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**Tapuwaekiwi Tapuaeharuru Taiharuru te Whakatōhea Toheraoa:  
Connecting to My Iwi and Reclamation of Identity through Endurance Running  
Grounded in Iwi Narratives and Tikanga/Culture.**

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
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at  
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by  
**NICHOLAS HELYAR-MAGILL**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

2025

E kore au e ngaro  
E kore au e whakamā  
He kaha nei i ahau  
Ki te kimi, ki te rapu  
Ko wai au.

Manene ki te motu  
Manene ki te ao  
Aha pēhea  
E kore e wareware  
Ki taku ūkaipō  
He uri nō Te Whakatōhea

(Huriwaka, Maxwell & Hata, 1991)

# He Tirohanga - Abstract

This thesis explores the intersection of endurance, whakapapa, and cultural reconnection through the lens of ultra-marathon running and Te Whakatōhea tīpuna pūrākau. By weaving together personal narratives, historical contexts, and contemporary athletic practices, this research examines the role of endurance sports as a pathway for cultural revitalisation and identity reclamation among Māori athletes.

Endurance is a fundamental characteristic of Te Whakatōhea, embodied not only in the physical feats of long-distance running but also in the iwi's historical resilience through colonisation, raupatu, and cultural disconnection. This research positions ultra-marathon running as both a metaphor and a mechanism for reclaiming whakapapa, fostering well-being, and strengthening the connection between Māori athletes and te ao Māori. Drawing upon Kaupapa Māori methodology, qualitative research methods, and tikanga Māori principles, this research seeks to decolonise endurance sports by embedding iwi narratives, tikanga, and mana whenua engagement into the sport of ultra-running.

A central aim of this research is to develop a culturally grounded framework that integrates Te Whakatōhea pūrākau and tikanga into ultra-marathon events. This framework envisions a race that traverses ancestral pathways, acknowledges the whenua and mana whenua, and fosters a culturally safe environment for Māori athletes. The research questions driving this thesis examine the historical endurance of Te Whakatōhea, the impact of colonisation on Māori participation in endurance sports, and the potential for tikanga to be embedded in ultra-marathon events.

The findings of this research reveal that endurance is deeply woven into the whakapapa of Te Whakatōhea and that ultra-marathon running serves as a powerful means of reconnecting with iwi identity, whenua, and te ao Māori. Through interviews with Māori endurance athletes and an exploration of iwi narratives, this research highlights the transformative potential of culturally embedded endurance sports. Furthermore, the research identifies barriers to Māori participation in ultra-marathons, including historical disenfranchisement from traditional athletic spaces and the predominance of Pākehā worldviews in endurance sports. Addressing these barriers, this thesis proposes a tikanga-based model that seeks to attract greater Māori

participation by integrating kaupapa Māori principles into the design, organisation, and execution of ultra-marathon events.

This research is also a personal journey of endurance and reconnection, reflecting on my own whakapapa as a descendant of Te Whakatōhea and an ultra-marathon runner. Raised outside of the iwi rohe, my path of reclaiming identity through sport mirrors the broader themes of cultural endurance and revitalisation explored in this thesis. By engaging with iwi histories, participating in kaupapa Māori spaces, and embedding tikanga into my athletic practice, I have sought to bridge the gap between past and present, creating a future where Māori endurance athletes can thrive within a culturally affirming space.

Ultimately, this thesis contributes to the growing discourse on Indigenous endurance sports, cultural resilience, and decolonial approaches to athletic participation. It affirms that ultra-marathon running, when grounded in whakapapa and tikanga, has the potential to serve as a tool for cultural reconnection, healing, and identity reclamation for Māori athletes and Te Whakatōhea whānau.

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# Ngā Ture Tuhi Tuhingaroa - Thesis Conventions

## Te Reo - Language

There is a convention when writing to italicise words that are not in English, to differentiate them from the English words around them. Highlighting their difference, suggesting they don't belong within the text. We do not speak in italics, and for many in Aotearoa, we use Māori words throughout our daily conversations. In the writing of this thesis, I have chosen not to italicise words in te reo Māori, in the spirit of Kaupapa Māori methodology, I do not see these words as having any less value or authority than the English words that surround them.

This document has also been written at a time when I am trying to reclaim the reo that was lost from my whānau. It is an exercise in tāku Māori mana motuhake to freely use this kupu within the following pages, I am furthering my ability to kōrero Māori and deliberately pulling these kupu into my world.

The word Māori will remain capitalised, and to signify their mana place names, people names, iwi names, hapū names, marae names, and names of methodologies and methods will also be capitalised.

To further encourage the use of te reo Māori, English definitions have not been included in brackets after simple Māori kupu. However, a glossary list of kupu and their English translations has been included. For some more complex terms a brief description has been provided in text.

In keeping with the dialect of Te Whakatōhea, tohutō have been used to denote the elongated or double-vowel pronunciation. These will be presented as ā, ē, ī, ō, ū. This will only be incorporated in Māori kupu.

## Te Whata Kupu - Glossary

This glossary has been written to provide a guide for te reo Māori words that have been used throughout this thesis. This serves as a guide to understand when a kupu has been used and the text does not provide an explanation.

Ahikā	Burning fires of occupation
Awa	River
Hapū	Sub-tribe
Hauora	Health
Hikoi	Walk
Hinengaro	Mind
Iwi	Tribe
Kaupapa	Topic, theme, subject
Koha	Gift, an acknowledgement
Kōrero	To speak, to talk, conversation
Kupu	Word
Mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge systems
Maunga	Mountain
Moana	Ocean
Moko Kauae	Facial moko on a woman
Ngahere	Forest
Oma	Run
Pātai	Question
Pepehā	An identification of one's place in te ao Māori
Pūrākau	Story, Iwi Narratives
Rangahau	Research
Rangatahi	Youth
Rangatira	Leader
Raupatu	Confiscation
Rohe	Tribal land
Tamariki	Children
Tangata	People
Tapu	Sacred

Taua	War party
Te ao Māori	The Māori world
Tikanga	Protocol for actions
Tinana	Body
Tīpuna	Ancestors
Tohu	Sign
Ūkaipō	Home or source of sustenance
Wahine	Women
Waiata	Song
Wairua	Spirit
Whakaaro	Thought or idea
Whakapapa	Genealogy
Whakataukī	Proverb
Whakawhanaungatanga	Establishing relationships
Whānau	Family
Whare	House, building
Whenua	Land

# Ūpoko 1 - Whāia: Introduction

## 1.1 Kupu Whakataki - Introduction

I view endurance as more than a physical act; it is a way of being, deeply rooted in my whakapapa. It is a lens to view the world around us, which can be used in every facet of our lives. This thesis is the result of my exploration of endurance, drawing connections between personal narratives of ultra-marathon running, the pūrākau of Te Whakatōhea, and the broader dimensions of cultural reconnection and identity. Through the lens of whakapapa and te ao Māori, this research weaves together threads of Mātauranga Māori, personal perseverance, and the potential for transformative health outcomes within Māori communities.

For Te Whakatōhea, endurance is not limited to physical feats; it is embodied in the survival and resilience of the iwi through the challenges of colonisation, raupatu, and cultural disconnection. This thesis is both a personal and collective journey. It reflects my reclamation of identity and reconnection to Te Whakatōhea, as well as a broader inquiry into how tikanga Māori and te ao Māori can enrich and transform the world of endurance sports.

This research centres on two critical aims. The first is to explore the stories and traditions of Te Whakatōhea tīpuna to uncover their relationship with ultra-marathon running and physical resilience. These narratives will inform the development of a culturally grounded model that integrates tikanga and iwi narratives into the sport of ultra-marathon running with the aim of attracting greater Māori participation in the sport. The second aim is personal: to continue my journey of reconnection with Te Whakatōhea, fostering an understanding of how Māori identity and physical activity intersect to promote well-being.

## 1.2 Te Tāhuhu o te Rangahau - Research Context

The historical and cultural backdrop of Te Whakatōhea provides the foundation for my research. The story of Te Whakatōhea is one of perseverance and resilience, shaped by the significant events of raupatu, colonisation, and land dispossession. These events disrupted the social, cultural, and physical well-being of the Te Whakatōhea people, but the spirit of tohe—endurance—remains central to the identity of the iwi, the endurance to fight for one-hundred

and fifty-nine years to reach a fair settlement. This thesis situates endurance sports within this broader narrative, investigating their potential as a tool for cultural reconnection and resilience.

Ultra-marathons are characterised by their demands on physical, mental, and emotional resilience. Similarly, the act of reconnection to whakapapa and te ao Māori is a marathon in its own right—one that requires perseverance, patience, and a commitment to ongoing learning. This thesis argues that endurance sports can serve as both a metaphor and a mechanism for cultural revitalisation, providing pathways for healing, reconnection, and identity reclamation for Māori individuals.

### 1.3 Tōku ake kaupapa - Personal Connection and Motivation

The inspiration for this research stems from my journey as a Māori endurance athlete and descendant of Te Whakatōhea. My life has been shaped by physical pursuits, including competitive swimming, cycling and running ultra-marathons, alongside the challenges of reconnecting with my whakapapa and te reo Māori. These experiences have illuminated the profound connections between physical endurance, cultural identity, and well-being.

As a descendant of Te Whakatōhea raised outside the iwi rohe, I have grappled with feelings of disconnection and the complexities of navigating te ao Māori as an adult. My journey of reconnection has been guided by the wisdom of tīpuna, wisdom I am able to attain through the guidance and aroha of Te Kahautu Maxwell as well as the support of my whānau and hapū. This thesis represents both an academic inquiry and a deeply personal endeavour, driven by a commitment to honour my tīpuna and contribute to the revitalisation of Te Whakatōhea.

Beyond my personal motivations, I am driven by a desire to protect and honour the mana of the whenua we run across. This is achieved by respecting the hauora of Papatūānuku, ensuring that our actions contribute positively to the environment. It is also upheld by honouring tūtohu whenua, the significant landmarks named by the tīpuna who first encountered them. Respecting these sites is an act of mana enhancement. I am motivated to bring this tikanga into the world of ultra-marathon running.

## 1.4 Ngā Pātai Rangahau me Ngā Whāinga o te Rangahau - Research Questions and Objectives

The overarching question guiding this research is: How do the pūrākau of my Te Whakatōhea tīpuna connect to my experience of ultra-marathon running and how can these narratives be linked to my own reconnection journey?

Supplementary questions include:

- What role does te ao Māori play in ultra-marathon running?
- How has colonisation impacted Māori participation in sports?
- How can tikanga Māori be applied to ultra-marathon running?

These questions seek to explore the intersections between cultural identity, endurance, and well-being while examining the broader implications of colonisation on Māori participation in sports. By answering these questions, the research will culminate in the development of a framework for integrating tikanga Māori into endurance sports, with the goal of fostering greater participation and cultural reconnection for Māori athletes, and to emphasise the acknowledgement of the mana whenua of the land a race covers.

## 1.5 Te Tuaiwi o te Tuhingaroa - Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured to reflect the journey of endurance and reconnection, beginning with the personal and expanding into the collective. Chapter Two introduces my personal narrative, examining the whakapapa and pūrākau of Te Whakatōhea alongside my experiences as a Māori endurance athlete. Chapter Three outlines the methodological approach, grounded in Kaupapa Māori principles and qualitative research methods. Chapter Four offers a literature review, analysing the role of te ao Māori in sport, the impacts of colonisation, and the potential of endurance sports as a catalyst for cultural revitalisation. Chapter Five is an exploration on the history and pūrākau of Te Whakatōhea. Chapter Six presents the proposed model for integrating tikanga Māori into endurance sports, and Chapter Seven analyses the qualitative findings from participants engaged in this kaupapa. The final chapter concludes by reflecting on the research outcomes and their implications for Te Whakatōhea and Māori endurance athletes more broadly.

## 1.6 Te Whakarāpopoto - Conclusion

This thesis is a journey of endurance, resilience, and reconnection. This research honours the legacy of Te Whakatōhea tīpuna while contributing to the revitalisation of te ao Māori through the lens of endurance sports. By weaving together personal narratives, historical contexts, and contemporary practices, this research aspires to inspire others to embark on their own journeys of cultural reconnection and physical resilience. Ultimately, it serves as a testament to the enduring spirit of Te Whakatōhea and the transformative potential of embracing both ancestral heritage and contemporary athletic pursuits.

# Ūpoko 2 - E Koe: The Researcher

## 2.1 Kupu Whakataki - Introduction

I am Māori; I am an endurance athlete; I am a Māori endurance athlete. Who I am is the product of everything I have done in my life and the actions of all those who came before me. My passion for pushing physical limits has been with me my whole life. Getting to this point has been a long journey, never straightforward, but throughout I have endured and persevered. The history of my people, Te Whakatōhea, is also one of endurance and perseverance. Surviving against the odds and remaining strong and proud. Long before I arrived, my tīpuna were masters of endurance, and long after I am gone, that spirit of endurance will continue. My connection with Te Whakatōhea is through whakapapa, so it is inescapable. However, my awareness of this connection is something that has come to me later in life. My journey of reconnection is one of endurance and perseverance, continuing even when the easier option would be to give up. This chapter serves as an exploration of who I am as a researcher by delving into my personal history and what this research hopes to achieve. In doing so, this chapter lays the essential foundations of this research.

## 2.2 Tapuwaekiwi Tapuaeharuru Taiharuru te Whakatōhea Toheraoa: Connecting to My Iwi and Reclamation of Identity through Endurance Running Grounded in Iwi Narratives and Tikanga/Culture

The title “Tapuwaekiwi Tapuaeharuru Taiharuru te Whakatōhea Toheraoa: Connecting to My Iwi and Reclamation of Identity through Endurance Running Grounded in Iwi Narratives and Tikanga/Culture” was chosen as a title for this thesis as within it, it contains references to myself, my tīpuna, our shared history as endurance athletes, and the whenua that we have walked on. The title is a summation of who I am and how I identify as both a Māori and a Māori endurance athlete.

Tapuwae refers to a footprint or a stride—symbolising the steps I take as I cross the whenua on foot. These are the same strides my tīpuna took as they arrived in Aotearoa and established their lives here. They made strides in travelling for food, commerce, warfare, or marriage.

Tapuwae can also refer to a charm or a spell that ensures speed, allowing the performer to move quickly and unimpeded, whether in flight or pursuit.

Tapuwaekiwi refers firstly to a maunga within the rohe of my iwi, Whakatōhea. Tapuwaekiwi was named by Ngātorohaka, an arrival on the Nukutere waka, which landed at Ōpape (Gunderson, 1903; Maxwell, 2019). The arrival of the Nukutere preceded the arrival of the Mātaatua waka by approximately eight generations which amounts to two-hundred and twenty-five years (Whakatōhea Deed of Settlement of Historical Claims, 2024). Tapuwaekiwi is a landmark that is highlighted in the waiata of our iwi.

Tapuwaekiwi also references the footsteps of the Kiwi bird. Our Te Whakatōhea tīpuna arrived in Aotearoa from Hawaiki, and set out traversing the whenua, making strides in pursuit, habitation, or in flight. These same strides are seen in the movements of the Kiwi. The Kiwi can be found within the rohe of Te Whakatōhea, in the forests, hunting and surviving, their numbers growing. Their distinctive call can also clearly be heard, travelling through the ngahere. The Kiwi was also a source of food and protein for my people, ensuring their survival. The feathers of the kiwi also provided clothing and protection for my people, further ensuring their survival.

The Kiwi symbolises me as a runner navigating the bush. It maintains a large habitat and traverses it with resilience. The Kiwi is also a distinctive symbol of Aotearoa, the national bird, and is used as a signifier of nationality. Kiwi is used as shorthand for New Zealanders. The Kiwi as a symbol is recognised internationally and often used in delegations, sporting teams, and tourists.

A kiwi draws subsistence from the soil; it is nourished and refuelled as it dips its beak into the whenua. Much like the Kiwi, I also draw my substance from the whenua. It is a way that I can spiritually, mentally, and physically connect. The act of running through the forest provides me with sustenance.

Tapuaeharuru

Haruru refers to a thud, a dull sound, or a consistent noise. It can also describe a roar. Sound is a vibration, an acoustic wave that transmits or spreads out throughout the air,

Best (1905) describes another use of haruru by Māori. Haruru is also the name of a spell or charm that is uttered to heal a person who is wounded or suffering from a broken bone. The injured would lay on the ground, while the priest would place his left foot on the patient's body and repeat the invocation.

“Haruru ki tua  
Haruru ki waho  
Haruru ki runga ki tenei tangata” (p. 8)

Cast the spell beyond  
Cast the spell from your mouth  
Cast the spell onto this person

The priest would then repeat a hono such as

“Tao ka tu  
Ka tu ki hea?  
Ka tu ki runga  
Ka tu ki waho  
Ka tu ki te uaua nui o rangi  
Ma wai e mimi?  
Ma tahito e mimi  
Ma wai e mimi?  
Ma te atua mimi  
Taku kiri nei  
Taku kiri tapu  
He kiri ka toetoea  
Ka hahaea ki te taha o te umu  
Hai!  
Ka toro te kiri ora  
Ka mahu te kiri ora  
Mahumahu akuanei  
Mahumahu apopo.” (Best, 1905, p.8)

“Wounded by a spear  
Where is the wound  
The wound is on the top  
The wound is on the outside

The wound is on the big muscles of Ranginui

Who will urinate?

The penis will urinate.

Who will urinate?

The god will urinate.

My skin

My sacred skin

The split in the skin

The cut in the skin beside the oven

Hai

Stretch the skin together

To heal the skin

Heal now

Heal for tomorrow” (Best, 1905, p8)

The left foot of the priest being placed on the patient is important as that foot is tapu, and the Mana of the priest’. This again references the tapuwae or the footstep of the title of this thesis. Tapuaeharuru is the sound of many people’s feet stamping, running, or walking. It is the sound of many, hundreds and thousands. Together in unison, the roar and the reverberations coming from their feet. Our footsteps’ sound spreads across the whenua as we do the same. Achieving tapuaeharuru is a goal of this thesis, to bring Māori together to run. Running across the whenua of our tīpuna, running together. Enhancing our physical, mental, and spiritual health through community, physical activity, and cultural reconnection.

Tapuaeharuru is also a landmark on the eastern shore of Lake Rotoiti within the Ngāti Pikiao rohe, where the Te Whakatōhea rangatira Apanui was killed. Te Whakatōhea were attempting to reach Ōrākau in the Waikato to assist the Kīngitanga, Kīngi Tāwhiao in 1864 as they were besieged by the crown. A battle occurred in an ambush by local iwi, and many were lost. This is an example of the endurance of the Te Whakatōhea war party of three hundred travelling by foot to cover the roughly two-hundred and fifty kilometres that lie between Ōpōtiki and Ōrākau. Tapuaeharuru, for me, was a place I ran through while completing my first one-hundred-kilometre race at the Tarawera Ultra-Marathon in 2023.

Looking again at Tapuaeharuru and how we interpret it, I also consider it to represent healing footprints or strides. There is a level of healing greater than me. There is the healing of old wounds, inflicted generations before I was born. Running through the whenua of Ngāti Pikiao,

cleansing the whenua and repairing the relationship with Te Whakatōhea. Unaware of the fact, but me, a representative of Te Whakatōhea was taking steps and healing us all as I made my way across the whenua. Running to heal yourself. Running, for me, has been a tool to manage my mental health struggles; being able to go out for a run, no matter how long, provides healing for me. Physical activity and the required mental focus have a calming effect, a way to simplify the worries of a moment and just focus on one step at a time. For physical injury, running has been of great assistance, too. Recovering from an injury requires movement, and though the pace may not be what I was used to, being able to move the muscles required strengthens them, making running in the future easier.

We can also look at running to heal our people, encourage physical activity to strengthen us and protect us from the health outcomes of a sedentary lifestyle. Running can strengthen our hearts, help us lose weight, and help us be more active and mobile. Healing ourselves through activity. Through running we can also find spiritual healing, reconnection to our whakapapa, and finding a place within te ao Māori.

Tai is the sea or the coast. Te Whakatōhea is an iwi that sits on the coast. The moana is the source of much of our prosperity. The sea was how we arrived in Aotearoa, crossing Moana-nui-a-Kiwa to settle here. The sea is inescapable in Aotearoa. I grew up swimming competitively in the pool and open-water ocean swimming. It has been with me my whole life. The sound of the ocean is something I am used to: the slashing and the crashing, the sound your hands make as they enter, and the rhythm of your kick in the water. The sound of the water splashing around your ear as you take a breath, and even the bubbles as you first dive into the ocean and submerge your head.

Taiharuru is a Te Whakatōhea landmark. At Ōpape, where my own Ngai Tamahaua hapū is situated, are the caves named Taiharuru. Taiharuru is a way for our people to judge the weather conditions. When the wind is high, as it enters the caves, it makes a rumbling sound, haruru letting you know the conditions.

On occasions, Taiharuru makes an unusual sound that is ominous that a leader of the iwi has passed.

For myself, as Ngāi Tamahaua from Ōpape, this is the sound from my rohe, the sound of nature colliding with itself. The collision of three great forces in te ao Māori, Tāwhirimātea, the blowing of the winds, Tangaroa, the crashing of the waves and Papatuanuku, bearing the brunt of her two son's fury. As they collide, the sound is the result, originating in Ōpape and reverberating across the motu. This sound, like me as a runner, travels far. It's a sound we can all hear, a shared experience. Linking myself with those who hear it. The sound of Taiharuru

can mean the call of home, identification, or a place of belonging. Taiharuru can mean a celebration both in life and in death.

Te Whakatōhea Toheraoa, is a whakataukī. This references the Toheraoa, which is a hardy shrub that will grow in all kinds of terrain and endures all weather. It is an ideal grass to persevere in the harsh coastal environment of the Te Whakatōhea rohe. This whakataukī speaks to the spirit of Te Whakatōhea. The ‘tohe’ is our persistence. And the ‘raoa’ is a ‘choking’. Despite the ‘choking’, Whakatōhea ‘persists’. Surviving the raupatu, we continue. In the face of hardship, we continue fighting for the future. Running is a battle of persistence, especially ultra-marathons. When the easiest thing would be to stop or choke and give up or die, raoa. The reward for the finish line comes only from persistence, the tohe.

The title of this thesis is the story of Te Whakatōhea, me, and how we continue to endure.

## 2.3 Nicholas Helyar-Magill

### 2.3.1 Ahau

Ko Tarakeha te maunga  
Ko Ōpepe te awa  
Ko Muriwai te tīpuna whare  
Ko Tapaeru te wharekai  
Ko Ōpape te Marae  
Ko Ngāi Tamahaua te hapū  
Ko Te Whakatōhea te iwi  
Ko Mātaatua te waka

He uri tēnei nō Te Whakatōhea

The pepeha allows Māori to introduce themselves. It situates us in the present by acknowledging where we came from and what came before us. It connects the past, present, and future. We highlight the waka our Tīpuna arrived on, and this links us to all other iwi that originated from the same waka. For Mātaatua waka, this links myself to; Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Awa, Te Whakatōhea, Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Ngāpuhi, Ngāi Te Rangi, and Ngāti Pūkenga. We acknowledge our Iwi, forging connections to the audience; they may be Te Whakatōhea,

too, or their iwi may have a history with Te Whakatōhea. Our Maunga signifies our tīpuna, a great formation rising over the whenua looking over us. Our awa is a source of life, providing sustenance to our people; waimāori, kai, and bathing are all provided by our awa. Our Hapū is the heart of our iwi connection, a collection of whānau who come together. Our marae is the place where we meet; the marae is carved with the faces and pūrākau of our tīpuna. Looking at the marae allows us to know our history. Inside are photos of whānau who have passed, their faces a reminder of who we are, and serve as a guide. Understanding the decisions they made for our survival serves as an inspiration for making decisions in the present to benefit future generations.

I was born in the United Kingdom while my parents were living abroad, travelling the world. My arrival curtailed those plans, prompting our return to Aotearoa shortly after my birth. Having grown up in Kirikiriroa, my parents decided this was the best place to return to. My earliest years were spent living in Waikato, the Bay of Plenty, and eventually settling in Tāmaki Makaurau. During this time, my younger sister Bridget was born. At age nine, we returned to Kirikiriroa, a city I love and have considered my adopted home since. For many years, it was just my home. I was unaware of my Te Whakatōhea whakapapa, Ōpōtiki being nothing more than a spot on the map. It wasn't until later in life that I connected to my whakapapa. Te ao Māori was a foreign concept, so many generations earlier, my whānau left Ōpōtiki, and we never returned. Growing up, I did not know my whakapapa.

My time at high school was spent at Hamilton Boys' High School, just as my father had. However, my interest in and time spent in high school were relatively short. I left at sixteen, having just achieved NCEA level one. Once I had left school, I immersed myself in the underground music scene of Hamilton. Punk and Hardcore shows were where I spent most of my time. Beyond just the music, it was a lifestyle. It was beyond seeing bands occasionally; it was several nights a week; it was engaging in a community built around the music; it was being involved in the organising and promoting shows; it was making my music. The lifestyle that came with listening to this music became all-encompassing; my identity was built around my place in this scene. Across Aotearoa was a network of like-minded people, friends in different cities, all brought together by this shared love. In my life now, some of the dearest people to me are people I met in this world.

In my late twenties, I met my now wife, Raya. We built a life together, first in Cambridge and now in Kirikiriroa. It wasn't until I turned twenty-eight that I even considered enrolling in university. My wife's belief in me to achieve a degree was enough to convince me to enrol. In late 2018, I enrolled at The University of Waikato for a Bachelor of Social Science starting in 2019. Initially, my major was Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management. It was in my first semester that I realised I had little passion for business and a lot of passion for political science. I shifted to a double major in Māori, Indigenous Studies, and Political Science. Juggling full-time study, full-time work, and marathon training was difficult. My bachelor's degree was also during the COVID-19 disruptions, adding further difficulty to the endeavour. But in 2023, I finally graduated after finishing school so early. Achieving this has been a huge source of pride.

Towards the end of my degree, while talking with my friend and thesis supervisor, Dr Te Kahautu Maxwell, I decided to go further in my studies and enrol in this master's degree. The confidence I gained from my bachelor's degree was a big part of my decision to enrol. His guidance to me was I had to write about something I loved. It is the love that has pushed me through my research and writing. Combining my love of exercise with my growing immersion in te ao Māori has been an incredible honour. I can create a document that combines these passions in creating something for my iwi, my whānau, and myself.

Exercise has been a constant factor in my life. Starting with swimming, then cycling, and now running. Exercise has provided me with purpose and direction. The times when I have felt my worst, both mentally and physically, have been the times when I haven't been physically active. Throughout my time at university, I have used running to clear my head and focus. Under pressure from assignments or balancing work, life, and study, I can take a short run to refresh and refocus.

### 2.3.2 Hākinakina - Sport

A consistent factor in my life has been sports, specifically endurance sports. Training and competing in various endurance-based sports have significantly shaped who I am and my personal development through adulthood.

Like most children in Aotearoa, I played rugby and soccer in my younger years, though neither sport stuck for me. The beginnings of my connection to endurance sport began at age eight with swimming, an endeavour I pursued until the age of sixteen. Starting with Learn to Swim programs, this quickly became a competitive sport for me. Swimming is a demanding sport, and this period instilled in me a strong work ethic, discipline, and goal-oriented mindset as I diligently trained with the dream of achieving Olympic-level performance. It was all-encompassing. Swim lessons became swim training. These training sessions got longer and more frequent. At the end of my swimming career, I was training twelve to fourteen times a week, two hours in the morning before school, two and a half hours in the evening after school, three hours on a Saturday morning, and strength or dry-land sessions thrown in too. Everything was in pursuit of one goal: to swim at the Olympics. Beijing was a long shot; I would have been eighteen, and London was more realistic. But at a certain point, I finally said no. The love was gone. At sixteen, I saw what would be required to make the cut and what the next two and six years would be like. That was it. I was finally done, and I was no longer a swimmer. I had lost the spark and the motivation to persist and pass on my dream. Never having achieved this dream remains, to this day, a great source of regret. I am regularly drawn to thoughts of what could have been. A thought that becomes more pronounced every four years when the Olympics are on. As an athlete, my identity was wrapped up in this goal; the pressure to achieve this came from within. It was what I expected myself to achieve, and it was what I assumed everyone around me wanted me to achieve. In failing to do so, it felt as if I had failed to achieve what others expected of me. While there were some external expectations, those around me, particularly my family, just wanted me to be happy. The expectation and pressure of Olympic success came from within; it was a personal motivation and expectation.

While this specific ambition was not realised, the skills I learned to pursue this Olympic dream fostered a lasting passion for physical challenge and self-improvement. I still call these skills back on in my current ultra-marathon running endeavours. The demands of swimming became overwhelming. Training twelve times a week as a teenager virtually guarantees either absolute success or complete burnout. For me, it was the latter, falling out of love with the sport that had shaped so much of me.

The single-minded focus on swimming had an impact on my schooling. I would frequently not go, opting to return to bed after training or just do nothing. Enrolled at a high school that prized sporting excellence, my frequent truancy was ignored as the results I achieved reflected well

on the school. When I got out of the pool one last time, I also left high school. I had achieved NCEA level one and was old enough to sign myself out, so that is exactly what I did. The end of my swimming career was, for a time, the end of my love of exercise; the passion had gone. In the past few years, I have only begun swimming again. Using it as a tool for recovery and fitness. Returning to the pool has allowed me to remember that I love being in the water. I love swimming, and it brings me great peace and satisfaction.

In my early twenties, I developed an interest in cycling, first as a means of transport. Then, after discovering that my physiological strength had grown quickly, I moved to cycling as a competitive sport. Cycling provided a distinct change from the four-minute or less races I was used to in the pool. Races could go on for several hours and required very different physiological adaptations to what I was used to. Cycling also requires the athlete to master the physical act of riding and controlling a bike. In a race, a small lapse in concentration or mistake can result in moderate to severe injuries to not just yourself but the riders around you. This change in sport developed my interest in endurance. An opportunity to go further and longer than I previously had. Cycling provided a vehicle to explore the whenua around me, taking me through places where I wouldn't have driven through otherwise. It sparked a want to explore more and an appreciation of the varied terrain and sights of the world around me. This exploration began my curiosity of how my tīpuna moved and lived across Aotearoa. Valleys and mountains that were difficult on the bike created a sense of awe when thinking about how our tīpuna crossed these same lands on foot. While racing was the primary focus, it had taken me to places up and down Aotearoa. It also allowed me to race overseas in New Caledonia and Australia. It was the training to compete that I enjoyed. The solitary experience of being on the road exploring the whenua was what I truly enjoyed.

Despite the many positives that cycling brought, the negatives were difficult to ignore, particularly the frequent crashes and resulting injuries. It was one crash, riding to get a coffee, that was the final straw. A collision with the back of a car left me on the road, requiring many stitches and looking at a long recovery. My heart wasn't in it anymore. A momentary lapse in concentration was the realisation that I wanted to do something different.

## Whakaahua 1



Riding through the Whakarewarewa forest in Rotorua (Helyar, 2019).

Beginning university in my late twenties while still working and wanting to maintain some sort of healthy life, meant my time on the bike would become less. Maintaining fitness, though, was a high priority for me. Running seemed like the ideal alternative. I hadn't run since high school. However, the time-efficient nature of the sport seemed ideal for my life at the time. So, I bought my first pair of running shoes and began. Very slowly, running is an easy sport, but I quickly realised my physiological fitness required muscular fitness to match. Slowly, my running distance increased, distances became easier to cover, and my walking intervals became shorter until I ran non-stop. My love of competing kicked in, and the idea of racing entered my head. If I could run, then surely, I could race. Beginning with the local Park Run, a weekly five-kilometre race, I started to love the sport. I progressed to longer races, ten kilometres, half-marathons (21.1km), and eventually marathons (42.2km). The longer the distance the more I enjoyed the sport.

I learned about ultra-marathons. Technically, any race longer than a marathon would be considered an ultra-marathon. However, they are usually set distances: fifty kilometres, fifty miles, one hundred kilometres, one hundred miles, two hundred kilometres, and on and on. The idea of being able to run one hundred kilometres entered my head, and it became what I wanted to do. One hundred kilometres is a nice standard; you measure that distance from where you are on a map and realise how far you are travelling. Essentially, Kirikiriroa to Tāmaki-Makaurau. How cool to run that far, I thought. I decided to enter the Tarawera Ultra Marathon, a one-hundred-kilometre distance.

The undertaking of such an event has a logical starting point; by simply deciding to enter, I began the process. The decision to enter was based on my history of endurance sports and my desire to push myself further. The countless hours of training and prior races undertaken, covering increasing distances, all provide a foundation for undertaking this race. Deciding to enter was based on confidence in my ability to train, but also the opportunity to undertake the unknown. The Tarawera Ultra Marathon offers distances of twenty, fifty, one hundred, and one hundred miles. I had already run several marathons, so the fifty kilometres, while being tough, didn't feel like a challenge. One hundred kilometres was unknown, so there was a possibility that I might not be able to complete it. Wanting to persevere and achieve something like this appealed to me. Getting to the start line would require long hours of focus and dedication to training, sacrificing a lot to achieve this goal.

### 2.3.3 Te Reihi - The Race

The start line for the race isn't on the day. It begins months or even years before. Only once you enter is the beginning. The years of training are now building blocks to continue training toward the race. Months of training brought me to the starting line. After a misfire and an additional year of training due to a COVID-19 cancellation in 2022, it's February 2023, and I'm ready to race. Everything I have done leading up to this has made me sure that I can complete the distance. However, simultaneously, I question if it isn't enough, and I'm fooling myself.

The start line is at Lake Ōkātina, following a welcome by Ngati Tarāwhai. The gun goes off, and the journey begins. One hundred and two kilometres to cover on foot, one step at a time. Resisting the surge of the excitement, I pace it conservatively, knowing how far I can have to go. Hundreds of runners stretch out into a mostly single-file line, all aware of what will come. Everything is going well, but until the moment, things go wrong. About twenty kilometres into

the race, I trip, fall, and land hard on the dirt. Embarrassed by the stupid mistake and shaken by the landing, in a moment of frustration, I seriously considered just walking to the next aid station, getting in a car and going home. I think that months of training were wasted that fall, but if I were to pull out, those months of training would be wasted because I couldn't persevere toheraoa. A desire to overcome prevails, and I continue step by step. The kilometres tick by, eating and drinking regularly, still amongst the crowds, everyone is on their mission. At around the sixty-kilometre point, a marathon remains, and things start getting bad. My body is tired, my feet are sore, and the urge to sit down at each aid station is harder to resist. These races feature aid stations at eight to ten-kilometre intervals, areas where food and drink are available to graze and refill from. Stopping only to refill bottles and eat some fruit, I keep on running. As the number of kilometres increases, the distance walking rather than running gets longer. At eighty kilometres, I've gone further than I ever have before. Each step becomes one step further. At the same time, each step is becoming increasingly painful. Through solidarity in our suffering, another runner and I worked together to get through it, talking about life, work, and study. Anything but what we were going through helped to distract my mind. We are both going through the same experience, aware that we don't want to be thinking about our immediate reality. Despite cushioned shoes, I can feel each stone underneath my feet. The sun sets as I make it to the final aid station at ninety-seven kilometres. Just five more to go, into town, through the sulphur flats, behind the Polynesian Spas, then into the finish chute. It's not far, but the distance feels impossible. At the final aid station, my wife joins me, talking about anything but the race, distracting my mind from my pain. A mixture of uncomfortable jogging at walking gets me through, then into the finishing chute, where the finish line is visible. Crossing the finish line is a huge relief; nearly thirteen hours of running have been completed, and it's all over. Emotion swells, exhausted from the run and in awe of what I have achieved. When the finishers medal is placed around my neck, I am ushered into the finishers' area. A place to sit down, eat, and contemplate what I have achieved. It's nighttime now, my body aches, my feet are bloodied, and the hardest part of the race still needs to be done. I must get out of the chair I am planted into and walk or hobble to the car to return to our accommodation. Out of every stretch covered during the race, this feels like the longest.

## Whakaahua 2



Running the 102-kilometre race at the 2023 Tarawera Ultra Marathon. Coming into the aid station at Tikitapu, still with 20 kilometres still to run (Helyar-Magill, 2023)

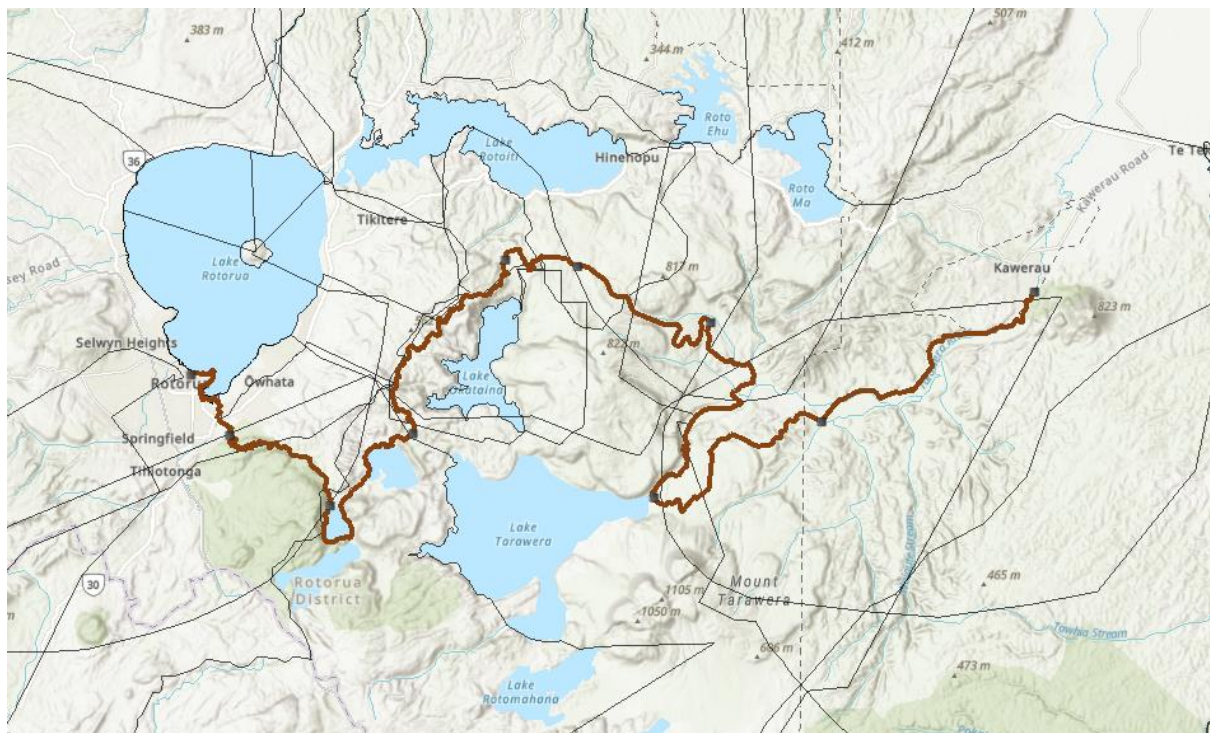
#### 2.3.3.4 Te Ara Reihi Oma - The Race course

The course itself has been one of the key inspirations for undertaking this research. In developing a model that respects and consults with all mana whenua whose whenua the athletes will traverse; it is essential to have a clear understanding of who these mana whenua are.

The map below (Mapi 1) illustrates the 100-kilometre course overlaid on a representation of iwi areas of interest in the region. The brown line indicates the race route, while the black borders denote iwi areas of interest. The race begins in the whenua of Ngāti Tūwharetoa ki Kawerau and Ngāti Rangitihi. As the race progresses, it moves through the rohe of Tūhourangi, Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāti Tarāwhai, and Ngāti Rongomai, before concluding in Ngāti Whakaue (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2025).

This mapping highlights the level of engagement required to ensure that all mana whenua are acknowledged, respected, and appropriately consulted, and that their permission is secured before hosting the race.

**Mapi 1**



Iwi Areas of Interest overlaid with the Tarawera Ultra-Marathon 102km course (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2025).

*Note:* Areas of Interest of iwi identified in the Māori Fisheries Act 2004, and those iwi/hapū that have begun the process of negotiating settlement of their historical Treaty of Waitangi claims and are listed on Te Kāhui Māngai.

### 2.3.4 Te Tātai Hono ki te Whakapapa - Connection to whakapapa

Growing up embedded in te ao Pākehā, my knowledge of te ao Māori was small snippets picked up from school or TV. My knowledge was essentially non-existent—I only knew Aotearoa as the name of this country and could barely recite the first verse of the national anthem. Like many, my pronunciation was terrible; place names throughout this country were frequently butchered. Through intermediate and high school, I learned Japanese and German, languages foreign to this whenua, languages without a connection to me. At that time, my concept of identity was strongly Pākehā, or Kiwi, as many Pākehā who are uncomfortable with that label prefer.

A tohu, when I was around eighteen or nineteen, I was in Browsers, a second-hand bookstore in Kirikiriroa. I picked up a copy of *Whakatōhea of Ōpōtiki* by A. C. Lyall (1979), at this stage, I was completely unaware of my whakapapa, unaware that this book was about me and who I am. Despite this. For some reason, I bought the book. I can't remember why I was so convinced to make this purchase, but I took it home, and it sat on my shelf for years. Sitting in wait, the book was packed and unpacked several times, moving houses and cities, but it always remained on a shelf. Through learning my whakapapa, something clicked in my brain. I remembered this book I bought years earlier. It was well-travelled but essentially unopened; I was just waiting until I was ready for it. Having read this book several times, it has been an invaluable tool in my understanding of Te Whakatōhea and our history. Having spent more time in Ōpōtiki, landmarks mentioned in this book stand out. I have stood at Paerata, where Tarawa was found washed ashore, the story of the arrival of Tarawa is a foundational story to Te Whakatōhea that is told in Chapter Three. It is a special feeling now to come back to this book that has hung around in my life for so long and now use it as a reference in my writing.

The connections I have made, returning to my ūkaipō, have been deliberate. This reconnection has come from a want to reconnect, a wish to understand who I am, and a want to be part of a world my tīpuna were. Like many Te Whakatōhea, I live outside of our rohe. The separation of our people and our whenua is common, with its roots in the raupatu that occurred in 1864.

Ōpōtiki had become a place where my whānau had no future. Following the invasion by the Crown of Ōpōtiki and the massive land confiscations that followed, opportunities for a good life were almost none. The remaining people struggled to survive on the Ōpape Reservation—a sliver of land measuring just 22,000 acres, described as, at best, second-class land (Waitangi Tribunal, 2024)—which Te Whakatōhea were forced to live on.

Following the raupatu, no one from my family returned to our marae until me. They lived across Aotearoa, settling in Gore, Gisborne, Taupō, Te Aroha, Kirikiriroa, and Tāmaki-Makaurau. Living away from Ōpōtiki, our connection to te ao Māori and Te Whakatōhea was forgotten. Our reo was lost, and the knowledge of who we were was gone. For me, five generations from our last relative living in Ōpōtiki, we were just an ordinary pākehā family. It was an uncle who was diving into our family tree and rediscovered our whakapapa. His father's great-grandmother, and my great-great-great-grandmother was Ngahiraka. A portrait was found, too, clearly a wahine Māori, wearing her moko kauae, bearing a resemblance to the women in our family. This news was more a curiosity for most of my family, an interesting historical point, but it did not provide the spark to learn anything further. For me, however, it was a spark, a realisation that my place in the world meant something greater. I wanted to learn more, learn our history, and learn who we are.

Ngahiraka born in Ōpōtiki, was married three times in her life, from all three marriages she had children, there are now many generations of descendants of Ngahiraka that trace our whakapapa to Te Whakatōhea through her. Through marriage and the necessity for survival following the Crown's raupatu in Ōpōtiki, Ngahiraka left Ōpōtiki, as discussed in chapter five of this thesis, the raupatu devastated Te Whakatōhea. Those who survived the attack were left with very little, and it is this that has caused so many descendants of Te Whakatōhea to reside outside of our rohe. Survival necessitated assimilation, assimilation required the loss of our reo, the loss of our tikanga, and the loss of our connection to te ao Māori. Survival in this case is an act of endurance, five generations survived, while our whakapapa lay, waiting for reconnection. To survive five generations is to endure.

#### 2.3.4.1 Te Tahu anō i te ahi kua mātaotao - Reconnection

Reconnection is not easy; it was a daunting prospect for me. Knowing is one thing but taking that first step is an entirely different challenge. You may know your marae but knowing when to show up or how to take that first step can be a mystery. It's intimidating, standing on the edge of connection, unsure how you will be received. I don't look Māori, I don't have strong te reo Māori, I struggle to remember the names of my tīpuna. These are all barriers to making

those connections. All these barriers stood between me and te ao Māori. Rawiri Waititi, in a speech at Manurewa Marae in Tāmaki Makaurau, said, “You may not know your maunga. You may not know your awa. Your awa and your maunga know you. You may not know your reo. But your reo knows you. You may not know your marae, but your marae knows you. You are good enough because our tīpuna made it so.” (Campbell, 2023). However long you have been removed from te ao Māori, it is still there waiting for you to come home.

The first step for me was a chance encounter. Wandering into a two-hundred-level paper at the University of Waikato, Mana Motuhake, I was met by the teacher and Associate Professor, Te Kahautu Maxwell. To him, on first impression, I was a pākehā who would be a thorn in his side while teaching Mana Motuhake. However, from whakawhanaungatanga (teacher and students making formal introductions prior to the first lecture), I introduced myself by saying “nō Whakatōhea ahau” (I am from Te Whakatōhea), and he recognised that I needed help to reconnect.

After making that step and reconnecting, my connection is tenuous at best. Not growing up in te ao Māori, I lack a lot of the inherited cultural knowledge that those who have grown up there innately understand. Unaware of whānau histories and how we connect. Giants of our iwi who have touched so many lives are a mystery to me. The discomfort is worth it. Being part of something much larger than myself is an incredible feeling. The more I engage, the more my doubts dissipate.

One of my first experiences in Te Whakatōhea was being taken by Te Kahautu to Te Rere marae for an Ōpōtiki Mai Tawhiti practice. Like a deer in headlights, I arrived at the marae, completely unsure of what I was even doing, knowing just one person, and with little understanding of what I was in for while watching a Kapa Haka practice. These fears were unfounded. I was immediately welcomed by my whānau, who was interested to know about me and what I had done. I began to loosen up and learn more about kapa haka, and I spent my first night on a marae, sleeping inside of Te Iringa, surrounded by my Te Whakatōhea whānau.

There isn't one way to be Māori. I don't need to replicate anything or anyone else I have seen. In being authentically me, I am being Māori.

I think about how I was drawn back to the rohe of Te Whakatōhea and if my whānau has experienced the same. My koroua, Wilfred Beaumont-Orr, was in the Air Force through World War Two, he was based in the Pacific operating the guns on the planes. When he returned from the war, my grandfather went to Motu to recover from the ordeal he had been through. He grew up in Taupō, never having lived in Te Whakatōhea, but when he returned and needed a space to heal, he went to the rohe of our tīpuna. I never had the opportunity to ask what he knew of our whakapapa from the era he grew up in, and it's likely that even if he was aware, he chose to forget for the sake of assimilation. He found what he was looking for in Motu, and when he returned, having rested and recovered, he began his family in Waikato. It is a shame this knowledge was lost. Whatever knowledge he may have had was gone without my whānau learning what he knew. If it was an unknown calling to the Motu, then I liken it to the same calling I felt to purchase the Te Whakatōhea book by Lyall (1974). Unconsciously, our whakapapa called us to be immersed again.

My first introduction to the world of Te Whakatōhea was attending a hui in Kirikiriroa. I was encouraged to attend by Te Kahautu Maxwell as the hui was a step in the ratification process of our Treaty Settlement. The hui was for Te Whakatōhea living in Waikato to learn more of what the settlement entailed and how we could vote to ratify it. My next step of introduction was appearing on a live Zoom hui, or Zui, broadcast for all our iwi to watch. I spoke on what I thought the settlement would mean for our iwi. A terrifying prospect speaking to that many people on a topic so important. However, I embraced the challenge and dived in, speaking as best as I could. To further my introduction, and to make greater connections to my iwi I was encouraged to run for a seat on our post-settlement trust board, Te Tāwharau o Te Whakatōhea. I was a new face, but it allowed me to introduce myself and speak to my aspirations for our iwi. I wanted to build a brighter future where our people could be happy and healthy. Provide opportunities for housing, physical activity, education, and employment. Ultimately, I was unsuccessful; however, I received over four hundred votes from our people. This reassured me that what I was doing was right and I must continue fighting for my reconnection.

The act of reconnection requires constant maintenance. I now regularly attend our Ngai Tamahaua hapū hui, either online or in person at Ōpape. In 2023, I was elected as our hapū representative on the Whakatōhea Fisheries Trust board. This election was both a great honour and a huge responsibility. My Hapū took a chance on someone who was disconnected but wanted to reconnect to our hapū and iwi. With the signing of the Whakatōhea raupatu

settlement, the existing trust assets were shifted to the new Te Tāwharau board. This ended my tenure as a board member, but the honour of representing our people remained.

Te reo Māori is the language of our tīpuna; our knowledge and history are all contained within the language. I grew up without Te reo Māori; the obvious kupu were absorbed, but being unable to speak my tīpuna's language is a source of frustration and shame. Rather than being resigned to never understanding, I have dived in and immersed myself. I have attended the Te Whakatōhea Tohekura twice. Tohekura is a language wananga held over four days, where our iwi living all over the motu can return to our rohe, immerse ourselves in our reo, learn our history, and immerse ourselves in our iwi. It is four days of living, breathing, smelling, tasting, and understanding what living as Te Whakatōhea feels like. Through attending Tohekura, I have made new friends, and connected with whānau also descended from Ngahiraka, mending the disconnection the raupatu inflicted on us. and whanau members of Ngahiraka and stoked the fire of learning te reo Māori more, growing my ability to speak and understand and reigniting and feeding my ahika. However, four days a year is insufficient, so I am enrolled with Te Ataarangi ki roto o Tainui, attending Kura every Monday. Spending two hours immersed in a te reo Māori environment has allowed my ability to flourish and again make strong connections and friendships with my fellow students. The best way to grow my reo has been to practise every day. To achieve this, my wife and I enrolled in the Papa Reo course through Te Wananga o Aotearoa, a small step, but it has encouraged us to speak te reo Māori in our house.

### Whakaahua 3



(Helyar-Magill, 2024)

An image I captured standing on the beach at Ōpape. After leaving the Tohekura at Waiaua Marae in 2024, rather than turning left to make my journey back to Kirikiriroa, I turned right and headed to Ōpape. Standing on the beach, staring at the moana, I felt connected with my Te Whakatōhea whakapapa. I was invigorated by the weekend spent amongst my whānau and excited for the future. Standing there and looking back at the moana reminded me of my Tīpuna, coming from the moana to the whenua. Arriving to establish themselves and plant the seeds of our iwi.

Reconnection is a continuous process. Recently at the Hikoi mō Te Tiriti, I was asked by a friend if I was going to the tangihanga for my whanaunga Riki-Lee Mitai, who had passed earlier in the week. Riki-Lee was the manukura tāne of Ōpōtiki Mai Tawhiti, but beyond a kapa haka, he was a leader of our iwi. Riki-Lee was also one of the first from Te Whakatōhea to embrace me as whānau and make me feel welcomed. The loss had weighed on me, and while I wanted to attend, I hadn't made the plans to do so. However, at that moment of being asked,

I realised the obligation of citizenship and what is required of me, and I felt fully a part of my iwi. My answer was yes, and that afternoon, I made the journey home to say farewell. The Tangihanga itself was one of the biggest in Te Whakatōhea history, an event worthy of the mana that Riki-Lee carried. Over the week, thousands of mourners arrived at Te Rere Marae in Ōpōtiki to mourn and pay their respects. In *Speaking with Te Kahautu Maxwell (2024)*, he describes the tangihanga as an act of endurance or the realisation of the training undertaken by our iwi. For days, the marae operated flawlessly; parking, kai, cleaning, and pōhiri all progressed smoothly and to a high level. Te Rere and Te Whakatōhea achieved this through practice; holding the signing of the Deed of Settlement in 2003 was practice for such a large event, and the Opening of the new Harbour mouth in town in 2024 was practice for this event. The training that had occurred prior allowed the tangihanga to proceed at a high level.

Reconnection itself can be viewed as an ultra-marathon. Learning te reo Māori, reconnecting to Te Whakatōhea, and embracing te ao Māori are individual marathons. They all take training, patience, and perseverance to achieve. They are now lifelong endeavours, maunga teitei, that I must climb. Harder than any race I have ever done, and at the same time, achieving these goals will be more satisfying than any finish line I can reach.

## Whakaahua 4



Standing on the Marae at Ōpape. Muriwai, the whare of Ngai Tamahaua (Helyar-Magill, 2024).

## 2.4 Te Whāinga - Aim of this research

The primary aim of this research is to produce a model that can encourage Māori to engage in ultra-marathons. Our people's history, struggles, and motivations inform this model. If I can encourage just one Māori to buy a pair of running shoes and begin their journey, I consider this a success. A secondary aim that stems from this is to indigenise ultra-marathons. By this I seek to integrate tikanga into the sport as a tool to make the sport more attractive to Māori and thereby entice a greater level of participation.

I have ambitions of bringing an ultra-marathon to the rohe of Te Whakatōhea and develop a race that follows important routes that our tīpuna took. And provide a culturally safe experience for all who wish to complete the journey. The race itself will be underpinned by tikanga, which respects and acknowledges the mana whenua across the race course. It will seek to identify and highlight the roles this plays in ultra-marathons.

The secondary aim of this project is for my reconnection and happiness. I seek to fill the void that the raupatu inflicted on our whānau. Learn our history, and heal myself in the process

## 2.5 Te Pātai Rangahau - Research question

The overall aim of this research is to answer the following question:

What do the stories of my Te Whakatōhea tīpuna tell me about the world of ultra-marathon running that I currently live within? How does this link to my reconnection to Te Whakatōhea?

Further to this are supplementary questions that will help shape my research

What role does te ao Māori play in ultra-marathon running?

How has colonisation impacted Māori participation in sport?

How can tikanga Māori be applied to ultra-marathon running?

The purpose of these questions is to develop a culturally safe model to be applied to ultra-marathon running that aims to encourage greater Māori participation in the sport. The encouragement of greater participation is to encourage both greater health outcomes and cultural understanding. While acknowledging the mana whenua of the land the race crosses

## 2.6 He Whakapae - Hypotheses

The following are hypotheses that this research will aim to resolve:

Our tīpuna were masters of endurance, travelling great distances to Aotearoa and further again upon landing on this whenua. There is a rich tradition of Māori endurance we as athletes, can tap into to motivate and push ourselves in great physical endeavours and physical conditioning.

The world of ultra-marathon running operates with a very Pākehā worldview. Nods to te ao Māori, if existent, are at a surface level, without any engagement with tikanga Māori and mana whenua.

By presenting a way in which tikanga Māori can be applied to ultra-marathon running, creating an ultra-marathon that crosses several iwi rohe, that is run by Māori, for Māori that retraces the ara tīpuna or ancestral trails of love or war that are culturally safe, engaging mana whenua and application of tikanga. The objective is to encourage greater participation by Māori in ultra-marathon running through culturally safe practices.

## 2.7 Te Whakarāpopoto - Conclusion

In this chapter, I have laid the foundation for understanding the interconnected nature of endurance, identity, whakapapa, and particularly within the context of myself; Te Whakatōhea. My journey as a Māori endurance athlete is not just about physical perseverance but also a reconnection to te ao Māori, history, and the spirit of endurance embedded in the whakapapa of my people. By tracing personal and collective histories, I demonstrate how traits of endurance, resilience, and determination have been passed down through generations—from the tīpuna who navigated the whenua and moana of Aotearoa to the present-day challenges of long-distance running and athletic competition.

The symbolism and significance of landmarks such as Tapuwaekiwi and Taiharuru offer a deeper context rooted in the whenua of my tīpuna through which I navigate my identity, drawing parallels between the physical act of running and the historical journeys of my tīpuna. The chapter emphasises that endurance, in the Māori context, goes beyond mere physical exertion; it is deeply tied to spiritual, mental, and communal aspects of life. The connection to the land, the footsteps of tīpuna, and the rhythm of movement across the whenua all form part of a larger narrative that ties past and present together.

This chapter has also set the stage for examining how contemporary ultra-marathon running can serve as a means of cultural reconnection for myself and other Māori. By engaging with their ancestral heritage and embedding tikanga Māori into my athletic pursuits, I open a pathway for future discussions on how Māori values and traditions can be integrated into ultra-marathon running. Furthermore, exploring how colonisation has impacted Māori participation in sports lays a critical foundation for understanding the existing barriers and the importance of reclaiming physical spaces for Māori athletes.

The emphasis of this chapter has been tied to myself; this is a work of personal reconnection, and as such, my narratives have been woven throughout. Ultimately, this chapter has served to highlight the importance of perseverance in sports and the ongoing journey of cultural reconnection and identity formation. It establishes the idea that endurance is not a solitary endeavour but one that is supported by the whakapapa, whenua, and cultural knowledge passed down through generations. As the research progresses, it will continue to explore these themes in greater depth, aiming to inspire and uplift others in the Māori community to pursue their journeys of endurance and reconnection.

# Ūpoko 3 - Te Iti: Methodology

## 3.1 Kupu Whakataki - Introduction

This chapter introduces the methodologies employed in this research, detailing the principles that guided the qualitative research process and the interpretation of the collected data. At its core, this research is an exploration of endurance—not just as a physical attribute required for ultra-marathon running, but as a deeply embedded cultural principle within whakapapa, tikanga, and Māori endurance Tohetoa and resilience Tohenihorau. The methodologies chosen reflect this duality, ensuring that the research process itself embodies the principles of persistence, adaptation, and whanaungatanga, just as endurance running requires mental fortitude, long-term preparation, and collective support. This section will examine Māori principles such as tikanga Māori, whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, kanohi kitea, and wairuatanga, which informed the qualitative research methods and data analysis. The methods employed were selected because they align with Māori principles, which are integral to the research, the participants, and ultimately to Te Whakatōhea, for whom this research is intended. This chapter provides an explanation of the rationale behind these methods, including their application in examining the history of Te Whakatōhea, the perspectives of research participants, and their role in developing a tikanga-informed framework for ultra-running.

Looking at the history of Māori and research, extensive research has been conducted on Māori by non-Māori researchers working within a Western academic or colonial framework. These established, hegemonic frameworks do not make allowances for or serve the cultural sensibilities, values, or beliefs of Māori. Pākehā researchers undertaking this research have maintained a positivist approach, upholding the importance of objectivity, generalisation, and neutrality (Smith, 2021). In doing so, they have characterised Māori in often dehumanising ways, resulting in Māori distrusting researchers and sceptical of their findings (Hudson, 2004). In recent years, there has been a growing change in attitudes, and there has been an increase in research being conducted by Māori, with Māori, and for Māori, that is carried out within a kaupapa Māori methodology. This approach is an exercise in Tino Rangatiratanga, asserting ownership and authority over our information and ensuring mātauranga remains in Māori hands.

From the late 1990s, conferences and events emerged dedicated to furthering Māori research on our terms. Examples include Te Oru Rangahau, a Māori Research and Development conference held at Te Pūtahi-a-Toi, Massey University in 1998, Tikanga Rangahau Mātauranga Tuku Iho: Traditional Knowledge and Research Ethics Conference held at Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand, Wellington in 2004, Kei muri i te Awe Kāpara he Tangata kē: Recognising, Engaging, Understanding Difference, Wellington in 2010, and Tākiri te ata: A New Dawn has Arrived MAI Doctoral Conference in 2015. These gatherings of Māori academics created environments where ideas could be shared, and kaupapa Māori as a methodology could be further strengthened, as well as giving Māori academics a stage to share their research to an audience without having to justify the legitimacy of how they carried out their research.

This chapter discusses indigenous research paradigms, qualitative research methods, Kaupapa Māori methodology, Whāia e koe te iti kahurangi ki te tuohu koe maunga teitei – a tailored methodological approach centred on the history of Te Whakatōhea, research participants, interview process, and data analysis approach.

### 3.2 Ko te Tikanga - Kaupapa Māori Methodology

Endurance within a Kaupapa Māori research framework mirrors endurance in sport. Just as ultra-marathon runners must prepare, strategise, and push beyond their perceived limits, Māori research must also navigate challenges, ensuring that Māori knowledge remains intact and continues to serve future generations. This research acknowledges that whakapapa, tikanga, and wānanga-based knowledge-sharing are forms of endurance in themselves, preserved through collective commitment to Kaupapa Māori principles.

The way research is undertaken is shaped by the chosen methodologies, which ultimately determine how the research is conducted. Research methodologies outline how we conduct ourselves to answer the question we set out to answer. These tools ensure we can engage with the question critically asked and come to our conclusion appropriately. In the 1980s, a new method of undertaking research emerged. It put Māori cultural values at the forefront of its concerns. The establishment of groups, such as the Research Unit for Māori Education at the University of Auckland, was important in the development of these Māori research methodologies (Smith, 2021)

“What happens to research when the researched become the researchers?” (Smith, 2021, p.239). Following the arrival of pākehā in Aotearoa, what shortly followed was colonial research on Māori being undertaken by non-Māori researchers. This research sought to restrain and reject the Māori language, beliefs, and cultural identity (Durie, 1998). Through an ultimately white supremacist framework based on empirical data and experimental testing (Khun & Hacking, 2012), Māori were subjected to these colonial academic enquiries.

Research conducted by Pākehā on Māori through colonial means established assumptions about Māori through misunderstands of cultural values and the misinterpretation of data (Hudson, 2004; Smith, 2021). As a result of this approach, the findings gathered and acted on by Pākehā became “an enduring feature of colonisation” (Mahuika, 2015, p. 35). As a resistance to the hegemony established by colonial research, Māori research methods are applied to decolonise research, maintain control over knowledge, and reclaim lost knowledge. Māori research methods have provided a unique foundation for indigenous research to be carried out in Aotearoa. These methods are unique to this country, methods that secure and uphold Māori cultural authenticity and maintain Māori knowledge. To lift Māori and come up with solutions affecting Māori, research requires a methodological framework that is based on Māori cultural values, ideas, and sensibilities.

The development of kaupapa Māori frameworks in the research arena has allowed Māori researchers and participants to explore, interpret, and disseminate knowledge in a way that makes sense to the participants and researcher to benefit the community being researched. Kaupapa Māori principles, therefore, reinforce tikanga Māori. It provides “cultural legitimacy of Māori knowledge and values” (Walsh-Tapiata, 1998), with varying alternatives to establish, retrieve, and translate the data that reflects Māori knowledge (Smith, 2021). It is a process whereby Māori carry out research for Māori within a confined process encompassing a Māori system of knowledge. Pihama (2015) argues that as a foundation for theory and research, a kaupapa Māori methodology stems from Māori struggles for tino rangatiratanga and mana Māori motuhake. Therefore, it is evident that there is a clear social, cultural, and political intent. This unique process gives Māori researchers and participants the freedom and flexibility to engage, discuss, control, and choose the important issues impacting Māori and select the most appropriate processes that include Māori values, practices, and beliefs based on tribal traditions.

Mahuika (2015) describes kaupapa Māori theory and practice as not simply being limited to dealing with the issues that Māori face as part of ongoing colonial legacy but rather that it offers “further potential to deal with matters of importance for Māori beyond colonisation” (p. 43). She further asserts that kaupapa Māori is a critical theory of resistance to the continued oppressive nature of colonisation imposed on Māori people and culture, legitimising the argument that kaupapa Māori research is anti-colonial. For this reason, the focus of a kaupapa Māori methodology shifts to no longer being consumed by a reactive relationship with the Crown but rather motivated to address the issues of relevance and concern for Māori actively. Subsequently, Mahuika (2015) argues the resistance to colonialism, as Pihama (2005), Smith (1997), Taki (1996), Walker (1996) have discussed, requires “‘dismantling’ of the ‘masters house’, a re-programming of the ‘oppressors’ tools (Lorde, 2021), so that revitalisation and resistance might be made more effective in the ever-evolving present and future” (p. 12).

Kaupapa Māori methodology does not advocate anti-Pākehā sentiment. Instead, it empowers Māori to explore new possibilities and shape their destinies in ways that benefit both present and future generations. There are varying aspects of kaupapa Māori methodology; however, the commonalities that exist within this framework are: for Māori, by Māori, controlled by Māori, of benefit to Māori, and based on Māori values, customs, and beliefs (Moyle, 2014; Pihama, 2015; Rewi, 2014; Smith, 2021; Tiakiwai, 2015). Therefore, Māori researchers must develop an understanding of Māori customary protocols and practices and adopt a holistic worldview when developing our methodologies.

### 3.3 Meiha Kounga Tikanga Rangahau - Qualitative Research Method

A qualitative approach was applied to gather relevant knowledge for this research. This method enabled an immersive engagement with the research question (Bishop, 1999; Lee & Lings, 2008; Minichiello et al., 2003; Moyle, 2014). Additionally, the qualitative approach integrates methods and theories that analyse the social aspects of research participants and the influence of the wider environment (Berg, 2004). For this research, two methods were employed: autoethnography and grounded theory.

Autoethnography seeks to describe and systematically analyse participant’s personal experiences to understand cultural experience (Ellis, 2004; Holman Jones, 2005). This method challenges canonical ways of carrying out research and representing others (Spry, 2001) and

treats research as a political, socially just and socially conscious process (Adams & Holman Jones, 2008). Unlike the traditional hypothesis-deductive approach, which seeks to prove or disprove a hypothesis, grounded theory—a more inductive approach (Corbin & Strauss, 1990)—enables the construction of new theories based on the collection and analysis of real-world data from interviews (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & L, 1967). These two methods offer flexibility in interpreting underlying meanings, language, and themes from a contextual perspective, which may not emerge through a quantitative approach.

### 3.4 Ngā Wetewetenga Meiha Kounga - Qualitative Analysis

A thematic analysis was conducted to analyse the qualitative data gathered throughout the research process. This approach involves “identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Thematic analysis provides flexibility, allowing data to be interpreted from either a data-driven or theory-driven perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method ensures that themes are derived directly from the raw data, independent of pre-existing theories or assumptions held by the researcher (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Boyatzis (1998) argues further that themes can be determined from prior research but should only be applied to data of a similar nature or relevance.

The first stage of thematic analysis is to become familiar with the data. This was achieved, in part, by carrying out interviews with the participants. If time allowed transcribing and collaboratively reviewing the collected data with the participants themselves was an integral part of the analysis process. This enabled me to inherit a real sense of the conversation. Interviews were transcribed into text from which themes and quotes emerged. Once I had identified and made sense of the thematic ideas expressed throughout the data, the next logical step was to review and condense these ideas into major themes. As a result, a more in-depth understanding of the data collected from the participants began to appear. An important step of the qualitative data analysis involved allowing participants to review, edit, and validate their interviews to ensure I did not influence the text and the context in which the raw interview data and themes were collected. The final step of the qualitative data analysis was to produce a discussion that provided an argumentative dialogue, reflecting themes collected from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## 3.5 Tikanga Māori Approach

Māori principles integral to the cultural fabric, beliefs, and tikanga of Te Whakatōhea were employed to complement this Kaupapa Māori methodology. These selected principles informed the research methods used to gather knowledge from participants and supported them in sharing their stories. The guiding principles examined in this section are whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, wairuatanga, and kanohi kitea.

### 3.5.1 Whanaungatanga

Whanaungatanga was essential in conducting my research; its importance was felt in all aspects of the research and writing process. Mead (2003) describes whanaungatanga as a kinship that binds whānau together. The concept of whanaungatanga is strongly focused on how parties establish and maintain relationships with each other.

While whanaungatanga is inextricably linked with whakapapa (Rameka, 2018), this concept can also be applied to non-kinship groups that are linked together for a specific purpose. Wilson (2008) argues that actively seeking relationships and maintaining accountability for those relationships is fundamental within the confines of an Indigenous research paradigm.

To carry out this research, I tapped into pre-existing relationships that were established through whakapapa and sporting participation. This connection created a mutual understanding of our shared cultural norms, or tikanga. As my research is focused on Māori perspectives on ultra-marathon running, the participants' whakapapa was a key requirement of their participation. The knowledge that participants were sharing was knowledge that had developed through personal experience. Their experience as Māori athletes meant they were experts in the knowledge I sought from them. Our established relationship made participants more willing to share and engage in the research I was undertaking. Our shared interest or dedication to advancing the aspirations and future of Māori created a common cause to work towards. This relationship came with a level of trust that I would act in the best interests of us as Māori, and it also provided another level of accountability that I had to meet in carrying out my research.

The decision on an appropriate supervisor was made based on an existing relationship of friendship and whakapapa. The nature of our relationship allowed me to approach my supervisor formally and informally. Through our relationship, I grew my knowledge of te ao

Māori, our shared iwi history, and my reo. By placing whanaungatanga at the centre of this process, I created an opportunity for a rewarding and fruitful writing process.

Just as ultra-marathoners rely on their community for guidance, encouragement, and logistical support, this research was built upon pre-existing relationships through whakapapa, iwi connections, and shared sporting experiences. The research process mirrored the structure of endurance training—requiring time, mutual trust, and a recognition that no journey is undertaken alone.

By embedding whanaungatanga into both the research approach and the discussion of endurance running, this research recognises that Māori participation in sport is not an individual act but a collective experience, shaped by whānau, hapū, and iwi support systems. This principle reinforces the idea that success in endurance sports—like success in Māori research—is not defined by individual achievement alone, but by the strength of relationships that sustain the journey.

### 3.5.2 Manaakitanga

Manaakitanga was an essential component of this research. Mead (2003) describes manaakitanga as caring, supporting, respecting each other, and nurturing relationships regardless of the situation. During this research, the concept of manaakitanga was continually emphasised when engaging with participants. My commitment to maintaining trustworthy connections with the participants illustrated my dedication to the kaupapa of further advancing the well-being of Māori and Māori athletes. The participants who agreed to engage with this research were also passionate and committed to it, as they could see the benefits of this research contributing to advancing a model that would benefit Māori.

### 3.5.3 Wairuatanga

As a latecomer to te ao Māori, the wairuatanga aspect was one that I wasn't immediately familiar with. I was raised very much in te ao Pākehā baptised in the Anglican church; however, my attendance was limited to mostly funerals. My spirituality developed from connecting with the taiao while cycling or running through it. With my growing awareness of te ao Māori, my understanding of Māori belief grew, spending time amongst Tāne Mahuta, diving into Tangaroa, and battling with Tāwhirimātea on my bike. The more I learnt, the more I saw of our connection to the atua.

Through my reconnection to Te Whakatōhea, I have been introduced to the hāhi Ringatū and its karakia. The importance of the Ringatū faith to the people of Te Whakatōhea is humbling. It was a guide; it gave our people light, especially following the raupatu when the Crown took everything.

This practice has encouraged greater mindfulness, spirituality, and consideration in my daily rituals. Karakia has taken on a profound presence in my perspective. The comfort and safety I have experienced in my reconnection to Te Whakatōhea have been partly thanks to an embrace of spirituality.

For Māori, wairuatanga is interwoven through our day-to-day lives, cultural beliefs, values, and customary practices (Kennedy et al., 2015). It is an integral aspect of our existence and important to our well-being (Lindsay et al., 2022; Valentine et al., 2017). We are often described as a spiritual people, and central to our spirituality is karakia. The customary practice of karakia was employed throughout the research process to ensure the spiritual component was appropriate, relevant, and protected, while also guiding both the participants and me during interviews. An appropriate karakia was recited before the interviews were conducted, and after the interviews, another karakia was conducted to close off. Karakia were not only used during the interview process. Whenever I felt it was appropriate, or during difficult times, a karakia would be recited to alleviate the situation and recentre myself to the task at hand.

#### 3.5.4 Kanohi kitea

Another key expression important to Māori is Kanohi kitea. Smith (2008) refers to this concept as “being seen by the people – showing your face, turning up” (p. 15). This expectation-based concept, encompassing face-to-face contact, supports the value of whanaungatanga in strengthening people’s relationships (Bishop & Glynn, 1992; Carpenter & McMurchy-Pilkington, 2008; Mead, 2003). To Māori, it is the preferred method of communication, enabling extended whānau to participate and allowing more in-depth knowledge to be shared (Pipi et al., 2004). Kanohi kitea is a process that requires time and effort. As such, in doing so, we are emphasising the importance of the relationship and the kaupapa being discussed.

### 3.6 Te Hunga Whai Wāhi - Research Participants

From a researcher's perspective, applying qualitative research methods allowed me to carefully select participants who possess extensive knowledge and/or have lived the experience or are currently participating in the subject matter being studied (Berg, 2004). Patton (1999) explains further and argues that purposeful data collecting encourages researchers to study "information-rich cases in depth and detail" (p. 1197).

### 3.7 Ngā Arotakenga Tikanga - Ethics Review

Thorough discussions and ethical analysis with my supervisor were carried out to ensure that the procedures stipulated by Te Manu Taiko: Human Research Ethics Committee were followed. For the research process, I received ethics approval from Te Manu Taiko: Human Research Ethics Committee Faculty of Māori & Indigenous Studies Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao on the 8th of December 2023 to carry out the data collecting process. Informants who participated in the interviews were presented with the research information sheet, research participant consent form, and interview questions before the interviews. These documents have been attached to this thesis (see appendices).

It is possible that there were ethical concerns involving my whānau in this research. However, I am confident that this research is justified due to considering these implications and the nature of the research within kaupapa Māori theory.

Ethical consideration based on moral principles was a huge contributing factor in this research. The thesis contains the personal life stories of participants embedded with their perspectives, experiences, and aspirations. Therefore, establishing and maintaining respectful relationships with the participants in this research was vital and will continue after this research. I was also cautious regarding the inclusion of the terms 'interview' and 'research' when engaging with participants because I was aware that it could have negative impacts on their confidence to share information. Therefore, in line with Kaupapa Māori Methodology, I took many steps to ensure that the wānanga space was safe and comfortable. Philosophies stipulated within Tikanga Māori posit high value and importance on manaakitanga (Mead, 2003).

One of the challenges in Māori research is the potential for perceived authority differences between researcher and participant. To mitigate this, interviews were conducted in a wānanga format, allowing for open discussion rather than a rigid question-answer dynamic. This ensured

that participants retained agency over their narratives, reinforcing the research's commitment to Māori ownership of knowledge.

Another key ethical consideration was the responsibility to honour the knowledge shared. The research process was guided by the understanding that Māori knowledge is not simply data—it is whakapapa, taonga, and mātauranga inherited from tīpuna. As such, all contributions were treated with respect, reciprocity, and a commitment to upholding tikanga throughout the research.

### 3.8 Te Tukanga Uiui - Interview Process

I provided hospitality in planning and preparing for the interviews, such as ensuring kai was available. Some interviews required me to travel to participants' homes, where the reciprocal manaakitanga of their whānau demonstrated that support for this research extended beyond the participants themselves. During the interviews, the participants and I established a level of trust and mutual respect, which also contributed to information being willingly shared. As much as kanohi kitea was desirable, some interviews had to be conducted via video call. In these cases, kai was unable to be shared.

Information about the purpose and goals of the research was very important, as it provided an overview and reasons why the researcher chose to conduct this research. An information sheet (refer to 9.2 Research Information Sheet) provided the participants with a brief description of the project, explained how participants were selected, described participants' rights, data management, risks of the project and supervisor information.

Koha, a reciprocal process underpinned by respect between two parties. It can be likened to the analogy of 'you give, and you take'. Giving can take the form of money, time, food, support for people, or contributions to a specific kaupapa. To uphold the customary practices relating to koha, I travelled to participants where it was convenient to alleviate any financial cost and time restrictions that participants may have experienced. As this research was being nurtured by the participants' giving of their knowledge, I reciprocated by providing kai to most participants during the interviews. After this research, all participants received a copy of this thesis as a taonga to display my full appreciation for their time, efforts, and invaluable contribution.

### 3.9 Te Mahi Pono - Accountability

Accountability in this project extends to the researcher's whānau, iwi, hapū, and the communities involved in ultra-marathon running. This multifaceted accountability reflects the interconnected nature of relationships within te ao Māori and the responsibility of ensuring the research aligns with the values, aspirations, and mana of those involved. This thesis is distinctive in achieving a rigorous and culturally sensitive research process that engages both Māori and peers within the ultra-marathon community. As both a researcher and an active participant in the studied group, this role carries responsibilities to ensure the research process is conducted with accuracy and integrity.

My daily engagement with the ultra-marathon community reinforces this accountability. At events across the motu, I participate not only as an athlete but also as a representative whose actions and research remain visible and open to scrutiny. This visibility ensures that I am held accountable by my research participants and the wider community. The inability to stand before my peers would signal that the research has either been conducted inappropriately or misused in some way, highlighting the importance of ethical and relational research practices.

The transparency of my research process is central to maintaining trust. Research findings will be shared openly with participants, and I remain accessible for discussions and questions at any research stage. This openness extends beyond individual participants to include the wider whānau and marae community, recognising their stake in the generated knowledge. The research gains depth and relevance by involving the broader community, aligning with collective values and aspirations.

This approach is supported by Wilson's (2008) Indigenous research paradigm, which positions ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology in a continuous, interconnected cycle. Wilson articulates that "ontology and epistemology are based on relationships that form mutual reality, while axiology and methodology are grounded in maintaining accountability to these relationships" (pp. 70–71). This paradigm underscores the relational and cyclical nature of Indigenous research, where maintaining and respecting relationships is both a guiding principle and a measure of success.

By embedding these principles into my research, I ensure that it honours the people, places, and values it seeks to represent. The process becomes not just an academic exercise but a living

expression of whakawhanaungatanga, reciprocity, and collective accountability, fostering a research environment that is culturally grounded, transparent, and impactful.

### 3.10 Whāia e koe te iti kahurangi ki te tuohu koe maunga teitei -

#### Thesis Framework

There has always been a history of Māori competition and sports. Movement and competition are seen throughout Māori histories. Whāia e koe te iti kahurangi ki te tuohu koe maunga teitei, I hira mate tāu taonga ki te whai ao. Whakatōhea history tells of a maiden, Te Ao Putuputa and her true love, Niho Makuru. For a brief period, the Whakahorohoro, a Māori Olympics, iwi set aside their differences and observed a truce for the duration of the tournament. At the same time, they engaged in competitions of strength, power, speed, and stamina. Competing for the glory that comes with victory on a grand stage. At a tournament in Ōpōtiki, hosted by Whakatōhea, a young chief from Turanganui named Tawhito triumphed over all others. The impressive display by Niho Makuru caught the eye of the beauty of Whakatōhea, Te Ao Putuputa. Their love was mutual and immediate, burning brightly. While for the duration of the whakahorohoro, a truce remained in place, animosities between the people of Turanganui and Whakatōhea were so strong that a marriage between Niho Makuru and Te Ao Putuputa was untenable. After the tournament, Niho Makuru returned home, and the pair spent a year longing for one another. (Lyll, 1979 p.187)

“Te Ao Putaputa was raised as a puhi or virgin maiden by her tribe. Her attendants would not allow any male to come in close contact with her. When Niho Makuru returned to Tūranga his whole being had been consumed with a lust for Te Ao Putaputa. One day, he whispered a love charm, atahu, into a ngāruru shell (*Cookia sulcata*). He released the ngāruru onto the currents of Hinemoana to be carried to Ōpape, the home village of Te Ao Putaputa. One day, the women folk of Ōpape set out to dive for seafood when Te Ao Putaputa came across a ngāruru shell that had been washed ashore. Then Te Ao Putaputa heard a voice speaking to her from the ngāruru shell; it was the love charm of Niho Makuru at work. The potency of the ātahu was such that Te Ao Putaputa immediately fell to the love charm and pursued Niho Makuru en route for Tūranga” (Maxwell, 2024).

“Irikura Irikura

Iri a te tipua

Tipu-a-nuku  
Te whakamaua mai manawa ki tōku tinana  
Whitiora a te tahito  
Hotu-nuku Hotu-rangi  
Tukia te papa i raro i a manawa  
Te pūkenga, te wānanga  
Whakamaua ki tahito o te rangi  
Iritoro Iritoro  
Hei  
A suspended love charm  
A charm to exhilarate the female potential (vagina)  
A potential who's beginning was deeply rooted in mother-earth Papatuanuku  
Heaven and earth throb and pulsate  
And the earth below beats like my heart  
The anticipation, the euphoria rages through the penis that stands erect to the heavens.  
Standing at attention, demanding attention!  
The potential will be reached!"  
(Maxwell, 2024)

Before setting out on her journey, Te Ao Putaputa consulted a tohunga, who exclaimed, “Whāia e koe te iti kahurangi; ki te tuohu koe maunga teitei” Search out the sacred greenstone treasure, the kahurangi; if you bow let it be to a lofty mountain, which is to say, don't lose sight of the ultimate goal in your heart. The tohunga also provided a spell to be recited when things looked dire, and the correct recital of these words would give her what she desired. “I hira mate tāu taonga ki te whai ao” Open my eyes so they behold life's precious treasure. Hiking day and night through the dense bush beyond Whakatōhea, enduring relentless storms when she was out of food and lost in the dark. Te Ao Putaputa recited that spell and was reunited with her love. And their union was forged. It is this union that links the whakapapa of Whakatōhea and the tribes of the East Coast of the North Island of Aotearoa (Lyall, 1979 p.190). This pūrākau tells us of the grit and determination she showed in pursuit of her goal. She prepared and was supported on a journey that stretched over one hundred kilometres, over maunga and in all weather. Just like in running an ultra-marathon, we are determined, and we are supported by those around us.

“E rere rā, E rere rā

Ngaruru e, e rere, e rere rā  
Kawea te aroha ki te tau e  
Te au ki te taiwhakararo  
Ngaru hinga atu  
Ngaru hinga mai  
Papaki kau ana ngā tai aroha e  
Ki Ōpape e

Te Ao-putaputa  
Te Ao-nui Te Ao-roa  
Te Ao o tōku katoa  
Ko Hineruhi koe (E Ao)  
Nāna i tū te ata hāpara  
Ko Puhi-kai-a-Tiki koe (E Ao)  
Nāna i tū te hunga tāngata

Tiki-i-āhua  
Tiki-kaiwhētuki  
Tiki-kapakapa  
Kapakapa-tū-ki-te-rangi  
Ki te whai ao  
Ki te ao mārama  
Te Ao-putaputa e

Pātukituki taku manawa e  
Hotu-nuku Hotu-rangi  
Titīmanawa ki Tītīrangi  
Tūranganui-a-Kiwa

Hapainga te aroha  
He waha i pā mai  
Taku wahine pūrotu

Te Ao-putaputa

Te Ao-nui Te Ao-roa  
Te Ao o tōku manawa

E rere rā, E rere rā  
E te tau e  
Ki Turanga-makaurau  
Taku wahine pūrotu  
Taku tāne pūrotu

Iritoro, Iritoro  
Hei” (Maxwell, 2010).

“A love charm  
That is suspended above the female element  
That is produced by Mother-Earth  
A charm that awakens my sexual desires  
The hunger for the stiff male potency  
Throbbing below, and throbbing above  
That penetrates the vagina that causes gasps of euphoria  
The skill, the learning  
Hold on tight to the penis as it stands hard protruding skyward in its magnificent glory.  
A love charm indeed.  
Hei

Float away, and make haste  
The Ngaruru shell is imbued with the special love charm  
Float away and make haste.  
Carry the spell of love to my soon to be maiden bride  
Upon the northern currents  
Upon the constant rolling waves  
Like the raging tides crashing upon the shores at Ōpape is the intensity of my love

Te Ao-putaputa  
You are the great world,

My ever-encompassing world

You are my entirety,

You are my world,

You are my everything

E Ao you are Hineruhi the goddess of beauty, the one who brings about the dawn

E Ao you are the princess virgin

The consumer of men folk

The one that makes men stand to attention.

Te Ao-putaputa

Tiki-the first man that was carefully fashioned

Tiki-that shines and glistens when wet in its own natural juices

Tiki-that twitches, pulsates and throbs

When excited

When sexual aroused

And jerks as it grows in enormity exploding into the heavens

Its orgasm dims the stars and the moon

And rips away the darkness and forces the dawning of a new day

Te Ao-putaputa

My heart races

My male prowess beats up and down in eager anticipation

The adulation heralds from Tītīrangi

Here in Tūranganui-a-Kiwa (Gisborne).

Nurture this love

As a mouth has uttered

You are my beautiful lady partner

My wife to be.

You are my great world

My ever-encompassing world

You are the world to me and my heart

Float away my ngaruru shell

The vessel of my love charm  
The love of my life  
To settle with me here in Tūranga-makaurau (Tūranga-of many lovers)  
My beautiful lady  
I am your handsome man  
Te Ao-putaputa.

A love charm.  
Hei!” (Maxwell, 2010)

### 3.10.1 Ūpoko 1 - Whāia: Introduction

The writing of this thesis has pulled me further into my whakapapa. Whāia is “to look, go in search of” (Williams, 2022, p. 484); at the beginning of this process, I set out to reconnect and learn what my whānau had lost due to the raupatu. Before undertaking this thesis, I was looking for something; I had used endurance sports to find what I was looking for. Te Ao Putaputa was told to seek out her love, and through university, I was called to seek out my whakapapa. I arrived at university with little knowledge of my whakapapa, but I was called to seek out more as I learned more. Through this, I have found a connection with whānau and am constantly seeking out a deeper connection. This journey has improved my life considerably. It has allowed me to learn more about myself and become confident in my identity. The pūrākau of my iwi contains feats of endurance that I seek to emulate. To share in the footsteps of my tīpuna.

### 3.10.2 Ūpoko 2 - E Koe: The Researcher

My identity as Whakatōhea is a hard-fought one. Because of the raupatu that The Crown inflicted on Whakatōhea, my whānau left Ōpōtiki in search of more, in search of life. Through necessity, a deliberate amnesia of our whakapapa was adopted by whānau. Assimilation into te ao Pākehā, a goal of colonisation, was successfully achieved, or reo, our pūrākau, our identity as Māori was forgotten. Chapter two of this thesis opens with an introduction of myself as a researcher. I provide insight into my worldview and what has shaped it up to this point. Chapter two establishes my research question and the context in which it sits. By establishing my history and linking through the history of Te Whakatōhea, I lay out the key themes that this thesis

seeks to answer. The primary aim of this thesis is to develop a model of endurance that can be made available to other Māori athletes, encouraging them to participate in the sport of ultra-marathon. The secondary aim is exploring my identity and how I fit within te ao Māori.

### 3.10.3 Ūpoko 3 - Te Iti: Methodology

Conducting research requires building upon a foundation established by academics and knowledge holders before me. Chapter Three outlines the methodological framework that underpins this rangahau, ensuring that the research process aligns with both academic rigor and Māori ways of knowing and being.

This chapter discusses the theories and methods employed to complete this thesis, with a particular focus on Kaupapa Māori methodology as a guiding framework. It explores how tikanga Māori was applied throughout the research process, ensuring that knowledge was gathered, analysed, and presented in a way that upholds the values of manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, and tino rangatiratanga. Additionally, this chapter details the methods of data collection, including kōrero with key informants, pūrākau as a research tool, and engagement with iwi narratives.

By grounding this research in Māori methodologies, this chapter ensures that the findings and conclusions of this thesis are not only academically robust but also culturally authentic and relevant to Māori communities.

### 3.10.4 Ūpoko 4 - Kahurangi: Te Arotakenga Tuhituhi, Pukapuka, Kōrero - Literature review

Knowledge is a treasure, and this chapter represents the wealth of understanding gained through engagement with existing scholarship. Just as research must be built upon a strong academic foundation, the model developed in this thesis is grounded in the work of scholars, researchers, and knowledge holders who came before me.

Chapter Four presents a literature review that explores a broad range of topics, weaving together key themes relevant to this research. It examines Māori participation in sport, endurance in te ao Māori, tikanga-based approaches to physical activity, and the role of pūrākau

in motivation and identity formation. This chapter identifies gaps in the literature and positions this research within the wider academic and cultural discourse.

By critically engaging with these sources, this chapter provides the knowledge foundation upon which the final model is built, ensuring that it is both academically informed and culturally grounded.

### 3.10.5 Ūpoko 5 - Ki te tuohu koe: Te Whakatōhea

To fully understand the context in which this research is undertaken, it is essential to first understand the iwi that has inspired it. Just as Chapter Two established where I come from and stand, and Chapter Three explored the methodological foundation, this chapter shifts focus to Te Whakatōhea, the iwi whose legacy and stories have shaped this research.

Chapter Five provides an exploration of Te Whakatōhea, delving into the histories of significant tīpuna, key events, and the iwi's relationship with endurance. This historical and cultural context is crucial for understanding the connections between whakapapa, whenua, and physical endurance, reinforcing how the principles of resilience and perseverance have long been embedded in the identity of Te Whakatōhea.

By grounding this research in the narratives of Te Whakatōhea, this chapter ensures that the final model is not just an academic construct but a culturally authentic framework that reflects the experiences, values, and histories of the iwi that inspired it.

### 3.10.6 Ūpoko 6 - Maunga Teitei: Te Tauira - The Model

The great mountain represents Chapter Six, symbolizing both the challenges faced and the ultimate goal of this research. In Te Ao Pūtāputa, the great mountain represented the final step toward reunion and love, a force strong enough to overcome all obstacles. Similarly, my great mountain is the development of a tikanga-informed framework for ultra-marathon running—a model that embodies Māori values, endurance, and cultural identity.

In this chapter, I present the model developed through this research, detailing how tikanga, whakapapa, and pūrākau have shaped its structure. The model is designed to create culturally safe spaces for Māori in ultra-marathon running, ensuring that participation is not only about

physical endurance but also about spiritual connection, cultural affirmation, and personal growth.

By climbing this metaphorical mountain, this research aims to contribute to the revitalization of Māori endurance traditions, providing a culturally grounded model that integrates both Māori knowledge and modern endurance sport.

### 3.10.7 Ūpoko 7 - I hira mate: Te Tātari Meiha Kouna Tikanga Rangahau - Qualitative research analysis and findings

I hira mate serves as a guiding principle for this chapter, symbolising the journey toward knowledge and understanding. Just as guides lead others to precious taonga, the contributions of research participants have shaped the direction of this discussion. Their insights provide the foundation for achieving the final goal of this thesis—the development of a tikanga-based framework for ultra-marathon running.

This chapter highlights the importance of engaging with Māori voices, ensuring that the research remains true to Kaupapa Māori Research principles. The perspectives shared by participants are not merely data points but valuable whakaaro that give depth, authenticity, and cultural relevance to this research. By centring Māori experiences, this chapter acknowledges the mana of the knowledge shared and the responsibility to represent it faithfully and respectfully.

The discussion is structured around participants' contributions, comparing their perspectives to identify key themes. These insights are then applied to develop a tikanga-based approach to ultra-marathons, ensuring that Māori values—such as whakapapa, wairua, whanaungatanga, and manaakitanga—are embedded into endurance running.

Through this process, the voices of participants become the guides in shaping an approach that is culturally meaningful, sustainable, and empowering for Māori athletes. This chapter not only presents their kōrero but also demonstrates how their experiences inform the final model presented in this thesis.

### 3.10.8 - Ūpoko 8 - Tau taonga ki te whai ao: Te Whakarāpopoto - Conclusion

The world's beauty is found in linking everything together, and the beauty or the treasure is found. By applying this methodological approach, I will conclude by linking together each of the previous steps and succinctly conclude my research, presenting a conclusive document. In conclusion, I will answer my stated research question by drawing from the conclusions gathered throughout my thesis. In doing so, I will give myself, my participants, and Whakatōhea a voice in developing a tikanga-based ultra-running framework. A development that will advance our aspirations and stand as an expression of mana motuhake.

### 3.11 Te Whakarāpopoto - Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, the discussion has detailed the critical integration of Kaupapa Māori methodology, qualitative research methods, and the underlying cultural principles that have guided this research. The emphasis on Māori-centred approaches such as whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, wairuatanga, and kanohi kitea has illustrated how indigenous knowledge systems are not only fundamental to the methodology but are also essential in ensuring that the research remains culturally authentic and community-focused.

Kaupapa Māori methodology, rooted in Tino Rangatiratanga, has proven to be a vital framework for decolonising research practices. It emphasises the importance of Māori owning our knowledge, enabling researchers to engage with our communities in a way that respects and upholds Māori values and tikanga. This chapter has argued that by applying this methodology, Māori researchers can reclaim and redefine their narratives while creating research that directly benefits their communities.

The qualitative methods employed, particularly autoethnography and grounded theory, have provided a flexible and responsive approach to gathering and analysing data. These methods allowed the researcher to engage deeply with the participants, not merely as subjects, but as collaborators in the process. The thematic analysis provided the necessary tools to interpret the complex social, cultural, and historical contexts that shape the lived experiences of the research participants. This approach has been integral in developing a tikanga-informed framework for ultra-marathon running, ensuring that the research is grounded in Māori worldviews and lived realities.

Moreover, the ethical considerations discussed in this chapter underscore the significance of conducting research in a manner that respects the mana of the participants, and the communities involved. Adherence to kaupapa Māori principles, such as ensuring informants' safe and comfortable participation and maintaining accountability to the wider whānau and marae, exemplifies the care and responsibility required when engaging in Indigenous research. This reinforces the idea that when done correctly, research is not merely a data collection process but a reciprocal relationship that honours the knowledge and contributions of those involved.

Finally, the guiding principles of whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, wairuatanga, and kanohi kitea have shaped both the methodology and the research outcomes. By embedding these principles into the research process, the research has remained firmly connected to the cultural and spiritual values of Te Whakatōhea. These principles have also facilitated deeper relationships with participants, ensuring that the research is methodologically sound and culturally meaningful.

The methodologies employed in this research were essential in uncovering the dual nature of endurance—both as a physical challenge in ultra-marathon running and as a cultural principle embedded in whakapapa and tikanga. By centring Kaupapa Māori methodology, the research was able to capture Māori perspectives on endurance in a way that reflected the lived realities of the participants.

Thematic analysis revealed key themes around whanaungatanga in endurance running, the role of tikanga in long-distance events, and the significance of whenua in defining Māori participation in sport. These insights have been critical in the development of the final endurance model, ensuring that it is grounded in both contemporary ultra-marathon running practices and traditional Te Whakatōhea values.

This research process itself reflects the endurance required to uphold Māori knowledge systems, reinforcing that whakapapa, storytelling, and tikanga are not only methods of knowledge transmission but also forms of cultural endurance. The final model proposed in this research is not simply a framework for designing ultra-marathons—it is a statement about the endurance of Māori identity, the resilience of iwi knowledge, and the power of sport as a means of cultural reconnection.

This chapter has demonstrated how indigenous research paradigms, when coupled with qualitative research methods, create a robust framework for conducting culturally relevant and responsive research. The methodologies and principles discussed will continue to inform the development of a tikanga-based model for ultra-marathon running, contributing to academic

discourse and advancing the aspirations of Māori athletes and communities. As we move forward, these principles must remain at the forefront, ensuring that the research continues to reflect Māori values and knowledge systems.

# Ūpoko 4 - Kahurangi: Te Arotakenga Tuhituhi, Pukapuka, Kōrero - Literature review

## 4.1 Kupu Whakataki - Introduction

Te ao Māori—the Māori worldview—and being Māori form the core of this thesis. These concepts shape the foundation of this research and inform its approach. Understanding te ao Māori, is central to this research. These same values of endurance, adaptability, and spiritual resilience are evident in both traditional and contemporary Māori movements. Whether in the migrations of waka, historical long-distance travel on foot, or modern ultra-marathon running, Māori have demonstrated a deep relationship between endurance, whakapapa, and movement. This research examines the connections between Māori identity and endurance sports, framing ultra-marathon running as a contemporary expression of ancestral endurance traditions. These elements permeate all aspects of Māori life, informing the way Māori interact with their environment, communities, and broader society.

This research addresses a notable gap in discussions about Māori participation and motivations in ultra-marathons. Although considerable scholarly research has explored ethnicity and sports, the focus has largely been on team sports. Sports such as Netball, Rugby League, and particularly Rugby all attract high levels of participation from Māori. Rugby holds a significant place in the culture of Māori and the culture of Aotearoa (Grainger, 2009); understandably, this is where much of the academic focus lies. Rugby is not just a sport but a cultural touchstone; Rugby is linked to expressions of national and personal identity, community cohesion, and national pride (Hapeta et al., 2019; Hokowhitu et al., 2008). However, this emphasis on Rugby has led to a significant gap in research on other forms of physical activity, particularly individual endurance sports and for this thesis, specifically ultra-marathons. When we move beyond the rugby field, the research volume diminishes dramatically, leaving a knowledge gap about how Māori engage with other forms of sport and physical endurance beyond the field.

The goal of this research is rooted in a commitment to both endurance sport and te ao Māori. The goal is to develop a model to encourage and facilitate greater Māori participation in endurance sports, specifically ultra-marathons. While Rugby and team sports dominate discussions around Māori involvement in athletics, there is a rich, though underexplored, history of Māori engaging in feats of endurance. Traditionally, Māori have travelled great distances on foot or by waka for leisure and necessity. These journeys required not only

physical strength but also mental and spiritual resilience. In its many forms, endurance is deeply woven into Māori history and identity. These pūrākau are rich with stories of endurance, often connected to survival, exploration, and whakapapa.

This historical connection to endurance is especially relevant when considering Te Whakatōhea. The tīpuna of Te Whakatōhea undertook incredible feats of endurance in their daily lives through times of conflict and migration. We can look to these historical examples to develop a framework for encouraging greater Māori involvement in ultra-marathons. By drawing on the historical endurance feats of Te Whakatōhea and other iwi, this research aims to develop a culturally grounded model that aligns Māori values with the demands and the culture of ultra-marathons.

The objective of this research is to promote greater representation of Māori in ultra-endurance events. Beyond just increasing the number of participants for the sake of it, this work is about reclaiming a space in which Māori already have a historical and cultural precedent. By reconnecting Māori athletes with the movements of our tīpuna, the model developed through this research seeks to foster a sense of cultural pride and identity, allowing Māori to see ultra-marathons as a realm where they can push their limits and reconnect to the movement of their tīpuna.

## 4.2 Te Ao Māori

### 4.2.1 Tikanga Māori

Tikanga, as a concept, appears very straightforward when broken down. Tika means correct; as an adjective, it tells us that if something has been done, it has been done in the right way, all the required steps have been followed, and as a result, the final product is as expected (Mead, 2016). Therefore, when we look at tikanga and how to apply it, we see it as describing the correct way to go about something. From the mundane to the tapu, tikanga ensures that actions are carried out correctly (Duncan & Rewi, 2018). Tikanga serves to ensure the safety of all participants, both their physical and spiritual safety (Hudson et al., 2010). Tikanga governs relationships within the human and non-human realms and can be integrated into every aspect of life (Foster, 2002). These principles are equally relevant to ultra-marathon running, where tikanga ensures that engagement with the whenua is done respectfully and in alignment with Māori values. For example, before an ultra-marathon route is planned, tikanga may require

consulting mana whenua to acknowledge the spiritual and historical significance of the land being traversed. Additionally, pre-race karakia, adherence to environmental protection practices, and recognising the whakapapa of the land through route naming are ways that tikanga can be embedded in endurance running.

Tikanga Māori can be understood as the foundational legal system of Aotearoa, predating the arrival of tauīwi (Law Commission, 2023). As a system of customs, values, and principles, tikanga served as the primary framework guiding the social, political, and spiritual conduct of Māori. Tikanga provides structure and flexibility, which ensures that interactions and relationships between people and communities are governed by principles that promote harmony, reciprocity, and respect (Pipi et al., 2004).

This Indigenous legal system extended beyond interpersonal relationships to encompass broader connections between people and all elements of the natural and metaphysical world (Foster, 2002). Tikanga articulated the interconnection between individuals, the land, the ocean, the sky, ancestors, and the divine. It acknowledged the interconnectedness of all things within the universe, positioning human beings not as separate or dominant but as integral participants in a vast, living system (Mead, 2016).

As Mikaere (2011) discusses, tikanga is not restricted to the physical realm; it extends across time and space, reflecting a worldview that stretches "from the very beginning to an infinite future" (p. 120). This cyclical, rather than linear, understanding of time allows us to see that tikanga is not static but continually evolving to maintain balance and harmony in the world around us. The authority of tikanga and its relevance have emerged from its dynamic ability to adapt. At the same time, remaining rooted in principles passed down through generations offers guidance in the present and future (Law Commission, 2023).

In this way, Tikanga Māori stands not merely as a historical artefact but as a living system of law that has shaped and continues to shape the relationship between Māori, the land, and the world around us (Foster, 2002). The arrival of Pākehā in Aotearoa introduced new legal frameworks that would dominate the legal landscape. However, tikanga remains a cornerstone of Māori identity and sovereignty, offering an approach to law and governance that embraces all aspects of existence (Law Commission, 2023).

## 4.2.2 Hoa

In Māori tradition, a “hoa” refers to a spell or ritual to enhance a practitioner’s ability in specific activities. Often, these rituals are associated with destructive or combative actions, such as the killing of people or animals, the felling of trees, or the shattering of stone. While predominantly concerned with violence or destruction, hoa may also be utilised to fortify or accelerate the capabilities of individuals and inanimate objects. A hoa can be recited to imbue a weapon with greater power, ensuring that the weapon is stronger, faster, and more effective in the damage it inflicts on one’s enemies. In other contexts, a hoa may be recited to manipulate the physical world; relevant to ultra-marathons, a hoa can be recited to shorten the distance between two points, allowing the caster to traverse the whenua with increased speed and efficiency (Best, 1982).

A specific form of this ritual, the “hoa tapuwae,” is a charm intended to render a person exceptionally swift-footed. A hoa tapuwae allows the caster to move quickly, overcoming obstacles such as hills and terrain that would otherwise slow their progress. Another example is the “hoa rākau,” designed to increase the efficacy of weapons, embuing them with the ability to deal devastating blows (Best, 1982).

In divinatory rites, any object, such as a stone or stick, might be hoaiā—blessed or charged with spiritual power—thus transforming it into a suitable medium through which future events might be foreseen or certain outcomes achieved. From this, we can see the versatility of the hoa, beyond just a tool for physical empowerment but also as a conduit for accessing deeper spiritual knowledge (Best, 1982).

We can look to Pio of Ngāti Awa for a noteworthy example of the hoa tapuwae. His incantation exemplifies the power of the hoa as it allows the caster to traverse vast distances with great speed, seemingly altering the landscape to facilitate unhindered travel. Pio’s charm reads as follows:

“Piko o te ara i mua ra, tū mai koe ki muri ra  
Pū rarauhe i mua ra, tū mai koe ki muri ra  
Pae maunga i mua ra, tū mai koe ki muri ra  
Tuku atu au kia rere me he matakokiri anewa ki te rangi.”

Translated, this incantation conveys:

“Bend of the path before me, stand thou behind me.

Bracken clump before me, stand thou behind me.

Hill range before me, stand thou behind me.

Let me speed forward like a meteor darting across the heavens.” (Best, 1982, p. 165)

In this charm, Pio commands the natural elements—the path, the bracken, the hills—to move behind him, effectively clearing his way. The words “let me speed forward like a meteor darting across the heavens” convey the imagery of rapid travel as a meteor crosses the sky, suggesting that through this *hoa*, Pio can manipulate the very fabric of the *whenua*, facilitating swift and effortless travel. This *hoa tapuwae* is an example of how Māori utilise a connection to *te ao wairua* to strengthen their physical abilities and achieve great feats. This further highlights the close relationship between Māori and the physical and spiritual realms.

#### 4.2.3 Te Tirohanga Māori ki tōna ao - Māori World View

The Māori worldview is rooted in a holistic understanding of the interconnectedness of all entities, both living and non-living. *Whakapapa* is at the core of this understanding; a concept utilised to describe and understand the intricate web of connections. *Whakapapa* can be translated as genealogy or lineage. However, *whakapapa* extends beyond a mere linear family tree; *whakapapa* embodies an interconnected matrix that contains the relationships among all things across the past, present, and future (Jahnke, 1997). This framework shapes our lives and the world around us, emphasising that every aspect of existence is linked through a continuum of relationships that define and influence each other.

By perceiving the world through *whakapapa*, Māori recognise the significance of relationships among people and with the *whenua*, the *wai*, and all the world around us. By understanding and visualising this interconnectedness, a sense of responsibility and stewardship toward the environment is fostered, as well as how the well-being of one aspect directly impacts the whole. Thus, *whakapapa* is a foundational principle that guides social structures, cultural practices, and environmental ethics within Māori society.

#### 4.2.4 He Tātai Whakapapa ki te Whenua, te Tūrangawaewae - Whakapapa and connection to whenua

Whakapapa is an essential component at the core of this thesis. It serves as the foundation for this research and provides a guiding framework throughout the research. This research is deeply rooted in the aim of exploring whakapapa, gaining a deeper understanding of its significance, and examining its role within a broader interconnected framework.

Whakapapa is often translated into English as “genealogy” but falls short of encapsulating its meaning. For Māori, whakapapa is more than a historical record of familial relations; it is a comprehensive framework that defines our place within the universe. It links us to our whānau, the whenua we inhabit, Māori creation narratives, and the generations that will follow. Understanding one’s whakapapa reveals who we are and how we fit into the broader tapestry of existence. Within our whakapapa, we find kaupapa and tikanga that guide our interactions with the world and serve as a compass for life (Simmonds, 2024).

Whakapapa is an inextricable aspect of Māori life, permeating every facet of te ao Māori. So integral is it that removing the concept of whakapapa would effectively erase the essence of being Māori; without whakapapa, the Māori identity loses its foundation. Owing to its profound significance, Māori scholars have extensively examined whakapapa and its influence on our lives. Ani Mikaere (2011, p. 285) articulates this by stating:

“Whakapapa embodies a comprehensive conceptual framework that enables us to make sense of our world. It allows us to explain where we have come from and to envisage where we are going. It guides how we should behave towards one another and helps us understand how we fit into the world around us. It shapes how we think about ourselves and the issues that confront us from one day to the next.”

Through whakapapa, we establish a profound connection to the land we stand upon. This connection is rooted in our tīpuna, who first settled in Aotearoa after disembarking from their waka. As they dispersed across the land, the rangatira named places and geographical features after themselves, their tīpuna, or to commemorate significant events that occurred in those locations. This practice, known as taunaha whenua or tapa whenua, was more than an act of naming; it was a way of imbuing their mana into the whenua, thereby asserting their relationship with and guardianship over the land (Taonui, 2019). In the context of endurance

running, recognising and honouring these names is essential. Every landmark passed in an ultra-marathon holds whakapapa and significance, and engaging with these names connects runners to both the land and its history. As much as this understanding is important for Māori, it is equally important to tauiwi, by broadening their awareness of where they are running, a deeper more conscious connection is made. Incorporating traditional place names into race routes, acknowledging them in pre-race ceremonies, and embedding them in race narratives ensures that Māori knowledge systems remain visible to endurance events rather than being erased or overlooked.

Beyond these terrestrial connections, whakapapa links us to Papatūānuku and Ranginui, central figures in Māori mythology and the creation narratives. According to these narratives, all living things descend from the union of Papatūānuku and Ranginui. Their separation by their children ushered in Te Ao Mārama, which allowed life to grow and flourish. This whakapapa places us within a greater network that includes the physical world and the spiritual, emphasising the holistic relationship between all things (Walker, 2004).

Understanding whakapapa is not solely about tracing lineage; it is about recognising the interconnectedness of all things. Whakapapa informs our perspectives on everything, from the physical to the spiritual. It covers our relationships and the world around us. This interconnectedness reinforces the understanding that humans are just one part of the world and highlights the importance and responsibility of acting as a kaitiaki and upholding Māori values in caring for the environment (Keenan, 2000).

Examining whakapapa allows for an exploration of Māori identity, cultural practices, and the historical threads that shape narratives in contemporary society. By engaging with whakapapa, we can find deeper layers of meaning embedded in our traditions, understand who our Tīpuna were and why they undertook these actions, and apply this knowledge to address present-day challenges facing Māori. It also brings into view the importance of preserving and revitalising Indigenous knowledge that has been marginalised and suppressed due to the process of colonisation (Mahuika, 2019).

This exploration also emphasises the resilience and, importantly, the endurance of Māori. Despite attempts to disrupt, displace, and destroy Māori and our knowledge, whakapapa remains healthy and growing. It continues to shape how we think about ourselves, our relationships with others, and our interactions with the natural world. By acknowledging the importance of whakapapa, we honour our tīpuna and maintain the knowledge so that future

generations may continue these traditions. Whakapapa is a reminder of what Māori have endured to be here today.

Whakapapa can be both a link to our past and a pathway to our future. It is a dynamic and forever-evolving concept that we use to inform and enrich te ao Māori. Even as we navigate the complexities of the modern world, the knowledge embedded in whakapapa offers us guidance and sustenance, reminding us of our place within the vast continuum of existence.

Whakapapa provides a sense of belonging and the comfort of being part of a collective. Reconnecting to whakapapa fosters a deeper sense of identity and connection to the wider community. Whakapapa facilitates the forming of valuable relationships across hapū and iwi.

### 4.3 Te Hauora o Te Māori - Māori health

Heke et al. (2018) comprehensively explore how indigenous knowledge systems, particularly Mātauranga Māori—the traditional Māori epistemology—can inform and enhance health interventions aimed at obesity prevention. By approaching health through a lens of systems thinking, which emphasises the interrelatedness of components within a whole system, the authors advocate for a drastic shift from the dominant Western model of individualised care to a more holistic, all-encompassing approach to achieving greater health outcomes. This integration of Mātauranga Māori into healthcare practices underscores the importance of how our view of health and well-being is rooted in the cultural sensibilities that we were raised in and that what may have developed in a European context may not be best suited for Māori. Their work also highlights and acknowledges the collective nature of health and well-being in Māori communities.

The authors challenge Western healthcare methodologies that often isolate health issues from their broader social and cultural contexts. Heke et al. (2018) argue that by incorporating Indigenous perspectives into healthcare, practitioners can develop and implement a more nuanced understanding of health that encapsulates the physical but also mental, spiritual, and environmental dimensions. This holistic model aligns with Māori concepts of well-being, where health is not just the absence of an illness or injury. However, it is a state of balance and harmony within oneself and the community and world around us.

Historically, before the European colonisation of Aotearoa, Māori populations enjoyed relatively long-life spans for that era. Royal (2005) links this longevity to the collective structures of well-being embedded within iwi and hapū. These traditional structures fostered within them a communal approach to health, where responsibilities and care were shared amongst all stakeholders, and the individual's health was intrinsically connected to the health of the community and the environment around them. These holistic practices encompassed all aspects of health, considering the physical conditions inside the body and external factors such as social relationships and environmental interactions.

By acknowledging and implementing these traditional knowledge systems, contemporary health practices can implement a more effective and culturally relevant approach. The holistic approach informed by Mātauranga Māori offers us a comprehensive framework that can address the complex health issues that Māori face today, such as obesity. By considering the interplay of multiple determinants of health, a broader plan for wellness can be implemented. This culturally sensitive model can potentially improve health outcomes for Māori by aligning healthcare strategies with their values, beliefs, and social structures.

Heke et al. (2018) highlight the important contributions indigenous knowledge systems can make to modern healthcare. By challenging the limitations of Western individualised care and advocating for a holistic, culturally informed approach, they pave the way for more inclusive and effective health interventions. The historical context provided by Royal (2005) reinforces the significance of collective well-being practices in promoting longevity and health, underscoring the relevance of these traditional systems in addressing today's health challenges.

#### 4.3.1 Whare Tapa Wha

Te Whare Tapa Whā is a significant model for Māori health developed by Dr Mason Durie in 1984 (Durie, 1998; Health Quality & Safety Commission New Zealand, n.d.). The model emerged in Aotearoa as a response to Western reductionist approaches to health, which often prioritise identifying and treating isolated symptoms without fully considering their broader implications within a person's life and well-being (Beresford, 2010). Te Whare Tapa Whā challenges this view by conceptualising health as a holistic, interconnected system that integrates four essential dimensions of wellbeing: taha tinana, taha hinengaro, taha whānau, and taha wairua (Rochford, 2004; Ministry of Health, n.d.). Each of these dimensions

contributes to an individual's overall health and resilience, reflecting a balance essential for maintaining wellness within a Māori worldview. Just as a whare stands firmly when supported by four strong walls, Te Whare Tapa Whā suggests that optimal health is achieved only when each dimension is in harmony (Durie, 1998). The model emphasises the interconnectedness of ourselves and the world around us, which resonates deeply within te ao Māori and provides a culturally relevant framework for understanding and addressing health issues.

Te Whare Tapa Whā is flexible in its application; it can be applied beyond healthcare. Ultramarathon running provides a unique lens through which to apply and explore the four dimensions of Te Whare Tapa Whā, demonstrating how this Māori health model integrates physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being. Taha tinana, the physical dimension, is inherent to the sport, as running is fundamentally a form of physical exercise. Undertaking the training required to complete an ultramarathon requires and develops strength in the muscular and cardiovascular systems, enhancing the participant's overall physical health and endurance (Durie, 1998). This physical activity strengthens the body and creates endurance and a sense of resilience, enabling runners to push beyond their perceived limits, and positively impacting their holistic health.

Taha hinengaro, the mental and emotional dimension, is equally significant in ultra-marathon running. For many, running serves as a powerful tool for enhancing mental clarity and focus. The repetitive and rhythmic nature of running creates space to step away from the complexities of daily life, offering a meditative reprieve (Health Quality & Safety Commission New Zealand, n.d.). Deliberately setting aside time to focus on your mental space and allow for reflection and a break from the stresses of life. Additionally, ultra-running provides a framework for setting and achieving goals, creating a sense of purpose and allowing for accomplishment. Each completed run, whether during training or at a race, reinforces self-belief and contributes positively to mental health by building resilience and instilling a sense of achievement.

Taha whānau, the social dimension, can be enriched through the communal aspects of ultra-running. The community found among runners and volunteers at events highlights the ability of the sport to foster connections beyond immediate whānau (Ministry of Health, n.d.). The shared feat of endurance, pushing past physical and mental barriers, creates a bond among

participants. This bond found in solidarity allows participants to support one another through encouragement, shared knowledge, and collective celebration of goals achieved. At the same time, the importance of immediate whānau cannot be understated. Whānau support plays a crucial role in ultra-marathon participation, offering logistical assistance such as transport and aid station support, as well as emotional encouragement and post-race celebration. Their presence and aroha reinforce the relational aspect of well-being and highlight the interconnectedness of the individual and the collective in our health and well-being (Durie, 1998).

Lastly, the spiritual dimension of taha wairua is interwoven into the ultra-running experience, particularly when engaging with the natural environment. Running across diverse whenua creates opportunities to connect deeply with the land, its whakapapa, and the wairua that imbues it (Durie, 1998). For Māori, the whenua is not merely a backdrop but a tīpuna and a source of sustenance, inspiration, and connection. As an ultra-runner, acknowledging and respecting the whenua through which we run becomes an intentional engagement with te ao wairua. This connection is deepened by the knowledge that our tīpuna once traversed these same landscapes, which fosters a sense of belonging and highlights the nature of the generational connection's whakapapa creates. Considering this, ultra-running becomes a deliberate act of engagement with te ao wairua, deepening our connection to the physical and spiritual worlds.

Incorporating Māori tikanga into ultra-running can further enhance taha wairua by embedding cultural practices into the sport. Practices such as beginning a race with karakia or acknowledging significant landmarks with mihi create moments of intentional reflection and spiritual grounding (Rochford, 2004). These actions honour the spiritual significance of the whenua and create a space in which a deeper connection to te ao Māori can be found, enhancing the overall sense of purpose and meaning through running.

However, as much as there are benefits to ultra-marathon running and the implementation of Whare Tapa Whā, there are challenges. Accessibility can be a barrier to participation, as the financial, physical, and time commitments required to participate in the sport may limit engagement for some individuals and whānau. Additionally, as much as the sport fosters a sense of community, the required focus on training or competition can sometimes overshadow other dimensions, such as taha whānau or taha hinengaro, creating an imbalance that could

impact overall well-being. Recognising these potential challenges and striving for a holistic approach is crucial to maintaining harmony across the dimensions (Ministry of Health, n.d.).

While viewing ultra-running through the lens of Whare Tapa Wha provides us with a unique insight, we are not just limited to one sport. This lens can be applied to other sports and broader contexts, demonstrating the versatility of Te Whare Tapa Whā as a framework for holistic health. Beyond the sport, the principles stated can be adapted to other pursuits, encouraging individuals to develop their well-being in diverse ways. Through this lens, ultra-running serves as a model for health and underscores the interconnectedness of these dimensions in te ao Māori (Durie, 1998; Health Quality & Safety Commission New Zealand, n.d.)

### 4.3.2 Atua Matua

To best engage Māori in seeking better health outcomes, we must look beyond individual symptoms. The Atua Matua Health Framework states that health and well-being for Māori can be achieved by looking at a complete picture of the environment around us. By learning the mātauranga our tīpuna carried about health and the environment around us and implementing it in our current situation, a holistic model of health can be achieved.

Developed by Dr Ihirangi Heke, the Atua Matua Māori Health Framework is an innovative approach to health that prioritises the connection to the knowledge of tīpuna over conventional fitness goals. Rather than focusing solely on physical training, this framework encourages individuals to look further and engage deeply with their cultural heritage and the natural world. Through this engagement, improved well-being and fitness emerge as incidental outcomes in reconnecting with oneself and one's tīpuna (Warbrick et al., 2016). The framework emphasises that health is a physical and holistic experience rooted in cultural identity and environmental relationships.

Traditionally, Māori perspectives on health and well-being were holistic, emphasising the importance of balance across wairua, tinana, whānau, and hinengaro (Durie, 1985). This perspective recognises that every aspect of an individual's life is interconnected, and an imbalance in one of these areas can affect our overall well-being. The holistic approach is deeply embedded in Māori culture, where health is viewed as a collective journey rather than an individual endeavour.

In contrast, the dominant approach of Western medicine often adopts an individualistic and reductionist approach (Beresford, 2010). It tends to focus on specific markers of illness, addressing symptoms and diseases in isolation. This approach prioritises the remediation or repair of aspects of health without necessarily considering the individual's broader social, cultural, and spiritual context. This approach can overlook the complexities of lives and the interplay of factors that contribute to a person's overall health and may fail to fully address the underlying causes of illness (Margues et al., 2021).

The Atua Matua framework challenges the constraints of the Western medical model by reframing health within a cultural and environmental context. The framework advocates health practitioners to develop a more comprehensive understanding of well-being, including spiritual connections, family ties, mental health, and physical ability. By integrating the knowledge and practices of our tīpuna, the framework seeks to restore balance and harmony in individuals and communities, leading to more sustainable health outcomes.

## 4.4 Hākinakina - Sport

### 4.4.1 Tuakiri me te Hākinakina - Identity and Sport in Aotearoa

In Aotearoa, sport occupies a major portion of the nation's consciousness and is deeply ingrained in its cultural identity. The importance of sports is evident not only in dedicated sports sections of the news but also woven throughout facets of our national media, such as news broadcasts, advertisements, and social commentaries. This presence underscores the important role that athletic pursuits play in daily life. For tamariki, participation in local sports such as rugby, netball, or soccer is more than just an extracurricular activity; it is considered a rite of passage that fosters community engagement and personal development from a young age. Participation helps to develop identity, and these sports serve as common ground, creating cultural connections across socioeconomic classes, ethnicities, and social barriers, thereby reinforcing a collective sense of belonging. The integration of sport with the concept of 'New Zealandness' is so deeply ingrained that it is often overlooked; there is an implicit expectation that being a New Zealander inherently involves an interest in some form of sport (Borell, 2016; Grainger, 2009; Hapeta et al., 2019).

The perception of sport as an egalitarian endeavour in Aotearoa is rooted in the belief that it functions as a pure meritocracy. This perception suggests that success in sports is solely determined by the individual's talent and willingness to work and that we provide equal opportunities for all to excel regardless of their background. While talent and dedication are significant components of sporting success, this perspective overlooks or discredits the complex cultural and socioeconomic factors that significantly influence outcomes (Coutinho et al., 2016; Sava et al., 2024). Access to quality training facilities, coaching, nutrition, and support systems varies greatly among different communities. This challenges the notion of sport as an unbiased arena, as this perception fails to account for systematic disparities that can hinder or enhance an individual's ability to succeed.

If we look at rugby, regarded as the national sport in Aotearoa, we can see a domain where Māori athletes have achieved great success and national recognition. Māori players are celebrated for their perceived natural physicality and strength, which allows them to excel at the game. This celebration, however, is interwoven with elements of stereotyping and colonial ideas of racial hierarchy that can inadvertently undermine the value and position of Māori in wider society (Hokowhitu, 2004). Also, by attributing sporting success to their inherent physical abilities, this view undermines the hard work, strategic thinking, and discipline these athletes have invested in their craft. The view of particularly Māori men being only suited for their physicality is highlighted by Watson (2007), who states, "Māori success in sport is recognised by Pākehā New Zealanders because it does not threaten their economic and political dominance" (p. 786). For the hegemony of Pākehā society, Māori success is limited to the field; beyond the white lines is where the acknowledgement and celebration end. While Māori athletes are lauded within sports, such acknowledgment does not translate to empowerment or equality in other societal spheres.

The portrayal of Māori, particularly Māori men, in popular culture further highlights this issue. Films such as *Once Were Warriors*, *Utu*, and *Crooked Earth* depict Māori males as embodying physical strength, a propensity for violence, and a lack of intellectual and emotional depth (Hokowhitu, 2004). The representations in these films reinforce the harmful stereotypes that reduce Māori identities to simplistic caricatures, emphasising colonial notions of savagery and aggression over complexity and humanity. These narratives contribute to a broader societal lens that views Māori bodies primarily through their physical attributes, which neglects the deep cultural, intellectual, and emotional dimensions of Māori identity.

Furthermore, rugby has historically been used as a tool for the assimilation of Māori into colonial New Zealand society. The colonial education systems forced on Māori were designed to mould young Māori for roles they were considered suitable for, such as labour and agriculture while distancing them from their traditional cultural practices and knowledge systems (Borell, 2016). European sports, particularly rugby, were incorporated into these systems to promote discipline, obedience, and conformity to colonial norms. This approach aimed to “civilise” Māori youth by redirecting their energies towards pursuits that were deemed acceptable by the colonisers, undermining the connection to their Māori cultural identities and promoting assimilation into Pākehā.

These historical and cultural dynamics deeply influence the expectations of tāne Māori and their expressions of masculinity. Society often views their bodies through a lens that emphasises physicality and strength, which is associated with notions of savagery and limited intellectual capacity (Hokowhita, 2004). This perspective is particularly pronounced in contact sports, where physical dominance is highly valued. Hokowhita (2009) critiques this narrow framing by asserting, “The Indigenous body symbolised the physical realm and, thus, was employed for its physical labour, observed for its performativity, and humanised through the physical pursuits of sport” (p. 110). Hokowhita (2009) underscores the limitations imposed on Māori men, noting that their identities are confined within the boundaries of physical performance, neglecting their full humanity, intellectual depth and potential contributions beyond the athletic sphere.

As we address these issues, we must recognise the multifaceted identities of Māori individuals and challenge stereotypes that have been imposed on them. The valorisation of Māori athletes for their ‘natural’ abilities should be challenged and reframed to recognise the skill, strategy, and intellectual engagement essential for success in sports. Additionally, there must be a conscious effort to dismantle the colonial narratives that have historically marginalised Māori and to promote representations that reflect the diversity and richness of Māori culture.

The integration of Māori into professional sports and, by extension, into certain aspects of society has not necessarily equated to genuine inclusion or equity for those admitted. While sports can serve as a platform for visibility and recognition, they have also strengthened existing power imbalances. If not critically examined, little progress can be made. It is essential

to move beyond superficial celebrations of success and address the underlying systemic factors influencing access and opportunity within sports and society.

While sport in Aotearoa plays a significant role in uniting communities and is a source of national pride, it also highlights deeper societal issues related to race, identity, and power dynamics. The assumptions and stereotypes surrounding Māori athletes should be challenged and replaced with a more nuanced understanding of how sport intersects with cultural identity. Critically examining these intersections can foster a more inclusive and equitable society that values all dimensions of Māori identity and contributions.

#### 4.4.2 Whakapakari Tinana me te Tuakiri Iwi Taketake - Exercise and Indigenous Identity

Dubnewick et al. (2018) and McHugh et al. (2018) discuss the significance of traditional games and physical activity within Indigenous cultures, particularly focusing on Indigenous youth in the Northwest Territories of Canada. Although the context of their research is geographically distinct, many of the themes explored are relevant to Indigenous communities in Aotearoa. Their research demonstrates how engagement in traditional Indigenous games can enhance the overall well-being of youth (aged 14-18) while fostering a sense of cultural pride and identity. Such games are not merely recreational but deeply embedded with Indigenous knowledge systems and serve as vital conduits for cultural transmission. These games and the knowledge within contrast to mainstream sports or colonial sports, which reflect the histories and narratives of colonising societies. Traditional games are inherently connected to Indigenous ontologies and worldviews and, as a result, offer youth an opportunity to reclaim and reconnect with cultural practices that may have been threatened and devastated through colonisation.

Participating in these traditional games enables Indigenous youth to place themselves within and experience a sense of continuity with their tūpuna, sharing in the same activities passed down through many generations, surviving colonisation. This shared experience helps create a sense of identity and belonging while contributing to the revival, reconnection, and maintenance of Indigenous cultures. We can also look to these games as a form of cultural expression and a vehicle to engage with the whenua, providing holistic opportunities for a relationship with the environment. These games require participants to learn about the whenua, its contours, and its stories and serve as a platform for environmental stewardship and cultural

learning. This land-based connection is particularly important as it reinforces Indigenous epistemologies that view the land as a living entity, a tīpuna that informs identity, sustenance, and wellbeing (Dubnewick et al., 2018; McHugh et al., 2018).

Through engagement in traditional games, participants can cultivate personal and social skills transferable beyond a sporting context. Through participation, youth can develop confidence, resilience, and physical skills. Skills that can be applied to the rest of their lives, including education and employment. These games also provide a way to strengthen social bonds and build a sense of community amongst Indigenous youth, providing culturally relevant spaces where they can connect, support one another, and engage in cultural reconnection and reinvigoration (Dubnewick et al., 2018; McHugh et al., 2018). These environments are important, as they privilege Indigenous identity and knowledge and provide a counter-narrative to the colonial hegemony of mainstream sport.

We can also look to McCourt (2021), who argues that sport holds an important cultural position. Sport will often serve as the vehicle for socialisation within families and to broader societal groups. By participating from a young age, athletes involved in these activities are offered a pathway to potential participation in elite sports and are also presented with an avenue for developing a deeper connection with community values and traditions. Early exposure to sports is instrumental in establishing a passion that enables youth to view sports as a lifelong pursuit. A pursuit that is deeply intertwined with cultural identity and personal growth.

Rees et al. (2015) further assert that sports are essential in developing the participants' social identity. Sport influences how individuals perceive themselves and their roles within a community. Participation in sports shapes decision-making abilities by aligning the personal choices of an athlete with group expectations and shifting the perception of success from individual action to collective achievements. Through this lens, traditional Indigenous games contribute to forming a collective identity rooted in shared cultural values, communal responsibility, and a sense of collective empowerment. The development of this shared identity is especially important in Indigenous contexts. Colonisation has often fractured traditional social structures in these spaces, undermining community and identity. Therefore, through participation in culturally rooted sporting activities, Indigenous youth can strengthen their sense of identity and foster their communal belonging, ultimately contributing to the health and future resilience of Indigenous communities.

#### 4.4.3 Hākinakina Māori - Māori Sport

The development of Māori schooling in Aotearoa and its relationship to the popularity of English sports, particularly rugby, reflects the broader history of colonisation and cultural assimilation of Māori in Aotearoa. From the emergence of early mission schools in Aotearoa through to modern schooling systems, we can see how team sports, particularly rugby, hold an important place in Māori life and community.

In the colonisation of Aotearoa, the education system had been used as a tool of assimilation to mould Māori into model citizens of the British Empire. The British schooling model was a key element in the process of assimilation. Before European arrival in Aotearoa, Māori had whare wananga, where knowledge was shared, ensuring its survival. These whare wananga were rooted in tikanga and te ao Māori, as that was all that existed then. The first challenge to this hegemony came in the form of Mission schools, a tool of the colonisers to convert the 'primitive' and 'barbaric' natives to Christianity and civilisation (Walker, 2016). European missionaries established these mission schools for Māori in Aotearoa in the early 19th century. The initial mission station was founded at Oihi in the Bay of Islands in December 1814, following the efforts of Reverend Samuel Marsden (Barrington & Beaglehole, 1974). The first school building opened on August 12, 1816, marking the beginning of formalised European-style education for Māori children.

These early mission schools served dual purposes: to provide education and to spread Christianity among the Māori population. The curriculum used included religious instruction alongside basic literacy and numeracy skills. Thomas Kendall, one of the first school teachers, played a crucial role in developing educational materials, including the first book of grammar lessons in te reo Māori, published in 1815 (Simon, 1998).

The Native Schools Act of 1867 marked a shift in Māori education policy. The act allowed for the establishment of primary schools in traditionally Māori communities, known as Native Schools. These schools were designed to accelerate the assimilation of Māori into European culture and society. The Native Schools system was explicitly used as a tool of colonisation, aiming to "civilise" Māori children by immersing them in European language, customs, and values. This approach often came at the expense of traditional Māori knowledge and practices. As stated by Simon (1992), "Boarding schools were favoured over day schools because they

removed the Maori child from the influence of their families and villages. This, together with the requirement that English be taught, can be seen as intended to help assimilate Maori to Pakeha cultural customs. We also see from the inspectors' reports that this assimilation aim was intended to facilitate the establishment of British law" (p.80).

Introducing English sports, particularly rugby, into Māori communities was closely tied to the educational system. Schools became a primary vector for introducing and popularising these sports among Māori youth. Rugby gained significant traction and became deeply ingrained in Māori culture.

According to Ryan (2007), "Rugby was introduced to New Zealand as part of the colonial package, along with Christianity, the English language, and British cultural norms" (p. 78). The sport was seen as a means of instilling British values such as discipline, teamwork, and fair play.

Despite its colonial origins, rugby became a sport through which Māori could assert their cultural identity and challenge colonial power structures. Incorporating the haka into rugby performances is a prime example of this cultural appropriation and resistance.

The 1888-89 New Zealand Native football team, predominantly Māori, was the first New Zealand rugby team to tour beyond Australasia. This tour showcased Māori athletic prowess and introduced the haka to international audiences, creating a lasting association between Māori culture and New Zealand rugby (Ryan, 2007).

The impact of colonial education policies and the introduction of English sports on Māori communities has been profound and long-lasting. While these institutions and practices were initially assimilation tools, they have also become sites of cultural resistance and reclamation.

As Walker (2004) argues, "The Native Schools system, while designed to assimilate Māori, inadvertently became a site of cultural persistence and adaptation" (p. 146). Similarly, rugby and rugby league, despite their colonial origins, have become important avenues for Māori cultural expression and pride.

#### 4.4.4 Omanga - Running

While team sports like rugby have long been a dominant focus in Aotearoa, there exists a parallel history of Māori engaging in endurance-based physical activities. Running has been central to Māori survival, from traversing vast landscapes for kai and warfare to participating in ceremonial or strategic journeys. Unlike the structured and colonially introduced sports of the 19th and 20th centuries, long-distance movement has always been embedded in te ao Māori. Understanding these traditions allows us to reframe ultra-marathon running as an extension of Māori physical and cultural expression, rather than as a purely Western athletic endeavour. Running is one of the most straightforward activities a human can perform at its most fundamental level. Running is characterised by the rhythmic motion (Taiharuru) of placing one foot in front of the other at a pace faster than walking. This simplicity is one of the most compelling attributes of the sport; regardless of the distance covered or the speed achieved, the essence of running remains consistent (Bramble & Lieberman, 2004; Sears, 2001). The formation of the runner as an identity only requires the person to engage in running. The accessibility of running is enhanced by the minimal amount of equipment required to participate; typically, just a suitable pair of shoes is all one needs, making it a universally approachable endeavour (Lieberman et al., 2010). The versatility of running allows it to be performed in many different environments, at any time, and across any terrain, whether through forest trails, along urban roads, or around athletic tracks. The duration and intensity of a run can be tailored to the runner's desire or abilities. A run can range from a brief sprint to extended distances (Joyner & Coyle, 2008; Zinner et al., 2015).

When we discuss the sport of running, our perceptions are usually fixed on specific distances and terrains. Each discipline within the sport carries its unique knowledge and expectations, highlighting the diversity within the running community. While the identity of being a runner is broad, encompassing anyone who partakes in the activity, a spectrum of specialisations exists based on preferred distances or terrains. These specialisations create sub-groups within the larger community, defined by the specific demands and characteristics of their chosen running disciplines (Scheerder et al., 2015).

Within track running, distinct sub-categories exist that cater to various athletes' proficiency. Sprinters, for instance, focus on short-distance events such as the 100-metre and 200-metre dashes, requiring explosive speed and anaerobic power. Middle-distance runners typically specialise in the 800-metre or 1,500-metre events, which demand a blend of speed and endurance. Long-distance track athletes engage in races like the 5,000-metre and 10,000-metre,

emphasising aerobic capacity and sustained pacing strategies (Tucker & Collins, 2012; Joyner & Coyle, 2008). Track runners typically specialise in one or two distances that align with their physiological strengths and the energy systems predominantly utilised in those events. It is uncommon for a 100-metre sprinter to compete in a 10,000-metre race, as the physical demands and training methodologies differ significantly between sprinting and long-distance running (Zinner et al., 2015).

Track running is often associated with competitive athletics; the standardised terrain and fixed distances allow for measurable and, therefore, comparable results. This environment fosters global competition and caters to athletes attending their first competition to those we see competing at pinnacle events such as the Olympic Games (Tucker & Collins, 2012). In contrast, road running is provided over longer distances and more varied terrain. While these make comparisons across the globe difficult, the sport remains competitive and is featured at pinnacle events. Due to the variability of courses available, road running is a sport that can be held anywhere there is a road or path; race organisers are not limited by access to specific running tracks and can offer varying distances all run simultaneously. Because of this, these events attract a broader range of participants, from the hyper-competitive to the recreational (Lee et al., 2014; Shipway & Holloway, 2010). While competitive runners may aim to achieve specific performance goals, the health benefits of running are the goal for many. These mass participation events also allow runners to challenge themselves and push their limits, aided by the solidarity and atmosphere of the event (Nikolaidis et al., 2019).

Road races also offer a range of standardised distances that have become popular benchmarks within the running community. Events such as the 10-kilometre run, the half-marathon (21.1 kilometres), and the full marathon (42.2 kilometres) attract significant global attention and participation (Scheerder et al., 2015). These distances provide runners with a benchmark they can compare themselves against, compared to other athletes or previous times the distance has been completed. The widespread availability of these events further increased the sport's popularity among the public (Shipway & Holloway, 2010). In the context of Aotearoa, a look at the New Zealand Running Calendar (n.d.) for the current twelve-month period shows that more than five hundred events of varying distances are available nationwide.

If we look beyond roads and tracks, the discipline of trail running brings participants to natural terrains and diverse landscapes. Although trail running lacks a precise definition, the consensus is that it involves running on unpaved surfaces such as forest paths, mountain trails, gravel

roads, or farmland. The absence of designated roads characterises trail running. The discipline embraces the unpredictability and variability of the natural world (Hoffman & Wegelin, 2009). Trail running requires runners to adapt to varying terrains, elevations, and obstacles, adaptations that require physical fitness, mental resilience, and a want for something unique (Vernillo et al., 2017). Considering the nature of the world around us, trail runs may incorporate road running sections that link trails together. All this is to say that trail running is a unique sports discipline with fluid boundaries and definitions. The unique opportunities presented appeal to a broad range of athletes. Some who may be seeking adventure, those who wish to push their limits, those who want to connect to nature, and many trail runners will approach the sport with multiple motivations. Much like road running, the sport attracts hyper-competitive runners through runners seeking fun or finding their limits. (Hoffman & Wegelin, 2009; Knechtle & Nikolaidis, 2018). The growth of trail running has been seen alongside a broader interest in outdoor activities and endurance sports that expand the traditional boundaries of running (David & Lehecka, 2013).

From this, we can see running is a broad activity that, despite its inherent simplicity, is sprawling in nature and encompasses a wide array of disciplines, distances, and terrains. These variables allow individuals to engage with it in ways that align with their interests, goals, and physical capabilities (Shipway & Holloway, 2010; Scheerder et al., 2015). Whether on the track, road, or trail, running fosters communities united by their shared love for the activity in all its forms (Hoffman & Wegelin, 2009; Knechtle & Nikolaidis, 2018; Taunton et al., 2002; Moore, 2016; Ferber & Macdonald, 2014).

#### 4.4.5 Te Oma Taumanu - The Marathon

The marathon, covering 42.2 kilometres, stands as the premier event in road running and holds a prestigious position within the realm of athletics (Joyner & Coyle, 2008). Its origins trace back to ancient Greece, commemorating the run of Pheidippides from the battlefield of Marathon to Athens (Lovett, 1997). This historical foundation has elevated the marathon beyond a mere sporting event to a symbol of human endurance and perseverance and serves as a beacon in the pursuit of excellence.

The marathon garners significant global attention in the contemporary sporting landscape, transcending cultural and geographical boundaries (Scheerder et al., 2015). Major cities worldwide host annual marathons attracting elite athletes and recreational runners. Events such

as the Boston, New York, London, Tokyo, and Sydney marathons have become iconic, drawing tens of thousands of participants and shutting down their respective cities as thousands of spectators watch (Shipway & Jones, 2008). These races serve as both competitive arenas for professional athletes and personal milestones for amateurs seeking to test their limits.

The allure of the marathon extends beyond physical achievement; it embodies a profound personal journey for many (Shipway & Holloway, 2010). A runner will often begin their journey to improve health, covering only a few kilometres at a time. The prospect of completing a marathon, a distance that initially seems insurmountable, can be a powerful motivator. This motivation can drive runners to push beyond their perceived limitations, developing discipline, resilience, and determination.

In recent years, intense focus has been placed on breaking the two-hour barrier in the marathon, a feat once considered beyond human capability (Tucker & Santos-Concejero, 2017). As of October 2023, Kelvin Kiptum of Kenya holds the official world record at 2:00:35, set at the Chicago Marathon. This remarkable achievement underscores advancements in training methodologies, nutritional strategies, and technological innovations contributing to elite performance (Jones, 2006).

Culturally, the marathon has transcended its athletic origins to become a metaphor for endurance and prolonged effort in various aspects of life (Shipway & Holloway, 2016). The term "marathon" is frequently applied to activities requiring sustained effort, such as "danceathon," "telethon," or "marathon sessions" of work or study. This linguistic adaptation reflects the event's emblematic status as a symbol of sustained endeavour and the human capacity to persist in facing challenges (Reischer, 2001).

#### 4.4.6 Te Oma Hauroa - Ultra-Marathon or the Evolving Perspective of Distance

The perception of distance for a runner is not static; it evolves throughout their running journey. What once seemed an insurmountable distance gradually becomes attainable and, eventually, ordinary. Initially, a distance that a runner considers impossible becomes a goal to strive for. Upon achieving it, the distance no longer feels as formidable as it once did. For example, a runner aspiring to run five kilometres may find that once this milestone is reached, their ambition will naturally extend to a longer distance. The five kilometres that once seemed daunting become a routine training run as they prepare for greater challenges (Shipway & Holloway, 2010). As Reischer (2001) articulates, "Because of this shared view of the marathon as a nearly superhuman distance, running a marathon engenders a change in the subjective

perception of space: the 'far' becomes increasingly less so; the impossible becomes realisable. This imaginative shift is grounded in the phenomenology of corporeal existence" (p. 25).

When a runner achieves the mythical marathon distance, their focus typically diverges into one of three paths (Boudreau & Giorgi, 2010). The first path is cessation: satisfied with the monumental achievement of completing a marathon, the runner may choose to stop, content in the knowledge that they have accomplished what they set out to do. The second option is to pursue improved performance by running marathons faster. Through the experience of running a marathon, runners often identify areas where they can enhance efficiency or speed, fuelling a desire to better their previous times (Jones, 2006). The third option involves seeking even more superhuman challenges by exploring how much further they can run. It is at this juncture that runners often turn their sights to ultra-marathons.

Ultra-marathons are defined by their relation to marathons, representing the next frontier for distance runners. Officially, an ultra-marathon is any race longer than forty-two kilometres, the standard marathon distance (Knechtle & Nikolaidis, 2018). Thus, even a forty-three-kilometre race qualifies as an ultra-marathon. However, races marketed as ultra-marathons will typically adhere to specific, round-number distances such as fifty kilometres or miles, one hundred kilometres or miles, or even two hundred kilometres or miles. These distances present a quantitative increase and demand a qualitative shift in training, strategy, and mental fortitude (Hoffman & Krouse, 2018).

#### 4.4.6.1 Te Oma Hauroa Wā Tūwhera - Back-yard Ultra

The Backyard Ultra is an emerging yet niche event within ultra-endurance sports. This unique discipline challenges participants to complete a 6.7-kilometre loop every hour on the hour. The format is structured so that completing 24 loops or hours equates to covering 100 miles (Hoffman & Krouse, 2018). Unlike traditional races with a fixed distance or time limit, the Backyard Ultra continues indefinitely, initiating a new lap at the start of every hour until only one runner remains.

The race's conclusion hinges on the participants' endurance rather than a predefined endpoint. The final remaining runner must complete an additional loop to be declared the winner. All other participants are considered to have not finished the race, a status denoted as "Did Not Finish" (DNF), regardless of the distance they have covered. This aspect underscores the

event's relentless nature and the desire of competitors to push themselves to compete (Knechtle & Nikolaidis, 2018).

As of the latest records up to October 2023, the world record for the Backyard Ultra stands at 108 laps, which amounts to 724 kilometres. This feat exemplifies the levels of physical endurance and mental resilience required of athletes in the discipline. The Backyard Ultra tests athletes' psychological fortitude as much as their physical capabilities, requiring them to repeatedly muster the motivation to start each new lap under increasing fatigue and often in adverse conditions (Roebuck et al., 2018).

Each hour presents a cyclical challenge: runners must complete the 6.7-kilometre loop and utilise any remaining time to rest, refuel, and prepare for the next lap. The format necessitates strategic pacing; while a well-trained runner might find a single loop within an hour manageable, the cumulative effect of continuous laps over multiple days intensifies the strain on both body and mind. Participants must manage their energy expenditure to remain in the race despite no indication of how long that could be (Millet et al., 2011).

Sleep deprivation adds another layer of complexity. As the race extends into multiple days and nights, inadequate rest can impair cognitive and motor functions. Runners must employ techniques to cope with fatigue, such as short naps during the brief interludes between laps or mental strategies to maintain focus and motivation (Hurdiel et al., 2018).

The Backyard Ultra's format also fosters a unique competitive environment. Since the race continues until only one runner remains, participants develop a sense of camaraderie and solidarity in a shared experience, supporting and encouraging each other between laps. This social dynamic can bolster morale and introduce psychological challenges as runners weigh their competitive drive against communal bonds (Shipway & Holloway, 2016).

Compared to other ultra-endurance events, the Backyard Ultra emphasises outlasting competitors over achieving a personal best time or distance. This shift in focus requires a different mental approach, prioritising perseverance and strategic endurance over speed (Boudreau & Giorgi, 2010).

Backyard ultras represent a significant test of physical and mental endurance. Their indefinite nature demands mental resilience, physical endurance, and a desire to continue. The event's

growth in popularity reflects a broader interest in exploring the limits of human endurance within a supportive yet intensely challenging framework.

#### 4.4.7 Tauwhāinga Toru me Maitai Māori - Triathlon and IronMāori

Ironman has evolved into a global brand that epitomises the pinnacle of human endurance and capability. Originating from an idea to push the limits of what individuals can achieve physically and mentally, Ironman events have become synonymous with extreme athletic challenges and perseverance. Triathlon, the sport central to Ironman, requires athletes to sequentially swim, bike, and run, undertaking a comprehensive journey to the finish line. Unlike athletes who specialise in a single sport, triathletes must dedicate themselves to training across three distinct disciplines, necessitating exceptional fitness and technical proficiency in swimming, cycling, and running.

The conception of Ironman was rooted in a desire to test the boundaries of endurance across multiple sports. In the late 1970s, athletes residing in Hawai'i were inspired by the emerging sport of triathlon and sought to determine which type of endurance athlete was the fittest (Bridel, 2013; Lamont & Kennelly, 2012). The unique terrain of the Hawaiian Islands, along with local open-water swimming events and marathons, provided an ideal setting for this challenge. The idea was to link these events with a cycling leg, creating a formidable test of endurance that combined the island's natural elements.

In 1978, a 226.3-kilometre course was devised. This encompassed a 3.9-kilometre open-water swim, a 180.2-kilometre bike ride, and a 42.2-kilometre marathon run. Athletes who undertook this challenge were pushed to their absolute limits, as completing all three stages demanded physical stamina and mental resilience (Bridel, 2015). The concept of this ultimate endurance challenge captured global attention, leading to the expansion of Ironman as a worldwide brand. Today, athletes around the globe can compete in Ironman events that adapt the original Hawaiian distances to new and diverse courses, including the popular half-Ironman distance. These races attract a wide spectrum of participants that range from elite professionals competing for their jobs to "ordinary mortals" and "weekend warriors" seeking to test their limits (Robertson, 2007; Vogel, 1998; Zurn, 2005).

The triathlon concept is a significant physical challenge and a model for enhancing one's physical fitness, health, and general well-being. Training for and competing in three sports presents a challenge that motivates individuals to improve their fitness levels and explore their

capabilities. Regardless of the distance, the varied nature of the triathlon provides an incentive for personal development and lifestyle improvement.

IronMāori is a series of triathlons in Aotearoa that embodies the spirit of challenge and self-improvement. These events offer competitors, not exclusively Māori, an opportunity to test their limits within a culturally enriched framework. The inception of IronMāori was a response to the issues of poor health outcomes among Māori, often associated with a lack of physical exercise and unhealthy lifestyle choices. The initiative aims to promote positive health outcomes achievable through physical activity and movement (Pohatu, 2015).

Grounded in te ao Māori, IronMāori is informed by fundamental values such as *kanohi ki te kanohi*, *tino rangatiratanga*, *whanaungatanga*, and *manaakitanga*. By hosting events rooted in these values, IronMāori seeks to attract Māori participants and encourage community involvement. There is a desired domino effect whereby the participation of one member of a *whānau* inspires others within that family, *hapū*, or *iwi* to engage in the event.

The main goals of IronMāori are:

1. Run events that inspire and incentivise participants to reach for and attain positive lifestyle changes.
2. Run events that embody the Trust's values and *kaupapa* (principles) of *kanohi ki te kanohi*, *whanaungatanga*, *manaakitanga*, and *tino rangatiratanga*.
3. Encourage healthy food choices, regular exercise, being smoke-free, and alcohol and drug-free lifestyles (Pohatu, 2015).

While traditional triathlon training is often perceived as primarily a physical endeavour, the cultural heart of IronMāori creates a more holistic event. It supports not just the physical well-being of competitors but also their mental, cultural, spiritual, and social health. This holistic approach aligns with Māori health models, such as *Te Whare Tapa Whā*, which emphasise the balance between different aspects of well-being (Durie, 1998)

Ironman and IronMāori represent more than athletic competitions; they are platforms for personal transformation and community engagement. They provide opportunities for individuals to surpass their perceived limitations while fostering values of solidarity and mutual support. The success and expansion of these events underscore the universal appeal of striving for excellence and the profound impact such endeavours can have on individual lives and broader communities.

### 4.3 Te Whakarāpopoto - Conclusion

This chapter has covered a wide spectrum of perspectives and knowledge systems, integrating te ao Māori with contemporary discussions on endurance sports, identity, and health. The thematic focus on whakapapa, Tikanga, and the interconnected dimensions of Māori health models has illuminated the critical relationship between culture and physical activity. It also underscores how these foundational aspects of Māori knowledge systems can inform and enhance the participation and representation of Māori in ultra-marathons. By grounding the discussion in a culturally rich framework, this chapter has demonstrated the potential for creating more inclusive and meaningful spaces in ultra-marathons.

Central to this chapter's argument is the premise that whakapapa is the cornerstone of Māori identity, providing a framework for understanding connections across people, whenua, and time. This genealogical foundation extends beyond familial ties to encompass the natural and spiritual worlds, positioning Māori as active participants within an interconnected web of existence. Such an understanding allows us to view endurance as a physical endeavour and a holistic journey involving the mental, spiritual, and social realms. For Māori, whakapapa reflects not only historical narratives but also pathways for contemporary engagement, offering valuable insights into how the actions and values of our tīpuna can inspire present-day pursuits, including ultra-endurance events.

The concept of tikanga has been pivotal in exploring how cultural values can be applied to modern contexts. The emphasis tikanga places on correctness, safety, and respect aligns with the demands of ultra-marathons, where preparation, discipline, and responsibility are essential. By embedding tikanga into ultra-running practices, from choosing routes that honour mana whenua to incorporating rituals such as karakia, athletes can connect deeper to the whenua, te ao Māori, and their whakapapa. This approach also addresses the broader kaupapa of ensuring that physical activities resonate with cultural integrity and promote collective well-being.

The Atua Matua framework and Te Whare Tapa Whā have provided robust models for examining health and endurance through a Māori lens. Both frameworks underscore physical, mental, spiritual, and social interdependence in achieving holistic well-being. When applied to ultra-marathon running, these models illustrate how the sport can be more than a test of physical stamina. For Māori athletes, it becomes an opportunity to strengthen their wairua through

connection to whenua, enhance taha whānau through shared experiences, and foster taha hinengaro by overcoming psychological barriers. Such perspectives challenge the reductionist approaches of Western health paradigms, advocating instead for systems that honour indigenous knowledge and its profound relevance to contemporary issues.

This chapter has also highlighted the historical and cultural precedents for endurance within te ao Māori. From the feats of tīpuna navigating vast distances by waka or on foot to incorporating hoa and other rituals to enhance physical abilities, Māori have long demonstrated the capacity for endurance. By recontextualising these historical narratives, the chapter provides a framework for reclaiming ultra-marathons as a space where Māori can reconnect with ancestral traditions and assert their identity. Such reclamation is not merely symbolic; it has practical implications for fostering cultural pride, enhancing health outcomes, and addressing disparities in sports participation.

The discussion on sport and identity in Aotearoa revealed how deeply athletics are in the national consciousness and how Māori have navigated this landscape. While rugby has been a dominant focus, its historical role as a tool for assimilation contrasts sharply with the opportunities ultra-marathons present for self-determination and cultural expression. The chapter critiques the stereotypes often associated with Māori athletes, particularly the reductionist narratives that emphasise physicality over intellect. By promoting ultra-running and similar disciplines, there is potential to challenge these constructs and celebrate the multifaceted capabilities of Māori athletes.

Additionally, the chapter's exploration of models like IronMāori illustrates the transformative power of culturally grounded initiatives. By integrating Māori values such as manaakitanga and whanaungatanga, IronMāori has demonstrated how sport can transcend physical activity to become a vehicle for holistic well-being and community empowerment. The success of these events provides an example of how a similar approach to ultra-marathons can be imagined, creating further environments where Māori athletes can thrive physically while remaining anchored in their cultural identity.

The implications of this chapter extend beyond the realm of sport. Integrating te ao Māori with ultra-marathons serves as a metaphor for broader societal transformations, where Indigenous knowledge systems are not peripheral but central to shaping inclusive and equitable futures.

By privileging whakapapa, tikanga, and holistic health models, the research underscores the importance of reasserting Māori perspectives in traditionally marginalised spaces. This approach enriches the academic discourse and provides actionable pathways for addressing disparities in health, representation, and participation.

This chapter establishes a foundation for understanding the intersection of Māori identity, endurance, and health through a culturally embedded lens. It advocates for a paradigm shift within the sport, prioritising Mātauranga Māori and its application to endurance sports. The insights drawn from this discussion will inform the development of a model that aligns ultra-marathons with Māori values. A model that fosters cultural empowerment, pride, and collective well-being. By bridging the past with the present, my research affirms the enduring relevance of Māori knowledge and charts a course for future generations to thrive within their cultural heritage and the broader world.

# Ūpoko 5 - Ki te tuohu koe: Te Whakatōhea

## 5.1 Kupu Whakataki - Introduction

As much as this thesis explores endurance and running, it also examines the whakapapa of Te Whakatōhea. The history of Te Whakatōhea is one of endurance and perseverance that is still maintained today.

The research process has facilitated a deeper exploration of Te Whakatōhea whakapapa, examining the lives and actions of its tīpuna. It is through the pūrākau of Te Whakatōhea tīpuna that its people today maintain and honour their traditions. Te Whakatōhea of today is connected through whakapapa to the tīpuna who arrived in Aotearoa and established the iwi.

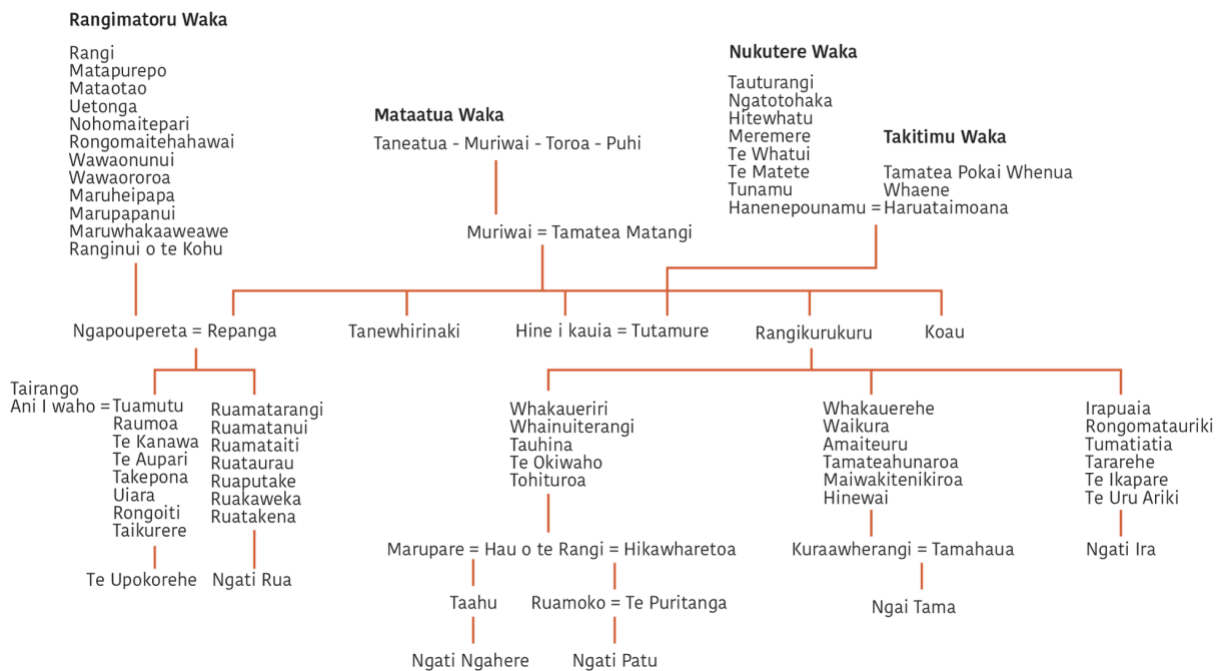
It is this deep connection to the whenua that inspired this research. Questions of whose whenua a run may occur is central to understanding the history, and the whakapapa of the whenua. Much of this knowledge is contained within the pūrākau of Te Whakatōhea. The pūrākau of the iwi contains the glory and the misery that its people have endured.

Understanding the pūrākau of Te Whakatōhea is essential to contextualising the approach taken in this research. This chapter serves as an introduction to the pūrākau of Te Whakatōhea. The full story is far too broad to be contained within a single chapter; it is an endless narrative, preserved and transmitted by the elders of the iwi.

## 5.2 Whakapapa

Te Whakatōhea trace their whakapapa back to the arrival for four waka: Rangimatoru, Mātaatua, Nukutere, and Takitumu. Below in Figure five, we can trace the tīpuna of the iwi, down to the formation of the six hapū of the iwi that are recognised today; Te Ūpokorehe, Ngāti Rua, Ngāti Ngāhere, Ngāti Patumoana, Ngāi Tamahaua, and Ngāti Ira.

## Whakaahua 5



The Whakapapa of Te Whakatōhea (Te Tāwharau o Te Whakatōhea, n.d.).

### 5.3 History of Te Whakatōhea

Te Whakatōhea resides in the Bay of Plenty region of Aotearoa. While the Mātaatua waka is recognised as the iwi’s primary origin, earlier waka also arrived in Aotearoa, establishing the region and linking with the Mātaatua arrivals to form the iwi as it exists today. These early waka brought Hapūoneone and Ngā Ariki, the earliest tribes of the region. The waka “Rangimatoru was captained by Hape; Otorereao by Tairongo, Pakihikura by Irakewa; Te Araumauma by Taarawa and Tuwhenua by Tamatea-Matangi” (Whakatōhea Deed of Settlement of Historical Claims, 2024, p.11). These names hold great significance in the history of Te Whakatōhea and the region to which the iwi belongs. Today, Te Whakatōhea traces its whakapapa through Tūtāmure of the Nukutere waka and Muriwai of the Mātaatua waka. The union between Tūtāmure and Hineīkauīa, the daughter of Muriwai, laid the foundation for Te Whakatōhea as an iwi, bringing together the mana of Te Panenehu and the Mātaatua waka. Over generations, the identities of Te Wakanui and Te Panenehu merged, shaping Te Whakatōhea as it is today (Lyll, 1979, p. 34).

In the east of the area at Te Rangi in 1250AD, the Nukutere Waka landed thirteen generations before the great migration to Aotearoa, bringing Te Whakatōhea tīpuna Tauturangi who brought with him the Te Wakanui people. It is from Te Wakanui that Tūtāmure and his people,

Panenehu descend. The influence of Tūtāmure is said to have been spread across the motu. However, we can trace the eastern and south-eastern boundaries of the Whakatōhea rohe to the time of Tūtāmure and the Panenehu people. Tūtāmure was responsible for defining the exercise of mana and rangatiratanga over the eastern and southern boundaries of Te Panenehu (Lyll, 1979 p.44).

The descendants of Tarawa, the Ngāi Tū people settled in much of the southern, central and northern regions of the Whakatōhea rohe. This area of influence included the space where the town of Ōpōtiki currently sits. Several of the hapū of Te Whakatōhea; Ngāti Ngāhere, Ngāti Pautmoana, and Ngāi Tamahaua descend from the Ngāi Tū people. Descendants of Taarawa including Tamakōmutumutu, Hauoterangi, Tahu, and Ruamoko hold great significance in the histories of the hapū of Te Whakatōhea and Te Whakatōhea itself (Lyal, 1979 p.46).

Approximately eight generations after the Nukutere waka arrived in Aotearoa, to the west the Mātaatua waka landed. The Mātaatua waka features in the history of many iwi in Aotearoa, especially in the eastern Bay of Plenty; Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Awa, Te Whakatōhea, Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Ngāi Te Rangi, Ngāti Pūkenga, and Ngāpuhi in the north of Te Ika-a-Maui. The Mātaatua Waka, captained by Toroa and accompanied by his siblings; Muriwai, Puhi, son Ruaihonga, and half-brother Taneatua. Upon landing in the west of our rohe, Muriwai disembarked and stayed in her cave at Kohi Point which is in Whakatāne. This point is significant as it is where Muriwai saved the Mātaatua waka. After landing the men disembarked and went to survey the area, leaving the women aboard. The ocean began to drag the waka back out to sea. In breaking the tapu of wahine handling the waka, Muriwai let out her cry and saved the waka, leading it back to the shore (Lyll, 1979 p.6; Whakatōhea Deed of Settlement of Historical Claims, 2024).

The eldest son of Muriwai, Repanga married Ngāpuapereta who was the daughter of Ranginui-a-tekohu of the Rangimātoru Waka from Ohiwa. The first son from this union, Tuamutu, had a union with Ani-i-waho, the daughter of Tairongo, who was a descendant of Hape (Ūpokorehe Hapū). Their other son, Ruamatarangi was an ancestor of Ruatakena (Ngāti Rua hapū). From another son of Muriwai, Rangikurukuru, the Ngāti Ira hapū descends and also links Ngāti Ngāhere and Ngāi Tamahaua (Lyll, 1979 p.7; Whakatōhea Deed of Settlement of Historical Claims, 2024).

The influence of Muriwai is evident throughout Te Whakatōhea, most notably in the iwi's name. Muriwai noted for her tenacity and stubbornness gives us the tohe in Whakatōhea. Te Whakatōhea today is made up of the six hapū, Te Ūpokorehe, Ngāti Ngāhere, Ngāti Ira, Ngāti Ruatakena, Ngāti Patumoana and Ngāi Tamahaua

## 5.4 Kūmara in Aotearoa

The Mātaatua narrative about the origin of the Kūmara is told here. It is due to this event returning to Hawaiki to attain the kūmara that the Mātaatua waka was built and brought Te Whānau a Irākewa of whom Muriwai was the eldest child to the union of Irākewa and Wekanui. The history of Māori in Aotearoa is a story of endurance. The stories of our Tīpuna are stories of endurance. We can look to Best (1996) describing the journey of kūmara to Aotearoa. The story of kūmara arriving in Aotearoa predates the arrival of many of the waka to these shores. Brothers Taukata and Hoaki had arrived from Hawaiki in the time of Tama-ki-Hikurangi of Kakaho-roa from Whakatane (p.693). This was a journey of great effort, navigating the ocean currents and skies to arrive in Aotearoa. The brothers encountered the daughter of Tama-ki-Hikurangi and were invited to dine amongst his people, Te Hapu-oneone. The kai of the whenua was served, and while the food appeared to be the prized kūmara, this was not the case. The brothers were served the inner part of the mamaku tree fern and the root of the cabbage tree. The kai tasted like wood. The brothers requested a bowl of water and produced some dried kūmara. After mixing the two, it was served back to Tama-ki-Hikurangi and the people of Te Hapu-oneone. They were astounded by the taste and wanted more. The brothers were tasked with returning to Hawaiki and sourcing more kūmara to be planted in Aotearoa (Best, 1996, p.702). The brothers carved a new waka from driftwood, named Te Ara-tawhao and Hoaki, and members from Te Hapu-oneone set out on the long return voyage, retracing the journey to Aotearoa (Best 1996, p. 703). The kūmara was sourced in Hawaiki, and a new waka was constructed to travel to Aotearoa. This new waka was the Mātaatua waka, the same waka that brought the tīpuna of many of the tribes of Aotearoa with it. The Mātaatua, along with Te Arawa, Tainui, Takitumu, and Kura-haupo, set out to Aotearoa (Best, 1996, p.704). The journey of kūmara to Aotearoa is a story of endurance and survival, mirroring the way Māori have always relied on physical and mental resilience to navigate their environment. Just as Taukata and Hoaki traversed vast distances across the Pacific to bring kūmara to Aotearoa, modern Māori endurance athletes draw on similar strengths—navigating vast distances with careful preparation, strategy, and an understanding of the environment. Ultra-marathon running

can thus be seen as an extension of these endurance traditions, where physical movement is deeply tied to whakapapa and the sustenance of whānau.

## 5.5 Tīpuna

### 5.5.1 Muriwai

Muriwai stands as a pivotal ancestral figure in the history and whakapapa of Te Whakatōhea, an iwi located in the eastern Bay of Plenty region of New Zealand. As a prominent female ancestor, Muriwai arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand aboard the Mātaatua waka approximately nine generations after the arrival of the Nukutere canoe (Te Tāwharau o te Whakatōhea, 2024; Walker, 2005). Her journey and subsequent actions have become deeply ingrained in the oral traditions and cultural identity of Te Whakatōhea.

Upon the arrival of the Mātaatua at Whakatāne, Muriwai demonstrated the leadership she is known for today. Te Whakatōhea history tells that, while the male members of the expedition ventured inland to survey the land, the waka was left attended by the wahine of the party. The tide where they landed began to rapidly rise. Observing that the growing tide threatened to sweep the Mātaatua out to sea, Muriwai took decisive action. She famously exclaimed, "Ka whakatāne au i ahau!" (I shall be like a man!), before saving the canoe from being lost. This act of bravery not only preserved a crucial link to their ancestral homeland but also immortalised Muriwai's name in the place named Whakatāne (Walker, 2007).

The legacy of Muriwai extends beyond this singularly heroic act, as her descendants played crucial roles in shaping tribal structure and territorial claims of Te Whakatōhea. Her son Rēpanga settled in Ōpōtiki and married Ngāpoupereta, establishing a lineage that would lead to the Ngāti Ruatakena tribe (Te Tāwharau o te Whakatōhea, 2024; Walker, 2005). Equally significant was her daughter Hine-i-kauia and her marriage to Tūtāmure, a union that formed the foundation of Te Whakatōhea (Walker, 2005). This marriage effectively merged the mana of Te Panenehu with that of the Mātaatua waka, consolidating the influence of Te Whakatōhea over their traditional lands and solidifying their place in the complex tapestry of Māori tribal relations in the region (Te Tāwharau o te Whakatōhea, 2024).

Muriwai stands as a royal or majestic figure in Te Whakatōhea. All six hapū of the iwi trace their whakapapa back to Muriwai, and as such she is given the reverence appropriate for her position. In Ōpōtiki, on the outside of the Te Tāwharau o Te Whakatōhea building is a large portrait of Muriwai, appearing beautiful and majestic. The portrait serves as a reminder to us, the people of Te Whakatōhea, the mana the Muriwai carries. It is from Muriwai and her stubbornness that Te Whakatōhea derives our name from, tohe.

It is Muriwai that set the boundaries for the rohe of Te Whakatōhea, and we are a unique iwi in that our name originates from a wahine. We can look to Muriwai as our beginning, it is her tenacity and determination that has set the course for our iwi. It was Muriwai that set the boundaries of our rohe. Muriwai had the mana to call what she believed to be the reaches of our whenua, this action is acknowledged and celebrated in the haka Te Tapu o Muriwai (Kurei, 2022 p. 8).

### 5.5.2 Tūtāmure

Kāore koe i rongō ki te tangata  
Nāna i noho Whakarua  
Kārangaranga te muri  
Ka tutū ngā tamatea o te moana e  
Ko au, ko au, ko au tēnei ko Tūtāmure

Have you not heard of the man  
That lives where the Whakarua (Northeast) wind blows  
He who call to the horizons  
And the white horses of the seas stand at the ready  
For it is indeed I, I am Tūtāmure

This well-known Tūtāmure war-cry is when he and his army of 10,000 warriors captured the once impregnable Kahungunu pa Maunga-a-kahia (Maungakāhia) to avenge the murder of his Tāneroa. Kahungunu the younger brother of Whaene the grandfather of Tūtāmure, when he asked Ko wai te rangatira o te ope taua nei? Who is the leader of this war-party. Hence the response by Tūtāmure who's fame preceded him.

Tūtāmure was of the Panenehu iwi, prior to this name the iwi was known as Te Wakanui. Te Wakanui is in reference to the Nukutere waka which made landfall at a bay Awaawakinno east of Ōpape. There is a rock in that bay known as Te Rangi which is the anchor of the Nukutere waka. Nukutere waka migrated from Hawaiki thirteen generations before Te Hekenga-Nui (The Great Migration). The Te Whakatōhea tīpuna that was aboard Nukutere was Tautūrangi. He disembarked along with his people and the Atua of the Nukutere named Tamaiwaho remained in the rohe and is buried upon a mountain named Kapūārangi in the Waiaua basin, the Atua Tamaiwaho and Tūtāmure are both buried in the same place which is marked by a tīkouka tree. Tamaiwaho eventually became the Te Whakatōhea war god. The kauwaka (seers) would invoke Tamaiwaho prior to going into war. The whakapapa of Tūtāmure and his descent lines can be referred to on the whakapapa chart at 5.2 Whakapapa

Tūtāmure stands as a towering figure within the historical and cultural framework of Te Whakatōhea, an iwi of the eastern Bay of Plenty in Aotearoa. His prominence as a rangatira is not only rooted in his leadership and strategic prowess on the battlefield but also in his esteemed whakapapa, which connected him to another powerful iwi, such as Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāti Raukawa. These connections imbued Tūtāmure with great mana, as his chiefly lineage symbolised both inherited leadership and political influence. His marriage to Hinewai, a prominent figure from Ngāti Ruatakena, further cemented his position, enabling the formation of strategic alliances that enhanced inter-hapū cooperation and stability in the region.

The education of Tūtāmure and his brothers, as they reached manhood, placed great emphasis on attaining proficiency in the skills of warfare. Using weapons, military tactics and strategy were passed down, and the skill they acquired with taiaha, mere, kotiate, and other weapons was notable, with word of their abilities spreading. Men of Whakatōhea gathered at the practice grounds, to observe the skill on display. Their abilities were a source of pride for the iwi. (Lyll, 1974, p.38)

In the domain of warfare, Tūtāmure is remembered as a formidable leader, revered for his skill in defending Te Whakatōhea territories from external aggressors. His strategic acumen solidified his leadership and ensured the safety and integrity of his Te Whakatōhea lands. More than just a warrior, Tūtāmure is seen as a cultural hero. His deeds and leadership were immortalised not only in the oral traditions of Te Whakatōhea but also in the very landscape itself. Place names, carvings, and other symbolic representations serve as physical reminders of his legacy, ensuring that Tūtāmure's name continues to be invoked in tribal oratory and genealogical recitations. The continued celebration of his life underscores his enduring influence within Te Whakatōhea and the wider Māori world.

The physical preparation of Tūtāmure's men for warfare is also a critical aspect of his leadership legacy. According to traditional accounts, such as those shared by Uncle Danie Poihipi of Te Whakatōhea, Tūtāmure's warriors underwent rigorous training, including running up and down mountains to develop the physical strength necessary for battle. This form of physical conditioning not only symbolised the warriors' readiness but also established a clear hierarchy: only those capable of enduring such arduous tasks were deemed fit for combat, while those who failed were relegated to support roles, such as preparing food for the warriors. This training regime shows us the high standards of physical endurance and discipline that were required of Tūtāmure's followers; this strength and fitness help to illustrate how effective and formidable Tūtāmure, and his soldiers were in warfare.

The death of Taneroa, the sister of Tūtāmure, provides another example of endurance in the history of Te Whakatōhea. Taneroa, who Tūtāmure was close to, was murdered by Te Toko-o-te-rangi at the request of her husband Rongomainotai of Ngāti Kahungunu (Lyll, 1974, p.40). To avenge the death of his sister, Tūtāmure assembled a great war party of over fifteen hundred men. Four hundred travelled by foot through Waitoa to Gisborne, and the rest by sea, carried by twenty-five great waka (Downes, 1914, p.121). For both groups, the journey to Gisborne for revenge required great endurance and preparation. On land, from Ōpōtiki to Gisborne via Wairoa is a journey of over three hundred kilometres through gorges and over hills. The warriors had to be prepared physically and mentally to travel this distance and arrive at their destination ready to fight. A journey this long takes several days, and to accommodate this food and shelter must also be carried, this requires additional support to accompany the warriors, carrying not just provisions for the warriors, but for themselves too. These non-warriors also required endurance and strength to carry the increased burden. At the same time as the party were travelling on foot, the remaining warriors set out on waka to journey via the ocean. Around the coast from Ōpōtiki to Gisborne is a journey of several hundred kilometres, again these warriors had to be prepared for the physical challenge of getting to the battle. While the waka lessened the load of carrying food and supplies, the vessel still had to be paddled through the ocean and around the coast safely and efficiently.

One well-known narrative from Whakatōhea history further illustrates Tūtāmure's dedication to his role as a leader. According to Lyall (1974 p.41), while Tūtāmure was suffering from a boil on the back of his knee, which initially prevented him from joining his men in battle, his determination led him to seek a remedy from his mother. Once cured, Tūtāmure did not hesitate to rejoin his forces, employing a *hoa tapuwae* to hasten his journey and catch up to his warriors. This episode not only highlights his resourcefulness and dedication to his men but also underscores the spiritual dimensions of leadership in Māori culture, where physical and metaphysical assistance could be sought to overcome obstacles. The mention of the *hoa tapuwae* aligns with broader Māori beliefs in the connection between the physical and spiritual realms, highlighting that Tūtāmure's success as a leader extended beyond his physical abilities to include spiritual insight and guidance. The *hoa tapuwae* is further discussed in the Literature Review chapter of this thesis.

Tūtāmure's legacy is broad, encompassing his role as a warrior, strategist, and a key ancestral figure whose influence remains a defining part of Te Whakatōhea today. His story, preserved

in oral traditions, continues to resonate within the collective memory of Te Whakatōhea, serving as a powerful reminder of the enduring values of leadership, strength, and whakapapa that are central to Māori cultural identity. Through these stories, Tūtāmure remains a symbol of mana and resilience, shaping the identity of his people and their ongoing connection to their land, history, and each other.

In this way, Tūtāmure not only defended the physical territories of Te Whakatōhea but also safeguarded the spiritual and cultural foundations of his iwi, ensuring that his name would remain a pillar of strength and continuity for future generations. His story exemplifies the intricate relationship between leadership, land, and legacy in Māori society, with his influence still reverberating throughout contemporary Māori discourse.

### 5.5.3 Tarawa

Endurance is a central theme in the narrative of Te Whakatōhea, woven throughout the pūrākau of our tīpuna, many of whom accomplished extraordinary feats. Among these, Tarawa is often recognised as the foundational tīpuna of Te Whakatōhea. His significance lies not only in being regarded as the first man to set foot in rohe of Te Whakatōhea but also in being credited with the naming of Ōpōtiki. Tarawa's story is a complex blend of myth and history, embodying both the genesis of Te Whakatōhea and the spirit of endurance and adaptability that has shaped the iwi. According to some accounts, Tarawa was perceived as a trickster; others saw him as a deity, or even as a taniwha, a powerful guardian figure (Lyall, 1974).

One of the most remarkable elements of Tarawa's story is how he arrived in Aotearoa. Legend has it that he was initially mistaken for a rata log when he washed up on the beach. Upon closer inspection, however, the inhabitants realised that what they had thought was driftwood was, in fact, a man, accompanied by a paepae kaiawha. Tarawa revealed his identity and explained that he had travelled to Aotearoa not on a traditional waka, but through a remarkable feat of endurance—by “te ara umauma,” meaning that he had used his chest, or human strength, to traverse the vast ocean (Lyall, 1974). This detail underscores both the mythical nature of the account and emphasises the human tenacity and resilience in the face of overwhelming odds, themes found throughout the history of Te Whakatōhea.

The location where Tarawa was found became known as Paerata, in honour of his arrival. His journey is a metaphor for perseverance, as it is said that he had been left behind during the original voyage to Aotearoa. Rather than accept his fate and remain behind, Tarawa is said to have journeyed across the ocean through sheer human willpower, arriving on the shores of Aotearoa unaided by the tools or vessels traditionally associated with such a voyage. His story exemplifies the qualities of determination and resourcefulness, making him not only a key figure in the oral history of Te Whakatōhea but also an embodiment of the iwi's enduring spirit.

#### 5.5.4 Te Whakatōhea and its history with Te Kīngitanga

The whakapapa of Te Whakatōhea to Te Kīngitanga and more so the Tainui waka pre-dates 1858. Tūtāmure his whakapapa through his mother Hanenepounamu is traced back to the Tainui waka and its people. Hoturoa the captain of the Tainui his first born was a female named Tōrerenui-ā-Rua. From her union with Manaakiao of tangata whenua origin they had Tainui, from Tainui came Tairoa, Tairoa begat Taimanawapōhatū, he had Tai the eponymous ancestor of the Ngāi Tai iwi. Tai had Tūteauru, who had Rongomaiteauru, who begat Rongomaiteururangi, whom had Rongomai, who had Hanenepounamu the mother of Tūtāmure (T. Maxwell, personal communication, 2025).

Te Whakatōhea swore its allegiance to the Kīngitanga in 1858 at Pūkawa, on the shores of Lake Taupō at the great gathering of rangatira, this gathering is known as Hīnana ki uta, Hīnana ki Tai. This hui was hosted by Te Heuheu the paramount chief of Ngāti Tūwharetoa. Te Whakatōhea were represented by Paora Te Ua no Ngā Rangi of Ngāti Ngahere hapū. It is recorded that Pāora stated; “Ko Te Kōwhai te maunga, ko Te Whakatōhea te iwi, ko Paora Te Ua o Ngā Rangi te tangata. Ko Te Kōwhai ki Tongariro, ko Tongariro ki Taupiri ko Pōtatau te mana kei runga. Essentially what he was saying he was tying Te Whakatōhea to the great hui at Pūkawa and declaring the allegiance of Te Whakatōhea to the fist king. King Pōtatatau Te Wherowhero and to the Kīngitanga (T. Maxwell, personal communication, 2024).

Following the invasion of Waikato by Crown forces in 1863 during their campaign against the Kīngitanga movement, Kīngitanga leaders sought support from iwi across the North Island. Among those called upon was Te Whakatōhea, most of the Te Whakatōhea rangatira were hesitant to commit to armed support, wary of the implications of joining the conflict. However,

when word reached them that Crown forces had arrived in Tauranga, the iwi shifted its stance and pledged military support to the Kīngitanga cause (Whakatōhea Deed of Settlement of Historical Claims, 2024).

By late February 1864, Te Whakatōhea joined a Tai Rāwhiti taua composed of approximately eight hundred warriors from iwi and hapū across the East Coast, united in defence of the Kīngitanga movement. One of the leaders of the Te Whakatōhea contingent was Apanui of Ngāti Patumoana. After gathering at Matatā, the taua attempted to travel inland towards Waikato, planning to pass through the Rotorua Lakes area. However, they were confronted at Lake Rotoiti by local Māori who opposed the Kīngitanga movement. This confrontation culminated in a significant battle at Tapuaeharuru, a bay located on the eastern shores of Lake Rotoiti (Whakatōhea Deed of Settlement of Historical Claims, 2024).

The battle at Tapuaeharuru holds considerable significance in the history of Te Whakatōhea. The name Tapuaeharuru has been chosen as the title of this thesis to emphasise the importance of this place. A reflection on the arduous journey undertaken by the Tai Rāwhiti warriors underscores the depth of their commitment. From Ōpōtiki to Matatā, the group travelled sixty-six kilometres, followed by an additional thirty-nine kilometres to Tapuaeharuru—an impressive total of 105 kilometres.

However, the landscape in 1864 was vastly different from that of today. Unlike modern athletes travelling along paved roads, the Tai Rāwhiti warriors faced challenging, undulating terrain, which required them to carry food, weapons, and other supplies necessary for survival. Furthermore, the ambush at Tapuaeharuru was unforeseen, as the taua had intended to continue their march toward Waikato, which lay an estimated additional 140 kilometres inland. After covering this great distance, the warriors would still need to muster the strength and preparedness to fight in support of the Kīngitanga movement.

This moment in history is not merely a testament to the physical endurance of Te Whakatōhea and their allies but also to their strategic commitment to a wider political and military cause. The journey and the battle at Tapuaeharuru serve as a powerful symbol of endurance, resilience, and the ties between the iwi and the Kīngitanga movement.

## 5.6 Taunaha Whenua

Taunaha whenua, the practice of naming land, is a deeply embedded tikanga within te ao Māori, serving as both an act of mana whenua and a means of imputing the whakapapa, pūrākau, and tīpuna into the landscape (Wiri, 2013) For Te Whakatōhea, the naming of whenua reflects historical journeys, acts of endurance, and significant ancestral events, ensuring that the stories of tīpuna remain present in the land they traversed, defended, and settled. These names do more than indicate locations—they act as reminders of the physical, spiritual, and mental endurance required by tīpuna to journey, survive, and thrive.

The endurance displayed by Te Whakatōhea is inscribed into the landscape through place names that commemorate pivotal moments in iwi history. For example, Paerata is named in remembrance of Tarawa's arrival, marking the significance of this journey and the effort required to reach these shores. Ōpōtiki is named after a pool that Tarawa placed his two pōtiki (pets) after they had travelled across the moana in Hawaiki to Aotearoa. The name of the pool is Ōpōtiki Mai Tawhiti (The place of the Pets from away). The name of the iwi, Te Whakatōhea carries with it the memorialisation of the determination of Muriwai. These names serve as taonga tuku iho, carrying the mana of those who first traversed these lands and ensuring that their journeys are not forgotten.

The practice of taunaha whenua aligns ultra-marathons, where athletes must navigate challenging terrain, push through physical limits, and draw upon mental resilience to complete their journeys. Just as tīpuna named locations to honour their experiences and establish their presence, ultra-marathon routes present an opportunity to embed tikanga and whakapapa into endurance events. By incorporating significant ancestral pathways and named landmarks into race design, these events can become more than physical challenges—they can act as cultural re-engagements, reconnecting participants with the land and its histories.

Incorporating taunaha whenua into endurance running means ensuring that place names are acknowledged, respected, and understood. Engaging with mana whenua to tell the stories of these locations would allow runners to develop a deeper connection with the whenua, transforming the race from a competitive event into one that is deeply integrated with tikanga. Through this approach, endurance running can become a contemporary reflection of the long journeys, strategic endurance, and deep relationship with the whenua that Te Whakatōhea tīpuna upheld.

## 5.7 Te Rohe Whenua o Te Whakatōhea - The Rohe of Te Whakatōhea

Whakatōhea has occupied the coastal lands and rich alluvial plains around Ōpōtiki since the arrival of our tīpuna from Hawaiki. The traditional lands of Te Whakatōhea have been described as falling within boundaries commencing in the east at Pakihi at the mouth of the river along the sea coast to the mouth of the Waiotahe stream to the mouth of Ohiwa Harbour past Te Horo onto Maraetotara. Then turning inland southwards to Puhikōkō by a straight line to Pukemoremore then to Mapouriki at one time a fighting pa. Then descending to Waimana Stream; following the stream; then following Parau Stream to Tangata-e-roha on to Kaharoa. From Kaharoa to Pa Harakeke, a ridge heading towards Maungapohatu, to Maungatapere, descending into the Motu River to the Kaitaura falls to Peketutu. Leaving the river and up a ridge to Whakarangō; following the hilltops until it reaches Tipi o Houmea. Then descending towards Makomako until it crosses the Takaputahi Stream to Ngaupoko Tangata. Following the ridge to Kamakama; along the ridge to Oroī. Then turning seawards to Te Rangi on the sea coast, then along the sea coast to the mouth of the Opape Stream, to Awahou Stream to Tirohanga and back to Pakihi. (Whakatōhea Deed of Settlement of Historical Claims, 2024)

The diverse whenua encompasses rivers, streams, hills, and mountains—challenging terrain that our tīpuna navigated on foot. To journey within the rohe of Te Whakatōhea required perseverance and endurance.

The challenging nature of the whenua of our iwi made traditional agriculture difficult. Farming the hills on mountains inland was an attractive proposition. Instead, the moana was the main source of kai for our people (Walker, 2004; Whakatōhea Claims Settlement Act 2024)

## Mapi 2



The rohe of Te Whakatōhea. (Tū Ake Whakatōhea Collective, 2016)

### 5.8 Te Tapu o Muriwai

In te ao Māori, mātauranga has been preserved and passed on in many forms, including waiata. Waiata are not simply songs for the sake of songs, these waiata contain important and sacred

knowledge, the transmission and teaching of which was performed in a formal educational setting, such as *whare wananga*. One such *waiata* sacred to Te Whakatōhea is Te Tapu o Muriwai. This *waiata* delineates the *iwi*'s boundaries and describes the ocean as a source of nourishment for the *iwi*. It describes our relationship with the *moana* and the *whenua*.

“Maruhia atu i runga o Tirohanga te tohu  
Whakaari, whakarērea atu te whaiwhaiā te mate  
tonu atu.  
Whakaihu Moutohora, tāpapa ana Te Rae o Kōhi,  
waiho ma te whakamā e patu.  
Ana Waimuri tō ringa te waka!  
Hiko te uira, haruru te rangi ngaoko te whenua,  
ikahuirua.  
Tapu te wai, tapu te tai ki te rātō Awa-te-Ātua.  
Eke Arawa.  
Whakaheke matamoe Waipiko hurihia Rūrima  
tūtūtara noa mua iho koe.  
Rukuhia te hāpuku te wheke.  
Tōia tō hope, Hāmatatū timu Te Koko, auē Ngā  
tamahine a Te Whakatōhea.  
Takahia te pipi tahe aku pōtiki, Pākihikura ki uta,  
kura ki waho.  
Kapakapa Hukitewai pāra takoto te one.  
Kōpū e oho!  
Kaikirikiri tuatua Waiaua te kai a te karoro koa.  
Koeaea e, Tītītko e.  
Tapu te paru.  
Nukutere Te Rangi Awaawakino ngā tai nui ngā  
tai roa.  
Kōpua-Pātiki huki te pakeke.  
Minohia atu te wai Waiomahau.  
Hā te mure Tokaroa kai waho, kai uta Parinui  
tātahi whatawhata kahawai, pāraharaha ika iti

Ōhinemōtu, Aukati-Pāhau, Pou tū ana te ure.  
Tapu te awa Ōhēkopara!  
Tōtōia atu, tōtōia mai, Mai i Ngā Kuri a Whārei ki  
Tihirau. Ei te tapu o Muriwai e!

From Tirohanga I look out towards the plume of  
Whakaari, where the seer was left to die.  
Yet he mounted a whale and made landfall at Te  
Rae o Kōhi where he quoted, “let you die from  
embarrassment.”  
You were forsaken Muriwai for tampering with the  
canoe (Mātaatua).  
The skies lit up with lightning, roared with thunder  
and the earth trembled.  
A sign of death, your two sons had drowned at  
sea.  
Muriwai you placed a restriction on the sea and  
the land, no gathering of food was permitted from  
Tihirau  
in the east to the setting of the sun.  
Te Awa o Te Atua where Toroa performed a  
karakia  
on the beached Te Arawa canoe and exclaimed,  
“move Arawa.”  
The migration of the matamoe eel navigating the  
tuatara inhabited Rūrīma Islands.  
Dive deep for groper at Te Puku o Te Wheke.  
At Ōhope make good with your paddle and arrive  
at Hāmatatū.  
Low tide at Ōhiwa is when the bountiful shellfish  
can be seen; known as “the daughters of Te  
Whakatōhea.”  
Tread upon the pipi at Waiōtahe arriving at the

pool where my pets from afar reside at Pākihikura  
inland  
and onshore.

The water boils at Hikuwai with shoals of fish.  
The morning star Kōpū is visible, awake, frostfish  
are on the beach. The sand-eating tuatua are  
plentiful at Waiaua where the seagull feast on  
whitebait and tītiko.

The people at Waiaua are known as “Tapu te  
paru.” At Awaawakino is where the anchor rock  
Te Rangi of the Nukutere canoe can be found.

The great tides and long tides of the Tainui  
flow at Kōpua-Pātiki (the bay at Tōrere) where  
Ngātoroirangi caught the tail of the whale.

The water of the Waiomahau waterfall cascades.

Down to the snapper rocks, Tokaroa, which is  
further out and Parinui, which is closer to shore.  
Upon the shore kahawai and the small pink moki  
(pāraharaha) are dried on the drying racks.

Aukati-Pāhau intercepted the attempt on the  
maiden Ōhinemōtu by Poumātangatanga.

A restriction was placed on the Mōtū River with  
the drowning of He Kōpara.

Haul the canoe; from Ngā Kurī a Whārei ki Tihirau.

It is the tapu of Muriwai!”

(Maxwell, et al., 2023)

This waiata holds history for the rohe moana of Te Whakatōhea. Noting the boundaries of the rohe, and the sources of sustenance that the iwi relies on

This waiata is more than a historical record—it is an expression of the relationship between Te Whakatōhea, the whenua and the moana. The detailed references to landmarks, rivers, and sacred spaces within the rohe reinforce the notion that whenua is not simply a backdrop but an

active participant in iwi identity, survival, and wellbeing. Just as this waiata traces the contours of the rohe, ultra-marathon running similarly involves navigating and engaging with the whenua, tracing these same contours.

Integrating iwi narratives such as this into ultra-marathon running acknowledges the whakapapa of the whenua and ensures that the act of endurance is not merely physical but also spiritual and cultural. Running these ancestral pathways becomes an act of whakapapa in motion, a way of re-establishing the relationship between people and place. This aligns with tikanga Māori perspectives on movement, endurance, and land-based identity, where journeys across the whenua are imbued with cultural meaning rather than being solely for competition or recreation.

### 5.1.5 Te Tiriti o Waitangi

On the 27th of May 1840, the Crown convened a hui of Te Whakatōhea rangatira in Ōpōtiki. The hui was called for rangatira to consider the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Representing the Crown was a trader and former Church Missionary Society worker. The worker was fluent in te reo Māori, however, there is doubt as to the understanding both he and Te Whakatōhea rangatira had of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Whakatōhea Deed of Settlement of Historical Claims, 2024).

Seven Te Whakatōhea rangatira signed Te Tiriti o Waitangi: Tauatoro (Ngai Tamahaua, Ngati Ngahere); Te Takahiao (Te Ūpokorehe); Te Aporotanga (Ngati Rua); Rangimatanuku (Ngati Rua); Rangihaerepō (Te Ūpokorehe, Ngai Tamahaua); Wi Akeake (Te Ūpokorehe) and Whakia of Whakatōhea. Once the document was signed, the agent acting on behalf of the Crown offered gifts of pipes and tobacco to the Te Whakatōhea rangatira (Whakatōhea Deed of Settlement of Historical Claims, 2024).

In the two decades following the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the people of Te Whakatōhea flourished. The peace following the wars of years prior and strong economic growth fuelled by trading with the growing city of Auckland afford the people of Te Whakatōhea a good and prosperous life (Walker, 2004; Whakatōhea Claims Settlement Act 2024).

## 5.9 Te Patunga o Te Wākana - The Killing of Carl Völkner

Reverend Carl Sylvius Völkner was an Anglican missionary working in Ōpōtiki. Tensions in the town had been growing between Māori and the colonial government. These tensions led to Völkner's execution on March 2, 1865. Völkner's execution was influenced by several factors. Firstly, there was a suspicion that the missionary was spying on the local people on behalf of the government. It was believed that his frequent trips between Ōpōtiki and Auckland involved passing on information about local Māori activity. At the same time, the influence of the Pai Mārire religious movement was growing. The arrival of Kereopa Te Rau, a Pai Mārire leader, further intensified anti-government sentiments among some Māori in Ōpōtiki. The Pai Mārire movement was a religious movement that sought to liberate Māori from colonial oppression. The movement opposed European encroachment and sought to revitalise Māori culture and traditions.

Völkner was hanged from a tree, and his corpse was desecrated by Kereopa. For Kereopa beyond the accusation of spying for the crown, there was a broader, more political meaning to his actions. Before Kereopa ate the eyes of Völkner, he exclaimed 'These are the eyes which have witnessed the destruction of our land' (Walker, 2004; Whakatōhea Claims Settlement Act 2024).

## 5.10 Raupatu

The response of the Crown to the killing of Völkner was swift and violent. Kereopa and the innocent Te Whakatōhea rangatira Mokokoko were apprehended and executed for the killing of Völkner. However, just two lives for one was an insufficient price to pay and the crown launched a full-on invasion of Te Whakatōhea lands. Confiscating approximately 448,000 acres of land and killing an estimated sixty from Te Whakatōhea. Sixty people at that time represented around ten percent of the Te Whakatōhea population.

The death and confiscation at such a large-scale utter devastation to the economy and the people of Te Whakatōhea. Homes and villages were destroyed, and taonga was confiscated. Infrastructure built by Te Whakatōhea was now under the ownership of the crown, and the property was looted to sell to Pākehā buyers. With their lands confiscated the people who remained were restricted to the Ōpape Native Reserve, a tiny slither of land that once belonged

to Te Whakatōhea. The land allocated in the reserve was around 20,300 acres, however only about 200 of this was suitable for farming, with the rest being dense bush and land unsuitable for farming. This tiny reserve was now to be shared by the six hapū of Te Whakatōhea (Walker 2004; Whakatōhea Claims Settlement Act 2024).

### 5.11 Te Poari o Te Whakatōhea - The Whakatōhea Māori Trust Board

Following the invasion and confiscation of Te Whakatōhea lands, the iwi began petitioning the Crown for compensation. The first petition was submitted to Parliament in September 1914, but the Native Affairs Committee made no recommendation, and as a result, the Crown took no action (Whakatōhea Deed of Settlement of Historical Claims, 2024). Over the following decades, successive petitions were either dismissed or resulted in inadequate compensation offers (Whakatōhea Deed of Settlement of Historical Claims, 2024).

In 1945, Te Whakatōhea submitted a sixth petition. Rather than conducting another inquiry, the Crown offered a compensation payment of £20,000, which was deposited into the Whakatōhea Claims Settlement Account (Whakatōhea Deed of Settlement of Historical Claims, 2024). This settlement came thirty-two years after the first petition and was intended as compensation for the raupatu (land confiscation). In 1949, the Crown passed legislation to establish a Trust Board, which was officially formed in 1952 to administer the compensation on behalf of Te Whakatōhea (Whakatōhea Deed of Settlement of Historical Claims, 2024).

From the outset, Te Whakatōhea leaders had a clear vision: the £20,000 compensation fund would be used solely to purchase land within the iwi's rohe. This strategy aimed to restore the iwi's economic base and secure a sustainable future. The inaugural representatives of the six hapū were elected to oversee this vision, ensuring that all land acquisitions directly benefited the iwi.

Over the following decades, the Trust Board strategically purchased and consolidated land holdings, expanding its agricultural assets to rebuild the iwi's economic strength. Farming became a key pillar of economic recovery, allowing Te Whakatōhea to reclaim a portion of what had been taken. However, the Board also recognised the potential of the ocean in securing long-term prosperity (Harawira, 2017).

Te Whakatōhea became the first iwi in Aotearoa to establish a large-scale mussel farming operation, pioneering Māori-led aquaculture. The success of the Whakatōhea mussel farm not only revitalised the Ōpōtiki economy but also set a precedent that allowed all iwi to receive aquaculture settlement allocations. From mussel lines to a processing facility, the Whakatōhea

Māori Trust Board—now known as Te Tāwharau o Te Whakatōhea—is the largest employer in the region (Te Tāwharau o Te Whakatōhea, n.d.).

This legacy of economic endurance and tribal resilience demonstrates that the prosperity of Te Whakatōhea has been driven not by a settlement, but by the vision, determination, and strategic leadership of its people.

## 5.12 Te Whakataunga Tiriti - Treaty Settlement

On the 27th of May 2023, exactly 183 years after Te Whakatōhea rangatira signed Te Tiriti o Waitangi, a milestone was achieved. The Crown and Te Whakatōhea signed the Treaty settlement in Ōpōtiki at Te Rere marae.

The signing of the Whakatōhea Treaty settlement marked a significant step in addressing historical grievances between Te Whakatōhea and the Crown. The settlement acknowledges the Crown's breaches of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi, including land confiscations, loss of autonomy, and the impact on the social and economic well-being of the Whakatōhea people. It includes a formal apology from the Crown, financial redress of approximately \$100 million, and the return of culturally significant lands. Additionally, the settlement establishes a framework for a renewed relationship between Te Whakatōhea and the government, aiming to enhance the cultural, economic, and social development of Te Whakatōhea in the future. With the signing of the settlement, Te Whakatōhea can begin to heal from decades of injustice, humiliation, and internal disputes. The settlement, while acknowledging the historical injustices, is for the future. To ensure the future of Te Whakatōhea is bright, just as it was before the raupatu.

The journey to the 2023 signing of the settlement could be likened to an ultra-marathon. A race not measured in kilometres, but years, one-hundred and eighty-three years our people had endured from the signing of Te Tiriti to the signing of the settlement. During that time, our iwi submitted several claims to Parliament, seeking redress for the injustices committed against our people.

The settlement process strained our people in many ways. The hurt and disappointment suffered to remain and have had a deep effect on relationships within the iwi. Many of our kaumatua who fought so hard for this settlement, unfortunately, passed before their vision could be realised.

Just as a runner stands on the starting line visualising the journey ahead, the tīpuna who survived stood on the whenua and envisioned the path to reclaiming what had been taken in the raupatu.

The endurance of te Whakatōhea, tohenihorau

### 5.13 Tohenihorau - Endurance

The journeys of early Māori in their travels to and from Aotearoa are acts of endurance. These feats of endurance have laid the foundation for future generations to draw inspiration from and expand upon. As Best (1996) states when discussing the journeys of early Māori, “it must be clear to such students that the majority of such voyages were by no means chance ventures, or the result of vessels being driven off land by storms. Those daring voyagers of old knew well the water-roads of the Pacific, and the many isles that lie far spread across its waters. They knew how to reach those isles, and how to return therefrom, for they were bold and skilful navigators” (p.692).

The journeys undertaken by Māori between Aotearoa and Hawaiki were not spontaneous expeditions; they required meticulous planning, extensive training, and excellent endurance. New waka had to be constructed, navigational knowledge of wind and ocean currents was essential, food stores needed to be gathered, and voyagers had to be physically and mentally prepared for the challenges of the vast Pacific. These same principles of preparation, resilience, and determination are integral to both the historical endurance of Te Whakatōhea and ultra-marathon running.

The endurance of Te Whakatōhea is deeply embedded in its migrations, battles, and the naming of whenua. The arrival of Muriwai on the Mātaatua waka required dedication, strength, and training—not only to survive the journey to Aotearoa but also to save the waka and establish her people’s presence in the new land. Her leadership and unwavering resilience became foundational to the identity of Te Whakatōhea. Likewise, Tūtāmure exemplified endurance through his commitment to warfare, his rigorous preparation for battle, and his long journeys across the rohe. His warriors trained intensively, running up and down mountains, strengthening their bodies, and ensuring they had the stamina to endure long campaigns. The legendary 300-kilometre journey to avenge the death of his sister Taneroa demonstrates not only the physical capabilities of Te Whakatōhea but also the strategic endurance required to plan, prepare, and execute a long-distance campaign. These examples illustrate that endurance

in Te Whakatōhea was never just about physical ability—it was about mental strength, preparation, and commitment to kaupapa.

This relationship between endurance and whakapapa is also reflected in taunaha whenua—the act of naming landmarks as a way of imbuing them with meaning and mana. For example, Paerātā is named to remember the arrival of Tarawa, marking an event of significance within Te Whakatōhea history. Similarly, Tarawa is mentioned in connection to his landing, demonstrating how tīpuna memorialised their endurance feats by embedding them into the landscape. These named places do more than commemorate history—they serve as reminders of the endurance, exploration, and strategic movement of Te Whakatōhea tīpuna.

Ultra-marathons, particularly those that cross iwi rohe, provide an opportunity to revitalise these traditions by embedding tikanga into endurance running. Just as tīpuna named the whenua to reflect the journeys they undertook, contemporary endurance events could incorporate whakapapa narratives into course design, acknowledging the historical and cultural significance of the land traversed. By engaging with mana whenua and recognising these ancestral pathways, endurance running can become more than just a sport—it can be a means of reconnecting with whenua, tīpuna, and whakapapa. This alignment between physical endurance, cultural identity, and land-based storytelling offers a unique framework for ensuring that ultra-marathons are not only a test of athleticism but also an expression of cultural pride and historical continuity.

## 5.14 Te Whakarāpopoto - Conclusion

This chapter has explored the historical and cultural legacy of Te Whakatōhea, tracing the narratives and pūrākau that form the foundation of its identity and connection to the land. The whakapapa, tīpuna, and significant events detailed here demonstrate the endurance, resilience, and adaptability that define Te Whakatōhea, encapsulating a legacy of leadership, perseverance, and cultural richness.

From the courageous actions of tīpuna like Muriwai, who established the boundaries of the rohe and demonstrated endless determination, to the endurance and strategic acumen of leaders like Tūtāmure, the narratives of Te Whakatōhea are infused with themes of physical and spiritual strength. These stories, deeply rooted in the history of the rohe, serve as enduring symbols of the iwi's capacity to navigate both challenges and opportunities over generations. The historical accounts, such as the raupatu and subsequent struggles for redress, further

highlight the enduring spirit of Te Whakatōhea as an iwi committed to justice, cultural preservation, and Tino Rangatiratanga.

This chapter also reflects on the collective endurance of Te Whakatōhea through their historical journey, comparing it to an ultra-marathon—a metaphor that aptly conveys the physical, emotional, and spiritual challenges faced by the iwi. The whakataukī, waiata, and pūrākau shared throughout this chapter illustrate how the iwi’s history continues to inspire and inform contemporary aspirations, ensuring that the lessons and legacy of the past guide the future.

Strengthening the foundation of this thesis, the chapter underscores the link between whakapapa and the idea of endurance, not just as a physical feat but as a cultural and spiritual practice. To undertake an ultra-marathon, preparation is essential. Establishing a foundation and building on top of it. In the pūrākau of the tīpuna of Te Whakatōhea, there is an established precedent for endurance that can be integrated into the sport of ultra-marathons. These narratives ground the research in te ao Māori and underscore the significance of this work.

# Ūpoko 6 - Maunga Teitei: Te Taurira - The Model

## 6.1 Kupu Whakataki - Introduction

This thesis presents a framework deeply rooted in the metaphorical journey to the mountain, symbolising the ultimate goal and the arduous path required. This framework, inspired by tikanga and a Te Whakatōhea whakataukī, tells the story of Te Ao Putaputa and her journey toward her treasure. Parallels the preparation and execution of an ultra-marathon, where the journey to the start line represents the culmination of sustained effort, determination, and support over time. The mountain represents the treasures we seek, personal achievements, cultural connections, or broader societal goals. These treasures include the completion of this thesis, the development of the proposed model, the endurance required to run ultra-distances and accomplish sporting aspirations, and, most importantly, the endurance required in reconnecting to Te Whakatōhea. Each step on the journey is gold which reflects not only the achievement sought but also the formidable challenges encountered along the way.

Ultra-marathon running offers a unique opportunity to examine the intersection of individual effort and collective support. While running is inherently solitary, it is essential for success that a runner has a support network. This network could be made up of family, friends, and community. This network reflects key principles of te ao Māori, such as manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, and kotahitanga, which emphasise care, relationships, and unity. This framework acknowledges that no achievement is purely individual; instead, it reflects a cumulative effort, echoing the concept of whakapapa as a lineage of actions, relationships, and history that shape the present and inform the future. This approach ensures cultural safety while embedding Māori values and perspectives into the event.

Grounded in Kaupapa Māori methodology, the framework integrates tikanga at every planning, implementation, and reflection stage. By doing so, organisers can ensure cultural safety while enriching the event with Māori values and perspectives. This approach transforms an ultra-marathon from a mere athletic endeavour into a celebration of connection to the whenua, community, and oneself. The principles guiding this framework can be applied broadly, demonstrating how cultural values can enrich and redefine endurance events while fostering greater inclusivity and understanding.

The framework developed here has the potential to extend beyond ultra-running; it can be seen as a model for embedding Indigenous perspectives into unique areas. By grounding activities in the values of te ao Māori, this framework seeks to achieve a unique experience that encompasses physical and cultural experiences and to provide a transformative journey for participants, supporters, observers, community, iwi and organisers.

## 6.2 Te Waihangatanga i te Kaupapa - Establishing the Kaupapa

The kaupapa of an ultra-marathon serves as its heartbeat, defining its purpose and aspirations. A kaupapa Māori-informed framework requires alignment with the values and principles of te ao Māori. Doing so can elevate the event beyond an athletic competition to one that reflects the deeper connection between people, whenua, and whakapapa.

To establish a strong kaupapa, the organising team should ask pivotal questions: What is the race's unique contribution to the ultra-marathon community? How does it reflect the mana of the land it traverses? For athletes, the event should challenge their physical endurance and inspire reflection on their journey and purpose. A well-defined kaupapa should reflect the history, values, and aspirations of the local iwi and hapū, embedding the event within its cultural and environmental context.

To truly centre tikanga into the event, race organisers should actively include representatives from each hapū or iwi whose whenua is traversed during the event. Establishing a formal role for these representatives within the organising committee ensures that the diverse tikanga of each group is recognised and upheld. This approach not only strengthens the relationship between iwi and event organisers but also affirms the mana motuhake of hapū and iwi. By embedding tikanga at the governance level, organisers can deepen cultural integration and foster an event that truly reflects Māori values and local iwi aspirations.

The kaupapa might also extend to community benefits. For instance, the race could serve as a platform for cultural revitalisation, emphasising te reo Māori, pūrākau, and tikanga through storytelling and ceremony. At the same time, the event can promote hauora and well-being for both participants and residents, blending physical fitness with mental and spiritual enrichment.

Aligning the race’s purpose with these broader goals will ensure it remains meaningful to all stakeholders.

## 6.3 Te Akotanga i te Kōrero Ōnehe rā me te Horopaki kia mārama - Understanding the History and Context

### 6.3.1 Te Rangahau i te Whenua - Researching the Whenua

The whenua serves as a living repository of history, culture, and identity, carrying the stories of those who came before. To truly honour the whenua, race organisers must engage with its whakapapa and pūrākau, recognising that every landscape holds ancestral narratives embedded in natural landmarks, wāhi tapu, and place names. This knowledge is safeguarded by mana whenua, who uphold and transmit these histories through generations. While consultation or wānanga with mana whenua can help uncover these narratives, a more meaningful approach—as previously recommended—is to include mana whenua in a formal organisational role. This ensures that the knowledge of each iwi or hapū is accurately represented and embedded in race planning.

For example, tīpuna may have traversed specific pathways for survival, trade, warfare, or spiritual journeys, shaping the whenua through their movements. These ancestral journeys are reflected in place names, oral traditions, and wāhi tapu, offering a deeper connection between the land and those who travel across it today. By integrating these narratives into the race’s identity, organisers can guide athletes not only through the physical terrain but also through a landscape woven with cultural meaning, enhancing their understanding and appreciation of the whenua.

Moreover, each iwi and hapū upholds unique tikanga specific to their rohe, influencing the way the land is engaged with and traversed. Organisers must respect these practices, particularly if the race crosses multiple rohe, where tikanga may differ between regions. This could involve adjusting race protocols, seeking guidance on karakia, or modifying routes to avoid wāhi tapu and other significant sites. These considerations are essential for ensuring cultural safety and demonstrate a commitment to mana whenua and their enduring relationship with the land. By

embedding tikanga into the event's structure, race organisers not only honour iwi and hapū autonomy but also deepen the cultural and spiritual integrity of the race itself.

### 6.3.2 Te Mahitahi ki te Mana Whenua - Engagement with Mana Whenua

Engaging with mana whenua is not a transactional process but rather a partnership built on mutual respect, understanding, and collaboration. The relationship between event organisers and mana whenua should be grounded in whakawhanaungatanga, fostering trust over time through meaningful dialogue. Initial discussions should focus on understanding the community's aspirations, values, and concerns, creating a foundation of trust that will guide the entire event planning process. This engagement is integral to ensuring that the event aligns with the cultural and environmental values of the local iwi and hapū.

Mana whenua should be involved at every stage of the event's development, from determining the race route to shaping its branding, ceremonies, and environmental policies. By collaborating in these areas, organisers can ensure the event reflects the unique identity of the whenua and its people. For example, mana whenua could offer guidance on choosing culturally significant locations for race segments, suggest appropriate tikanga for ceremonial elements, and advise on environmental practices that honour their role as kaitiaki. Their input also ensures that the event acknowledges and celebrates local pūrākau, history, and traditions, weaving these narratives into the fabric of the event.

Involving mana whenua in decision-making ensures the event remains culturally grounded and authentic while strengthening its relationship with the local community. It reinforces the principle of tino rangatiratanga, empowering mana whenua to have a meaningful voice in how their whenua is represented and utilised. This collaborative approach creates an event honouring physical and spiritual connections to the land, fostering respect, inclusivity, and shared purpose. Ultimately, the partnership between organisers and Mana Whenua enriches the experience for all participants, making the event a celebration of both cultural heritage and athletic achievement.

## 6.4 Te Whakamārama i te Kaupapa mō te Hunga Whai Pānga - Defining the Purpose for Key Stakeholders

### 6.4.1 Kaiwhakahaere - For Organisers

Organisers can create a race that is both innovative and culturally significant. This might involve promoting health and well-being, revitalising cultural traditions, or showcasing the region's natural beauty. A kaupapa Māori framework can help organisers differentiate the race, appealing to participants who value meaningful, culturally rich experiences.

Additionally, the event can serve broader community objectives, such as fundraising for local initiatives or creating employment opportunities. Organisations ensure the race leaves a lasting positive legacy by aligning the event's purpose with the aspirations of athletes and the community.

### 6.4.2 Kaiwhakataetae - For Athletes

The journey of an ultra-marathon athlete is one of endurance, resilience, and self-discovery. When they commit to the race, athletes embark on a physical and emotional transformation driven by a personal "why." Race organisers can enhance this experience by encouraging athletes to reflect on their motivations and framing the race as more than a competition, a journey of connection with the whenua and its history.

Through a kaupapa Māori focus, athletes can also be introduced to the significance of the whenua through pre-race educational resources. These include guided tours, digital storytelling, or workshops on the cultural and historical importance of the course. Such initiatives enrich the athlete's experience and foster a deeper appreciation for the whenua they will race across.

By centring tikanga at the heart of the event, the race can foster relationships and inspire further connections beyond the finish line. For athletes who whakapapa to the rohe, a race on ancestral whenua can inspire pride and connection, allowing them to retrace the steps of tīpuna and deepen their understanding of whakapapa. It also provides an opportunity to race under the manaaki and aroha of whānau; the support from friends and loved ones can help athletes endure challenging moments during the race and push beyond perceived limits. For some who whakapapa to the rohe but live far away, the race can provide an opportunity to return and

reconnect with their whakapapa. For Māori who don't whakapapa to the rohe, it can inspire them to explore deeper into the history of their rohe, seeing what is possible and how it could be recreated in their rohe. The race also serves as an act of whanaungatanga, fostering connections between groups and uncovering shared histories. For non-Māori, the event can serve as a connection to te ao Māori, to explore deeper than a surface-level appreciation. Considering the position of Tangata Tiriti and their partnership with Tangata Whenua, coming together in a culturally safe way under the manaakitanga of mana whenua can strengthen the bonds between the two groups.

### 6.4.3 Hāpori - For the Community

A well-organised ultra-marathon can bring significant benefits to the local community. Beyond the immediate economic boost to businesses, the event can raise the profile of cultural groups, providing them with a platform to share their mahi and stories. Partnerships with local schools, arts groups, and environmental organisations can extend these benefits, fostering community pride and engagement.

Furthermore, the race can provide opportunities for skill development through volunteering or participation in planning. These experiences build local capacity, ensuring that the community is not just a backdrop to the event but an integral part of its success.

To give back to the community proceeds from entries can be put towards a koha to mana whenua, acknowledging their support in the organisation and continuing the reciprocal relationship between the organiser and the community.

## 6.5 Ngā Wāhanga o te Hangahanga - Framework Components

### 6.5.1 Tikanga

The idea behind this research is to develop a model where tikanga is considered in every stage of planning and execution. As tikanga has an inseparable position in te ao Māori, it should be the same in a race. This ensures the process is grounded in respect for Māori cultural values and practices and that everyone who encounters the event is kept culturally safe. Tikanga is integrated into the race in multiple ways throughout planning, implementation, and post-event reflection. For instance, implementing karakia throughout the process, planning meetings with

karakia, and implementing an appropriate karakia for the runners and volunteers at the beginning of the race. Implementing karakia provides a safe spiritual environment consistent with tikanga Māori and, secondly, allows participants to reflect and consider the journey before and ahead of them.

Tikanga is also upheld in Māori values. Whanaungatanga emphasises cultivating meaningful relationships with all stakeholders, including athletes and mana whenua. These relationships must be built and maintained to allow the event to flourish.

Manaakitanga is implemented in the care of stakeholders. Ensure the route is as safe as possible and that participants know about hazards. It can be exercised to provide enough suitable nutrition on the course at aid stations. It ensures that first aid is readily available when athletes need it. It can be exercised in cut-off times, allowing generous time to allow as many athletes as possible to finish, and in place to ensure participants are not left out on course beyond a safe time. Manaakitanga is also applied to volunteers, providing them with fluid and food to get them through the long race and providing shelter from the elements.

Kotahitanga is reflected in the collaborative efforts required to host a successful event. Ensure that all stakeholders have been looked after in a way that they wish to come together and create a great environment. The event's success relies on more than just the runners completing the course. It ensures that all stakeholders are happy and safe and walk away willing to return the next time the race is held.

And finally, Aroha. Aroha is the value that should be the foundation for the whole kaupapa. Aroha is applied in the respect that is given to all participants, volunteers, and the surrounding community. Aroha is applied to the whenua that the race is held on, ensuring that all actions are done in a way that respects the whenua. In centring the tikanga of mana whenua, aroha is being applied. It is also seen in the honouring of pūrākau.

### 6.5.2 Kaupapa Māori Methodology

Kaupapa Māori methodology centres Māori ways of knowing, being, and doing, providing a culturally grounded framework for engaging with people and places in a way that upholds mana and ensures safety. While initially developed as a research methodology, its core principles can extend beyond academic contexts, serving as a guiding framework for events such as endurance races. By applying a Kaupapa Māori approach, a race transcends the boundaries of a physical challenge to become a meaningful and culturally rich journey. Such an approach not only

honours Māori values but also prioritises the well-being of participants, creating a unique event that stands apart from others.

The first step in embedding Kaupapa Māori methodology into a race is grounding the event in the whakapapa of the whenua where it takes place. This process involves recognising and respecting the mana whenua of the area and incorporating pūrākau and tīpuna narratives into the event. Acknowledging the whakapapa of the whenua fosters a connection between participants and the land, enriching the event with cultural significance. For example, the event can begin with a pōhiri to welcome participants as manuhiri onto the whenua. A pōhiri establishes a spiritual and physical connection between mana whenua and manuhiri, affirming the importance of tikanga Māori and ensuring participants feel spiritually safe in the environment.

Naming race segments after local landmarks or culturally significant concepts is another way to weave the whakapapa of the whenua into the event. This practice honours the mana of tīpuna and provides participants with a more profound cultural experience. Local runners can draw strength from their tīpuna as they run under their protection, while participants from other rohe can learn about the pūrākau of mana whenua. This approach reinforces connections established during the pōwhiri, embedding cultural meaning throughout the race.

Designing the event in collaboration with mana whenua is essential to upholding tikanga and ensuring the event aligns with the principle of tino rangatiratanga. Consulting with mana whenua allows them to exercise their authority and provide guidance over the design of the course, ensuring it avoids culturally sensitive spaces and maintains the health of the whenua. This collaboration enables the race organisers to respect local values while fostering mutual trust and partnership. By involving mana whenua in the decision-making process, the event honours their tino rangatiratanga and creates a foundation for co-governance.

Several key principles of Kaupapa Māori methodology can guide the planning and execution of the event. Tino rangatiratanga requires that mana whenua be actively involved as event co-creators rather than merely consultants, ensuring their aspirations, histories, and values are integral to its design. Manaakitanga can be reflected through participatory approaches, such as hui and wānanga, to gather community input and build consensus, ensuring that the event is inclusive and collaborative. Reflexivity and accountability are also critical; organisers must

adopt a reflexive approach, critically evaluating decisions to ensure alignment with Kaupapa Māori principles. Regular reporting back to mana whenua on progress reinforces accountability and strengthens relationships with the community.

By grounding the event in the principles of Kaupapa Māori methodology, it becomes more than a race; it transforms into a journey that honours whakapapa, upholds tikanga, and fosters relationships between people and whenua. Such an approach ensures the event is culturally meaningful, spiritually enriching, and respectful of mana whenua while offering participants a unique and transformative experience.

### 6.5.3 Te Whakauru i ngā Tikanga Māori - Cultural Integration

#### 6.5.3.1 Te Tapa i te Ingoa - Naming the Race

The name of a race plays a critical role in shaping its identity, purpose, and connection to place. Choosing a name grounded in te reo Māori or local pūrākau not only honours the whenua and its people but also invites participants to engage with the cultural and historical context of the event. A name inspired by a tīpuna's journey, a significant natural feature, or a local whakataukī can serve as a narrative anchor, evoking the stories and mana of the rohe. This approach ensures that the race is more than a physical challenge; it becomes a storytelling platform that ties participants to the environment they traverse, fostering a deeper sense of connection and respect for the whenua and its whakapapa.

Additionally, a name in te reo Māori signals the centrality of Māori values and perspectives, setting the tone for an event prioritising cultural integrity and inclusivity. It becomes a point of pride for mana whenua, reflecting their tino rangatiratanga while also providing an educational opportunity for participants from outside the rohe to learn about the cultural and historical significance of the land. By embedding the event's kaupapa in its name, organisers can create an experience that resonates deeply with participants and leaves a lasting impression.

#### 6.5.3.2 Ngā Momo Tikanga Whakahaere - Ceremonial Elements

Incorporating pōhiri, karakia, and marae-based hospitality into an event ensures cultural safety while providing participants with a profoundly enriching experience. These practices embed

tikanga Māori into the event's structure, affirming the cultural integrity of the occasion and offering participants an opportunity to connect with te ao Māori. For many non-Māori athletes, staying on a marae or participating in a pōwhiri may be their first introduction to Māori culture, making the experience both memorable and meaningful.

The pōhiri, as a formal welcome, establishes participants' spiritual and physical safety by grounding them in the values of manaakitanga and whakawhanaungatanga. Through this process, participants are welcomed as manuhiri onto the whenua, fostering a sense of inclusion and respect. Karakia, integrated at key moments such as the opening and closing of the event, enhances the spiritual dimension, ensuring the mauri of the land and people are acknowledged and protected.

Marae-based hospitality further strengthens these connections, offering athletes a unique opportunity to experience the warmth and generosity of Māori culture. The shared environment of the marae encourages whakawhanaungatanga among participants, organisers, and mana whenua, fostering relationships beyond the event itself. This integration of Māori cultural practices elevates the event's significance and leaves a lasting impression on participants, deepening their appreciation for the culture and values of the tangata whenua.

#### 6.5.3.3 Ngā Tohu me Nga Kōrero Tuku Iho - Signage and Iwi Narratives

Bilingual signage throughout the event underscores the importance of te reo Māori while serving as an educational tool for participants. By incorporating both Māori and English, the signage reinforces the presence of te reo Māori in everyday contexts, normalising its use and showcasing its relevance. This approach aligns with efforts to revitalise te reo Māori and ensures that both Māori and non-Māori participants feel welcomed and included in the event. Furthermore, bilingual signage can provide place names, directions, and cultural explanations that deepen participants' connection to the whenua they are traversing.

Storytelling stations along the course offer an innovative way to share pūrākau, whakataukī, and significant historical events associated with the landscape. These stations transform the race into an interactive cultural journey, allowing participants to engage with the narratives of the whenua in a meaningful way. For example, runners might learn about tīpuna who once walked the land, significant battles or events that shaped the area, or the unique natural features

that hold cultural importance. This immersive approach ensures that participants not only challenge themselves physically but also gain a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical layers of the whenua. By integrating these elements, the event becomes more than a race; it evolves into a celebration of Māori heritage and a powerful platform for cultural exchange.

#### 6.5.3.4 Te Whenua me te Tiaki Taiao - Land Use and Environmental Care

Environmental stewardship is a fundamental aspect of respecting the whenua and upholding the principles of kaitiakitanga. This requires a commitment to sustainability, minimising environmental impacts, and contributing to the land's long-term health. Practical steps include using sustainable materials, reducing waste through recycling initiatives, and planning for restoration in areas affected by the event. Collaborating with tangata whenua ensures these efforts align with local tikanga, including adherence to rāhui and other protocols related to land use. Regular environmental monitoring allows organisers to track the race's impact and ensure alignment with the principles of kaitiakitanga, fostering accountability and continuous improvement.

To deepen the integration of kaitiakitanga, the event's environmental practices must reflect Māori environmental ethics, emphasising the interconnectedness of all living things within the taiao. Working closely with mana whenua to identify wāhi tapu and ecologically sensitive areas ensures the course design respects these spaces, preventing harm to culturally and environmentally significant locations. This approach acknowledges the sacredness of the land and reinforces the importance of protecting its mauri.

Initiatives such as aligning with te mana o te wai ensure the race minimises its impact on waterways. This might involve careful planning to avoid pollution or degradation of water sources, coupled with restorative actions like riparian planting or wetland restoration where needed. Additionally, replenishment initiatives such as planting native trees or contributing to conservation projects leave a positive environmental legacy in the rohe. These efforts mitigate the race's environmental impact and actively contribute to the regeneration of the whenua, embodying the principle of reciprocity inherent in kaitiakitanga.

By embedding these practices into the event, organisers demonstrate a commitment to environmental stewardship beyond the race itself. This ensures the event honours the whenua

and its people, creating a model for how endurance events can align with the values of sustainability, respect, and cultural integrity.

#### 6.5.3.5 Ngā Wheako Kaiwhakataetae - Athlete Experience

An ultra-marathon should aim to create an inclusive and meaningful experience for all participants, recognising athletes' diverse goals and motivations. Whether racing to win or striving to finish, each participant contributes to the event's mana. A hallmark of a well-organised ultra-marathon is its ability to cater to this diversity, ensuring a safe, enjoyable, and enriching experience for everyone involved.

Offering variable distances is a practical way to attract athletes of varying abilities and foster greater participation. While not every runner is ready to tackle a one-hundred-mile course, shorter distances provide an entry point for those new to the sport or those wishing to test themselves at a challenging yet achievable level. This inclusivity also opens the event to whānau participation, encouraging shared experiences and potentially inspiring a lifelong love of endurance running. By providing options that cater to different skill levels, organisers create an event that is accessible while still retaining its challenge and appeal.

Designing routes that highlight cultural and natural landmarks enhances the event's uniqueness, creating a race that is not only physically demanding but also culturally and spiritually enriching. Integrating storytelling elements along these routes can deepen the participants' connection to the whenua, allowing them to appreciate its beauty and significance as they progress through the course. Safety is equally crucial in the planning process. Clear course markings, well-equipped aid stations, and comprehensive medical support ensure that athletes can focus on their journey without undue concern for their well-being.

Providing a finishing taonga offers a meaningful way to engage participants with te ao Māori while leaving them with a lasting memory of their achievement. While many races use medals or belt buckles as finishing tokens, incorporating a uniquely Māori taonga, such as pounamu or a crafted item inspired by the rohe, offers an opportunity to celebrate local culture and craftsmanship. Collaborating with local artists or craftspeople to design and create these taonga enriches the event's cultural authenticity and supports the local economy. Such a gesture underscores the organisers' respect for the land and its people while giving finishers a meaningful keepsake that carries the mana of the event and its surroundings.

Organisations can create an ultra-marathon that resonates with a wide range of athletes by prioritising inclusivity, cultural integration, and participant safety. This approach ensures the event is not only a test of physical endurance but also an inspiring journey of connection to the whenua, its people, and its stories.

## 6.6 Te Tō Mai Tāngata - Attracting participants

### 6.6.1 Kaiwhakataetae - Athletes

An ultra-marathon should be positioned as the culmination of a journey, an event that athletes aspire to participate in, marking a significant milestone in their personal and athletic growth. For many participants, competing in such a challenging event is not just about physical endurance but also about achieving a deeply personal goal. Framing the race as the endpoint of a transformative journey can resonate with athletes who seek experiences that test their limits and provide a sense of accomplishment.

The event's reputation, values, and unique offerings are critical to attracting participants. A race grounded in cultural richness and environmental stewardship offers more than a test of physical ability; it provides a meaningful narrative and connection to the whenua, encouraging athletes to engage with the event on a deeper level. This dual focus on athletic and cultural experience can make the event particularly appealing to those looking for something beyond the standard ultra-marathon format.

Marketing efforts should emphasise the race's distinct features, such as its alignment with Kaupapa Māori values, opportunities for cultural immersion, and routes through the unique whenua. Highlighting these aspects in promotional material positions the event as a race and an experience of personal and cultural significance, making it aspirational for a broad spectrum of athletes.

### 6.6.2 Karahipi - Scholarships

Ultra-marathons can be life-changing experiences for participants, pushing them to implement significant changes in their lives as they work towards completing the race. The preparation

required for such an event often leads athletes to adopt healthier lifestyles, overcome personal challenges, and aid in the development of mental and physical resilience. These transformative experiences make ultra-marathons not just competitions but transformational milestones in personal growth for the athlete.

Scholarships offer a means of extending access to the event, enabling individuals who may not otherwise have the resources to participate. By offering financial support or covering entry fees, organisers can provide opportunities for athletes from diverse backgrounds, particularly those from underrepresented communities, to take part in the event. Scholarships could also include mentorship opportunities or training support, helping recipients prepare holistically for the race while fostering a sense of inclusion within the broader athletic community.

Incorporating scholarships into the event allows organisers to amplify its impact, ensuring that financial constraints do not limit the opportunity to compete. Additionally, these initiatives can inspire a broader pool of participants, fostering diverse stories and experiences that enrich the event. The scholarship recipients, having worked hard to overcome barriers to entry, often find the ultra-marathon to be a transformative experience that has a lasting impact on their lives, both within and beyond the sporting world.

## 6.7 Te Whakaurutanga - Implementation

This thesis aims to develop a model that can be presented to race organisers as a flexible and culturally grounded framework readily applicable to an ultra-marathon event. The ideas developed here are deliberately broad in scope and designed to allow for adaptation and implementation across Aotearoa, irrespective of location or community. By prioritising inclusivity and adaptability, the model seeks to uphold the diverse tikanga of iwi and hapū, supporting their mana motuhake in implementing a race.

A key strength of this model lies in its emphasis on accommodating local tikanga rather than imposing a singular, prescriptive approach. This flexibility ensures that the mana of the people involved, and their values, traditions, and aspirations remain central to the event. By allowing local tikanga to guide the event's structure and protocols, organisers can preserve the cultural integrity of each iwi or hapū, creating an event that reflects and celebrates the uniqueness of its location and people.

Prescribing a one-size-fits-all framework would risk perpetuating the cultural hegemonies this model seeks to challenge. Such an approach would further marginalise or homogenise the diverse tikanga of iwi and hapū across Aotearoa, undermining the principle of tino rangatiratanga. Instead, this model seeks to empower mana whenua as active partners, ensuring their perspectives and practices shape the event at every stage.

### 6.7.1 Te Ao Whānui - Beyond Aotearoa

The primary focus of this research has been to explore how a culturally grounded model can encourage Māori participation by applying a distinctly Māori lens to the kaupapa. Rooting the model in tikanga Māori aligns with Māori values and principles and provides a framework for creating culturally meaningful and inclusive events. This approach emphasises the importance of whakapapa, tikanga, and kaitiakitanga, fostering a deep connection to te ao Māori for participants and organisers alike.

However, the relevance of this model extends beyond Aotearoa. Across the global Indigenous world, many communities face existential challenges like those of Māori, including the erosion of language, culture, and connection to land. These communities are actively seeking ways to revitalise their cultural practices and ensure their survival amidst the pressures of modernity. While this model is firmly grounded in Māori principles, it holds the potential to inspire Indigenous peoples worldwide to develop their own culturally specific frameworks.

By drawing on the essence of this model, other Indigenous communities can adapt its principles to their unique contexts, using their tikanga, languages, and worldviews as the foundation. For example, Indigenous peoples in other regions might design events that integrate their ceremonial practices, storytelling traditions, or land-based knowledge, creating initiatives that reflect their specific cultural heritage. This cross-cultural applicability underscores the importance of Indigenous-led cultural preservation and resilience approaches.

Ultimately, this research demonstrates that culturally centred models strengthen the connection between Indigenous peoples and their heritage and offer pathways for others to celebrate and sustain their unique identities. By sharing this approach, we contribute to a collective

movement that uplifts and empowers Indigenous communities globally to reclaim, revitalise, and protect their cultural legacies.

## 6.8 Te Ine Angitū - Measuring Success

To assess the success of the implemented model, an evaluation must be conducted through a multifaceted lens, considering the various ways the event creates impact. Athlete feedback is essential for evaluating the logistical aspects of the race and the overall participant experience. Insights into elements such as race organisation, course design, support stations, and safety protocols help organisers identify areas of improvement for future events. Moreover, athletes' reflections on how the race challenged them and contributed to their personal growth provide valuable data for refining the event and ensuring that it meets the expectations of those participating.

Community feedback is equally vital in measuring success. Understanding the race's impact on residents and businesses helps gauge whether the event has fostered positive relationships and contributed to the local economy. It is essential to ensure that the event aligns with the needs and values of the surrounding community, respecting their space and resources while also creating opportunities for engagement and development. This feedback can be gathered through surveys or interviews with community members, including local businesses, iwi, and other stakeholders, ensuring a holistic understanding of the race's broader social impact.

Cultural responsiveness is another key metric of success. Ensuring that the race upholds the tikanga of mana whenua and honours their stories and traditions is critical to aligning the event with Kaupapa Māori values. Regular consultation with mana whenua provides a framework for assessing whether the event has respected the local culture, environment, and whakapapa. This could include reviewing aspects such as pōwhiri, karakia, storytelling along the course, and the overall representation of Māori values, ensuring that the event is culturally safe and meaningful for all participants.

Environmental metrics are essential to demonstrate the race's commitment to sustainability. Tracking waste reduction efforts, measuring the use of sustainable materials, and assessing the effectiveness of land restoration initiatives provide tangible evidence of the race's alignment

with kaitiakitanga principles. Monitoring an event's environmental impact also involves evaluating the race's adherence to ecological best practices, such as ensuring minimal disruption to wāhi tapu and ecologically sensitive areas. Including replenishment initiatives, like native tree planting or contributions to local conservation projects, offers a means of measuring the positive environmental legacy left behind.

By measuring success through these diverse and interconnected outcomes, organisers can refine their approach and continuously improve the race, ensuring it remains impactful and meaningful for all stakeholders. This expanded framework underscores how an ultra-marathon can evolve into more than just a race; it can be elevated to celebrate culture, community, and endurance, honouring the land, its people, and the collective aspirations of all participating.

## 6.9 Te Whakarāpopoto - Conclusion

The journey to the mountain encapsulates the essence of striving for something meaningful, challenging, and transformative. This thesis proposes a framework that aligns the pursuit of ultra-marathon running with the values and principles of te ao Māori, creating a culturally grounded model that fosters individual achievement within a collective context. This framework demonstrates how race organisers can integrate the principles of whakapapa, tikanga, and kaitiakitanga into ultra-marathons to create culturally resonant, spiritually enriching, and environmentally responsible events.

Through applying Kaupapa Māori methodology, this model ensures that every aspect of the event—from its conception to its execution and beyond—is informed by Māori ways of knowing and being. This framework emphasises the importance of collaboration with mana whenua, embedding the narratives of the whenua and its people into the fabric of the event. By doing so, it not only honours Māori cultural values but also provides a platform for cultural exchange and mutual respect.

The broader implications of this framework extend beyond the realm of ultra-marathon events. It is a blueprint for how Indigenous knowledge systems can inform and enhance modern practices across diverse fields. By centring the values of care, connection, and stewardship, this model demonstrates the potential of culturally grounded approaches to inspire collective well-being and resilience.

Ultimately, the proposed framework celebrates the collective journey—recognising that every achievement is the product of interconnected efforts and relationships. Just as the mountain challenges and inspires those who seek its summit, this model invites us to reflect on our paths, the people who walk with us, and the treasures we seek. In doing so, it offers a vision for events and initiatives that honour cultural heritage, foster community, and inspire transformative journeys.

# Ūpoko 7 - I hira mate: Te Tātari Meiha Kounga

## Tikanga Rangahau - Qualitative research analysis and findings

### 7.1 Kupu Whakataki - Introduction

This chapter is guided by the concept of I hira mate, symbolising the pursuit of sought-after knowledge or treasures. Within this research, I hira mate represents the process of weaving participant insights, cultural perspectives, and academic analysis into a cohesive framework for ultra-marathons. This chapter builds upon the previous discussions by presenting key participant contributions, identifying research limitations, and outlining recommendations for future application. The voices and reflections of the participants are instrumental in steering this discussion and serve as a cornerstone for developing a tikanga-based approach to ultra-marathons. By aligning this research with Kaupapa Māori principles, this chapter foregrounds the significance of Indigenous methodologies and privileges Māori perspectives, ensuring that the findings remain firmly grounded in te ao Māori.

The field of ultra-marathons provides a unique lens through which to explore the intersection of physical activity, cultural identity, and health. This chapter delves into the participants' narratives to uncover how te ao Māori and Mātauranga Māori influence their engagement with ultra-marathons. These narratives are pivotal in addressing broader questions around the integration of tikanga into sport, the potential for ultra-marathons to serve as a vehicle for cultural reclamation, and the role of whakapapa in shaping participation and motivation.

Central to this discussion are the semi-structured interviews conducted with four participants, each bringing a distinct perspective shaped by their whakapapa, personal experiences, and connection to endurance sports. The deliberate informality of these interviews was designed to foster authentic dialogue, allowing participants to share their thoughts without the constraints of a rigid academic framework. This methodological approach aligns with Kaupapa Māori research principles, emphasising the importance of reciprocity, relationality, and manaakitanga in the research process.

The chapter begins by outlining the participants' profiles, providing a snapshot of their backgrounds and connections to endurance sports. This is followed by a thematic analysis of the data, structured around key areas of inquiry, including personal motivations, whakapapa connections, community and shared experiences, accessibility and environmental factors, and cultural competency in events. These themes were chosen to explore the multifaceted relationship between te ao Māori and endurance sports, aiming to develop a framework that prioritises tikanga and fosters inclusivity. This chapter also examines the limitations of the research in its current form.

This chapter represents a step toward developing a tikanga-based approach to endurance sports. By centring Māori voices and perspectives, this research contributes to the academic discourse on Indigenous methodologies and provides a practical blueprint for fostering cultural inclusivity and authenticity in endurance sports. The ideas and reflections shared by the participants show the depth of Māori knowledge and its potential to inform and enrich contemporary practices in endurance sports.

## 7.2 Kaiwhaiwāhi - Participants

The participants selected for this research represented a diverse range of backgrounds within the endurance sports community. Their experiences spanned from seasoned ultra-marathon runners to those relatively new to long-distance endurance events. Participants whakapapa to various iwi, reflecting the regional and cultural diversity within Māori endurance athletes. These varying perspectives allowed for a nuanced discussion on how tikanga Māori informs sporting experiences, accessibility, and cultural identity in ultra-endurance events.

In designing the questions, the decision was made to anonymise the participants. This approach aimed to help them feel more comfortable sharing information that would later be made publicly accessible. The information, while personal, is not sensitive, so while names have been removed details about them have been provided to create a picture of them and their perspective.

Participant One: a tāne Māori aged 50s. Is a successful academic who has a life-long passion for endurance sports dating back to his childhood. His experience is vast, and like me, was on a journey of reconnection to Te Whakatōhea.

Participant Two: a tāne Māori in his 40s, is a father, ultra-runner, and triathlete. He came to the world of endurance late in life and has fully embraced the sport to benefit his health.

Participant Three: a tāne Māori in his 40s, is a doctor who discovered the sport young. His recent endeavours have seen him compete in multi-stage ultra-marathons on every continent.

Participant Four: As part of the studied demographic, the researcher's perspectives were considered valuable in conducting this research. As an act of auto-ethnographic inquiry, the same questions posed to participants were also examined from the researcher's perspective. Since reflections on this subject were integral at the beginning of the research, they remain essential in its execution and implementation.

### 7.3 Ngā Pātai - Questions

Discussions with participants were designed to explore several key themes: personal experiences and motivations, whakapapa connections, community experiences, accessibility and environmental factors, event cultural competency, and suggestions for future development. Given the conversational nature of the interviews, not every topic was covered in depth. However, the insights gathered were essential for developing the model presented in Chapter Five.

Broken down into themes, the pātai covered were

#### Personal Experience and Motivations

- What sport do you take part in?
- What are your motivations for this endurance sport?
- Have you run/walked since childhood? If yes, what has kept you going over the years? If you stopped but came back, why? If you started later, why running?
- What motivates you to continue training?
- How does it make you feel when you accomplish what you do?

#### Whakapapa Connections

- What is the tikanga that you bring to this exercise?
- Do you know any stories of your tīpuna and the movements they made? Does this encourage you?
- Is there a wairua aspect to the exercise you undertake?
- Did you grow up in te ao Māori?

### Community and Shared Experiences

- Is this a shared interest with your parents, tamariki, and mokopuna?
- How has this exercise helped your health and well-being (physical and/or mental)?
- How do you encourage more people into the sport?
- Accessibility and Environment
- Where do you live? Rural, city, etc.?
- How accessible are off-road running tracks to you?
- Are you aware of the history or whakapapa of the land you train/run/walk on?
- If you train and/or compete on your own rohe, does your connection with the whenua change your perspective or experience?

### Competitions and Acknowledgment of Mana Whenua

- Do the events you participate in adequately acknowledge the mana whenua of where the race occurs?
- Is an acknowledgment by event organisers important? What would you expect to see?
- If you live, compete, or train overseas, are you aware of the mana whenua of where you are?
- What would an event look like if it was truly Māori?

### Future Development and Advisory Input

- What advice do you have for creating this new framework?
- Should there be a Māori advisory board for Māori endurance sport?
- Could a Kura/academy be a practical solution to encourage more Māori participation from tamariki and rangatahi?

The pātai covered a broad range and were written to elicit thoughtful responses from the participants.

## 7.4 Ngā Whakautu - Answers

### **What sport do you take part in?**

Participant One: He is a general endurance athlete; he specifically takes part in endurance running and cycling.

Participant Two: He has previously participated in football, basketball, and volleyball. However, he has moved away from team sports and mostly focuses on endurance sports such as running, swimming, cycling, and tying them all together into triathlons.

Participant Three: Is deeply involved in ultra-running, His speciality is multi-day stage races, and he has just completed running a multi-stage ultra-marathon on every continent in a year (2024).

Participant Four: I am currently a runner, focused on ultramarathons. I am currently training for a one-hundred-kilometre race while looking toward longer events in the future.

### **What are your motivations for this endurance sport?**

Participant One: There is a mixture of motivations, there is a general enjoyment of the sport and being outdoors. There are obvious health benefits to both physical and mental health. Running provides him with a buzz that helps him to feel balanced mentally and physically. There is also a competitive aspect too, pushing his limits to see where he can go.

Participant Two: Whānau, whānau is the biggest motivator. Being healthy and active so he can spend as much quality time as possible with his young daughter. Longevity and mental well-being are key drivers in his participation in endurance sports.

Participant Three: His primary motivation is to challenge himself physically and mentally. Candidly describing it as “type two fun” as in fun gained from the satisfaction of overcoming hardship or difficulty. There is also an element of escape from his high-pressure medical career.

Participant Four: It is a need, needing to be active and push limits. Being fit, healthy, and feeling that way is a constant source of motivation.

### **What is your own tikanga that you bring to this exercise?**

Participant One: Tikanga is implemented firstly by reciting karakia before and during long journeys to provide spiritual protection and deepen ties to te ao Māori. He also likes to reflect on the journey covered, to appreciate the effort required and the land that has been crossed. He does feel that there are more ways in which he could engage with tikanga in his sporting endeavours.

Participant Two: He acknowledged his lack of consistency in his tikanga. However, he does occasionally reflect on whakataukī that have been shared with him. Whakataukī that emphasise perseverance, the importance of whānau, and achieving personal growth through challenges.

Participant Three: His approach to endurance sport is one of resilience, humility, and perseverance, traits derived from his whakapapa. It is important to acknowledge the tikanga that comes from training and competing. He also points out manaakitanga as a crucial element, the support and care between fellow competitors, and with the global Indigenous communities he has run through in his endeavours.

Participant Four: The first part is respecting the run, this is done by respecting the distance, not going beyond limits, and making sure all preparation has been done, for example there is enough food and or water to complete the distance. The second part is being aware of where I am running, sticking to paths, avoiding sacred spaces, and learning the mana whenua of where the run occurs.

### **Do you know any stories of your tīpuna and the movements they made? Does this encourage you?**

Participant One: He is aware of some of the long journeys his Te Whakatōhea tīpuna undertook, the distances covered are amazing and provide inspiration for his adventures.

Participant Two: Like many whānau in Aotearoa, he has been disconnected from te ao Māori. He has little knowledge of the stories of his tīpuna as the connection was lost, and knowledge ceased to be passed down. He is interested in reconnecting and reclaiming his connection.

Participant Three: We discussed his more recent tīpuna, and how he has retraced their footsteps. His whānau were some of the first Māori doctors in Aotearoa, a career he has followed into. He has a family history of resilience and service that inspires him in his daily life.

Participant Four: I was previously unaware. However, through learning more an understanding of where they went and how they travelled has become a source of awe and inspiration.

### **Have you run/walked since childhood?**

Participant One: He took part in running from a young age, joining the Scottish Harriers, which ingrained a lifelong love of endurance activities. Running was a key part of this youth and the inspiration to stay active as an adult.

Participant Two: Endurance sports were something that he came to late in life, introduced to them through his relationship with his wife. Since being introduced to this world, he has developed a love for endurance.

Participant Three: He began running while at boarding school. It was a tool for coping with the anger and frustration he felt that stemmed from the racism and bullying he experienced. It was this that laid the seeds for his lifelong passion for endurance sports.

Participant Four: Running is something I came to late in life, however, I have spent my life immersed in endurance sports such as swimming and cycling.

### **Is there a wairua aspect to the exercise you undertake?**

Participant One: Either running or cycling outdoors there are moments of profound connection with Papatūānuku. Particularly on a solo journey through remote areas, there is a deep feeling of being grounded and supported by the natural world around him. Karakia also helps to foster a sense of purpose and protection, especially during long extended journeys. So, there is a deep sense of wairua to the activities he undertakes.

Participant Two: There is a spiritual element to endurance sports, they allow athletes a moment of self-reflection, and connection with nature, and allow us to appreciate the beauty of the whenua around us. These experiences foster a sense of wairua, and how it can be lifted through endurance exercise.

Participant Three: Running is a spiritual journey for him. It provides opportunities for self-reflection in moments of peace and a connection with nature. He uses running as a meditative tool, one that allows him to process challenges in his personal and professional life.

Participant Four: Running is all about wairua, it is a way to engage with the world around us at a level outside the physical. It is a tool for meditation and escape from the pressures of life. It allows time to think and to connect to the land and the whakapapa under your feet.

### **What motivates you to continue training?**

Participant One: Motivation comes from the intrinsic rewards of physical activity, the sense of accomplishment, mental clarity, and an opportunity to spend time with whānau. There is also a performance aspect of wanting to go faster and improve his fitness.

Participant Two: The most important thing is his health. Maintaining his health so he can be around for his whānau. There is also the challenge of pushing through perceived barriers that come from training. And the satisfaction of overcoming or achieving a challenge.

Participant Three: Endurance sport has its rewards, these being personal growth, mental toughness, and a sense of accomplishment. These rewards are what pushes him to keep on going. He also wants to inspire rangatahi to enter their own journey and experience ultra-marathons

Participant Four: The feeling of not training is motivation to keep on going. Exercise is a tool that has been used to improve both physical and mental health. Without exercise, these things begin to deteriorate.

**How has this exercise helped your health and well-being? Physical and/or mental.**

Participant One: Notes the mental clarity, physical fitness, and overall balance that running brings to his life. He emphasises the importance of physical activity in preventing negative habits, like smoking, or managing post-viral health challenges.

Participant Two: There has been a noticeable improvement in his mental and physical health since starting endurance sports. Lower heart rate, increased strength and mobility, and greater mental clarity are all benefits of the training he does.

Participant Three: Endurance running has been a tool to manage stress and improve his overall health and well-being. Having a demanding medical career and having a positive outlet where he can relax and unwind has been essential.

Participant Four: Running has been essential for maintaining my mental health. Setting aside the time creates a schedule, and the time spent running allows me to focus on just what is important for that run.

**Where do you live? Rural, city, etc.?**

Participant One: Lives in a city

Participant Two: Lives in a city

Participant Three: Lives on the edge of the city

Participant Four: Lives in a city

**How accessible are off-road running tracks to you?**

Participant One: Trails in Aotearoa are very accessible. You don't need to go far to find a unique environment to run in.

Participant Two: He lives in an area that has easy access to trails and green spaces that are great for running. He is also lucky to live somewhere that is in close driving distance to the forests in Rotorua and Tokoroa that have exceptional running and cycling trails.

Participant Three: He resides in Auckland; however, he is right by a forest with hundreds of kilometres of trails available to run on. We are lucky in Aotearoa to have access to trails like this in a relatively short drive.

Participant Four: There is an abundance of off-road trails within a short drive from my house. There is also a network of paths throughout the city that are excellent for running on.

### **Did you grow up in te ao Māori?**

Participant One: No, as an adult he has begun the process of reconnection and learning about his Tīpuna.

Participant Two: His whānau lost their connection to te ao Māori, and he grew up disconnected. It is only something he has realised later in life that he wishes to explore more and reconnect to his whakapapa.

Participant Three: His upbringing was partially immersed in te ao Māori due to his father's work as a Māori Anglican minister. However, he did not grow up speaking te reo Māori. Now in his adult life, his whakapapa and Māori identity is something he is constantly aware of.

Participant Four: I grew up completely removed from te ao Māori, it is something I have embraced as an adult.

### **Are you aware of the history or whakapapa of the land that you train/run/walk on?**

Participant One: He is aware of the connections to his rohe and travelling over that whenua. He acknowledges the significance of connecting to the whenua of your tīpuna and the potential for creating events that honour that history.

Participant Two: He has limited knowledge of the whakapapa of the land he trains on. However, there is a desire to know more, and he is aware of the benefits of knowing this. He talks about a friend who avoids areas due to the wairua associated with events in the past. There is an importance to knowing the history of the whenua.

Participant Three: The whakapapa of the whenua is something that fuels his appreciation of the land he runs on. The history underneath his feet. This awareness or understanding is what fuels his respect and appreciation of the whenua.

Participant Four: Learning about the whakapapa of the whenua is a key part of my running. Knowing where I will run and who ran before me is important to appreciate the whenua you are running on.

**If you train and/or compete on your own rohe, does your connection with the whenua change your perspective or experience?**

Participant One: There is a deep connection to his whenua when moving about and taking part in events on his whenua.

Participant Two: he has not had the opportunity to extensively train, race, or explore his rohe. But as a part of reconnection, he would like to and sees it as an important piece of understanding.

Participant Three: Being able to train in areas connected to his whakapapa fosters a deeper appreciation for the land and its significance.

Participant Four: I haven't had the opportunity to race on my rohe yet. However, time spent there always makes me feel more connected to my whakapapa and te ao Māori.

**Do the events that you take part in adequately acknowledge the mana whenua of where the race occurs?**

Participant One: There is an acknowledgement at some events, however it isn't widespread. It is something that could be supported more.

Participant Two: Some do, Iron Māori is an example of it being implemented and acknowledged respectfully. It is a race rooted in te ao Māori, so, therefore, tikanga is essential. Mana whenua pōhiri visitors to the whenua, and karakia and a wero are performed as per local tikanga. However, this stands out as most events lack this level of cultural engagement.

Participant Three: It is something that can be improved on. It is an important step to uplift the mana whenua connected to the race.

Participant Four: I don't believe it is adequately acknowledged. It is this lack of acknowledgement that was the motivation for this research.

**What would an event look like if it was truly Māori?**

Participant One: An event that integrates tikanga at all levels. One that implements karakia to begin, and one that reflects the journey of the tīpuna of mana whenua. We discussed the potential for a Te Whakatōhea-linked endurance event and the potential for cultural growth that could provide.

Participant Two: He sees a Māori focused event as one that prioritises inclusivity, tikanga, and whānau well-being. Again, Iron Māori is a model that embodies this. It is an event that emphasises community and personal growth over competition.

Participant Three: He envisions a Māori-centric endurance event as one that incorporates tikanga, celebrates whakapapa, and fosters a sense of community and whānau.

Participant Four: This research has been a way to find out what that would look like. However, it would be an event that places tikanga at its heart. That would be the one non-negotiable.

### **How do you encourage more people into the sport?**

Participant One: There should be an emphasis on making the sport accessible and enjoyable. This should be done to counter overly competitive environments. While there is a place for that, most participants aren't competing to win, they are there to achieve. Implementing community activities beyond the race is also a way where events can become more accessible and inviting.

Participant Two: We can start by making endurance sports more relatable and accessible. Bring the focus to health, well-being, and culture rather than solely competition. Once again Iron Māori is a great example of this, but we can also look at the TV program MatchFit, which brings retired athletes back to the game as a way of improving their health and well-being.

Participant Three: He advocates for making endurance sports accessible and inclusive. He mentors youth through scholarships, to inspire a lifelong love of the sport, participation, and transforming their lives through endurance sports.

Participant Four: I believe that presenting it as a way for people to come and challenge themselves, and find their limits is a way to attract more people. Regardless of the distance, presenting it to go further than they have before. And grounding the event in te ao Māori, to ensure it is an authentic and safe place to come to.

### **What advice do you have for me to create this new framework?**

Participant One: Suggest focusing on tikanga and cultural connection, and the intrinsic rewards of endurance sports.

Participant Two: By centring elements, such as whakapapa and tikanga, into the framework making it meaningful for Māori participants. He also stresses the importance of providing opportunities for community connection and making the framework adaptable to different skill levels.

Participant Three: He emphasises incorporating tikanga, fostering inclusivity, and creating opportunities for personal growth. He suggests building frameworks that align with Māori values and cater to diverse skill levels.

### **Should there be a Māori advisory board for Māori endurance sport?**

Participant One: He does support the idea as it provides an opportunity to integrate Māori voices and perspectives into the sport. He suggests Toi Tangata as an example of a group that offers a Māori perspective on health and activity.

Participant Two: The idea of a Māori advisory board could be beneficial as it can guide culturally appropriate development of sports. It can emphasise Māori perspectives and help to align events to Māori values.

Participant Three: A board or similar could be a way in which endurance sports can be directed in how to adequately align their events with tikanga Māori.

Participant Four: Yes and no, a board on its own could guide how the event could operate. However, I see the model developed here as serving the same purpose.

### **Could a Kura/academy be a practical solution to encourage more Māori participation from our tamariki and rangatahi?**

Participant One: It is important to foster a lifelong love of sport and activity. Being active and keeping healthy. A Kura or academy could be a vehicle for achieving this and sparking that love.

Participant Two: There is a potential in the idea. It can be a way to engage tamariki and rangatahi, making endurance sports an attractive option for them to compete in. It would also allow for the fostering of a sense of achievement and belonging to a supportive and culturally grounded initiative.

Participant Three: He endorses educational initiatives like a Kura or academy to engage tamariki and rangatahi in endurance sports. He points to the importance of fostering resilience,

discipline, and cultural pride in young participants. He has established a charity that aligns with this vision and mentors rangatahi, providing structured training, and supporting them in completing ultramarathons as a means of building confidence and self-awareness.

Participant Four: I like the idea of a kura or academy. It is an unusual sport that many won't be aware of. It presents an alternative pathway to achieve success, whether personal or competitively. And it also changes your life in the way that it builds structure and promotes discipline.

## 7.5 Ngā Aukatinga me te Titiro Whakamua - Limitations and Future Thoughts

A significant limitation of this research is the absence of wahine Māori voices among participants. Although efforts were made to recruit wahine athletes, constraints such as timing, availability, and willingness to participate in formal research settings impacted their inclusion. This absence presents a gap in the research, as wahine Māori may experience endurance sports differently, particularly in relation to tikanga, whānau obligations, and accessibility. Future research should actively prioritise the inclusion of wahine perspectives to ensure a more holistic understanding of Māori participation in endurance sports. This could involve targeted recruitment strategies, the use of whānau-based interviews, or kaupapa Māori methodologies that create culturally safe spaces for wahine participation.

The research was limited to participants already engaged in endurance sports. Expanding the research to include individuals with an interest in the sport but no prior participation, as well as those who have never considered it, could provide broader perspectives on increasing accessibility. By engaging with a group outside of the sport, their perspectives could highlight areas where the sport could be made more attractive to encourage their participation.

Another limitation of this research is the scope constraints inherent to a master's thesis. The limitations of time and word count limit the depth and breadth of knowledge that could be explored. While this research provides a strong foundation, the potential for further research is extensive. A more comprehensive investigation could offer deeper insights into the intersections of endurance, tikanga, and Māori identity, broadening the understanding of this kaupapa and its significance. Furthering this, is the limited ability of the researcher to speak and understand te reo Māori. While this ability has been strengthened throughout the research,

a much greater understanding could be achieved by a stronger ability to read and understand pūrākau and kōrero in its original language.

The final limitation is that the research remains theoretical at this stage. While the proposed has been developed through rigorous research, its effectiveness would be best evaluated through practical implementation in a race setting. To be able to implement the strategies in a race would be the perfect test of if they are truly successful.

A significant contribution to the research came from Uncle Danie. It was his Mātauranga that provided guidance throughout this research. The knowledge shared by Uncle Danie provided context and centred the questions asked in a te ao Māori context. The knowledge provided in these conversations was broader than this thesis can contain and is deserving of its own publication. The pūrākau and history should be preserved in a way that future generations can access this knowledge.

## 7.6 Te Whakarāpopoto - Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the integral role of tikanga Māori in endurance sports, as expressed by participants. Their insights confirm that Māori athletes experience ultra-endurance events not only as physical challenges but also as opportunities for cultural affirmation, whakapapa connection, and the expression of tino rangatiratanga. Through this research, it is evident that endurance is deeply embedded within te ao Māori, extending beyond the individual pursuit of sporting achievement to encompass intergenerational resilience, collective identity, and cultural reclamation.

However, several challenges remain. Barriers to participation, the need for greater cultural safety in endurance events, and the absence of wahine Māori perspectives in this research highlight areas for further exploration. The findings suggest that Māori engagement in ultra-endurance sports could be strengthened by increasing accessibility, incorporating tikanga-based event planning, and ensuring a culturally safe environment for all participants. The development of the tikanga-based model proposed in this thesis provides a potential framework for achieving this.

Moving forward, the findings from this research can inform the development of culturally embedded endurance events where tikanga Māori is actively incorporated into race design, athlete preparation, and post-race reflection. Future research should build upon this work by trialling the proposed model in real-world settings, assessing its effectiveness in fostering inclusivity, and measuring its impact on Māori participation in endurance sports. Additionally,

further inquiry into the experiences of wahine Māori in ultra-endurance sports is essential to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural values and gender intersect in endurance-based activities.

Ultimately, this research contributes to ongoing discussions about the intersection of sport, identity, and Indigenous knowledge, highlighting the potential of ultra-marathons as a medium for cultural revitalisation. By embedding Mātauranga Māori, whakapapa, and tikanga into endurance sport, there is an opportunity to create spaces where Māori athletes can compete, connect, and thrive—grounded in the strength of their cultural heritage and guided by the wisdom of their tīpuna.

## Ūpoko 8 - Tāu taonga ki te whai ao: Te Whakarāpopoto - Conclusion

### 8.1 Te Whakarāpopoto - Conclusion

This thesis has explored the intersection of ultra-marathons, whakapapa, and cultural identity within the context of Te Whakatōhea and te ao Māori. Grounded in the principles of Kaupapa Māori methodology, the research highlights the connections between physical endurance, pūrākau, and the journey of cultural reconnection. By weaving together personal narratives, historical contexts, and contemporary practices, this research contributes to a growing discourse on the transformative potential of Indigenous knowledge systems within greater society and with the intention of implementing this knowledge into the transformation of ultra-marathon running.

Central to this work is the conceptualisation of endurance as more than a physical feat—it is a holistic expression of resilience, identity, and connection. The narratives of Te Whakatōhea tīpuna exemplify strategy, perseverance, adaptability, and strength, qualities that have enabled the iwi to withstand the challenges of colonisation, raupatu, and cultural disconnection. These attributes, deeply embedded in whakapapa, function as both metaphor and mechanism for addressing contemporary challenges, particularly within ultra-marathon running.

Through the lens of whakapapa, this thesis reimagines ultra-marathons as a medium for cultural maintenance, revitalisation and reconnection. Ultra-marathons, triathlons, and other endurance pursuits provide a unique platform to integrate tikanga Māori, reaffirm connections to whenua,

and honour tīpuna. And provides an opportunity for event organisers to be proactive and be seen to acknowledge iwi practices and narratives and learn from them. The research findings demonstrate that such integration is not only feasible but also transformative, offering Māori athletes' opportunities to engage in sport in ways that affirm and celebrate their identity.

The culturally grounded model for ultra-marathons proposed in this research underscores the importance of embedding tikanga Māori and recognising mana whenua in endurance events. This framework prioritises inclusivity, cultural safety, and environmental stewardship, addressing the current lack of meaningful engagement with Māori values in mainstream ultra-marathons. By retracing the trails of tīpuna, incorporating tikanga, and engaging with local hapū and iwi, this model aims to foster greater Māori participation while promoting a deeper appreciation of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives.

Despite its contributions, this research acknowledges its limitations. The personal nature of the inquiry, while offering depth and authenticity, may limit the generalisability of its findings. Additionally, the scope of the research—focused primarily on Te Whakatōhea and ultra-marathons—presents opportunities for future exploration. Expanding the research to include other iwi, diverse sporting disciplines, and broader cultural contexts could yield further insights into the intersections of Indigenous identity, physical activity, and resilience.

Looking ahead, this thesis aspires to inspire further research and practical application that centres Māori perspectives within sports, health, and endurance events. The proposed ultra-marathon within the rohe of Te Whakatōhea, guided by tikanga and celebrating ancestral pathways, offers a tangible example of how these concepts can be realised in practice. This research serves as a call to action for Māori athletes, organisers, and communities to reclaim and redefine physical activity in ways that honour and uplift te ao Māori.

Finally, this research is a testament to the enduring spirit of Te Whakatōhea and the broader Māori community. It highlights the resilience inherent in whakapapa and the potential for ultra-marathons to serve as a vehicle for cultural maintenance, revitalisation, and well-being. By embracing the wisdom of tīpuna and embedding it into contemporary sporting practices, the future can be one where Māori athletes and communities thrive, deeply connected to their identity, whenua, and heritage. Through continued engagement with kaupapa Māori and endurance sport, the potential for new pathways of resilience, cultural strength, and collective empowerment can emerge.

The concluding statement is taken from a Te Whakatōhea waiata that encompasses the body of this research, endurance through Ultra Marathons, with the proposition to integrate Tikanga

and Pūrākau into the race format making this sport culturally safe and the intention to promote greater Māori participation in Ultra Marathon running.

Tū ake Whakatōhea tāhuri whakarongo ki te reo pōhiri mai e nga iwi hei āwhina. Kia kaha, kia mau ki te hāpai ake rā i te ora mō te iwi e tau nei. Tohetohea mātou....

Stand united Te Whakatōhea, lend your ear and heed the welcome issued to iwi to assist the cause. Be strong and be steadfast to raise the health standards for the people. We endure; we persevere.

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# Ūpoko 9 - Ngā Āpitianga - Appendix

## 9.1 Ngā Tikanga Whakaae - Ethics Approval



Te Kāhui Manu Tāiko: Human Research Ethics Committee  
Faculty of Māori & Indigenous Studies  
Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao  
Friday 27 January, 2023

### **Ethics Approval**

Tēnā koe kei ngā manu tāiko e rere atu nā i ngā huarahi o te rangahau.

This letter is to confirm that Nicolas Helyar-Magill has received ethical approval for the study, **Tapuwaekiwi Tapuwaeharuru Taiharuru te Whakatōhea Toheraoa: Running together, running to the future, Māori identity, mental, physical, and spiritual endurance through sport. Our history shapes our aspirations.**

The ethics application was reviewed by members of Te Kāhui Manu Tāiko and was signed off by the chair of the committee on 8 Hakihea, 2023. Good luck as you embark on your research.

*Mahia te mahi hei painga mō te iwi – Nā Te Pua Herangi.*

Ngā manaakitanga.

Associate Professor Waikaremoana Waitoki  
Convener, Te Kāhui Manu Tāiko  
Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao  
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato  
Faculty of Māori & Indigenous Studies  
The University of Waikato

## 9.2 Research Information Sheet - Interview

### 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](mailto:fmis@waikato.ac.nz)



## ***Tapuwaekiwi Tapuwaeharuru Taiharuru te Whakatōhea Toheraoa***

### Research Information Sheet - Interview

Tēnā koe,

My name is Nicholas Magill. I am conducting research on Māori perspectives on endurance sport. The aim of this research project is to produce a master's thesis that explores how more Māori can be encouraged to undertake this sport.

As part of our research we are conducting an interview. I would like to interview you for this project to discuss your thoughts on foot-based endurance sport (walk, hike, run). 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.
- 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 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:

Nicholas Magill  
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: [nicmagill@gmail.com](mailto:nicmagill@gmail.com)  
Phone: 02040383171

NB. For students you will need to include details for your supervisor (e.g. see below)

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact my supervisor:

Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao – Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies

Supervisor: Dr. Te Kahautu Maxwell

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

## 9.3 Consent form for Participants

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### Consent Form for Participants

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](mailto:fmis@waikato.ac.nz)



## Tapuwaekiwi Tapuwaeharuru Taiharuru te Whakatōhea Toheraoa

### 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:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

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