

Taku Kuru Pounamu

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Ki ā tātou tamariki. E iti noa ana, nā te aroha.

He Mihi

Tēnei te mihi ki a koutou katoa i tautoko mai i te kaupapa o 'Tiakina Te Pā Harakeke', otirā i te whakaputanga o tēnei taonga hei whakamanawa i ngā whānau me ngā hapori i roto i ā rātou mahi whakatupu tamariki.

Kei ngā puna o te kī, kei ngā mātāpuna mātauranga i whai wāhi ki ngā uiui, ki ngā wānanga, kua rangatira te kaupapa nei i a koutou!

Kei ngā kanohi hōmiromiro, mei kore koutou hei aumiri i tā tātou taonga kia pīataata ai.

Kupu Whakataki

‘Taku kuru pounamu’ (My precious adornment) is a whakataukī that speaks of a child who is loved and cherished by their whānau. It represents for us the essence of this publication, an expression of the collective wisdom and values of our ancestors, and the adoration that we have for our tamariki. A selection of whakataukī, or ancestral sayings, form the basis of this publication. Each whakataukī reflects the centrality and importance of children in the Māori world. They also give insights into practices that uplift our tamariki, mokopuna and wider whānau.

‘Taku kuru pounamu’ was born out of the research project ‘Tiakina Te Pā Harakeke’ which explores the mana of te pā harakeke, the collective values that nourish all whanau members. ‘Tiakina Te Pā Harakeke’ provided an opportunity to investigate and understand more fully our knowledge, beliefs and practices relating to whānau, and more specifically childrearing, in the Māori world. What we found was confirmation that our own tikanga, our cultural practices, are about enhancing the well-being of tamariki as taonga within our whānau, hapū and iwi.

This is a small selection of whakataukī. Many of them remind us that we need to be mindful of our actions. We must always treat each other with care and respect, especially our children. Our actions should ensure the safety and well-being of our tamariki, mokopuna, and whānau, and should never be harmful. These are critical messages passed to us by our tūpuna. These ancestral messages provide us with examples of traditional childrearing philosophies and practices.

Many valuable lessons are encoded in the language of whakataukī and in this publication we touch on but a few. In deciding which whakataukī should feature, it was important for us to acknowledge the voices of those who contributed to ‘Tiakina Te Pā Harakeke’ and to include, where possible, whakataukī shared with us by kaumātua during our interviews. A number of other whakataukī pertinent to the whānau context, have also been included as examples of how we can draw upon ancestral knowledge to support the care and nurturing of our tamariki and mokopuna today. While there is a wealth of whakataukī worthy of inclusion in this publication, many were unable to be included, due to the time-frame of the publication.

We hope that we have done justice to those whakataukī that have been included in this publication. We set out with a goal to share positive, culturally enriched and effective approaches to childrearing as defined and practiced by our tūpuna. It is our sincere hope that we have done this and that applying the cultural knowledge embodied in these whakataukī will enrich and enhance the experiences of our tamariki, mokopuna and whānau.

These are gifts of mana left to us by our tūpuna to share with present and future generations.

Hokia ki tō ūkaipō

Return to your place of origin



Ūkaipō relates to the suckling of a child on their mother's breast at night. In a broader context it relates to one's ancestral land, a place of nurturing and of spiritual and emotional strength. We are encouraged to return to our ūkaipō to ensure current and future generations know where they are from and are grounded in their identity.

Mā ngā pakiaka e tū ai te rākau

With strong roots a tree will stand



A person cannot stand if there is nothing supporting them. We need to know where we are from, where our roots are and to maintain those ties to whānau, hapū and iwi to enable us to ensure strong connections for current and future generations.

Kotahi te kākano, he nui ngā hua o te rākau

A tree comes from one seed, but bears many fruit



The hua, or fruits, referred to in this whakataukī are children. It reminds us that we must nurture our children, we must care for them and we must tend to their needs so that they grow strong and well.

He taonga te mokopuna

Grandchildren are precious



A grandchild is very precious. They are a fountain for ancestral knowledge and an everlasting reflection of those who have gone before. They carry our strength and that of our ancestors. They are our future generations and without them we would cease to exist.

Nā te moa i takahi te rātā

The rātā was trampled by the moa



The early influences in a child's life are significant in their growth and development as a person. For this reason it is important that children are nurtured positively when they are young and protected from being 'trampled upon'. Doing so will ensure that they develop into people that are confident and just.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi,
engari taku toa he toa takimano

My strength is not mine alone,
but the strength of many



Providing and caring for tamariki is extremely demanding and stressful if left to the individual. Having support from the whānau and community provides a great deal of relief for parents and also helps to ensure the well-being of the collective.

Tūngia te ururua, kia tupu whakaritorito
te tupu o te harakeke

Set fire to the undergrowth so that
the new flax shoots may sprout



Clearing away the undergrowth enables the healthy growth of harakeke. In the whānau context, there may be issues that need to be dealt with from time to time. Ensuring that they are addressed allows whānau to move forward in a positive way and to flourish.

Tamaiti ākona ki te kāinga,
tūnga ki te marae, tau ana

A child who learns at home stands
on the marae with dignity



Being raised well at home is critically important. When children are given guidance and taught by their elders and parents how to conduct themselves properly, they are able to act appropriately in public.

Matua rautia

Raise your children collectively



Raising a child is not an individual endeavour, but rather a job for the many. When a child is raised collectively, it builds their confidence. They know who they are, they know who their relatives are, and each one of those relatives is collectively responsible for the child's safety and well-being.

Kia mahara ki a Rona

Remember Rona



This whakataukī makes reference to the story of Rona. One night Rona went out to fetch water and tripped on the root of a tree when the moon hid behind the clouds. She cursed at the moon and was taken away for her transgression. This is a reminder to us to be careful of what we say or do.

He taonga nui te tūpato

Caution is greatly prized



In the Māori world it is seen as a good thing to be cautious. Teaching children to be mindful of things around them and to act with caution, particularly in situations where there is an element of danger, could potentially save them from harm.

Tamaiti piripoho, he aroha whāereere

A mother's love, a breast clinging child



The closeness of a child to their parents is indicative of a loving relationship in which the child is cherished and made to feel like an important part of the whānau. Such a relationship also gives a child a sense of security and a desire to remain close to their whānau as they get older.

Ko tā te tamariki he wāwāhi tahā

A child's role is to break the calabash



Our tūpuna acknowledge the natural tendencies of a young child. Children are inquisitive and will break things. This is all part of their play and learning. As parents it is our responsibility to teach our children to respect people's belongings while at the same time nurturing their naturally inquisitive nature by creating a safe environment for learning and exploring.

Nāu i whatu te kākahu, he tāniko tāku

You wove the cloak, I added the border



As a cloak is woven before the ornamental border is added, those raising children are responsible for the character of their child and others enhance what has already been acquired. Contributions to the development of skills in other specialities are seen to add the elaborate trim, or embellishment.

Ko Hinetītama koe,
matawai ana te whatu i te tirohanga atu

You are like Hinetītama,
a sight that causes the eyes to glisten



This speaks of the beauty and sacredness of women and is a reminder to treat our young girls and women with absolute respect.

Taku māhuri tōtara

My young tōtara



This phrase is a term of endearment that is particularly suited to young boys. It acknowledges both the strength and fragility of our young men and is a beautiful phrase that we can use to show our adoration for them.

Te piko o te rākau, tērā te tipu o te māhuri

As the tree is bent, so shall it grow



Children can be likened to a young sapling as it grows. In order to grow healthy and well they must be nurtured. In their learning and growing they can also be moulded in a particular way. Positive contributions to their development while they are young will enable them to flourish as people.

He tao rākau e taea te karo,
he tao kupu e kore e taea te karo

The thrust of a spear can be avoided,
but not the thrust of words



Words are powerful. They should be used carefully and in ways that acknowledge the mana of both the words spoken and the person spoken to. This means we must speak with care and aroha to our children. To speak in ways that demean or abuse others is like a spear to the heart and soul.

Mā te tuakana ka tōtika te teina,
mā te teina ka tōtika te tuakana

Older and younger siblings contribute equally to each
other's growth and learn from one another



The tuakana - teina relationship is a reciprocal one with each having responsibilities for, and learnings from, the other. While the older sibling may often be a role model or example for the younger sibling to follow, there will still be things that they can learn from their younger whānau members.

He kai poutaka me kinikini atu,
he kai poutaka me horehore atu,
mā te tamaiti te iho

Pinch off a bit of the potted bird,
peel off a bit of the potted bird,
but leave the inside for the child



A critical aspect of raising children is that we provide them with the best care that we possibly can. Ensuring that their needs are met before our own is a natural part of being a parent and guarantees the well-being of our children above all else.

He iti tangata e tupu, he iti toki e iti tonu iho

A small person may grow,
but a small adze remains small forever



People are always more valuable than material things. The importance of keeping this in perspective cannot be underestimated. By placing our well-being and growth at the centre of our aspirations we are supporting our children and whānau in a meaningful and powerful way.

Te tau o taku ate

The seat of my affections



This simple phrase is a beautiful expression of the absolute love that one has for another person. It is a much used term of endearment that we can say to our children to let them how much they are cherished and loved by their whānau.

Iti noa ana, he pito mata

Only a little morsel with raw potential



Latent in a kūmara seed, or indeed any living thing, is the ability to grow and produce more of its kind. Like the kūmara, children too are full of potential. Our job as parents and whānau is to ensure that the potential of our children is realised by believing in them, nurturing them and supporting them to develop and flourish as people.

Kohikohia ngā kākano, whakaritea te pārekereke,
kia puāwai ngā hua

Gather the seeds, prepare the seedbed carefully, and
you will be gifted with abundance of food



Childrearing in the Māori world is often associated with the cultivation of kūmara. Like the environment of a child, a pārekereke, or seedbed, requires the right conditions for kūmara seedlings to flourish. By providing a healthy and nurturing environment for our children, we can be certain that they too will blossom, grow and flourish.

Te kuku o te manawa

The pincers of the heart



Embodied in this whakataukī are the feelings of love and affection that we have for our children. Making sure that they know how much we adore them is an important way of affirming their place in the whānau and supporting their well-being.

Taku hei piripiri, taku hei mokimoki,
taku hei tāwhiri, taku kati taramea

My pendant of scented moss,
my pendant of fragrant fern,
my pendant of aromatic shrubs,
my sweet-smelling locket of spear-grass



This refrain was often sung by a mother while nursing as an expression of love for her child. The four plants referred to were admired for their scents and were worn in satchels around the neck. The metaphor of a child as a fragrant locket worn close to his or her mother's breast is a beautiful representation of the love between a parent and their child.

Tāu mahi rā, e te iti kahurangi

Your work is well done, my little treasure



Recognising our children for the contributions that they make to the whānau and commending them for things that they have done well is important both as a cultural practice and also as a way of developing confidence and self-esteem. This whakataukī is fitting as an acknowledgement of the efforts and accomplishments of our tamariki.

He rā ki tua

A day to come



Life may bring many difficulties and challenges. Despite this, there will always be times that are joyful. The key thing to remember is that when things are not going so well, never lose hope. We can always be assured that the sun will rise again tomorrow with the promise of a new day and the possibility of a new beginning.

