Mana Kaitiakitanga: Mouri moko! Mouri wahine! Mouri ora!

Mera Penehira

Rangitāne, Ngāti Raukawa

Mera Penehira's doctoral reseaerch centred on traditional knowledge and healing practices, case studying Māori women with hepatitis C. In particular the research examined the process of moko (traditional Māori skin carving) and notions of mouri (force, energy) as legitimate components of Māori well-being.

In exploring the intersections of identity, marginalisation, gender, health and well-being, this chapter describes and utilises the *Mana Kaitiakitanga* indigenous framework of health and well-being. The framework is centred firmly in Māori conceptualisations and understandings of human and environmental relationships. As such *Mana Kaitiakitanga* provides the context in which tā moko fits naturally as a healing intervention. Tā moko is a process that penetrates the flesh and marks the skin; it is a process that involves both blood and pain, which may seem incongruous with healing. However, the research has revealed that through pain comes understanding; through pain comes a RE-membering of strength; through pain comes joy; and through marking comes identity of who we are and how 'well' we have been in the past and can be again.

Introduction

This chapter draws on the conversations with, and personal experiences of a Māori woman who has undertaken the journey of having moko kauwae (moko of the chin). She has chosen to be named Ripeka in this chapter. Her expressions and experiences give honour and integrity to this piece of work. She shares just a portion of her journey of illness, healing and wellness. It is this portion that she identifies, forms the rationale for continued and sustained re-clamation of cultural practices, and where traditional knowledges are evidenced. This chapter validates the voices of Māori women who bring unique and significant insights to a discourse that for too long has been marginalised by the machinations of colonisation.

Moko journeys and experiences enrich the lives of many Māori. We explore the special relationships developed in the process of moko. Such relationships are an important part of well-being and healing to those who engage in the practice of moko. The power of moko as a healing tool is evident in the re-creation and uplifting of mouri experienced by Māori women.

Mana Kaitiakitanga: Māori principle of well-being

Developed by Huirangi Waikerepuru, myself and other students in 1997, *Mana Kaitiakitanga* provides a comprehensive framework in which it is useful to view mouri. Emerging from a series of wānanga (knowledge forums) which were ultimately aimed at the resurgence of moko kauwae amongst Taranaki Māori women, it provides an overview of the Māori principle of well-being, thus providing an appropriate platform for discussing mouri in the present study.

The framework (Figure 1) includes mouri as one of seven key elements of Māori well-being, the other six all referring to various aspects of hau (breath). Mouri and hau are viewed here as the 'carriers' or 'indicators' of areas in our lives and in our being that are essential to our well-being, which in the context of the Māori principle of well-being, includes physical, spiritual and emotional states of being. Māori Marsden (1988) describes the relationship between mouri and hau, positing that hau-ora (health of life, holistic life), or the breath of life, is the source from and by which mouri emanates. Whilst saying that in particular contexts hau is used as a synonym for mouri, Marsden also differentiates between the concepts, advising that hau is a term only applied to animate life, whereas mouri can be applied to both animate and inanimate things. Marsden (1988) states:

> Mauri was a force or energy mediated by Hauora – the Breath of the Spirit of Life. Mauri Ora was the life-force (mauri) transformed into life-principle by the infusion of life itself. (p. 21)

As shown in the framework below, seven elements that make up the Māori principle of well-being are framed by four further institutions or concepts: Health, environment, law and tikanga Māori (Māori law/lore). In so doing, it is suggested that these institutions engage directly with one's well-being and vice versa. That is, the state of health and the environment, the way we operate within the laws and indeed lores of our communities, and our knowledge and practice of tikanga, all impact on our well-being. In contrast, our state of well-being, or otherwise, impacts on our ability to operate in healthy ways with and within the environment, and to conduct ourselves in law/loreful ways, by knowing and practising tikanga Māori.

The base of the framework includes: tapu (sacred), tika (correct), pono (truth), hē/hara (wrong), noa (normal). These concepts allude to states of being that we move through and between in everyday life and events. They are significant contributors to the framework, in that these states, or rather our ability to understand what state is necessary for what purpose, and our ability to move between states, is critical to our well-being. Whilst a full explanation of these concepts is not essential to achieving the purpose of conveying a sense of understanding of mouri, the following provides an overview of how these concepts were discussed in terms of the framework development:

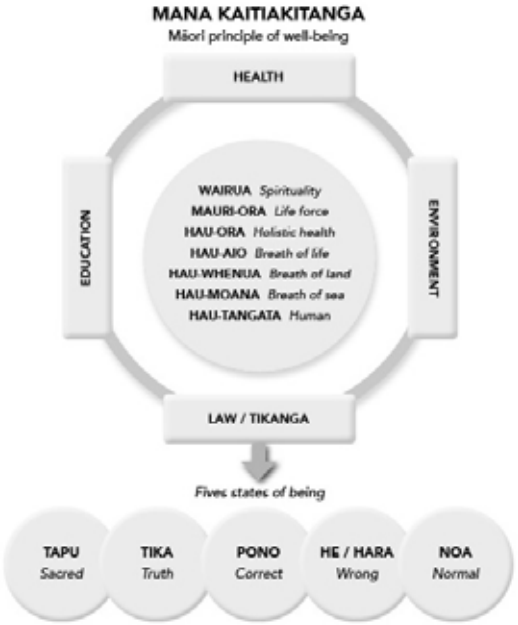

Figure 1. Mana Kaitiakitanga: A comprehensive framework of Māori concepts, elements, and principles of well-being

Tapu (Sacred): A necessary state of being to enable certain things to be achieved or events to be conducted. To gain in-depth understanding of karakia (prayer, incantation) and other forms of traditional knowledge, or to participate in events such as tangihanga (funeral, grieving process), one enters into a state and space of sacredness.

Tika (Correct): It is necessary to be able to conduct oneself correctly according to whatever situation, event, or level of thought one is engaged in. This requires an understanding of what is correct in the first instance. In terms of children developing into adults with a healthy sense of well-being, it is important that they develop a knowledge and understanding of what is correct. This may be whānau (family), hapū (sub-tribe) and iwi (tribe) specific.

Pono (Truth): To operate in a truthful sense enables one to be open to new learning. The relationship between truth and new knowledge is significant, in that our belief is that if one does not engage truthfully in a learning situation or wānanga, they will not reap the benefits of that situation – they are not in a state to receive, nor understand new knowledge. When one operates from a space other than the truth, it impacts negatively on their well-being.

Hē/hara (Wrong): In learning, in living and in being well, mistakes are made. This concept recognises that, and its place in the framework reminds us that it is a state that we will all be in from time to time. Whilst in that state, it generally detracts from our well-being. However, it is significant to understanding the Māori principle of well-being, that we take new knowledge and understanding from our mistakes; from our time in the state of 'hē'.

Noa (Normal): This is the state in which we operate for much of our daily lives, activities and events. It is well known to us. It is perceived to be the opposite to tapu and provides the basis from which we can enter into other ways of being.

If each of these states have a significant place in our lives, and if collectively they provide the basis for the Māori principle of well-being, how is it that we move through these states and between these states? The mediating mechanism, the mechanism that guides us into, through and out of these states is simply karakia. We have karakia that specifically take us into a state of tapu for example, and karakia that release us from that tapu. There are karakia that can be used to remind us of what is pono and tika, and karakia that caution us about being in the state of 'hē'. Karakia kai or food blessings are perhaps the most common form of karakia for the state of noa. With an understanding of karakia as the mediating agent of these states of being, it is acknowledged that karakia play a significant role in the Māori principle of well-being.

The seven elements of the Māori principle of well-being are explained below in the terms and understanding that were applied during the framework development:

Wairua (Spirituality): 'Ngā wai e rua' (the two waters) is discussed by Waikerepuru (2009) as one interpretation of the concept of 'wairua'. In doing so, he speaks of the spiritual essence emerging from the two fluid sources present at the conception of a child. This can relate also to that which is created when Ranginui and Papatūānuku merged. In terms of how wairua influences the Māori principle of well-being, it is essential that one has a connectedness with indigenously Māori spirituality. That includes knowledge, understanding and practical application of karakia, pure (tapu lifting ceremony), and waiata (song).

Mouri-ora (Life force): Refers to the innate life force within each of us. In terms of our well-being it asks us to consider the wellness of our energy, of the force/s that activate us to do things and to operate and interact with our world. This explanation relates to the discussions in development of the *Mana Kaitiakitanga* framework, and as the focus of this paper this concept is discussed more fully further on.

Hau-ora (Holistic health): Māori conceptualisation of health is holistic, including reference to physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. Hau-ora literally may be translated to be breath of life.

Hau-aio (Breath of life): Refers to 'te hau a Io' or the breath of Io who is recognised by Māori as the supreme being from whom creation is derived.

Hau-whenua (Breath of land): The well-being of humans relating to the well-being of the land. Hau-whenua also refers to the relationship between people and the land. If each of these are well (the people and the land), and the relationship between them is active and well, this has a significant positive contribution to hau-ora. This element also facilitates the notion of 'tangata whenua', which recognises Māori as people of the land.

Hau-moana (Breath of sea): Similarly to hau-whenua, the well-being of humans relating to the well-being of the ocean environment. The relationship between people and the ocean is referenced here. The independent wellness of each (the people and the

ocean environment) is important, as is the wellness of the interactions between them.

Hau-tangata (Breath of humanity): Refers to the unique human spirit within each of us. It speaks of both the individual and the collective well-being of humanity. Just as hau-whenua and hau-moana are about people and their relationship to the land and ocean environments, hau-tangata is about people and their relationships to and with each other. Our wellness as individuals impacts on our ability to relate to and engage with others, either enabling us to contribute to or detract from the wellness of others and the collective.

As shown here, mouri is but one of seven key elements of the Māori principle of well-being. The descriptions of each of these elements allude to what may be perceived as a Māori view of the overlapping nature of aspects of well-being. I suggest that because of this overlapping, there is a strong interdependence between each of these notions. This further suggests that if just one of the elements is less than 'well', then all will be affected. The *Mana Kaitiakitanga* framework is therefore an holistic one which provides a platform for understanding the place of mouri in Māori health and well-being.

A review of both the contemporary and historical literature reveals further understandings of mouri. Elsdon Best (1934) described mauri (mouri) as 'the active life-principle, or physical life-principle', though he also acknowledged that it was not a simple term to describe, nor a term that non-Māori could easily understand. Whilst drawing a similarity with the term 'soul', he notes that it differs significantly in that, unlike the soul, it ceases to exist once a person is deceased, referring to the expression "kua ukiuki te mauri", in reference to the death of a person.

Pita Sharples (1995) speaks about the notion of 'whakahoki mauri', a concept that has been with Māori forever. It essentially refers to the need to restore a person's mouri, and in this context to restore their identity, pride, and well-being. In a review of kaupapa Māori literature, Linda Smith (2000) writes that:

> Mauri is the life force inside the person, which makes the individual function. It is the combination of your spiritual, physical, chemical makeup … if your mauri is sick, you will become sick. (p. 27)

Again, this points to the significance of mouri in one's health and well-being. As Barlow (1991) posits, one does not have control over their own mouri or life-essence (in this instance), however, I would argue that given Sharples (1995) advice regarding the notion of whakahoki mouri, and the knowledge shared in the *Mana Kaitiakitanga* framework above, specifically the mechanisms, protectors, and modes of transmission between states, that Māori do have the inherent ability to nourish, protect, and uphold both our own mouri and that of others. Conversely, we might also choose to engage in ways that have the opposite effect on mouri, that is, to denigrate, put at risk, and deny the well-being of one's mouri.

Mouri moko: Mouri ora

This section examines the mouri evident in the process of moko and in moko itself, and ultimately, the relationship that has with the mouri or the moko recipient. Does mouri moko exist and in what ways is that evidenced? For Māori, moko carries with it the mauri of our tūpuna (ancestors), of whakapapa (genealogy), and of our identity. It is its own narrative, telling its own stories using the language of Māori visual art and spirituality. As Ngahuia Te Awekotuku and Linda Nikora (2007) explain, moko symbolises an ideal which includes "bloodlines and life lines, about being Māori. And being more." (p. 158)

Life-essence is one of the most common ways of describing mouri, and so it is a very natural assumption that because the notions and practice of moko include bloodlines, life lines, and are to do with whakapapa and identity (amongst other things), that there is indeed evidence of 'mouri moko', and that this mouri both enhances and provides another expression of the individual wearer's existing mouri.

Given this, many potential wearers of moko choose very carefully the placement of their moko. Most agree that facial moko are particularly significant and matters of their own personal identity, their view of themselves, and how they value themselves, are all factors in determining whether they select facial moko. In my view, this indicates a processing of alignment of mouri that the potential moko recipient enters into, albeit consciously or sub-consciously. That is, the recipient is determining how the relationship will be between their own mouri and that of the moko, in order perhaps, to ensure the potential for a natural and effortless forging of the two. Indeed, for some however, the moko is something that already exists within themselves or within their whakapapa. As such, many would view it simply as an enhancing of their mouri through this outward expression that moko provides. Others, however, view moko as quite a new addition to themselves that requires in some way a relationship building with their existing mouri. In simple terms, the wearer thinks about how they

want to represent themselves, their identity (and all that is included in that), in the moko to be carved and which they will wear permanently in their skin. Te Awekotuku and Nikora (2007) state, that of the participants in their study: "Many were also sensitive about whether they 'deserved' it and learned a lot more as they questioned this." (p. 176) They further state:

> For us, it is more than skin deep; neither pumped in, nor painted on, it is a resonance through the blood that rises to the surface, it stains the needle and blends with the ink, it marks the chisel; it moves with heart rhythm and breath … For the wahine mau kauae [female chin tattoo], tāne rangi paruhi [male with full facial moko], Māori mau moko [Māori with moko], it is about life. (p. 209)

What further evidence of mouri moko would one desire than the descriptor above? Clearly moko is a multi-layered journey, and it carries with it a multiplicity of meaning for both the 'creator' and the recipient:

> Moko has many meanings to those who carry it. Moko is about identity; about being Māori in a Māori place, being Māori in a foreign place, being Māori in one's own land and times, being Māori on Māori terms. It is about survival and resilience. It reflects Māori relationships with others; how they see Māori, and more importantly, how Māori want to be seen. (Te Awekotuku & Nikora, 2007, pp. 208-209)

Linking the physical and metaphysical relationships that exist amongst us and in the moko journeys themselves, helps us to better understand the relationship generally between physicality and spirituality. Te Awekotuku and Nikora (2007) explain:

> Wearers become experts in communication, exponents of the art of explaining symbol and significance, because the outsider needs to be reminded that Māori are different. Different from them, and different from one another, and in this difference, there is celebration, on a metaphysical as well as physical level. (p. 209)

Given that 'health' is one of four cornerstones of the Māori principle of well-being (*Mana Kaitiakitanga*) above, which encircle mouri and the other elements of the framework, it could be further suggested that when one's health is poor, so is one's mouri, as noted by Linda Smith (2000).

Re-claiming and re-membering indigenous knowledges

Recognising the importance of indigenous knowledge and our responsibilities as Indigenous peoples to reclaim, protect and advance it, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues made the following declaration in 2007:

> We, the undersigned Indigenous peoples and organisations, having convened during the Sixth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, from May 14-25, 2007, upon the traditional territory of the Onondaga Nation present the following declaration regarding our rights to genetic resources and Indigenous knowledge; reaffirming our spiritual and cultural relationship with all life forms existing in our traditional territories; reaffirming our fundamental role and responsibility as the guardians of our territories, lands and natural resources; recognising that we are the guardians of the Indigenous knowledge passed down from our ancestors from generation to generation and we reaffirm our responsibility to protect and perpetuate this knowledge for the benefit of our peoples and our future generations; strongly reaffirming our right to self-determination, which is fundamental to our ability to carry out our responsibilities in accordance with our cultural values and our customary laws. Strongly reaffirming our commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as adopted by the Human Rights Council, including, Article 31, which establishes that:
>
> Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions. (Indigenous Peoples' Council on Biocolonialism, 2007, pp. 1-2)

This declaration, which sits alongside the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), provides an important focus on the protection of indigenous knowledges. In so doing, it defines what constitutes indigenous knowledge and the responsibilities of indigenous peoples to that. In terms of the present study, it challenges us as Māori to consider the ways in which we revitalise, and re-engage in the moko process, and what protective factors need to be considered for this part of our traditional knowledge. Te Awekotuku and Nikora (2007) posit manaakitanga (trust) as a significant factor to the broader protection of moko stating:

> For everyone about to undergo the moko process, trust is an important issue, even if it is not talked about by the artist and the client at the time. Beneath the work remains the guiding principle, he aha te mea nui i te ao? He tangata! [What is the most important thing in the world? People!] (p. 139)

This trust needs to be evident in the relationship between the potential moko recipient and carver or artist, as well as the extended whānau or people and elements present in the process. That is, the carver needs to trust the wearer, the wearer trust the carver, and all others involved trust in the integrity of that relationship, because through that relationship and the broader relationship that they have with the other elements of the recipient's whakapapa (for example, land, sea, mountain, people and ancestors), the integrity of the moko is maintained. Through this, the integrity of the knowledge and practice is maintained. Charles Royal (2005) addresses the issue of integrity and evolution of traditional and indigenous knowledge saying:

> Genuine grievance and injustices must be addressed in a genuine manner. I also acknowledge that the traditional knowledge bases of indigenous peoples is properly the 'business' of those peoples. However, I would suggest that although traditional indigenous knowledge arose and arises within particular cultural, social and environmental settings and conditions, lying at the heart of traditional indigenous knowledge are responses to ubiquitous human questions, issues and experiences. I would like to offer an alternative view of indigenous and indigeneity that makes great use of the traditional knowledge and worldviews of 'indigenous' peoples. This is so that we may find an alternative and creative avenue for our intellectual and spiritual energies, and traditional knowledge and that these precious resources may not be spent on 'resisting' alone. (p. 4)

It is particularly significant to note the reference here to our ongoing development being something that occurs for more than reasons of 'resistance'. My position is that whilst that would be an ideal, as tangata whenua living in a colonised land, we often have little choice but to be active resistors. I would suggest however that there is space in both the arts and in academia for us to be creative as well as active resistors.

In progressing the political discourse concerned with Māori health, in the next section I will explore further Māori views on illness, wellness and healing, and importantly, the 'acts' and experiences which shape these.

The politics of well-being

> What is clear is that the impact of colonisation on Māori approaches to health has been significant. In order to understand the current state of Māori health and the position of traditional healing, we need to understand that such changes within our cultural, spiritual, academic and economic context has altered our ability to access much of the knowledge and practices of our tūpuna in that rongoā [traditional Māori medicine] was without doubt a part of our daily lives. (Reinfeld & Pihama, 2008, p.31)

Although repealed in 1962, the Tohunga Suppression Act of 1907 has played a significant role in how Māori view health, well-being, and healing. It states:

> 1. This Act may be cited as the Tohunga Suppression Act, 1907.
>
> 2 (1) Every person who gathers Maoris around him by practising on their superstition or credulity, or who misleads or attempts to mislead any Maori by professing or pretending to profess supernatural powers in the treatment or cure of any disease, or in the foretelling of future events, or otherwise, is liable on summary conviction before a Magistrate to a fine not exceeding twenty-five pounds or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months in the case of a first offence, or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding twelve months in the case of a second or any subsequent offence against this Act.

> 2. No prosecution for an offence against this Act shall be commenced without the consent of the Native Minister first had and obtained. (General Assembly of NZ, 1907)

Although Māui Pōmare, Peter Buck, Apirana Ngata and James Carroll, primary sponsors of the Act, were Māori, clearly the Act represents a non-Māori analysis and fear of Māori custom and practice that has at its heart the intention of halting Māori healing interventions. Rua Kenana and other Māori leaders and traditionalists were particularly, though unsuccessfully, targeted by this Act. Although the underlying reasons for this are not immediately apparent, without question we continue to battle for a complete turnaround from the Act, to a point where Māori healing interventions can be viewed as legitimate and valid once more. Mamari Stephens (2001) provides a useful analysis from a legal perspective that engages a more contextual approach and uncovers the core intent of the Act by simultaneously studying both the political climate of the time and the subsequent application of the Act:

> The Act was the product of political and psychological tensions that prevailed at a unique period in New Zealand history. There were certain overt aims to the legislation, such as the prosecution of Rua Kenana and the improvement of Māori health, that were not fulfilled. On careful examination of the debates and related sources it appears that another primary intent of the Act was symbolic. It offered opportunities for the Pākehā dominated legislature to reassert certainty in the face of uncertain medical technologies and millenarianism, and to exert political dominance over growing Māori autonomy. (p. 469)

Stephen's (2001) analysis provides an important backdrop to the reclamation of Māori traditional knowledge and healing discourse, as is the topic of the present study. It reminds us that in reclaiming our knowledge and re-engaging in the practices of Māori healing, we need to be mindful of maintaining control of and determining how, at all levels, the reclamation occurs. It is also critical to note as a Māori female writer, the impact this legislation had on us as women. Ani Mikaere (2003), leading academic on Māori women's spirituality amongst other things, states:

> The Tohunga Suppression Act 1907, in outlawing Māori experts, continued the colonial pattern of demeaning Māori spirituality … because the preservation of the spiritual safety of their whānau and hapū had been such an important role for Māori women, the devaluation of the traditional spirituality automatically resulted in a loss of status for them. (p. 111)

Māori women like Ani provide an important analysis of the effect of coloniser legislation on the role, status and practices of Māori women. Understanding this is a critical element in reclaiming the strength and breadth of Māori women's voice and physicality in society. We continue to live in a colonised land, under the same system of governance that through the Tohunga Suppression Act, 'outlawed' the practices we are re-engaging. Clearly the Māori health, well-being, and healing discourse is not devoid of political debate and influence.

With this Act providing the introduction to Māori views on health and well-being, what of Māori views prior to colonisation? How did we perceive illness, wellness and healing? This is critical because it is posited that moko, a practice engaged in freely prior to colonisation, is a valid healing intervention. We need therefore to consider the context of that time from where this traditional knowledge and practice originated. As Royal (2005) explains:

> Contrary to what some critics may say about the rejuvenation of traditional knowledge ['going backwards'], the revitalisation of traditional knowledge is as much about understanding our future as it is about our past. (p. 5)

Reinfeld and Pihama's (2008) work did just this, by reviewing Māori traditional healing knowledge literature, conversing with key informants and considering the current practices and future implications of the use of rongoā Māori (traditional Māori medicine) in Taranaki. In undertaking this, they discovered some important indicators of Māori original instruction centred on our health and well-being:

> Being alone; an individual standing apart, is viewed by Māori as a precursor to dis-ease and imbalance. Whanaungatanga (relational systems) is a way of living in relational systems without losing sight of who you are and the need for self care 'first'. When attending rongoā Māori whether in a private home or clinic the role of whānau is given first priority in any healing process. The support and strength of the many focused on the one and the shared burden or worries of the one spread out amongst the many – these are spiritual principles which culminate

> in a view in which all is returned from the source of all beginnings and endings. Io the supreme Creator. The primary vehicle for this releasing and lifting away is karakia. (Reinfeld & Pihama, 2008, pp. 37-38)

What is most evident from this work and further exploration of the literature is that healing is not something that occurs in isolation, either from the environment or people surrounding the person; nor are the healing interventions themselves undertaken in isolation from each other. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, healing is a part of a whole, part of a bigger picture that is really concerned with humanity, life and life-style:

> Imbalance expressed by an individual is never solely attributed to that individual. Instead this approach is mindful of addressing the whole person in the context of their relationships. Rongoā Māori is therefore a 'people medicine' which seeks to restore balance between the temporal (relationships) and those of the eternal. Imbalance in this paradigm takes place within a whānau context. More often individuals present as they are often the 'carriers'. Usually such individuals are the most vulnerable and spiritually open within the whānau such as the very young and frail members. To address entire whānau is to address 'all our relations' and in so doing the mauri of the whānau is able to be restored. (Reinfeld & Pihama, 2008, p. 38)

The whānau is clearly a significant part of the 'whole' being described here – that is, the holistic Māori view of health and well-being. Restoring the balance, therefore, was not always focused on the individual; whilst 'balance' might be an issue for the individual, it is not assumed that it rests necessarily within the individual.

> While traditional healing was largely symptomatic, aiming to provide rapid relief of symptoms, the physical remedies themselves were employed within a wider philosophical and theoretical context. Central to the belief system of traditional healers were the fundamental concepts of tapu, noa, rāhui [restriction] … they were also the basis for a Māori theoretical position concerning illness and sickness. (Durie, 1998, p. 15)

Understanding the inter-relatedness and inter-dependence of healing are shared by many and are well documented in the work of Reinfeld and Pihama (2007):

> The idea that we can isolate physical illness out from spiritual or emotional wellbeing is one that is a clear contradiction to concepts such as hauora and mauri ora. Māori constructions of wellbeing have always been articulated as being interrelated on all levels; physical, spiritual, emotional, mental and more recently economic. There is no desire to affirm any notion that one form of healing can happen in isolation as that is clearly not what is articulated by participants in this research. Rather we hear many stories and reflections on how healing was interconnected. (p. 15)

My position is that in discussing Māori views on illness, wellness, and healing, we are discussing Māori views on life – in other words – a Māori worldview. As evidenced by the *Mana Kaitiakitanga* framework presented earlier, and discussed by other Māori and indigenous writers above, Māori worldviews are holistic with a reluctance to view any one aspect in isolation from another. In addition to this Māori have necessarily had to respond to the political and colonisation agenda of successive governments, whose legislation and policies have had negative impacts on Māori practices and well-being.

Māori women's views and experiences of moko

> Tā Moko—taking Moko—is a serious commitment. It inscribes your soul, it uplifts your senses, and it changes you forever. It is the ultimate engagement of oneself with one's body, because it cannot be removed. (Te Awekotuku, 2006, p. 135)

In contemporary times moko is viewed as part of our political resistance. Many of my friends carry moko as a direct sign of resistance, it is something we consider an act of our own Māori sovereignty. Contemporary singer songwriter Moana Maniapoto (2002) encapsulates simply the power of moko resurgence in the lyrics to her song 'moko':

> I wear my pride upon my skin. My pride has always been within. I wear my strength upon my face. Comes from another time and place. Bet you didn't know that every line has a message for me. Did you know that. (Moana and the Moa Hunters, 1998, track 8)

As with other political statements, this does not come without negative reaction:

> In contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand, Māori continue to encounter unfavourable opinions and hostile attitudes based on preformed and

> unsubstantiated judgements … prejudice towards Māori and the tattooed face is not a new phenomenon and it continues today. (Nikora, Rua, & Te Awekotuku, 2003, p. 11)

Our experiences are not limited to outside spaces; indeed, we often face the harshest criticism from within our own homes and families:

> Within families, and Māori communities, moko confronts how Māori think about ourselves, histories, continuities and change. It is a mark of critical reflection and conscious choice and signals an ongoing engagement with the decolonisation project. (Nikora, Rua, & Te Awekotuku, 2007, p. 488)

As moko wearers we choose to carry the taonga for our own reasons, and always, these reasons relate to identity. The moko has its own integrity as described below:

> In this world, today, wāhine mau kauae, tangata mau moko, pūkanohi [full facial tattoo] — wearers — are speaking for themselves, about themselves, and commenting on how others view them. Unanimously, they insist the decision to take the marking is about continuity, affirmation, identity, and commitment. It is also about wearing those ancestors, carrying them into the future; as their moko become a companion, a salient being with its own life force, its own integrity and power, beyond the face. (Nikora, Rua, & Te Awekotuku, 2003, p. 14)

Māori women wearers and carvers of moko participated in case studies as part of doctoral research centred on moko as a healing intervention (Penehira, 2011). This chapter privileges the voice of one participant, chosen for her articulation and emphasis of moko in relation to healing, gender, health, well-being and marginalisation. She is known in this context by her chosen pseudonym of 'Ripeka'.

> I grew up in Porirua and it wasn't cool back then in the 50s and 60s to be Māori … I think I used to spend most of my time pretending not to be Māori … it was a pretty rough place to grow up, but it taught me how to be tough and stand up to things … It was hard but now I have a great life, I'm the manager of a successful business and I have been here for a long time. It's what I love, working with Māori and rangatahi [youth]. I've been involved in lots of political movements over the years, again back before it was cool. We got a hard time back then, but we learnt a lot. I was one of the first to get an armband tattoo and then lots of others followed. Being Māori is really important to me now and my moko have been a big part of that identity really. [Ripeka]

Ripeka's story represents someone who is now a successful Māori businesswoman and one who has contributed significantly to kaupapa Māori education for around 25 years. Moko is described by Ripeka as a purposeful political action.

Spiritual elements surrounding moko, were included and indeed highlighted in conversations with Ripeka:

> I'm just keen to carry on with the tā moko … that was a real experience … I really felt changed after that. I found it quite a spiritual experience … it was a very special moment for me as well. [Ripeka]

The 'specialness' surrounding the process of moko is apparent, and the desire to experience that again speaks to the power of the process in uplifting the participant. In my view, this is evidence of but one way of the person accessing a spiritual connection that might not otherwise be available to many Māori today. Having spiritual connectedness is clearly identified as beneficial to the recipient:

> It gives me kaha [strength], it makes me feel strong … it's a representation of who I am … it represents what is in my life and I haven't finished, I still want to do more … [Ripeka]

The spiritual origins of tā moko, the spiritual experience enjoyed by the recipient is evidenced as being closely linked to identity, which is further viewed as a source of strength. The moko for this participant represents both who she is, and where she has come from, in that they tell the story of her life's journey. Each one indicating what is in her life already, and she alludes to the fact that her moko journey, as with her life journey, is ongoing. Thus, there is an acknowledgement of the ongoing nature of the spiritual connections that have been bound in the moko she has received to date. The relationship between moko and the recipient's spirituality, has been made explicit, and because of the permanency of moko, and because moko is now a part of her identity, there is an implicit permanency in the spiritual awareness and relationships that now exist for Ripeka. Consequently, there is a permanency of strength that abounds, and that she is reminded of in a very visual way each time she views her carved skin. Spiritual strength is evidenced here as having a significant role in the identity of the participant.

Furthermore, the dialogue has also demonstrated the existence of marginalisation experienced by the participant. This marginalisation is to some extent mediated by the spiritual strength encompassed in the process and wearing of moko.

Ripeka's development as a Māori woman, and as a moko recipient, was ensconced in Māori women's political movements of the time. She wears multiple moko, all of which are positioned to enable her to choose when she exposes or covers her taonga (treasure). As with all moko recipients each experience of further adornment is unique—the moko she wears tell the account of her identity as a Māori woman that developed during the political years of the 1980s and 1990s, and now into the new millennium:

> My moko are very political in a sense – they are political statements and they are about who I am. [Ripeka]

Political awareness largely shaped Ripeka's view of herself and other Māori women, as something to be proud of, and the moko that represent this part of her life journey are a visual record and visual reminder of that pride. The aesthetic beauty of her moko adds to that pride and to her sense of well-being:

> They give me strength and make me feel strong … I look down at my moko and remember what I have been through and know that I can do more. [Ripeka]

Thus, in terms of mouri-ora, the moko have a mouri of their own, which stems from the mouri of the experiences that helped shape them, which in turn, influence the shape of what is to come. The strength or mouri-moko that Ripeka refers to is a part of her own strength and mouri now, which she carries with her in the journey of life.

Carving moko both signifies another part of life's journey, as well as reflecting and indeed influencing Ripeka's well-being. The representations of tinana (body), wairua (spirituality/spirit), and hinengaro (mind), further portray Ripeka's own view of well-being and give us an example of the significant relationship between moko and hau-ora, the holistic view of Māori well-being:

> My arms were my own designs … interestingly they have red in them … I didn't talk to anyone about it, I went in and said I wanted the red in it as well … and then after it was on my arm I think a kaumātua [elder] said to me one day that I only had half the fish on there … he saw it as one of our stories that I had on wrong and that the red represents rangatira [chiefly status] … it wasn't something that was being done then, no-one had arm bands, I didn't know about traditional moko at that time, I had no knowledge apart from reading a few moko books. [Ripeka]

In this dialogue it is evident that Ripeka's moko experiences have varied, and that as in this case, access to traditional knowledge and moko artists influences the process and the experience. At the time Ripeka had her early moko work done, as she says, it was not commonplace. Indeed, she was one of the first Māori women of this generation to carve the tūhono (arm band tattoo) which has since become a common moko adornment. So, whilst she is aware that in traditional terms, her design may be deemed by some as incorrect, she has a clear analysis of the place these early moko have in the journey of moko more generally speaking. Those who took on moko in the 1980s did not have a range of Māori artists to choose from as we do today. Designs depicting traditional Māori imagery were scarce, and so with little access to either the information or people, Ripeka took matters into her own hands and designed her own. In my view, this 'moko action' is evidence of someone creating and accessing her own healing. It is an example of Māori women's strength, initiative, and creativity. At the same time, I believe we need to be aware that not all Māori women are in a position or can follow this lead. More recently, Ripeka has undertaken the traditional moko of the buttocks, known as rape or pakipaki (buttock tattoo):

> My 'rape' … that was different because that was the tā moko artist's design and that was deliberate – I wanted traditional, though it's not completely traditional. Placing the red in there was aesthetic – to match my others. I knew about the artist through my friend's introduction – I wanted to experience a woman artist and see a female doing it. It's only her I'll go back to now – I noticed a lot more caring, very different to how men approach the work. [Ripeka]

Ripeka's desire for more traditional work within her moko journey reflects both the availability and access to tradition, as much as the progression of herself as a Māori woman. The rape was described as an enormous undertaking, during which time much pain was experienced:

> It was like nothing before in terms of the pain … the length of time too. [Ripeka]

Ripeka spoke also of the strength gained in looking back on that process.

> I know now what I can handle, and it just makes me feel stronger. [Ripeka]

It is significant that when one has endured the pain, determination, and sense of achievement encompassed in this type of moko process, that the recipient then carries with them the knowledge that they can apply that endurance and determination into other challenges they may face in their lives.

In conversations about Ripeka's moko journey, we discussed her move from contemporary to more traditional moko, as described earlier in this chapter when referring to the rape she attained. Ripeka has considered further traditional work and shared the following:

> In terms of kauwae [female chin moko], I don't think I ever will – the reason being, I think the women who wear kauwae are very strong women. Strong in themselves because clearly everyone is looking – and for me, I don't know if I would want to be looked at all the time. So that's what I'm saying about the kauwae for me – but maybe I'll do it at 70 … it's not something I feel I would be comfortable doing at this time though, for those reasons. I must say, that I am extremely proud of all my moko, but I must admit there are times when I'm glad that I can put on a long-sleeved shirt and not have to have them seen. Sometimes I would rather keep them to myself, and in my work, it's not always a good thing. [Ripeka]

So kauwae is not a closed door for Ripeka, but not something she would currently feel comfortable with. Clearly, she has considered the extra attention that moko potentially attract, she knows that it is not all positive, and in my view, this is a valid consideration. However, without question, moko is an identity marker:

> I just feel proud of who I am and being Māori … two of my moko, my arm band and one on the other arm were my own designs … the arm band came from my first march to Waitangi … in fact, it was the first march to Waitangi and so after that I wanted something that represented that journey at that time for me, and being proud of what I was doing and being a part of it all … [Ripeka]

Identity is a key factor in decisions surrounding both attainment and placement of moko. Ripeka referred above to her reluctance to undertake facial moko, and here she reminds us of its relationship to societal acceptance (or otherwise!), which in turn relates to the position of tangata whenua in Aotearoa/New Zealand:

> You know it's not something I could do (have moko kauwae) … I admire people like you who do it, I think you are incredibly brave. I know it can be lonely when there are only a few of you out there and the kinds of reactions, mixed, that you get – all I can say is you have to be very, very strong to manage that every single day. For me, if I don't feel up to it, I can cover up and be the businesswoman that I'm expected to be. I couldn't handle that constant looking either – mentally and emotionally exhausting and with it on your face you just couldn't choose to have a 'no-show' day if you didn't think you could handle it that day. [Ripeka]

Conclusion

The conversations with Ripeka give honour and integrity to this work. In telling her story of illness, healing and wellness, of which a selected portion is shared in this chapter, the rationale for continued and sustained re-claimation of our cultural practices and traditional knowledges is further evidenced. Māori women offer unique and significant insights to this discourse, which for too long have been marginalised in the processes of colonisation.

Moko journeys and experiences have enriched the lives of many Māori. The special relationships developed in the process of moko, have proven to be an important part of well-being and healing to those who engage in the practice. The power of moko as a healing tool is evident in the re-creation and uplifting of mouri experienced by Ripeka and many others.

The indigenous framework *Mana Kaitiakitanga* provides a way of conceptualising health and well-being in a specifically Māori way. It enables us to engage with concepts such as mouri that are inherent in conversations of illness, wellness, healing and well-being. Finally, it has been argued that *Mana Kaitiakitanga* provides the context in which tā moko fits naturally as a healing intervention.

Glossary

hapū	sub-tribe
hau	breath
hau-aio	breath of life
hau-whenua	breath of land
hau-moana	breath of sea
hau-tangata	breath of humanity
hau-ora	health of life, holistic health, the breath of life
hē/hara	wrong
hinengaro	mind
iwi	tribe
kaha	strength
karakia	prayer, incantation
karakia kai	food blessings
kaumātua	elder
kauwae	female chin tattoo
manaakitanga	trust
Māori mau moko	Māori with moko
mauri-ora	life force
moko	traditional Māori skin carving
moko kauwae	moko of the chin
mouri	force, energy
mouri moko	an expression of the individual wearer's existing mouri
mouri ora	life force
ngā wai e rua	two waters
noa	normal
pakipaki	buttock tattoo
pono	truth
pūkanohi	full facial tattoo
pure	tapu lifting ceremony
rāhui	restriction
rangatahi	youth
rangatira	chiefly status
rape	buttock tattoo
rongoā	traditional Māori medicine
rongoā Māori	traditional Māori medicine
tā moko	Māori traditional skin carving
tāne rangi paruhi	male with full facial moko
tangata mau moko	person with facial moko
tangata whenua	people of the land
tangihanga	funeral, grieving process
taonga	treasure
tapu	sacred
tika	correct
tikanga	Māori law/lore
tinana	body
tūhono	arm band tattoo

tūpuna	ancestors
wahine mau kauae	female with chin moko
waiata	song
wairua	spirituality/spirit
wānanga	knowledge forums
whakahoki mauri	to restore a person's mouri/ mauri
whakapapa	genealogy
whānau	family
whanaungatanga	relational systems

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