

# *Growing closer to death*

## **Māori spirituality and ageing**

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# Pae Herenga pilot study

Pae Herenga: A qualitative investigation of traditional Māori end of life caregiving customs.

Aims: To gather evidence about traditional whānau care customs to determine the contribution they make to building whānau resilience during the caregiving and bereavement trajectory. Best way to conduct larger study?



# Pae Herenga. Goal 1.

- To strengthen Māori whānau awareness and understanding of traditional end of life care customs and to support bereavement:
  - Assumption that cultural care customs may not be fully retained due to ‘urban drift’ (cultural disenfranchisement, ethnic diversity, changing whānau composition and living in te ao hurihuri ).



# Pae Herenga. Goal 2.

- To strengthen palliative care services awareness and understanding of traditional care customs
  - To support better access to palliative services
    - To increase cultural/spiritual knowledge and understanding among the workforce.

# Rationale

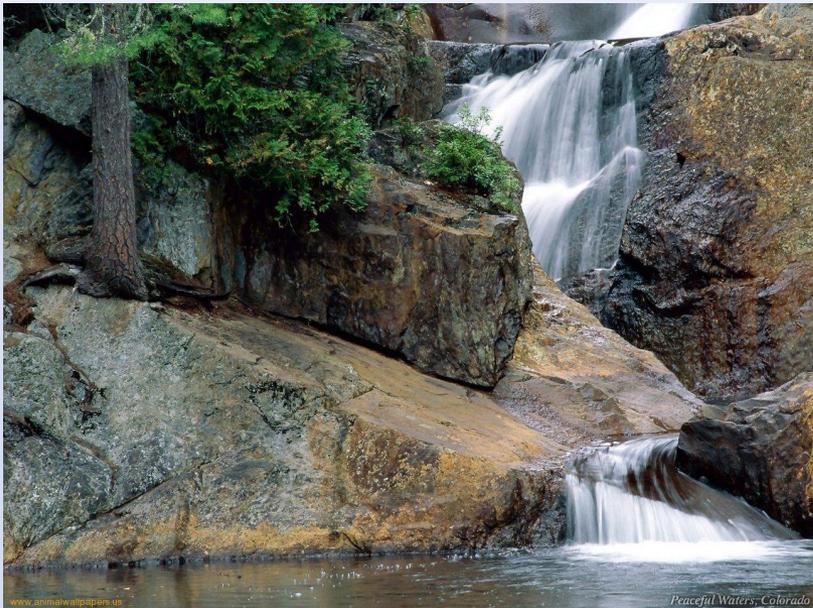
- Projected Māori deaths are expected to increase from 3,180 in June 2015 to 4,900 in 2033 (54% increase in 18 years)
- Deaths over 65 are expected to increase from 51.9% to 72.0% of total Māori deaths by 2033
- Deaths over age 85 is expected to more than double.
- Palliative Care Council (2015). Updated Projections of Deaths in New Zealand, March 2015. Wellington: Cancer Control New Zealand.

# Method

- Kaupapa Māori research (kaumātua led interviews)
  - Bishop (2005); The Pūtaiora Writing Group (2010)
- Recruitment, Te Ārai kaumātua networks
  - 5 whānau interviewed (4 home care settings)
    - Ngapuhi, Ngati Whatua, Tainui, Ngati Porou, Te Arawa
- Kanohi ki te kanohi interviews; open ended questions (multiple stories about kaumātua at EoL)
- Interviews digitally recorded and transcribed
- Thematically analysed using KMR principles.

# ‘Spirituality’

- “Wairuatanga is the basis of all things. All living things have mauri (a life force) and a spirit.”



Wilson, D. 2008. Te Kapunga Putohe (The Restless hands): A Maori centred nursing practice model. *Nursing Praxis in New*

*Zealand*. Vol 24. No 2.

## Findings: Traditional perspective of ageing and death

- Older age, illness & dying constructed as a normal part of the life and death cycle
  - Māori relationship with land/nature; lived by the seasons
  - Spiritual meanings attributed to illness and death:
    - Everything has a mauri (life force)

Moon, P. (2004).  
*Tohunga: Hohepa Kereopa*.  
David Lang Publishing Ltd,  
Auckland



# Findings: Wairuatanga

## Spiritual and religious beliefs and customs

- Kaumātua carer participants demonstrated:
  - Strong tribal tikangā (values, beliefs and practices)
  - Strong Christian beliefs and practices
- Adult participants demonstrated wairua principles in action:
  - Āroha, āwhi, tautoko, whānaungatanga, kōtahitanga, rangatiratanga, kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga
- Wairuatanga is diverse between & within whānau
- Belief in the immutability & permanence of the spirit
- How kaumātua lived, reflected their EoL spiritual care preferences.

Moon, P. (2004). *Tohunga: Hohepa Kereopa*. David Lang Publishing Ltd, Auckland.

Ngata, P. (2005). Death, Dying and Grief. In M. Schwass (Ed.), *Last Words: Approaches to Death in New Zealand's Cultures and Faiths* (pp. 29-40). Wellington, N.Z.: Bridget Williams Books with the Funeral Directors Association of N.Z.

Pere, R. 1991. *Te Wheke: A celebration of infinite wisdom*. Gisborne, New Zealand: Ao Ako Global Learning New Zealand.



# Spiritual well-being of kaumātua at end of life

- “Taupaenui – realised potential”  
(overarching theme)
- Kaitiakitanga – Stewardship
- Whānaungatanga – Connectedness
- Taketuku – Transmission
- Tā Koha – Contribution
- Takatū – Adaptability.

- Will Edwards (2010). *Taupaenui: Maori positive ageing*. Massey University, NZ. Unpublished thesis.



# Realising potential for whānau

- Kaumātua's primary concern is for their whānau and hapū (sub tribe) or iwi (tribe);  
*Will the whānau be okay after I've gone? What can I do to support (manaaki) my whānau, hapu, iwi?*
- MacKinlay (2001) supports idea that spiritual growth continues until death; as death approaches they are confronted with their own mortality and spiritual journey.



# Whānau tautoko

## Te haerenga wairua ki te ārai

The end of life journey provides an opportunity for kaumātua to grow *closer* to death, to move towards the ārai (veil). It is a process that requires support from whānau carers (extended whānau and formal carers). Everything that happens on the journey towards the ārai either contributes or diminishes the spiritual experience and well-being of kaumātua. Whānau who intentionally provide care as an expression of whānaungatanga (connectedness), āroha (love, care, concern), āwhi (affection, support) and manaakitanga (reciprocal care) help to strengthen their wairua for the journey home.



# Te Whare Tapa Whā

- Wairua (overarching spiritual dimension)
- Hinengaro (conscious and hidden mind)
- Tinana (physical dimension)
- Whānau (family; includes extended whānau)

# Vignette:

## Preparing for death - 'Tohunga'

- Predetermined role of kaitiaki (guide) (Female participant)
- Pōwhiri: Kāranga (Call to bring the living to farewell kaumātua)
  - Kaitiaki greets manuhiri; assesses request to pay respects to kaumātua
  - Kaitiaki gives access to manuhiri to enter their home
  - Mihi whakatau; kaumātua gives formal welcome
  - Access to dying kaumātua requested
  - Manuhiri fed by ringawera (people who run kitchen)
  - Kaitiaki approaches kaumātua to request permission for visit
  - Kaitiaki advises manuhiri of outcome
  - Manuhiri visits kaumātua (or is turned away)
  - Kaitiaki role continues until tūpaapaku (body) leaves home.



## Vignette: Authority of tikangā

- Kaumātua states burial preference before she dies
  - Requests to be buried at her whānau ūrupā
    - Deeper reasoning (caring for family)
- Grieving husband wants her to be buried near him
- Kuia (kaumātua's whānaunga) arrives & invokes tikangā
- Permission granted for tūpaapaku to be taken by kuia
- Kaumātua's wish granted – she's taken home

**Seeding a spiritual culture of care:  
How can we support kaumātua to *grow*  
positively towards death?**



# Acknowledgements

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