

*Article*

# **Ancestral Footsteps: Te Heke ki Korotuaheka**

**Kelli Te Maihāroa**

## **ABSTRACT**

This article presents an Indigenous cultural narrative of the author's whānau (family) re-tracing their ancestral roots and routes on a five-day hīkoi (walk). Walking as a whānau is an expression of ahi kā roa, the long burning ancestral fires throughout the whenua (land), thus re-igniting intergenerational interest in Indigenous knowledge. The visceral experience of walking backwards into one's future rekindles feelings and memories of eternal familial bonds. This article explores trekkers' experiences through a commemorative hīkoi through the Waitaki Valley in 2016, as recorded by participants in whānau journals. Today, hīkoi is a way of re-tracing ancestral footsteps of tīpuna (ancestors) who have travelled across Aotearoa New Zealand for over a millennium.

## **KEYWORDS**

Heke (migration), hīkoi (walk/ march), whenua (land), Indigenous knowledge, tīpuna (ancestors)

## **Background and Context**

Inspired by history and the legacy of waka carver and navigator, the late Sir Hekenui Busby, contemporary Māori society has rejuvenated ancient navigation traditions across Te Moana Nui a Kiwa, the Southern Pacific Ocean (Douglas, 2020; Henare, 2018; Te Ao Māori News, 2019; Te Kanawa, 2015; Turei, 1993) and the waterways of Aotearoa (Foster, 2009). Tracing Māori ancestral footsteps has also taken place through commemorative visits to places where tīpuna served in the 28th Māori Battalion of World War II (Clarke-Mamanu, 2018; Gisborne Herald, 2018; NZ Mānuka Group, n.d; Melbourne, 2014). Today, Māori whānau walking together on the same

whenua that their tīpuna (ancestors) travelled is a way to gain insights and first-hand experiences of ancestral footsteps of the past, particularly in the colonial era when many ancestors were forcibly removed from the land (Ashton, 2013; Botting, 2021; Forbes, 2016; Hurihanganui, 2020; Joseph, 2012; Judge, 2016; Maipi, 2014; McLean, 2019; McClean, 2016; Napier, 2013; Simmonds, n.d.; Te Kura Kaupapa Motuhake o Tāwhiua, 2020; Te Maihāroa, 2017; Waatea, 2020).

The founding tīpuna (ancestor) of Te Waipounamu was the celestial navigator of the Uruao waka, Rākaihatū. Rākaihautū and his Waitaha people were the first community to reach the shores of Wakatū, Nelson around 850 A.D (Carrington, Tau & Anderson, 2008; Mitchell & Mitchell, 2004; Tau, 2008; Te Maihāroa, K., 2019, 2017). Almost a millennium later, in the Māori village of Te Wai Te Ruati near Temuka, the tribal raketira (chief) Te Rehe and his wife Kokiro gave birth to their second son Te Maihāroa (1800-1886) and raised him in the ancient lore handed down through his mother's Waitaha ariki lines (high born). The lineage from Rākaihautū to Te Maihāroa have been archived for posterity in seven whakapapa (genealogical) tables (Graham, 1922). Te Maihāroa stood for the mana Māori of his people and Hoani Tikao stated that his whakapapa cannot be disputed (Tikao, 1990, p. 83).

## **Te heke ki Te Ao Mārama, 1877 | The migration to Ōmarama, 1877**

Te Maihāroa followed his father's chiefly footsteps in becoming a powerful raketira in his lifetime, a leading tohuka (spiritual priest) and the last Māori prophet of Te Waipounamu, South Island of Aotearoa (Beattie Collection, 1939-1945; Elsmore, 1989; Mikaere, 1988; Tikao, 1990). As a young man in the early 1800s, Te Maihāroa was confronted with challenges resulting from early settlers and the onset of colonisation. Every cornerstone of the ancient Waitaha way of life was turned upside down with the introduction of European diseases, the diminishing use of te reo Māori me ōna tikaka (Māori language and culture), the rapid loss of whenua, the restricted access to mahika kai (traditional food), and the encroachment of colonial settlers squatting on and claiming Māori whenua.

As a kaitiaki of Papatūānuku (Mother Earth) along with his people, Te Maihāroa was outspoken about the 'blood money' that was collected from selling our earth mother

(Te Maihāroa, R, 2013). He was a staunch advocate of tino rakatirataka (Māori sovereignty), writing to the New Zealand Government and the Queen of England to reinforce that foreign settlers should only be permitted to live on legally purchased land. In 1848, large tracts of land such as the land deal of eight million hectares, were sold by Ngāi Tahu to the New Zealand Company for 2,000 pounds (Mikaere, 1988). Te Maihāroa and other southern raketira of the time, including Ngāi Tahu, viewed the sale in 1848 as covering “only such land as could be seen from the (east) coast” (Mikaere, 1988, p. 68).

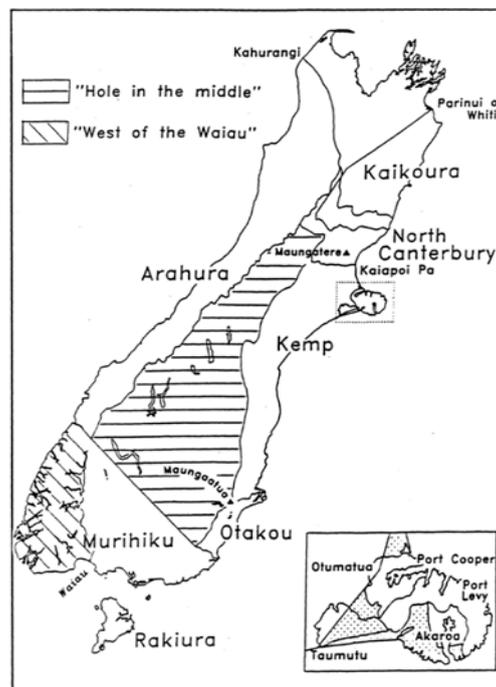


Figure 1. The Claim and the Proceedings. (The Ngai Tahu Report, 1991, p.7).

Te Maihāroa was the ariki tauaroa (paramount chief) and identified the urgent need to assert his unextinguishable ahi kā roa, uninterrupted occupation of his ancestral land. This Indigenous land rights underpinned the traditional land tenure system to secure the “hole in the Middle’ by way of physically occupying these unsold ancestral lands (The Ngāi Tahu Report, 1991, p.8). He aimed to not only protect his chiefly land rights, but to also preserve Māoritaka (living and being Māori) through a system of cultural and social separation from colonial settlers (Beattie, 1935-1945; Elsmore, 1989; Mikaere, 1988). This assertion of tino rakatirataka was commonly known as ‘Te Heke ki Te Ao Marama’ (Beattie, 1935-1945) and the ‘Arowhenua Movement’

(Elsmore, 1989), where between one hundred and fifty to six hundred whānau members sought refuge within the hinterlands of the 'Middle Island' of the South Island (Beattie, 1918).

The viewpoint that the interior of the land had not been visited was further reiterated in the Ngai Tahu Report (1991, p.8):

*The claimants said that Ngai Tahu did not sell to the Crown as part of Kemp's purchase ... land in the South Island from Canterbury foothills up to the centre line of the alps. This large area of land, during the claim described as the "Hole in the Middle", now contains considerable hydroelectric and drainage works and includes major lakes, rivers and mountains.*

Journeying through their ancestral whenua, the whānau on Te Heke found the landscape dotted with European squatters without any compensation to Māori for these illegal leases. Despite living peacefully for almost two years at Te Ao Mārama, Te Maihāroa and his community were forcefully evicted from their beloved land by the settler government and returned to Korotuaheka, an ancient Waitaha site at the southern end of the Waitaki river (Beattie, 1935-1945; Elsmore, 1989; Mikaere, 1988).

## Planning the hīkoi

### **Te heke Ōmaramataka 2012**

In December 2012, a group of whānau and friends set out to follow in the ancestral footsteps of our pōua, Te Maihāroa, and his Waitaha people by undertaking a commemorative hīkoi. We walked to acknowledge and honour one-hundred and thirty-five years since Te Maihāroa led his people on Te heke ki Te Ao Mārama (the migration to Te Ao Mārama), commonly known today as Ōmarama (Te Maihāroa, 2019, 2017). The contemporary hīkoi was named Te heke ki Ōmaramataka (migration of lingering memories), which traced the 1877 heke from the Waitaki river mouth into the hinterland of Ōmarama. As part of the author's doctoral thesis, whānau were invited to record their experiences on Te heke Ōmaramataka in whānau journals, forming the basis of thesis research and a journal article, *Retracing Ancestral Footsteps* (Te Maihāroa, 2017, 2019). This event was also the subject of a YouTube

documentary, *Te Heke 2012: Waitaki Mouth to Omarama*, created by a whānau member Bronwyn Judge (2012).

## **Te heke ki Korotuaheka 2016**

Using the same data collection process, the author invited whānau members to keep a personal journal of their hīkoi experiences while trekking Te heke ki Korotuaheka over five days in 2016. This hīkoi traced the ancestral footprints of Te Maihāroa and his people when they were evicted from Ōmarama and returned to the ancient kaik (village) of Korotuaheka, at the mouth of the Waitaki river. The author is a mokopuna of the prophet Te Maihāroa and was involved in both contemporary heke in 2012 and 2016, taking on multiple roles as an organiser, participant and researcher.



Photograph 1. Koata Te Maihāroa and Anne Te Maihāroa Dodds planting native flora at Korotuaheka urupā (cemetery), south of Waitaki river (Lisa Te Raki, 2016).

A formative part of the author's doctoral project involved researching the original heke in 1877 and interviewing kaumātua (elders) and inviting participants on the contemporary heke in 2012 and 2016 to document their experiences in whānau

journals (Te Maihāroa, 2019). A kaupapa Māori methodology was adopted as the most culturally appropriate approach to the rakahau (research). Drawing on the principle that research “undertaken by Māori [is] for Māori and with Māori” (Smith, 2015, p. 47), the author developed a ‘for Waitaha, with Waitaha, by Waitaha’ framework. Whakawhanaukataka (relationship building) was adopted as the culturally appropriate manner to invite whānau participation (Bishop and Berryman, 2006; Bishop, Ladwig and Berryman, 2014; Cram and Kennedy, 2010; Hutchings, Tipene, Carney, Greensill, Skelton and Baker, 2012; Rewi, 2014).

Up to 50 whānau members participated in Te Heke ki Korotuaheka, with six whānau members recording their experiences in whānau journals. The research participants comprised of four kaumātua and two pakeke, five were wāhine (women) and one tane (male). Three participants provided whānau journals for both the 2012 and 2016 heke and academic publications based on the doctoral research (Te Maihāroa, K., 2017, 2022). The whānau journals were transcribed and then returned to the participants to check for accuracy. The texts were sequenced according to each of the five days of the journey, forming a daily group diary of whānau experiences. A kaupapa Māori methodology allows whānau voices to be presented as whole texts with the author making additional insights to link threads of personal experiences together to construct a collective narrative. This process of group story work highlights similarities and differences between the experiences of whānau members (Archibald et al, 2022).

## **Whānau journals, 2016**

The idea of Te Heke ki Korotuaheka was discussed amongst several of the Waitaha matriarchs. Anne Te Maihāroa Dodds at the age of 83 framed the hīkoi as an opportunity for the younger generation to grow into leadership roles. Anne’s nieces Ramonda Te Maihāroa and Greta Te Maihāroa assumed the role of project managers. When reflecting on the genesis of the two heke, Anne offered these insights:

*The whole idea of a Heke began in 2011 and our plan to walk between Christmas and New Year 2012 was very enjoyable and enlightening. We began to feel the time, energy, and effort our tīpuna must have given to such a traditional hīkoi, without all the mod-cons we have today.*

*The whole meaning of ahi kā has been bought alive again, as some of us feel the spirit of belonging, and knowing our whenua or placenta is safe on ancestral whenua (Dodds, A., personal communication, 6 March, 2016).*

Due to this trail having already been trekked in 2012, the event organizers for the 2016 heke had a blueprint for how this event could be replicated. One of their first tasks was to collate the addresses, emails, and shopping lists from the 2012 hīkoi. According to Waitaha kawa, an invitation to join the group hīkoi was extended with the intention of being as inclusive as possible, and as an expression of manaakitaka (caring / hospitality).

*The dates were set for five days. We had to start in Ōmarama. Communication lines were opened. There was no decision made other than the whānau and others would be invited if people wanted to come, they could come. I did say that the invitation should be sent to Ngāi Tahu, as a lot of people came from North over the years, and it is important that we work together. There were no restrictions to invitations because we always include rather than exclude (Participant J).*

In 2012, a steering committee was set up with approval from the Waitaki District Council and a funding grant from Te Puni Kōkiri. Four years later, the whānau were unable to access TPK funding as the Whānau Ora criteria had changed. This did not deter Ramonda and Greta who made the decision that whānau could make their own accommodation bookings and “they set the price range, tried to keep it as light as they could, \$10 per child and \$20 dollars a day” (Participant J). Another modification was the return direction of the trek, which followed the 1877 trail when Te Maihāroa and his people were evicted and forced to return to Korotuaheka at the entranceway to the Waitaki valley.

*I know Ramonda did the route at least twice. I took her and showed her the route that we took. So, she made the maps from that, she did a good job with those maps, they were detailed. We took two cars to get all the food in, we were able to share the load between Ramonda, Greta, and us. We had a list; I made a list, and we ticked off the list (Participant J).*

The discussion collates excerpts from journal writings of whānau members who agreed to participate in the 2016 heke and the author’s doctoral research. The work

is intended to read like a group diary of walking from Ahuriri to Korotuaheka over five days. Two main themes that emerged were claiming ancestral ties and connecting with ancestral whenua through the group experience. Rather than analyse the selection of journal quotes, the author has woven these passages into a cultural narrative for readers to draw meaning from the group story work (Archibald et al, 2022).

## **Hīkoi: 10-14 Jan 2016**

### **Day 1: Ahuriri to Ōmarama, 10 January 2016**

With whānau and public occasions, a lot of mahi (work) goes into making an event happen. When whānau members consented to participating in the hīkoi, they were sent an email with information about the authors doctoral thesis and an invitation to be research participants. One email response highlighted the importance of documenting the hīkoi, with regard to recording the personal experiences of whānau walking the route Te Maihāroa led to Korotuaheka.

*Thank you for including the story of Te Maihāroa in full and your care in setting up this research. What beautiful paper to write on? I'm going to write a few impressions (Participant N).*

Whānau members reached the hīkoi starting point at Ahuriri camping ground at various times on a Sunday afternoon, with most people feeling relaxed and in holiday mode. One participant recalled seeing everyone arrive:

*The day arrived and we all ventured to Ōmarama. There were a few hiccups for me with my broken hand, and two missing windows from my new caravan. It's part of the plan. We're tracing our footsteps now. When we arrived, some of the people were already there. One of them from Australia, who was that boy from the Bull family. There were quite a few there when we arrived, so we swapped greetings and had a prayer. I remember saying a prayer each morning and night. It was open to everyone and everyone introduced themselves (Participant J).*

People sheltered from the sun and reminisced about the last time they had visited the area for the 2012 hīkoi. Although this place was a public camping site, for some

it held special memories as a sacred place.

*We waited for all the members who felt the call to gather at the sacred spring alongside the Ahuriri river. This is the place the last heke four years ago ended (Participant K).*

Another participant noted the time that whānau members were asked to gather and the relaxed atmosphere.

*We arrived at the Ahuriri nohoaka (campsite). We were supposed to be there by 2.30pm for a 3pm mihiwhakatau. The Aunts were still coming, so it was a casual first gathering. Very cool people rocking up, half that I hadn't met before (Participant A).*

For one participant, they felt this was a different heke to the one earlier in 2012, that this 2016 hīkoi that was led by grandmothers.

*It's Sunday arvo, and I arrive with moko [grandchildren]. First this eye saw was the grandmother's flag being put up by a couple of cousins, then feeling this walk is a grandmothers' walk. So, I hopped out of the vehicle and greeted the whānau with hugs and hongi (Participant M).*

Another participant also thought about the last heke, four years earlier, when their mother was still alive and a very special photograph was taken.

*We travelled up the little gravel road towards where we completed our heke last time. I still remember the photo of my māmā, posing on the track, she didn't like photos, but happily stood and smiled for me (Participant A).*

He kore mihi aroha, our love for the ancestors who have passed is never lost, as their memory and spirit becomes passed on to the descendants whose lives they created. The late Rangimārie Te Maihāroa, the Ūpoko (spiritual head) of Waitaha, was remembered in a journal entry:

*This the place where I took my last walk alongside my beautiful pōua Rangimārie last summer. We have been creating memories here and healing the wrongs of the past. We gather to join our peaceful forces and honour those who walked before us. This is the place we start our new journey together (Participant K).*

The heke symbolized a peace hīkoi or a way where the past could be honored by

remembering the ancestors who had travelled this trail. A narrow path leading up to a clearing was the place where forty people gathered for an opening ceremony. Facilitated by matriarch Aunty Sissie, a mihi whakatau (traditional welcome) and acknowledged the people coming together for a commemorative hīkoi. The karakia (prayer) thus opened the trail so whānau members could walk in their ancestral footsteps. Anne Te Maihāroa Dodds and the author conveyed the background history of Rākaihautū, and the importance of whenua and Te Maihāroa and the heke. Matua Rua Pick completed the formalities by playing his kōauau (flute).

*There was a pōwhiri under the trees where the last Te Heke finished. It felt solemn and sacred, but also very friendly and welcoming (Participant L).*

## **Day 2: Ōmarama to Otematata, 11 January 2016**

The whānau were told that breakfast was ready from 7am, as whānau had to be packed up and prepared for the first walking day.

*It was up to each walker to pack their own lunch; Gay did all this last time (Participant J).*

Waitaha identify as kaitiaki of Papatūānuku. Therefore, it was imperative that the camp site was left as it was found – with only footprints and memories being left behind.

*Everything was packed up. No rubbish was left, we've always done that, leave nothing behind (Participant J).*

The whānau began the hīkoi with "a blessing from our spiritual head, Aunty Sissie sending us off with karakia" (Participant A). People felt encouraged by the guidance of elders. One tāua (grandmother) observed that Waitaha was non-hierarchical in the way that we organize ourselves tribally as an iwi.

*We had a little whakawātea (spiritual clearing) and instructions were given with the previous walkers were asked to be the leaders, because they already know the drill. Rua was there with his pūkāea (trumpet). We did the whakawātea, which is the clearing of the pathway of Waitaha. I was no better than anyone else, we were all the same (Participant J).*

Anne Pate Titaha Te Maihāroa Dodds, aka Aunty Sissy, shared her whakaaro on the importance and meaning of performing the whakawātea.

*I shared a whakamoemiti (prayer) to clear our pathway, and after months of planning he Kaupapa o tēnei Heke from Te Ao Mārama to Korotuaheka, anei te rā e rua tekau o Hanuere, 2016. Kua rere te haere tātou ki Te Ao Mārama, one of the pristine places of ancestral whenua, including Hāwea and Wānaka, in Te Wāhi Pounamu, confiscated by the then Government, known as ‘the Hole in the Middle’. From what I understand from my papa, is that from our Waitaha ariki line, my great grandfather, pōua Te Maihāroa did not sign the Treaty. It is no wonder, as according to his belief system, ‘we are of the whenua, the whenua does not belong to us’ (Te Maihāroa, A., 2016).*



Photograph 2. Whakawātea, clearing the opening of the return trail. (Lisa Te Raki, 2016).

After the whakawātea, the whānau gathered for a photo before embarking on Te heke ki Korotuaheka 2016. One kaumātua reflected on emotions that Te Maihāroa and his people would have been feeling after their eviction and return hīkoi.

*I touched the stream we were next to and said goodbye. I thought of the eviction of our ancestors and how sad it all must have been. However, with Te Maihāroa’s vision to head back to the Waitaki mouth, there must have been hope and confidence (Participant J).*

Both the 2012 and the 2016 hīkoi were organized in remembrance of Te Maihāroa and his people on Te Heke 1877-79, paying homage to Papatūānuku and the Waitaki river and her tributaries. The Ahuriri stream found a special place in one whānau member’s heart.

*I really appreciated Aunty's warm welcome and the sense of inclusiveness as part of the whānau – thank you! I was really struck by the idea there being a contract with the river and though what a brilliant idea of Aunty's and nice it was acknowledged by others. It therefore seemed appropriate to hear the voice of the rivers as we sat around doing our mahi (Participant N).*

The commencement of the second hīkoi in 2016 served as a reminder that people walking the trail were being cared for by whānau members attending to their support needs. For one participant, his wairua (spiritual) followed two paths as the walkers set off.

*I watched them gather for the start of the walk, with me being in the supportive crew. Some of my spirit went with them and some of my spirit stayed to clean up and move to the next camp to sort out where we are staying (Participant I).*

Several members of the support team visited the urupā where Uncle Rangimārie Te Maihāroa was laid to rest. When one participant was about to leave, an elder gifted her a taoka (treasure), which in turn became a symbol of whānau and spiritual resilience.

*As we were exiting the site, Aunty handed me a taoka to take with me – te whai (the stingray). It was important because it was a gift presented to her at the same site when we finished last time, made with aroha by a man on the West Coast. At the time, Aunty was unsure what it was supposed to mean, but she adored it, and it is now one of her favourite taoka. I carried it with trepidation, knowing that it was supposed to now journey with me back down the valley to Korotuaheka. I felt it was a tohu, to keep me spiritually strong on this journey without my māmā this time (Participant A).*

Another tohu (spiritual sign) was recalled by a participant who noticed something unusual about the waters of the Ahuriri.

*It was strange. When I left the area that stream came up dirty. I thought it must have been the Ahuriri, but when I came away, no, the Ahuriri was not up (Participant J).*

As the first day of walking continued, the support team assisted people with water,

kai and sometimes rest.

*I'm one of the supportive crew members with vehicles as a shuttle ready to pick up tired or slow walkers on the way to Otematata (Participant I).*

The hīkoi was long, hot, and busy with people moving back and forth to pick up cars and tired walkers. A participant wrote of how the mokopuna (grandchildren) were coping.

*The mokos that started with the walkers got tired about halfway and needed to be picked up, but got back to camp at Otematata and they ran around playing, so were they really tired, aye? (Participant I).*

Arriving in Otematata, the place where whānau would camp for the evening, was a welcome relief. Sprinklers were set up to relieve hot and tired walkers. Despite the energy and physical effort required for walking, whānau utilized this time to connect to their common ancestry and tīpuna whenua (ancestral land).

*Everyone was happy and enjoying the beautiful day, which passed very quickly. Some took the opportunity for several stops and swims. We have our lovely filmmaker with us, and she tries to get people talking on camera. (Participant A).*

### **Day 3: Otematata to Kurow, 12 January 2016**

Day 3 was the second walking day. In a temperature of 34 degrees Celsius, people were aware of health and safety factors that could affect them. Beginning with a karakia to protect whānau members, the kaupapa for walking to Korotuaheka was also impressed.

*We were hoping to start early, but there seemed to be no rush, with people rising in good spirits. One older lady left early by herself before karakia, so after our experience yesterday, cousin and I shared karakia to keep her safe on the busy road (Participant A).*

Trekking up to ten hours a day meant the support team were needed to make water and food readily available throughout the day. Cars were also relayed along the road to take care of people so that they could focus on the days walk ahead of them.

*I am the supportive crew again this time, I collect the keys to wakas and move them down to Kurow camp so it makes it easier on walkers, so they can shower, eat and sleep (Participant I).*

One participant wrote that she was researching the hīkoi in her journal notes:

*I've been marking major rivers on the topo map on my phone as research for the information project. I asked others to give me thoughts, feelings on river ways as we passed, (to see) if they feel inspired too. Matua has some info for me for the Waitaki river there. (Participant K).*

At Otematata camping ground in 2012, whānau members woke to light rain and a uenuku (rainbow), which was seen as a tohu, a sign that the atua and tīpuna were with the hīkoi and pleased with our efforts. In the same camping site four years later, whānau witnessed another tohu.

*As we gathered before we left, one of the sisters pointed out a tohu in the sky, a cloud in the formation of te whai the stingray which added to the sense of intrigue as to what it could mean? (Participant A).*

One person noted the hazards of walking alongside the open road.

*The last Heke had us on our toes, in survival mode the whole time! The angle of the terrain was difficult, and we walked single file on the edge of the road alert for traffic then into the bidi bids and ruthless barley grass (Participant K).*

In contrast to walking on the hard road surfaces, the new bike trail was a pleasant and welcome change.

*This track is such a blessing! We can walk four astride, were away from the dangerous busy road as we can converse and focus on our surroundings (Participant J).*

One participant considered the responsibility of taking care of the physical safety of whānau and the weight that was placed on Te Maihāroa's shoulders in being responsible for the wellbeing of hundreds of people who had left their home to join

the 1877 heke:

*I was feeling wary of walking the road today, a sense of protection of the whānau moving through the valley. It reminded me to think of our tīpuna, and the responsibility that Te Maihāroa had for the safety and wellbeing of everyone. It must have been a massive undertaking, Te Heke, The Migration of 150-600 people (Participant A).*

This second leg of the walk was the longest in distance, and whānau members began showing signs of weariness.

*My sister and I started together and near the front of the pack, however, our short legs being slow, had others pass us and we ended up in the back groups again (Participant J).*

The effort required on the longer but slower second leg was noted by another participant.

*Such a hot day, 27 kilometers in 34-degree heat! I think I'm the slowest walker, but my cousins stuck with me (Participant L).*

However, the kōrero that was shared while walking was one feature of the hīkoi keeping people's spirits up.

*I ended up in the last groups with my cousins, we were together in the heke four years ago and we chatted of many things as we walked (Participant J).*

An unfortunate incident occurred at one part where whānau members were cautioned to "move on" by a local who did not want them resting by the lake.

*We stopped for a foot soak and bite to eat near the holiday park near the lake, and we were to 'move on' (Participant J).*

This event was also recorded by another participant.

*The only incident to mar the day was the camping ground manager who didn't like us eating*

*and sitting on the lake foreshore around the middle of the day. So ironic to have someone react so quickly to us being on 'private' land and wanting us to move on. Really made me think of Te Maihāroa and his whānau and what it meant to be moved on with no capacity of the European squatters to share Ōmarama. Instead, the Europeans assumed it was theirs! (Participant N).*



Photograph 3. No time to rest, move on whānau. (Jane Zuster, 2016).

With that aside, the locals and summer visitors in the Waitaki valley were generally very friendly towards the whānau on the hīkoi. Cyclists stopped to chat as they went past, and cars would toot horns in support. One woman gifted fruit to the walkers on the hīkoi.

*A local lady stopped her car to offer us fresh fruit, telling us that it was 34 degrees. She said she had been watching the whānau move through the valley and wanted to give us some kai to help sustain us (Participant A).*

When the group reached the campsite, relief and joy to have made the destination point were felt by all.

*The Camp Kurow has a river and swimming pool which some of the walkers, kids, support crew jumped, walked, crawled, flipped, fell, yelled as they go in, then later they feed the eels that live in there at nights (Participant I).*

The evening was spent around the barbeque singing waiata (songs) accompanied by ukulele, and a birthday cake for Aunty Jenny. Te Kohurau, known today as Kurow, is a special place for Waitaha: a resting place, an ancient wānaka (learning) site and

a site of ancestral rock art. The Kurow museum and staff share close relations with Waitaha whānau, seeing the museum exhibits a collection of Waitaha treasures, such as a mokihi (reed boat) made by the late Rangimārie Te Maihāroa. Moving through the Waitaki valley, the hīkoi created spaces for whānau members to connect with people and places.

*On the way back I said to Shane to stop at the museum and there was Karen and I invited her, John, and his wife to come for a catch up. They bought lollies for the kids, and we had a lolly scramble. Samantha learnt how to play the ukulele and a couple of songs. We sung a few songs. The men helped us to pod the beans. I took the beans over there amongst us. We had to go to bed early as there was a 6am wake-up call (Participant J).*

## **Day 4: Kurow to Duntroon, 13 January 2016**

Day 4, the third day of walking, saw people in a positive frame of mind as they gathered for morning karakia.

*Aunty is in good spirits and has lots to say, noting the meaning of names (Participant A).*

Significant places were being visited along the hīkoi: Kurow Museum and Takiroa, a site of rock art. One participant noted their personal feelings.

*Feeling sorry for the walkers but all seem in fine spirits and keen to get going. Feel a little guilty that I'm not walking. I guess we all in our own ways are thinking of our ancestors and the huge changes in their lifestyles – devastating changes full of loss (Participant L).*

Bronwyn Judge, a national filmmaker, posed a question to some whānau members: what does it mean to be a descendant of Te Maihāroa? One journal entry stood out.

*It is hard to be able to put into words our experiences, there is much that cannot be shared and talked about, even hard to find the words to express the feelings. I just feel aroha. Aroha for my sisters, whānau and new friends that have walked and journeyed with me. Aroha for whānau that have worked so hard in the background to make Te Heke 2016 a success. Aroha for my strong Aunties, who continue to keep alive the peaceful messages of Te Maihāroa (Participant A).*

A participant considered how items were displayed at the museum.

*We walked into town where we visited the museum which holds some of our ancestors taonga and prints of the rock drawings. It was strange to have our peaceful section next to the World War II memorial display (Participant J).*

Another person noted the children's excitement to visit the museum.

*The kids were saying what about the museum, what about the museum? They went out of their way the Kurow staff to welcome us. The kids liked the toys around the place and the place to put your koha in. They saw all our artefacts and the mokihi was elevated and well displayed and you can see the whole thing. We can use it if we want, but you really need to be careful with it and it can't be getting wet. They (the children) got a lolly and a certificate at the end (Participant J).*

For Waitaha people, the awa (river) represents an ancestral lifeforce: 'Ko Waitaki ko au, ko au ko Waitaki' – meaning, 'the Waitaki is me, and I am the Waitaki.'

*The spiritual presence is very close today, I feel it all around me. My sister, new to Te Heke feels it too. She is often caught looking over her shoulder, feeling them moving with us. I can't describe the joy that I am now feeling, moving on he ara tawhito (ancient pathways) our tīpuna and to be doing this with my baby sister makes it even more special. (Participant A).*

On the hīkoi, people interacted by sharing aspects of Indigenous knowledge associated with the natural environment, such as the Waitaki river.

*I walked with our filmmaker and learnt more about her as well as what Uncle and Aunty are working for, in terms of recognition of Waitaha, being part of the lower Waitaki Management group to protect the Waitaki River and passing on history and knowledge to keep Waitaha history alive (Participant J).*

Māori history and the normalising of te reo Māori for everyday use have become increasingly important for the nationhood of Aotearoa and visiting tourists.

*One of the cyclists that has gone past us for the last three days, greets us in te reo Māori. Several more stop to ask what we are doing and to chat. Aunty will be pleased with the whakawhanaukataka of her whānau and her local community (Participant A).*

The visit to Takiroa, an ancestral site of rock art near Duntroon, was especially noted by research participants.

*We arrive at Takiroa, the rock art. It is one of those special sacred places that I love. Mocha the dog, is going off, kind of crying, wanting to get in behind the fence to the rock art – she senses them (ancestors) here also (Participant A).*

A historically significant site of the earliest rock art in Aotearoa, Takiroa symbolized a visible connection between the ancestors and their descendants.

*We met up with others at Takiroa, we viewed the drawings and dreamed of those who drew them. We left a stone there as an offering and carried on, three more kilometers to Duntroon! (Participant J).*

As the hīkoi arrived at Duntroon domain, some gathered to drink and kōrero (talk), whilst others went to see the rock art.

*We went to see an amazing cave drawing five kilometres up Earthquake Road, which I took photos of. So much appreciating learning more about Waitaha and enjoying everyone's company! (Participant K).*

The domain was packed with whānau, friends, and other travelling campers, where one participant noted that “we gathered for a prayer and a pow wow. The visitors were welcomed to be a part of it” (Participant J). After dinner, some of the whānau members who did not have tents went back to stay in Kurow, whilst those who stayed were invited to contribute to an evening of kōrero.

*Tonight, we gathered in the lounge of the domain and tāua Aunty Sis spoke to us all. She shared her thoughts and stories and conveyed her messages well. One person we met on Peace Day asked the question which they had talked about. It was “what is it like to be the descendants / children of a prophet”? Even though we were very tired, a few people share their thoughts. It was interesting, as not a lot of people had really thought about it before. Then the idea of what is it like to be Waitaha? Thought provoking questions (Participant J).*

## **Day 5: Duntroon to Korotuaheka, 14 January 2016**

The final day of the hīkoi opened on a slower note.

*My tinana is tired, but my heart has been warmed and my waiura lifted. I don't really want to get out of bed, knowing that this is our last day together before we all must re-join the world (Participant A).*

In a circle formation, the whānau held hands while karakia was performed. The ritual closed with a waiata (group song) before people began walking from Irvine Road to the mouth of the Waitaki river.

*We completed our circle in the morning. it felt so good. All of the birds were singing in the trees, and we took that as a tohu. It had grown as more whānau had come to join us. We stopped and said hello to Hugh Perkins, Deputy Mayor from Oamaru (Participant J).*

The group of walkers had grown in number.

*My other sister and nieces have joined the rōpū (group), catching up with whānau that they have not seen for a long time. My sisters joined us, so it was great to immerse them within our rōpū and introduce them to new people (Participants A).*

With the increase in numbers came an upsurge in group energy, drawing in grandchildren who wanted to take part.

*Deacon said: "I have to walk with them" and Shane slipped out to walk with the group. I guess that's how the old people knew who should be here and there – that's all part of the plan. That's what I call it, when you've completed your work on this side, then you go over to the other side, to bliss (Participant J).*

*I felt a bit different to the rest cause the last day of the walk (as) a supportive waka going up McPherson Road. I caught up with the walkers and got out of the waka to finish with the whānau and noticed other whānau members in with the walkers for the last several kilometers. Which I wanted to do anyway; the feeling was getting too strong not to (Participant I).*

The enlarged rōpū for the final kilometer was warmly welcomed by a large group of whānau, friends and a local reporter at the designated end point.

*I dropped back to the middle to shake hands etc., with the walkers and cuzzie and me back up to the front. My heart wanted to stay in the middle of the heartbeat aye. In the end, there is no end to hidden tears (Participant I).*

For the whānau on this hīkoi, the past and present had merged.

*I feel a real connection with the universe. It was a bitter-sweet time also. Remembering our tīpuna and how they would have felt coming back down the valley after being evicted from their ancestral home (Participant A).*

As the hīkoi neared its end, emotions ran high.

*We arrived and hugged and cried and chatted. I thought of our tīpuna and their arrival, it was high stakes for them! Forced out so fast, I hope they found peace here. I had a moment together with one of my female cousins, in a strong embrace (Participant J).*

*Spiritual wise, to our whānau, you must experience evenings, mornings, days and nights, sleeps, and a bit of walking pain, talking, laughing and even somebody will question some whānau members if they are really Waitaha. You can't take away Waitaha out of Te Maihāroa, otherwise we keep putting it back in. Walkers put more mana back in the journey than they realise whānau, to keep it fresh (Participant I).*

A poroporoaki (farewell) was held at Korotuaheka urupā, the resting place for many tīpuna who accompanied Te Maihāroa on Te heke ki Te Ao Mārama in 1877.

*The farmer had put white plastic bags to show us the way and he took us to the north end. I am happy with that because there are kōiwi (bones) on the east side and we didn't want to park our cars there. We were down near where the big trees had fallen (Participant J).*

Appropriately in a Māori cultural context, the hīkoi was greeted with the sounds and symbols signifying a welcome home ceremony.

*The Waitaha Grandmother flag flew in the breeze, and our karaka was responded to by a call of pūkāea (Participant A).*

*Four of us blew the instruments to clear the path for the people to enter the fenced area of our ancestors' burial ground (Participant J).*



Photograph 4. Toa Rickus (left), Katarina Te Maihāroa, Rua Pick and Michelle Croft call te heke to the urupā where Te Maihāroa is buried (reproduced with consent from Otago Daily Times, 16 January 2016)

The pūkāea welcomed the whānau to a physical and spiritual space where they could share a moment in time, remembering their ancestors who undertook the 1877 heke.

*The gate was opened, we were called up by our kaea rōpū (caller). At the gate our kaikarakia (leading caller) Aroha Rickus called to our tīpuna resting (Participant J).*

*The Ratana service was accompanied by hīmene (hymns). Te Amoraki Rickus gave our mihi to everybody and the tīmata o te whakamoemiti (opening thanksgiving prayer) (Participant J).*

A participant reflected on the closing rituals in terms of spiritual connection and consciousness:

*An expansion of consciousness, connections on a deeper wairua (spiritual) level, retracing the footsteps of our pōua, experiences that we will keep in our hearts forever and share with our mokos. (Participant A).*

## Conclusion

To document this hīkoi in an academic format is part of a process of weaving together the worlds of the iwi and the academy of Aotearoa.

*This has been one of the greatest experiences for me as I learn more about myself and Waitaha. The connections that I've made with others and within myself have been powerful and life changing. I hope to continue on this path and explore myself and Waitaha even more. I hope to engage the whānau in our kaupapa as we struggle to fit with this modern society so that we always remember who we (Participant J).*



Photograph 5. Te heke ki Korotuaheka group photo. (Te Maihāroa whānau collection, 2016).

## Disclosure

No potential conflicts of interest were reported by the authors.

## ORCID

Kelli Te Maiharoa: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9586-0657>

## About the Author

**Kelli Te Maihāroa** is of Waitaha, Ngāti Rārua Ātiawa, Taranaki, and Ngāti Maniapoto descent. An Associate Professor at Otago Polytechnic, Kelli holds a Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Arts, Postgraduate Certificate in Child Advocacy, Certificate of Professional Studies, Bachelor of Education, Diploma in Primary Teaching, and Diploma in Tertiary Education. She is a Board Member of Waitaha Taiwhenua o Waitaki and Manuhaea Ahuwhenua Trust Board.

## Bibliography

- Addison, P. (2021, May 16). Retracing the Footsteps of Apa-Hāpai-Taketake. <https://www.ngatiapakiterato.iwi.nz/panui/retracing-the-footsteps-of-apa-h%C4%81pai-taketake/>
- AncestryDNA. <https://www.ancestry.com.au/dna/>
- Archibald, J. et. al. (Eds). (2022). *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Story work as Methodology*. With a Foreword by Linda Tuhiwai Smith. London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Ashton, A. (2013, January 2). Ancestral journey retraced. Otago Daily Times. <https://www.odt.co.nz/regions/north-otago/ancestral-journey-retraced>
- Beattie, H. (1935-1945). The Heke to Omarama 1878: A Celebrated Migration Which Nearly Led to Fighting. *Beattie Collection (1939-1945)*, E-21, p. 1-19. Hocken Collections Library, University of Otago, New Zealand.
- Beattie, H. (1939). TIKAO TALKS: Traditions and Tales of the Canterbury Maoris. Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed.
- Beattie, H. (1918). Traditions and legends: Collected from the natives of Murihiku. (Southland New Zealand). *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*. Volume 27, No. 107, p 137-16.
- Beattie, H. (1918). *Notebook of Herries Beattie*. Beattie Collection (1939-1945), Hocken Collections Library, University of Otago, New Zealand.
- Bishop, R., Ladwig, J., & Berryman, M. (2014). The Centrality of Relationships for Pedagogy: The Whanaungatanga Thesis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 51(1), 184–214. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831213510019>

- Bishop, R., & Berryman, M. (2006). *Culture Speaks: Cultural Relationships and Classroom Learning*. Wellington: Huia Publishers.
- Botting, S. (2021, 4 June). Hīkoi across Northland retraces Dame Whina Cooper to oppose SNA 'land grab'. Northern Advocate. <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/northern-advocate/news/hikoi-across-northland-retraces-dame-whina-cooper-to-oppose-sna-land-grab/RIQK4LQQBOB4OTCQZZ6ZESG5MM/>
- Carrington, A., Tau, T. M., Anderson, A. and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu. (2008). Ngāi Tahu" a Migration History: *The Carrington Text*. Wellington: Bridget William Books.
- Clarke-Mamanu, M. (2018, October 30). Māori Battalion descendants' life-changing journey to Italy. Te Ao Māori News. <https://www.teaomaori.news/maori-battalion-descendants-life-changing-journey-italy>
- Cram, F and Kennedy, V. (2010). Researching with Whānau Collectives. *MAI Review*, 3, 1-12.
- Douglas, M. (2020). *Origins with Scotty Morrison*. Greenstone films. <https://www.greenstonetv.com/our-programmes/origins/>
- Elsmore, B. (2012). *Mana from Heaven: A Century of Māori Prophets in New Zealand* (3rd edition). Auckland: Libro International.
- Elsmore, B. (1999). *Mana from Heaven: A Century of Māori Prophets in New Zealand*. Auckland: Raupo Publishing.
- Forbes, M. (2016, January 10). Warriors retrace footsteps of Chief Te Ruki Kawiti. *Radio New Zealand*. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/te-manu-korihī/293821/warriors-retrace-chief%27s-footsteps>

- Foster, M. (2009, August 27). *Waka trip opens eyes to ancestry*. Bay of Plenty Times. <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/bay-of-plenty-times/news/waka-trip-opens-eyes-to-ancestry/I2PD3E2BYUUMCLJ7QKOLASSR5E/>
- Graham, G. (1922). Te heke-o-nga-toko-toru. (The migration of the three). *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*. Volume 31, No. 124, p 190-192.
- Gisborne Herald. (2018, October 4). *Coast students visit Italian wartime sites*. <https://www.gisborneherald.co.nz/local-news/20181004/coast-students-visit-italian-wartime-sites/>
- Henare, P. (2018). *He Tānga Manawa / Hekenui Busby carves waka to retrace great migration*. Te Karere. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1843673669030322>
- Hurihanagui, T A. (2020, November 14). *Hīkoi of a lifetime: Retracing Māhinaarangi's footsteps*. TE AO MĀORI, Radio New Zealand. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/te-manu-korihi/430610/hikoi-of-a-lifetime-retracing-mahinaarangi-s-footsteps>
- Hutchings, J., Tipene, P., Carney, G., Greensill, A., Skelton, P., & Baker, M. (2012). An Indigenous Food Sovereignty Initiative and Hallmark of Excellence for Food and Product Production. *MAI Journal*, 1(2), 131-145.
- Joseph, P. (2012). Tātarakihī – The Children of Parihaka. NZONSCREEN: IWI WHITIĀHUA. <https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/tatarakihi-the-children-of-parihaka-2012/related>
- Judge, B. (2016). *Te Heke 2012: Waitaki Mouth to Omarama*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdfUMooFPow>
- Kahi, T. (2009). *The Flight of Te Hookioi*. Documentary Film.
- Low, N. (2021). *Uprising: Walking the Southern Alps of New Zealand*. Text Publishing.

- Maipi, P. (2014, 1 January). *Descendants retrace Rua Kenana's footsteps up Maungapōhatu.* Te Karere. <https://www.facebook.com/tekareremaorinews/posts/626688670728834>
- McLean, T.O. (2019). He whīkoi Manawa *Whenua retraces footsteps of Waikato-Tainui ancestors.* Te Karere. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=569953757147993>
- MacLean, H. (2016, 16 January). *Walk re-creates Te Maiharoa's journey.* Otago Daily Times. <https://www.odt.co.nz/regions/north-otago/walk-re-creates-te-maiharoa-s-journey>
- Mikaere, B. (1988). *Te Maiharoa and the Promised Land.* Auckland, New Zealand: Heinemann.
- Napier, L. (2013, January 20). *Chiefs retrace footsteps of Tainui in region.* Stuff.co.nz. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/sport/8199530/Chiefs-retrace-footsteps-of-Tainui-in-region>
- New Zealand Mānuka Group. (n.d). East Cape Students Retrace Footsteps Maori Battalion. <https://www.nzmanukagroup.com/find-out-more/news/east-cape-students-retrace-footsteps-maori-battalion/>
- Rewi, T. (2014). Utilising Kaupapa Māori Approaches to Initiate Research. *MAI Journal. Volume 3, Issue 3.*
- Tau, T. M. (2008). The Discovery of Islands and the Stories of Settlement. *Thesis Eleven, 92*(1), 11-28. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0725513607085042>
- Te Kanawa, W. (2015, July 30). *Māori Students travel to Rarotonga to retrace the footsteps of their ancestors.* Te Ao Māori News. <https://www.teaomaori.news/maori-students-travel-rarotonga-retrace-footsteps-their-ancestors>

Te Maihāroa-Dodds, A. (2015, 16 May & 2016, 27 February). Personal communication. Glenavy.

Te Maihāroa, A. (2015, June). *Additional Evidence on "Project Aqua – Waitaki River Low-Flow Trial"*.

Te Maihāroa, K. (2022). *Decolonising Peace and Conflict Studies through Indigenous Research*. Springer Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan

Te Maihāroa, K., Devere, H., Solomon, M. & Wharehoka, M. (2022). Exploring Indigenous Peace Traditions Collaboratively. *Decolonising Peace and Conflict Studies through Indigenous Research*. Te Maihāroa, K., Ligaliga, M. & Devere, H. Palgrave Macmillan: Singapore. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-6779-4>

Te Maihāroa, K. (2019). *Kā Pakihi Whakatekateka a Waitaha. The Plains where the Waitaha Strutted Proudly. Titiro ki muri, kia whakatika ā mua | Look to the past to proceed to the future: Why tīpuna used rakimārie (peaceful living) to claim and maintain ahi kā (burning fires of occupation) during early colonial contact and does it hold validity and relevance for whānau today?* A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Otago.

Te Maihāroa, K. (2017). Te Ara o Rakimārie, The Pathway of Peaceful Living. *Te Kaharoa*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.24135/tekaharoa.v10i1.151>

Te Maihāroa, K. (2015). Kaore Whakeheke Toto, Do Not Shed Blood: Looking into the Past for Messaged to Create a Peace Based Future. In Pims, J., & Dhakal, P. (Eds.) *Nonkilling Spiritual Traditions* (vol 1., p. 97–112). Honolulu Hawaii: Centre for Global Nonkilling: Honolulu, Hawaii.

Te Maihāroa, R. (2013, 4 April). Personal communication, Ōmarama.

- Te Maihāroa, Rangimarie and Te Maihāroa-Dodds, Anne Pate Sissie. (2014). *Amended Statement of Claim of the Waitaha Taiwhenua o Waitaki Trust against the Crown relating to the loss of identity, lands, and resources of the Kati/Ngati Rakai, o Waiariki o aio Waitaha People*. MIR: 6215.
- Te Rito, J. (2007a). Whakapapa: A Framework for Understanding Identity. *MAI Review*, 2, 1-10.
- Tikao, T. (1990). *Tikao Talks. Ka Taoka Tapu O Te Ao Kohatu: Treasures from the Ancient World of the Māori*. Auckland: Penguin.
- Te Ao Māori News. (2019, February 8). 27<sup>th</sup> Portage Crossing retraces tupuna steps. <https://www.teaomaori.news/27th-portage-crossing-retraces-tupuna-steps>
- Melbourne, P. (2014, May 7). *KKM students to retrace the footsteps of the 28<sup>th</sup> Māori Battalion*. Te Karere, TVNZ. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haeS1aJBgwQ&list=PLI\\_dWmvUmX0dh\\_J9mXgJ4-i\\_GFLCtXntz](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haeS1aJBgwQ&list=PLI_dWmvUmX0dh_J9mXgJ4-i_GFLCtXntz)
- Te Kura Kaupapa Motuhake o Tāwhiuau. (2020, November 3). *Te Hekenga Nui a Tangiharuru*. <https://tawhiuau.nz/a/LEeXHXF>
- Simmonds, N. (n.d). *Te Tira Hikoi*. <https://www.wananga.ac.nz/about/research/taku-ara-ra-ko-mahinaarangi-research-project/kaihikoi-profiles/>
- Smith, L. T. (2015). Kaupapa Māori Research: Some Kaupapa Māori Principles. In *Kaupapa Rangahau: A Collection of Readings from the Kaupapa Māori Workshop Series*, edited by L. Pihama et al. Waikato University: Te Kōtahi Research Institute, Pp. 46-52. The Waitangi Tribunal. (1991). The Ngai Tahu Report, 1991. [https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt\\_DOC\\_68476209/Ngai%20Tahu%20Report%201991%20V1W.pdf](https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt_DOC_68476209/Ngai%20Tahu%20Report%201991%20V1W.pdf)

Turei, P. (1993). Kupe – Voyaging by the Stars. NZ ON SCREEN.

Waatea News. (2020, December 2). *Hīkoi inspiring journeys with ancestors*.  
[https://www.waateanews.com/waateanews/x\\_story\\_id/MjYxOTU=/Hīkoi-inspiring-journeys-with-ancestors](https://www.waateanews.com/waateanews/x_story_id/MjYxOTU=/Hīkoi-inspiring-journeys-with-ancestors)