



TE WHARE WĀNANGA O  
AWANUIĀRANGI

# WHEN CLOSURE NEVER COMES

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*A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
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This thesis will be stored at Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi. It will therefore be available for future students and researchers to read and reference.

Natasha Kaylene Hineru Emery

Signature:



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Where ever you are, please know, I will never stop looking for you and loving you endlessly.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the grief and loss surrounding my brother, Jason, who disappeared fifteen years ago and has not been found. The research is drawn from an autoethnography methodology which will be used in order to gain the full event and emotional turmoil that was created. Grief and loss will be the center of this Kaupapa, with the notion of suggestions and recommendations in which to move through these emotions. This thesis will invite the reader into my thoughts and emotions, sharing the learnings and research through autoethnography to enable the reader to truly grasp the impact the event has had on myself, my Whānau and the Whānau within the other case studies. It is the aim that the reader will find usefulness from this thesis in terms of relating to the events and understanding the emotions that go along with it, utilising the suggestions and recommendations, especially if the reader him or herself is experiencing the same emotions due to the same nature of the event. It is also the intention to ensure that this Kaupapa is written about in a way that maintains the Mana of those missing people, to ensure that they are not forgotten and will live on through my words. Grief and loss are emotions that are experienced by many people but in different situations and in many different ways. The grief and loss in this thesis are centered on Whānau who have loved ones that have gone missing but haven't been found. While the grief and loss can be compared to other grief and loss scenarios, it is important for this thesis to be centered on the missing loved one in order for the emotions to be aligned to that event, not others. The Kaupapa of this thesis, while extremely emotional, is also part of the healing process for those involved.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	7
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	8
CHAPTER ONE.....	10
INTRODUCTION .....	10
1.0 Chapter Introduction .....	10
1.2 Aim and Research Questions .....	13
1.3 Significance.....	13
1.4 Overview of Thesis .....	15
1.5 Chapter summary .....	16
CHAPTER TWO .....	17
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	17
2.0 Chapter Introduction .....	17
2.1 Grief and Loss.....	17
2.2 Impacts, Emotions and Reactions of Grief .....	19
2.3 Missing People Case Studies .....	21
2.4 Stages of Grief .....	26
2.5 Chapter Summary .....	28
CHAPTER THREE .....	29
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....	29
3.0 Chapter Introduction .....	29
3.1 Methodology Overview .....	29
3.1a Qualitative .....	29
3.2 Methods.....	34
3.2a Underlying Questions.....	35
3.3 Introspective Analysis.....	35
3.3a Introspection.....	35
3.3b Introspective Analysis.....	36
3.4 Using Westernised writing as opposed to Te Ao Māori frameworks .....	37
3.5 Chapter Summary .....	38
CHAPTER FOUR.....	39
PERSONAL NARRATIVE.....	39
4.0 Chapter Introduction .....	39

4.1 Our Story.....	39
4.1A ‘We didn’t ask to be born’ .....	39
4.1B ‘We are safe and loved...but for how long?’ .....	40
4.1C ‘Whānau disconnection from the start’ .....	41
4.1D ‘The savage years’ .....	41
4.1E ‘Trying to understand but can’t’ .....	43
4.1F ‘Our Salvation’ .....	44
4.1G ‘The Uplift and the Consequences’ .....	46
4.1H A new family begins .....	50
4.1I The beginning of the end .....	53
4.2 The Aftermath .....	56
4.3 The healing begins .....	62
4.4 Calming the Storm .....	69
4.5 Chapter Summary .....	72
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....	73
5.0 Chapter Introduction .....	73
5.1 Results.....	73
5.2 Chapter Summary .....	80
CHAPTER SIX.....	81
CONCLUSIONS.....	81
6.0 Thesis Review .....	81
6.1 Recap main points.....	81
6.2 Key Findings .....	82
6.3 Limitations .....	84
6.4 Recommendations.....	85
6.5 Last word .....	86
References.....	88
APPENDICES .....	91
Appendix 2: Consent letter for use of name in thesis .....	92
Appendix 3: Newspaper article of court case .....	93
Appendix 4: Coroner’s Findings.....	96
Appendix 5: Death Certificate .....	103



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Chapter Introduction

‘Each year police receive more than 8000 reports relating to missing people. Of those reported missing about 95 percent are found within 14 days, with over half located within the first two days..... however, there are more than 350 people in New Zealand who have been missing for more than a year’ (Police, 2019)

I will be identifying and discussing the loss of my brother, who went missing in 2004 and has never been found. The loss and grief emotions will be centered around both stories of my brother and I, which I will tell from the time we were born. I will tell my brothers story through personal narrative, utilising an autoethnography methodology. It is my intention to tell the whole, entire story to allow you, the reader, the opportunity to understand in fullness the depth of the heartbreak and despair of this tragedy. I will also explain in my own words what I have worked through in order to maintain a normal way of life for myself and my Whānau.

‘With any loss there is grief’ (Glassock & Gressor, 1992). Grief is managed in so many ways. People deal with the pain and suffering of grief in their own individual ways. In addition, it is these ways, which can interpret whether a person can move on or continue to cling to the past. The choices made based on this grief process that has no closure can or will affect the person’s own life and the lives of others around them in various ways. It is up to the individual as to how to make this process gradually decrease. This is difficult to do, as part of the grieving process can be to hold anger, guilt and sadness. These processes need to be dealt with in the right way, as each one has its own dynamics. For example, guilt is a separate feeling from anger or sadness.

In my own experience, I have experienced all of these feelings and have had to deal with each in a different way. Each feeling is a difficult feeling, which needed to be processed, unpacked and understood. Once this has been accomplished, moving forward is possible. However, if these feelings are not addressed or acknowledged, moving forward can seem impossible. As previously noted, it is up to the individual to want to move forward. Only then can this process

begin. For some, the thought of moving forward is to diminish the intensity of the grief and loss, therefore believing that the individual is providing a disservice to the missing loved one. This is another train of thought that needs to be unpacked and processed. This research will explain ways in which to do this in a safe manner.

The research described in this thesis focuses on the grief experienced by myself and others when a loved one goes missing and is not found. It will describe the journey that I have undertaken during this time and will identify the grief process and how this has been managed throughout the years. Each journey will be explained from the beginning of the incident to the current day. All facets of the incident will be documented to ensure that the reader fully understands the true nature of the grief a person can experience under these painful circumstances. Each journey will be based on case notes and articles that are readily available to me, the researcher.

I, the researcher, will explain my own experience with suffering such a loss. I will explain my journey and the grief of my loss and how I cope with this affliction every day while still being able to function normally, or as normal as possible. I will share my journey from the beginning, outlining the story of my brother in its entirety. To not do this would not give my thesis the mana it deserves. My brother's story and those of the case studies I will discuss need to be told to provide awareness to those suffering the same plight. So that others that may be suffering in silence know that there are people out there that understand what they are going through and are able to empathise, not just sympathise. To share these journeys also means to keep these loved one's memories alive. This person was a person who was loved and treasured and their memory should never be erased, much like a person who has died. I will speak more intensely in relation to this as I am passionate about ensuring that my brother is always remembered through his children, friends, Whānau, pictures and memories. They are more precious now that he is not here and to not acknowledge him as part of the Whānau means to eradicate his memory from future generations. I will ensure that this will never happen.

## **1.1 Background to the Study**

As this thesis is written using an autoethnography methodology there will be no participants. This will be a personal narrative, sharing the stories of both my brother and I. There is also the ethics concern in regard to the safety of both myself and any participants emotionally and physically, therefore it was decided that no one would be interviewed and the research would be gained from the readily available information held in literature, books and internet, which I will enter within the literature review, my findings and discussion. I will share my own experience, drawing on other stories that are similar. It is my intention to ensure that the full, raw story is told, allowing the reader to gauge the feelings of sorrow and despair.

My brothers' story will give the reader the insight of who my brother was and the events leading up to his disappearance. My story will inform the reader of the emotions associated with the disappearance and the pain of loss and grief. To truly get an essence of the lost loved ones it will be my role to ensure that the full story is told, inclusive of any unsavory information. Any history will not detract from the fact that my brother was just that: a person who was and still is loved and is sorely missed. I will include myself within this story as I am the one who has lived it, and experienced the pain and grief due to my brother's disappearance.

I will tell my story of how I have managed to move through the emotions since my brother left, who has been missing for fifteen years now. I will describe the thoughts, feelings and emotions that I have felt during this long period of time. I will also talk about my coping strategies and what I have done over these years in which to lead as normal a life as possible.

This thesis will also provide the reader with an in-depth overview of the impact my brother's disappearance has had on his Whānau, namely his children, grandchildren and I during this fifteen-year period.

Therefore, the purposes of this study are:

Without a Trace: Coping with the Loss and Grief of Missing Family Members.

The aim and purpose of this study is to examine the coping strategies that bring renewed purpose and meaning to those who have lost a family member as a missing person. The nature of the topic dictates the use of an inductive and interpretive analysis, where meaning drawn from personal narratives contribute to new understandings and theories of coping with loss and grief.

## **1.2 Aim and Research Questions**

The overall aim of the study is to identify what coping strategies are used to cope with the grief of a missing loved one over a long period of time, to evaluate the coping strategies used and their effectiveness and lastly document the findings in terms of how well these strategies worked.

To achieve the aim as described above, the research seeks to first answer several questions.

1. What does the grief and loss look like?
2. What were the significant emotions?
3. What learning is available that can help to inform others who experience this loss and grief in the future?
4. What was the outcome when it was realised that closure may never be forthcoming?

## **1.3 Significance**

This study is significant because this is a topic that is not discussed for long periods of time within the media, if at all. I cannot find another thesis that speaks about this sensitive subject. For example, Moore (2011) states:

‘While Natalee Holloway, the teen who went missing in Aruba, did garner a lot of publicity, much of it emanated from the tireless efforts of her family, who devoted tremendous amounts of time generating newsworthy copy. Others work as hard but don’t get anywhere near the press the Holloway case has generated. It’s a disconnect that is hard to understand. Some cases click with the media, and some don’t.’

Media, especially social media like Facebook and other social networking platforms prove to be the most powerful engine to ensure that the missing person's story is shared, not just locally but also internationally. An example of this is a posting I made on a Facebook missing persons page, explaining who my brother was and how long he has been missing. This has been commented on many times and shared over fifty times that I am aware of. The power of media is not something to be taken lightly. Goodyear (2014) reinforces this view by stating that

‘It gives us the opportunity to share our stories and get our opinions out there. Having the freedom to say what we want on the Internet makes us feel heard.’ She goes on to state that ‘It allows us to connect with people all over the world. It can be used for bad things, but it can also be used for good.’

The significance of this study is also to provide a platform in which others can share their stories without shame or guilt. In my own example, I have suffered a tremendous amount of guilt and shame, not wanting to talk about my brother at all for fear that others would judge due to the circumstances surrounding his disappearance. It has only been in the last five years that I am able to freely talk about him and share memories of him with others outside of my immediate family. Sharing of these such stories can promote the healing process for the families, enabling them to move forward towards a normal functioning existence, which I can attest to.

This study is significant in so many other areas. It is my intention to provide a thesis where people can read our stories and gain knowledge and support to allow them to get through this never-ending nightmare. It is also my intention that those who read this thesis, who may have also experienced this pain, may take some comfort in the knowledge that they are not alone. I, for one, have felt very alone as no one understands the true essence of what I am experiencing if they have not experienced it themselves. However, by writing this thesis I am able to break down my feelings and thoughts, truly expressing them. It is also part of the healing process that I need to be able to fully move forward, for both myself and my Whānau.

Being able to share the story of my brother, along with the pain and sorrow I have experienced helps to keep the legacy of my brother alive and allows me to share his story in the hope that he is never forgotten. This is my way of ensuring that, to ensure that his memory

lives on within his Whānau and friends. That is the most important thing in the world to me and I will make sure that he is never forgotten. Ever.

## **1.4 Overview of Thesis**

Chapter One introduces my research topic which is coping with grief and loss, providing an overview of how I will tell my story in a narrative, along with case studies that share the same focus of missing people.

Chapter Two is a review of the literature on the topics of grief and loss, impacts, emotions and reactions of grief. It will include missing people case studies as well as the stages of grief that a person may experience.

Chapter Three discusses the research frameworks and methodologies within which my research is based. These are qualitative methodology, autoethnography and personal narrative. I will provide a methodology overview, explain the methods I will be using to conduct the research, as well as an introspective and cultural analysis.

Chapter Four shares the story of my brother who disappeared fifteen years ago and has not been found. I have named this section ‘Our Story’, as my brother and I shared this life for many years together. Other sections will then follow on from this, to show the pain and grief experienced, including the impacts of his disappearance on his children and the coping mechanisms used to maintain normality. ‘Calming the Storm’ will be the final section of this chapter, which will discuss how I was able to move forward to normality on a daily basis.

Chapter Five discusses the findings and results of our stories. It will also discuss the loss and grief and the way in which this was overcome to lead a normal life. This will derive from my story and the case studies shared within this thesis. This chapter also discusses the research questions, providing suggestions and recommendations for the reader based on literature and my own personal experience.

Chapter Six concludes this thesis, providing an overview of the key findings, limitations, recommendations and closing.

## **1.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter discussed research in relation to missing people and the loss and grief associated with this. The research will be centered around this, to allow the reader an in-depth experience in regards to those feelings and emotions. The research in this thesis aims to look at the event, what happened and how those left behind manage to function as normally as they are able.

This chapter introduced the thesis and a background of my proposed topic. I have also given an overview of my own understanding of the topic, having experienced it myself. I will continue to experience the loss of my loved one until there is closure.

The next chapter reviews the literature on grief and loss, impacts, emotions, missing people and the stages of grief that stems from a loved one going missing without a trace and no closure, with a particular emphasis on how they have coped during this time and what strategies have been used for them to function somewhat normal lives. I say somewhat as a person's life is changed forever due to this sad event.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Chapter Introduction**

‘When I close my eyes, I see you.... When I open my eyes, I miss you’ Dipini, (2019)

The previous chapter discussed research in relation to missing people and the loss and grief associated with this. The research will be centered around this, to allow the reader an in-depth experience in regards to those feelings, emotions and impacts. The research in this thesis aims to look at the event, what happened and how those left behind manage to function as normally as they are able.

The previous chapter also introduced the thesis and a background of my proposed topic. I have also given an overview of my own understanding of the topic, having experienced it myself. I will continue to experience the loss of my loved one until there is closure. I have shared the story of my brother and the circumstances surrounding this event.

This chapter reviews the literature on topics in relation to grief and loss, impacts, emotions and reactions to grief, as well as case studies that involve missing people, including real life stories and the thoughts and feelings that those affected have. The literature readings also include readings that discusses ways in which the bereaved person or persons are able to move forward toward a semblance of normality.

#### **2.1 Grief and Loss**

Research Question 1: What does the grief and loss look like?

Grief and loss can be profound with no end in sight. Everyone grieves differently, and in turn it is the way in which the person chooses to manage this grief that will determine the outcome. For some this may be easy to process, however for others there is a never-ending struggle through a cloud that they just cannot get through. There can be a sense of helplessness or a



total overwhelming of emotions and feelings that are totally foreign to the person, with no understanding of how to deal with them.

This section serves to provide an understanding for those who are struggling, to know that they are not alone and that grief and loss does not discriminate.

Shulman (2018, page 12) discusses grief in terms of an interface between the experience of profound loss and the search for restoration and healing:

Grieving is a protective process. It's an evolutionary adaption to help us survive in the face of emotional trauma. Although we usually envision physical trauma when we think of traumatic brain injury, here we'll focus on emotional trauma as the cause of brain injury and on its consequences for daily function. The experience of grief can overwhelm us, but understanding the science behind grief can dispel mystery and restore a sense of control..... there's comfort to be found in understanding how our brain responds and heals through traumatic loss.

This book interested me in terms of the 'brain injury' that stems from the grief and loss suffered. This is another way in which to interpret the grief and loss, to be able to process it and to take control once more of one's life.

Moorey (1995) talks about the grief and loss that people suffer and support that is available to alleviate this. It also talks about family support and social support, which is important for those experiencing grief of any kind. Again, there are those that mean well but can make the stress of the trauma worse instead of better. It is important to be able to recognise when we are grieving and put coping strategies in place. 'Adult grief is complex and varied, and individuals will respond to loss in unique ways' (page 29). This is very true. Everyone experiences loss and grief differently.

Each individual situation must be carefully looked after with intervention and support put in place that is specifically designed to that person. If this doesn't happen a lot of the feelings can darken, with no end in sight. It is vital that the person suffering has good supports in place

to be able to talk and off load in a comfortable environment. Without that it is a very hard space to be in and get out of.

Handler (2013) states:

After you've survived the death of a loved one, an illness, a broken romance, the loss of a home, country, or even a social structure, the story of who you are changes. In writing about what's changed, you want to make sense of the impact of your loss.....for yourself and for family and friends, including those not yet born.

This is easy to relate to in terms of experiencing any type of loss and grief. It is the making sense of the loss that can be the daunting phase to go through.

## **2.2 Impacts, Emotions and Reactions of Grief**

Research question 2: What were the significant emotions?

The impacts, emotions and reactions to grief can differ from person to person. Again, it is the individual who decides how to face the grief and how it impacts on them emotionally. While this can be dependent on the grief that is being suffered due to the nature of the contributing incident, the impacts, emotions and reactions are still felt in a way that most can understand.

Boss (1999) discusses learning to live with unresolved grief:

Perceiving loved ones as present when they are physically gone, or perceiving them as gone when they are physically present, can make people feel helpless and thus more prone to depression, anxiety, and relationship conflicts. How does ambiguous loss do this? First, because the loss is confusing, people are baffled and immobilized. They don't know how to make sense of the situation. They cant problem-solve because they do not yet know whether the problem (the loss) is final or temporary.....Second, the uncertainty prevents people fro adjusting to the ambiguity of their loss by reorganising

the roles and rules of their relationship with the loved one, so that the couple or family relationship freezes in place.

Persaud & Bruggen (2017) also discuss ambiguous loss, associating an unconfirmed loss of a Whānau member to a higher level of distress compared to that of a confirmed loss. ‘The problem is that when there is hope, it leads to incessant dwelling on the missing person, interfering with daily life and leading to collapse in the long run’.

Heeke, Stammel, & Knaevelsrud (2015) discuss ‘prolonged grief disorder’, of which they claim to be a grief reaction following this type of loss, which then develops intense longing and a yearning for the lost loved one, combined with feelings of both emptiness and hopelessness that can last for six months or more:

Regression analysis indicated that, among relatives and friends of disappeared persons, the extent of hope predicted PGD above and beyond depression severity whereas among bereaved persons, PGD was predicted by time since the loss, the number of traumatic events and symptom severity of PTSD and depression.

This is an indication of what grief can do to a person. It is not discriminative, it can happen to anyone and everyone is different in terms of the impact the grief has on them.

C.S Lewis (1961) speaks in relation to his grief:

No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. The same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep swallowing. At other times it feel like being mildly drunk, or concussed. There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me.

Again, this is another example of the impact that grief can have on a person. While one cannot assume to know how a person will react throughout their grief process, this may resonate with those who have experienced these emotions and feelings.

## 2.3 Missing People Case Studies

There are many missing people in the world. Some may choose to leave their lives behind to start new ones for one reason or another. And then there are those who go missing unintentionally due to sinister intentions or taking their own lives in remote areas of the country where they will not be found easily. Whatever the reason, when a person goes missing it has a profound effect on loved ones left behind.

Such is the case of Mona Blades who went missing in 1976. As Blanchard (2005) discusses, the mother of Mona Blades has cried every day for 30 years, suffering due to not knowing what happened to her daughter. Mona's brother Tony told the Daily Post his family had not talked to the media over the past 30 years about their feelings because it was too hard on them, especially their mother, who is now in her 80s. This even has undoubtedly shattered this family and they have never been the same since.

Graw Leary & Broughton (2015) developed a book to identify the most current information regarding missing people. This book includes material of missing people of all ages, including human trafficking. The purpose of this book is not only to share the information, but it is hoped that it may trigger further research as it is acknowledged that this is a limited in this field.

This book includes highly personal narratives of those who have missing loved ones, sharing their stories and their feelings of loss and the not knowing. The people who have shared their stories have shown the courage they possess, as sharing can be very painful, especially when sharing with others who cannot relate to their pain, grief and loss.

These personal stories can aid professionals in ensuring that these types of rare circumstances are treated with sensitivity always. There is no 'rule' as such when dealing with these cases as each case is very different to the next. Different circumstances demand different approaches, and each person needs to be cared for in different ways. It takes skill in a professional sense to be able to do this. Not everyone will resort to professional intervention however dependent on the resilience of the person suffering will dictate the support required.

Some of these stories resonate with me with the thoughts and feelings shared. One statement rings very true: ‘Other people don’t know what to say to you or how to treat you’ (Hattenstone, 2015). This is something that I come up against a lot. My preference would be that people don’t say anything, however I do understand that is only because they care that they feel compelled to. There are few people that have experienced this therefore they don’t really know what to say.

McQuillan (2017) discusses via a website the missing people stories such as Tupulaga “Peter” Talalelei, who vanished without a trace in July 2014 from Petone, Kaye Stewart, who disappeared while on a short bush walk in the Rimutaka Forest in 2005, Michael Dudley who disappeared from Dunedin in 1978, Kirsa Jensen, who was last seen in 1983 while out riding her horse Commodore and was never seen again, and Amber-Lee Cruickshank who vanished from Kington, near Lake Wakatipu in 1992. All of these cases are now cold, with no new information leading to answers about what has happened to them. For the families of these loved ones, time stands still while they grieve, love and hope for information leading to an outcome in terms of what happened to their loved ones.

This web page explains in brief detail the circumstances surrounding the disappearance. It also has photos which show members of the grieving families of some of the missing people. These photos clearly show the pain and grief that they continue to suffer. While there is some certainty in regards to some the cases being homicide, this can never be confirmed until someone shares new information or a body is found.

In regards to these cases, the pain, grief and not knowing would be excruciating. In the case of Michael Dudley who went missing in Dunedin, he has now been missing for 40 years with no closure for his family. In the Mona Blades case, she has been missing for 43 years. For some this is a lifetime of anguish, not knowing and wondering what has happened to their loved ones.

Another enduring case that has spanned more than 50 years is the James Boland Case. Hegarty (2019) discusses this cold case that spans sixty years. Peter Boland went missing in 1957 and has never been seen since. This is one of the longest running cold cases in New Zealand:

The boy, from Avondale in Auckland, was on holiday at a farm in the Waioeka Gorge and was reported missing by four men who were on the property when he disappeared. The men - three of whom are still alive and are now aged in their 80s - say Peter went missing on the morning of August 31, 1957, while looking for horses near the farmhouse. He was never seen again.

There is much to this story where it was felt that no investigation was conducted properly, if at all to establish or search for Peter. Detective Sargent Rob Lemoto stated 'The fact no trace of a healthy, intelligent, 9-year-old boy who had been taken to the farm with family friend Ken Woods was ever found, should have been cause for greater concern at the time' (page 1).

Peter's brother Gavin Boland states also on the case:

No footwear, no clothes, apparently no footprints and definitely no body. That's very unusual, particularly given the stories the men reportedly told of the time Peter went missing - looking for horses in the morning, just a kilometre or so from the farm house. I would like to find out what happened and, if it was an abduction or murder, I would like to see the person punished.' (page 1)

Over sixty years have passed for this Whānau with no answers. The pain and suffering caused by this loss is unimaginable.

Gavin goes on to state 'I've had this underlying feeling that people I get close to might disappear and never come back.' (page 1). This statement resonates with me as I find due to my circumstances I find it hard to get close to people in the fear that they may leave and not return. It is a hard space to be in but one of a protective nature and I totally understand it.

The case has now been reopened. There is hope that some answers may be known during the course of this investigation, however after 62 years this may be a huge undertaking. Due to the time and lack of evidence, the chances that a definitive answer is found is extremely limited.

Congram (2016) discusses a multidisciplinary perspective which integrates these perspectives with contexts and methods to provide an honest and true account of missing people. This

reading also talks about the method of forensics that can help with DNA testing should anything be found. It explains the painstakingly hard work that is undertaken to search for and uncover any information in relation to the person who has gone missing. I found this reading to be of good value, although the stories within are from Canada. While it does talk about missing people it also talks about the loss that the families suffer and the tireless work they provide to try and find closure for them.

Madigan (2015) tells the enduring story of the disappearance of all three Beaumont children; Jane 9, Arnna 7, and little Grant Junior, 4. On January the 26<sup>th</sup>, 1966 they left their home that morning at 8.35am to play and swim at the Glenelg Beach in Australia, with their mother requesting they return home on the local bus at 12pm. The last sighting of the children was that afternoon, at the beach, but in the company of a male, who seemed familiar to the children. This male has never been identified, despite a number of suggestions and leads given to the police.

This is one of the longest cold case mysteries in Australia, which has spanned over 50 years. While there has been a lot of information gathered, no one has been held accountable for their disappearance and assumed murders. The parents of these three children, Grant and Nancy Beaumont never gave up hope of seeing their children alive. Nancy recently passed away this year (2019), sadly with no answers. Grant Beaumont is still living, aged in his 90s.

There have been many hoaxes relating to the whereabouts and the condition of the children, but all of these leads led nowhere. There have been some very likely suspects, as well as properties searched and dug up, to no avail. No evidence of the childrens whereabouts have been found.

One can only imagine the pain and suffering this couple has had to endure over this time. Not knowing where their children were and what had become of them after 50 years would take its toll on anyone. The initial grief that they endured, the terror they felt and the never ending nightmare of not knowing what happened to their children. As Grant stated to the press immediately after the disappearance, 'it's a complete mystery. I can't understand it. My kids will be crying their eyes out. It's like a nightmare.....it's the waiting around, the suspense. I don't know where to go, where to look' (Madigan, 2015).

To live the next 50 years not knowing where or what has happened to your children would be the worst thing imaginable. Time does not always heal for those who are living with the nightmare on a daily basis. This case is a prime example of that. All three children gone, never to be found. Hopes dashed time and time again must play on ones mind and feelings. It would be fantastic if Grant could finally get closure before he passes on. And Nancy will finally be able to rest in peace. One can only hope that she has been reunited with her beloved children in the afterlife.

THE LOST: Kirsa Jensen (2017) is a short podcast that discusses one of the most enduring missing persons cases in Aotearoa, New Zealand. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1983 Kirsa disappeared while riding her horse at the mouth of Tutaekuri River. The last confirmed sighting was by a member of the public who stated that Kirsa, with a bloodied face, was seen talking to a man in a white utility van.

While there has been much speculation in regard to Kirsa's case, with a number of suspects connected to her assumed murder, no one has been held responsible for her disappearance.

As the years have gone by Robyn's resolve has never wavered. She continues to hope that she will find out what happened to her child. She became a guidance counsellor at a school and also had her own practice where she worked with parents who had lost a child through violence. All of these stages in her career path were due to her own painful experience. She wanted to ensure that these parents were able to connect with other parents who had experienced the same, with therapy and group work.

35 years on and Robyn, Kirsa's mother holds on to the hope that her daughter will be found. 'To be able to locate her, and put her in a decent place. To rest. Forever' (THE LOST: Kirsa Jensen, 2017). I totally understand this, as this is the hope I also hold on to, that my brother will be found and laid to rest with his family.

My conclusion after watching this pod cast has led me to believe that the grief and loss Robyn has endured over the years has only made her stronger. She has risen above these feelings, and while still there always, she has been able to transform it into a positive, with the career path she has chosen. While no parent would ever want to go through what she has, or to lose a child



to violence, having support networks in place can ease the feelings to become less intense and intrusive. I am enamoured of her ability to work through the pain and use it positively.

## **2.4 Stages of Grief**

While everyone deals with grief differently, there are those who believe that there are stages of grief. Heart (2014) talks about his five stages of grief, which are the same stages as those of (Kubler-Ross & Kessler, 2005): Denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance, however it is dissimilar in the way in which each stage was felt and worked through. For example, each stage is broken down in order for it to be understood, unpacked and worked through. Each stage also had a poem, one of which I will share here, from the stage of anger:

‘Where is my justice?  
No sign of balancing scales.  
Expect your life to be fair.  
This system of law just fails.

So, what did I do?  
To deserve a fate so cruel?  
Bad in a previous life?  
Broke a universal rule?

No jury of peers,  
To help keep things by the book.  
They would see mitigation,  
And then let me off the hook.

This grand court of life,  
There is no justice there.  
Guilty of a trumped-up charge,  
The sentence is my despair.’ (page 38)

Machin (2009, page 5) believes that loss and grief are contextualised within Western society. It shares stories from those who have experienced grief and loss and talks about ways in which to move through the emotional maze to function normally. New ways in which to move forward are suggested. For example, it is stated:

.....research in practice and shows how listening closely to the narratives of the bereaved can lead to new ways of looking at loss. I commend it to everyone involved in the endeavour to understand and respond to the needs of those experiencing loss.

I like this reading as it shows that there should never be just 'one way' in which to deal with loss and grief. It is based on the individual and the feelings they experience as these can all differ from individual to individual. It also depends on the circumstances in which the missing person became missing. These feelings never go away, and no one should ever be expected to get over such things, however there are ways in which to manage these feelings without it impacting fully on our day to day lives. Once the understanding is gained, the response can be tailored to the individual in order for that person to move through the fog and come out the other side feeling clearer and less fragile.

This reading resonates with me in terms of 'muddling through' as I call it. I muddle through to ensure that I can maintain a normal way of life for me and my Whānau. I need to be able to not step into a fog of nothingness, that will only be to the detriment of myself and those around me.

Doka (2017, page 1) talks about the journey of grief and finding a way through in which to lead a normal life. While he does not identify stages, this reading is still very relevant to the processing of grief.

Everyone deals with grief in different ways, as is stated here:

Yet while the experience of loss is universal, the reactions to that loss are as distinct and individual as you are. Everyone grieves the individual loss in a unique way.

The fact is paradoxically both troubling and comforting. Troubling, since you want certainty: *What can I expect in grief? When will these feelings and reactions end?*

*What is normal?* But comforting too, because it accounts for the wide range of reaction you may be experiencing, and it reminds you that, just as each relationship is unique, so is each loss. Your own reactions have no less worth or validity than those others around you.

I know that I have asked myself these questions a lot over the years. I am an emotional person by nature therefore I need to process my feelings in depth to be able to understand what it is that I am feeling. But by realising that this is ok and is part of the journey makes it more comfortable to share the underground feelings I felt I couldn't share with others.

## **2.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter reviewed the literature on topics that involve missing people, including real life stories and the thoughts and feelings that those affected have. The literature readings also include readings about pain and grief and suggestions in terms of decreasing the severity of the grief experienced.

The next chapter will describe the research frameworks that will be employed in the study of coping with grief due to the loss of a person that has gone missing and has not been found.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Chapter Introduction**

The previous chapter reviewed the literature on topics that involve missing people, including real life stories and the thoughts and feelings that those affected have, including the impacts that they have had to endure throughout this traumatic time. The literature readings also include readings about pain and grief and suggestions in terms of decreasing the severity of the grief experienced.

This chapter will describe the research frameworks that will be employed in the study of coping with grief due to the loss of a person that has gone missing and has not been found.

#### **3.1 Methodology Overview**

This section describes the methodological approach taken in this thesis. They are Qualitative and Autoethnographic.

##### **3.1a Qualitative**

Qualitative research is a means in which to uncover trends in thoughts and opinions, and to delve deeper into the Kaupapa. In this case, I will be using this research methodology to investigate and prepare my findings in relation to the impacts of my brother's disappearance, sharing the grief and loss comparisons that are commonly felt.

(Tracy, 2013) discusses three components of qualitative research: self-reflexivity, context and thick description.

Self-reflexivity 'refers to the careful consideration of the ways in which researchers' past experiences, points of view, and roles impact these same researchers' interactions with, and interpretations of, the research scene' (page 4). What this refers to is such that the reader's life and experience shapes the approach and the way in which the research is conducted. With this

in mind, my own thoughts, opinions, values and beliefs will be imbedded in this thesis as part of the qualitative research process.

Context refers to:

‘immersing oneself in a scene and trying to make sense of it-whether at a company meeting, in a community festival, or during an interview. Qualitative researchers purposefully examine and make not of small cues in order to decide how to behave, as well as to make sense of the context and build larger knowledge claims about the culture.’

Context is a process that enables me to immerse myself into the Kaupapa, making sense of it all, building a solid knowledge base in order to gain findings. I am doing this by ensuring that the story I tell is untarnished, true and in its entirety. I will ensure to leave bare the raw emotions, thoughts and feelings so that the true essence of the Kaupapa comes through to the reader.

Thick description is directly related to context, according to researchers who:

‘Immerse themselves in a culture, investigate the particular circumstances present in that scene, and only then move toward grander statements and theories. Meaning cannot be divorced from this thick contextual description.....by describing the background and the context of action, researchers can decipher a twitch and tell it apart from a wink and from a parody of a wink- and they may interpret the meanings of all these gestures and help predict whether we are likely to see the behavior again’. (page 6).

Thick description collaborates with context to interpret and analyse the Kaupapa, to be able to distinguish between certain actions or behaviours. For example, using thick description within this Kaupapa allows me to differentiate between sadness and grief, ensuring the reader has clarity in relation to which emotion is being referred to and how it impacts on the Kaupapa.

There are other authors who interpret qualitative research differently, as it is dependent on the research being undertaken. For example, (Maruster & Gijenberg, 2012) believes that:

‘Qualitative research seems to demand less effort and skill than quantitative research. However, because of the multitude of possibilities and choices that need to be made, performing a qualitative research project is not, as at first glance it seems to be, an easy endeavor.....The road to success in this project is made up by a trajectory of methodological procedures; choosing the appropriate qualitative research techniques; performing a systematic collection and analysis of qualitative data; and a constant comparison of and critical reflection on the findings.’

For this thesis, there will be a number of procedures I will undertake in order to collect qualitative data in order to clearly analyse the findings and outcomes. Critical reflection is a must within this Kaupapa. Without it the Kaupapa will lack substance and the reader will not gain the understanding that the writer is trying to achieve.

Based on the examples shown above, I will be incorporating all facets mentioned in order to gain the findings and provide outcomes and/or recommendations. It is my intention to fully immerse myself into the Kaupapa, creating a true narrative. This will in turn create an environment in which I am able to be self-reflective, enabling the background and the actions of the context I have provided. Utilising thick description will also assist with ensuring the context is clear and concise, differentiating between emotion and actions. I will use these processes to gain clear findings, having critically analysed them prior and during the process.

The way in which I will do this will be explained in the method section of this thesis.

Autoethnography is also part of the qualitative research process, of which I will explain in the next section of this thesis.

### **3.1b Autoethnography**

Autoethnography is an exciting form of qualitative research, which enables me to use a personal narrative in order to tell the story of my brother’s disappearance, as well as the impacts it has had on us as his Whānau.

‘Autoethnography’ uses self-reflection and writing (of the researcher/author) to explore their autobiographical story and connect to wider cultural, political, and social meanings. Ellis and Bochner (2000) explains the autoethnography methodology:

‘I start with my personal life. I pay attention to my physical feelings, thoughts, and emotions. I use what I call systematic, sociological introspection and emotional recall to try to understand an experience I’ve lived through. Then I write my experience as a story. By exploring a particular life, I hope to understand a way of life.’

Here is another example of this method: ‘Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that focuses on self as a study subject but transcends a mere narration of personal history’ (Chang, Wambura Ngunjjiri, & Kathy-Ann, Collaborative Autoethnography, 2016). While the narration is centered around me, it is a personal history journey in which to explain to the reader the entire story from start to finish. As this also explains, Autoethnography is a qualitative method.

Another example of this research method is explained by (Chang, Autoethnography As Method, 2008): ‘My book is not about my autobiography per se, but about a research method that utilizes the researcher’s autobiographical data to analyse and interpret their cultural assumptions. This explanation was lofty and abstract’. Therefore, this example explains that while autoethnography may seem autobiographical, the researcher’s data or story in this thesis, assists to answer the research questions based on fact and personal experience but is not the center of the entire discussion as these are what the case studies will be presented to assist with this.

(Wall, 2008) states that:

‘autoethnography is an intriguing and promising qualitative method that offers a way of giving voice to personal experience for the purpose of extending sociological understanding..... however, that autoethnography can be a very difficult undertaking..... confronted anxiety producing questions pertaining to representation, balance and ethics. As well she dealt with the acceptability of her autoethnography by informal and formal reviewers. For the author questions linger, but she hopes that

sharing issues that arise in autoethnography work will strengthen our understandings of this challenging yet highly promising form of enquiry’.

This appears to have a different context and opinion to those of others. While yes, autoethnography can be difficult, I believe it is in the way it is managed, with the respect and delicacy it deserves.

Autoethnography enables me to include elements of autobiography in the thesis. This thesis is very much a story of my own experience, with case studies available incorporated to corroborate and familiarise the issue itself. These case studies will all have different circumstances, however the same outcome: a loved one has gone missing, and has not been found. These case studies will be investigated at in terms of circumstance and time. I will discuss case studies in increments, with the longest running case study being over 50 years, which is the case of the Beaumont children who disappeared in 1966. Using autoethnography will enable me to study the case studies in their entirety. That is my intention.

My experience has lasted over 15 years therefore this will be the basis for this thesis. Autoethnography will be able to assist with bringing my story to the fore, to allow the reader to experience what I have experienced. My story, along with the case studies I explore, will be in its rawest form. To not be at its rawest form means that the reader will not truly understand the circumstances surround the disappearance and the aftermath, who it affects and how it affects them.

Using this methodology enables me to be able to share my story within my research as a person who has experienced the trauma of a loved one going missing. With autoethnography, I am able to collaborate with case studies, showing where there are similarities and differences in our respective journeys. It will also portray the similarities of the thoughts and feelings only those who have endured this will understand and empathise with. These case studies, along with my story, will form the entire basis of my thesis.

While autoethnography is my preferred methodology and this is the methodology I will be using for this thesis, there were others that will be similar. For example there are:



"Producing life stories is an increasingly popular form of narrative-based inquiry in fields as diverse as anthropology, education, gerontology, history, law, medicine, psychology, sociology, and women's studies. Methods of inquiry into lived experience appear under such labels as autobiography, biography, autoethnography, life history, and oral history. Despite their differences, the common purpose of these methods is to inquire into lived experience and to re-present that experience in a narrative form that provides rich detail and context about the life (or lives) in question. Life storytelling can be understood as an intellectual site where the narrative turn in the social sciences meets the desire to exercise the descriptive and analytic processes that C. Wright Mills famously called the 'sociological imagination'." (Edith Cowan University, 2018)

While the methodology that I am using I will call autoethnography, the above will be intertwined into this methodology. I do not want to state that I am using all of the above, (although the reader may see this), as the methodology I have chosen encompasses all of the above. Autoethnography is life history, oral history and biographic. However, these are what autoethnography is, therefore this is the methodology I will be using for this thesis.

This methodology will allow me to tell each case study and my own story from the beginning to the present day. Each case story will be researched carefully so that all of the story can be told in its entirety. For example, my story will begin years prior to my brother going missing. I need to do this to show the reader what mindset my brother was in prior to his disappearance and how this mindset came to be. I hope that the reader will understand all the case studies I will discuss in this thesis, to the point that the reader will become immersed in the story, very similar to reading a novel type book.

### **3.2 Methods**

#### **Personal narrative Kōrero**

To achieve the aim as described above this study seeks to first answer several questions:

1. To look at how we grieve and how we continue to live our lives not knowing what has become of our loved ones.

2. To evaluate the effectiveness of the coping mechanisms used to carry on with life while still not knowing what has become of the loved one who has gone missing.

There will be underlying questions to answer the above, of which I have shared some below:

### **3.2a Underlying Questions**

Research question 1: What does the grief and loss look like?

Research question 2: What were the significant emotions?

Research question 3: What learning is available that can help to inform others who experience this loss and grief in the future?

Research question 4: What was the outcome when it was realised that closure may never be forthcoming?

This study, applying an inductive and interpretive approach is more associated with qualitative research, autoethnography methodology. In this study, autoethnography methodology is most appropriate, as this seeks to make sense of human experience and connect this with a wider cultural context.

### **3.3 Introspective Analysis**

#### **3.3a Introspection**

Introspection is the examination of one's own conscious thoughts and feelings. As Smithies & Stoljar, (2012) discusses, 'A more neutral starting point is to use the term 'introspection' as a placeholder for the distinctive way (whatever it is) in which we know our own minds'. It investigates at your own personality and actions, considering your own motivations.

Verlag Tübingen, (1986) describes the history of introspection to be that of:

Thinking aloud, verbal reports and verbal data are terms frequently used nowadays as synonyms for a special method of gathering data on mental processes. These terms also often signalise a certain proximity to a qualitative research approach in contrast to a quantitative one.... Introspection is a systematic method of observing oneself.

This somewhat coincides with Smithies & Stoljar, (2012), both reiterating that introspection is related to our minds, thoughts and feelings.

I am self-critical by nature therefore examining my thoughts, feelings and actions are a daily process for me. I am always retrospectively thinking about what I have said or done and think of ways in which this could have been said or done differently. I believe that this is part of my genetic makeup as I have always self-reflected for as long as I can remember.

There are pros and cons to introspection. For myself, as I self-reflect constantly, I can end up second guessing myself and the decisions I make. While I can't change what has already happened, I constantly play the scenario back in my mind, thinking of ways in which I could have changed it from a negative to a positive, or a more positive outcome.

As O'Brian (2010) states:

Although it may be satisfying to give in to compulsion, the energy of the mind is still nonetheless consumed through fearful self-inspection. Over time this type of negative introspection can give rise to mental illness and serious emotional problems.

This has not been an issue for me as such, however the negative impact as stated above clearly shows what could happen if negative introspection is a constant in your thinking.

I am self-critical by nature therefore examining my thoughts, feelings and actions are a daily process for me. I am always retrospectively thinking about what I have said or done and think of ways in which this could have been said or done differently. I believe that this is part of my genetic makeup as I have always self-reflected for as long as I can remember.

### **3.3b Introspective Analysis**

'Introspective analysis is the careful systematic self-observation with the intent to learn more about the self.' (New World Encyclopedia, 2014)

While this is similar to introspection, the word ‘analysis’ gives it a slightly differing meaning. While introspection is to self-reflect mentally, introspective analysis means to self-observe one’s self, with a view to analysing the results that have been discovered. Essentially it is a study of behaviour (Wheeler, 1923).

Wheeler, (1923) goes on to explain:

The introspective method should be used along with the study of behaviour because it provides information regarding the setting in the which behaviour takes place and because it gives a necessary check upon the reliability of behaviour data.....Behaviour data alone are inadequate. Introspection does not differ from other methods of scientific observation.

The examination of thoughts, feelings and actions will be showcased throughout this thesis, especially as this thesis is a personal narrative in relation to my brother’s disappearance and the impact this has had on me and other Whānau. I will explain the consequences of these thoughts, feelings and actions by using the introspective analysis.

### **3.4 Using Westernised writing as opposed to Te Ao Māori frameworks**

I have not framed my thesis in a Te Ao Māori framework or lens. The reason for this is simple. The Kaupapa of this thesis does not discriminate by gender, age, culture or race. It could happen to anyone and that person would be struck by the same feelings, thoughts and emotions.

While culture may play a big part in the way in which a person deals with the trauma, the thoughts, feelings and emotions are the same. While I am not discouraging others to look at this Kaupapa through a Māori framework or lens, I choose not to. My brother was still trying to find his way in the world of Te Ao Māori therefore his true way of thinking was Westernised. I need to tell the story of my brother’s disappearance in a way in which he would understand. The only way to do this is to utilise a Westernised way of interpretation and writing.

Writing this thesis in a Westernised lens does not take away my own Māori beliefs and values. I learnt these later in life and I follow them, along with my Pākeha values. I am blessed to be

able to walk in both worlds. However, to provide justice to my brother's story within this thesis, I must write it in a way that would be familiar to him.

Therefore, this thesis will be written in a generic platform, as I would hope that anyone who is also going through this trauma will be able to understand the contents and utilise any recommendations or suggestions contained within, regardless of age, gender, race or culture.

### **3.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter described the research frameworks that will be employed in the study of coping with grief due to the loss of a person that has gone missing and has not been found. It has explained what this means in terms of the writing analysis and introspective views.

I have also explained the reasoning behind my decision to write this thesis in a generalised, westernised way of writing.

The next chapter will summarise the contents of the research thesis, the research methods that will be adopted and the outcome, which is to outline coping strategies for those people who have had a loved one go missing and not be found. This will be achieved by the narration of my brother's story, as well as my own, to establish clear findings and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PERSONAL NARRATIVE**

#### **4.0 Chapter Introduction**

The previous chapter described the research frameworks that will be employed in the study of coping with grief due to the loss of a person that has gone missing and has not been found.

This chapter will summarise the contents of the research thesis, the research methods that will be adopted and the outcome, which is to outline coping strategies for those people who have had a loved one go missing and not be found. This will be achieved by the narration of my brother's story, as well as my own, to establish clear findings and recommendations.

#### **4.1 Our Story**

The following is the story of my brother and I, in its honest and rawest form. This thesis aims to provide the reader with a full account of the turbulent life we had, as well as the disappearance of my brother, the impacts and emotions this created. I will also discuss what paths I took in order to move forward with my life and maintain a sense of normalcy moving forward, which has not been easy to achieve.

##### **4.1A 'We didn't ask to be born'**

Jason was born on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November 1972. He was the first of three children to be born to both our parents. In 1974 another brother, who I will call 'the middle brother' was born. I followed in 1975.

I don't recall ever seeing our parents together as they separated and eventually divorced by the time I was one-year old. Our paternal grandmother, who, along with our paternal grandfather cared for Jason and I when our parents separated, told us stories when we were older. She told us that our father was abusive towards our mother, however our mother, being Māori and coming from an affluent family, did not tell anyone in the event that her own parents would find out. Our maternal grandfather was extremely strict and came from the belief that 'you make your bed, you lie in it'. Of our mother's parents, she did not want him to know.

What I found out many years later after requesting my Social Welfare file, was the fact that my mother was also unfaithful to my father, and all three of us children were admitted to hospital due to her lack of care. In fact, at ten months old the hospital refused to release me to my mother as they did not feel that she could care for me or the other children appropriately. My mother left NZ with another man to go to Australia, leaving all three of us children in the house. We were found two days later by my grandmother who had been looking for us. I was found in my cot, my big brother Jason trying to feed me a bottle of cold milk. The middle brother was found asleep. We were taken to hospital to be checked, then my grandmother took us home with her.

Our father had also gone to Australia to look for our mother to no avail. He rang our grandmother three days later to check on us and did not realise that we had been left in the house, assuming that our mother had taken us to our grandmother. He didn't think she was capable of just walking away. My grandmother was furious with our father and told him to come back. She also told him that she would be taking us as he and our mother were not capable parents. Our father agreed to this arrangement as he was working long hours, and, truth be told, he didn't know how to look after little children as we were all under the age of five.

#### **4.1B 'We are safe and loved...but for how long?'**

I was just under one and my brother three when he and I went to live with our grandparents, our father's parents. Our middle brother had been taken by our mother's parents as he had health problems. There my brother and I remained in Pukeatua until I was five, Jason seven or eight. Our father worked endless hours and we hardly saw him, unless we got up early and saw him asleep on the couch. While we weren't privy to all of the history of our parents, I do think now, after years have passed, that our father didn't know how to be a father. He didn't know how to love us or to be there for us and we saw no effort. He didn't spend time with us or take us anywhere with him. The only time I remember seeing him while living with our grandparents was when he bought me a china tea set for my birthday. I kept that tea set for over twenty years. In saying that I do wonder at times if he felt overpowered by our grandparents. They willingly showed affection and caring, and Jason and I loved them so much. They became our world as we saw them as our stability and ultimately as our parents.

I do wonder sometimes if this was intimidating for our father, as we would shy away from him as opposed to giving him a hug etc.

#### **4.1C ‘Whānau disconnection from the start’**

Our mother’s parents never had nor wanted anything to do with my brother and me. We didn’t even know what they looked like. While this didn’t affect us initially, in my later years I realised just how much we had lost in terms of Whānau connections. Our father’s parents were European therefore we did not have a Māori upbringing, in fact we didn’t know what Māori was. We did not know any of our Whānau until later in life. However, I will never disregard my grandparents as they showed us the ultimate life during the five years we lived with them, and continuous love. A life which made us feel cared for and loved. And they continued this love and support for the rest of their lives.

My father married another woman when I was five, Jason eight. We met her on occasion when they were dating but didn’t really know her well. We would visit her at her work and she would be cordial towards us. I remember thinking that she was pretty and she seemed nice. Jason agreed and we were happy to see her the few times that we visited her. When they married, we didn’t know. We weren’t invited to the wedding, our step mother telling us years later that she ‘didn’t want any snotty nosed little Māori kids at my wedding’.

#### **4.1D ‘The savage years’**

When Jason was seven or eight and I was five (I had just started school), our grandfather suffered a stroke. As little children we didn’t know what that meant and didn’t notice anything wrong apart from our grandfather being more tired than normal.

So being told that we were going to live with our father and his new wife in Tokoroa was a shock for us. We weren’t told beforehand that we were going to live with them, our grandmother chose to tell us on the day. I didn’t know at the time that she was trying to convince our grandfather to keep us as she didn’t want our father to take care of us due to his history of violence. Years later my grandfather told me just how guilty he felt by doing this but he thought it was the best thing to do at the time. I still remember that day. Jason and I



crying as our father came to pick us up, us not realising what was happening. For me I was devastated. My grandmother was the only mother I knew and as a five-year-old, the attachment I had to her was extreme. But our bond never broke and I still regard her as my mother. However, this next stage in our lives would prove to be the ‘savage’ years as I refer to them.

While our step mother was nice to us for the first three months or so, this slowly changed, and her demeanour became nasty and cruel toward us, especially when her own sons were born. As a five-year-old I could not understand why. Even today I often wonder. Each day we would wake up, not knowing what mood our step mother was in. She treated us like she hated us and this showed in the way she looked at us and the way she spoke. She also inflicted assaults upon us, mostly for trivial things, such as arriving home one minute late. An example of this is a memory I have when I was seven. I came home from school one minute later than the previous day. My stepmother asked me why I was late. I stated that I wasn’t late. I received a slap across the face which resulted in a bleeding nose. She sent me out to the garage toilet to clean myself up. I stayed in the garage the entire night as I was too scared to go back inside. My stepmother came out in the morning, laughing at me, telling me that I was a ‘snotty nosed little Māori kid who no one wanted’. The more I cried the more she laughed and told me to get to school. I had no breakfast or lunch but I was too scared to ask her for any.

That was also a way of controlling us. If she was angry we were sent to school with no food. This included breakfast and dinner. Once, Jason stole a sandwich from another child’s school bag. Why? Because our stepmother had refused to feed us for two days. He was found out and was severely punished by our father. Jason never did this again and we both chose to be hungry whenever this happened, hoping that our stepmother would have gotten over whatever it was by the time we got home and would feed us. We also got used to being hungry and got through the foodless days by drinking a lot of water.

Jason always got the worst of the abuse. He was verbally and physically abused by our father, mainly due to our stepmother telling lies about us. I didn’t fare much better, however our father seemed to take the abuse to another level with Jason, who received more frequent assaults from at the request of our step mother. He would hit us both with a belt however Jason also got the belt buckle which would cause massive bruising where my brother would cry out in pain for days. I was too afraid to stop the assaults but I was always there to take care of Jason

afterwards, cleaning his wounds and talking to him to try and settle him. I could only imagine from his sobs how much pain he was in, not just physically but emotionally as well.

We would talk together about running away, going back to our grandparents or retaliating against our parents. We only had each other so we tried to protect each other, to no avail. Jason ran away a number of times however each time he was found and brought home the consequences were severe. I was too scared and tried my hardest to be the best child in the world, however anything I did was never good enough. Our step mother always found fault somewhere. All I could do was again comfort my brother after yet another beating.

#### **4.1E ‘Trying to understand but can’t’**

Now that I am older I realise that it must have been hard for our step mother to marry a man with two children. However, this realisation is only short lived. My Whakaaro is such that she knew about us, and she knew that we would be living with them. If she didn’t like it she should never have gotten into a relationship with our father. And because she did, my brother and I were the ones who paid the price. In saying that, her behaviour towards us taught me what was right and what was wrong by the way it made me feel. I took those feelings with me into adulthood, ensuring that my step children never experienced what I did.

Not long after we moved to Tokoroa our father built a huge steel shed on the back of our property. He told us it was for his weight lifting equipment and also our step-mother’s studio for her paintings. That was short-lived, as Jason and I were forced to sleep in there after our rooms were cleared while we were at school and our beds and drawers were moved in. Now we only went into the house to eat, use the toilet or bathe. During this time, I had a total sense of abandonment. We hated living in that shed with only our bed and a little TV to keep us company. There was no heating, making it extremely cold, especially in the winter months. We didn’t dare complain, we just tried to stay warm as best as we could.

Jason and I would discuss both our father and step-mother’s behaviours. I would cry a lot, telling him that they hated us, but I couldn’t understand why. Neither of us could understand why we were being treated so cruelly when we didn’t know most of the time if or what we had done wrong.

My big brother would hug me, tell me that it was OK and he would protect me as much as he could. At times I would feel bad, as Jason would always get the brunt of the abuse and I couldn't protect him from that. But he would always make sure I was OK, walking me to and from school and taking the blame a lot of the time, even though neither of us had committed any offences. And that is how we were. We only had each other so we tried to look after each other the best we could.

#### **4.1F 'Our Salvation'**

Our safe-haven was our grandparents, where we would visit most weekends. While they knew something was happening at home, we were too scared to say anything in case we or them got into trouble. School was another haven. Jason and I loved going to school and went every day, whether we were sick or not. With staying home being the alternative, school was a welcome distraction from the dysfunctional atmosphere at home. And again, we never told the school or our grandparents what was happening at home for fear of retribution.

We embraced every moment with our grandparents. We would dread it knowing that we were going back to our parents. So, we tried to make the most of the time we had, basking in the love and adoration our grandparents showed toward us.

Jason tried to get into any sports teams he could. He was great at rugby, soccer and tennis. However, he was never able to join as our parents wouldn't pay the fees. I would see how embarrassed he would get when the coaches would always say he couldn't be a part of the team due to non-payment. So, he participated in activities that were free, playing sports during lunch time and drawing cartoon characters, which he loved doing and was very good at.

However, one day my grandmother saw bruising on Jason's legs from a whipping he received from our father with an electric cord. Social Welfare was called. We didn't see our grandparents for at least a year after that, as the Social Worker had told our step mother of the claims our grandmother had made, which she had promised not to do. Our stepmother denied the allegations and our file was closed. Just like that. We were never spoken to and our grandparents never laid another complaint again in fear of losing contact with us again and

losing all confidence in the system that was meant to protect us. They were our salvation and they knew that. Their love for us knew no bounds but I know how much our grandparents hurt, feeling helpless to help us. The only thing they could do was try and take us as many weekends and holidays as they could.

We spent seven years in Tokoroa with our father and stepmother before leaving to live in the Far North. During this time, our parents decided to separate. For a time both Jason and I lived with our father in a tiny one-bedroom bach. We travelled to Otamatea High School (it was a full year school) and spent our days by the beach and living off oysters, as these were free and easy to pick. Our father worked various one-off jobs to get us through, refusing to receive benefits of any kind. After a year Jason remained with our father in Pahi Beach and I moved in with our stepmother and my two brothers, attending school at Te Kopuru. While the verbal abuse continued from my stepmother, there was no physical abuse toward me. Not that the verbal abuse wasn't bad enough.

Again, my school became my haven, although I struggled with friendships and learning. My brother was the same, except his difficulties were his violent outbursts at his teachers and students alike. During this time, my brother told me that our father would hit him or verbally abuse him daily. It finally got too much, and my brother retaliated. Social Welfare were called as my brother had hit our father with a piece of wood. The same piece of wood that our father had hit him with. My brother was sent to a family home where he remained for three years. He was thirteen when he was taken away.

During those years in state care, Jason told me he was the victim of verbal and physical abuse, this time by those who were meant to be caring for him. He ran away a multitude of times and each time he was found he was sent back to the same place, regardless of the allegations he made against the caregivers. He continued to run away in order to get relief from the abuse that he suffered. He told me that he gave up saying anything as to why he ran away nothing would happen, he would just get returned regardless. He was angry, he had tried to contact our mother on numerous occasions, hoping that she would come and get him or at least talk to him but all letters and phone calls went unanswered.

Jason came back to us years later a shell of his former self. He was angry and frustrated at the way he was treated. He also continued to believe that his life was the way it was due to our mother. He was the only one of us two that had developed an attachment to our mother and he was the one who felt the separation the most. He believed for many years that she would come back and get us. He held on to that dream always, right up to his disappearance.

During the same time Jason was in care, my father had returned to our stepmother. The physical abuse returned and one day he hit me across the face with a spatula while at the kitchen table. Why? Because I giggled at something my little brother said. I went to school, rang my grandparents, begging them to come and get me. I ran away to my friend's house until they were able to come and get me the next afternoon. They travelled throughout the early morning and day to come and get me, as it was a seven-hour drive. I then went to live with them in Te Awamutu. I was eleven.

#### **4.1G 'The Uplift and the Consequences'**

While I was grateful to my grandparents for all they had done the damage had already been done. I had a new sense of freedom and developed an attitude where I didn't care about what my grandparents thought or felt, I was going to do whatever I wanted whenever I wanted and I did just that. I hardly went to school and when I was there I wasn't there to learn, I was there to be disruptive and rude to the teachers. I struggled with friendships and drew myself towards people that had the same attitude as me.

Back in the late eighties, early nineties, what we know today at Oranga Tamariki, Ministry for Vulnerable Children was called the Social Welfare Department.

I caused my grandparents the utmost grief. To this day I carry the guilt of what I put them through. I spent six months with them before Social Welfare became involved and eventually removed me from their care. I didn't know at the time but my grandparents were hurt, overwhelmed and distraught at my behavior and couldn't control me any longer. They asked Social Welfare for help.

Social Welfare during this time were going through changes. As Maharey (2000) states:

During the 1980s the Department had sustained a tidal wave of criticism that it was unresponsive and insensitive to the needs of Māori. Further the Department was perceived as unclear in its purpose and unable to meet the needs of New Zealanders.

These changes eventually culminated in the establishment of three independent organisations:

- the Ministry of Social Policy,
- the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, and
- the Department of Work and Income which integrated the New Zealand Employment Service, bringing together both income support and employment service functions.

This evolution fundamentally changed the way income support, employment, and social services are delivered in New Zealand.

This was a time that constituted change within policy but certainly not with practice. As a current registered Social Worker, it is important to look back on those years and look at how far we have come. In my own personal opinion there are still Social Workers who practice with an ‘old school’ lens, where they have the belief that they know better and the Whānau they are meant to be supporting do not. While, yes, my grandparents were under pressure while caring for me, my grandmother told me that she didn’t want them to take me away, she wanted support to help all of us. However, this didn’t happen as the next part of this thesis will explain.

I didn’t know much about it at the time, apart from the time that the Social Worker came to our home in Tokoroa and I didn’t see my grandparents for a year. That is what I associated them with, taking me away from my grandparents, which is what they were doing again by removing me from their care.

My friends and I were walking down the street of Te Awamutu. This was during the school holidays so we were within our rights to be walking around during that time of the day. A car swiftly pulled up out of nowhere, with four adults exiting three males and one female. Two

came to my right, the other two to my left. I was lifted off the ground by one person on each side putting their arms under my shoulders and I was literally carried to the car. Not once did they say anything until I was placed in the back seat of the car, with one person on each side of me to ensure I couldn't escape. My friends were screaming and crying, as they too were just as bewildered as I and initially thought I was being kidnapped! Little did I know that I was being uplifted as the Social Welfare department had applied to the courts to have me removed from my grandparents and placed in state care. This made me what they called at the time, a 'State Ward', or a 'Ward of the State'.

I spent time in three different foster homes, as well as numerous stints in the girl's home, which was a home for girls who had committed offences. I need to state here that I didn't commit any offences, my crime was running away. And the consequences for running away were dire. Food was withheld, beatings and verbal abuse were just some of the atrocities afflicted upon me and other Social Welfare children. The carers believed that this was ok, that we were nothing and we were treated as such. I remember each home that I was put in, that the carers had their own children living there as well, which meant that us Social Welfare children had to share a room, at one point six girls in one room while the carers daughter had her own room, which I might add, was significantly bigger than the one we shared.

The girl's home was a frightening experience, which I endured whilst being placed there six times, all for running away. This was like a mini prison, complete with bars on the windows and every door unlocked and locked as you went through. It was the survival of the fittest, or the hardest. The gang affiliations were strong therefore you had to 'rep' a side when you got there. And you made sure that you did what you were told by the senior girls. Thankfully I was never beaten in this girl's home but I certainly saw a number of girls who were and ashamedly, while I wasn't a part of the beatings, I participated by being a 'lookout' or 'distractor'. I reasoned with myself that this was the only way in which to keep myself safe. One could forgive my naïve girl way of thinking; however, I still remember what I saw and I always felt guilty about not trying to prevent it from happening in the first place.

The workers there weren't much better than the carers in the Social Welfare homes. They swore at us and treated us like dirt. One of them explained to me that that he was only there 'cos it's a job' and he wasn't concerned about any of us. I also recall when one girl was

savagely beaten by three other girls. While the fight was broken up and the perpetrators taken away to isolation, no help arrived for the injured girl for at least an hour. One of the workers even told her that he deserved what she got because she was 'too mouthy and it deserved a smack'. This girl had a broken jaw, missing teeth and two black eyes. Once she was released from hospital she was brought back to the girl's home and placed back with those who had beaten her. I remember at the time thinking that that wasn't right but I kept my mouth shut so as not to receive what she did. Thankfully she wasn't harmed again.

Throughout this time, thanks to all that I had experienced, I became more and more rebellious, believing that no one cared and I didn't care what they thought. I tried to talk to my Social Worker about the abuse that had happened in the foster homes and the girl's home but no one believed me and I was told I was just a 'naughty girl who has no ambition in life. You will be barefoot and pregnant before you are 16'. The last sentence was to become a reality.

I remained in Social Welfare care until I was fourteen, when I was placed in the care of my maternal uncle, who was the vice president of the local black power gang. I always wonder now why Social Welfare ever thought that this was a good idea, but they must have thought it was as I was left there and I didn't see anyone from Social Welfare again. But as a fourteen-year-old girl, I thought this was amazing.

Living with my uncle and partner was a strange experience. We lived with other patched members and their partners in one big house. My uncle did try to shield me from some of the life that he led but I saw enough. There were continuous parties, drugs and fighting and I would go for rides with them around town and a couple of times I got into fights with other girls, thinking I was 'hard' because of who my uncle was. My uncle went to prison about six months after I had started living with him. He later became a victim of suicide while incarcerated. Inevitably I started a relationship at fifteen with one of the patched members.

The relationship was doomed from the start. My partner was extremely possessive and controlling and when the abuse started I didn't leave. I believed that this is what I deserved and this is how gang life was. But I did know it was wrong.



I leant on my grandparents during this time, however inevitably, I became pregnant by my partner I was in a relationship with, giving birth to a baby boy, two months after turning sixteen. I left the father of my child when I was eighteen. His violence became too much and I feared for myself and my child. During this time, I chose to let my child live with his paternal grandparents, a decision I have regretted for many years, as when I tried to get him back after getting my life sorted, they took me to court and gained full custody of him. The process was ugly and I knew if I fought back the repercussions would include losing all contact with my son, which I was not prepared to risk.

#### **4.1H A new family begins**

Jason was in and out of prison from the age of sixteen to twenty. By then I was a mother and was living in my own home. Therefore, he would always come and stay with me when he came out. We always had a bond and he knew I would always have him live with me. He didn't really like working and in the 1990s there was no obligation to look for work when in receipt of a government payment. He would hang out with his friends and members of the black power, which scared me as I was worried he would join with them. Fortunately, although he prospected, he didn't join. He continued to live with me until my circumstances changed and my son went to live with his father's Whānau. We went our separate ways, remaining in constant contact.

I ended up back living with our grandparents while Jason chose to be transient. He never worked but stayed with friends until he outstayed his welcome. Until he met his children's mother, the woman who would change his life forever.

For this thesis I will refer to this person as Jason's partner. She was pregnant with her fourth child when she met Jason. I was very wary of her and her intentions towards my brother. While we had been apart for some years, we were still extremely close therefore I was the first one he introduced her to. Our grandparents were the same, not liking her very much. But I eventually concluded that I didn't have the right to judge who my brother chose to be in a relationship with. And I also realised that it didn't matter who she was, I would more than likely feel the same way toward any woman who was with my brother.

Two months of starting their relationship Jason and his partner moved to Rotorua. There his partner gave birth to her fourth child. Jason adored the child and treated her as his own. Not long after this his partner became pregnant again. She gave birth to my brother's first biological child. I was the first one he called. I was living with my now husband in Te Awamutu and travelled to Rotorua to see my niece as much as I could. This only strengthened the relationship between Jason and I. Four more children quickly followed, with my brother becoming a father of nine children, five being his biologically. As I lived in Te Awamutu and Jason lived in Rotorua I wasn't aware of all the issues they were dealing with. While I knew they were living in poverty, I tried to help with money and food when I was able.

Unbeknown to me, Jason had started becoming verbally abusive. At the time, it wasn't physical but his partner was buckling under the strain of Jason's possessiveness and control. She didn't know who to talk to and how to deal with it. While visiting with her and the children one day, I noticed how withdrawn she had become and asked her if everything was OK. This is when she told me about the verbal abuse and the possessive behaviours Jason was displaying. He wouldn't let her leave the house unless he was with her and if he went out he had friends who lived next door keep a look out to ensure she didn't leave. Jason's partner felt trapped and was unsure what to do. This was clearly an extreme form of control. Stark (2007) defines this behaviour as 'a pattern of coercive control that one-person exercises over another in order to dominate and get his way.' I agree with this statement, I was angry as I felt that Jason was starting to display the same traits as our father, something we promised each other would never happen. I spoke with Jason sternly, admonishing him for his behaviour.

Engel (2002) sheds some light on why my brother became the abuser. She discusses those who suffered from emotional abuse as children and how it is hugely common that they are more likely to raise their own children in the same manner:

'My hope is that by helping individuals and couples to stop abusing each other, we will raise children who are less likely to pass on abusive communication and behaviour to their children and substantially reduce the incidence of child abuse in the future'

I always hoped that my brother would never become the abuser, but these hopes were dashed after his partner explained what had been happening for a long period of time. My anger was mixed with sorrow, as now the realization hit me just what his children were being exposed to.

We ended up talking for some hours, with Jason explaining how he was feeling. He was scared that his partner would leave him and so was doing everything he could to stop that from happening. He was aware that his verbal outbursts were not OK but he felt powerless to stop himself when he became angry. I agreed with him and told him that this was definitely not OK, and I reiterated the discussions we had growing up, one being that we would never treat our children the way in which we were treated. I was angry and I told him so.

After some time of discussion Jason finally broke down, explaining that our mother leaving had traumatised him. So much so that he had been visiting her in Te Awamutu (she had moved with her husband and two children there, including our middle brother). He felt so hurt that our mother was living her life as if we didn't exist. He went so far to develop a relationship that he even offered one of his unborn children to her. When she said no he felt even more deflated. The fact that we had a brother and sister that our mother loved and cared for, that we could see this, really affected him.

While I had managed to move forward without needing our mother's affection, Jason was unable to. I never had an attachment to our mother and I didn't really know her. In my eyes our grandparents were our parents and I didn't know anything different. I didn't realise until then how affected he was by our mother leaving but now I could. He was three when she left, and had developed an attachment to her, one only he and she felt and understood. He felt abandoned and hurt. He was doing everything he could to keep his family together but by doing so he was only pushing them apart. I promised I would do whatever I could to help him.

As time went by things started to settle, however I now know that this was the calm before the storm. About a year later Jason began hitting his partner, then his violence went towards the children. I will never know why Jason chose to do this and I have always held some guilt that I wasn't doing enough to stay in constant contact with him and the children.

#### **4.11 The beginning of the end**

One day I received a call from a friend of his partner. She told me that Jason had beaten his eldest daughter the night before. The child had gone to school with bruising to the face. In turn, the school had called the police. My now husband and I rushed to Rotorua to find out what was going on. Jason had been arrested and we were asked if we would take the child that had been assaulted. We agreed immediately. Social Welfare were now involved with Lisa and the remaining children therefore we were able to take the child home with us. The anger I felt at the time towards my brother was unsurmountable. How could he do this? Why did he do this?

The feelings of anger and rage I felt that my brother could do this to one of his children really hit me hard. This time I didn't have any excuses for him. Feelings of hate towards my brother came forth, especially when I could clearly see the damage he had done both mentally and physically to his child. When we took my niece home I told Jason's partner that we would not be bringing her back. As her mother, it was her responsibility to protect her child and she didn't do that. Jason's partner agreed, not putting up a fight in any way.

The next day I received a call from the Rotorua police who asked if my brother could be bailed to my address. I said no as the victim was living with us now. I heard my brother calling out to me from the police cells, begging me to come and get him. Anger rose up into my feelings once again and I told the police officer that no, he was not welcome in my home at that time. Again, my thoughts returned to the previous questions. Why did he do this? How could he?

My brother eventually was bailed to another address in Te Awamutu. I wasn't OK with this as the people living at this address were my son's family. I didn't think it was appropriate but because I had said no I didn't think it was my place to say anything. However, my son soon started telling me that Jason had been picking on him, as my son at that time had contact with his grandmother, our mother. This enraged Jason, who became jealous and bitter, saying nasty things to my son, fueled by his own issues with abandonment. He and I had words which settled things down but the fact that our mother was in contact with my son was something that really hurt Jason, as our mother did not have anything to do with his children. I understood his feelings, and I could not answer why our mother had chosen to become part of my son's life,

however, as I explained to him, I would not stop this relationship as long as it was a positive one and my son was happy. Jason understood but I knew it still hurt, regardless of what I said.

As time went on Jason and his partner started contacting each other again. I told Jason that it was a bad idea as this would just lead to more trouble due to his bail conditions which included non-association with his partner. Prior to Christmas in 2003 she began texting Jason, first about the kids, then becoming more intimate, saying she missed him and wanted him back. Jason knew that he was not allowed to go near his partner or the children, a fact he felt deeply that Christmas. I tried to make him a part of our Christmas but I knew that he was missing his children immensely. Despite what he had done, I knew that he genuinely loved his children. He just did not know how to express it in a healthy manner. I told him that I would help him any way I could but he needed to want the help, of which he told me he did.

In February 2004, Jason absconded from the bail address and did not appear in court on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February. It became known later that he and his partner had continued their communication but it had taken a sinister turn. From the texts I saw between them, his partner was allowing Jason to believe he could return home, then at the last minute she refused to have him. This has been going on for a number of weeks. Jason, finally having enough of the back and forwards, text her telling her he was coming to see her. His partner didn't want him to, but Jason decided that that was the only option at the time and told her that he was coming, which frightened his partner.

Once Jason's partner contacted me, I travelled to Rotorua to search for Jason. I was terrified that he would hurt his partner, the kids, or himself. He didn't turn up to the house he had shared with this partner and I spent a week, staying with a friend at night, searching for him. Deflated, I went home. I held out hope that he was ok and he wasn't going to do anything stupid.

During the near six weeks, while he was on the run, I heard stories that he was hiding at friends' houses and was ok overall. I tried to get messages to him, telling him we loved him but he needed to hand himself in. Finally, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April I got a phone call from him. This was to be the last time we ever spoke. I asked him if he was ok. "Yeah sis, I'm ok. How are the kids? How's my daughter?" I told him that they were ok. I told him I loved him, no matter what. "You're my big brother. I love you. I hope you know that?" I asked him. His response

was that he did know, that he had always known but he couldn't comprehend why his life had turned out this way. I pleaded with him not to do anything silly. There was something in his voice, although he was talking normally, that made me think something was wrong. "Nah sis, I'm not gonna do anything" he replied to me. "Tell my kids I love them". I told him I would, that everything would be ok but he needed to do the right thing. He was about to answer me when the phone cut off. I still can only assume that the phone went flat, as I tried to frantically call him back but it kept going to voicemail.

I still think about the phone call. In my heart, I know if we weren't cut off I could have talked him out of what was to happen next. The fact that we got cut off and that was the last time I heard his voice still haunts me. I keep reminiscing about what might have been had we had more time to talk.

Unbeknown to me on this same day Jason sent his partner flowers. I found this out when I rang her to advise that Jason had contacted me. I warned her that I felt something was about to happen, regardless of what Jason said, however she laughed this off. "He won't hurt me or the kids, he loves us". This coming from a person who was telling my brother that she wanted him home then didn't. While I am not trying to lay blame here, it may come across that way. I knew my brother better than anyone. I knew that the texts his partner had been sending would have deeply upset Jason and he would have felt abandoned once again. Jason tended to create huge issues that, to us, were actually small. He festered on issues, making them bigger than they needed to be, but the texts, I knew, would have made a huge impact on him. I told his partner again that I had a bad feeling and that she needed to ensure that she and the kids were around other people in a safe environment. Again, she laughed this off stating she and the kids were fine and Jason wouldn't do anything.

The next day, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2004, Jason's partner returned to her sister's house, where she had been staying. The court documents stated that Jason presented a loaded .308 rifle at Lisa. The children were also in the vicinity, with one of them still in the car with Lisa. What the court document does not state is the fact that Jason tried to shoot Lisa but thankfully, the gun jammed. Another person at the property was able to get hold of the rifle and Lisa was able to drive away. Jason then ran off. This initiated an armed defender search but he was not found.

The next day on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April he withdrew money from a Credit Union in Rotorua. This was the last bank transaction he ever made. The last official sighting of my brother, Jason Colin Sinclair, was on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2004, when he appeared from some bushes, threatening his partner's sister. He has never been seen since.

## **4.2 The Aftermath**

It has been fifteen years since my brother disappeared. Not one day goes by that I don't think of him, what has happened to him and where he is located. He is constantly in my thoughts, a lingering sense of wondering which never goes away. I will never find closure until I know what has happened to him, where he is and bring him home to our grandparents. Only then will I be able to rest.

In 2005, one year after Jason disappeared, I married my partner. During the lead up to this occasion I tried to contact him, asking his friends if they had seen him, to no avail. As both of our grandparents had passed in 1995 and 2003 respectively he was the next closest family member and I wanted him there. But I couldn't find him. My wedding day was wonderful, however in the back on my mind I was sad that he wasn't there to share this momentous occasion. I didn't think at the time that he was 'missing', I just thought he was hiding and wasn't ready to be found.

Not long after getting married I fell ill. I was in and out of hospital with no answers to my issues. Finally, after 12 months I saw a private specialist who was able to give me a definitive diagnosis which led to my having to have a full hysterectomy. I was only 29 at the time and I this impacted me on me in the say way in which a death would, as I was told I would never have any more children. During my time in hospital my thoughts went towards my brother and again wondering where he was. This was a time where I needed him and his support and I remember feeling really alone not having him there to talk to. While my husband was beside me supporting me of course, the bond Jason and I shared was very close and while I wanted my husband there, I wanted my brother there as well.

During these first three years I always wondered where he was and if he was OK. I didn't think at the time that he was 'missing' per say; I thought that he was still out there hiding and this is why he hadn't contacted me. I was working and taking care of his child but I kept in touch with my friends in Rotorua. There were rumours that my brother had a new partner and was living with her in Rotoma. Police investigated these rumours four weeks after this information was known and found no sign that Jason had ever been there. And then there were the rumours that he was in Taupo. Again, this was investigated but there was no evidence that Jason was there or had ever been there.

Three years later the police began to realise that while there were active charges against him he had not come to their attention for that long period of time. For a person who had raked up a number of charges over the years prior to his disappearance, this was strange. They investigated further, checking bank accounts, flight details and visiting his friends. They also followed up again in relation to the Taupo and Rotoma connections with no success. No one had had contact with Jason during this time. His friends assumed that he had been caught and was in jail. However more information was given to the detectives. A number of friends stated that prior to the gun incident Jason had told them that he wanted to take his life and that he had a hut that he had made in the bush around Okataina. They did not realise that he hadn't been seen or heard from in the three years that had passed. A police search was conducted in the Okataina forest with no success. That is when the police detectives decided to visit with me.

I was intrigued to know what they wanted from me, especially as the police detective advised that what they wanted to discuss with me was better done face to face instead of over the phone. I hoped they had new information about my brother, however this was not to be the case. It was explained to me all of the work the detectives had completed in order to garner new information in regard to the whereabouts of my brother, which included the bush searches in the Okataina area. My brother had now been missing for six years. There was no new information garnered therefore the detectives felt that my brother Jason was more than a fugitive. They were now classing him as a missing person.

As anyone could imagine, I was devastated. While I didn't want to believe this information, when I looked at all the information I had to agree. Jason hadn't tried to contact us, he hadn't tried to contact his partner or the children. He had not come to police attention during this



time. For a person who had racked up numerous charges over the years, not coming to the attention of the police was unusual.

During this same visit I was asked if I would be willing to provide a DNA sample. This was due to both of my parents being asked but refusing to provide their samples. This angered me. Why? This was something that could help with identification, why would they refuse to do this? Of course, I provided mine as I wanted to help in any way possible. Why neither of my parents wanted to do the same was and still is, beyond me.

A thousand questions ran through my mind. Where was he? Had he done something to himself? Had someone done something to him? My mind was racing. I felt a number of emotions during this time, those being fear, guilt, anxiety, panic, sorrow and of course understanding and love. I missed my brother. For me, the not knowing at the time meant that he was OK and that he was hiding. By believing that at the time, I felt comfort. Now that he was considered a missing person, my true fears and despair came to the fore. I spent the next few weeks very tearful and leant on my husband and children for immense support during this time. It was difficult as this was unfamiliar territory and none of us knew how to react. I admit during those first few months alcohol was a numbing presence in my life, a way in which to block out the feelings and emotion that I didn't know how to cope with. I didn't speak out about how I was feeling as I was trying to understand myself. Thankfully this only lasted a few months.

Another three years followed with no new information. I continued to work and raise my niece, who now regarded us as her parents, with my brother always being in the back of my mind. I always kept his memory alive by celebrating his birthday and lighting a candle for him every Christmas. I continue to do this every year. I talked to his children about him all the time, telling them about growing up with our grandparents and what we did as children. I didn't, and never will, tell them about the negative experiences we had. It's in no one's interest that I tell them about this.

My brother had been missing for a total of six years when the detectives came to see me again. I was informed that a final search would be made the following month in the bush area that Jason's friends spoke of. If there was no evidence leading towards finding my brother, they

would proceed with the Coroner's court, asking for Jason to be declared legally dead. I was devastated all over again. I was torn in two, was this the right thing? If this happened and he was declared dead, would they stop looking for him? What if he wasn't dead? What were my rights as his sister and next of kin? I posed these questions to the detectives. I was advised that they had not come to this conclusion lightly however after looking at all the information this is the only outcome that is more likely. While it could not be stated whether he died at his own hand or at the hands of others, the likelihood that he was dead was very strong. I could not stop this process, it would be done regardless as this is the process that needed to be followed.

The detectives encouraged my husband and I to attend the hearing so that all evidence and information could be heard. My devastation turned into sorrow, guilt, and hopelessness. If I was going through with this process and attended the Coroner's Court hearing, did this mean that I was agreeing with the police and believing that he was dead? My husband and I discussed this at length, as he kept reminding me that Jason could, in fact, still be alive. I felt torn between attending or not. Again, there were so many mixed emotions that I found it very difficult to comprehend what was being said. However, with the support of my husband, we agreed to attend the Coroner's court.

The detectives stated they had tried to contact both my parents; however, they did not want anything to do with my brother or his disappearance. This angered me, they hadn't supported him then and now they were truly turning their backs on him. I stated that was fine, my husband and I would attend the hearing. I was the closest family member my brother had apart from his children. I needed to be there for them, and for my brother.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2010, my brother's hearing was heard. Only my husband and I turned up, no one else. Both of my parents had been advised of the court hearing and were invited to attend but they both chose not to. The detectives explained all of the evidence and information leading up to and during my brother's disappearance. I became emotional during this process, as the information being given was raw and emotionless. While I realised that the case was made with no intention of being uncaring, I found the process just that, although the Judge was nice and acknowledged me accordingly. That day my brother was declared legally dead, the verdict stating that he had died in the Bay of Plenty, his cause of death being unknown.

I spent the next week at home, taking time off work to try and make sense of what had happened. I lay in bed most days thinking about where he could be, my mind switching from finding him alive to finding him deceased and what I would do in each circumstance. Where I would take him if he was found deceased and what I would say to him if he was found alive. These thoughts were with me constantly. As was the feeling of guilt. My worst thought, which remains with me today is such that if Jason did in fact take his own life he would have done so believing that we did not care about him. That is a fear that I always carry. That he was alone, feeling unloved and uncared for and felt that that was the only option he had. Even as this paragraph is written I feel the tears in my eyes coming forth. The thought of Jason feeling this way devastates me and always will.

When I went back to work I did find it hard to function and concentrate fully on my duties. Luckily, I had an amazing manager who was the only one that I told what was going on and who supported me one hundred percent. I couldn't get different scenarios out of my head and it felt like it was almost on replay, swimming around in my thoughts, especially the question as to whether he was alive or not.

One of the worst things I could have done during this time was not talk about him to others, however I didn't know how to. Most people did not know about Jason and his disappearance and during those first ten years I didn't tell anyone due to fear of being judged. I didn't want people saying how sorry they were, or asking me over and over what happened. I also felt a lot of shame that somehow this was attached to my life and people would look and treat me differently if I did share this story with them. The one time that I tried to talk about him in intimate circles I was met with negative comments by one of our Whānau therefore I chose to retreat and not discuss my brother for some time.

And there were those who believed they knew where he was, that he was still in hiding, living in Taupo, Rotorua and even in Te Awamutu. Whethere good intentioned or not, these people had absolutely no evidence of the claims they were making, which only upset us again each time a new story was told. There were 3 occasions where I went to these people to tell them to stop telling stories unless they have proof. I was told that Jason was their friend and they knew where he was, and I shouldn't believe that he was dead. I argued with these people, unless they had definitive proof then they should be quiet. The impact the stories had on Jason's

children was huge and it needed to be stopped. I heard nothing more for about a year until my niece received a message from one of these ‘friends’ again, saying he knew where her father was and not to tell me. Thankfully she did and I sent this ‘friend’ a message telling him never to contact my niece again. He never did.

I received the copy of the findings after it was signed by the Coroner on the 21<sup>st</sup> July 2011. I was then advised that I was able to apply for Jason’s death certificate. I decided not to do this until 2018. I reasoned with myself that by doing so would only finalise the issue and I was confirming to myself that he was really deceased. However, due to Māori land issues I needed to apply for his death certificate, which I did in December 2018. This process was extremely heart wrenching, as when I applied for the certificate I was advised that his death had not been registered by the courts. This caused untold distress to me, as I had to then liaise with both births, death and marriages as well as the courts to access the right documentation in which to finalise the registration and get the certificate. This meant that I had to register the death and get the legal documentation to finalise everything. Each time I would ring a department to follow up I found myself having to repeat the history over and over, which just caused more anguish each time. It took three months to finally get it all resolved and I now have the death certificate.

During the fifteen years my brother has been lost to us, so much has happened. My husband and I raised Jason’s eldest biological child as our own, the one that he was charged with assaulting. During her life she has had a number of behavioural and drug issues, however we have been able to work with her to make changes. I believe her behaviours are due to the trauma she suffered, although she will never admit this. She now has two children of her own and we are blessed to have her and our Mokopuna and will continue to love and support all of them.

Jason’s partner became transient, moving around New Zealand, at one-point Australia. She began new relationships which resulted in emotional and physical abuse. All of which the children witnessed. Jason’s youngest three children all had a lot of involvement with Social Departments, with all of them entering care. My husband and I tried to take them and care for them but this put a strain on our marriage and some hard decisions needed to be made. These children were dysfunctional with no boundaries, respect or values, despite me trying my hardest

to instill some into them. The youngest had a child at thirteen, which was removed from her care and is now in the custody of the ministry. She then had another child at fourteen, and is currently in residential care with her child, the ministry trying to give her a chance to be a mother. Another daughter has also had a child, with the ministry also being involved, however she has lived in residence with her child up until a month ago when she has moved in with her brother. The ministry is still heavily involved. Jason's eldest son, who we cared for from the age of eleven to seventeen is doing well and working on a farm. Sadly, the same can't be said for Jason's youngest son who, at seventeen is currently in prison and will remain there for some time.

I think a lot about what would have happened if my brother was still here, and was around as his children were growing up. I blamed him for a long time for what has happened to his Whānau. I still do in some ways, as I believe that things may have been different for his children and I if he were still here.

#### **4.3 The healing begins**

I became redundant in 2011 from my position at Te Wananga o Aotearoa. While initially I was devastated, I was able to pick myself up and move forward. I worked in a hotel, then in the disability sector before securing a role working with youth. Being in this role enabled me to look at my educational opportunities and what I wanted to achieve.

In 2012 I decided to complete a Bachelor of Social Work, which I had started in 2005 but never completed. In the final year (2014) our last assignment was to complete a framework based on a Kaupapa we were passionate about and deliver it in a conference setting. After much thought I decided to use my brother's journey and develop a framework from that journey. This was the time in which I could really start the healing process and this was the first time that I allowed myself to publically talk about my brother.

As I wrote the paper for my conference presentation I felt the emotions come forth, however instead of trying to suppress them I used them to provide an accurate and honest account of my brother's journey. Writing the paper, while extremely emotional, was highly therapeutic at the same time. It took me longer than usual to write as I wanted to make sure that those who read

or heard the presentation would understand the full impact of the pain and suffering caused since Jason left us.

To ensure that I could safely deliver this conference presentation I had to practice with mock audiences to ‘desensitise’ myself. I had a small number of friends who came to listen to my paper. The first time was extremely harrowing, with me stopping numerous times to gather my composure. My friends were amazing, supportive and caring towards me which I valued so much.

After practicing five times to different small groups I felt strong enough to deliver the paper at the conference. A number of friends were there for support which I so appreciated. The practice paid off. I was able to tell my brother’s journey, along with my own and the framework I had created clearly and without breaking down. While of course there were emotions during this time, I was ready as I knew when they would come so I was pre-prepared, which was a huge positive moving forward. In fact, one of the panel members was crying when I finished and came over to hug me. This was a truly defining moment. I didn’t want people’s sympathy, I wanted my brother to not be forgotten and this was one way of achieving that. The fact that this panel member reacted in this way meant that I had clearly defined and explained my brother’s journey, along with the emotions my Whānau and I were dealing with.

The day I graduated with my degree was one of mixed emotions. I was ecstatic that I had achieved this qualification and having my Whānau there with me to watch me graduate was amazing, but I couldn’t help but search through the audience. I did this unconsciously, and after some minutes of looking through the crowd I realised who I was looking for. My brother. But he wasn’t there and this made me feel so sad. Sad that he wasn’t there to share this achievement that he was a part of.

After completing my degree, I studied towards a Graduate Diploma in Professional Supervision. Again, there was a conference and framework paper at the end of the programme and again I told my brother’s story, along with the framework that I used for my Bachelor’s degree. This time it was much easier, however I did become emotional during this time, which I could not hide. While there were no tears from the panel this time I was congratulated on

preparing such an emotional and sensitive Kaupapa. That day I felt proud that I was my brother's sister. I felt him around me, which made me happy and content.

And now I am completing a thesis to complete a Masters of Indigenous Studies. It is only fitting to continue with the same Kaupapa, however in a much deeper level than that of the previous qualifications I have achieved. Again, this has been very healing for me and I am finding that the more I write, the more I feel my brother near me, encouraging me. I write this for him in the hope that his memory is never forgotten. I hope that others will read this thesis and get more understanding about those who have lost loved ones that haven't been found. I hope that people enjoy reading this and will take any comfort that can be provided within these words.

There are so many emotions a person goes through when dealing with this type of grief. I felt guilt, anger, confusion, fear and above all sadness. There has been a cycle of grief for me, which I will now explain. I will also explain what I did to overcome these feelings and how I have managed to forge the semblance of a normal life throughout it all. I am an emotional person by nature so having these feelings and being forced to acknowledge and deal with them has not been easy by any means. Anyone who says that time heals cannot begin to comprehend nor understand the meaning of that statement. Time does not heal, it is just a means to move forward, understanding the grief and loss and learning to deal with it on a daily basis. But for me it will never go away, it becomes a dull ache that is there always, always rearing its head when situations arise. But by learning to deal with it helps to get through every day. Coping is a word I use a lot, as I have learnt to cope with the feelings of loss. Time has taught me that. However as above the feelings never go away entirely and I believe never will until my brother is found and I know what has happened to him.

I am an emotional person by nature. I cry at sad movies or when I hear of something sad. And when I think of my brother, even today tears well up in my eyes as I remember him with love and sadness. The emotions never go away and they never will, especially as there is no closure. But I am finding it easier to be aware of these emotions and deal with them, as I will explain below.

The first emotion I felt was anger about the whole situation. I was so angry with my brother for what had transpired and the affects it had on us all. I kept thinking about what I would say to him when I saw him, about how angry I was with him and how devastated I was.

In hindsight, I think I had narrow thinking as at first became about me and the impacts his actions had on me. This emotion only stayed with me in the first initial four to five weeks of his disappearance, which was not deemed a disappearance at this point. But during this time my brother's name, picture and an overview of the incident was published in newspapers and television, forcing me to remain at home, fearing condemnation. I didn't want people's sympathy, at the time I wanted my brother found and brought to justice. My anger knew no bounds, especially when I looked at his daughter and the damage he had caused her. I couldn't believe that he was following in our father's footsteps and had become the abuser, not the victim.

Once the anger had dissipated, the emotion then turned into guilt, of which I will elaborate on shortly. The dissipation I speak of only happened once I was able to gather my thoughts. I couldn't speak to people as this was an unknown level of feeling, I didn't know anyone who had experienced this type of situation. I also didn't want to talk to people in fear of embarrassment or condemnation. I will say that during the initial harrowing stages my employers were exceptional, allowing time off and supporting me if needed. I had to tell them due to the nature of the situation, which is something I wholeheartedly did not want to do. However, as above, they were extremely supportive, of which I am truly thankful. Other than them only my husband knew the full extent of the situation. I didn't want to talk to people about it as I believed no one would understand what I was feeling.

My focus turned towards Jason's daughter, trying to support her in the best way we could and continue to lead as normal a life as we could. This included enrolling her at the local school and getting her settled. Having this as a distraction certainly helped with dealing with my first emotional feelings. She bounced back quickly and settled into school well.

The second emotion that came from that anger was guilt. That I hadn't done enough to stop him, that I wasn't a good enough sister and I could have supported him more. This guilt was the most powerful emotion as this led me to blame myself for the whole ordeal. I felt guilty



that I couldn't save him and the emotions he must have been feeling at the time. And most all, I felt guilty for even thinking that he had taken his life. I thought that I had let him down. Of all of these emotions, this was one of two that I have felt the most.

In order to deal with this emotion, I chose to take care of his children in any way I could, even to the detriment of my marriage, other children and grandchildren. I felt that I was helping him by doing this, and alleviating my own guilt in the process. I did this without thinking. I was almost on auto pilot, not realizing the impact my actions were having on others around me. This in turn caused me to feel guilty for putting my husband, children and grandchildren through this also. I had changed our Whānau dynamic without discussing it with them first and this was not fair.

However, as a lot of time went by, I learnt to realise that I shouldn't feel guilty for the action of others. After continuously rewinding the disappearance scenario in my head I concluded that guilt was dragging me down, that I wasn't being fair to my marriage, children and grandchildren. And I wasn't being fair to my brother's children by caring for them out of guilt. I also realised that while I loved his children without question, guilt was the front runner for the majority of the decisions I made in relation to caring for them.

Releasing the guilt is extremely hard, and I continue to hold some form of guilt in my heart for my brother. I probably always will but by opening up to people, discussing the situation with professionals and being receptive to recommendations and suggestions I have managed to finally believe that there was probably nothing I could have done for my brother. He was an adult with his own feelings, values and beliefs, ones that I couldn't change. He needed to be responsible to what has happened and I should not be shouldering any of it as I did not cause it. I needed to prioritise and ensure that my husband, children and grandchildren were my priority. I did this by returning two of the children back into state care. This again raised a lot of guilty feelings however I knew that I had to do this. Thankfully my husband supported my request to not send the others away. I no longer feel guilty for what has happened as I know, due to the actions I put in place, my marriage is safe and the relationship with my children and grandchildren remain intact. I ensured that I did not shut out my husband, that I talked more to him and our children, making sure that any decisions were made as a Whānau, not just one made by me.

The major guilt I hold, and will always hold until an outcome is known, is my brother believing that no one cared or loved him. While I realise that this is his own way of thinking, it doesn't detract me from the fact that that is the way he may have been feeling, which breaks my heart. If he has indeed taken his life, he would have done so believing that we did not care about him, which is as far away from the truth as possible.

The third emotion is confusion. I felt a lot of confusion, especially in the first ten years. Confusion about my thoughts and feelings and confusion about whether my brother was dead or alive. I felt as if I was in a pool of water and I couldn't swim to the top, no matter how hard I tried. I felt torn between what I was being told and what I wanted to know, which were two very different things.

I still have confusion, confusion in terms of what happened to him and why he chose to do what he did. He told me that he loved his children so much, why would he do something like this to them? And if he has taken his own life, why? Why would he put his Whānau through years of torment? Did he really think that this was ok? Or did he truly believe that taking his own life was for the betterment of his children? These questions may never be answered and only add to the confusion that I have constantly. These questions remain with me like a repetitive song that is on loop, it keeps replaying over and over again. They will always be there unless he is found and the truth of his disappearance is known.

I have had vivid dreams about Jason, with him calling out to me to help him. I call out to him, asking him to tell me where he is, that I love him and I'm sorry for what's happened. But every time he starts to speak I wake up. These dreams, while more infrequent now, affect me emotionally and mentally. I have learnt through my own feelings that this is a dream, that is me and my feelings that are creating these dreams with the uncertainty I have on a daily basis. Or is it just a dream? This question just adds to the confusion.

I doubt that the confusion will ever go away until the outcome is known. Unanswered questions will remain until this happens. There is no way in which to overcome this confusion unless these questions are answered. I just have to put them into the back of my mind each time they come forth in order to move forward.

The fourth emotion was fear. I was fearful of the unknown and what the future held, not only for Jason but for the Whānau left behind. I was fearful of what would happen if he was found and how I would deal with it. Sometimes I was even fearful of my own thoughts and feelings. Because my thoughts could be true, which was that Jason had taken his own life and I couldn't stop it.

I also have the fear that he is still alive but is fearful himself of making contact. While it has now been fifteen years, there has been no evidence presented to undoubtedly confirm that he has passed on. While reality and evidence provided to the courts state that in all probability he has taken his own life, I cannot acknowledge this in its entirety until such time as he is found. This is evident in the fact that I waited eight years to apply for Jason's death certificate, which was an emotional and profound time, due to circumstances that I had to resolve in which to receive the said certificate.

I still have the fear, which is still a raw emotion, however I have succumbed to the fact that something has happened to Jason and I live in hope that answers will arise once he is found. I have hope always that he will be found and I can bring him home to us.

The fifth emotion, which is intertwined in all of the above emotions, is sadness. I was, and still am, so sad about the whole ordeal. I'm sad that my brother is gone and his children don't have a father and his grandchildren don't have a grandfather. I am sad that the thesis I am writing is about my missing brother. I wish wholeheartedly that I didn't have to write about him. But I choose to in order to keep his memory alive. This is also a healing process for me. The more I write the more my brother appears to me in my thoughts. He will never be forgotten.

The sadness I feel has never diminished, it is always there but has now become a dull ache with no end. While I know it is there always, and sometimes when I am vulnerable it comes to the fore, I choose to remember the good things about my brother and memories that we shared while being with our grandparents. These memories help me to decrease the sadness, however it never goes away and never will.

The sixth emotion is hope. Hoping one day that he will be found and, regardless of the outcome, that I am able to bring him home where he belongs. Beside our grandparents, the

true parents that truly loved and cared for us. This emotion is what keeps me going, and enables to push other emotions to the side. Hope helps me each day. While with hope comes the confusion, guilt and love emotions, it also provides with me a shield, in order to protect myself and help me to get through each day. I hold hope that before I pass I will know what happened to Jason, and I hold that hope deeply. This is an emotion that can't be dealt with. It is always there and always will be. The intensity of emotion will never decrease while there is no known outcome. However, this emotion does not stop me from moving forward, in fact it sometimes helps me to move forward when other emotions become prevalent.

The last emotion, which is an everlasting one, is love. The love I have for my brother is eternal and will never wane. While he has not had the greatest of lives, he was my brother and I loved him and always will. His children and grandchildren are his legacy and through them Jason will live on. I will always ensure that.

#### **4.4 Calming the Storm**

Love for my brother, his children and grandchildren enable me to ensure that his memory is never lost. I have put my brother's story on social media in the hope that people continue to look for him and to continue to love the brother, father and grandfather that we knew. Others have shared their stories on this site also, which I take some comfort in the fact that there is a space for us to do so. This is key to being able to move forward successfully.

While there are other emotions that one can feel during this time, these were the most extenuating. Emotions can become prominent in an instant, especially when I see his children or see something that reminds me of him. Or writing this thesis. But learning to deal with these emotions as they come forth is key to be able to move forward.

My feelings in relation to our mother was different. I had never developed nor had a relationship with her therefore I didn't have the emotional ties that Jason did. What I did know however, through the teachings of my grandparents and our experiences with our parents was that I would never harm my children, that I would tell them that I loved them every day and they would never be scared in their own home ever. While there are always mistakes made, my children know that I am there for them always, to love, protect and nurture them, which is something that my mother chose not to do. I am at peace now with my mother. I know that I

will never get the answers I seek and I am OK with that. All I can do is ensure that I do not lead my life like she did.

Finding my husband John in 1994 was the catalyst for change. I was nineteen years old, John thirty-five. We endured a lot throughout the first ten years of our relationship, most of this I put down to our age difference and the way in which we each viewed the world. I could be possessive and non-trusting. After what I endured with my son's father I found it very difficult to trust this man, who had been married prior and had five children when we met. He didn't come from a broken home and he and his six siblings were extremely close, something that was foreign to me, and he didn't understand the dysfunctions of a broken home, although he was dealing with a separation when we first met.

Initially I felt uncomfortable as while I was close to Jason and our grandparents, the large gatherings of immediate Whānau in one place made me feel somewhat isolated. However, John's Whānau, including his children were wonderful, welcoming me into the Whānau almost immediately. This was a Whānau setting I could only dream of, and I appreciate them every day for accepting, loving and caring for me and my children. I have a great relationship with all of my step children and Mokopuna, of which I am extremely grateful for. It has always made me wonder why my mother didn't want this sense of Whānau and wellbeing? There was so much she missed out on with my children and Mokopuna. However, that was her choice and hers alone.

As the years have progressed and since marrying in 2005, my marriage is stable, caring and loving. My husband is now sixty years of age and while every marriage has its ups and downs my husband has always stood beside me. He has stood beside me during these fifteen years of turmoil, his support unwavering. He has allowed me to follow my dreams and education, supporting me all the way. I don't know who was prouder the day I graduated with my degree, him or me. These moments show me how much he loves me. I am thankful for him every single day as I truly believe that if we had not met my life would be extremely different.

Last year, March 2018 our mother passed away. Six weeks later my mother in law passed away. Only one death had a profound effect on me, and that was the passing of my beloved mother in law. When my mother passed away I didn't feel anything apart from sadness at what

kind of life she had that she felt it was OK not to acknowledge two of her own children. I stayed throughout the Tangihanga process and my Whānau took me home. Even now, a year later I don't feel anything. To add insult to injury neither Jason nor my name is on the headstone of our mother. Only the middle brother and youngest sister's names, along with our middle brother's wife's name were etched into the stone, along with their children. No mention of mine or Jason's children. We didn't exist. During the unveiling this upset a lot of my immediate Whānau, but more so my husband, who was livid with my middle brother and wanted to tell him so. I calmly spoke to my darling husband, ensuring him that it was OK, that this was what I expected and to let it go. But my husband hurt for me, as he too cannot understand why this happened and how disrespectful the whole scenario was.

I finally, after ten years, started to open up and talk about my brother. I was talking to Whānau members about some fond memories and I remember a Whānau member telling me that she was surprised how openly I could speak about my brother and without sadness. She implied that she felt I was being insensitive and should show more emotion and compassion. I asked her why? My brother by then had been declared legally dead. Should I be in mourning every day? I told her that her questions were insensitive to me and she should embrace the fact that I was able to finally open up after so many years and be able to talk about my brother without crying. This did not sit well with this Whānau member, who talked about the ways of our Tūpuna and how strong they were by not letting their feelings show, as well as ensuring the gravity of the situation was not diminished. This is the one and only time I took offence to someone discussing my brother and his disappearance. I felt angry that she felt that I should be more subdued about the situation. I spoke to her at length, explaining the journey I had been on and how hard emotionally it had been. To be able to talk about my brother openly and honestly was absolutely huge for me, and this needed to be respected. This wasn't about being Māori, far from it. Disappearances did not discriminate in any ethnicity. The thoughts and feelings I had were generic, anyone could feel the same, and I can only assume that any person that had endured this horrific event would feel the same, regardless of ethnicity. After this discussion this Whānau member apologised to me. While I understood where she was coming from, as this was the way in which she was raised, she acknowledged that the same could not be said for me and I had my own way of dealing with it. While I accepted her apology this experience led me to shut down for a period of time, fearful of what others would say if I spoke about my brother. However, after spending time with a friend who is a counsellor, I was

encouraged to talk more as this was part of the healing process. To talk about my brother meant he wasn't forgotten and I was able to react to my emotions in a more positive way.

I try to talk about my brother to his children as much as I can, sharing positive childhood memories of us both. I don't talk about the dark times as they don't need to know this. All they need to know is their father, regardless of his faults, loved them very much and that would never change.

More recently I went to a psychic show in the hope that it may yield some answers. Unfortunately these were not forthcoming so I am still left with no closure. But by working through the pain of the loss I am able to function as normal as possible each day. The one thing that is constant always is my brother, hoping that I will find closure one day before my time comes.

My tribute to my brother is held within these words of this thesis. I am extremely proud and sad at the same time to be able to talk about him and share our story. It is hoped that a person who has experienced a similar event is able to read this and realise that they are not alone and gain some insight into moving forward. I also hope that this thesis will be read by those who would like to understand in some small way, the impact this tragic event can have on a person and an entire Whānau. But my biggest hope is such that the reader will see what I have tried to envisage throughout this thesis...that my love for my brother will never wane, and his memory will live on in me, his children and grand children.

#### **4.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter summarised the contents of the research thesis, the research methods that will be adopted and the outcome, which is to outline coping strategies for those people who have had a loved one go missing and not be found. The narration of my brother's story achieved this, as well as my own, to establish clear findings and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **5.0 Chapter Introduction**

The previous chapter summarised the contents of the research thesis, the research methods that will be adopted and the outcome, which is to outline coping strategies for those people who have had a loved one go missing and not be found. This was achieved by the narration of my brother's story, as well as my own, to establish clear findings and recommendations.

This chapter will discuss the results of the narration, the findings and the recommendations.

#### **5.1 Results**

There are several results that I discovered whilst writing this thesis. I learnt a about myself, my behaviours and emotions. These results and learnings have assisted in answering the following research questions:

Question 3: What learning is available that can help to inform others who experience this loss and grief in the future?

Question 4: What was the outcome when it was realised that closure may never be forthcoming?

Leick & Davidsen-Nielsen (1987, page 3) explain that 'the various emotions of grief have to be released. New skills have to be developed. The emotional energy has to be reinvented'. In order to move on to a somewhat semblance of a normal life, these must be acknowledged and worked towards.

There are many situations that trigger the feelings of loss and grief. This book describes these feelings and shows some examples. It also talks about attachment and the thoughts and feelings that prevents one to let go and move forward. It also discusses how hard letting go can be and, other than attachment, what can happen if this doesn't happen, in an emotional and mental sense. Feeling dazed, unable to socialise and be around people are amongst the most common



for those in this situation. Feelings of despair, suicidal ideology, and guilt are also common. For myself I have experienced the majority of these feelings, although I have not had thoughts of taking my own life. My Whānau have kept me strong therefore this has been my saviour. However, there are those out there that don't have these supports therefore it can be quite different for them.

This book describes treatment methods created by the authors to assist people to overcome their grief and loss. It also provides advice for the reader in terms of how to work with pathological and normal grief in both individual and group settings.

A quote that resonates with me is:

Families of missing people face unimaginable and intensely painful emotions. There does not seem to be any words to describe this loss, this ambiguous loss, unending not knowing..... Hope can be a vital way of survival and is enduring through the years (Greene & Alys, 2016).

This quote summarises the full impact of the loss and grief. Hope is the only emotion that can be held on to, which in my case is a constant. Hope that my brother will be found. While my hope emotion has changed to that of getting my brother back to bring him home either alive or deceased, the hope is still one of the strongest emotions that I hold.

Zonnebelt-Smeenge & Vries (1998) has an interesting take on grief and loss that I agree with:

You can come to the point where you can take charge of your grief. You can manage it, that is, you can choreograph the process of grief and do things intentionally to get through to the other side. We don't agree with the old saying "it just takes time". Grieving takes work, intentionality, and assertiveness on your part.

I remember looking at my brother's daughter who I raised, when she gave birth to her first child. An amass of emotions came over me, but when I looked into my mokopuna's eyes I realised that I needed to start taking charge of my grief in order to move forward. While I am sad that my brother is not here to see his mokopuna grow up, I feel blessed that I am and that I

can witness this for the both of us. Grieving is always a work in progress and I think that while the grieving never ends, the intensity becomes less over time. But it needs to be worked on all the time to ensure that it doesn't completely impact your life.

There are so many impacts when one experiences grief. Thoughts and feelings contribute and often intensify the impacts, which then becomes the foundation in the way in which we respond. All those involved are impacted in different ways, also with different responses, often dependent on the severity of the loss. In my case the impact of my brother going missing has impacted my Whānau and I in so many different ways. I have found, throughout the years, that while my thoughts and feelings remain the same, I am able to control the impact so that it is less severe. This is always a work in progress, however it has become easier.

As LaGrand (2011) states:

We have no choice about grief. No one asks us if this is a convenient time for someone we love to die. We have no choice in that we will react to that loss. Our reactions may be expressed in the ways that we think or feel about our loved one or in how we behave.

Preitler (2015) puts this into perspective by this explanation,

Trauma in and of itself is already characterised by immense feelings of helplessness. When relatives 'disappear' without a trace, these feelings of helplessness and impotence become constant in the lives of those left behind.....The relatives of people who 'disappeared' do not have any such opportunities for ritualised goodbyes, for funerals. The pain caused by the immeasurable loss cannot be expressed since this would to concede death. It would imply that all hope of the beloved 'disappeared' still being alive as been given up.

These feelings and emotions hugely impact my everyday life, even now after fifteen years. My brother's disappearance has impacted our lives for the past fifteen years and will continue to do so until he is found. It is how we now react to these impacts to work towards normality that is the key to our sanity and happiness moving forward.

Reactions are a normal part of the grief process, with most having a negative connotation at the beginning. In my case the impacts of losing my brother still affects us deeply due to the closure that has not been found. The impact has been felt by my brothers' children as well, especially now that they are having their own children and their father isn't there to enjoy these momentous occasions. This is a huge impact on them.

When my brother first went missing my reactions stemmed from anger. At the time I didn't think of him as being missing, it wasn't until three years later that I realised that something was wrong. To my detriment I was angry for a long time, with the belief that he was 'still on the run' and just didn't want to be found. Of course, I always wondered where he, how he was and what he was doing, however this was still overpowered by the anger of what he had done to his family, namely his children. Needless to say, that even though I carried that anger I knew that if he appeared I would welcome him home with open arms, with a view of him facing his demons and facing up to what he had done.

My reactions also led me to take on my brother's children, all five of them at one stage. The guilt and the anger, along with the belief that our children would never enter state care drove me to make these decisions, which I now realise were based on my heart, not practicality. Unfortunately, my husband and I buckled under the strain and we made the hard decision to send some of the children into state care, which is something that I have felt guilty about for many years.

I am an emotional person at the best of times. This is something that I work hard at, in order to keep those emotions in check and to ensure that reactivity is at a minimum. Due to being a Social Worker, the skills I have learnt in this space has helped me immensely with this, although I do still fight my emotions when dealing with a particularly sad or tragic case.

Nolen-Hoeksema & Larson (1999, page 79) talks about the distress associated with expressing their emotions:

People who expressed their emotions more and did not engage in dangerous activities to avoid thinking about their loss were less distressed over time. Yet people who

perhaps were too focused on their emotional reactions to their loss-who ruminated about those emotions and the consequences of their loss-were also more distressed.

I cannot agree totally with this statement as I believe that this depends on the situation. It took me ten years before I could openly talk about my brother. I talk about him all the time now, which has now become less emotional. However, the impacts of his disappearance weigh heavily on me daily, and while it may not cause 'more' distress, the distress is a constant, regardless of what I am doing.

(Kubler-Ross & Kessler, 2005) explain the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. While this book is centered around death and this Kaupapa is about the not knowing the fate of a loved one, it is still very much relevant in terms of the stages.

The denial stage can be described as 'the world becomes meaningless and overwhelming. Life makes no sense. We are in a state of shock and denial.... we wonder how we can go on, if we can go on, why we should go on' (page 21). I can relate to this, as I was in denial, for want of another word, when the police came to state that they were going to court to declare my brother legally dead. While this book is more centered around death, the same emotions come to the fore when we talk about denial. I felt this also, but in a different space, however the emotion was as raw as what this stage talks about.

The second stage, anger, can present itself in many ways. 'it is important to remember that the anger surfaces once you are feeling safe enough to know you will probably survive whatever comes.' (page 23). This again is another emotion I suffered in the initial stages of my brother's disappearance. There were a number of reasons for my anger which I will discuss further into this thesis. Anger is a normal and understandable emotion one goes through, especially in the initial stages.

The third stage, bargaining, is the 'if only' stage. Questioning ourselves, could we have done something more? Pleading with God, asking for one more minute with the loved one. 'We even bargain with the pain. We will do anything not to feel the pain of this loss. We remain in the past, trying to negotiate our way out of the hurt' (page 27). I believe that this is ongoing. My brother went missing fifteen years ago and I will also have the 'if only' moments, which

contributes to my emotional guilt. This will always be an ongoing battle within my mind, one that will never end until closure is had.

The fourth stage is depression. After the bargaining stage, the attention is then focused on the present. The feelings during this stage include empty feelings, and grief can reenter but in a much stronger realm. 'It's important to understand that this depression is not a sign of mental illness. It is the appropriate response to a great loss' (page 30). This is very true. In my experience, the depression stage comes on during significant events, such as my brother's birthday or Christmas. When his Mokopuna were born, this caused me to become very sad, reflecting and imagining what life would be like if my brother was here to see them. The most depressive thought is knowing that they may never get to meet their Koro and know how much he would have loved them.

The fifth and final stage is acceptance. For those who have a loved one go missing, acceptance can be a long way off. While this the hardest stage, it is one that can assist with moving forward. It is a journey of self-discovery that only the person experiencing these stages can make. In my experience, I do think that my brother is no longer with us. I hold on to hope that I will find the answer before I pass over and bring him home and lay him to rest with our grandparents.

Missing Persons List (2018) is a website that has an up to date account of missing people in Aotearoa, New Zealand. It shows photos of the missing person and the circumstances surrounding his or her disappearance. While this is not a complete list, it displays those people where permission has been sought and granted. There are some people listed on this site that have been widely publicised but there are also a lot that has not been, including my loved one. There are currently 23 people who have been classed as a missing person on this web site, however there are many more.

My brother is not named on this site despite being missing for fifteen years. Even though he has been declared legally dead I have been assured that if any new information is brought forward, this would be followed up. Up until then however they will not review the case. This saddens me as my brother was and still is just as important as those featured on this site, regardless of his situation and the circumstances surrounding his disappearance. I have been

told that due to the case not being active he will not appear on this list. I intend on contesting this as the more information out there and the more my loved one is in the public view, the higher the chance of information or new leads being found or given.

Herald.co.nz (2010) discussed the court proceedings that took place 17 December 2010 in regard to declaring my brother legally dead. It gives a brief overview of the circumstances and lays bare what the detective Sarah Bishop believes happened to him:

I do not believe it would be possible, if he was still alive, for him not to contact the one person who he knew loved him unconditionally, his sister Tash," she said. "I believe Jason has taken his own life and that it is likely he did so in remote and dense bush in the Okataina area.

I, along with my husband, attended this court hearing, which was a painful process. While one would assume this would grant some sort of closure, I found it only raised more questions in relation to where my brother is. Nine years after this inquest I have those same questions with no answers, which causes untold grief to me and my Whānau. The hearing itself was extremely hard, as hearing the evidence only caused more emotions to come forth. It was also hard when it was only my husband and I in attendance, with my parents not turning up. I felt it was up to me to be there, to show that there were people who loved and cared for him, no matter what. But not having other Whānau members there was devastating.

There are a lot of missing people in the world. Some choose to leave their families of their own accord while others do not have a choice, having had terrible atrocities committed against them leading to death, where the body has never been found. In my case, my brother went missing and has never been found. Whether this was due to him taking his life, or someone unknown taking his life, we do not know. It is a never-ending saga that currently has no end.

Hattenstone (2015) discusses via a website gives first-hand accounts of those who have had a sibling go missing. While it also shares stories of those who have been found, there are still several true stories where some have not been found. In some cases, the parents of the missing loved ones have passed on and the siblings are left to continue the search. This can be heart wrenching for all involved. For the parents who have passed, it must have been so painful to

pass on not knowing what became of their child. This is one of my biggest fears, that I will pass on before I know what has become of my loved one. While I am only 44, life is short and you don't know when your life may be cut short. I can only hope that I find closure before that day happens.

## **5.2 Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed the findings and results of this thesis. It also discussed the loss and grief and the way in which this was overcome to lead a normal life. This has derived from my story and the case studies shared within this thesis. This chapter also discussed the research questions, providing suggestions and recommendations for the reader based on literature and my own personal experience.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **6.0 Thesis Review**

I have identified and discussed the loss of my brother, who went missing in 2004 and has never been found. The loss and grief emotions were centered around both the story of my brother as well as my story which I told from the time he went missing. I told my brothers story through personal narrative, utilising an autoethnography methodology. I have told the whole, entire story to allow you, the reader, the opportunity to understand in fullness the depth of the heartbreak and despair of this tragedy. I have also explained in my own words what I have worked through in order to maintain a normal way of life for myself and my Whānau.

The research described in this thesis focused on the grief experienced by the participants when a loved one goes missing and is not found. It described the journey that this person has undertaken during this time and identified the grief process and how this has been managed throughout the years. Each journey has been explained from the beginning of the incident to the current day. All facets of the incident have been documented to ensure that the reader fully understood the true nature of the grief a person can experience under these painful circumstances.

This thesis has explained the positioning in terms of my own feelings and emotions in order to show the reader what methods were undertaken in order to move through the cloud of uncertainty and move into a space of relative normalcy.

#### **6.1 Recap main points**

The research topic has been explained, which focuses on the grief experienced by the participants when a loved one goes missing and is not found. A literature review of readings has been written for this thesis. This literature review, along with other literature that has been cited, has provided the methods used to coordinate the research which are qualitative research and autoethnography methodology. The case studies used can be found in the public space, therefore there was not any participants.



## 6.2 Key Findings

There were a number of key findings in regards to this thesis. To clearly define and breakdown these findings, the research questions will be answered here in a review type style of writing.

### 1. What does the grief and loss look like?

This thesis has been extremely highlighted with examples of grief and loss. The personal experiences of anger, sadness and love are all discussed in this thesis. Literature also guides this with a view to understanding these thoughts and feelings and the realisation that it is okay to have these feelings. What does this look like? Throughout the thesis it explains what the grief and loss stages consist of. As the writer has explained, isolation, tearfulness, being ashamed and not discussing the situation are all key components of the impacts this experience has caused.

Five stages of grief have also been identified in an attempted to make sense of the situation. These five stages are broken down per stage and clearly articulated for the reader to understand. The writer finds that these stages are helpful to understand what the grief and loss emotions are and how to move through them.

### 2. What were the significant emotions?

The emotions this thesis identifies are numerous, however the significant emotions that are discussed are anger, sadness and love. Literature discusses five stages of grief however the reader will clearly see that anger, sadness and love are the most prominent emotions felt by the writer and are reiterated in the case studies which support this Kaupapa.

These significant emotions have a common theme, which is that they are all felt at the same time, while they are individualised as well. Throughout the experience of having these significant emotions, I have found that while I have dealt with them individually, they are all there together, mixed up in a web that I had to work through to disengage from. No one of these emotions are more important than another. In terms of this Kaupapa, is it only natural to

feel these emotions. Literature and self-experience show that this is a natural emotional path to take.

3. What learning is available that can help to inform others who experience this loss and grief in the future?

As the reader has indicated, and the literature suggests, the learnings from this experience is monumental, however the writer can only hope no one else experiences this trauma. Learnings come from being a part of the experience, learning to move forward and grow without the memory of the loved one ever being diminished.

The biggest learning from this experience is the knowing that it can get better, that there are others out there that have had the same experience and know how the other is feelings. Knowing that moving into a state of normalcy is a possibility and the cloud can minimise if you let it. This experience can certainly define a person but it is not who the person is. Learning and knowing that you are not alone is one of the most important things to be able to begin the process of moving forward.

Speaking out about the situation earlier is another key learning I have found. It may have been easier in the first initial years if I had of consulted a counsellor or a trusted confidant to talk about and understand the emotions and feelings I encountered. By not doing so the emotions and feelings impacted my life more severely, in my own opinion. Talking about it earlier may also have enabled my Whānau to gain the skills in which to have supported me more. It was to my detriment that this did not happen.

Moving through this traumatic time also showed how important Whānau and friends truly are. While they may not understand what you are going through, knowing that you are not alone and that they are there for you is a vital part of the moving forward phase. I could not imagine going through this alone as the outcome would have been very, very different. Not being afraid to show emotions is an important factor to ensuring that Whānau and friends know how you are feeling. Keeping the emotions inside is not healthy for anyone.

What this experience has definitely taught me is that I am a strong person who has overcome one of the most traumatic experiences one can face. Not having closure will always be with

me, and I will never be fully settled until I have that, but I am able to move forward in my life with a smile and happiness that surrounds me. Being able to talk about Jason freely is liberating for me and I'm able to do so lovingly, ensuring that while the pain of his disappearance will never go away, neither will his memory or the love for his children, as this is something that I can make sure of.

#### 4. What was the outcome when it was realised that closure may never be forthcoming?

While there may never be a true outcome to this experience, it is the realisation that my brother will never come home which proved to be the defining moment in which I was able to move forward. While I struggled with this for years, the evidence and the silence has finally allowed me to conclude what I have always thought for years: that is no longer with us.

The feeling of loss never goes away. Neither does the wondering of where Jason is and if he will ever be found. But the realisation that I may never find the answers is finally apparent, and regardless leaves a dull ache in both my mind and soul. I don't believe that this will ever go away until an outcome is found but through writing this thesis, breaking down the walls of silence and embracing the emotions, I move forward into a manageable space in which to function normally on a daily basis. However, anyone who experiences this will never be the same again. The span of time does not remove the thoughts and feelings a person has for another but the pain of these feelings lessen as time goes on. But the person will continue to be loved forever.

### **6.3 Limitations**

Due to the nature of the research question and the thesis Kaupapa there were some limitations while writing this thesis. The main limitation to this thesis is subject to the lack of participants. While I have moved through my feelings to be able to speak freely, there are not many who are in the same state. The decision was made not to have participants due to the ethical dilemmas this posed to both the participants and the writer, therefore the majority of literature used to support this thesis came from case studies of true accounts as well as my own journey.

The subject matter encased in this thesis can be deemed highly sensitive to others, therefore the focus for this thesis has been centered mainly around the writer's story, with case studies

and literature to support the findings and learnings. All care has been taken to share the case studies with the utmost respect and sensitivity.

Another limitation is the lack of literature found in relation to grief and loss pertaining specifically to missing people. There is not a lot of information in regards to this, therefore literature pertaining to generic grief and loss has been used to support this thesis. It is understandable due to the sensitive nature of the Kaupapa that there may not be a lot of literature, however it was discovered that there was less than initially thought. While grief and loss emotions are similar, there are differences due to the circumstances, which the writer has suggested in this thesis.

While these limitations have been highlighted it is important to note that regardless of them the story was still a story to be told, which has been accomplished through the writing of this thesis. The intention of the thesis was to enable the reader to understand the story and the feelings, emotions and impacts that resulted. This has been shown throughout the thesis, therefore the intention is confirmed.

## **6.4 Recommendations**

There are a number of recommendations writing this thesis has brought to light. As per the findings section, being able to discuss the experience from start to finish is very important as part of the grieving and sadness process. This experience is a complex one and not a lot of people will be able to understand what you are going through.

Anyone that experiences this should find a good counsellor or a trusted Whānau member/friend to openly discuss the feelings and emotions being experienced. Don't be afraid to express how you are feeling and let the tears flow, don't shy away from them as this is part of the grieving process. By doing so will assist with the healing and understanding processes.

Another recommendation is to be part of the process when dealing with the traumatic situation with law enforcement and others. Don't be afraid to ask questions and don't feel that you must agree or go along with their recommendations. Be a part of the process to ensure that you are aware of what is happening every step of the way. This will alleviate any notion that nothing

is being done or no one is looking and will also assist with the grief process, especially during the initial stages of the loved one disappearing.

The final recommendation is to ensure that your Whānau still are a priority. This Kaupapa can be draining and can take a piece of you away but that doesn't have to happen to you partner or children if applicable. Don't shut them out, don't push them away, talk to them as they may well be your biggest supporters during this traumatic stage of your life. Support them as well, as they may well be feeling the same way that you do. Sharing the grief and pain together will most certainly assist with the healing process.

## **6.5 Last word**

This research thesis has outlined the topic of the research, the methodologies that were adopted as part of the research process as well literature reviews and case studies that supported the findings.

This research thesis has excited me, as being able to write about this topic has been part of the healing process for me, having experienced it first-hand. I hope that the reader gains more information and understanding when interacting with those who have experienced such a loss. The not knowing is the hardest part of the ongoing process however with the right strategies to cope one can move forward and have a normal life.

In conclusion, Chapter One introduced my research topic which was coping with grief and loss, providing an overview of how I would tell my story in a narrative, along with case studies that shared the same focus of missing people.

Chapter Two was a review of the literature on the topics of grief and loss, impacts, emotions and reactions of grief. It includes missing people case studies as well as the stages of grief that a person may experience.

Chapter Three discussed the research frameworks and methodologies within which my research was based. These are qualitative methodology, autoethnography and personal narrative. I provided a methodology overview, explained the methods I used to conduct the research, as well as an introspective and cultural analysis.

Chapter Four shared the story of my brother who disappeared fifteen years ago and has not been found. I named this section ‘Our Story’, as my brother and I shared this life for many years together. Other sections then followed on from this, to show the pain and grief experienced, including the impacts of his disappearance on his children and the coping mechanisms used to maintain normality. ‘Calming the Storm’ was the final section of this chapter, where I discussed how I was able to move forward to normality on a daily basis.

Chapter Five discussed the findings and results of our stories. It also discussed the loss and grief and the way in which this was overcome to lead a normal life. This derived from my story and the case studies shared within this thesis. This chapter also discussed the research questions, providing suggestions and recommendations for the reader based on literature and my own personal experience.

Chapter Six concluded this thesis, providing an overview of the key findings, limitations, recommendations and closing.

There is the hope that this thesis will become a basis for my doctorate thesis in due course.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Ethics approval letter, Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiārangi

Appendix 2: Consent letter for use of name in thesis

Appendix 3: Newspaper article of court case

Appendix 4: Coroner's Findings

Appendix 5: Copy of Death Certificate

## **Appendix 2: Consent letter for use of name in thesis**

28 February 2019

To whom it may concern,

### **RE: Permission to be named in the thesis of Natasha Kaylene Hineru Emery**

I give permission for me to be named in the thesis of the above person. I am well aware of the Kaupapa and what the thesis contains and I am more than happy to be named as part of this Kaupapa.

Please contact me on [emerywhanau@xtra.co.nz](mailto:emerywhanau@xtra.co.nz) if you require any further information.

Regards,

*John Emery*

John Hoani Emery

## Appendix 3: Newspaper article of court case

ROTORUA DAILY POST

# Missing man'dead'

17 Dec, 2010 7:30am

©4 minutes to read

Rotorua Daily Post

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It has been more than six years since Jason Colin Sinclair's family have seen him. Police believe the 38-year-old may have taken his own life and that his body is in dense bush near Okataina.

The Rotorua father of five has not been seen since April 21, 2004 and an inquest was held into his disappearance in the Rotorua Coroner's Court by Doctor Wallace Bain this week.

Investigating police officer Detective Sarah Bishop presented a comprehensive report into the enquiry into Mr Sinclair's disappearance.

Mr Sinclair had failed to turn up in court for sentencing charges of assaulting an 8-year-old girl in February 2004. He had had a troubled upbringing and was estranged from his parents after his grandparents were left to raise him and a sister to whom he was very close, Mrs Bishop said in evidence.

While his sister, Natasha Emery, was able to work through issues of abandonment, Mr Sinclair had been left "bitter, angry and unable to cope with life". In 1996 Mr Sinclair had entered into a relationship and the couple had had five children together.

On December 9, 2003, he was arrested by Rotorua police for assaulting one of his children and failed to turn up for sentencing in February 2004. A warrant was issued for his arrest. He had breached conditions of his bail by meeting his partner just after Christmas 2003, when she told him the relationship was at an end.

Mr Sinclair had had trouble accepting that, Mrs Bishop said.

On April 14, Mr Sinclair had jumped out of bushes, pointing a loaded rifle at his former partner outside an Edmund Rd home. A male family member had taken the rifle from Mr Sinclair and dragged him away, the court was told.

A week later Mr Sinclair had returned to the Edmund Rd address where he told a family member he was “going to get you”.

That appeared to be the last time he was seen alive, Mrs Bishop told the coroner. Throughout the following months and years, extensive enquiries had been made with family and friends, none of whom had seen him since 2004.

Flyers with his photograph were dropped in the area where he was last seen, banks and Work and Income had been checked, and police had check Mr Sinclair had not changed his name in recent years.

Flyers with his photograph were dropped in the area where he was last seen, banks and Work and Income had been checked, and police had checked Mr Sinclair had not changed his name in recent years.

A story featured in The Daily Post and on the television programme Police Ten-7 four times, seeking information about Mr Sinclair’s whereabouts.

Mrs Bishop said that by early this year it was apparent Mr Sinclair was not just avoiding police and he was declared a missing person. In March, Rotoma Search and Rescue staff search the Okataina, Lake Rotoatua and Lake Rotongata areas for any sign of Mr Sinclair after a friend said he might once have camped there as he was affiliated to the ara.

Nothing of note was found, Mrs Bishop said.

It was clear he was not just hiding, as between 1989 and 2003 Mr Sinclair had amassed several criminal convictions, showing a propensity to come to the attention of police, she said. However since his disappearance he had not come to the attention of police and had made no contact with his sister.

Mrs Bishop told the court it appeared Mr Sinclair had been unable to cope with the rejection from his partner and had taken his own life.

“I do not believe it would be possible, if he was still alive, for him not to contact the one person who he knew loved him unconditionally, his sister Tash” she said. “I believe Jason has taken his own life and that it is likely he did so in remote and dense bush in the Okataina area.”

Dr Bain, who reserved his findings, told Mrs Emery there did not appear to be any doubt Mr Sinclair was dead. “If he was going to contact anyone, it’s clear on the evidence it would be you or the children,” he told Mr Sinclair’s sister. Mrs Emery nodded in agreement.

## **Appendix 4: Coroner's Findings**

IN THE CORONER'S COURT  
HELD AT ROTORUA

IN THE MATTER of the Coroners Act  
2006

AND

IN THE MATTER of an Inquest into  
the death of

JASON SINCLAIR

Before:

Coroner Dr Wallace Bain

Date of Hearing:

15 December 2010

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FINDINGS OF CORONER DR  
WALLACE BAIN

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INDEX

	PAGE
Issues	2
Evidence	2
Legal Position	4

ISSUES

- [1] This Inquest raises important issues. Can Jason Sinclair who has not been seen or heard from since April 2004 be legally declared dead?



- [2] This is an Inquest into the death of Jason Colin Sinclair who died in the Bay of Plenty district in the weeks following April 2004, his cause of death being unknown.

## EVIDENCE

[3] The Court was informed in evidence that Jason Sinclair has not been seen or heard of since April 2004. Detective Sarah Bishop from the Rotorua CIB gave detailed evidence before the Court. Natasha Emery who was Jason's sister also gave evidence. Detective Bishop is stationed in Rotorua and attached to the Rotorua CIB. She is the Officer in charge of the investigation into the disappearance of Jason Sinclair. She summarised his disappearance as follows. He was born in 1972 and had two siblings. Some detail was given of the early family relationship. In 1996 Jason entered into his own relationship with Lisa Goodman and that lasted approximately seven years. It was described as being unstable and there were difficulties in respect of having the children. The Department of Child Youth and Family had been involved in respect of the care of the children and the Police had become involved in respect of family assaults. He was charged with assaulting one of his children and this was in December 2003. Continuing Police interviews followed with the children and on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2003 Jason appeared in Court and pleaded guilty. He was released on a variety of conditions and he was next due to appear in Court on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2004 for sentencing.

[4] After Christmas in 2003 he breached his bail conditions and he did not reappear in Court and a warrant was issued for his arrest. He did send some flowers to his partner and on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 2004 contacted his sister by telephone but she has not seen or heard of him since. In that conversation he stated that "life isn't worth living".

[5] The following day he presented a loaded .308 rifle at his former partner at a Rotorua address. The children were in the vicinity and Jason emerged from some bushes

with the rifle. Another person grabbed hold of the rifle and his partner was able to drive away. Jason then ran away. There was a bullet in the chamber of the rifle and a second bullet in the magazine. It appeared from examination of the bushes that Jason may have been living there for some time.

[6] There was then an armed offenders search. The next day on 15<sup>th</sup> April Jason went to a Credit Union to withdraw money from his account. That was his only bank account and it was the last bank transaction ever made. On the 21<sup>st</sup> April he came out of some bushes and threatened a person known to him. Police were called but he disappeared and that appears to be the last time he was seen alive.

[7] The Court was told that numerous inquiries were made to locate him since then with friends and associates, patrols of addresses where he had been staying and still had belongings, neighbourhood support flyers, articles in the Daily Post, inquiries with banks, his friends' partners and children, and the children's school.

[8] Subsequently WINZ inquiries were made, bank accounts and all inquiries were negative in respect of Jason Sinclair.

[9] In December 2009 the Police spoke with Jason's ex-partner and she had not heard from him since the earlier armed incident. No other family members have been contacted. Close friends of him were spoken to in February 2010 and they had not heard from him either.

[10] In March 2010 Rotorua Search and Rescue lead by Detective Sergeant John Wilson undertook a day search in Okataina and Lake Rotongata for any sign of Jason or the campsite where a friend had indicated he had been living. No note was located. No name change of Jason Sinclair has been recorded and an Interpol comparison finger check was completed which was negative. Internal Affairs advised that he had never held a passport and his whereabouts is unknown for six years and four months.

[11] Details were presented to the Court of his Police background. The Court was

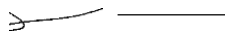
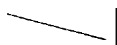
informed that the family have accepted that he is now dead and primarily because of the lack of contact with them and the lack of contact or attempted contact with his children. The Detective advised the Court that her conclusion was that Jason Sinclair was unable to cope with the rejection by his partner and the alienation from his children. Further the Court was told that if he was alive, from his whole history and background, it would not be possible for him to avoid attention of the Police for that length of time or resist seeking contact with his children or to not contact the one person whom he knew loved him unconditionally, which was his sister Tash. The Court was told that the Police believe he has taken his own life and it is likely he did so in a remote and dense bush in the Okataina area.

- [12] Exhibits were produced to the Court which included the missing person's report, birth certificates, interviews, transcripts, police job sheets, photographs, timeline and statements.

#### LEGAL POSITION

- [13] The Court refers to the detailed Findings into the death of Kelly Marie Fitzgerald. Those Findings outline in detail the Legal Position.
- [14] The Court reaches the conclusion to the Briginshaw standard that based on the overall background and circumstantial evidence and wide variety of indicia as established by Case Law, that Jason Sinclair is dead.
- [15] However, the Court is not able in accordance with the Legal Standards, to conclude that in fact Jason Sinclair has taken his own life.
- [16] I find that Jason Sinclair has died in the Bay of Plenty district in the weeks following April 2004, his cause of death being unknown.
- [17] That completes this Inquest.

Signed by the Coroner at Rotorua on this 21<sup>st</sup> July 2011

A handwritten signature consisting of a stylized 'W' followed by a horizontal line.A handwritten signature consisting of a diagonal line followed by a vertical line.

---

Coroner Dr Wallace Bain

## Appendix 5: Death Certificate

BDM 108

# New Zealand Death Certificate

**DECEASED**

First/given name(s) **Jason Colin**  
Surname/family name **Sinclair**

*(If different from above)* First/given name(s) at birth -  
Surname/family name at birth -

Date of death **On or about 21 April 2004**  
Place of death **Bay Of Plenty District**  
Cause or causes of death **Coroner's Findings**  
*(as specified in doctor's certificate or coroner's order)* **Causes Unknown**  
**Missing Presumed Deceased**

Name of certifying doctor -  
Date last seen alive by certifying doctor -

Sex **Male**  
Age and date of birth **31 years 26 November 1972**  
Place of birth **Public Maternity Hospital Te Awamutu**  
If not born in New Zealand number of years lived here -  
Usual home address **No Fixed Abode**

Usual occupation, profession or job **Unemployed**  
Date of burial or cremation **NR**  
Place of burial or cremation **Body Not Recovered**  
Age of each living daughter **5 3 6M**  
Age of each living son **4 2**

**PARENTS**

**FATHER:** First/given name(s) **Colin George**  
Surname/family name **Sinclair**  
*(If different from above)* First/given name(s) at birth -  
Surname/family name at birth -

**MOTHER:** First/given name(s) **Hinemoa Gerada**  
Surname/family name **McMillan**  
*(If different from above)* First/given name(s) at birth -  
Surname/family name at birth **Malcolm**

**RELATIONSHIP(S)**

Relationship status at time of death **Separated from De facto partner**  
Relationship type **De facto**  
Age of deceased at event -  
Place of marriage/civil union -  
**SPOUSE/** First/given name(s) **Lisa Ann**  
**PARTNER:** Surname/family name **Goodwin**  
Sex **Female**  
Age *(if living)* **32**

Certified true copy of particulars recorded by a Registrar

Issued under the seal of the Registrar on **31 October 2018**

Registration Number

**2018028527**



CAUTION - Any person who (1) falsifies any of the particulars on this certificate, or (2) uses it as true, knowing it to be false, is liable to prosecution under the Crimes Act 1961.