

# A kin community study: utilising whakapapa as a research methodology

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## Abstract

Central to Māori culture is whakapapa. Whakapapa can be defined in several ways, including genealogy or a taxonomic framework. A fundamental element of whakapapa is the connections between people, land and entities. Whakapapa is a holistic concept that embraces the natural (physical) and spiritual worlds. It can act as both a theoretical and practical platform for research. It also provides an ethical, respectful and appropriate way to conduct research with Māori communities by revealing their perspectives, experiences and priorities. This article discusses how whakapapa can be utilised as a research methodology for a Māori kin community study. Whakapapa is a complex and multilayered concept that encompasses many components. This article examines the layers of whakapapa, defining what it is and its critical components. Then, it explains how whakapapa can be utilised as a research methodology for a Māori kin community study. It draws on my doctoral study to demonstrate how whakapapa can be successfully utilised as a research framework to understand, explain, and interpret knowledge and information regarding a kin community.

**Keywords:** whakapapa, whakapapa research methodology, kinship, descent, Māori identity, mātauranga

## Introduction

*"I had my ideas rearranged by a deep exposure to oral histories, iwi histories, and they don't have this linear view. Time is more like a spiral than an arrow. You dive back into the ancestral past, and the next minute, you're spinning out into the future. That's the way those stories are told. The structure is based on whakapapa" (Salmond in Warne, 2020).*

Dame Anne Salmond, a reputable Aotearoa historian, emphasises the importance of 'whakapapa' in terms of Māori learning and storytelling, which is framed by whakapapa. Whakapapa acknowledges a Māori way of knowing and seeing (Roberts, 2013; Tapsell, 2021). It can also serve as a skeletal structure in which Māori epistemology, ancestors, narratives, events and lived experiences can be interpreted, organised, and explained (Roberts, 2013; Tane, 2018; Mahuika, 2019; Te Whata, 2021; Kawharu et al., 2023). This paper examines how whakapapa can be applied to a Māori kin community study as a research methodology. It begins by discussing the conceptual layers of whakapapa to provide a platform for understanding whakapapa as a research methodology. It demonstrates how complex and multilayered the concept of whakapapa is by drawing on a range of academic literature. Then, it explores whakapapa as a research methodology, explaining how I used this methodology as a theoretical and practical tool in a kin community research investigation.

### Whakapapa as Conceptual Layers

Whakapapa has several conceptual layers (Te Rito, 2007; Rameka, 2012; Mahuika, 2019; Ngata, A. & Ngata, W., 2019). Understanding the conceptual layers of whakapapa provides a foundation for comprehending whakapapa as a research methodology. I draw on various Māori scholars' commentary to demonstrate this (Ngata, 1972; Barlow, 1991; Te Rito, 2007; Royal, 2007; Roberts, 2013; Taonui, 2015; Ngata, A. & Ngata, W., 2019). While whakapapa is often referred to as 'genealogy' or 'history', its scope is much broader (Taonui, 2015; Rameka, 2018; Mahuika, 2019).

"Whakapapa" is a word that can be divided into two parts. The first part is 'whaka', and the second is 'papa'. 'Whaka' can be translated as 'enable' or 'make happen' (Rameka, 2016a; Te Aka Māori Dictionary, 2024). Additionally, 'whaka' is a particle used as a prefix that can be added to the beginning of another word, causing something to be or happen (Te Aka Māori Dictionary, 2024). The second part, 'papa', refers to something flat, a surface, or a board (Marck, 1996; Keegan, 2012; Connor, 2019; Te Aka Maori Dictionary, 2024). Some accounts discuss the word "Papa" in terms of "Papatūānuku", the Earth Mother, from whom the name "Papa" originated (Royal, 2007; Mead, 2016; Ruru, 2018; Reilly, 2018; Toki et al., 2022). These two concepts combined can mean 'to create a base or foundation' (Royal, 2007).

As a noun, whakapapa translates as genealogy, genealogical tables, lineage, and descent (Taonui, 2015; Lilley, 2016; Mead, 2016; Mahuika, 2019; Ngata, A. & Ngata, W., 2019; Te Aka Māori Dictionary Online, 2024). Māori, for example, can trace their ancestry back to the beginning of the cosmos, landscape and everything it entails (Taonui, 2015; Lilley, 2016). Barlow (1991) affirms this by stating, “whakapapa is the genealogical descent of all living things from the gods to the present time” (p. 173). He continues by saying everything has a whakapapa (for example, rocks, trees, soil, animals, mountains), and it binds everything. Furthermore, in order for something to exist and be known, it must have a whakapapa (Roberts & Wills, 1998).

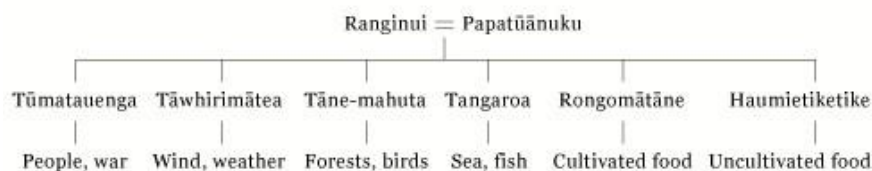
As a verb, whakapapa is defined “as to lay one upon another or to place in layers” (Te Aka Māori Dictionary Online, 2024). A respected Ngāti Porou leader and politician, Sir Apirana Ngata, provided a similar definition of whakapapa, calling it “a process of laying one thing upon another” (Ngata, 1972, p. 6). He explains, “if you visualise the foundation ancestors as the first generation, the next and succeeding ancestors are placed on them in order layers” (Ngata, 1972, p. 6). Not only does whakapapa encompass layers of ancestors, but also layers of narratives, knowledge (mātauranga), experiences and events over time. In addition, whakapapa is characterised by the recitation of genealogies and stories, which create a foundation of meaning and purpose for people (Royal, 2007).

The fundamental concept of systematic layers is a crucial component of whakapapa. This is consistent with the definition of whakapapa provided by Professor Paul Tapsell (2021), who describes it as “a genealogical ordered knowledge system” (p. 46). Tapsell (2021) further adds that whakapapa can be viewed as a “genealogically ordered system that continually regenerates and rebalances old knowledge with new observations, giving birth to new innovations and solutions over time” (p. 44).

## **Whakapapa - Cosmic Genealogy**

A layer of whakapapa includes cosmic genealogy (also known as Māori creation of the universe). Māori cosmology and spirituality are entwined with whakapapa. Māori, like other indigenous cultures, have their own narratives about how the universe came into being (Royal, 2005; Te Rito, 2007; Mahuika, 2019). Within Māoridom, there are different versions of these creation narratives. Despite the variations, there are common threads. These include transitioning from darkness to light and separating earth and sky (Royal, 2005). These creation stories are comparable to those of the Pacific Islands from which they derived (Harmsworth & Awatere, 2013). Cosmological narratives provide Māori with a way of understanding the universe through the lens of interconnectivity, where the world is seen as a vast family (Royal, 2007; Graham, 2009). Whakapapa also assists Māori in making sense of their world, their position in the world and the relationship they share with living and non-living things (Roberts, 2012; Harmsworth & Awatere, 2013; Roberts, 2013; Walker et al., 2019). This idea reflects the belief that Māori are an integral part of the world and intrinsically connected by familial ties and obligations (Harmsworth & Awatere, 2013). Furthermore, the genesis of Māori people from atua

(Papatūānuku and Ranginui), from which everything originates, is understood through whakapapa (Ka'ai & Higgins, 2004) as shown in Figure 1.



*Figure 1: Offspring of Papatūānuku and Ranginui. (Royal, 2007)*

The whakapapa from the primordial deities is a customary belief shared among Māori. While each iwi has its own account of how Māori people arrived in the "world of light," all of them share the generic trait of deriving from atua (Opaki, 2021, p. 42). This thought process promotes the survival and well-being of the taiao (environment) and tāngata (people) (Harmsworth & Awatere, 2013). In this manner, whakapapa serves as a framework for the organisation of knowledge and the creation and development of all things (Graham, 2009). Furthermore, whakapapa, in a broad sense, offers an overarching framework for the organisation of knowledge. More specifically, tātai, which means to set in order or arrange, is the method by which domains can be ordered (Roberts, 2013). For instance, the organisation of forests or the sea with all that exists within it.

Viewed as holistic and cyclic, whakapapa consists of two dimensions of te taha wairua (spiritual aspects) and te taha kikokiko (physical elements), where people, things, and atua are all interconnected (Ka'ai & Higgins, 2004). The spiritual dimension is linked to various atua, such as Ranginui and Papatūānuku, which lay the foundation for physical connection (the world of Te Ao Marama) (Royal, 2007). The physical dimensions can be seen as the visible elements, blood, bones, and flesh (Rameka, 2018). Meanwhile, spiritual dimensions refer to the unseen or invisible elements (Taonui, 2015). As mentioned in the Environmental Protection Authority's Guide to the Mātauranga Framework document (2020),

"a key aspect of Māori concepts, values and beliefs is the holistic nature of all things; that all concepts are linked and only effective when utilised in a holistic manner. The relationship between Māori and the environment, and all living things, is based on whakapapa" (p. 14).

Various aspects of Māori culture are brought to life through whakapapa (Ka'ai & Higgins, 2004) and "it is the scaffolding that structures not only for humans but also materials and nonmaterial worlds" (Kawharu & Newman, 2018, p. 52). Thus, whakapapa can be regarded as a linking concept that connects all things.

## Whakapapa as a Framework of Time

Whakapapa has been conveyed as a timeline for history or to signpost significant events and ancestors across time. According to Kawharu and Newman (2018),

“whakapapa can also be seen as a process and an ordering of the spiritual (gods and ancestors) realm, people and events so that, for example, occasions like hui (meetings), life crises like weddings or tangi, or historical episodes like battles, can be considered not only in terms of the acts themselves but also as moments in a broader continuum of time. When thinking of whakapapa, then, it collapses time so that time-past is connected to time-present” (p.53).

Significant historical occurrences are remembered by ancestors and documented in oral histories like waiata and whakataukī/whakatauākī (Kawharu & Newman, 2018).

Likewise, contemporary important events (life crises, behaviours, policies, actions) have their whakapapa in terms of their connection to previous generations or situations (Royal, 1998). Whakapapa can be seen as an essential approach to Māori philosophy, behaviour and social system that views things and actions in a more comprehensive temporal and spatial context (Kawharu & Newman, 2018). Additionally, Kawharu and Newman (2018) liken whakapapa to a whāriki (mat) that intertwines the environment, realms (spiritual and physical) and people (living and deceased ancestors) throughout time and space, creating a complex matrix and signifying connections and order.

## Whakapapa as a Framework of Social Organisation

Whakapapa acts as a social organisation tool to support Māori identity (Hudson et al., 2007; Te Huia, 2015; Kawharu & Newman, 2018). It also helps to locate Māori position in the world, understand the world and how to act within these relationships. Four fundamental customary principles—waka (canoe), iwi (tribe), hapū (sub-tribe), and whānau (family)—that are connected to a shared heritage serve as the foundation for genealogical relationships (Mead, 1997; Mahuika, 2019). Waka is a symbol of identity that symbolises the migration of Māori ancestors from Polynesia (Durie, 1997; Taonui, 2005; Nikora, 2007). Waka is relatively made up of an array of iwi that descend from a rangatira of the waka (Taonui, 2005). At the same time, iwi is a tribe that is the largest socio-political grouping in Māori society, often named after a paramount ancestor (Van Meijl, 1995; Taonui, 2005). Iwi also means bones (Williams, 1957). Iwi is made up of several hapū (Taonui, 2005). A subtribe is called a hapū, and it is made up of family groups. Members of a particular hapū are genealogically linked through a common ancestor. Furthermore, the common ancestor of the hapū (often the name of the hapū) was typically junior to the founding ancestor of the iwi (Walker, 2017). The smallest grouping, whānau, generally means a family consisting of three or four generations (i.e., grandparents, parents, children, and grandchildren) (Metge, 1964; Walker, 2017). Whānau was the household unit in a kāinga (Ngata, 1940; Rarere, 2022). Hence, whakapapa represents membership to these groups, identity, belonging and positioning in the world.

Whakapapa can refer to genealogy. There are two transecting lines in genealogy: kinship and descent. Descent has been described as the direct line of ancestry from ancestors to living descendants, while kinship is the lateral line of ancestry (Firth, 1959; Kawharu, 1975; Tane, 2018). Kinship is also concerned about the interconnectedness of individuals to broader kin (Firth, 1959). As described by Kawharu (1975), “kinship is general and ambiguous, whereas descent is particular and unambiguous (p. 23). Whakapapa, through descent, can give specific individuals certain rights, such as land shares and grants that other kinship relatives may not necessarily access (Tane, 2018).

### **Whakapapa as a Framework for Membership**

Individuals with a genealogical connection to iwi, hapū and whānau possess obligations, responsibilities, roles and rights to these groups (Mead, 2016). Individuals who are members of hapū are entitled to take part in hapū/iwi affairs. Certain descent lines enable individuals to access land shares and grants, attend tribal ceremonies and be accepted as tangata whenua on a marae (Mead, 2016). Being frequently seen as an active participant in hapū affairs is an important part of hapū membership. The state of membership can be impacted by ideas about ahi-kā (warm fires) and ahi-mātao (cold fires). Keeping the home fire burning can refer to active member participation, living in the kāinga, while ahi-mātao can mean the fire has gone cold in terms of no seen face or active participation in hapū affairs (Taonui, 2005). Thus, if residing away as a kin descendant, it is important to be seen actively participating in hapū affairs. Additionally, membership in hapū/iwi can shed light on the historical ties and legal rights that exist between the Crown and hapū/iwi, such as claims to land under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

### **Whakapapa as a Framework for Māori Identity**

Whakapapa is an integral part of Māori culture and a key component of identity (Lilley, 2016). Through whakapapa, Māori connect to various entities, tupuna, whenua, whānau, hapū, iwi and waka (Harmsworth & Awatere, 2013). It provides a platform to understand who they are, where they are from, and their position in the world (Rameka, 2016). Not only does it help Māori understand connections, but it also provides an awareness of the greater things that surround them. As Ngata (2021) described, whakapapa makes Māori aware that people are not superior to the taiao and are only a small part of it. Ngata (2021) further explains that people are a small part of the whakapapa, and they must, therefore, remain humble and respectful to the many ancient elements (i.e., rocks, mountains, trees, birds) they live amongst in the world. This method of thinking ensures a deeper appreciation of the worth of nature and how we value, respect, behave and interact with our natural surroundings.



## **Whakapapa, a Framework for Transmitting Customary Mātauranga and the Pursuit of Contemporary Mātauranga**

Whakapapa is the basis of customary mātauranga (Taonui, 2015). The whakapapa of mātauranga saw new learning and development emerge when Māori ancestors arrived from the Pacific and settled in Aotearoa. Hence, mātauranga was born of this land (Duncan & Rewi, 2018). Whilst I refer to Māori knowledge as mātauranga, I acknowledge this word as a contemporary label (Matamua, 2021). Historically, mātauranga referred to aspects such as pūrakau, kōrero tawhito, and waiata. Whakapapa is central to customary mātauranga and Māori perceptions of knowing (Rameka, 2016a). Whakapapa is about pursuing knowledge, even in traditional times, and that pursuit of knowledge continues today (Ngata, 2021). Significant components of the whakapapa of knowledge, as noted by Pere (1984), are the means of safeguarding, retaining, developing and understanding knowledge of the Māori world and existence.

Whakapapa can be recalled through the use of waiata (songs), whakataukī (proverbs), pūrakau (stories) and kōrero tawhito (history/narratives) (Calman, 2012; Roberts, 2012). It is through whakapapa (ancestral lines) that mātauranga was transferred through vertical bloodlines via relationships such as kaumātua-mokopuna (elder-grandchild), uncle/aunt-nephew/niece or tuakana-taina (senior relative-junior relative) (Inia, 2021). Often, the source of knowledge derives from the older generation (elders, kaumātua/pakeke) and is passed down to the younger generation (Higgins & Meredith, 2011). Not only did whānau have their own mātauranga, but each kāinga had localised knowledge passed through the generations. The transmission of mātauranga via generations was to foster and ensure the survival of such mātauranga, and those who received it were trusted, and it would be maintained (Inia, 2021). Additionally, Royal (1998) points out that whakapapa can be used as a template to examine the capacity of neoteric knowledge through inherited knowledge, antecedent experiences and recognition of patterns. In agreement, Graham (2009) claims that 'whakapapa is a means and a way of acquiring new knowledge, being the all-important link between the past, present and the future' (p. 3).

## **The Application of Whakapapa as a Research Methodology in my Doctoral Study**

### **My Doctoral Research**

Climate change is one of the most significant issues the world is grappling with today. Recently, Aotearoa has experienced a number of significant weather events (e.g., Cyclone Hale and Cyclone Gabrielle) that have impacted many lives, some directly, others indirectly. It is, therefore, critical to look at ways to prepare and reduce climate-related risks. Through a case study, my doctoral research explored the impacts, challenges, and opportunities of climate change regarding Te Rimu Ahu Whenua Land Trust. Tairāwhiti region, the wider context in which Te Rimu Trust is located, is one of the most affected

areas in Aotearoa. My doctoral research investigated the perspectives of five Te Rimu trustees about their concerns and approaches to mitigating climate-related issues. Three research questions guided this investigation:

1. What are the impacts of climate change in relation to Te Rimu Trust's whenua?
2. What are the challenges and opportunities of climate change as it relates to Te Rimu Trust's whenua?
3. How is or could Te Rimu Trust respond or adapt to the impacts of climate change?

The aim of this research was to increase awareness and understanding of climate-related issues for Te Rimu Trust regarding its whenua and the Karakatūwhero River that flows through its boundaries. The findings offer a framework through which Te Rimu Trust and Māori land trusts can generally address climate-related issues by developing their own climate change adaptation framework that can be adapted nationwide.

### **Background of Te Rimu Trust**

Te Rimu Trust is located in Te Araroa, a small rural coastal town on the East Coast of the North Island, Aotearoa. Te Araroa is approximately 169 kilometres north of Gisborne (Turanganui-a-Kiwa) (Figure 2). Te Rimu Trust is an Ahu Whenua land trust that was established in the early 1980s by a small group of Māori landowners. Ahu whenua land trust has been described as a legal body that multiple Māori landowners can use to administrate their land (Māori Land Court, 2024a). This group aspired to develop their ancestral land, which had been lying idle for some time. Te Rimu Trust is approximately 240 hectares, which consists of Tokata A14, C12, C13 and Whetumatarau C11, C12, C13, C14 (Māori Land Court Online, 2024). It has approximately 400 shareholders. Most, if not all, shareholders and trustees are affiliated with surrounding hapū in and around the Te Araroa region. Furthermore, the majority of the shareholders live away from the whenua of Te Rimu Trust, scattered throughout Aotearoa and overseas.



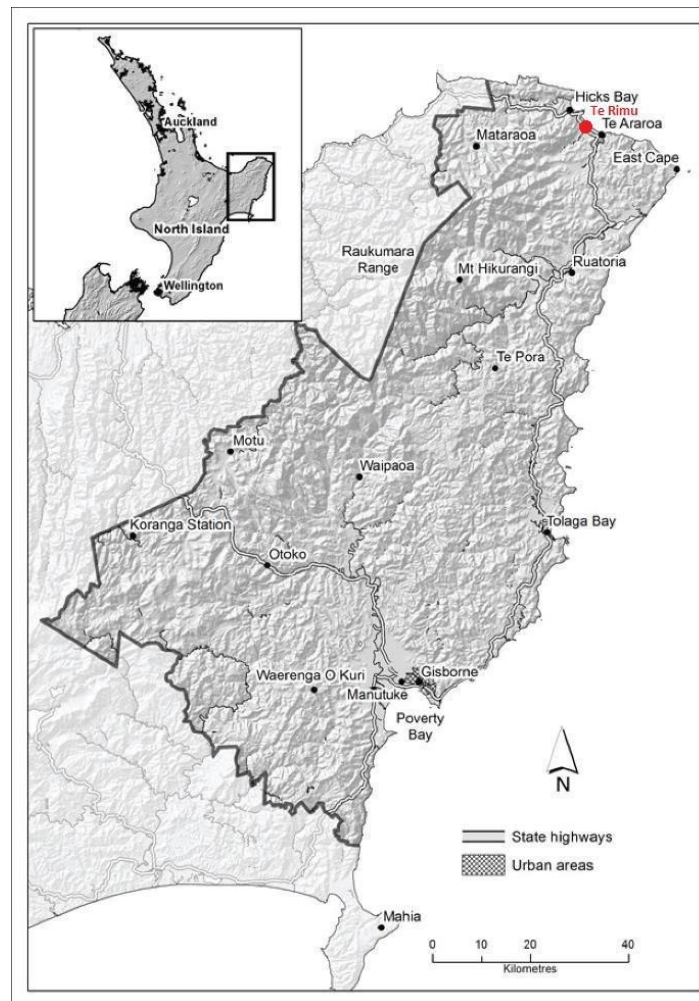


Figure 2: Location of Te Araroa (and Te Rimu Trust). Chappell, 2016, p. 7.

## Whakapapa Research Methodology

Whakapapa research methodology can be applied to a Māori kin community research investigation. According to Graham (2005), whakapapa provides a legitimate research framework for engaging in research with Māori communities. There are several studies that have successfully utilised whakapapa as a research methodology in relation to kin community studies, including Te Rito (2007), Kawharu (2016), Tane (2018), and Te Whata (2021), to name but a few. Whakapapa acts as a structural framework to understand, view and analyse Māori knowledge and serves as a practical tool to gather data (Mahuika, 2019). As Kawharu et al. (2023) noted, whakapapa research methodology is an ethical approach to research and an expression of Kaupapa Māori theory. Furthermore, Ka'ai and Higgins (2004) emphasise the point that "whakapapa may be defined as networks of relationships, or interconnections, between people (genealogy), between peoples and nature (ecology), between people and atua (cosmology), and between people and cultural concepts (kinship and socialisation)" (p.15).

## **Whakapapa of Māori Cosmological Narratives**

In my doctoral thesis, my methodology began by describing the cosmological genealogy narrative, a generic account (of Te Kore, Te Pō, Te Ao Marama) that explained the phenomenological origins of Te Ao Māori in how the world (deities and humanity) came into existence (Reilly, 2018). In addition to telling a story of how Māori values, beliefs, knowledge, and worldview were developed, this helped to set the scene for my research investigation. This narrative also signifies a unique perspective of how Māori see the world. It laid the groundwork for fundamental cultural themes and customs in my thesis, which also gives meaning to daily existence that endures today.

Māori are similar to other indigenous cultures around the world who have developed their own worldview in relation to the Earth (land, waterways, winds, seasons and wildlife) (Harmsworth & Awatere, 2013). Deities (atua) are an important element of Māori cosmological narratives. In my methodology, I trace my whakapapa (genealogical connection) from atua, Papatūānuku and Ranginui to a predominant ancestor, Porourangi (Figure 3). Porourangi is a significant figure in Ngāti Porou whakapapa, as explained later in this article.

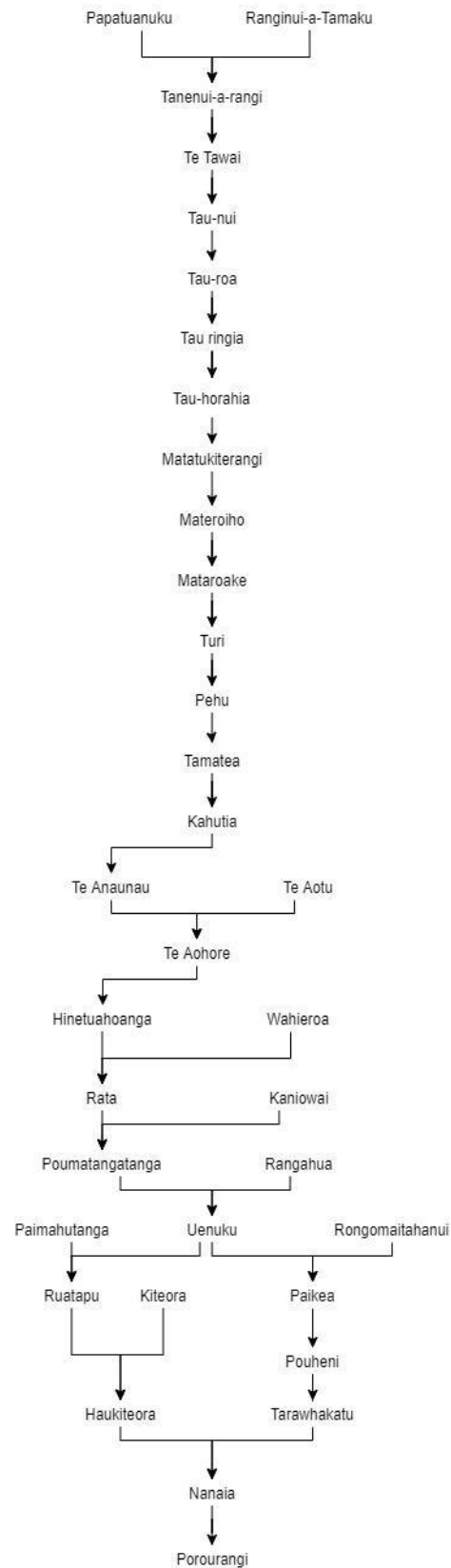


Figure 3: Whakapapa chart from Papatūānuku and Ranginui to Porourangi adapted from *Whakapapa: Mai i a Rangi raua Ko Papa ki a Rongowhakaata* (Rongowhakaata Trust, 2009).

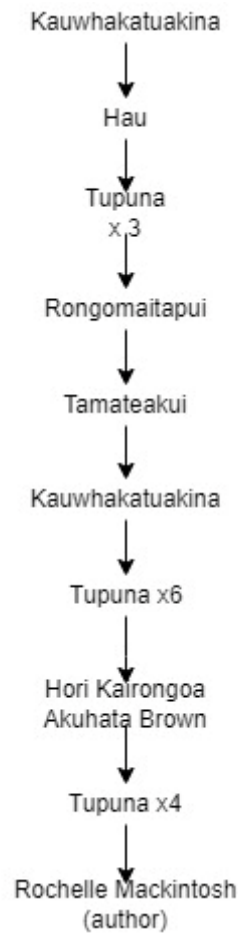
## Whakapapa in Te Ao Marama

### Whakapapa as a structure and organisational tool of Te Ao Marama

The transition from cosmic narratives continues to structure and organise Te Ao Marama, the world of the living. For instance, the Māori origin narrative of Te Kore, Te Pō and Te Ao Marama signifies the progression of knowledge, as does my doctoral thesis. As mentioned earlier, Te Kore and Te Pō represent the blank emptiness of the mind, where no knowledge exists (Walker, 2004). Te Ao Mārama is the world of knowledge, representing explanatory, growth, progression, wisdom, understanding, rationality, and enlightenment (Kawharu & Tapsell, 2019). In the world of the living, my whakapapa extends to my iwi, Ngāti Porou.

### Whakapapa to Ngāti Porou

Whakapapa involves methodologically reciting one's genealogical connections that show how one's lineage to parents, grandparents, and tupuna continues through familiar layers, emphasising the connections to others. This helps to connect a myriad of people across time and space. My whakapapa links me to my tribe, Ngāti Porou, the second largest tribe in Aotearoa. This tribe, like many other tribes in Aotearoa, consists of several hapū (subtribes). The name Ngāti Porou first emerged in the 18th century. The name Ngāti Porou derived from the eponymous ancestor Porourangi, who was born approximately 1450 AD. (Drummond, 1937). Porourangi is the significant ancestor that binds the members of Ngāti Porou together. Porourangi's full name is Porou-Ariki-Te Maratara-a-Whare Te Tuhi-Mareikura-a-Rauru. His name is shortened to "Porou" (Reedy, 2005). Porourangi is a descendant of the primordial gods Papatūānuku and Ranginui, as shown in Figure 3. Through Porourangi, I could trace my whakapapa to Kauwhakatuakina, the founding ancestor of the hapū, Te Whānau a Kahu of the Tokata area in Te Araroa. This whakapapa also links me specifically to the land of Te Rimu Trust, as shown in Figure 4.



*Figure 4: Author's whakapapa, descending from Porourangi*

Through historical Māori land court records, I was able to trace land shares of my mother, who is a current shareholder of Te Rimu Trust, from her tupuna, Hori Kairongoa Akuhata Brown, who claimed land rights through his whakapapa in the Native Land Court decades ago.

### **Kin Accountability**

Kin accountability is a customary practice where rangatira (leaders) historically voluntarily demonstrated service to wider kin for future generations to thrive (Tapsell, 2017). Kin accountability, as described by Kawharu and Tapsell (2019), is “essentially fulfilling a reciprocal relationship between leaders and communities where leaders are motivated to serve and be responsible to their communities, while communities, in turn, shape the parameters of leadership” (p. 8). Additionally, Kawharu et al. (2023) refer to kin accountability to the community as utu. Utu can be referred to as reciprocity, which is concerned with amity relationships between individuals and groups (Te Aka Māori Dictionary, 2024). The concepts of ability and accountability are essential elements of kin accountability. These two concepts are intertwined. Ability can be referred to as using one's credentials or expertise and personal effort to support one's hapū in

achieving one's aspirations, whereas accountability is the personal obligations and sacrifices one makes towards one's hapū. This may mean “giving back”, demonstrating one's service to their hapū or “proving oneself” to their community (Cram, 1995; Selby & Moore, 2007; Mahuika, 2015).

In my research, I was accountable to different kin groups such as my whānau, hapū and Te Rimu Trust. In regard to the Te Rimu Trust, my kin-accountability lies with the trustees, shareholders and beneficiaries. I made myself accountable to the Trust by attending Annual General Meetings (AGM) every year when possible, which requires me to travel from Wellington to Gisborne. The AGM is often held on a Saturday at the end of November or early December. During the AGMs, I informed the shareholders of my research progress and answered any questions that they had about the research. I also attended Trust hui and working bees (when possible). While I was available to the Trust to offer my service, there were also times when I declined undertakings because it was important that I dedicated quality time to this research, given the restricted time frame in which to complete this study. The guilt and pressure of not being able to commit to the Trust's initiatives was mediated by the commitment to complete this research that would provide valuable reports for the Trust in the hope of long-term benefits of providing data, trustee insights and information regarding climate change challenges.

My kin accountability also lies with my own whānau for long periods working on this research project, which meant missing important whānau events and holidays with my two young daughters. I am incredibly grateful to my immediate whānau for supporting me during these times. I hold myself accountable also to my wider whānau (great aunts/uncles, cousins, relatives), who supported me and often checked in on my progress. Additionally, kin accountability embraces the researcher's intention of undertaking the research. A family member, for example, questioned why I was undertaking this research and what benefit it would have for the Trust. Hence, the whānau made sure I was accountable to them.

I was also accountable to my hapū and kin community of Te Araroa. Some community members shared their knowledge, insights, and experiences with me generously, and in return, I let them know I was prepared to help them by offering my services. Furthermore, my attendance at Te Araroa community hui and Trust hui contributed to the development of whakawhananungatanga (relationships), which has important significance for longer-term outcomes.

### **Whanaungatanga Recruitment**

The participants for this research were accessed through Te Rimu Trust, my whānau land trust. My whakapapa and connection to this Trust allowed me the opportunity to approach the trustees to participate in this study. Since 2017, I have attended Te Rimu's Annual General Meeting, which has allowed me to form relationships with some of the Trust's members. Additionally, two of the trustees are my grandmother's brothers, which also made approaching them to participate in this study straightforward.



Pursuing research participants outside of the Trust was more challenging. When some of the Trust's members introduced me to members of the Te Araroa community, I was frequently asked, "Who is your whānau?" Once I informed them, they knew my whānau and understood my connection to Te Araroa. Establishing communication with Te Araroa community members was made more accessible by having whānau members residing there. For example, my mother's brother was able to contact community members who were willing to kōrero to me about climate change. While some community members were willing to kōrero to me, some were not. I found that whakapapa connection did not necessarily guarantee that people would kōrero to me. Building relationships was needed, and it required time, trust, accountability, and familiarity.

## **Kōrero**

Data was collected through kōrero. Kōrero included formal one-to-one interviews, group discussions and informal conversations with trustees and kaumātua. The location of the kōrero (formal interviews) was chosen by the research participants, including the participants' homes and the local yachting club. Kōrero was conducted kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face in person), which is often preferred by the Māori participants; however, one participant's kōrero was completed via Zoom due to distance and time constraints. Semi-structured kōrero were used with a set of guiding questions as a way of keeping the kōrero on track. It also allowed for open responses and in-depth conversations (Pathak & Intratat, 2012). Koha was given to research participants to show my appreciation for their participation in the research.

Regular contact with research participants was maintained throughout the entire research project. The research participants played a major role in guiding the research processes and assisting with research questions. Transparency was an essential part of the process, where the research participants reviewed transcripts. Additionally, the final draft of the thesis was sent to each participant to review to ensure that what was written was accurate and that any amendments needed were made. Whakapapa research methodology enabled empowerment and prioritisation of the research participants or community in the research process through consulting, co-design, collaboration, and consent.

## **Conclusion**

Whakapapa is a multifaceted and complex concept that can be utilised as a research methodology for Māori kin community investigations. It is a holistic and contextual concept. Using whakapapa as a research methodology acknowledges and respects a Māori approach to gathering, interpreting and understanding Māori knowledge and experiences. It also embraces inclusivity and cultural appropriateness and benefits those involved. This paper has demonstrated the various conceptual layers of whakapapa, including the definitions and the meaning of whakapapa as well as whakapapa as a framework for cosmic genealogy, time, social organisation, mātauranga,

membership, Māori identity, acquiring and transmission of knowledge. Māori cosmological narratives explained Māori existence (both supernatural and human), locating Māori position in the universe, describing the natural world and the transition from one state to another (for example, Te Kore, Te Pō). It also explained the advancement of knowledge and explored essential elements that continue to influence generations today. The continuation of whakapapa within the realm of Te Ao Marama continues to serve as a scaffold and layering of Māori knowledge. Whakapapa acted as a way to organise, comprehend, transmit, and debate how Māori come to acquire new knowledge. Employing whakapapa as a research methodology facilitates a structure for understanding the sociocultural context of the research site and research participants. Whakapapa, in terms of genealogy, helps to connect me to the deities of Papatūānuku and Ranginui, to my tribe Ngāti Porou, to my hapū, whānau and my Māori land trust, Te Rimu Trust. Whakapapa influenced and guided the methods used in my research, such as whanaungatanga recruitment and kōrero. Therefore, whakapapa as a research methodology can be successfully applied to Māori community investigations.

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## Glossary

- Ahi kā – burning fires of occupation  
 Ahi mātaotao – cooling fires of occupation  
 Atua – a supernatural being, demigod  
 Hapū – subtribe, kinship group, clan  
 Kanohi ki te kanohi – face to face, in person  
 Kāinga – villages, settlement  
 Kaumātua – elderly, old, aged  
 Koha – donation, gift, present, contribution  
 Kōrero – conversations, discussions, narratives  
 Kōrero tawhito – traditional narratives  
 Iwi – tribe  
 Māori – normal, natural, Indigenous, native  
 Mātauranga – Māori knowledge  
 Mokopuna – grandchild  
 Ngāti Porou – a tribal group of the East Coast, north of Gisborne  
 Papa – anything flat, board  
 Papatūānuku – Earth Mother  
 Pūrakau – myth, story  
 Rangatira – leader, captain of a waka  
 Ranginui – Sky Father  
 Taiao – natural world, nature, environment, Earth, environment  
 Tangata whenua – people born of the land, local people, Indigenous people  
 Tangi – Māori ceremony for a funeral  
 Tātai – set in order, plan, lineage, purpose  
 Te Ao Māori – Māori world, Māori worldview  
 Te Ao Marama – world of the living, the long-standing world  
 Te Kore – the realm of potential being  
 Te Pō - darkness  
 Te taha kikokiko – physical elements  
 Tuakana-teina – the relationship between an older sibling and a younger sibling  
 Tupuna – ancestor, grandparent  
 Tūpuna – ancestors, grandparents  
 Utu – reciprocity, pay, responding  
 Waiata – songs, chant  
 Waka - canoe  
 Whakapapa - layer upon layer, lineage, descent, genealogy  
 Whānau – family group, extended family  
 Whakatauākī – proverb, significant saying (person who said proverb is known)  
 Whakatauķī – proverb, significant saying (person who said proverb is not known)

Whāriki – woven mat

Whenua – land, country, territory, placenta