

A stylized illustration of a Māori family. In the foreground, an elderly woman with grey hair and a man with dark hair are shown in profile, facing each other and smiling. Behind them, a woman with dark hair is holding a young child. To the left, another woman is holding a large, orange, stylized object that resembles a haka mask or a piece of traditional clothing. The background is dark, and the overall style is graphic and colorful, with a focus on Māori culture and family.

A collection of stories about  
Māori perceptions of

# HOME

*Tō mātou kāinga,  
tō mātou ūkaipō*

**Tomairangi Morgan**





**Pātiki Pattern**

The tāniko pattern shown throughout this document is of the pātiki (flounder) and was designed by Honor McCorkindale for Ngāti Hauiti to reflect one of the mōkai left by Tamatea Pōkai Whenua in the district. Pātiki can still be found in the Rangitīkei River.



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In this collection of Pūrākau you will find the words, sentiments and aspirations that were shared during interviews with whānau from across Aotearoa as part of the *Tō Mātou Kāinga Tō Mātou Ūkaipō* research project, and which were re-worked into beautiful stories and poetry by Tomairangi Morgan.

To learn more about the *Tō Mātou Kāinga Tō Mātou Ūkaipō* research project visit us at:

<https://kia-puawai.whakauae.co.nz/project-2>



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## Foreword

**Ko te maumahara kore ki ngā whakapapa o ōu mātua tīpuna, e  
rite ana ki te pūkaki awa kāore ōna hikuawa, ki te rākau rānei  
kāore ōna pakiaka.**

**- Te Wharehuia Milroy**

Māori are a firm, determined people. Stretching back to the initial arrival of our tūpuna in Aotearoa, a history rich with tikanga, manaakitanga, whanaungatanga and every other ‘tanga’ was birthed. In acknowledging where we came from, our future endeavours were guided.

Today, Māori are experiencing a separation from where we come from. Due to urbanisation, colonial history, and a battle for recognition as a people, our whānau are struggling to find themselves in the surrounding world. How can we see where to go if we aren’t sure where we come from?

We have individual stories and journeys; however, we are still rooted in our collective beginnings. Whether in cities or rural communities, Māori are finding ourselves and our people, and redefining what it means to know where we come from. Some are blessed to know their whakapapa, linking them back to their iwi, tūpuna, marae. Others have adapted to create their own whakapapa in new places.

As the world around us evolves, our terminology evolves. Home has many different meanings and terms in te reo. Tūrangawaewae, ūkaipō, papa kāinga, haukāinga – to identify a few. These words have different meanings for different people, dependant on how our individual lives have unfolded. As our language is a living language, it is only right for our kupu to take on new meanings as we navigate this world.

Each of us knows where we come from, in our own way. Maybe we know our whakapapa, maybe we don’t. Maybe we feel empowered to go back to our marae, maybe we struggle to find our place there. None of these are right or wrong, they are simply where things are at. But each of us knows who took care of us, how we should care for each other. We know the people who love and support us, and those who we love and support. We have similar dreams of how to make this world feel like home.

This is dedicated to those who’ve felt homeless in the concrete jungles, out of place where we should feel at home. You are not alone, and your stories and experiences hold as much validity as the next. If you’ve ever felt unsure of where home is, perhaps this is where your own whakaaro can begin to flourish.



# Homeless

**I've been homeless for over a year.** A nomadic existence, floating in a world that cannot give me a home.

Dwellings rise and fall with the tide of sunrise and sunset; skeletons of concrete and brick.

Built on bloodshed, and philosophies I cannot see myself in.

This place is a constant ripple, a tidal wave, distorting a reflection I once recognised as my own face.

I have a house, it's true. It has a bathroom, a kitchen, a bedroom. I have a place inside to rest my head at night. But this deep unrest follows me into sleep and disturbs my dreams. I still feel alone.

**I'm homeless in my soul.**

Will a throw pillow on this couch I should call mine help me settle?

Tell my restless soul it belongs here? I'll decorate this space and pretend I fit somewhere between the furniture. I'll bring colour and life in here; in everything I do. And maybe the vibrance will seep into my skin and live there. *Maybe* it will feel like home.



**The day you left I lost my home, my place in this world.** I see you in my dreams and sometimes scream for you to let me come home now. It's not your time, moko, you say. *Why not?* Can I make you come home to me?

Your clothes hang in my wardrobe, your perfume on the bedside table. I've taped your photos to the walls around me. I write your name over and over and over until there's twenty pages of you in front of me. I don't leave the house without your watch or your ring. Once, I did. I spent the whole day feeling like the breath was stolen from my lungs.

You would tell me, when you were here, that I would always find you in my heart. **No matter how far apart we are, moko, I'm always in your heart.** I believed this in my bones, built the foundations of my identity on those words. When you died, I fell apart. I made you my heart, my whole world. And my heart died with you.

I've existed for over a year. I look for you everywhere. The unrest has grown over me. Discomfort encloses me in their fingers and I'm familiar with the feeling. I pretend you've gone on a long holiday somewhere; that you'll come home soon. One day you will, I'm sure of it.

So, I make my baby blanket smell like you, wrap myself in it and try for that familiar feeling of knowing your soul is here with me. Your jacket goes on the big bear who lives on my bed, and I burrow into him. I curl my body into his stuffed arms, aching for the warmth of your arms around me. I make an extra cup of tea at night and leave the hallway light on. In case there's a time when you walk back through the door.

A time when you come home to me.

I've been homeless for over a year.

**I'm homeless without you.**





# Reflection for “Homeless”

One of the research questions asked during the Tō Mātou Kāinga Tō Mātou Ūkaipō project was what home means to the participants. One participant provided answers linking to the concept of home being a person, reflecting that “...home is someone that you associate with being able to connect you to everything else.” Another question asked the participants about the important stories of home. Two participants provided answers that identify grandmothers as the “glue” in whānau.

What happens when the person is no longer there? This is what “Homeless” explores.

For Māori, people are a large piece of the foundations of our being. For some of the research participants, this person was their grandmother. For a lot of Māori, our Nans, Nanas and Nannies are the ones who keep everything going. Their homes always feel the safest, and their guidance is paramount when we face challenges in life. When they’re no longer here, where does that feeling go?

I related to this sentiment heavily. My Nan was my home. When she died there wasn’t a place to go to deal with the grief. The connection to everything else broke. There doesn’t seem to be one right way to mend that.

When we grieve the only home we’ve ever known, it doesn’t always make sense. Things like making that extra cup of tea or having their items around alleviates the mamae. That was the comfort they provided us, their mokos, with.

The word mokopuna means grandchild. Moko is the traditional Māori tattoo for the face or the body. Puna is a spring of water. The word mokopuna can therefore be interpreted as seeing the reflection of yourself in your grandchildren. It can also explain the deeper connection between grandparents and their grandchildren. This connection, evidently, continues after the death of our grandmothers.

Women are born with all of their eggs already in them. Consequently, the first home any and all people have had are within their grandmothers, when our mothers develop in their wombs. As Māori, we already have an innate connection to our tūpuna through the traditions of our culture.

Our grandmothers are our glue, and our first home. They shape who we are in life and long after they’re gone. They make us who we are.



# Ko wai tātou?

We come from strong lineage, acknowledged in our wairua, hinengaro and tinana. Our way of life is formed by our tūpuna before us. Puna is a spring of water. Tū is to stand. Our ancestors are those who stood before our time, reflected in our lives; to stand before us as a mirror of the tikanga and mōhio that informs us where we stand in the present day.

Whether those places, in which we stand, are on our marae, in cities hours away from home, or on the sands and shores of countries worldwide. We stand with the knowledge that we have a right to be here, to belong. We have our place in this world.

Who we are is not up for debate. How we love and care for ourselves and each other; these are the ways we define ourselves. Our value comes not of the material world, rather the spiritual realm in which we connect with those before us, those here today, and those to come after our time. Like the fibres of a rope, we intertwine and stand strong in one another.

**Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua – I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on the past.**

We do not dwell on the past; we use our past as the guide to our future. We come from people who understood the value of everything around them. The value of the land and sea. This is evident in the pūrākau passed down from generation to generation. All of which inform who we are, where we come from, where we're going.

Our history is a painful history, something glazed over by the systems in place to educate us and our children. That pain exists still, almost two hundred years later. But the evidence of our strength as one people, he iwi kotahi tātou, exists as well.





Our mothers, coming from a time where the kauae had to be earned, are stepping into their right – as wahine Māori – to don their history on their chins. Where our tūpuna fought for the right to recognition, our mothers are empowered to wear what is rightfully, pridefully, theirs. Our children are speaking up, commanding their right to be seen in a world where our grandparents were punished for the natural flow of their tongues. They sit and watch, from this world or beyond the fabric of earthly existence, tears flowing as they recognise their battles and struggles being overturned for the favour of their whānau.

**There is pride in being Māori.**

We find strength in our maunga, awa, moana, roto; in our marae, our iwi, our hapū. Our strength lies in every place our people have laid foot; in every place they've stood. We take this strength with us, as we learn to stand in every place in our world. Because this is our world, these are our waters and mountains. Who we are does not begin and end with us alone. The beginning of us came on our waka, across the glistening oceans to this land we call Aotearoa. Our end will never approach, as we continue to lay claim to our place in this tumultuous, ever-changing world.

We are the people of this whenua. We are the people of Hawaiki. We are voyagers inherently. Our capacity for knowledge, learning, being, cannot be contained. We find our people all over, in countries far and wide. We find our place throughout Aotearoa; whether on our haukāinga, or wherever our individual journeys take us. We are not confined to rigid definitions of what or who we should be; where or how we came to be. We carry our homes within us and within each other. We exist in an omnipresent way of life.

Who are we? We are Māori. We are strong.

We know our place wherever we are and wherever we go.

**Ko wai tātou? Ko Māori tātou i ngā wā katoa.**





# Reflection for “Ko Wai Tātou?”

In the article, *E hoki mai nei ki te ūkaipō*[1], there’s a reference made to Rameka (2018) about there being no single way to ‘be Māori’. I wanted to capture this idea in this piece. Following the themes of whakapapa, pepeha, and identity the “definition” of “being Māori” can’t have one single explanation. Māori, as a people, find our place in the physical world around us; Papatūānuku. We use the body of the whenua to orient ourselves and our way of being.

Pepeha was described as “offering a framework” in *E hoki mai nei ki te ūkaipō*. Pepeha are so important in te ao Māori. It’s an oral account, for ourselves and others, linking us to places our ancestors walked over in our very early days of life in Aotearoa. It ties us to the land, the iwi, and the tribal origins of who each of us are. While it communicates the history of us it doesn’t limit us to those specific areas in being who we are. We come from different places through our genealogy; both on our mothers and fathers’ sides of our whānau. It provides us with the foundations for who we are and where we’re from, allowing our people to “stake roots”.

I used the whakataukī, *kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua*, to link with the description in the article of whakapapa being a “shared oral history”. As well as pepeha being a tool for connecting us with the land and with each other, our ancestral whakapapa plays an important role in this. It allows us insight into where and who we come from, their pūrākau and whakaaro, and what they endured for us to be present today. Part of this history lies in the wisdoms derived from whakataukī and whakatauākī.

This whakataukī, in particular, says I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on the past; emulating the whakaaro behind the importance of knowing where we come from to inform where we’re going; an acknowledging of our whakapapa.

Along with this, the notion of having a “personal and collective identity” for ourselves within our tribal and geographic affiliations is a key factor into Māori identity as well. We carry an understanding that we are each small parts of a wider collective, aligning our identities with the people we come from, know, meet, and create. Our fluidity in the Māori worldview is carried through to how we operate as people today.

In one of the interview transcripts, K101 speaks on Ngāti Hauā never having moko kauae back in the day. They described it as something which would make identification of being Māori easy and would open up the wearer to abuse. It was an insurance of safety not to have one. However, for modern-day Ngāti Hauā (as confirmed in a participant’s interview), as well as general Māori society today, having our moko kauae is seen as a birthright; regardless of “how Māori” we are or whether we’re fluent in te reo Māori. There is less sense of fear, and more of pride, in having kauae on our chins now.

These readings heavily influenced how “Ko Wai Tātou?” was written as well as the tone of the story. It’s a piece with a firm stance, all informed by how these themes and ideas have been communicated in the research.

[1] Boulton, A., Allport, T., Kaiwai, H., Potaka Osborne, G. & Harker, R. (2021). *E hoki mai nei ki te ūkaipō - Return to Your Place of Spiritual and Physical Nourishment*. Genealogy 5 (45). <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy5020045>.



# A mean feed

This was why she did it, to see all their faces; together, smiling, laughing. Watching her moko run around, rarking each other up and taking chocolate from the cupboards when their parents weren't looking. Little tāhae lot they were. But they were her moko and so she didn't mind. Fed kids were happy kids.

Each Sunday afternoon she would toil away making the kai. An extra big pot of pasta for Tū; his favourite. Roast pumpkin and kūmara, chicken schnitzel, boil up, stuffing; the works. Whatever it was, they all came together for a meal, a karakia, and whānau time. Every puku seen to; every plate piled high. She'd sit and watch as her children talked and joked, and her moko played games and caused mischief. Why shouldn't they?

Here, no one had to be on their best behaviour. Shoes were kicked off at the door and heaped on top of each other. Almost twenty pairs, more if extras came along which they almost always did. Hei aha! The more the merrier, as it should be. And there was no sweeter music to her ears than the squeals and laughs of her moko, the hearty chuckles of her children. These meals were their neutral ground, everything else laid aside to bask in each other and the joy of being together.

Eventually, one son or another would pull out the guitar, strum a few chords and everyone would erupt into song. The little ones joined in with their parents, harmonising their way through waiata after waiata. Hadn't even made double digits, may even have trouble spelling out the word 'harmonising' but that wouldn't stop them. Away with the tunes they'd go with their parents cheering them on.

"Chur, bubba girl! Almost as good as your Nanny!" an uncle would say to his niece, with a kiss and cuddle. Her moko, her kids all smiles and pride in themselves and one another.







“Nan, can we have more rhubarb slice? Pleeeeeeeeeeeease?” her moko would all chorus together. How could she say no to those little (and not so little) faces? Ranging in age from their early 20’s to the youngest, being only a toddler, and they could all still turn on that charm for her, “we won’t ask again, Nan, just one more!”

As the evening light streams through, a few decide to make their way. Back to their homes, their lives, but everyone knew the next Sunday would be spent here in the lounge at her house. A few whines and groans from the moko.

“Do we have to go, Mum?” always followed by the same answer. They knew they’d have to, but they’ll all be back next week. None of them ever wanted to leave, she didn’t want it either. But eventually the spell would break over them as Hina climbed into the night sky, and the start of another week, back on the grind, until the following weekend. Kisses and hugs, and ‘see you next week, Mum’s’ and ‘Nan, will you save us some slice for next week?’ and she would promise to do so. They knew she would, a woman of her word. The matriarch holding them all together.

Then would come the four-year old, “Mum, I stay with Nan? I stay with Nan tonight?” like clockwork. Her mother would start to object and Nan would step in.

“If my moko wants to stay, you let her stay.” And that was that. She would find her moko sneaking into her bed later in the night, and that was her favourite time. Then more moko pleading to stay. And, of course, once Nan had said yes then the moko would get their way. Their parents, her children, not allowed to tell them no. They were allowed to be exactly who they wanted, and she would never turn them away. She loved that they always wanted just a bit more time. That’s what it was all for, just a bit more time for as long as she could be with them. Eventually, mattresses would be dragged into the lounge, and someone would complain about someone else’s toe jams.

As her kids departed, leaving their babies in her more-than-capable hands, the same words warmed her heart. This was why she did it.

**“Thanks again, Mum, thanks for the mean feed.”**



## Reflection for “A Mean Feed”

When asked for important stories of home during Tō Mātou Kāinga Tō Mātou Ūkaipō interviews, a key theme emerged: Growing and eating kai as a whānau. Food is an important part of te ao Māori. How we feed each other, and our people says a lot about how we care for those we love, for our whānau. Whether a kai hākari on the marae, or a shared family meal for one night of the week, our kai has a magic of bringing us together.

One participant said, “...she had a māra kai – I say she because she’d be out there at the break of dawn weeding, watering, whatever...”

Along with the theme of home being a person, as well as a grandmother’s influence over her whānau, this piece ties the three together. Showing up at Nan’s to relax, eat her food, and be around the whānau presents like a core memory for many. Everyone laughs, talks, and eventually (most times) someone starts the waiata train.

And, more often than not, at least one person always says, “man, that was a mean feed!” I felt this was an important aspect of the story. It not only encompasses the importance of the kai but the atmosphere around the kai as well. This is what comes to mind when considering the eating of kai that an interviewee referred to.

Part of the importance of kai, for Māori, is the ability and/or facilities to provide this for whānau. Tikanga Māori, especially when visiting the marae, is the feeding of everyone after all is said and done. This is done in situations even where there is raruraru being addressed.

Home, as described by some interviewees, is a place where their mokopuna and tamariki can be brought up safely. One participant described a lack of safety due to governmental reforms and systemic failures, which have had a “trickle-down effect” for whānau today. Displacement from the whenua, haukāinga, and the places where tūpuna are derived from has meant that urbanisation has taken precedent as a means of survival for many. Whānau have shifted to the cities for work, barely able to make ends meet to provide properly for the family. The statistical overview of meals coming from fast food suppliers, due to convenience and being the primary affordable means of kai, has left whānau feeling inadequate in providing for their tamariki and moko.

The craving for a home-cooked meal, not necessarily for themselves but for their babies, has become elevated in the importance of Māori homes; the end of watching their kids go without. For people who place importance on the ability to care for those we love, as a stakeholder in our own mana, good kai is often included in our manaakitanga, as well as kaitiakitanga. When bellies are full the whānau feel the connection to a healthy and safe environment and can relax in the knowledge that they’ve cared for each other in a meaningful way.

# Wawata

Ko ngā tūpuna hei tohu mō tātou  
Ka karanga atu rātou

Whakarongo koutou ki ngā wawata  
E karanga ana  
Hei whakataka i ā mātou

Ngā wawata o te haukāinga  
Te haumaru o te whānau  
Te hauora o ngā tamariki  
Te manaakitanga tātou i a tātou

Whakamaranga ai tātou katoa  
Ka tū te whenua me te tangata  
whenua  
Tō mātou mana motuhake  
Kia kore e whakataumaha anō

Ko te ao Māori tōku māpihi maurea  
Kia noho tonu ai

He wawata ō te iwi mō ake tonu atu





## Reflection for ‘Wawata’

A key pātai for the interviewees of the research project was about dreams. What is the best possible dream you have about home, safety and wellness? A theme that presented was somewhere for our people to go, to call ‘home’, and protection from violence, physical or otherwise. While reading through the individual answers the idea for Wawata was sparked.

Wawata means to dream. On top of safety and this sense of belonging, the call for healing, and grounding in te ao Māori came through. This inspired the idea for Wawata to be written completely in te reo Māori. The drive behind this was to capture the essence of the dreams the interviewees had for their home.

The answers to the question of the best possible dream reflected a desire in the interviewees to have emotionally and spiritually healthy homes, as well as thriving physical dwellings. It felt crucial to capture these elements in this pūrākau and identify those desires in a uniquely Māori way. To incorporate the call of the tūpuna to our people, to achieve these things and make them a reality, felt a natural way for this pūrākau to be directed in the language and meaning.

Te reo Māori is a naturally poetic language, therefore the pūrākau felt most natural to be written in the form of a poem. Less in terms of rhyming, and more in terms of the language used to convey the answers provided by the interviewees. In these dreams of home came the sense of yearning for simplicity and just ‘being’. It felt important to capture this.

There was a challenge in writing this pūrākau completely in te reo as I didn’t begin with an English version. I wanted to have te reo Māori to be the beginning rather than the alternative, a sort of symbolic representation of how to go about creating these healthy home environments for our whānau. Our whānau are aware of their needs and desires, so let our language speak to that.

Our dreams come from somewhere inside us, informed by our experiences and our whakapapa. The call of our tūpuna to adhere to those dreams is a representation of the internal drive to create those flourishing and nurturing environments. To stand with our whenua and uphold each other is to honour that long-standing connection between ourselves and our whenua, Papatūānuku; to honour her for the care and shelter she provides. Wawata is a call to our whānau to stand together and take those steps in unison, for us, our tamariki and all those who came before and will come after.

