us as humans from nature and our relational commonality with the natural environment. Anthropocentrism is an important feature of European understanding of the world. Often it was the presence of a mind that 'evidenced' our special uniqueness and denigrated all other life to being lesser than. 'Rational' thought was part of human exceptionalism. Plumwood (2002) states that this differentiation:

> … underlies and justifies that colonization of non-human nature through the imposition of the colonizers' land forms and visions of ideal landscapes in just the same way that Eurocentrism underlies and justifies modern forms of European colonization, which see indigenous cultures as 'primitive', less rational and closer to children, animals and nature" (p. 53).

This 'othering' of nature continues, and, having provided a rational justification for the destruction of the environment, European colonisation would go on to devastating ends. The environmental impacts of Western colonisation include the contamination of the land, often from mining activities, deforestation, water contamination, and the decimation of biodiversity from the introduction of new plant and animal species, pathogens, and from the other environmental impacts (Nesmith et al., 2021). In Aotearoa, this meant the loss of 90% of wetlands and 75% of original forest cover. Settler land clearings removed roots and ground cover causing the erosion of hillsides

and sediment build-up in waterways, and the introduction of other plant and animal species continued to further degrade local ecosystems (Wilmshurst, 2007). As species were lost, either entirely or just in particular regions, specific mātauranga (knowledge) about those species has also been lost, forever changing relationships between Māori and the environment (Department of Conservation, 2020).

The colonisation of relationships with nature

The Māori-whenua relationship was also challenged in the wairua sphere through the arrival of colonial religion that in some aspects supplanted existing relationships and histories:

> Missionaries demonised pre-colonial views towards land and the environment by campaigning against the views of tohunga and associating the pre-colonial Māori worldview with heathenism. The spirituality of land, associated with Papatūānuku, the Earth Parent or forebear of all natural things on earth, was negated through the promotion of a patriarchal view by declaring Ranginui the Sky Parent as heaven, and the missionary concept of a patriarchal God as the ruler of heaven and earth. (Smith, 2019, p. 20)

Through the imposition of European patriarchy in Aotearoa, many of our histories and stories were rewritten to erase the role of women and emphasise their new roles "that deemed women as both inferior and property" (Pihama and Cameron, 2012, p. 229). Notions of subduing women as 'property' further reinforced a property-ownership understanding and valuing of Papatūānuku as land. The loss of our central whakapapa relationship to Papatūānuku, and loss of the practice of returning our whenua to our whenua, has further separated Māori from our space and place in time and in the universe. This spiritual spacelessness and our physical spacelessness in terms of dispossession of land have doubly impacted on Māori. Kim Anderson, an Indigenous (Métis) feminist scholar from Canada, writes about the need to unpack and address the results of this as part of our decolonisation:

> I started to think about the loss of balance in our families, communities, and nations, and about how patriarchy had taken root, providing the soil for social ills like family violence, incest, sexual abuse, and child neglect. I could see that these problems were part of the legacy of colonisation and knew that we must address the oppression of women as part of a decolonising strategy. (Anderson, 2000/2016, p. xxiv)

Even the places and ways that Māori live have changed through colonisation; Māori have urbanised and many now live away from those lands that nurtured their ancestors. In 1936, 81% of Māori lived in rural areas, whereas more than 80% of Māori live in urban areas today. The areas in which Māori are living today are disproportionately lower socioeconomic suburban areas where maintaining a relationship with the natural world is more difficult (Walker et al., 2019). These urbanised Māori now live mostly outside of their ancestral lands and away from the social systems central to Māori customary law (Dawson, 2008).

Colonial (re)naming

The colonial act of naming and renaming, of and over places, still has a strong legacy across Aotearoa. When I was a child, my mother would often point out when driving past Von Tempsky Street how he did bad things against Māori. This was me being socialised to the reality that the places where our family lived had been named over and instead named after people who have committed atrocities against our people in the past. The issue of Aotearoa still having street names and statues that glorify war criminals who acted in such brutality against Māori are recurring political items. In Kirikiriroa our own streets and built environment reflects and perpetuates this legacy through street names, statues, and the erasure and re-landscaping of sacred spaces. These are everyday reminders of how our way of life and system of understanding the world was stepped over. The legacy of this is that the "renaming of the landscape was probably as powerful ideologically as changing the land" (Smith, 1999, p.51, as cited in Adams and Mulligan, 2002, p. 24). This is the experience that Tuck and Yang (2014) describe, noting "that violence is not

temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation" (p. 5). The trauma of colonisation is not just a historic phenomenon but it is something that prevails and continues to cause harm. Applying colonial names over the top of Indigenous names can lead to the loss of those original names, and over generations the loss of this knowledge can become permanent (Te Aho, 2011). The act and legacy of renaming has impacted on the survival of our knowledge as Māori. As an oral language people, our traditions of stories and learning have been interrupted and our intergenerational knowledge processes have been damaged.

Challenges to Colonisation

The 1960s and 1970s saw the rise of a range of social movements across the West around issues of social and environmental justice, civil rights, anti-war, and feminism. In Aotearoa, anti-racist Pākehā movements began, and Māori groups like Ngā Tamatoa and the Te Reo Māori Society were established (Brownstein, 2020; Te Ara, n.d.; Derby, 2011). Environmental groups at the time were growing in response to the increased commodification and further privatisation of air, land, and water. The "extractions, appropriations and marginalization" (p. 4), of these commons which occurred during colonial periods had continued through various neo-colonial and neo-liberal periods (Lotz-Sisitka, 2017). Memon and Kirk (2011) describe the period of the 1980s in Aotearoa:

> Running alongside this neo-liberal agenda was the momentum of revival of indigenous rights language since the 1970s, a reflection of a political recognition within the wider New Zealand society of the ownership and governance rights over natural resources guaranteed to Māori by the Treaty of Waitangi signed in 1840 with the British Crown, coupled with realisation of injustices caused by dispossession of natural resources and impoverishment of Māori precipitated by European colonisation and settlement. (p. 2)

Protests and social movements have been crucial in forcing issues of injustice into public consciousness. Kelsey (2022) speaks of the role of the protests throughout the 1970s and 1980s as being critical for Pākehā consciousness,

"We have to remember that it was the protest movements that actually put on the frontpage the issues that should have been discussed for decades, and a century and a half" (Te Ao with Moana, 2022, 2:12). In 1970 the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was established, followed by the first global conference on the environment, the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Environment in Stockholm. Also, in that same year the New Zealand Government established a Commission for the Environment, and Limits to Growth (1972) produced by the Club of Rome began to further challenge unlimited resource extraction and growth at the expense of the planet (Wilson, 1982; Environmental Protection Agency, 2021; United Nations, 2021). The 1987 Brundtland Report and the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio helped the adoption of the language of 'sustainable development', which, "maintained a view of nature as an economic resource to be managed in ways that yield sustainable economic benefits" (Adams and Mulligan, 2002, p. 6).

The rise of social movements through the 1960s and 1970s advocating for progressive social change were happening alongside calls for constitutional change in Aotearoa to better recognise and uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Article Two of Te Tiriti o Waitangi promised Māori paramount authority over their "lands, villages, and everything else that is held precious" (Network Waitangi Otautahi, 2018), which includes lands, rivers, forests, mountains and fisheries (Joseph, 2000). Despite these being promised in Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Māori rights to these have been ignored, leading Māori to demand their control over these be reinstated. Te Tiriti o Waitangi only returned to being recognised by the New Zealand Government with the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, which also established the Waitangi Tribunal to hear claims of breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi Act, 1975). Since the 1970s, Māori have had the return of some lands, half of the commercial fishing assets in Aotearoa, and some interests in forestry (Dawson, 2008). This can be seen as an effort to reconcile and overcome the "cultural superiority that precludes the development of power-sharing processes and the legitimization of diverse cultural epistemologies and cosmologies" (Bishop, 2011, p. 200). It is the discounting and not using as a starting point, these Māori epistemologies and cosmologies that has led to the very environmental degradation and diminished

mauri of the natural environment that Māori environmental initiatives are now stepping up to address.

The reality on-the-ground, however, is that many environmental projects still rely on various colonial institutions that are not based on Māori epistemologies and cosmologies. In Aotearoa, the current system of Pākehā governance relies on a highly devolved set of responsibilities from central to local government in a number of areas which conduct many of the on-the-ground relationships with Māori practising kaitiakitanga and community-based environmental restoration projects. Authority to make decisions, in particular for the local environment, through the Resource Management Act 1991 has been devolved from central government to regional and local government, to entities known as Territorial Local Authorities (TLAs) (Kerr, 1998, p. 1). The majority of on-the-ground environmental restoration initiatives have their interactions with TLAs. The Resource Management Act 1991 was the combination of 59 different statutes and aims to "promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources" (Resource Management Act, 1991, 5.1), including air, water, soil, and ecosystems, in a way that safeguards the ability for communities to provide for "their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety" (5.2). The Resource Management Act 1991 also "formalised a range of legal rights that were intended to include have Māori interests in the environment and the different way in which we view the world recognized and provided for, those rights are particularly vulnerable when presented as just one of many other considerations that decision-makers must take into account" (Te Aho, 2011, p. 353).

Decolonisation

Ngahuia Murphy describes decolonisation to them as being, "about healing, clearing, releasing, transforming, remembering, reviving and reasserting the pathways of our tīpuna" (Murphy, as cited in Elkington et al., 2020, p. 58). South African scholar, Heila Lotz-Sisitka, writes about environmental education, climate change, and environmental and social justice. From this

perspective, Lotz-Sisitka (2017) summarised the decolonisation of society as responding to these three intersecting issues:

> 1. Ecological destruction of the planet based on a conceptualization of nature as an exploitable object,
> 2. Poverty and inequality based on ongoing exploitation and accumulation of wealth,
> 3. Narrow rationalities epitomized by colonial and imperialist thinking (p. 8).

This definition is useful in bringing together prevailing social and environmental justice issues under the umbrella of decolonisation; the biodiversity crises, climate change, inequality, and poverty. This broader definition serves as a reminder of the interconnectedness of issues and how their colonial roots need to be continually challenged.

Decolonisation and indigenisation

The term 'decolonisation' can be problematic for Indigenous Peoples as it seemed overly centred on the colonisers, and not those who were the victims of colonisation, and yet it can still be expected that it is them, the colonised, who need to change through this process (Cairns, 2020). "Decolonization (the process of restoring Indigenous identity) can be very personal and should be differentiated, though not disconnected, from anti-colonial struggle" (Indigenous Action, 2014). Another term often used alongside decolonisation is indigenisation. I understand the difference to be that decolonisation is about structures, systems, institutions, and resources, while indigenisation is about culture. In the Aotearoa context, this would mean that decolonisation is concerned with the law, money, and instruments of the settler government, while indigenisation is about our reo, tikanga, Māori values and systems of understanding and social organisation. The biggest barriers to achieving the aims of indigenisation are often inequitable funding and structural restrictions placed by the settler institutions. Therefore, decolonisation on part of the coloniser can be a necessary precondition to enable the colonised to (re)indigenise. Cairns (2020) has unease with the term decolonisation and writing about their mahi in museums and work with Moana Jackson on the idea

of indigenisation, for which Moana offered the term ‘reMāorification’. The definition Cairns (2020) offers for this is that, “ReMāorification was the promise of a created space where we, as the indigenous people, could determine the space, the content, the practice, according to our own autonomy and independence.” The Hawaiian sovereignty activist and organiser Poka Laenui (2000) writes about a process for decolonisation for those who were colonised:

1. rediscover and recover culture;
2. mourn the losses resulting from colonization and exploitation;
3. dream of future social, political, and economics structures that incorporate traditional values;
4. commit to the vision; and
5. take action to make the dream a reality. (p. 2)

Looking deeper at what is needed to decolonise, several scholars are writing about the need to decolonise ecology that challenges colonial attitudes to land and relationships with nature.

> In the Aotearoa context, writing about land decolonisation tends to focus on reversing the damaging effects of large-scale industrial, horticultural and pastoral activities. Long-term native species preservation, reforestation, and weed and pest control efforts – encapsulated by the Predator-Free 2050 goal – can also be framed as ecological decolonization. (Mercia, 2020, p. 52)

Mikaere (2011) writes that, “[colonisation] has always been about recreating the colonised in the image of the coloniser” (p. 246). Lands that were colonised by Europeans were changed with European plant and animal species, European farming methods, and this changed landscapes to resemble ‘neo-Europes’ (Adams and Mulligan, 2002). Today, many Māori and Pākehā environmental restoration projects aspire to see the restoration of these pre-colonial ecosystems. Christopher Trisos, a researcher on climate change from South Africa, writes about decolonising ecology. Trisos et al. (2021) offers the

following shifts in working towards a 'decolonizing ecology', that are, "more creative, reflective, equitable, inclusive and effective in aiding a just transition to a more sustainable world:" (p. 3)

1. 'decolonize your mind' to include multiple ways of knowing and communicating science, 'know your histories' to acknowledge our discipline's role in enabling colonial and ongoing violence against peoples and nature, and begin processes of restorative justice;
2. 'decolonize access' by going beyond open access journals and data repositories to address issues of data sovereignty and the power dynamics of research ownership;
3. 'decolonize expertise', by amplifying diverse expertise in ecologies and giving due credit and weight to that knowledge;
4. and 'practice ethical ecology in inclusive teams', by establishing diverse and inclusive research teams that actively deconstruct biases so all team members are empowered participants in developing new knowledge. (p. 3).

Conscientisation

The work that is needed is ultimately a systems change, and not simply reform from within. The changes needed are both political and constitutional. The European systems and institutions established in Aotearoa by, and which, perpetuated colonisation, must be transformed as a precondition for decolonisation. Decolonisation cannot occur within these systems (Jackson, 2020; Mercia, 2020). The revolutionary educational theorist, Paulo Freire's (1970/1993) concept of 'conscientisation' can be useful in framing the pathway or setting the scene for decolonisation. His 'conscientisation' refers to, "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (1970/1993, p. 9), and that in learning this it, "enrols them in the search for self-affirmation" (1970/1993, p. 10). Becoming aware of and subsequently unsettled by an understanding of the realities of oppression is a first step in conscientisation. Mucina (2011) states that it is "through a process of self-driven action and self-driven reflection

about our future" (p. 2) that is what will bring about freedom for a people. Writing as a Pākehā, Amundsen (2018) describes this process as being, "when a Pākehā decides to explore and accept the impact of colonisation upon Māori, there is an unsettling upheaval in their self-perception as a logical result" (p. 141). Here it is conscientisation not only of the oppressed but from the perspective of a descendent and beneficiary of the colonisation of Aotearoa.

Supporting Freire's (1970/1993) 'learning to perceive contradictions' are the efforts in recent years to support the learning of New Zealand history. From 2022, it will be compulsory to teach the history of Māori arrivals, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, colonisation, and the New Zealand Wars in all schools and kura (The Beehive, 2019). My own experience, however, was that from my first year of intermediate school to my last year of high school, New Zealand history comprised some component of my social studies or history classes. I still remember glossing over The Declaration of Independence in passing, learning about Wakefield and his New Zealand Company, the 'Wairau Affray', and about Hōne Heke and the flagpole. My mother was staunch in her belief that general New Zealanders and young people don't know about Te Tiriti. Even though I was learning about 'The Treaty' every year at school, it was only ever taught in a matter of fact way from textbooks and devoid of any capacity to be interesting to any of the students. So much so that I longed for New Zealand history to be over so we could move onto Elizabethan England, World War 2, or just anything other than our own local history. Comparing this to the many workshops on He Whakaputanga and Te Tiriri I have attended and organised since leaving school, with the likes of Dr Ingrid Huygens, Suzanne Menzies-Culling, Moea Armstrong, and Catherine Delahunty, which have been engaging and transformational. These expert facilitators and educators share this content in engaging and interactive activities that invite participants to reflect, to go deep, and consider the lived implications of these histories on all of our lives in Aotearoa.

Decolonising environmentalism

Environmental movements also need to decolonise themselves and seek holistic, interconnected solutions to environmental degradation with Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC), rather than replicate colonial approaches (Nesmith et al., 2021). Indigenous peoples have been resisting colonial destruction of their lands and abilities to continue to live their ways of life since the earliest interactions with external colonisers. About 20% of the planet's surface is Indigenous land, and within that, 80% of the world's biodiversity is being protected by Indigenous peoples (Ngata 2021, as cited in Husband, 2021). Mainstream environmental action group Extinction Rebellion have received criticism for their issues around inclusion and for straying into appropriation in taking their organising tactics from American civil rights and Indian anti-colonial movements. The issue of activism aimed at mass arrests arising from their tactics is also of huge concern for already marginalised groups who will be disproportionately targeted by police in these actions (Zapata, 2020). In Aotearoa, School Strike 4 Climate Auckland (2019) disbanded claiming their organisation had been "a racist, white-dominated space" which had "avoided, ignored, and tokenised BIPOC voices and demands, especially those of Pasifika and Māori individuals in the climate activism space" (School Strike 4 Climate Auckland, 2021).

Go Eco (Waikato Environment Centre Trust) is a regional umbrella organisation for a range of environmental projects from gully restoration to food redistribution. In 2019, the organisation made headlines for a report submitted to the Hamilton City Council outlining the need to decolonise work in the environmental space:

> Conservation and environmental restoration work appears to depend on retired pākehā who have the time and privilege. Colonisation and systems of oppression continue to force people into a daily struggle of survival. Yet it is the more wealthy, who, through their consumption, travel and investments, continue to have the most detrimental impact on the environment. Without a structural analysis, environmental work can reinforce oppression and privilege. (Go Eco, 2019, p. 1).

In presenting this report to the Hamilton City Council most councillors took offence to what the then Hamilton Mayor, Andrew King, described as, "out of place, offensive… political and derogatory overtones" (McLachlan, 2019). However, one speaker in support of the report, identifying themselves as an older Pākehā conservationist, even attested to being representative of the attendees at community restoration events, and that when Māori do attend it is not uncommon for them to be treated with suspicion (Smallman, 2019).

Tensions between environmentalism and Indigenous People are not new. As the impacts of climate change are increasingly experienced globally, tensions are rising with the belief that action on climate change should trump other concerns. These tensions range from well-intentioned but uninformed actors, to far right 'eco-fascists' accepting the inevitability of the environmental crisis and proposing genocidal responses, either by simply taking advantage of the crisis opportunity, or out of ignorance (Wilson, 2019). Arguments that action on climate change need to supersede the aspirations of Māori are also present in Aotearoa. In Tāmaki Makaurau, the Honour the Maunga group was created to stop the felling of non-native trees on maunga across the city, as part of a work plan to restore these maunga to a more original state, as per the intentions of mana whenua (Dunlop, 2019). Responding to challenges from mana whenua and others, the leader of Honour the Maunga, Anna Radford (2022), asked, "But what exactly is decolonisation and how does spending many millions on destroying healthy mature urban trees during a climate emergency fix anything?" (Radford, 2022).

Restoration and healing

> 'Decolonisation' may not be the most appropriate word for that kind of remedy because, like colonisation, it came from somewhere else. Perhaps it could be replaced with the ethic of restoration. The use of this term would seek to replace colonisation not be merely deconstructing or culturally sensitising the attitudes and power structures that it has established, but by restoring a kawa that allows for balanced relationships based on the need for iwi and hapū independence

> upon which any meaningful interdependence must rest.
> (Jackson, 2020, p. 149)

Across Aotearoa there are numerous environmental restoration projects occurring as small community projects to larger national-level for-profit enterprises. The majority of environmental restoration work across Aotearoa however is Pākehā organised, funded, facilitated, and staffed by Pākehā, despite this work taking place on land, rivers, and mountains; geographic features that somewhere, Māori will whakapapa to, that Māori identity is derived from.

Reconnecting to the whenua

Garnett et al (2018) identified that while Indigenous Peoples comprise less than 5% of the global population, they "manage or have tenure rights over at least ~38 million km2 in 87 countries or politically distinct areas on all inhabited continents. This represents over a quarter of the world's land surface, and intersects about 40% of all terrestrial protected areas and ecologically intact landscapes" (p. 369). This land alone holds 80% of the total biodiversity of the planet (Veit and Reytar, 2017).

There is great potential for Aotearoa in acknowledging and including Māori understandings and measures of environmental wellbeing. Hall et al., (2020) outline the immense breadth of the contributions that Indigenous knowledge can make to urban ecosystem restoration, and that "by incorporating strong partnerships with Indigenous communities, we argue that the benefits from ecological restoration are more likely to be equitably and widely spread with enduring project success" (p. 2). At present there are a number of Māori key environmental concepts and frameworks that are being applied in environmental spaces, including whakapapa, kaitiakitanga, mana, ki uta ki tai, taonga tuku iho, mauri, ritenga, and wairua (Harmsworth and Awatere, 2013). For waterways in particular, there are now multiple Māori frameworks for measuring the health of waterways; Māori wetland indicators, Cultural Health Index, Mauri Compass, Mauri Model, Wai Ora Wai Māori, and others (Rainforth and Harmsworth, 2019; Biohabitats, 2018). Taking advantage of

current and future conservation projects to further improve aspects of kaitiakitanga, Walker et al. (2019) produced the Table 1 of the critical components of kaitiakitanga with specific actions that could frame restoration work through a focus on Kaitiakitanga (p.5):

Table 1. Critical components of kaitiakitanga are identified in the table with the accompanying actions to support mana whenua and mātāwaka in practicing kaitiakitanga. These actions are suggestions to support the creation of restoration initiatives that are framed through kaitiakitanga.

Aspect of Kaitiakitanga	Potential restoration actions
Place	Place-specific restoration projects;
Engagement	Research harvesting narratives; Whakapapa narratives & the use of resources; Including practitioners of cultural practices in restoration i.e. Māori healers, fishers, weavers into restoration projects; Development of engagement projects to include mātāwaka as well as mana whenua in Kaitiakitanga initiatives.
Intergenerational knowledge	Use place narratives; Educational activities; Encourage hapū leadership on knowledge protection; Inclusive restoration projects e.g., waiata, whakataukī to preserve knowledge; Mātāwaka could share knowledge with mana whenua groups about their resource use in urban areas.
Kinship	Hapū projects; Hapū narratives; Engage with mana whenua groups; Create opportunities to allow mātāwaka and mana whenua to share ideas for urban restoration projects.

Spirituality	Encourage cultural practices in restoration projects such as karakia, rongoā (Māori medicines) harvesting etc; Consider mana and mauri in project; Recognition of sacred places and their narratives.

Note. From "Kaitiakitanga, place and the urban restoration agenda" by Walker, et al., (2019). New Zealand Journal of Ecology. 43(3). p. 5.

The inclusion of kaitiakitanga into urban restoration initiatives can support Māori to maintain and strengthen their identity as Māori (Walker et al., 2019). This notion obliges mana whenua to act as custodians and protectors of their sacred resources, and to protect resources and taonga for future generations (Townsend et al., 2004).

There is support for these actions: "7 out of 10 Māori adults (aged 15 years and over) (69 percent) said the health of the natural environment was very important" (Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa, 2021). For Māori, many still maintain their kaitiaki obligations: "Nearly a third of Māori adults (32 percent) said they took part in activities, such as restoring waterways, tree planting, pest control, or beach clean-up in the previous 12 months. This rose to 46 percent for those living in rural areas" (Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa, 2021). In Kirikiriroa, there is a goal for 10% native vegetation cover by 2050 which will feature significant urban restoration to achieve this goal, up from the current 2% (Hamilton City Council, 2020).

Oranga

Achieving equity in health between Māori and non-Māori is an obligation under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Ministry of Health, 2019). Despite this, significant inequities exist in health outcomes in Aotearoa with Māori and Pacific People experiencing the worst health outcomes (Cummings, 2017). Socioeconomic factors contribute to these inequities. Whereas Pākehā comprise the majority of people living in poverty in Aotearoa, this is only 10% of the Pākehā population, compared to 20% of Māori and Pacific households living in poverty (Rashbrooke, 2013). However, income alone is insufficient to explain

the difference in health outcomes, higher experiences of racism among non-dominant groups can also contribute to reduced levels of health across a wide range of measures (Harris et al., 2018; Williams and Mohammed, 2013). Cheyne et al. (2008) describes this as the case where, "Māori were worse off, not just because they tended to be poorer than non-Māori, but because they were Māori" (p. 222). Experiences of racism can include problematic media representations, socioeconomic status, access to resources and opportunities, education, access to healthcare, segregation into neighbourhoods of higher crime rates and lower investment in services and infrastructure, disproportionate incarceration rates, emotional prejudice, internalised beliefs of inferiority, unconscious biases in the community, unconscious bias of physicians, psychosocial stressors, and unfair treatment. Many of these experiences can perpetuate intergenerational disadvantages and create and maintain negative health outcomes for minority groups (Williams and Mohammed, 2013).

Various models exist that articulate Māori health and wellbeing as being a part of broader social, spiritual, and environmental factors. Te Whare Tapa Whā (1984), developed by leading Māori health advocate, Sir Mason Durie, is a conceptual understanding of health and wellbeing. Described as a whare (house) with the four walls being: taha wairua/spiritual wellbeing, taha whānau/family and social, taha tinana/physical, taha hinengaro/mental and emotional, and importantly, whenua/land and roots, are often included as the ground upon which the whare sits (Ministry of Health, 2017; Mental Health Foundation, 2022). Durie's (1999) Te Pae Māhutonga model of health promotion brings together the areas of health: mauriora/cultural identity, ngā manukuru/leadership, te mana whakahaere/autonomy, te oranga/participation in society, toiora/healthy lifestyles, and, wairora/environmental protection. These two models demonstrate that good health and wellbeing is dependent on the strength of these interrelated areas of our lives.

Environmental justice

Because of the close and interconnected relationships between Indigenous Peoples and their environments, they have been among the first to experience the impacts of climate change (United Nations, 2021; Survival International, 2021). Political and economic marginalisation of Indigneous Peoples through the historic and ongoing processes of colonisation exacerbates the climate vulnerability of, and response capacity of Indigenous Peoples to climate change. Environmental justice is holding the lived experiences and voices of those who are most impacted and disadvantaged from the gains of climate pollution at the forefront of climate responses. “BIPOC communities are disproportionately affected by climate change, so the fight for climate justice should be led by their voices and needs, not Pākehā ones” (School Strike 4 Climate Auckland, 2021). “Because settler-colonial processes have increased the vulnerability of people and other species by displacing them into unfamiliar or lower-quality landscapes, the concept of ecological vulnerability to global change now intersects with environmental justice” (Trisos, et al., 2021, pp 6). Walker et al. (2019) identified this as being the case for Māori, disproportionately living in lower socio-economic areas with reduced opportunities to maintain a relationship with nature.

The Pākehā mahi

Biculturalism and cohabitation were initial objectives of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Biculturalism in Aotearoa “refers to a greater participation of Māori in the legal, political, and institutional systems of New Zealand” (Joseph, 2000, p. 8). Mercia (2020) suggests decolonisation in Aotearoa is “underpinned by a commitment to making cohabitation work” (p. 40). But the experience of colonisation in Aotearoa New Zealand was with the abandonment of recognition of He Whakaputanga and Te Tiriti. As settler authority expanded, “The colonisers’ need to impose their laws and institutions on people who already had their own allowed no room for an honourable relationship with iwi and hapū” (Jackson, 2020, p. 145). The current Pākehā New Zealand legal system had almost entirely displaced Māori customary law by 1900 (Dawson, 2008). It has been suggested that limits should be applied to parliament’s

ability to restrict Māori rights, in a move to curtail the idea of unlimited parliamentary sovereignty:

> A democratically elected parliament that constitutionally cannot infringe upon the protections afforded to Māori under te Tiriti o Waitangi would help to live up to its true promise. After all, this is not an argument for separatism, but a synergetic, mutually respectful partnership. As Williams and many others have argued, the Treaty is best understood not as one of cession, but as a framework for the distribution of powers between two peoples. (Ruru and Kohu-Morris, 2021)

As far back as 1861, New Zealand's first Chief Justice, William Martin, suggested that Māori only ceded to the Queen those powers necessary for the establishment of settled government and law, and, "In return they retained what they understood fully – the 'tino rangatiratanga', in respect of all their lands" (Williams, as cited in Ruru and Kohu-Morris, 2021). Tapsell (2021) expands on this by attributing the fault and the onus for action with the Crown:

> If the Crown could move to overcome a sovereignty bind of its own making and address its outstanding second article responsibilities with a constitutional transformation, assisting rangatira and hapu re-establish tino rangatiratanga (autonomous sovereign leadership) over their whenua, kainga, and taonga, the nation will overcome colonisation. (p. 140-141)

To realise the goals of biculturalism and decolonisation, much work is needed to be undertaken. This includes overcoming the exclusion of Māori, Māori values, and Māori knowledge systems at all levels in Aotearoa, and moving towards an ethos of inclusion, redress, and respect. Writing about experiences in searching for her Pākehā identity, Amundsen (2018) describes herself as, "… beginning to heal from our history that promotes a dependency on power and privilege of contemporary white New Zealanders" (p. 145). Outlining the implications for people identifying as Pākehā, Black (1997) lists:

- I have a responsibility to understand and implement the Treaty of Waitangi in every facet of my life

- I live in Aotearoa in relationship with Māori
- I have a culture that has uniquely developed from the experience of being in Aotearoa
- No other name describes my cultural identity and sense of belonging more clearly. (p. 96)

We still have much nation-building ahead of us to undertake. There is more work needed for Pākehā conscientisation and for the Crown to take actions to limit their sovereignty. Unlearning hegemony and embracing power sharing are big tasks but are ultimately what is needed. Where ecosystems and resource management are concerned, powersharing will produce more effective governance and management (Te Aho, 2011).

Summary

Whakapapa understandings of ngā atua, whānau, and pepeha, deeply wove the relationship between Māori and the natural environments they lived alongside and depended upon. The arrival of Europeans would ultimately bring conflict and imperialist colonisation, despite having agreed to mutually beneficial constitutional arrangements by way of He Whakaputanga o Te Rangatiratanga o Niu Tireni and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The settler abandonment of these documents worked in tow with the hegemonic goals of building a nation with absolute rule through parliamentary sovereignty.

The impact of colonisation was felt widely and deeply. Populations were reduced through disease and conflict. Land was confiscated and people were reduced to becoming refugees in other areas. Sacred places were desecrated. Systems of social organisation were undermined. And the imposition of a European legal and land ownership system further diminished the livelihood and collective landholdings of our people. Familial relationships and relationships with ancestral lands were stressed through the periods of urbanisation into homes and communities designed for nuclear families in towns and cities that now had Pākehā names. Forests were cleared, wetlands drained, and land use practices led to erosion and degradation of ecosystems. Coupled with introduced plant and animal pests, the endemic flora and fauna of

Aotearoa that survived continue to struggle into the present day. Europeans also brought with them Western notions of conservation. These often romanticised notions of conservation were couched in the same Eurocentric views that were conducive to colonisation in the first place. The Pākehā environmental focus grew as new groups developed to oppose the excesses of industrial exploitation and degradation. As the Māori renaissance took place and a greater awareness for historic grievances and deeply felt racism entered the mainstream consciousness, efforts towards decolonisation began to be developed. Treaty settlements and a greater inclusion of kaitiakitanga and tangata whenua involvement in planning for and delivering environmental restoration is increasing, yet there is still space for much further decolonisation of environmentalism and our relationships with nature in Aotearoa.

The process of restoring an Indigenous identity is possible and is happening. Practising kaitiakitanga is a way that Māori can reconnect with ancestral whenua and ways of being. The deep connections of whanaungatanga can be strengthened and the stories of old retold to new generations. Lived whakapapa relationships extending to pre-human times of plants, of sand and clay, and ngā atua Māori, to Te Kore, can be relived.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Indigenous research

At some point during my Masters journey I entered the state of no longer being a current university student while awaiting an unexpectedly complex extension process to be completed. During this period I found myself without access to the University of Waikato library with free access to published articles. At one point here I wanted to re-read part of one of my referenced articles, but finding myself on the outside of the academic paywall I could only appreciate the irony, in that I was looking for an article written by a Māori about Indigenous Knowledge creation. This was a reminder for me that the academy is still an institution positioned within a hegemonic Western knowledge-production process. This knowledge-production process is one that simultaneously acts to 'legitimise' Indigenous Knowledge by credentialing it through the Western academy, while in so doing commodifies this knowledge for commercial aims (Million, 2015).

This research project is a contribution to the fulfilment of my own qualifications, but I cannot disconnect myself from personally having similar experiences and reflections with those of my research participants. I am Māori. He Māori mātou. I share their aims and aspirations for a thriving environment and a decolonised Aotearoa, and I view this research as adding value to these aspirations. In terms of the topics explored in this thesis, this research also suffices Bishop's (1998) description of Indigenous research as being, "collective and orientated toward benefiting all the research participants" (p. 201). I heavily consider the purpose of research as adding value, and my hopes for this research is that it will in some way add value to the aspirations of Māori for their whenua and kaitiakitanga obligations.

Wilson (2008) describes that, "In both critical theory and constructivism, knowledge in itself is not seen as the ultimate goal, rather the goal is the

change that this knowledge may help to bring about" (p. 37). Valuing the kōrero that was shared with me as taonga, I am also in the space of sharing the aspirations that the research participants held for their respective mahi but also their reflections and my own on the collective aspirations of Māori in Aotearoa today. These are based on tino rangatiratanga, Māori social, economic, and political autonomy. I come to research with social justice-based views on how research can add value to these aspirations. As a Māori researcher, I am proud to hold this whakaaro in my mahi. The alternative is, as Bishop (1998) describes, "For Māori researchers to stand aside from involvement in such socio-political organization is to stand aside from one's identity. This would signal the ultimate victory of colonization" (p. 214). Archibald (2008) notes "...the duality of an Indigenous person who is also a researcher" (p. 416). This is important framing that highlights the reality for Māori researchers. As researchers we operate within the constraints of the academy, which itself comes from the world that oppressed our people. But, as Māori, we navigate this reality, to uphold and give life to Te Ao Māori and to seek justice for our people.

This research employs a Kaupapa Māori approach. Smith (1990, as cited in Smith, 1999/2012) outlines Kaupapa Māori research as being fourfold, it:

1. is related to 'being Māori';
2. is connected to Māori philosophy and principles;
3. takes for granted the validity and legitimacy of Māori, the importance of Māori language and culture, and
4. is concerned with 'the struggle for autonomy over our own cultural well-being.' (p.187)

This thesis is based on interviews with Māori research participants about their unique experiences as Māori involved in environmental restoration. My research participants could all speak well to the contrasting and complementary epistemologies, rules, and values across Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pākehā. This research asserts the primacy of Te Ao Māori and asserts this as a political act in contemporary resistance against colonisation, and as a proactive attempt to decolonise research. This research discusses environmental restoration and the

need to whakatika, to make right, the wrongs caused to the natural world through the imposition of colonisation. Māori aspirations for the enhancement of the mauri of our natural world and of our ecological systems is, at its core, a struggle for tino rangatiratanga over our natural resources, and is an expression of decoloniality.

Research participants

The purpose of this research was to hear from Māori involved in environmental restoration about their experiences in these spaces. I aimed to see if their practical experiences of being in a restorative connection with the whenua had any impact on their relationship to being Māori, to Te Ao Māori, to their sense of holistic wellbeing, and how any of these experiences related to their perceptions of decolonisation.

For this research I conducted interviews with three research participants. The sample I selected for this research were all participants who were experienced within both community-led restoration projects in and/or around Kirikiriroa, and who can also comfortably bring experiences from Te Ao Māori into their reflections and kōrero. The three participants selected were all involved in different environmental restoration projects in and/or around Kirikiriroa. This sample was not representative of all Māori involved in environmental restoration in Waikato. This sample was a practicable size to conduct this research without overly duplicating or omitting particular types of projects. Community-led environmental restoration projects have a range of variables in how they can compare to each other; being funded or unfunded, large or small (geographically or in terms of staff or volunteers), Pākehā or Māori-led, with employed staff, some employed staff, or all volunteers. For each of these, the measure of what each variable is can be challenging to establish. It was not my intention to isolate and mitigate any of these variables in selecting research participants from only a particular type or ensuring a spread of the type of restoration project that the individual research participants have been involved in and were able to reflect on. Rather, all of my research participants could confidently speak about a particular project they have been involved in at a

place that they whakapapa to. Each research participant brought complementary and different experiences from a range of lived experiences into the whakaaro that was shared with me. The participants are all also involved and aware of the political machinations of councils and funding, iwi and hapū, and the deeply networked social relationships interrelated with their respective projects. The participants all spoke both about their respective project/s but also generally about their broader experiences and observations in local and national-level environmental, political and decolonisation-related work that related to their experiences.

Whereas "in the dominant system, nepotism generally involves the use of friends and relations in a concerted effort to keep others out" (Wilson, 2008, p. 81), I very purposefully involved people whom I did have some connection to. This was not an exclusionary decision to 'keep others out', but rather to allow my research to value the experiences of those I am already accountable to in local environmental networks. This research did not seek to be representative of all Māori involved in this mahi, just a sample who would speak well to their experiences, and who would be comfortable sharing their whakaaro and musings with me.

I chose to not name my research participants as I wanted to avoid publicly individualising their experiences and to limit the potential to whakaiti the mana of what they shared with me. The local community environmental sector is full of many overlapping relationships of personal and professional networks. I explained to my research participants that I could not guarantee their anonymity because of the strengths of these relationships and that some of their comments might make them identifiable. For the same reasons, I also chose not to name or identify any of the particular projects that my research participants are involved in or refer to in what they shared with me. I did this to best uphold the mana of my research participants and of the respective projects. This was intentional in order to allow my research participants the safety to share their views frankly, without reservations or self-censorship, and without concern their comments may impact their respective projects.

Participants were offered the ‘Research Proposal’ (Appendix A), and had the research process explained to them. Prior to the interviews participants were given a copy of the ‘Participants Consent Form’ (Appendix B).

Research process

Each interview session was opened and closed with a karakia. The process of whakawhanaungatanga began the process of relationship building using tikanga Māori. Each interview went for between one hour and one-and-a-half hours. The audio of each kōrero was recorded and then later transcribed by myself. Each research participant was given a copy of the Research Proposal and had before them a copy of my initial research questions as prompts throughout the kōrero.

Ethics

The Research Proposal, Participant Information Sheet, Participant Consent Form, and the initial question guide for my interviews were submitted to Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies at the University of Waikato for ethical review. Ethical approval was gained prior to any interviews being carried out.

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis and Findings

This chapter is the presentation of findings from the conversations with my research participants. The findings of my research in this thesis support the understanding of the importance of environmental restoration for Māori involved in this mahi. This chapter also provides a discussion of the data from the conversations with my research participants from Chapter Five in regards to the literature described earlier in Chapter Two.

Thematic analysis

This process began with familiarising myself with the data I had collected. Part of this was listening and re-listening to the recorded conversations during the process of transcribing. During this process I already began to highlight some standout quotes and points that I considered important to feature, given the ideas they were expressing. After transcribing, I sat with my lengthy text documents and read through these multiple times. In doing this I was able to begin discerning where similarities were present between the data. I began to sort the data according to a large number of discrete but interrelated codes. Breaking the spoken, often complex, sentences down into discrete items was tricky, and as such some quotes would lend themselves easily to two or more codes. Ultimately, I had to rely on active judgement on my part as the researcher. In sorting the coded dataset, overarching themes and subthemes emerged. These were then arranged into an order that reflected the narratives shared by my research participants and the context of this research topic. This process culminated with the four themes of:

1. The legacy of colonisation;
2. Environmental restoration as a place for sharing knowledge;
3. Environmental wellbeing and human wellbeing, and;
4. Environmental restoration as a decolonising space.

Findings

This research explored the relationship between Māori working in environmental restoration and their experiences of improving wellbeing and identity. It also looked at the relationship they see this work having with decolonisation. Topics discussed during the interview conversations included:

1. How did you come to be in environmental restoration?
2. What is important for Māori working in these spaces?
3. Has being involved in this work had any impact on:
    a. Your relationship with the whenua/taiao?
    b. Your sense of wellbeing?
    c. Your identity as Māori?
4. Thinking about how this land came to be degraded, how does the impact of colonisation, history, and land-use changes feature in how you do this work?

The arrangement of these themes follows the chronological ordering used in Chapter Two. It begins with the impact of history on the environment, continues with the past and current Māori experiences of these, explores their reactions and responses, and looks at the transformative wairua space that environmental restoration can offer us as Māori. It concludes by discussing the relationship that these ideas have with, and as part of, decolonisation in Aotearoa.

Theme One: The legacy of colonisation

Environmental restoration for Māori in Aotearoa today must be understood in the context of history and colonisation. This theme is arranged with three sub themes of: displacement, Pākehā structures and systems, and money and accountabilities. This theme describes how my research participants discussed the impact that history and colonisation has had on the relationships between their whānau and their whenua. These impacts included the memory and legacy of displacement from ancestral land, and having to learn to navigate and seek meaningful recognition and relationships with Pākehā systems and structures,

such as local councils, when it came to environmental restoration, as well as the need to operate within Pākehā systems of accountabilities.

Displacement

The impact from the legacies of our ancestors being displaced from ancestral whenua is something that still has an impact on Māori today. This was evident in kōrero with my research participants: our identity as descendants of immense upheaval and change is real. For my research participants, the realities of the past are still well understood as they work today to restore the wellbeing of their ancestral whenua. One research participant describes this connection to what happened in the past as foundational to their commitment to return to the whenua today, and sees their work as part of the continuation of that struggle to regain their whenua.

> I think it's shaped by my tupuna that survived. They did everything they did to get it [land] back. Because they came back after 1822 when the musket raids happened, they survived and they came back, their children came back, you know. Then in 1863 another wave of invasion happened with more guns, more troops, more terrorism but they survived that too. And it was not long after that, that we found a number of other iwi had assimilated into that and they took up what was left instead of involving us or our iwi instead. I think I might be the legacy. I might be the mokopuna that comes back fighting for them, which all of us generally do. (Participant 2, personal communication, April 20, 2021)

Individual experiences of displacement were also raised during my interviews. This can come from growing up geographically removed from your ancestral land, or not being exposed to this side of your whānau, or a combination of both. One participant described how they overcame this sense of disconnection by spending years of hard work, and making a personal commitment on their part, to physically reconnect themselves with the land:

> So I did a bit of a stint inside and came back out and realised that I was, I felt urban, you know. I had my daughters and I realised that I didn't want that feeling of displacement, not knowing where I, you know not feeling grounded as a Māori or Pacific Islander or anything, so I in 2012 I committed

> myself to the marae, mowing lawns in the my own time in the weekends, my own money, that sort of thing. And I say that after five years that the old ladies, I suppose they were watching, and they pretty much said, "here's the keys, you're actually the original whānau that were kaitiaki, you know, the original curators of this marae." So I ended up becoming kaitiaki of the marae and through that the initiatives came through. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

The sense of displacement and lack of relationship with whenua, marae, and whānau can be inherited from parents who were similarly not raised with those connections and relationships for a variety of reasons, as one participant described, "my father sheltered us from his upbringing." The work this research participant then undertook as an adult to find that reconnection was immense, but it was their commitment to overcome any past hara or whakamā, and to ensure that it was not passed onto their children and future generations.

Displacement is not limited to the past either. Relationships with land extend through the past, present, and future. This is something easily forgotten, it could be assumed that current and future actions are only ever positive steps to overcome displacement, but we can in fact still take actions that create new hara for the future, or introduce displacement of our tupuna. One of my research participants spoke about this in terms of relocating kōiwi when they are found on sites and then moved away to rest somewhere else.

> What about when you find kōiwi? Instead of removing them and putting them way out miles away, why can't yous create another space for them so that they're not separated from where they lay, or their ūkaipō, because that creates a disconnection between us as mana whenua and it creates intergenerational trauma of displacement. (Participant 2, personal communication, April 20, 2021)

Pākehā structures and systems

The experiences of having to navigate Pākehā structures and systems in order to make progress in the space of improving the taiao was shared by my research participants. A significant system of Pākehā structures that has on-the-

ground impacts on environmental restoration is local government. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is foundational to the legal right for the establishment and operation of the settler government in Aotearoa. Te Tiriti o Waitangi also guaranteed rights for Māori in regards to their natural resources. My research participants identified that Te Tiriti o Waitangi was not being honoured. They felt that the government needed to make a start on this point and that a deeper understanding of how the treaty has not been honoured would be useful in allowing Māori to have greater relationships with the natural environment. My research participants expressed that this sentiment isn't limited to any elected councillors or council staff, but that it was a structural feature of society in Aotearoa. It prevails across central and local government, funding channels and accountabilities, and it is expressed by stakeholders, community groups and the public. Local government can be problematic for Māori where boundaries are concerned. The various imposed boundaries overlap and can be confusing when compared to hapū and iwi maps. Even the overlapping of regional and city or district councils, and the complementary and different work they do, again adds another layer of complexity for those on the ground. The need for layers of Pākehā involvement between Māori and the Crown was questioned with one research participant suggesting instead that the direct funding of Māori should occur.

> I think a great first step would be becoming, like disestablishing or devolving from the British. Great first step in honouring the Treaty. Their fault. And then see where it goes from there… Just Crown should divest and let hapū and iwi take care of their rohe and just fund them directly. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

This sentiment of removing Crown control and simply returning the land was also mentioned in regards to land held the Department of Conservation:

> …when I think of conservation I think of DOC, and how DOC has a lot of Māori land that they refuse to give back into Māori authority, or not refuse, but just they're not like trying to get Māori rangers, or they get one Māori to be a Te Tiriti Officer but instead you could just give the land back and that. But I can also see there are good reasons for DOC sometimes. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

The relationships that my research participants had either personally experienced or observed between Māori in environmental restoration and TLAs varied widely. It was observed that councils are largely trying to move in the right direction in terms of relationships with Māori but that this can often be very relational, and the experiences can vary depending on what individual holds what role. One research participant mentioned that there is a great contrast within the council in how individual members communicate and respond to communications.

> One more thing I learnt, that [Council] needs a lot of work, they've been trying to open their doors for Māori I've noticed. (Participant 2, personal communication, April 20, 2021)

Māori in the community are often highly pragmatic and skilful in discerning where power lies and in what positions and how to navigate systems and relationships. Bridging relationships between council and Māori communities was a key role that one of my research participants referred to, having to do it regularly, and usually with successful results.

> …they [Council] don't want to lose that partnership that's kind of overshadowing their core, their being in Council and all these other things that they didn't do. And this is from them themselves, they don't want to bring people [Māori] in, they're not getting replies from certain people for months, and we'll get a phone call after ten minutes. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)
>
> I believe we're in a good space because we're able to talk to those certain people that are actually up there in the pecking order where the Council guys, or city and parks they're in a pecking order. So they listen to this guy, this guy talks to this guy, and then this guy talks to the guy we talk to. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

There can also be judgements against members of the community, including Māori, for past offences and issues that support stereotyping and being dismissive.

> At the moment I feel like I am that bridge because even talking to Council they feel shit they didn't even want to work with

> me because of past hara, and they don't want to get over it, they can't get over it. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

There is an impression that some Māori in positions of power in local government have been co-opted by the Pākehā status quo, and compromise their obligations to hapū in favour of supporting Pākehā perspectives and endeavours. It was acknowledged, however, that some of these individuals are possibly just constrained by the numbers at council tables or by other pressures and are simply unable to do much other than maintain the status quo, which is usually not to the benefit of Māori.

> I think to learn that there are Māori within the Council that are trying to keep the status quo, because if they don't, it will take away their leadership role in the Council but it's like, are you even supposed to be there? There are Māori that are sitting in high places right now that know that whakapapa but don't want it to be, they want the status quo. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

> I think there's definitely a push back from other Māori that have gotten compensation over another iwi. Displacement over their whenua. (Participant 2, personal communication, April 20, 2021)

This impression of Māori in roles at councils also applies to some Māori who sit on boards for various organisations. There are similar expectations that these individuals would be more radical in their support for things Māori, but they are likely also encumbered by the rules and responsibilities those roles entail. This co-opting of Māori into these spaces can also detract from the role of the Crown in creating Māori division.

> …people got so wrapped up in colonisation that Māori on boards have still got that whakaaro and they would fight over that, and it's like well you're just fighting the wrong people. We should just team up and be like fuck the Crown. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

Councils can sometimes have a reputation for being unreliable within the Māori community. This was the experience one of my research participants had during their involvement with a particular council-funded project. They saw

judgement on the part of other Māori in the community around what their goals were and whether this work was what Māori wanted or what council wanted. That said, the general impression from my research participants was optimistic in thinking about the progress that councils are making, and how they are becoming more supportive of the aspirations of Māori.

> I had to tell them [Māori community] I'm Council funded blah blah blah, I was just honest you know. And they are willing to back any restoration, anything, in regards to [project name]. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021).
>
> Long term yes, I do believe that Māori, depending on who is going to pretty much advocate for it, we will get these contracts and it's just, especially holding the Council accountability for their, and making them, yeah I suppose, understand that they have to collaborate, it's part of respect and it's part of their long term goal too so it should be common sense. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021).
>
> I mean today at submission they were opening up with, tēnā tātou katoa, ngā mihi mō te huihuinga mō te rā. So I was like, okay cool. It might be more of a doorway for more of our people to connect in a way that they can't, that they're too shy to do that with Pākehā restoration groups. (Participant 2, personal communication, April 20, 2021).

The reliance on Pākehā funding for environmental projects can be an ongoing frustration. For one participant, there is a tension felt in how their work is at the discretion of Pākehā, both in terms of the funding to undertake the work and also in that the work takes place on land that is already only marginal for Pākehā anyway. This issue also captures the sentiment of how biased the system is against the aspirations of Māori. The Treaty Settlement process is at the grace of the colonial government, reflecting Pākehā values.

> …because it's reliant on funding from a Pākehā institution because we didn't get enough money from Treaty Settlements to do it, but even like, it's just starting from ground zero and even like parcels of land, that's Pākehā fencing off whenua. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

While there can be a tension with accepting funding and doing environmental restoration mahi on lands allowed by the Crown, there is a great deal of pragmatism in Te Ao Māori in taking gains where they exist. It was also acknowledged to be a financial opportunity towards greater financial sustainability, and this mahi can help to support the homecoming of whānau by providing employment and educational opportunities:

> And back home, especially post-COVID because that's changed a lot of things especially like the Government and those jobs for nature or whatever that fund was, like getting more funding so that more people can work at the marae and more people having that connection and it brings back another whānau from outside of the region if they are, to back home. And then them spending more time and all that kind of stuff which has been really cool that- it sounds weird but it's cool that the Government funded that. But and then I guess for back home, having more people around the nursery being able to look after that means it's able to create a profit so that can be our own money to spend on future projects. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

Accountability reporting for accepting grants or contract funding is commonplace. Some reporting back is extensive and can be a big piece of administrative work for a group of volunteers primarily motivated by practical tree planting. Sometimes also the time to provide accountabilities is far after the funds were received and as volunteers cycle through a project, documentation can be lost and future funding put at risk. One of my research participants saw this as a key responsibility for their role in supporting the capacity of community projects to access funding to grow.

> And these are the things that our whānau don't know either. So being able to educate that too, to be able to keep the funding coming from this side and working together to make sure they can give all the money. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

> …you need a management plan over the next 2 years, like you need these boxes, this is why funding was lost in the past because there was no management plan, and you didn't do milestones, you didn't say there's ten blocks and over the first year you did the first five outcomes, here's the photos of it, can

> I have the next year's money? (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

There are usually a lot of unknowns on the part of Pākehā groups around how to begin forming meaningful relationships with local hapū. Being able to navigate between a Pākehā group and local hapū was key success for one research participant in ultimately seeing the project receive substantial funding. However, being Māori, this research participant did not only want to ensure the project ticked 'the Māori box' but that there would be an ongoing relationship at the core of how that work would take on land traditionally belonging to that hapū.

> Because it's actually going to bring jobs out there. So they've got an opportunity now to hire people for the nursery, they've got an opportunity now to hire fulltime. You know we're working at the moment with [Pākehā project lead], he made a proposal, but he needed [hapū] backing, I said, I can back you and get this backing, this letter for the submission for the funding. But, [the project trust] will choose two employees, [the hapū] will have two. That just shows we're collabing, it's respect, you know. Because pretty much I got a bit hōhā and I bet you as soon as he got the letter he said nah I don't want them choosing anything. Pardon? Because then I felt like I'd been crapped on. Because you sort of used my name… Āe, it gets the Māori tick, and now you're the token Māori, used it, and then now, nah, I don't want it involved at all, it's all mine. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

Summary

The context of history was a recurring theme throughout my interviews. When discussing environmental 'restoration' or 'conservation', the conversation would also have regard to what is being 'restored' or 'conserved', and why there is a need for this. Current environmental restoration work is 'restoration' in the sense that it seeks to restore the wellbeing of the taiao, from both Pākehā measures of ecosystem services and biodiversity to Māori concepts of improving the mauri of a natural feature or resource. Pākehā systems and structures have presented my research participants with both frustration and support for progressing their respective restoration projects. The role of local

government in particular featured heavily in the on-the-ground interactions of my research participants in their undertaking of restoration mahi.

Theme Two: Environmental restoration as a place for sharing knowledge

Environmental restoration is a place where kaimahi (workers) can learn and share knowledge. The concept of kaitiakitanga is academic without practising its obligations in situ. Caring for the taiao is important and is something that can be done with a range of expert knowledge, but when experts are available and supportive, this can become a great opportunity for that knowledge to be shared. Being involved in environmental restoration necessitates conversations about the history of that land, how it came to be degraded, and can begin the process of learning about how people used to live there, and what the stories of those ancestors are. This process is also a space for those learning to build relationships with each other. For my research participants, being involved in this space was a catalyst for growing their appetite to learn more about Te Ao Māori and wanting to learn Te Reo Māori for themselves and their whanau.

Whanaungatanga

Being involved in conservation work can be a gateway into conversations with whānau about whakapapa and whānau history. These conversations can help to strengthen relationships in whānau and help to ensure that place-based relationships are maintained across generations. Having more opportunities to be at the marae and gather are important for whānau. For many of us who live away from our marae, getting home more often can be a challenge. Creating more opportunities for wānanga and learning at the marae, outside of gathering for tangi, are important.

> I think it would have been harder to connect with my Dad on it because me and him have quite a strong relationship in terms of Te Ao Māori and getting kaupapa or anything like that and I think being able to go to him and be like did you know about this, and him be like yeah and tell me a story about what it was like for him growing up there which we still do to this day. We still went to one of my other marae and then he was like, oh so

> is this Koro's land, no I thought this was Koro's land, I thought Nanny was from here not Koro? And like, he would have more of a discussion about whakapapa and even more like him opening up about that we didn't really have, I think it was this year actually, he was opening more up especially after I learnt te reo that he was like, oh yeah your whenua is buried at the marae you were working at. I was like, oh my god I didn't even know that he would have kept my whenua, he was like, why wouldn't we? That's right, we're Māori. I definitely don't think it would have been easy to like reconnect with my Dad and my whakapapa without doing that conservation work just because I think for a lot of Māori that didn't grow up in Te Ao Māori there's just no way of knowing how to connect back. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)
>
> Especially for hapū that, we don't have service yet at our marae so they can't even Zoom or anything the sessions and they're not technologically advanced because it's still the Kaumatua leading the way and none of the rangatahi have stepped up in a way. It's a weird dynamic. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

In addition to the valuable opportunities to reconnect with whenua, restoration mahi in a Māori setting can be a way of bringing abstract concepts into a physical context when learning about them.

> I think it hit more home when I was working with my marae. I think there was a lot more information but the difference was I was young so I wasn't really wanting to hear about what is conservation. I think I just learnt that word coming into second year of university, and learning that kaitiakitanga is conservation and I'm still coming to terms with that. But I think in terms of a Te Ao Māori way, it's about learning about the sustenance of life and how, because I didn't know about any sort of run-off or anything but I could see the impacts of it, and learning about it that way, quite physical, was, it like changed a lot of me and made me feel connected to that marae because I grew up not really knowing it. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

Learning about the past

The significant urbanisation movements of Māori away from rural ancestral lands into urban centres changed those rural communities in ways that are hard to imagine today. Restoration work at pā and marae offer a way for younger generations to return to learn not just about the land but how our ancestors lived as communities with the land.

> So learning more about what it was like to have a community up there because there isn't up there now because it's like our hapū boards and land board, land trustees, leasing that land out to Pākehā farmers... It was just easier for them but a lot of them are trying to return back there now. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

These stories can also contribute to the sense of loss, becoming aware of the changes that have happened over time as people and the relationships with the land moved away and were disrupted.

> But just learning those stories and hearing like, why is there a whole heap of concrete right here, and that they used to have a netball court then it was demolished so we could have something I can't remember what it was, but just all the little stories like kind of the whakapapa things and hearing about, our awa used to have koura and tuna, and over there you can see the little dips in the whenua are from where the tuna used to go and stop in their journey which was really cool, but so random because you don't really see that now because of colonisation and the over farming and consumerism of Māori things. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

Learning about Te Ao Māori

Environmental restoration is a setting where Māori are able to (re)connect with their Māori identity. Learning concepts from Te Ao Māori and mātauranga featured for all of my research participants during their work in environmental restoration.

> I know, for me I've learned a lot, I've had to unlearn a lot of things, I learnt a lot about restoring mana, like whakaoho te mana, te wairua tapu, things like that, and even kupu and reo

> and things like that. (Participant 2, personal communication, April 20, 2021)
>
> Sharing that mātauranga, because mātauranga isn't mātauranga if you don't share it. Knowledge, you share that kaupapa and then another kaupapa dominoes, so that sort of thing. (Participant 2, personal communication, April 20, 2021)

Being involved in environmental restoration also acted as a catalyst for some of my research participants to want to become more connected into a Māori identity. Strengthening knowledge in this regard was considered as simply another component or skill that adds value and competence in environmental restoration.

Intergenerational knowledge

My research participants all shared reflections on how the values of kaitiakitanga were instilled in them in their youth. This also reinforced their beliefs in the need to inspire, in turn, younger generations to become kaitiaki in their own right. Connecting with the community to sustain and grow this knowledge base was mentioned repeatedly throughout my interviews.

> Yeah that's right, the community feeling, the vibe of people around me, it's a really important thing, it's more than just come and do weeding to me, I see a whole further aspect of it to each individual. I try to talk to them, what brought you here today? So I can try and advertise, not advertise, but how I can try and pull in more volunteers based on certain attributes as to why they are there. A lot of it was instilled from a young age, from their mother, and they're coming back, they're now doing uni and they're wanting to garden, they're wanting to do what was instilled so yeah I believe now the biggest thing now is trying to build them young or introducing them young so that we've got another generation of eco warriors, kaitiakis. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

For one respondent, it was in school that their relationship with environmentalism began. This focus on environmental learning remained strong with them as they later had opportunities to work with their hapū on restoration mahi.

> I went to a Catholic Primary school and I remember on Arbor Day, we'd go to the closest awa which was just a stream, go to one of the suburbs and pick up the rubbish, now like looking back it was a really fun thing to do with all your friends and see who could find the coolest piece of rubbish… More formally, it [their relationship with environmentalism] was definitely leaving high school and I was fortunate to get involved with my hapū with a paid internship doing, we'd just started kicking off our riparian planting along our awa because we'd just hired an environmental officer or something. So I spent a lot of my summer break and any uni break going to our awa doing either gathering seeds from the trees there which were predominantly kōwhai and mānuka and then doing the whole putting them in the greenhouse, doing seedlings and growing them and then one winter or summer we did about 10,000 trees in about a month and that was with a couple of other people who were in, I guess an internship. But it was just some of us, the kids of the people on the exec, the rūnanga board just going out and planting trees. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

Role modelling responsibilities and sustenance of the ability to provide kai for your whānau are important things one participant is instilling in their children so that they might grow up to share these values and attributes:

> My kids are weeding the gardens at the marae. And for me it was about, okay I'm about this life now, but I wasn't, how can I instill this with my kids, and I thought it, and I only know what I'm doing now because my Nana had me in the gardens, my parents had me mowing the lawns, they had me doing these certain things that now that I have gotten a bit of age and have calmed down, I am reflecting back. And when I reflect back these were the things that I was taught, to sustain life and grow your own kai, all these certain things were already installed that I had forgotten. So I have made it for the next generation, and I have explained to the next generation why we do this, what's the bigger picture, selfless acts, you might not get a thank you but in the long run it is the most fulfilling thing, to know that is always going to be there, things aren't going to fall apart, there is kai there at the back if we ever need… we can rely on ourselves. Being self-reliant. We work. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

The demographics of those who attend restoration events has often been described as older and Pākehā, but there is a value that these older Pākehā can add to restoration, sometimes through their longtime and unflinching commitments to their local projects.

> …what I am noticing at the moment, they're about 60-80. Most of our groups are not young, and I don't want to be rude but they are enthusiastic because they come with everything, their binoculars, they prepared, they're looking for the rare bird that was sighted there last year. You know they're really enthusiastic about restoration, and it's even getting our Māori coming to even learn from these guys. They might be Pākehā but they've been doing it every Thursday for the last thirty years. Growing their own native trees in their own backyard and putting them down in these gullies and understanding that they're just there to help, they're not owners, the original owners are the mana whenua… (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

In contrast, there are less older Māori turning up to community restoration projects. The trauma and discomfort that many of our own old people may have experienced historically may contribute to the absence of many Māori at restoration activities.

> I'm not upset that they're all that age, I'm kind of saddened that they are and that it's just them. I wish there were more of our own kaumatua and kuia in there. I think it might be just through the way that they have been taught not to be themselves or not to go into those spaces because you know back in their time, when they were our age, it was not okay to go there, it's not okay to be who you are as Māori. If you're going to go in as Māori you have to have a Pākehā name, you've got to change your name, that's why we have a Pākehā name and a Māori middle name. I think there's not enough of us doing things, especially in Kirikiriroa. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

One participant described the buzz that some older environmentalists get when younger people join and in particular when Māori participate in their projects. This is a hopeful and encouraging sign for older stalwarts to know that their work is being embraced by younger generations and inspires confidence in the longer term success of their work.

> …they believe that, jeez you've gone home, jeez this is where you belong… they want to share what they've learned about kaitiaki. Just so the stories don't die. Especially if you're from that area. You know they get a buzz, because jeez you're young, wow. They feel like their work isn't going to stop, you know thirty years of work they die it stops. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

When asked about being hopeful for the next generation, one participant articulated a bold vision of a generation growing up feeling fully connected, without any inherited hara, and knowing their place within a whānau and iwi. Their hope is for a revival of culture, ecosystems, and genuine cohabitation.

> That the next generation have a future you know. That they are reconnected. That they are not lost anymore like my grandparents, or my dad's siblings, or grandparent's siblings. They don't know all their iwi, they're looking to someone else to tell them who they are. I hope that they realise, and that every single one of us know who we are for ourselves and know who we are without having to go somewhere else. That our culture is revived and so is our taiao. And there's a balance restored. A lot of our native indigenous species come back, maybe not all of them will be able to, but you know there'll be a wave of it going across the world that is not just about indigenous sovereignty. It's about working together and working in harmony. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

The trauma of colonisation on whānau and Māori communities as various forms of social issues continue today. Drug and alcohol use and the socio-economic realities that many of our whānau continue to experience were directly mentioned or alluded to by all my participants.

> There are a lot of us, our people, stuck on drugs and alcohol. I hope that going through this process or journey helps them to see that they do have something to hold onto. They can find something worthwhile, that they can see there is something there for their children to reconnect with, they're not always going to be displaced. That they can find out who they are and they can remember. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

One participant describes the importance of using environmental restoration as a way to demonstrate a different path for rangatahi, by role modelling this themselves, to break cycles of unemployment and hopefully inspire change.

> …two years on the broom prospecting since I was 13, to the point where I started my degree, these youngins looked at me and went Uncle, are you allowed to work? Can Gs work? That's when I started, what? So you have to be the change you want to see. Can't tell them what to do. You've just got to try, do. Do as you want to see. So that's where it instilled me for rangatahi because I wanted to break that cycle. Because it's all crap to be honest. The glamour looks good, but it doesn't last long you know, and that's where my passion really is to try and break that cycle and using restoration as a way grounding themselves, whether rongoa, whakapapa, identity. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

Summary

Being involved in environmental restoration is being in a space of learning and sharing stories of the past and aspirations for the future. Sharing of knowledge can come through strengthening relationships with whānau, and through simply being on and connected to the whenua. A desire to improve confidence and knowledge in Te Ao Māori was identified by each of my research participants as a part of strengthening their skill base in environmental restoration. In this regard, restoration knowledge, knowing how to be kaitiaki, is simply a part of a Māori identity.

Theme Three: Environmental wellbeing and human wellbeing

For Māori, our familial relationship with the natural world through both direct whakapapa connections as well as our identity being shaped by the geographic features of our pepeha, makes our personal wellbeing inseparable from the wellbeing of the environment. My research participants all shared widely about this relationship in terms of their own wellbeing, of connecting with Te Ao Māori, and as a means of gathering as hapū. The role of environmental restoration in improving biodiversity and aiding the return of species that act as

tohu from the past, particular birds, invertebrates, or plants, are visual and spiritual markers of the strengthening of the mauri and wellbeing of the taiao. The possibilities for Māori to strengthen their connections and understanding of Te Ao Māori through environmental restoration activities can be transformative, and reframe restoration projects as places to nurture and enhance cultural identity in addition to environmental aims. This applies to individuals but also whānau and hapū who use these opportunities to gather and strengthen whanaungatanga and hapū identity and autonomy. For many, returning to ūkaipō, ancestral whenua, or places where you can be in connection with Papatūānuku, are important ways of healing and becoming tau (settled).

Healing and transformation

As mentioned previously in Theme One: The legacy of colonisation, experiences of displacement are common for Māori. For individuals, whānau and hapū, who are able to reconnect with their whenua, this can be a powerful signifier of overcoming part of that historic trauma and disconnection. Returning to ancestral land can see the reconnection with a sense of identity, tūrangawaewae, and of having a sense of place in the universe to look outwards from.

> Well for a lot of years our iwi, our whānau have had to be whāngai in another iwi rohe and into another marae, and that marae would be speaking for us but without us, or would actually come over here, and say it was theirs but not ours… So for me doing that was a big step in healing our whānau, and healing our iwi and making them realise that they do have a place here. So I think that was one step in healing. Actually creating the, getting the facility, the lunchroom, that was another step, opening the door for them, a whare. So that they are able to come home and feel like they've got somewhere, that they can reconnect now. Because there isn't much places we can go. (Participant 2, personal communication, April 20, 2021)

Living by whakapapa relationships with the natural world positions yourself as one interconnected part of a far greater expansive familial universe. My

research participants acknowledged that they felt aware of being part of something bigger than themselves, and that doing environmental restoration mahi, they are working to improve the wellbeing of something far beyond the limits of themselves as individuals. Importantly, there is a wairua connection at play for Māori and the environment, which can also help that sense of spiritual connection and healing.

> Yeah – it was a spiritual transformation really, more universal than godly, or anything, more spiritual, energy and stuff like that. For me it was empowering to know that I'm doing this little bit for the long run. Someone gotta. It's a bit meditating you know, it humbled me, because at the end of the day it taught me a lot, it took away a lot of resent. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

The whenua is a grounding space for Māori. Returning to the whenua during challenging times or in times of mamae is something that can be healing. One participant described how they would often return to their marae or whenua, or find a place in their local ngahere to go and connect with Papatūānuku, to help themselves calm and settle.

> Yeah it has just been like, now if I feel really mamae, I have to go back to my marae, and I have to go to my awa where I spent all that time, connecting with it, even though at the time I didn't think about my connection back, but I can hear the awa speak to me in a weird way, and know, oh no, this is what I need to do, I am on the right path or I'm on the wrong path. Then I go back, or come back here and it's okay, my tūpuna have got me. But even just looking at driving around the country and seeing mānuka or kōwhai, and it's okay, it's fine, my tūpuna are still here with me through that connection. It's a weird thing to come to terms with as I grow older as well. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

Being involved in restoration mahi is a meaningful activity for growing a sense of participation in your community and whānau activities. Being productive and knowing that you are making a difference is an important contributor to a sense of wellbeing. Having a practical outlet for making positive steps in terms of our identity as Māori and commitments of kaitiakitanga can help us to overcome a sense of whakamā we may otherwise feel in this regard.

> It gives a confidence, self-esteem that I'm capable of doing that. And it doesn't matter if there's only a little bit of us doing it, we are still making impact. Yep. I am actually doing something, I'm not just sitting on my arse complaining, I'm actually doing something. (Participant 2, personal communication, April 20, 2021)

> I believe mentally, physically, spiritually, the whenua heals. Whether you know you're touching base, you're getting your hands dirty, self-pride, especially as a Māori man we have this obligation of mahi, we look after our whānau… we need to be given those opportunities to feel empowered, whether it's a trade or what so they can feel like they can provide as a man, they can support, they feel grounded. I know I can feed my whānau, anger stops, and I reckon 90% of it will stop. Because they feel something, I'm worth something, self-pride, I'm looking after my whanaunga, I'm doing my role, as a Māori man. That whole anger, it's happy, it's pride, I've got a job, I'm doing what I'm meant to do. And now I believe that yeah, that's what will fix a lot of our people. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

Cultural identity is crucial for the wellbeing of Indigenous People. One research participant spoke about how basing themselves on tikanga was important for them in understanding their commitment to environmental restoration. Doing this allowed them to take their kaitiakitanga obligations out of the Pākehā world and reconnect with the wairua of being in relationship with the taiao.

> Tikanga as a base of values is kinda how you structure yourself and you know everyone sees tikanga as a different view on, and a lot of those are morals and values and for me tikanga states for me that I am to uphold the whenua until my kids are of age they can uphold themselves. So that took away, why do I have to mow the lawns? Why am I doing this? Why isn't he down here doing this too? Took away all that why. Tikanga states that I'm here. Tikanga states this is my role. And when you fire that aspect, it takes all of that, why me, why my money, why not his, why not this. You know why. This is an obligation and at the same time it's an obligation between you and your values too. Don't expect anyone else to thing it, it's purely you. That's how it transformed me into a

> more humble, calm - it grounded me. I'd say I'd be more a tourist or whatever, more of a nature type of person, to the point where early morning dew, I would go out and with the whenua and my bare feet and might think to myself that all that energy I picked up off others, the hara and that, and push it into the ground and replenish it, and that was one healing thing for me. Was being able to put that into the whenua, especially in those early mornings, those dewy, you feel it, the connection. That's where I started to really connect, within my own spiritual walk. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

Environmental restoration can be accessible for Māori to step into and begin to realise improvements in the landscape and in themselves. The feeling of contributing back and being productive can be positive and transformative. It is an easy way for Māori to show their commitment and see results.

> Yeah if you're gonna get out there and do something. Yeah it's putting reason to action, it's something big for me, I can't just say this is that and that's this, I've gotta put it into action. So then I've got something, like leverage. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

> The biggest learning experience would be how much we're actually capable of doing, like the potential everyone has, all Māori have, to be able to go out and get amongst it when it comes to reconnecting with the whenua. (Participant 2, personal communication, April 20, 2021)

Healing as people

Improvements in wellbeing can also be felt by the whānau or hapū. Having more opportunities for whānau to gather and connect such as at planting days can help to bring more whānau to their marae or part of their whenua and create a buzz of activity. Bringing people together at the marae for activities other than tangi is important in strengthening the identity of whānau with their marae and identity as Māori.

> Since we've had our nursery there have been more people actively participating and really wanting to be involved compared to, we didn't used to have that stuff, even working bees, it would just be like our AGM and even then it had to be

> a whānau day so they'd have games for the kids to play to draw people up there but now people are invested in I guess our economic journey, because now we use the nursery to fundraise for more environmental projects that are on the way. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

Environmental restoration can be a way of deepening an understanding of health and wellbeing in an holistic Māori way. This can include stepping on from planting, to utilising frameworks like the maramataka, as well as embedding this into everyday life and starting to recognise rhythms of life based from the maramataka that can be applied elsewhere.

> But it was for me and even the maramataka, but just involving our entire culture with that to restore the balance of things so, like when you do something over here you've got to stop some things, it has it in the maramataka, there are days when you leave certain things alone so I thought well it's all introducing health and wellbeing in a holistic field, and the things that I know, that fit well and keep me going and excelling in things. Let's also change it because of that as well, because it's got more of a focus point on our traditional culture and involving that and healing and so we're healing our environment. (Participant 2, personal communication, April 20, 2021)

A sense of wellbeing is impacted by the extent to which people are able to feel included and able to participate in their community. Teamwork and collective activities can provide an opportunity for connection and healing.

> I find it a healing space, especially for our Māori… Instead of using your frontal cortex and emotion all the time, we could learn a lot from just being around each other. You are what you attract. You are what you surround yourself with. So I believe yes because they are teaching me a lot, I get told, what amazing mahi, but my mahi is a collective of them, it's not just myself. I am as strong as my team. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

Socioeconomic factors exert considerable influence over health and wellbeing. Environmental and social justice issues are interrelated and their inseparability is understood through a Māori understanding of the universe. But due to the interrelated nature of all of these issues, especially as Indigenous People experiencing colonisation, dealing with the wide variety of these issues can be

overwhelming. Knowing how to prioritise your time and energy in responding to these issues led one of my research participants to the freedom to come and go from their mahi in environmentalism to give more focus to other areas from time to time.

> I'm just maybe not that connected to environmentalism at the moment because of other injustices. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

> Where should you put your effort in? Well you just find your kaupapa and you stay with it and you don't digress, but for Māori you can't. Like today the Waitangi Tribunal just found that Oranga Tamariki is structurally racist and that is an ongoing breach of Te Tiriti, like how am I meant to focus on Papa, but like that's so sad, but also trying to celebrate the good wins, I saw Amnesty just put out their petition against facial recognition by cops and having a stop to that. I feel like being holistic in Te Ao Māori is beautiful when it's wellbeing, but we're all holistic in other ways so we're like, oh, everything is crumbling around me in different ways, especially because like, with hapū they're just coming back to terms of what it means to be a hapū, especially in terms of Treaty Settlements, it's devolving in a profit scheme again and even Treaty Settlements are a Pākehā framework forced. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

> How are we meant to focus? I wish Māori just focus on Māori and stop fighting Pākehā because it's just going to kill us off again. I think it's an ongoing process of colonisation of us allowing Pākehā to get into us, I guess. But I don't know. The Crown should be abolished. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

Self-care in this regard is important. There is a need for spaces that are for healing and not just about continually fighting. This research participant also acknowledged that we are not only recovering from past destruction, but in fact new frontiers of environmental destruction are continually surfacing that Māori will always be forced to confront.

> I wish there was just space for us to heal instead of fight, I think I'm tired, especially a lot of the people I surround myself with, or watch them on social media, there is so much pain of just being Māori and then to have to, like thinking about [a

> friend] has just started reconnecting with her whenua now they're [Pākehā] going to go and mine it. It's like, let's just stop doing dumb shit like that so that we can actually look after Papa and we can look after ourselves. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

Restoring the taiao

As humans our most important physical needs are met through the ecological services provided by the natural environment being in a healthy state. For many Māori, water and waterways serve as a tohu, a representation for the health of the wider environment, as they serve as strong visual indicators for levels of pollution. Wairua and kincentric relationships connect Māori to their environment and waterways.

> You know, our planting on our river for filtering and that's where I started learning and touching base with – to love the whenua, and understanding that our river is our sustenance, our life. If the river dies we die in a way. In regards to our drinking water, our spring, we pump it from the river still to this day. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

One participant felt a positive affinity for the taiao in how there is a universal Māori commitment to improving it:

> I think it's the one place that all Māori can agree on, in terms of Māori politics. Which is really beautiful… I think in terms of the sheer collective, biodiversity has been strong in every single, or all of the hapū and iwi plans that I have seen, it's like let's bring back our native plant and animal species and I think that's really cool. I think it's really hopeful to even see. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

Environmental restoration is expansive work not limited to removing and replacing plant species. There is a big need for pest eradication as part of restoring ecosystems. Pest eradication is one such component that individuals and community groups can also participate in.

> I need those traps done, I need those bat houses done, it all goes in conjunction with one another. Like I have to do the

> weeding to make sure it's clear but these traps… they all come in conjunction. We need these traps so that we have birds that are not getting eaten. We need the trapping so the bats aren't getting eaten, so it all comes into play, without one another there would be no restoration. So that's the other aspect too. You can weed all you want but you've got all the predators. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

> It's cool knowing some of the stories of oh that's what it was like, only three generations ago and that at some point the pests just took over but now it's all slowly coming back, and it's maybe only been a year and a bit that've been doing intense pest control, but with that comes 1080 which is tricky… it's stopped some of the work that's necessary for the pest control because our maunga is a cliff, there are only a few people in our hapū that know how to navigate it without like, if you get lost you're basically like left for dead because there is no way to get it, so the only way for pest control is actually 1080. But yeah, it's interesting those conversations. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

There is pragmatism in how restoration mahi can be done that isn't exclusively seeking to recreate a pre-contact ecosystem:

> …there are some plants that aren't bad for us, there are some that are good for us, we're not racist. So there are actually some that are good for us but some that aren't, like privet. (Participant 2, personal communication, April 20, 2021)

Climate change

The need for urgent action on climate change is well established. The role that environmental restoration mahi can play as part of our collective solutions is crucial. Especially in urban environments, the land available for planting is limited. In Kirikiriroa, privately owned land is the majority, yet significant reserves and gully systems with their respective gully specific restoration projects have the capacity to make large environmental improvements.

> Like the more that we restore the better the things are going to get in terms of cleaning emissions up because that's what sucks in CO2. The more trees the more plants the better for our environment, it's a no brainer. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

> I believe our marae needs to be educated again in regards to coal. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

The impacts of climate change are already being felt, our plants in the Waikato are struggling to survive through the longer, hotter, drier periods.

> In regards to climate change affecting our environment, we're having double seasons now, it's crucial that we do something. It's getting hotter and hotter. It's getting worse where, this year some of our plants didn't survive where they did last year. It's our seasons are getting sunny where our plants aren't growing properly. I'm seeing it first hand in my own… I'm noticing it big time. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

A Māori understanding of climate change should be inclusive of ngā atua Māori and hold their agency as natural forces that are responding to destructive human activities. The daunting future of runaway climate change is not just problematic for nature but also for the ability of current civilisations and species to maintain on Earth. These understandings of climate change are captured by my research participants:

> …but historically the Atua were always present and responding the dumb shit that humans do, so why would that stop now? (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

> Yeah it's irreversible damage for us, the planet will survive in whatever capacity it can, it's that we won't survive. … it will do it's thing then like revert back to a different normal. It's just living in a post-COVID world. I think about all the times that nature could waste me. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

One research participant also picked up on the intergenerational nature of climate change awareness from what they see in their communities. Mirroring many of the mainstream Pākehā climate movements, younger generations appear more engaged and focused on seeking climate justice.

> Climate change for me, rangatahi it's got a huge impact. They get it. Our older ones aren't that educated, so a lot of, not to be mean, a lot of our changes may have to happen as certain elders pass because they're not as capable to change… That

> our rangatahi, our next generation are more logical, they see it. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

Summary

Human wellbeing is deeply connected to the wellbeing of our environment. (Re)connecting with the taiao is deeply restorative for Māori. It can be a cathartic space for those involved as an outlet to connect to a practical kaupapa. Where things like decolonisation and climate change can feel overwhelming and paralysing, returning to our traditional practices of kaitiakitanga is a way forward. It is accessible for all levels of skill, experience, and knowledge. Being involved in this mahi can be the space that Māori need to step away from past and present raru and find themselves returning to a relationship with Papatūānuku that can transcend and settle our mamae. Environmental restoration can be a way for communities, whānau, and hapū to come together and gain funding for this mahi. This can be a transformative economic opportunity for those who are doing the right mahi at the right time. Creating employment for whānau to work on their ancestral whenua is a significant boon for the investment in ourselves as Māori. This produces the double benefits of wealth being a determinant of health, and for Māori gaining employment in Māori spaces where there is a similar Te Ao Māori benefit experienced.

Theme Four: Environmental restoration as a decolonising space

During my conversations with my research participants, questions were asked as conversation prompts around the degradation of land and how this came to be. How did, and does colonisation impact on the state of our whenua? And, how does thinking about this feature in how you approach your mahi in this space? This theme therefore discusses the whakaaro shared with me around the relationships between decolonisation and environmental restoration. Some of the kupu related to environmental restoration, ‘kaitiakitanga’ and ‘conservation’, are discussed in this theme, with some brief unpacking of what these feelings invoked in my research participants. Decolonisation itself as an

abstract concept, and also what it could actually look like, was explored. Relations with Pākehā and the aspirations for Te Ao Māori were also unpacked and how they can be realised discretely and mutually.

Decolonisation

Ideas around decolonisation were shared by all of my research participants. There was different whakaaro around the particular terminology of 'decolonisation', with some finding the term itself to come across as overly academic and disconnected from the vocabulary of our whānau, who are the ones back home at the marae.

> Yeah I've never really heard the word decolonisation come out of any of Aunties or Uncles mouths. I think for them back home it's too academic, it's like why are we focusing on that when we could do this. And just bring everyone back home. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)
>
> I think that any word that is just like simplistically, it's for the love of your whakapapa really. Just wanting to be a part of that connectedness, and decol is quite academic and like even I don't know what decol [decolonisation] means in terms of academia but I know what it looks like or what it can look like. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

Decolonisation, when reframed to the idea of the restoration of Māoritanga, became easier to engage with. My research participants considered the restoration of Māoritanga to be something easier for others to connect with and see how they are helping this to advance this.

> …it's cool to know more people from back home that are on that journey of decol and reconnecting. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)
>
> Yeah there's a certain wairua to decol, and you're like yeah this is hopefully it. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

The differences between the terms 'decolonisation' and 'reindigenisation' were also raised, with the former being more focused on structures/institutions and resources, and the latter more concerned with culture and values. With these understandings of the two ideas, a sequential relationship is presented in that

resources are needed to pay for, and dominant institutions that restrict Māoritanga, both need to cough up and step back as a way of Pākehā decolonisation, in order for Māori to reindigenise.

> …what's the different between decolonisation and reindigenisation? Decolonisation sounds like a Pākehā word you know. Well, I've seen some people talk about that reindigenisation is like the Māori framework, whereas decolonisation, Pākehā need to decolonise to allow us to reindigenise which is interesting. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

Building kaitiakitanga in others can be an inclusive activity based on the practical aspects that are achieved through this mahi. One research participant described this work as beneficial for all ethnicities based in Aotearoa. They also had a powerful framing of this mahi in terms of being about holistic restoration.

> I build that kaitiakitanga feeling within myself, but even with people, it's our role, that word tikanga, wherever we are that's our responsibility, with Pākehā, Māori, Indian, Fijian, we're all from here now. We're so intermarried it's not funny. I don't believe in this go back to your country, or… I'm kind of crapping on my Mother as a Pākehā, or as a Pommie… So I don't come from that perspective of decolonisation, I come from a perspective of the wellbeing aspect of what restoration does, spiritually, physically, mentally, exercise for the hinengaro, being out away from your desk, social groups, friends social groups, a lot of our people, especially our older ones come because they don't have anything else, so this is their time out. To even awhi that, that they come and get out of the house and they mix and mingle, that's part of their healing process too and especially on the depression side of things, they come to keep well. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

Relationships with Pākehā

Improving the environment in Aotearoa is a positive for everyone. This isn't limited to the environmental gains in terms of emissions reduction, biodiversity, and ecosystem services. This can also be about imparting the

cultural values of kaitiakitanga and elements from Te Ao Māori to be inspired and encouraged for non-Māori alike.

> It's not just for me, it's for the bigger wider community, and even for Pākehā to learn and to be a part of, because there is a lot of Māori culture that can help with Pākehā culture, or for people who come here because they don't like their own country. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

Racist microaggressions towards Māori are not uncommon. The lack of effort to try and pronounce Maori words correctly occurs in environmental spaces just as it does in wider society in Aotearoa.

> Not from all of them, but from maybe one or two, that have given me the odd look, don't really pronounce the names properly, like, know the history but won't really say or include Māori into anything. (Participant 2, personal communication, April 20, 2021)

One participant expressed being aware of the pre-existing biases that they and community members may have about each other but that over time they came to see that these were not barriers for participation for either side in the restoration mahi:

> …that's purely what I've seen time and time again. I got to see it about twenty odd times before I know to register that it is pono. So yeah, the one thing I believe about our community groups, and I came into this mahi a bit weary, is that they are, there's no cultural difference between them, it was me. They came in and went, you're the only darky, but they're not even seeing me for that, they're only seeing me as another companion who wants to learn and bounce off, and it is us most of the time, we simply see fear and put the barrier up. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

> Yeah I think a lot of our people are shy or shy away from things such as community meetings or, the [conservation organisation] meeting I went to last week I was the only Māori in there. You know they're saying kia ora, tēnā koutou when they open up, so why wouldn't we be here, why wouldn't we come here if they're going to use opening in te reo Māori? (Participant 2, personal communication, April 20, 2021)

Some Pākehā are aware of the need to educate and decolonise themselves and their people as a way of supporting Te Ao Māori. Environmentalism and social actions likely attract a disproportionate number of Pākehā who are personally committed to learning about Te Tiriti o Waitangi and exploring what this means for them as Pākehā in Aotearoa in relationship with tangata whenua today.

> I fully believe that I have to work on us these days because Pākehā are really doing a lot of mahi in regards to learning Māori, understanding tikanga, understanding Te Tiriti, constitutional differences between the Treaty, Te Tiriti, you know they are learning and I can advocate for that, far out. You know I've never come across this, I have come across the kōrero, but no action. These fullas live it. And for me I wouldn't even work for [organisation name] if they weren't tika. You know because I wouldn't be able to back them up, they are about tikanga, they are about this. I wouldn't be able to even work here because I'd feel like a fraud. Selling the dream, yeah we're Māori aspects but really it's about money money money. Yeah, I wouldn't be able to do it. So I am stoked to be here because they are teaching me a lot too. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

Alongside experiences of tokenism there are also experiences of many well-meaning Pākehā who do want engagement and relationships with Māori but haven't got there yet:

> And I think another thing would be learning that not all places are racist in Kirikiriroa. They're actually open to wanting us to be involved in what they've got going, because they have this kōrero about the iwi and hapū but they don't have them involved, so they're trying to have that door open for us to walk in, and be yay you're here, because we've learnt your reo and we've learnt all this stuff, now we need you to be here because you're the missing piece to that puzzle sort of thing. (Participant 2, personal communication, April 20, 2021)

Being a minority of Māori in a Pākehā community environmental group can feel like tokenism at times, but there can also be genuine alignment in terms of what the groups are working towards and what Māori see value in.

> I do feel like a token Māori, but I did say to [the organisation manager] that I am willing to be that person for the long run of

> our people. If it's gonna help [the organisation] in a way of merging relationships where skin colour is not merging it, pai ana I am willing to be that person. Because I believe in [the organisation's] end result. It's not fraud, it's not, you know. It's tika, so yep. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

There is still much to do, however, in terms of both getting Te Tiriti o Waitangi education and also learning what that means in terms of behaviour and how you operate practically in the community. One of my research participants noted that it was the on-the-ground workers in particular who needed education around this in order to become better collaborators with Māori.

> … they come here, no it's my gully, this this, and at the same time we've even had Te Tiriti exercises and they didn't even come, because you may learn and understand things a lot more different than what you think you know. But what I have said to the Council in the last submission, same thing, the people on the ground need to do a Te Tiriti course, and I think we may collaborate a lot better than we are, instead of I'm here, you're there, let's battle over this little piece of land, it's not like that. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

Kaitiakitanga

Kaitiakitanga was well understood by all of my research participants but there were preferences around the use of the term. In particular, the use of 'kaitiakitanga' by Pākehā, especially as it used Crown agencies and in the Resource Management Act, has created a sense that the term has been co-opted and taken away from Māori. When Māori terms are defined by Pākehā they can end up losing some of the wairua and meaning in the translation process. In not using the fullest understanding of a concept these words can become misappropriated and lose significance for Māori.

> Kaitiakitanga has been bastardised by Pākehā, so now I know that a lot of people don't want to use kaitiakitanga or kaitiaki because it has been bastardised by Pākehā. Especially like by Government and creating those definitions in the RMA. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

> …so like what is kaitiakitanga in a contemporary context now that it's been identified and labelled within legal parameters, well legal isn't alive. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

One research participant felt that the term kaitiaki isn't only for Māori, that this concept can be open for everyone to use and engage with. But in so doing, to use the kupu appropriately necessitates the need to also apply other Māori frameworks of understanding and actions.

> Because if you're a kaitiaki that's what you're going to include right? If you're going to use kupu reo Māori like kaitiaki you're going to have to use a culture or a system like that maramataka or Matariki or things like that or you know mahinga kai, tuna and eels. You know, everything that makes us who we are fits into that bracket of kaitiaki. And everything that I know as a Māori yeah fits into that as well. I didn't want it to just be for Māori, and it's not. I think it can help everyone, so I just wanted to put out there as well that it's not just about Māori it's about healing everything, our taiao, our wai, and ngā tangata katoa. (Participant 2, personal communication, April 20, 2021)

Instilling the sense of what kaitiakitanga is and the obligations it entails was a strong focus for one participant in their work to support local communities to be confident in caring for their local environment. This also includes cultivating a sense of relationship with the whenua, to know that you are not out of place being there, and that you are welcome. Having a sense of responsibility to the land and getting to be known for being there helps overcome feeling unwelcome or like a stranger who is not allowed to be there.

> …getting that feeling, obligated to, feeling that is their obligation being a local, instilling that kaitiakitanga feeling within our locals to do our areas. It's no good bringing in someone from that area to come down here, there's no real connection. You wake up every morning looking at it, and you feel it as a local that that's my responsibility to go and pick up that rubbish… You instill that kaitiakitanga and you can come down anytime, you can weed anytime, oh it's just across the road. You know they feel that empowerment. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

> …it's more about creating kaitiakitanga for people to be able to come down without me and feel, especially Māori, and feel

> that we're allowed. Somehow, we hear it's Council land, we don't want to walk there, we don't want to do anything, it's an official thing, like a copper, it's like the land is a Police Officer. (Participant 3, personal communication, April 16, 2021)

Kaitiaki can also serve as a political identifier. The term is used to reframe the participants in land occupations as 'kaitiaki' rather than 'protestor', as a way of reasserting the traditional obligations of kaitiaki to enhance the mauri of the environment, which could include preventing destructive land-use changes to occur.

> And it's just like changing, and with occupation movements they talk about kaitiaki but it's synonymous with protectors, and it's like, I'm not protecting, I wouldn't necessarily say I am protecting the environment because the environment could waste me in any second. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

> …when I went up to Ihumātao to occupy that was purely, well obviously because any sort of injustice towards Māori is really messed up, that's Papa that they're trying to destroy… and even sitting up there and learning about how there were urupā. I would never want my tūpuna to feel that kind of mamae and be stuck like that under all that concrete. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

> Yeah I think looking academically at previous protests about peaceful resistance, it is the most peaceful resistance there is and I think that is what was reflected at Ihumātao where they broke the police line and went and planted all the rākau which pushed them back. Which is peaceful resistance and a really beautiful moment. But that is just an active role of kaitiakitanga whereas other places will just naturally do that, but it's different when it's an occupation and the police are being police. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

The innate wairua connection that Māori have through whakapapa is what obliges our role as Māori to exercise kaitiakitanga. This participant was weary of allowing Pākehā into this space as they lack that wairua-whenua whakapapa.

> I don't think it's [kaitiakitanga] for them [Pākehā] to get. I don't think, like it's not in their whakapapa, I think that's where they latch onto white environmentalism because they try

> to relate… I think that's when it gets kind of dangerous when we allow Pākehā into our world to take hold of our worldview because they still don't have the whakapapa and they might have the physical aspects of like planting but they don't have the wairua that's connected to it. And especially at a hapū level, thinking about all of everyone's whenua that is buried there, that's literally the wairua of you know, and that's why you have a strong connection to a place or whatever and Pākehā won't ever have that, unless they become Māori somewhere or their whakapapa, but for the most part they won't have the wairua of it, they'll have some emotional connection, but it's still not. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

The obligations that Māori have as kaitiaki aren't is not something that Maori can easily disconnect from. The motivations for Māori and Pākehā in restoration mahi can also be different, and resulting feelings of discomfort for Māori in Pākehā-dominated environmental spaces can put off Māori.

> Yeah, and it's that at any moment they can just run away because at the end of the day it's just another Kaupapa, but for Māori it's integral to wellbeing. Especially for people like me who just come into it and environmentalism actually, I'd say I've drifted away from kaitiakitanga, because of white people taking up that space and I'm like, I don't want to do what you're doing. Even just like starting the day with a karakia is farfetched for Pākehā in terms of conservation work or anything. Maybe they're into planting trees because they take all of the C02, but we're planting trees because our manu can come and rest there or feed there and that's one of our tupuna, or ra da ra da ra, and that's more holistic than what a lot of Pākehā can comprehend at the moment. (Participant 1, personal communication, April 30, 2021)

Summary

The language of decolonisation can seem overly academic for what it might look like in practice. For Māori, the aspirations that we know are shared by our whānau are the restoration of a Māori identity in ourselves and the restoration of Māoritanga in the way that we work. The language of 'kaitiakitanga' can be problematic when used by the Crown and non-Māori. However, there are

supportive Pākehā who are committed to decolonisation and to see their institutions and structures decolonised for the betterment of Māori and Pākehā alike. Recognising the legacy of colonisation on the environment, on Māori, and on the ability of Māori to practise kaitiakitanga, necessitates the decolonisation of environmental restoration as an expression of social justice. Working towards this will also fully realise the ambitions of community environmental projects in Aotearoa as being wholly interrelated with the wellbeing and aspirations of Māori. Environmental wellbeing can be a decolonising space for those involved. Community-based environmental restoration is a place where Māori and Pākehā can connect to individually and collectively begin to educate and practise unlearning colonial hegemony, and navigate what a decolonised Aotearoa could look like.

Conclusion

The findings of the interviews with my research participants as themed from my thematic analysis have been presented in four themes: the legacy of colonisation; environmental restoration as a place for sharing knowledge; environmental wellbeing and human wellbeing; and, environmental restoration as a decolonising space. Decolonisation as the restoration of an Indigenous identity can be assisted and realised through the practice of environmental restoration. Restoring the environment to its full potential as a place for both learning and action will deliver great benefits for all participants. Engaging in place-based learning and local histories will do well to support conscientisation and the greater inclusion of tangata whenua at all levels of work. Enhancing environmental wellbeing will also do well to restore the oranga and wairua of individuals, whānau, and hapū. Decolonising Aotearoa is an immense task, but decolonising how environmentalism and environmental restoration is practised at a local level, project by project, while onerous, can help to plant the seeds of a critical consciousness to see Te Tiriri o Waitangi honoured, and for Māoritanga in Aotearoa for Māori and Pākehā alike.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion of the findings

This chapter is a high level discussion of my research findings against the relevant literature I explored in Chapter Two. This chapter again presents my findings organised into the four main themes used in Chapter Four. This research sought to explore the relationship for Māori working in environmental restoration, primarily in and around Kirikiriroa, and their experiences of how this work related to their wellbeing; to their identity as Māori; and the relationship they see this work having with decolonisation. Topics discussed during the interview conversations included:

1. How did you come to be in environmental restoration?
2. What is important for Māori working in these spaces?
3. Has being involved in this work had any impact on:
    a. Your relationship with the whenua/taiao?
    b. Your sense of wellbeing?
    c. Your identity as Māori?
4. Thinking about how this land came to be degraded, how does the impact of colonisation, history, and land-use changes feature in how you do this work?

Making use of kaupapa Māori research to inform my research process, the resulting semi-structured interviews produced rich data through the interactive kōrero with my research participants. This data sat with me while employing the use of thematic analysis to produce initial and then final coding to theme the responses into these four themes:

1. The legacy of colonisation;
2. Environmental restoration as a place for sharing knowledge;
3. Environmental wellbeing and human wellbeing;
4. Environmental restoration as a decolonising space.

Theme One: The legacy of colonisation

This research identified that colonisation continues to shape the context of environmental restoration. The majority of the literature reviewed in this thesis is critical of colonisation and the impact of colonial worldviews that were imposed on Indigenous peoples globally. My research participants shared kōrero that affirmed a critical view on the history of colonisation in Aotearoa and the impact this has on their identity and lives, as Māori in Aotearoa today.

Through colonisation, Māori were alienated from ancestral lands and livelihoods. The impact of the loss of their ancestral whenua through historic violence and disposition, the legal systems created to dispossess Māori of their land, and the trauma all this had on ancestors and whakapapa, is still felt today (Grimes, 2022; Moewaka Barnes and McCreanor, 2019; Reid et al., 2017). Māori have strong traditions of story-telling as a way of passing on knowledge and histories. This is how traumatic events from history can become part of the collective memory spanning generations (Reid et al., 2017). The memory of displacement featured for my research participants. Displacement, and being raised away from ancestral whenua, were shared experiences amongst them all. Walker et al. (2019) describes how, "traditional relationships to the environment, whakapapa and the practice of kaitiakitanga are challenged in urban settings" (p.2). The displacement for my research participants was individual, in that they and their whānau lived away, but one research participant also highlighted that their hapū had also historically been displaced as a collective from their whenua, and their work in restoration was related to overcoming that separation.

The imposition of Pākehā hegemony in Aotearoa is maintained through the sovereignty of the institutions of the New Zealand Government. For on-the-ground environmental restoration projects, the various Territorial Local Authorities (TLAs) are the most common institutions of Crown authority that restoration participants will have interactions with. In wanting to see Māori aspirations for their whenua, TLAs can be difficult to navigate and can be frustrating bodies to engage with in order to see a project's success.

Compliance with Pākehā systems is part of survival for Indigenous Peoples. Reid et al. (2017) write that, “To survive, indigenous people have to inhabit the political, economic and social institutional structures of the settler, the totalising nature of settler colonialism leaves them with no choice. These structures are both intentionally and incidentally biased towards the settler, particularly in the early years of consolidation, though this inequality continues into the contemporary era to varying degrees” (p. 24). My research participants reflected on interactions with councils and council staff that ranged from positive and helpful to frustrating and ignorant. Pākehā-designed and operated processes for funding and project accountabilities can constrain Māori aspirations for their whenua.

The ‘othering’ of Māori and nature were key conditions in justifying the expansion of colonisation in Aotearoa. The continuing expressions of these imperialist beliefs still remain and continue to reinforce the memories and acts of violence upon Māori society and our whenua (Tuck and Yang, 2014; Adams and Mulligan, 2021). This ‘colonising environment’ is also maintained through the imposition of colonial names on the Māori world. This has happened for towns and cities, streets, mountains, species, and even the anglicising of individual and family names. My research confirmed that the intergenerational trauma from this past is still felt by Māori today, through the stories they have inherited about the world they have largely lost (Reid et al., 2017; Pihama et al., 2014). All of my research participants made reference to the general experiences of Māori today growing up away from their ancestral whenua, with many Māori experiencing a range of barriers to their reconnection and ability to practise kaitiakitanga.

Theme Two: Environmental restoration as a place for sharing knowledge

Environmental restoration is a place where people are able to re/learn stories about their ancestors, their family, and themselves. It can be a space for rebuilding lost whanau connections, and a safe space to grow new ones, and impart the value of doing so into the next generation.

The common bonds of whānau relations that are the basis for Māori social organisation can be strengthened through environmental restoration as a whānau and hapū project. Mātauranga is under threat while species disappear as well as those with particular knowledge of those species disappear without passing this knowledge on (Te Aho, 2011; Department of Conservation, 2020). The findings in this thesis support the role of environmental restoration activities as being a way that Māori can connect to this mātauranga and help to prevent further losses. This research also showed that, for Māori in environmental restoration, they are also learning and being exposed to knowledge about other aspects of their whakapapa, marae, whānau and hapū histories, te reo, and Te Ao Māori.

Theme Three: Environmental wellbeing and human wellbeing

Human wellbeing is wholly dependent upon the wellbeing of the environment. Māori understand the natural world as nurturing us. Our relationship with whenua is a reciprocal nurturing cycle; whenua supporting us in the womb, whenua being a place for humans to organise socially, and whenua as a source of wairua, individual/collective, and political identity (Mead, 2003; Rameka, 2018; Walker, 1990; Harmsworth, 2020). Māori alienation from land, and its subsequent degradation on an industrial scale, diminished the critical role that whenua plays in the wellbeing of Māori (Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019).

Durie's (1999) Te Pae Māhutonga health promotion framework serves as an effective framework for identifying the various interrelated areas of oranga and how Māori can see these areas strengthened through their involvement in environmental restoration. The six areas of Te Pae Māhutonga are:

Mauriora/Cultural identity: Cultural identity is a critical prerequisite for the wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples (Durie, 1999). Environmental restoration is an activity where Māori are able to connect with Te Ao Māori; whakapapa, whānau and hapū, te reo Māori, marae and other elements of their pepeha.

Ngā Manukuru/Leadership: Environmental restoration is an activity that supports Māori involved in it to grow in their own leadership skills as community leaders, promoting the health and wellbeing of the taiao and the people of the community. My research showed how environmental restoration can support the restoration of a hapū identity and hapū autonomy.

Te Mana Whakahaere/Autonomy: Self-organising around the unique aspirations of the particular geographically-based community feature in environmental restoration projects. The success of these projects often relies on how the project is able to draw leadership and participation from the community and hapū support.

Te Oranga/Participation in society: "Māori were worse off, not just because they tended to be poorer than non-Māori, but because they were Māori" (Cheyne et al., 2008, p. 222). This acknowledges the role of structural racism prevalent in current approaches to welfare and healthcare for our people. My research described how for Māori engaged in environmental restoration, their work in this space helped to connect them into Te Ao Māori, and to apply a critical Māori focus to their advocacy for wider issues of social justice. This is how environmental restoration can help Māori call for specific Māori responses to address the barriers created by colonial hegemony that can deliver greater results than more colonial responses.

Toiora: Healthy lifestyles: Environmental restoration relies on physical activity. One of my research participants prided himself on using environmental restoration as an opportunity to take Māori, especially rangatahi, out of their homes and their usual routines, to get into the outdoors and engage in physical activity as part of this mahi.

Wairora/Environmental protection: Human health relies on the health of the environment. Environmental restoration works to directly improve the wellbeing of the environment and is an opportunity for Māori to be physically connected with it. For Māori living in lower socioeconomic areas, this can be an opportunity to connect with urban gullies and green spaces in our cities that

are otherwise particularly difficult to maintain relationships with (Walker et al., 2019).

Theme Four: Environmental restoration as a decolonising practice

European colonisation achieved aims of acquiring land for the production of wealth and reproduction of European settler society at the expense of those already here (Walker, 1990; Nesmith et al., 2021; Tapsell, 2021; Plumwood, 2003). For Māori, who had our entire way of living disrupted through colonisation, this includes our ability to practise kaitiakitanga, and to live in respectful reciprocal relationships with the environment. Through the loss of lands and subsequent land use changes, significant environment degradation occurred in Aotearoa. This theme is similar to Theme One: The legacy of colonisation, in that it recognises that the starting point for many Māori in environmental restoration is the need to overcome generations of environmental degradation resulting from colonisation (Nesmith et al., 2021; Wilmhurst, 2007).

Looking again at Laenui's (2000) five steps for colonised people to decolonise, my research participants all shared experiences of their own and, from what they have seen of other Māori involved in environmental restoration, as involvement across these five steps:

1. rediscover and recover culture;
2. mourn the losses resulting from colonization and exploitation;
3. dream of future social, political, and economics structures that incorporate traditional values;
4. commit to the vision; and
5. take action to make the dream a reality. (p. 2)

In my interviews, my research participants described their own rediscovery and connection with their Māoritanga. The mamae emanating from colonisation is still felt and is still very present, but each participant was steadfast in their dreams for local and large-scale changes to bring Māoritanga into the systems

and structures we operate within, and they are proud in taking action to pursue those dreams.

Connecting with the whenua in a restorative activity can be an effective step towards greater rediscovery of whakapapa, whānau, and hapū histories. The impacts of past hara (offending) are still mourned and or held by Māori. Māori in restorative activities have bold aspirations for the futures they are committed to for their whenua and whānau, and are proactively actioning these. Work is still needed by Pākehā and Tauiwi to decolonise their actions in the environmental restoration space and to make their projects welcoming, safe spaces for Māori. There is more work for Pākehā to do for themselves in decolonising the systems and institutions in Aotearoa that would go towards upholding their obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This would also enable Māori to further indigenise ourselves and the way we live in Aotearoa (Jackson, 2020; Mercia, 2020). It was noted by my research participants that the Pākehā involved in environmental spaces are stepping up in this regard, educating themselves and others in the community, and doing the work that Pākehā need to decolonise and become the Treaty partners envisioned at the 1840 signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

For Māori involved in environmental restoration, increasing their knowledge and confidence in Te Ao Māori is a way that they are reindigenising themselves. Through learning about whānau, whakapapa, and our place as Māori in relation to the universe in both space and time, we can begin to transcend imperialist and colonial thinking to seek justice and restoration of ourselves and the world we once held real as Māori. Indigenous whakaaro is free from the constraints of, "whiteness... the inevitability of capitalism... the hierarchy of heteropatriarchy" (Simpson, 2017 p. 17), because it recalls and can recall a time in relatively recent memory of a world before those things arrived and were imposed on our ways of life. In Aotearoa, those things came here with Pākehā, they brought those systems here, so although they have a pre-arrival history, it is still within those overarching paradigms. For Māori, pre-contact was a world where those systems didn't exist here, and our pūrākau, cosmogonies, and epistemologies exhibit a spiritual connection to a

world devoid of them. Stepping into being in a relationship with that world can be through the reconnection with Papatūānuku, returning and enlivening our practices of kaitiakitanga and encouraging this in others, and in the next generation. Restoring a lived relationship with our ancestral whenua and mātauranga is work to restore Te Ao Māori.

From my interviews, there is varied reaction to what decolonisation looks like in community restoration. But, through being involved in environmental restoration and learning about the history of European expansion in Aotearoa, conflict and confiscations, and the impact on people and the environment these caused, a conscientisation process can begin. There are barriers that prevent Māori from living our innate obligations to be kaitiaki. Decolonisation is often the work that we look to in addressing and overcoming these barriers for Māori. Conscientisation for Māori into a Māori identity, is a pathway into greater advocacy for the restoration of Te Ao Māori. Through Freire's (1970) concept of conscientisation, the process of learning, reflection, and action, Māori can use involvement in environmental restoration and our practices of kaitiakitanga as a pathway into Te Ao Māori. In doing so, we can find ourselves becoming stronger advocates for the changes that would see environmental, economic, social, and cultural improvements for all Māori in Aotearoa.

Summary

The research findings in this thesis confirm that for Māori practising kaitiakitanga, they also increase their knowledge of Te Ao Māori, they can experience healing and restoration, and they can become advocates for decolonisation and reindigenisation. This research confirms the importance of Māori values and understandings of whakapapa, whenua, whānau, wairua, mauri, and manaakitanga in environmental restoration. This thesis asserts that decolonising understandings of conservation, environmentalism, and environmental movements, would be conducive to strengthened environmental wellbeing in Aotearoa. The inclusion of Māori in community conservation projects supports Māori to practise kaitiakitanga. There is work for Pākehā to

do to decolonise colonial institutions in Aotearoa, and this includes how community conservation is funded and operates.

This chapter has revisited the four research themes and considered these findings against the literature explored in Chapter Two. This research reflects my own experiences in environmentalism throughout my life. Similar to my research participants, my own involvement in environmentalism has supported my desire to strengthen my connections with Te Ao Māori. Sometimes being the only Māori in the room, I have been asked to offer karakia by others, out of a genuine desire to be respectful and act appropriately. Pleasingly, some of these Pākehā have then gone on to learn karakia to offer themselves and not expect continually of Māori. But I have also been the only Māori present when our histories and relationships with the whenua have been excluded, or worse, incorrectly retold from a perspective that belittles our mana. I also share the aspirations of my research participants for the future of the taiao and for the increasing participation of Māori, tikanga Māori, and rangatahi Māori in these spaces.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

This chapter will conclude this thesis by referring back to my initial research questions to gauge how they have been addressed through my research. This chapter also includes a discussion around the strengths and limitations of this particular research, and offers suggested future research topics to continue the development of research in this area.

This thesis began with the story of my own whānau. The memories from my youth that I have of my Māori grandmother, her tangi, and of our whānua being at our marae, have all been formative in my own life. For me, these are the connections I have with my whakapapa, and the relationship I have with my marae and our whenua. In the kōrero shared by my research participants I was welcomed into a brief glimpse into their lives and experiences of being Māori, of finding and overcoming disconnection, and their aspirations for the taiao, as kaitiaki. To give meaningful context to their kōrero, I offered a karakia, recalling the whakapapa of creation. This grounded my work in the Māori cosmogony shared by my research participants. From here we unpacked some of the key concepts that underpin Māori relationships with the environment: whenua, whānau, manaakitanga, and whakapapa. These concepts are some of the building blocks for understanding the kincentric and interdependent ecosystems that Māori are a part of. This was important to understand, as with the arrival of Europeans to Aotearoa, despite well intentioned constitutional arrangements, eurocentric views of the world were imposed on Māori and the environment. These views, used rational views of science which ‘othered’ the environment out of the human whānau, justifying its expropriation and subjugation under colonial land uses, to grow colonial plants, people, and pests. I described the impact this had for Māori; the trauma of alienation from land and the dispossession of our hitherto way of life. The mamae from this period of intense violence is still carried by Māori today. Inherited trauma from memories of this time, are reinforced continually to Māori, as we live our lives within the colonising environment. I then take the journey to the rise of social and environmental justice movements calling for greater environmental

protections and the honouring of Te Tiriti o Waitangi amongst a variety of other issues. This flows into an exploration of decolonisation with comment from global and local scholars, activists, and leaders. Decolonisation is ultimately a political, constitutional issue, but unlearning colonial hegemony is needed across the board, to decolonise ecology and environmentalism. What this can look like was covered next. I outlined some of the initiatives for incorporating kaitiakitanga, in particular, into the core environmental restoration in Aotearoa. With this groundwork laid, I moved into describing the research process before reaching the analysis and findings.

The main question this thesis sought to explore was 'What are the experiences of Māori involved in environmental restoration?'. To answer this question several sub questions were also posed:

1. How does the wellbeing of the taiao relate to your wellbeing?
2. How does this mahi relate to your identity as Māori?
3. How does this mahi relate to ideas of decolonisation?

I sat with the answers to these questions and, in reading over them, I arranged the data into the themes of: the legacy of colonisation, environmental wellbeing restoration as a place for sharing knowledge, environmental wellbeing and human wellbeing, and, environmental restoration as decolonising space. These themes covered the impact of displacement, issues with Pākehā systems and structures, the value of whanaungatanga, learning about the past, and connecting with Te Ao Māori. The potential for environmental restoration to be a place for healing, transformation, and for decolonisation was also explored. The discussion chapter reiterated these themes as it made connections between the kōrero with my research participants and with the literature that had initially set the context for my thesis.

Conclusions

This research identified that the legacy of colonisation still impacts significantly on my Māori contemporaries working in environmental restoration. The impact of the loss of their ancestral whenua through historic

violence, dispossession, and legal systems created to dispossess land and identity from Māori, and the trauma this had on ancestors and whakapapa, is still real for Māori today. In responding to the past, through opportunities for environmental restoration, Māori often have to enter into relationships with local councils. The reality of navigating council for restoration projects, as the most common expression of Crown authority in-community, can have mixed results and is another reminder of ongoing colonial hegemony in Aotearoa. Environmental restoration is a place where people are able to (re)learn stories about their ancestors, their family, and themselves. It can be a safe space for rebuilding lost whānau connections, growing new ones, and imparting the value of doing so onto the next generation. Human wellbeing is wholly dependent upon the wellbeing of the environment. The kincentric relationships between Māori and the natural world speak to our complete interdependence on the taiao as our family and as an extension of ourselves. Alienation from whenua has negatively impacted the spiritual health of Māori and our ability to exercise tino rangatiratanga in regards to managing our own health in ways that we determine are most appropriate to us. Lastly, environmental wellbeing can be a decolonising space for those involved. From my interviews there was no consensus on understandings of decolonisation in community restoration projects, but through being involved in environmental restoration and learning about the history of colonisation and its impact on people and the environment, a conscientisation process can begin. Through learning about whānau, whakapapa, and our place as Māori in relation to the universe in both space and time, we can begin to transcend imperialist and colonial thinking to seek justice and restoration of ourselves and the world we once held real as Māori.

Discussion of the research

Strengths and limitations

A limitation of this research is the small sample size of research participants. These participants were selected because a personal connection had exposed their mahi to me. They are all involved in projects primarily in or around Kirikiriroa. Because of the small interconnected community of environmental

restoration in Kirikiriroa, it is possible that there are resources, approaches, networks, or relationships in Kirikiriroa that might be additionally supportive or problematic for restoration work. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that their experiences are representative across Aotearoa.

Suggestions for future research

Academic literature that relates kaitiakitanga and decolonisation is not in abundance. There is more knowledge on this topic in the minds of those who practise kaitiakitanga and experience the wairua connection between themselves as Māori and the whenua. The term 'decolonisation' however can present itself as overly academic and abstract to those who maintain a lived relationship with their whenua. From conversations with others involved in restoration work throughout my time writing this thesis, there is a general interest in content around decolonising environmentalism in Aotearoa both for the practice of conservation or environmental restoration, and also for movements and organisations working in these spaces.

I would suggest that it is the responsibility of Pākehā to educate themselves and work on decolonisation. In this regard, there are many great educators, allies, and accomplices in the sector already, and it is heartening to see these conversations happening as the need to explore what being Tangata Tiriti looks like. They can support Pākehā on the following questions:

- How can Pākehā and Tauiwi groups and individuals best support Māori perspectives and aspirations in these spaces in ways that uphold the tino rangatiratanga of Māori?
- How can these groups decolonise and diversify themselves in how they conduct their work?
- How do we make groups, especially in the climate space, robust in their understandings of Te Tiriti o Waitangi-based relationships in Aotearoa? Will they be robust enough to avoid the trap of climate 'solutions' that perpetuate colonial behaviour, thinking, and responses?

For Māori, there is more space to be filled in regards to land decolonisation, decolonising ecology, and connecting kaitiakitanga as decolonisation and reindigenisation. There is also more work for us as Māori to help take 'decolonisation' out of the academy and to use it to language practices such as kaitiakitanga.

My reflections

I see my own experiences reflected in those of my research participants. At times I have been the only Māori in the room, left to feel uncomfortable in silence or aggressively reactionary, when privy to hurtful or ignorant comments from non-Māori. Or the opposite end, when as the only Māori, being expected to offer a mihi and karakia, and with feelings of inadequacy when continually expected to perform as an expert on all things Māori. I have also been the youngest Māori in the room, and the one with the most to learn from elders and experts, hanging onto every word from a kuia or kaumatua as they have shared knowledge with myself and others. Throughout my involvement with environmentalism, I have been involved across a number of issues and groups that have made mistakes at times. Progressive social movements are often relentlessly self-critical and reflective. As more of these groups and causes have recognised their own colonial baggage and sought to reorganise themselves in ways that better include the voices of Māori as tangata whenua, and diversify themselves to include perspectives from younger people, wāhine, takatāpui, and people of colour, some are also exploring what it means to be Tangata Tiriti. I am fortunate to have been a part of many of these conversations which have been helpful for me in unlearning some of the colonial biases present in my thoughts and actions. My own involvement in social and environmental justice has supported me to strengthen my relationships with my whakapapa and the centering of my understanding of environmentalism on the relationship with Papatūānuku is at the heart.

Kupu whakamutunga

Environmental restoration is for Māori informed by the practice of kaitiakitanga. The health and wellbeing of Māori is wholly dependent to the health and wellbeing of the environment. Healthy reciprocal relationships between the whenua and Māori are of immense significance for Māori. For Māori engaged in the practice of kaitiakitanga, this work can support them to enter into their identity as Māori and support decolonisation and indigenisation.

GLOSSARY

Ahi kā	home fires, those maintaining occupation
Aotearoa	New Zealand
Atua	god, deity
Awa	river
Awhi	embrace, help
Hapū	kinship group of a number of whānau, to be pregnant
Hara	to violate tapu, offend
Hīkoi	walk, march
Iwi	extended kinship group
Kai	food
Kaimahi	worker
Kaitiaki	custodian, steward
Kaitiakitanga	custodianship, stewardship
Kaumatua	grandfather, elderly male, male of status
kaupapa	issue, initiative, topic
Kawanatanga	governorship
Ki uta ki tai	mountains to the sea
Kirikiriroa	Hamilton (city)
Kōiwi	bones
Kōrero talk,	speech
Kotahitanga	togetherness, solidarity
Kōwhai	*Sophora microphylla, Sophora tetraptera, Sophora prostrata* (tree)
Kuia	grandmother, elderly woman
Kupu	word
Kura	school
Mahi	work, job, activity
Makutu	spiritual/supernatural spell
Mana	authority, control, status
Mana Motuhake	self-determination, sovereignty, autonomy
Manaakitanga	process of hospitality and showing respect

Mānuka	*Leptospermum scoparium* (tree)
Manu	bird
Māoritanga	Māori culture, practices, and beliefs, way of life
Marae	courtyard for formal occassions of a meeting house
Maramataka	Māori lunar calendar
Matariki	Pleiades star cluster, beggining of the Māori year
Mātauranga	knoweldge, understanding, science
Mātāwaka	kinship group, often used referring to Māori outside of their ancestral lands
Maunga	mountain
Mauri	life force, essence of something
Mihi	to greet, speech, tribute, thanks
Mokopuna	grandchildren
Ngahere	bush, forest
Ngā tangata kātoa	all of the people
Oranga	welfare, health
Pā	fortified village
Pākehā	person of another breath, European, exotic
Papatūānuku	Earthmother, atua of the Earth, wife of Ranginui
Pepeha	a formulaic expression of identity
Pono	truthful, honest
Ponga	*Cyathea dealbata* (tree)
Pūrākau	legend, story
Rangatahi	youth, next generation
rangatiratanga	cheiftenship, authority, ownership, sovereignty
Rākau	tree
Ranginui	Skyfather, atua of the sky, husband of Papatūānuku
Raru	problem, issue, difficulty
ritenga	ritual, customary practice
Rohe	boundary, district, area
Rongoa	medicine, treatment
Taiao	environment, Earth, natural world
Takatāpui	gay, close friend of the same gender
Tāmaki Makaurau	Auckland (city)

Tangata whenua	people born of the whenua, local people (Māori)
Tangi	funeral, cry
Taonga tuku iho	treasures passed down from our ancestor
Tapu	sacred
Tau	to be at rest, settled
Tauiwi	person from afar, non-Māori
Te Ao Māori	the Māori world
Te Ao Mārama	the world of life and light
Te Ao Pākehā	the Pākehā world
Te Kore	the void, nothingness, potential
Te Pō	the night
Te Reo Māori	the Māori language
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato	The University of Waikato
Tika	correct, true
Tikanga	customs, practices
Tino Rangatiratanga	self-determination, sovereignty
Tohutō	macrons, symbol to make long vowel
Toitoi	*Gobiomorphus gobioides* (plant)
Tūpuna/tupuna	ancestors/ancestor
ūkaipō	original home
Urupā	burial ground
Utu	redress
Wāhine	women
Wai	water, stream, river
Waka	canoe
Whāingaroa	Raglan (town)
Whakaaro	understanding, thought, conscience
Whakamā	shy, embarrassed
Whakaora	restoring to health, healing, recovery, restoration
Whakapapa	genealogy
Whakatika	to correct, make right
Whanaunga	relative
Whare	house, building

Wharenui	meeting house
Whenua	land, placenta, ground, country

These translations are drawn from a combination of my own knowledge of the use of these words and from Te Aka Māori Dictionary (2022).

APPENDIX ONE: Research information sheet

Research Information Sheet

Te Kāhui Manu Tāiko
Human Research Ethics Committee
Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao
Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies

Private Bag 3105
Hamilton 3240
Phone: 64-7-838 4737
E-mail: fmis@waikato.ac.nz

THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Improving Māori wellbeing through environmental restoration as a decolonising practice

Research Information Sheet - Interview

Tēnā koe,

My name is Robert Moore. I am conducting research on the relationship for Māori between environmental restoration, wellbeing, and decolonisation. The aim of this research project is to show the interconnectedness of ideas of wellbeing and between Māori and whenua, and how decolonisation contributes to these.

As part of our research I am conducting interviews with up to three individuals at a time from a number of different Māori-led environmental projects. I would like to interview you for this project to discuss your thoughts on these themes. Interviews would take about one hour and would be set at a time and place convenient for you. All information you provide in an interview is confidential and your name will not be used, unless indicated by yourself. If possible we would like to record the interview on audio tape in order to develop clear and full transcripts of the interview. You have the right to among other things to:

- refuse to answer any particular question.
- Identify how you would like to be identified in the research.
- ask any further questions about the study that occurs to you during your participation.
- withdraw your material and participation at any time.
- receive to change and comment on the summary transcript of your interview.
- be given access to a summary of the findings from the study, when it is concluded.

I expect the major outcome from this research to be a full and complete Master's thesis. A summary of the research findings will be sent out to you.

Thank you very much for your time and help in making this study possible. If you have any queries or wish to know more please phone me or write to me at:

Robert Moore
Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao - Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato - The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105, Hamilton, New Zealand
Email: rm99@waikato.ac.nz
Phone: 027 3648 346

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact my supervisor:

Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao – Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies
Supervisor: Hineitimoana Greensill
Email: hineitimoana.greensill@waikato.ac.nz
Office phone: 07 838 4691

Te Kāhui Manu Tāiko – Human Research Ethics Committee **FMIS**
Version revised 10 April 2017

APPENDIX TWO: Participant consent form

1

Consent Form for Participants

Te Kāhui Manu Tāiko
Human Research Ethics Committee
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Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies

Private Bag 3105
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THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Improving Māori wellbeing through environmental restoration as a decolonising practice

Consent Form for Participants

I have read the **Participant Information Sheet** for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the **Participant Information Sheet**.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the **Participant Information Sheet**.

I would like my information: (circle option)
a) returned to me
b) returned to my whānau
c) other (please specify) _____

I consent / do not consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study to be used for any other research purposes. (Delete what does not apply)

Participant's Signature: _____

Participant's Name: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Name and contact information:

Robert Moore,
rm99@waikato.ac.nz

Supervisor's Name and contact information: (if applicable)

Hineitimoana Greensill
hineitimoana.greensill@waikato.ac.nz

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