

STUDENTS' CORNER E Mahara Ana Te Whanau The Family Remembers

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Indigenous New Zealand women live in two worlds, the world of the predominant Anglo-Saxon culture (Walker, 1990) and, the world of taha Maori. The interface among the cultures brings about a tension between traditional and modern definitions of childbirth and motherhood (Daviss, 1997) for wahine Maori. Wahine Maori come from diverse backgrounds (Durie, 1998; Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1993) and share a universality (Rabuzzi, 1994) with women in general in wanting; to have sovereignty over the birth process; to have a safe birth; and to retain their mana as wahine and as members of whanau, hapu and iwi. Women are central to the transmission of traditional cultural wisdom (Long & Curry, 1998) encompassing childbirth beliefs and practices (Daviss, 1997). Among the Maori are tribal elders, kuia, aunts and mothers who are pivotal in the journey of wahine Maori towards childbirth and motherhood. Colonisation (Durie, 1998; Walker, 1990) and the medicalisation of birthing processes (Abel, 1997; Ramsden, 1994) have been factors that have resulted in the breakdown of cultural transmission (Daviss, 1997; Long & Curry, 1998). This paper reviews the need for health services to collaborate with Maori communities traditional or otherwise to support constructive transformation for wahine Maori and the role of government policy making in sustaining Maori values and beliefs.

Te Timatanga/The Beginning

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|-----------|-----------------|
| Te Po Nui | The Great Night |
| Te Po Roa | The Long Night |
| Te Po | The Night |
| Te Po | The Night |
| Te Po | The Night |

The creation story begins within the realm of Te Korekore, The Nothingness (Marsden, 1992; Walker, 1990; Walker 1992), the realm between non-being and being, that is potential being. Following Te Korekore is the realm of Te Po with its stages of night. It is here that the 'seed-stuff of the universe and all created things gestate...it is the womb from which all things proceed (Marsden, 1992)'.

As the nannies and mothers we sung the above verse with our tamariki at kohanga reo. This waiata held special significance for one of our mokopuna named Te Po Muriwai. Te Po is prominent in my thoughts as I write of motherhood and creation. We sung this waiata repeatedly at Te Po's tangihanga last year. At age 11 years she had died.

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| We sing this song and we the mothers remember. | |
| Ki Te Po Uriuri | To the Deepest Night |
| Ki Te Potangotango | To the Intense Night |
| Te Po | The Night |
| Te Po | The Night |
| Te Po | The Night |

The creation story is universal (Rabuzzi, 1994; Walker, 1992) and the creation myths serve as a substructure from which traditional beliefs and practices are understood in the modern context (Walker, 1992). Ranginui, the sky father and Papatuanuku the earth mother embraced tightly while their numerous sons lay between them in the blackness. The elder son Tane Mahuta had grown tired of living in the packed dark conditions and forcibly separated Ranginui from Papatuanuku. This separation heralded the beginning of the world of mankind Te Ao Marama. From the earth Tane created the female Hineahuone and they begat Hinetitama the first born human. Tane consummated the incestuous relationship with Hinetitama and they begat the beginnings of the human race. Upon discovering that her lover was her father Hinetitama fled in shame from Te Ao Marama to the underworld. To signify this event she changed her name to Hinenuitepo, the woman of the great night.

It was the connection to Papatuanuku, the earth mother, and through the activities of Hineahuone, Hinetitama, Hinenuitepo and other fabled Maori heroines that the mana of wahine was derived in traditional Maori society.

Mana Wahine/The Authority of Women

The status of wahine Maori is linked to Papatuanuku the earth mother (Makereti, 1986; Rimene, Hassan & Broughton, 1998; Taylor, 1996; Te Awekotuku, 1991). Maori believe that the earth is the elemental womb to which mankind must return in death (Marden, 1992; Te Awekotuku, 1991). The first female Hineahuone was created from the sacred red clay of Papatuanuku. Women are tapu and noa at the same time (Kahukiwa & Potiki, 1999; Pere, 1991; Rimene, Hassan & Broughton, 1998). Tapu due to their sacred and spiritual beginnings and by virtue of their gender women are considered noa and have the ability to whakanoa or undo tapu. Hinetitama was the first born human female and from her originates Te Whare Tangata.

Te Whare Tangata/House of Mankind

Te Whare Tangata translates as the house of mankind (Makereti, 1986; Ratima, Ratima, Durie & Potaka, 1994; Rimene, Hassan & Broughton, 1998; Taylor, 1996). Te Whare Tangata

identifies the uniqueness of woman to conceive (Long & Curry, 1998; Rabuzzi, 1994) and establishes whakapapa (Makereti, 1986; Rimene et al.,) and therefore mana. Mana makes childbirth a phenomenal event. Te Whare Tangata is the place where those yet to be born wait until they are welcomed into the world of Te Ao Marama (Rimene et al.,).

Te Whare Kohanga/The Nesting House

Te Whare Kohanga initially referred to the ancient custom of building a birthing house for high born Maori women (Best, 1975; Rimene, Hassan & Broughton, 1998). The term Te Whare Kohanga now commonly refers to pregnancy (Rimene et al., 1998). To safeguard the wairua of the wahine, pepi and the whanau there are specific conventions pertaining to pregnancy and birth (Best, 1976; Makereti, 1986; Rimene et al., 1998; Te Rahuitanga Te Kohanga Reo, 1983).

The wahine Maori is instructed by other women to not cut her hair while hapu. The head is considered tapu and the wairua of the mother and the unborn child is to be protected. She is informed of; te manaakitanga o te tamaiti i roto o te whare tangata; to care for the child within her; and te whakahanga o te tamaiti whanau hou, the growth of the newborn child. The recollections of others prompts her to select names of significance for the pepi – after a tupuna or an important event. She is reminded of customs specific to childbirth; te whenua o te tamaiti, the placenta of the child; te pito o te tamaiti, the umbilical chord; and te whakaputanga o te whaea, the discharges of the mother. Te whenua ki te whenua (Potiki & Kahukiwa, 1999). The whenua or placenta of the newborn is given into the earth, back into the embrace of Papatuanuku (Best, 1975; Makereti, 1986; Rimene et al., 1998). Once the pito or umbilical chord detaches from the infant it too is returned to the earth. All birth membranes of the pepi and mother constituent Te Whare Kohanga and due to the woman's wider role as Te Whare Tangata these membranes require particular spiritual handling.

Knowledge and competency in pregnancy and childbirth comes mainly from the older women within the whanau and hapu (Makereti, 1986; Rimene et al., 1998). Mothers remember.

Te Ao Tane/The World of Men

In traditional Maori society the role of the man is both reciprocal and complimentary to that of the woman (Rimene, Hassan & Broughton, 1998; Walker, 1990). The mana of men is associated with the deeds of the gods like Ranginui, the sky father, his son Tane Mahuta (Rimene, Hassan & Broughton, 1998) and their male

descendants. Men are the kaitiaki of Te Whare Tangata. In conception the whakapapa of the male unites with the whakapapa of the female (Kahukiwa & Potiki, 1999). The role of the tane is to protect the wahine, thereby protecting his whakapapa. It has been said of some Maori men that they have forgotten this aspect of their role (Rimene et al., 1998). The immediate physical environment of the hapu wahine is the chiefly concern of the tane. He must ensure the safety of the wahine and child from negative and harmful elements. His lineage is nurtured by woman and lives on in the pepi.

Te Whanau/The Family

In traditional Maori society people had close kinship ties with their immediate whanau members, their hapu and iwi (Haines, 1987; Hiroa, 1949; Walker, 1990). The whanau is the smallest social unit (Rangi Hiroa, 1949; Walker, 1990) and although extended whanau members no longer live together Maori continue to interact closely with aunts, uncles, cousins and nannies (Durie, 1998; Ratima, Ratima, Durie & Potaka, 1994; Rimene, Hassan & Broughton, 1998). Whanaungatanga as a philosophy is the sharing of accumulated knowledge, experience and wisdom for the benefit of the whanau, hapu and iwi (Durie, 1998; Kahukiwa & Potiki, 1999; Pere, 1991; Walker, 1990). These days of living apart from traditional rural communities means whanaungatanga is extended to non-kinship ties within urban communities (Kainamu, 1996).

The contribution from the whanau towards new parents can include; physical and emotional tautoko; as guides in parenthood; and as kaitiaki for the tamaiti. Adults become parentis locus for all tamariki within the whanau and hapu (Makereti, 1986; Pere, 1991). The whanau draws on it's collective experience to make room for the new parental status of its younger whanau members. The whanau remember.

Kaumatuas continue to be the leaders of whanau (Durie, Allan, Cunningham, Edwards, Forster, Gillies, Kingi, Ratima & Waldon, 1997). Kaumatua are advisers and spiritual leaders, keepers of tribal lore and messengers of wisdom. Traditional cultural wisdom (Long & Curry, 1998) is passed down to the next generation through the recollections of kuia and kaumatua. Their role is purposeful; to instruct new mothers in matters of birth; to safeguard the wairua of the whanau through the observance of particular rites; and to guide whanau and hapu in the maintenance of support for the new parents. Kaumatua are the link with the past. Kaumatua remember.

Kaumatuas are the kaitiaki and teachers of young children (Makereti, 1986; Rimene et

al., 1998; Te Awekotuku, 1991). The relationship between kaumatua and mokopuna is special (Rimene et al., 1998; Te Rahuitanga Te Kohanga Reo, 1983).

Kotahi te ha o te tupuna me te mokopuna

The heartbeat of the tupuna and the mokopuna beat as one

Nga taonga tuku iho (Pere, 1991; Te Rahuitanga Te Kohanga Reo, 1983), treasures that have come down are passed on to the child through relationships with kaumatua. While the parents, and members of whanau and hapu, provide the physical and mental day to day nurturing of the child, it is the older whanau members, the kaumatua, who nourish the child spiritually. The active participation of kaumatua in rearing mokopuna ensures that tamariki are recipients of traditional cultural wisdom. Tamariki remember.

Tari Hauora/Health Services

Wahine Maori mostly had births on tribal lands as recent as 50 years ago (Abel, 1997; Makereti, 1986) attended by elders and whanau members experienced in birthing matters. The medicalisation of Maori birthing practices was a response to the high morbidity and mortality rates among women and infants (Abel, 1997) and came on top of wider colonisation processes (Ramsden, 1994). The take over of native birthing practices by the medical profession combined with components of colonisation resulted in a breakdown in the transmission of traditional beliefs and practices (Daviss, 1997; Long & Curry, 1998; Ramsden, 1994).

Following the demedicalisation of birthing services there has been an increase in numbers of Maori providers of maternity care, more Maori midwives and greater scope of midwifery practice in the community (Abel, 1997; Ramsden, 1994). However there remain identifiable gaps in prenatal and postnatal care (Ratima, Ratima, Durie & Potaka, 1994; Rimene, Hassan & Broughton, 1998) in that Maori understandings of health are different to those of health professionals and western medicine (Durie, 1998; Ramsden, 1994). The result has been that Maori women and whanau have been reluctant in accessing childbirth services. Maori are not homogenous therefore health services need to provide a range of strategies to meet the diverse lifestyles (Durie, 1998) of wahine Maori as well as the provision of culturally appropriate maternity and midwifery care (Ratima et al., 1994; Taylor, 1996). There remains an urgency for Maori participation in maternity services at all levels, as health professionals, as well as tribal elders and women experienced in birthing matters.

Health providers would do well to collaborate with Maori communities in the delivery of maternity care.

Kaupapa Kawanatanga/ Government Policy

Wahine Maori are the primary caregivers of children, caring for large families including whangai (Murchie, 1984). Maori women form the cutting edge of cultural restoration (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1993) and are at the forefront of the successful growth of Kohanga Reo. Wahine Maori are often in poorly paid work to subsidize the low income of their spouses. Maori generally experience inferior health, are poorly educated and live in substandard housing conditions.

The government as the treaty partner has a constitutional obligation under the Treaty of Waitangi (Durie, 1998; Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1993; Walker, 1990) to improve the socio-economic position of Maori in general. Article One of the Treaty of Waitangi, kawanatanga, is the provision for the Government to govern through central, state owned and local structures. Article Two, tino rangatiratanga, guarantees the authority of hapu and iwi to self-determination. Maori are often seen and understood to be one nation rather than various hapu and iwi with distinct identities. Article Three, oritetanga, is the provision of equality and equity for Maori compared to non-Maori. The negative socio-economic disparities between Maori and non-Maori continue to expand (Durie, 1998; Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1993).

The status of Maori women and Maori motherhood will get better when there are improvements in circumstances for Maori in general and for women in general (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1993). When the Government recognizes the extraordinary place of Maori in the constitution as tangata whenua then there will be benefits for New Zealand as a nation (Durie, 1998).

Te Whakamutunga Korero/End Discussion

Successful transformation to childbirth and motherhood is more complex than having safe births, healthy babies and healthy mothers. The elimination of risks associated with birth and the modernisation of childbirth and motherhood need not come at the expense of other dimensions of health such as mental, spiritual and whanau. Maori women are members of whanau, of community, of hapu, of iwi and of nations. As Te Whare Tangata women carry the values and beliefs reflected by their communities. Kaumatua remember, Whanau remember, Mothers remember so that Tamariki remember.

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Glossary

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| Hapu | Sub-tribe/pregnancy |
| Hineahuone | First female |
| Hinenuitepo | Goddess of the underworld previously known as Hinetitama |
| Hinetitama | Child begat by Tane and Hineahuone |
| Ha | Breath |
| Iwi | Tribe/bones |
| Kaitiaki | Guardians |
| Kaumatua | Elderly male or female/status title |
| Kawanatanga | Governorship |
| Kohanga reo | Maori language nest |
| Kotahi | One |
| Kuia | Elderly woman |
| Mana | Authority, prestige, power |
| Manaakitanga | Care for |
| Maori | Native people of New Zealand |
| Mokopuna | Grandchild/younger children of whanau |
| Nga taonga tuku ihu | Spiritual gifts |
| Nui | Great |

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| Oriori Lullaby, chant | |
| Oritetanga | Sameness/equality |
| Pakeha | Anglo-Saxon settlers to New Zealand |
| Papatuanuku | Earth Mother |
| Pepi | Baby |
| Pito | Umbilical cord |
| Potangotango | Intense night |
| Rangātiratanga | Self-determination |
| Ranginui | Sky Father |
| Roa | Long |
| Roto | In |
| Tamaiti | Small child |
| Tamariki | Children |
| Tane | Man |
| Tane Mahuta | God of the forest/ one of many sons of Papatuanuku and Ranginui |
| Tangata Whenua | People of the land/ indigenous people |
| Tangihanga | Funeral |
| Tapu | Sacred |
| Tautoko | Support |
| Te Ao | The World |
| Te Ao MaramaTe | World of Light/ world of mankind |
| Te Korekore | The realm of Great Nothingness |
| Te Po | The Night |
| Te reo | Language |
| Te Whare Atua | House of God |
| Te Whare Kohanga | Nesting House/ referring to pregnancy |
| Te Whare Tangata | The House Of Mankind/ referring to continuation of whakapapa |
| Tikanga | Customs |
| Tupuna | Ancestors/elderly |
| Uriuri (Te Po) | Deepest (night) |
| Waiata | Song |
| Wahine | Woman |
| Whakahanga | Development/ growth |
| Whakanoa | Make common, undo the sacredness, make safe |
| Whakapapa | Lineage |
| Whakaputanga | Discharges |
| Whanau | Family/birthing |
| Whanau hou | Newborn |
| Whanaungatanga | Family relationships |
| Whangai | Adopted child |
| Whenua | Land/placenta |

Papatuanuku - He Pikitia na Marama Kainamu - Wheeler, 1994, Tau 4 1/2 (yrs)



Te Whenua Ki Te Whenua
 I am an important being.
 I am a treasure, a sacred woman,
 tapu, as all women are and noa also.
 (Kahukiwa & Potiki, 1999)

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