



HĀPAI TE HAUORA
— MĀORI PUBLIC HEALTH —

NGĀ WHENU O TE WAHAKURA

THE MANY STRANDS OF WAHAKURA



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“He maha ngā whenu o te wahakura i roto i te waonui o te mātauranga, mā mātou koutou e awhi ki te whakaeke ki runga i ngā whenu e hiahia ana koutou, me te mōhio ka eke atu koutou ka whakawhānui atu ngā pae”

“There are many strands from the wahakura, of knowledge in the forest of learning, we will assist you to climb the strand that you want to, understanding that the higher you climb the wider the horizons”

Rangi McLean,
National Cultural Advisor, Hāpai Te Hauora

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FOREWORD

Helping to solve the problem of 'bed-sharing where there was smoking in pregnancy' by creating a safer sleeping space that could be deployed in the shared bed was a brilliant idea. But the weaving of this item in harakeke by Māori artisans to create a valued and treasured taonga was the fuel that got the wahakura idea moving. And the dedicated efforts of both individual weavers and networks of kairaranga to create large numbers of wahakura and increasing numbers of participating weavers is what now sustains the programme.

A generation now exists who do not know the times before the wahakura. It is as if the wahakura has always been here and it is woven into the fabric of our family lives. I get dozens of requests a week for information on where to find weavers. As far as I can tell via FB Messenger, most people seem to successfully source one from the lists of weavers that I provide them with. I know my contacts have sent scores of wahakura to Australia and I have seen them go as far as a Māori family living in Sweden. Earlier this year I sent three to Bristol, England, to University researchers who were wondering how they could use the idea over there in their cultural context of SUDI in poor white and immigrant families.

The big contribution that Sally Abel, me and others have made is in creating a lasting profile for the wahakura. We were part of the original Māori SIDS Prevention Programme in the 1990s – and then later when the reduction in SUDI deaths plateaued we developed the 'Safe Sleep' thinking, sourced weavers who could construct the wahakura, wrote about the initial idea, followed up and created the project with weavers and midwives,

developed research programmes around SIDS and SUDI risk, researched the acceptability of the wahakura, developed alternatives when we couldn't get enough wahakura, created the first DHB distribution of Safe Sleep devices and then worked on demonstrating the safety of the wahakura. It's been a heady ride!

The future of the wahakura is in attracting pregnant Māori whānau to circles of weaving that connect them to the traditional Māori world of Hine-te-iwaiwa – in weaving, pregnancy, childbirth and infant care. Thus empowered, I expect that contact with the western health services available to support pregnant women that are not well used by Māori women, become much easier to navigate and take advantage of. But be clear – it is the proud expression of 'Māori-ness' by a new generation of Māori mums and dads, and the life-changes associated with that 'Māori-ness' that will be responsible for preventing infant death.

Tihei wahakura!

Dr David Tipene-Leach

Prof of Māori and Indigenous Research
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NGĀ WHENU O TE WAHAKURA

Ngā whenu o te wahakura, the many strands of wahakura

Wahakura are best understood in the cultural context from which they derive. This paper prioritises the knowledge of whānau, weavers and communities so that health professionals and those working in safe sleep advocacy can conceptualise wahakura more broadly than in the context of Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) and its prevention. While wahakura do provide a safe sleeping space for mokopuna, their benefits are wide-ranging. An appreciation of this broad context will ensure whānau have the opportunity to benefit fully from wahakura and the associated tikanga, and for health practitioners to be able to engage with whānau in a strengths-based manner. This paper will briefly outline the benefits of the wahakura, through exploring relevant literature, the expertise of weavers and whānau experiences.

Wahakura offer many benefits to whānau, so having an understanding of these advantages should be considered when procuring and distributing these taonga. Hāpai Te Hauora recommend Māori-led training and education on wahakura, the pā harakeke and related tikanga to ensure ongoing positive engagement on SUDI prevention and beyond.

Many advantages are already widely understood about the wahakura. While wahakura allow mokopuna to sleep in close proximity to parents and are a traditional expression of Māori custom, they also provide whānau and health providers with a practical way of supporting and maintaining breastfeeding (Tipene-Leach & Abel, 2019). Their light weight and size allows

for easy transportation should whānau need to travel and have easy access to a safe sleeping space.

All aspects of mātauranga Māori have been impacted upon by colonisation. In this context it is important that the safe sleep and the SUDI prevention sector understand the ongoing impact of colonisation which is intertwined with the health outcomes of Māori (King, Cormack, & Kopua, 2018). The sector should have an understanding of how colonisation impacts the capability and capacity of the weaving community and the natural environment which sustains wahakura. As wahakura are a natural creation made of various species of harakeke, the sustainability of wahakura and the weaving community from which they derive is paramount (McAllum, 2005). It is recommended that the sector continue to seek understanding to support the weaving workforce, as well as the natural environment and wider ecosystem, which nourishes harakeke sources.

Wahakura as rongoā, as whakapapa: oranga tangata, oranga whenua

As wahakura are sourced from the pā harakeke, (harakeke plantation) it is important that the sector understands that from the Te Ao Māori perspective, the land and the plants sourced from it intrinsically sustain and nourish the wellbeing of whānau and communities. Wahakura are made of harakeke and the process from its inception at the pā harakeke, through to the weaving of each whenu (thread), through to the practical application of the wahakura, inherently sustains the wellbeing of mokopuna. As shared by White (2017)

...whenu are woven together, there is a plaiting and weaving of whakapapa connections. The mauri of the whenua integrates into the next phase of development and the base of the wahakura begins to develop. There is a sharing of knowledge as interested participants contribute and participate in the shaping of kōrero. The mauri of people present becomes a part of the wahakura (p. 51).

Depending on its application, harakeke has many functions as a rongoā. Muka, the fibre sourced from certain species of harakeke can be used at birth and tied to the umbilical cord (Ka'ai, Moorfield, Reilly, & Mosley, 2004). The reconnection with this ancestral practice is becoming normalised again in recent years with the increase of wānanga hapū (Māori birthing and antenatal classes) (Groenestein, 2018).

Harakeke has many functions and properties which have been described in Māori knowledge systems. For example, harakeke has antiseptic properties and can be used as a disinfectant from the liquid sourced from boiling the leaves and roots. In addition, it can be used as a bandage and it was utilised in pre-colonial times as a cure for intestinal ailments (White, 2017).

Wahakura in the natural environment

From an environmental standpoint, wahakura are sustainable resources that are locally crafted and ethically sourced from various pā harakeke around Aotearoa. Wahakura are the only safe sleeping space which are made of natural resources and crafted using Māori ancestral weaving methods. While some weavers use the taiore or kohunga species of harakeke to weave wahakura, each respective whānau may have their own knowledge system associated with their materials and practice (ibid).

As the weaving of wahakura is connected to the materials available, there are many environmental factors which need to be considered such as seasons to plant, times to harvest harakeke, opportunities to clear

away and continue to support the growth of pā harakeke (Ka'ai, Moorfield, Reilly, & Mosley, 2004). Anecdotal weavers and whānau have shared that they have their own pā harakeke which they maintain and source their materials from. These communities stress the importance of understanding the wider environment surrounding the plantation so that finest quality of harakeke is sourced, which is spray-free and clear of toxins. It is recommended that the sector appreciates the broader process of crafting wahakura, which includes the growing of pā harakeke and the knowledge systems associated with understanding the environment in which the pā harakeke are grown.

Wahakura as an identity marker

Culturally, wahakura reassert ancestral practices which are fundamentally entwined with mātauranga Māori. Wahakura provide an opportunity for whānau to connect with Te Ao Māori as these vessels draw on ancestral knowledge which centralises the wellbeing of mokopuna and whakapapa. Wahakura can therefore be used as an avenue to engage with whānau in a manner which centralises the mana o te mokopuna, mana o te whānau. This is important in terms of communication, strength-based and mana enhancing health messages and knowledge with whānau. Ultimately wahakura, as summarised by White (2017) are

...vessels of wellbeing. They are taonga despatched and derived from the tikanga, or grounding rules of the pā harakeke and marae. The marae is here viewed as a woven interface that connects people to a matrix of wellbeing and whakapapa. Standing as a repository of embedded codes in the weaving patterns, it teaches us of our heavenly origins (p.11).

The health sector should embrace initiatives that incorporate Māori practices and customs as the evidence shows that Māori are more likely to engage in a system that reflects and normalises our practices, values and belief systems.

The potential of wānanga

The weaving of wahakura, like all weaving, can be an individual pursuit, but I am often placed in wānanga conditions where information and skills are shared in a communal, whānau-friendly and collective environment. Wahakura weaving often includes whānau exploring ancestral stories pertaining to Māori birthing experiences. The weaving of wahakura can take place with mum and other whānau members and allows for others within the wider whānau to have a role in supporting the journey of tamariki mokopuna into the world. It is important that the sector remains open to the nature of hapū, whereby - within Māori understandings of the world - it is integral that all whānau members play a role in supporting the wellbeing of the mokopuna and that this responsibility is not isolated solely to mothers (Northland District Health Board, 2018).

Tash Wharerau (personal communication, July 10, 2018) a wānanga hapū facilitator shares what her space offers to whānau:

As part of the hapū wānanga that we deliver, we're very much coming from a non-judgemental place, because we know that whānau don't work like that and nobody does. ... we don't approach health related decisions, like smoking, in a mainstream way... not in any other way than it is about choices and decisions. We understand about addictions, and that if we truly mean it, that whānau are gold, then we find the most effective way to support their journey in making better changes for whānau.

Amy Wray (personal communication, August 11, 2018) the SUDI prevention regional coordinator for Midlands also shares:

The key concepts of our wānanga hapū is creating a safe space for our whānau, as if this is their space this is owned by them. The backbone of our kaupapa and our model is actually going to be the weaving wānanga with the main priority being strengthening connections. It's about whānau connecting with each other as whānau, connecting

with other whānau, connecting with health providers, connecting with the community, and the community has come together actually through wānanga. We're all here together, working together, for one purpose. So, that's really our key aspect of our wānanga.

Wahakura contextualised within Western institutions

The emergence of wahakura within Western institutions is complex. District Health Board (DHB) funding of wahakura is relatively recent and some DHBs are yet to establish this (Tipene-Leach & Abel, 2019). In this context, it is important to understand the complexities of integrating taonga Māori into a Western system, whether it involves education, health or other social structures. While there is a lack of literature to draw on concerning the integration of wahakura in a DHB space, this discussion sets out the broader context that can help inform this issue.

In recent years, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority has added a variety of Māori subjects to the national curriculum. Following the resurgence of Māori weaving practices within the art and design sector, weaving has become one of these subjects. When Te Roopu Raranga Whatu o Aotearoa, the national body of Māori weavers, was approached about the intention to include weaving in the curriculum, it resisted as it did not want Māori knowledge usurped from its own cultural context and placed in the control of outside bodies (Turi-Tiakitai, 2015).

A specific concern was that the Ministry of Education imposed particular standards of weaving. A committee member argued that 'breaking down knowledge into standards' could lose the holistic nature of the art. Furthermore, ancestral taonga and arts could potentially become a mere commodity, with no understanding of the tikanga and wairua associated with the

practices. Weavers who create wahakura have reinforced these points anecdotally with Hāpai Te Hauora.

It is with this knowledge in mind that health providers should be aware as to how they go about approaching weavers and should respect knowledge specific to iwi, whānau and hapū. Where necessary, they could share insights with the weaver – but with an appreciation of the skill set the weaver brings from their kinship ties.

Supporting engagement with whānau

To build positive relationships and engagement with whānau it is important that any health professional working with wahakura has an understanding of Māori worldviews as well as the outcomes of colonisation, which continue to impact whānau Māori (Durie, 2004). We advise that health professionals working to support whānau outcomes should complete cultural competency and cultural safety training to inform their practice. Hāpai Te Hauora recognises that the wider social determinants of health embed a lifetime pathway of inequity for whānau and their tamariki. Inequitable access to health services are prevalent in the engagement of Māori into maternal support services, including midwifery services, which extends into engagement with Well Child Tamariki Ora (WCTO), primary care services and enrolment into early childhood in the first two thousand days. Hāpai Te Hauora hold that the continued and perpetual inequities in health outcomes experienced by Māori constitute a breach of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. A commitment to uphold the inherent rights of 'Rangatiratanga' in practice, in our contemporary health system is essential to begin to improve health outcomes for Māori.

Ultimately, through building an understanding of Te Ao Māori, health professionals can become more conscious of institutional and personally-mediated racism which impact Māori. Separate to this, but related, is the cultural safety work

that health professionals should undertake to ensure they are cognisant of power differences between whānau and the health system, and that they are safe to practice within this paradigm. Within this context and social backdrop, wahakura can also be seen as a means to support positive engagement with communities. Should health professionals be more aware of the wider ecosystem and other benefits of the wahakura, the task of supporting safe sleep could provide the opportunity to connect with whānau in a culturally relevant and affirming manner. While at an operational level the use of wahakura is straight-forward, the taonga can also offer the opportunity to support more meaningful relationships with whānau and the community which venture beyond the clinical aspects of safe sleep.

Sudden Unexplained Death in Infants (SUDI) and Wahakura

Wahakura are acknowledged as a Māori response and contribution to the reduction of SUDI deaths. In 2006, the Nukutere Weavers' Collective, Ngā Maia, Te Puni Kōkiri and others launched the wahakura programme in Gisborne

The uptake of wahakura across Aotearoa has increased in recent years with many whānau and clinicians sharing how there is a growing desire for wahakura. In the context of SUDI Prevention, wahakura are the only safe sleeping device which are culturally relevant to Māori. From a health equity standpoint, ensuring health interventions are culturally relevant is integral to creating better health outcomes for Māori. While the SIDS rates fell dramatically in the early 1990s, they have not reduced equitably across population groups (Child & Youth Mortality Review Committee, 2017).

The SUDI risk for Māori and Pacific babies has remained constantly higher than for non-Māori non-Pacific babies. In fact, Māori babies are nearly seven times more likely, and Pacific babies are nearly four times more likely, to die from SUDI (p. 3).

This data signifies the vast differences in the rates of SUDI for different population groups and emphasises the need for the health sector to prioritise and needs and rights of whānau Māori and families of the Pacific. It is important to document that Māori and Pacific have differential access to the social determinants of health such as housing, education, income and that these inequities intersect with poorer health outcomes such as SUDI.

Taking into account the impacts and deprivation which these population groups experience, it is advised that SUDI prevention programmes work collaboratively with other agencies to ensure the wider needs of the families are met (Child & Youth Mortality Review Committee, 2017).

SUDI prevention messaging and wahakura

Hāpai Te Hauora is tasked with providing workforce development resources which are consistent nationally and are up-to-date and evidence based. The messaging must also consider what is relevant to each of the priority populations, so we work with communities to co-create and co-design these resources.

The P.E.P.E. acronym¹ provides distributors of safe sleep devices the opportunity to reinforce the top two risk and protective factors for SUDI. This messaging is also relevant to wahakura distribution. Hāpai Te Hauora provide extra resources² on the website for wahakura provision such as how to maintain and clean the taonga. Additional information which health professionals may find helpful includes:

- ◆ Place the wahakura in the middle of the bed between the parents with the top of the wahakura at the very head of the bed where both parents can easily see baby and comfort him/her (head to head).
- ◆ Position baby in the wahakura with his/her feet to the foot of the wahakura (feet to foot).
- ◆ Air the wahakura weekly or more frequently if the sheets are soiled. Usually instructions on the care of wahakura are given at wānanga or by the weaver.

¹ P.E.P.E. acronym

Place baby in their own baby bed in the same room as their parent or caregiver.

Eliminate smoking in pregnancy and protect baby with a smokefree whānau, whare and waka.

Position baby flat on their back to sleep - face clear of bedding.

Encourage and support breastfeeding and gentle handling of baby.

² Find digital resources here:

http://sudinationalcoordination.co.nz/digital-resources?resource_type=pepe_resources



REGIONAL DIFFERENCES OF WAHAKURA

Across Aotearoa the appearance, size and style of wahakura varies somewhat. The differences in most cases are specific to each respective weaver, or local, whānau/ hapū/ iwi weaving collective. As mātauranga Māori and weaving practices are not totally consistent, it is important to respect and retain different practices specific to iwi and whānau that sit within a wider system of knowledge (Durie, 2004; Ka'ai et al, 2004; King et al, 2018).

Rather than expecting expert weavers to adhere to a 'one size fits all' model or a nationally prescribed standard, we have worked with weavers to build up a body of knowledge 'for regions by regions with regions' to provide context and knowledge about wahakura and its various forms. But even within 'regions', each weaver has their own sense of artistry and creative expression.

We acknowledge the weavers and their whānau who have shared their mātauranga and lived experiences to document the

methodologies of wahakura weaving and associated tikanga with the aim of identifying both the common and the unique elements of such practices across Aotearoa New Zealand.

This section does not provide guidelines or specifications for wahakura within each of the respective regions. It provides a broader context which explores variations of styles, designs, weaving processes and the depth that is involved in producing these taonga. It is important to acknowledge not only the expertise involved in weaving these wahakura but to acknowledge that it all starts in the pā harakeke. Growing the tipu/ seedlings, the whenua sacredness, the years of tending the harakeke, and maintaining the pā. From the planting of a pā it could take anywhere from 5-7 years before any harakeke was harvested to prepare for making wahakura.



Cassandra Moar, Te Tai Tokerau

Whaea Cassandra is an expert weaver from Northland. She teaches hapū māmā and health professionals through wānanga wahakura and produces her own extensive collection of wahakura and other woven products. These include whāriki, kete, pōtae and most recently large tukutuku (wall panels) for Manaia PHO and the whānau room at Whangarei Hospital.

Cassandra, who has woven more than 2,000 wahakura waikawa, has customised the process so that the wahakura can fit a standard Pēpi-Pod® mattress (360 mm wide x 700 mm long at the base) and the walls are high enough (25 mm deep) to safeguard the structure of the wahakura when bed-sharing. She attributes her customised approach to the guidance and mentorship of Dr David Tipene-Leach and Nanny Whaipooti Hitchiner who led a revitalisation of the wahakura across Aotearoa in the early part of this century.

Weaving was a big part of Cassandra's upbringing. Her mother was a weaver and some of her first memories are of sitting on the whāriki with her mother and siblings, each completing a section of the whāriki. Growing up she remembers her father taking the whānau to tangihanga and the whole whānau would weave pārō/ kono (food baskets). Her brothers were also excellent weavers.

The art of weaving isn't limited to just cutting the harakeke and weaving into a product. Some of the processes of weaving included using the copper (large wash tub) to boil the harakeke to soften, to accessing the mud that was used to dye. Some of her memories as a child were of following the shifting muds (specific to Te Tai Tokerau) that were accessed in the mangroves down at the beach or in the creek. The muds shifted daily so it was a matter of reading the environment to know where to go. Weaving is now Cassandra's fulltime mahi, so she has a number of pā harakeke that she maintains and sources harakeke from.

Cassandra likes to use a muka flax to weave her waikawa. She identifies a muka flax through sight of the flowers which curl upwards and the leaves which have a black edge. Muka flax was processed in the north during the early nineteenth century as the plant produced strong fibre to make rope. Rope making was a profitable industry, thus the planting, cultivation and harvesting of such flax was abundant. Whilst the industry has been redundant for many generations, muka flax can still be found on roads near the factories. Cassandra continues to access and maintain some of these pā harakeke.

A number of DHBs in the northern region have secured contracts with Cassandra to help provide wahakura and education on wahakura weaving practices across their communities. In 2018, she presented Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern with a wahakura and a waikawa for her pēpi and she continues to supply Dr David Tipene-Leach and others with wahakura to support the kaupapa of Safe Sleep across Aotearoa.

Shelley Bell, Tāmaki Makaurau

Shelley Bell is a kairaranga who works and resides in Tāmaki Makaurau. In 1998 she enrolled into a Diploma of Māori Fine Arts Weaving at UNITEC under the tutelage of Joy Wikitera, Kahutoi Te Kanawa and Judy Hohaia. During her study she says “I got to learn the full shebang from karakia, tikanga, traditional dying, muka, tāniko, everything to do with weaving and all within te mahi ā Te Whare Pora. The course was extra challenging for me due to the fact that I birthed 2 pēpi during this time. Of Ngāpuhi and Tainui descent, when studying Shelley remembers being asked to research her connections to raranga and shared that one of her kuia (on her Tainui side) was named Te Ao Harakeke and that her ancestress Tōrere was the one tasked with carrying the clump of harakeke off the Tainui waka which was then planted and propagated up the Wainui river. It was heartening to know that Tōrere (the place) is known as having the finest weavers. My mum who was staunch to being Ngāpuhi, would correct me when I used the term ‘harakeke’ saying “no its name is kōrari”.

Shelley has managed to develop and incorporate entrepreneurial acumen and her artistry into a successful and sustainable business model. Whiri have become her signature weaving product and she and her weaving colleagues are producing approximately 200 wahakura annually across 3 District Health Boards, 2 Hauora providers, markets and individual whānau requests. Her art is not limited to wahakura, like many other kairaranga she produces all types of woven taonga.

Growing up in Rotorua she remembers fondly the memories of her elder brother (with intellectual disadvantage) who was taught to weave and prepare piupiu whenu by a whānau in the village of Whakarewarewa. “He would be given a bag full of flax and he would just sit in his room for hours and prepare the whenu. His room always had the smell of flax and was always messy with the para. I look back as a weaver now and realise that what we couldn’t see

then was that working with harakeke was his rongoā, that working with it was like a saviour”.

Previously involved in tutoring Raranga at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa and Manukau Institute of Technology, this year Shelley returned to teaching by holding her first wānanga wahakura supported by Counties Manukau DHB. A 5-week wānanga (5 x 3 hour sessions and a weekend noho) teaching 11 hapū māmā[s] through a process of “mahī a Te Whare Pora and Hine Te Iwaiwa, lessons in being in the Whare Pora, Te Papa Atawhai, whakaritenga, mahi raranga, whiri kete, they begun by learning the preparation of whiri kete giving them the skills of learning how to weave 3 whiri wahakura as well as all of the safe sleep messaging”. “It was beautiful to see the hapū māmā and their whānau come together, mahi together, to produce a wahakura.”

Her passion is to support wāhine to weave wahakura, she says “I want to support and help women into this space, building capacity and business development, but more importantly I want to have more Māori babies living and having the best start. The wahakura helps, it bonds, it is Māori, it is to practice te ao Māori, setting baby up for life, from wahakura connections to whakapapa, building on te ao Māori strengths all from the close proximity of a sleeping space”. “Seeing the oranga of whānau happening at the wānanga through the hapū māmā[s] own effort of making their own wahakura was a really special part of the project.”

She acknowledges the tikanga me ōnā ritenga of other master weavers and continues to develop and learn in this space, she says “I immerse myself in other weavers Whare Pora, developing my practice is based on lessons shared and learnt from other weavers”.



art by RIWA, Heretaunga

Te harakeke

Te kōrari

Ngā taonga i whakarere iho

O te Rangi

O te Papa

Homai te oranga mō matou

Tihei Mauri Ora!

Riwa is a Toi Māori artisan and she specialises in wahakura. Riwa has a distinct and set template for her wahakura using the waikawa style, with a harakeke spine at the base. Her measurements for the wahakura are standard, so every Wahakura Riwā (which means "to hold and protect your treasure") is the same. She guarantees the quality and she provides a maintenance, care, and use brochure for each wahakura. Safety standards are an integral part of each and every wahakura Riwā makes.

Within the design of her wahakura she weaves the shiny side of the harakeke facing inwards, she's weaved this deliberately so that baby and their delicate skin is closest to the smooth side of the harakeke. To maintain the integrity of each of the wahakura, they are sun-dried before distribution.

Within the concepts of whanaungatanga and manaaki Riwa encourages whānau to weave their own wahakura and supports this by teaching night classes to those that have an interest.

There are some varieties of harakeke that do not work well for wahakura. Riwa looks for length - as long as possible works best for wahakura.

Riwa harvests pā harakeke from all over Hawkes Bay, including Te Awa o Te Atua Reserve, just south of Flaxmere and further afield from Edwards Pit Park in Palmerston North, a beautiful reserve full of native plants and wetlands, and also in Kāpiti.

The distribution of Wahakura Riwā is not exclusive to the Hawkes Bay region, she also supplies to Southland DHB and Northland DHB, and a midwife running Hapū Māmā courses in Taranaki. There's even Wahakura Riwā overseas. Riwa shared with us, "I love everything about wahakura - making them, the fragrance they give, the embracing of our culture, and how they are helping our pēpē".

art by RIWA Ltd was one of 3 finalists for the Emerging Business Award, MWDI Māori Business Women Awards 2019.

Jenny Firmin, Manawatū,
Horowhenua, Tararua,
Whanganui

Ko Ranginui e tū iho nei

Ko Papatūānuku e tākoto ake nei

Ka puta ki te whai ao, ki te ao mārama, ngā tamariki te kāhui atua

Mai i te onetapu i Kurawaka Ko Hineahuone Ko Hinetītama Ko Hinenuitepō

Nā Hine-te-iwa-iwa te takapau wharanui, kia puta te pā harakeke

Ko te whare tapu o te tāngata te pitomata ki te pito ora

E putu ake ana a pūanga, he tohu o te ora

Tihei Mauri Ora

Jenny descends from and was brought up in Whanganui. She is a kairaranga specialist of wahakura waikawa. She grew up with raranga then later learnt more about the craft of weaving through Te Wānanga o Aotearoa 2009-2012. She then became a Kaiako there in 2013 and has become a prolific kairaranga within her rohe.

These waikawa are weaved from raw harakeke. She cultivates, maintains and harvests from her own pā harakeke which is based in Whanganui. She likes to use local pā harakeke when in other rohe. Jenny utilises her own tikanga which draws on the ancestral knowledge systems that she was brought up with and learnt over time.

Jenny has a huge commitment to teaching whānau and hapū wāhine the value of wahakura through teaching the process of weaving a wahakura in wānanga. The wānanga with whānau takes 3 days and starts in the pā harakeke - from karakia, to harvesting, to weaving the waikawa. She has a team of support kairaranga who sit with each of the hapū māmā and their whānau during wānanga. It's a team effort, even the kuia attend wānanga and sew and knit blankets for whānau to enjoy with their newly woven waikawa.

Jenny takes all of the newly made wahakura home with her from the wānanga and she takes them through a process of ensuring

their integrity as they dry. This drying process guarantees that the veracity of the waikawa is intact and ready for pēpi.

Her weaving talents extend across a range of raranga products and also include birthing mats/whāriki.

When whānau can't attend a wānanga and still would like one they can make contact with her to sort out what can be done for them. At the moment her and her team are producing wahakura for Palmerston North, and Whanganui.

Ala Ward and Felicity Spencer, Te Waipounamu

Ala and her daughter Felicity belong to a small roopu of weavers in the top of the South Island. The memories of their mum and aunties weaving on the back lawn prompted them to learn the art and everything that goes with it. In 2010, they both attended Te Wānanga o Aotearoa and were mentored to weave under the direction of Margaret Bond.

Ala and Felicity place huge importance on wahakura (both waikawa and whiri) and safe sleep but their practice is anchored in the knowledge that everything that they weave is a taonga. Every piece of raranga has a mauri and the process of karakia and tikanga is essential.

They weave styles of wahakura, waikawa and whiri utilising the parekāniwha (harakeke species). Waikawa is a faster process and with the pressure to produce large quantities for wananga these become the preferred option. Ala says “To care for and sustain my ringaringa, waikawa are the easier of the two to make, although sometimes the mauri comes into play here when weaving and I listen to the harakeke and sometimes end with a wahakura whiri.”

Ala works for Te Piki Oranga in Outreach Immunisation as well as supporting wānanga wahakura across the region. Felicity works for the Cancer Society and also supports this kaupapa. They understand the importance of whānau ora and health messaging so they easily incorporate these into their craft. “Engaging with them to make a difference for our whanau.” She says “If I can teach just one wahine about the wellbeing of their tamariki, I feel I’ve done my job”.

They maintain and harvest only one pā harakeke that is spread down and across the local riverbank. Some whānau ask for specific pieces and Ala tries to source harakeke from their area of origin. She says “It’s about whakapapa. If I can, I try to provide connections back to the whenua for each of those whānau”.



SUMMARY

This paper articulates the whakapapa of wahakura and documents the full context for this taonga from the perspectives of experts and communities. In the context of SUDI Prevention, this paper contributes historical context and regional expert narratives to demonstrate the full benefits available to whānau through deep engagement with the tikanga around wahakura. For the realisation of these benefits, significant change is required within the health system to accommodate mātauranga Māori me ōnā tikanga relating to wahakura.



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GLOSSARY

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Aotearoa | North Island, now used for New Zealand |
| Hāpai te Hauora | Māori Public Health Organisation based in Auckland |
| hapū | to be pregnant, kinship group, clan, tribe, subtribe |
| hapū māmā | pregnant women |
| harakeke | Phormium tenax, New Zealand flax, an important native plant with long, stiff, upright leaves |
| Horowhenua | area that surrounds the town of Levin in the lower North Island |
| iwi | extended kinship, tribe, nation, people,nationality, race, strength, bone |
| kaiako | teacher, instructor |
| Kairaranga | teacher of weaving |
| Kāpiti | Coast line in lower North Island south of Otaki and north of Pukerua Bay |
| karakia | prayer, grace, blessing, service, incantation, ritual chants |
| kaupapa | topic, policy, matter for discussion, plan, purpose, scheme, proposal, agenda, theme |
| kete | basket, kit |
| kohunga | superior variety of harakeke, used for muka and whenu. Great for weaving. |
| kōrero | speech, narrative, story, news, account, discussion, conversation, discourse, statement |
| mahi raranga | New Zealand flax weaving |
| mahi-a-Te Whare Pora | Learn Māori weaving using harakeke and other materials, Dip. in Māori & Indigenous Art |
| manaaki | support, hospitality, caring for, to protect, respect, generosity |
| Manaia PHO | Primary Health Organisation operating within Whangarei & Kaipara Districts of Northland |
| Manawatū | area that surrounds the city of Palmerston North in the lower North Island |
| marae | open area in front of whareniui where formal discussions take place, complex of buildings |
| mātauranga | knowledge, wisdom, understanding, skill, sometimes used in the plural |
| mauri | life principle, life force, vital essence, special nature, material symbol of life, source of emotions |
| mokopuna | grandchild, grandchildren, descendant |
| muka | prepared flax fibre |
| ora | life, health, vitality, fit, well, alive, to recover, revive, safe, healed |
| oranga | survivor, food, livelihood, welfare, health, living |
| Pā harakeke | flax bush, generations |
| para | left over pieces stripped off in preparing harakeke |
| parekaniwha | species/variety of harakeke |
| pārō/kono | small food basket |
| pēpē/pēpī | baby |
| piupiu whenu | leaves used to make traditional waist to knee garment made of harakeke |

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|------------------------|--|
| pōtae | cap, hat, beret, beanie, covering for the head, to encircle, surround, envelope |
| Rangatiratanga | sovereignty, principality, self determination, self management, chieftainship, authority |
| raranga | weaving, to wave, plait, to blow gently, direction, course, bearing |
| ringaringa | hand, arm, to wave |
| Rongoā | remedy, medicine, drug, cure, medication, treatment, solution to a problem, tonic |
| taiore/taeore | species/variety of harakeke great for weaving |
| Tainui/Tainui waka | territory of the tribes descended from the crew of the Tainui canoe |
| Tāmaki Makaurau | Auckland region |
| tamariki | children |
| tāngata | people, men, persons, human beings |
| tangata whenua | local people, indigenous people, to be natural, at home, comfortable, established |
| tangihanga | funeral, crying, weeping, rites for the dead |
| tāniko | boarder for cloaks, finger woven, embroider, embroidered |
| taonga | property, goods, possession, effects, object, treasure, anything prized |
| Tararua | area that surrounds the towns of Dannevirke, Woodville & Pahiatua, to divide into two |
| Te Papa Atawhai | Māori name for the Department of Conservation |
| Te Piki Oranga | Kaupapa Māori primary health provider for Te Tau Ihu o Te Waka a Maui |
| Te Rōpū Raranga Whatu | New Zealand Weavers Group |
| Te Tai Tokerau | Northland, North of Auckland |
| Te Tiriti o Waitangi | Treaty signed between Māori of Aotearoa-NZ and Queen Victoria on behalf of Britain |
| Te Waipounamu | South Island |
| Te Whare Pora | art of weaving |
| tikanga | protocol, correct procedure, practice, custom, habit, rule, code, plan, way, manner |
| tikanga me ōnā ritenga | standards & foundations of Māori society, indigenous Māori knowledge |
| Torere | name of ancetress from the East Coast, darling, beloved, truelove, loved one |
| tukutuku | ornamental lattice work used between carvings, to decorate, to let go, let down |
| wāhine | female, women, feminine, ladies, wives |
| waikawa | simpler style of wahakura |
| wairua | spirit, soul, attitude, quintessence, feel, mood, nature, essence, atmosphere |
| wānanga | tribal knowledge, lore, learning, seminar, conference, forum, to meet & discus |
| wānanga hapū | antenatal education programme, Māori labour, birth & parenting programme |
| wānanga hapū | educational meeting/classes for pregnant women and their families |
| whakapapa | genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent |
| whakaritenga | ritual, prayers, arrangement, settlement, agreement, appointment, |
| whānau | to be born, give birth, extended family, family group |
| whanaungatanga | relationship, kinship, sense of family connection |
| Whanganui | city and area around it on the West Coast of the North Island |
| whāriki | mat, spread out on the ground, floor covering, carpet, mat. |
| whenua | land, country, nation, state, ground, territory, domain, placenta, afterbirth |
| whiri | to twist, plait, weave, spin, to fold hands, curl up |
| whiri kete | flax weaving, basket weaving |



HĀPAI TE HAUORA
MĀORI PUBLIC HEALTH



HĀPAI TE HAUORA
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