**Weaving Worlds:
Raranga, whakapapa, and mana wahine**

Selena Shaw

A thesis submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design

Victoria University of Wellington
2021

Prologue

I close my eyes and I see the most beautiful yellow kete, a symbol of the suns golden light. I have dreamt of this kete for many years, the colour lays just beyond my ability to replicate with dyes. I have tried and tried to achieve the colours of my dreams, the colours only taiao can produce...

Acknowledgements

Ka nui te aroha ki a koutou

I am overwhelmed to experience the aroha and manaakitanga of amazing wāhine on this rangahau journey.

To my teina Lynette, you are certainly “te Kuini o te Ao”, you helped me understand mātauranga Māori, your knowledge and use of te reo Māori guided me in understanding why we do things a certain way, taking the kōrero well beyond tikanga, and placing it within my grasp.

My whānau provided me with the foundation I needed to collate this kōrero. My mum, aunties and sisters all shared their lives and experiences in ways that helped me to understand our whakapapa, raranga and my role in preserving this knowledge with each of you.

Finally to my supervisor, sister and friend Anne, thank you for sharing this journey with me, for helping me to see my potential and for believing in me when I wavered. It is one thing to have a good supervisor, but it is quite another thing to share your life with someone in the way we did. You saw me at my best and worst throughout this rangahau and you never gave up on me and my kōrero. Look what we have achieved!

Weaving words and weaving worlds.

Haere takirua whānau, always remember to journey together!

A Note on Language

Throughout this kōrero I use te reo Māori to explain or express the essence of what I have seen, experienced, and now understand. To assist in the flow and readability of this korero, I offer a list of relevant Māori words and terms in the attached glossary (Appendix A).

Karakia

As Māori tikanga requires, this weaving journey must be opened with a karakia, or blessing.

Greetings to the reader
 Greetings to the harakeke
 Greetings to the taiao
 Greetings to Papatūānuku
 Greetings to Hine-te-iwaiwa
 Greetings to Tane

Karakia are a key part of each stage of weaving – from harvest to completion – always acknowledging and giving thanks for the healthy plants, and for the environment that provided the necessary elemental cycles for abundant crops to grow and be harvested. Every weaver has a ritual blessing they say before cutting harakeke.

Just as I offer a reason for visiting the pā harakeke, I now let the reader know that I am here to tell stories. And just as I share my weaving intentions, I now say to you that these stories are about wahine Māori, whakapapa, harakeke, and raranga. These stories are about weaving worlds.

For te reo Māori readers, I offer the karakia I use before cutting harakeke:

Ki runga, ki raro, ki roto, ki waho i ahau,
 Ki te taiao, ki a koe e Papa
 Uhia mai ou hā
 Uhia mai te hā o ngā matua tūpuna
 Kia tapahi harakeke i tēnei rā mo te mahinga raranga
 Mō te ako hoki i ngā tikanga a harakeke
 Kia whakapai, kia manaaki ai i nga taonga tuku iho
 Haumi e, hui e.

Introduction

Ko Makeo toku maunga
Ko Waiaua toku awa
Ko Mataatua toku waka
Ko Waiaua me Omarumutu ōku marae
Ko Ngāti Ruatakena me Ngāti Patumoana ōku hapū
Ko Te Whakatōhea toku iwi

This is a thesis in three parts.

The first two parts present the research component readers might expect from a traditional Western thesis. It theoretically and methodologically situates my research, and explores my lived experience as a researcher, a weaver, and a wahine Māori. I introduce the reader to te pā harakeke and te whare pora, spaces central to the weaving experience, through the materials and tikanga of weaving a kete. The third part is what I call kete mātauranga — the knowledge contained in our basketry. After some brief reflections, I present a set of letters I have written to loved ones and photos of the kete I wove to carry each one. This part of the thesis is more creative, a means for me to share the knowledge I have gained through the experience of completing a Master thesis. I chose the letter format so this knowledge could be shared in ways that are meaningful to both whānau and other readers. These letters allow me to speak personally, in a way that honours oral tradition, capturing some of the lived experience of four generations of wahine Māori, and protecting our shared knowledge so it can grow.

Part 1 - Situating my research	page 7
1.1. Kaupapa Māori	page 7
1.2. Mana Wahine	page 8
1.3. Raranga, whakapapa, and mana wahine	page 9
Part 2 - Locating my weaving	page 11
2.1. Te Pā Harakeke	page 12
2.2. Te Whare Pora	page 15
2.3. Techniques and Tikanga	page 16
Part 3 - Kete Mātauranga	page 17
3.1. The Letters	page 20
3.2. Reflections	page 47
Bibliography	page 48
List of images	page 51
Appendix A	page 52

1.0 Situating my research

The Māori art of raranga is an example of cultural resilience and adaptation that deserves celebration. Puketapu-Hetet (2002) and Te Kanawa (2008) provide many examples of woven objects and stories of the knowledge captured, shared, and developed over time. We can see that techniques have adapted in response to many external factors (Hiroa and Buck, 1924; Puketapu-Hetet, 2002) just as materials and tools have changed or been modified (Smith and Laing, 2011).

The focus of this project is to explore female Indigenous design knowledge in the context of raranga harakeke, or flax weaving, and I situate this rangahau and kōrero in the experiences of my own whānau of weavers. There is the voice of my own experience and mastery, and there are the voices of my tīpuna who continue to guide and, at times, lead my understandings.

In this thesis I collect many stories, share many stories, and weave pieces that consolidate the knowledge gained doing this work, in the hope that it will act as a kete mātauranga for mokopuna. The mātauranga created in this thesis also contributes to knowledge created under the manaakitanga of whakapapa and mana wahine.

Doing research guided by Māori theories, and within a Māori context, means that I am contributing to the mātauranga that currently exists, that I am internalising these understandings, and that I am pushing new mātauranga back out to the world for scrutiny and use. Mātauranga is created when we contribute to something collectively and share it with others.

This research also asks the design discipline to hear, acknowledge, and consider Māori female knowledge as leading the way for Māori woven arts, female design theory and practice.

1.1. Kaupapa Māori

Kaupapa Māori research has two distinct features or characteristics. The first is that it is done by, for, and with, Māori. The second is that it is grounded in te reo Māori, because we understand that our indigenous language is the vehicle that drives thinking forward. I believe that Kaupapa Māori theory is the use of culturally appropriate research methods to inform collective knowledge transference by, for and with Māori. Smith (1993) supports this way of thinking and explains Kaupapa Māori Theory as a space where Māori operate free from external influences, distraction, and expectation.

As an academic approach, it came about during the Māori renaissance of early 1980s Aotearoa. This renaissance brought the ideas of Māori-based learning to the forefront of education and curriculum discussions (Ormond, Cram, & Carter, 2006). Initially grounded in educational pedagogy, its application and use can now be seen embedded and promoted in other areas such as law and health (Durie, 2017). Mātauranga Māori and kaupapa Māori theory are sometimes seen as the same thing, and can be used interchangeably (Durie, 2005; Durie, 2017; Henry and Pene, 2001).

Mikahere-Hall (2017) interprets the subtle differences between the two concepts, with mātauranga being used to portray traditional knowledge, whereas kaupapa Māori involves actively creating new knowledge based in the values of traditional knowledge. Henry and Pene (2001) define kaupapa Māori as being “the Māori way,” concerned with doing, being and thinking that encapsulates a Māori epistemology. Royal (2012) identifies kaupapa Māori as the creation of a plan by, and for, Māori. He believes tikanga are asserted and reinforced within kaupapa Māori theory and contexts.

Linda Smith (2012) simply summarises the essence of kaupapa Māori theory is the fact that it is by Māori, for Māori, and with Māori. And Graham Smith (2012) acknowledges how important it is for Māori to have possession of, lead and direct our research—to own our knowledge and not conform to, or assimilate into, a Western framework. I draw further inspiration and clarification from an article by Pihama, Cram and Walker (2002, p.41) where they emphasise:

Kaupapa Māori is, therefore, about asserting the right of Māori to be Māori while at the same time building a critique of those societal structures that work to oppress Māori.

What many Māori scholars also confirm is that kaupapa Māori in any form contributes to the on-going preservation of mātauranga (Royal, 2012; Smith L., 2012, Wilson, 2008).

As previously touched upon, te reo Māori is described as a fundamental base for Kaupapa Māori, as it cannot exist or operate without the language. We can take strength from wahine like Katarina Mataira, a staunch Māori woman many know as the mother of the kura kaupapa Māori movement, who believed that the essence of being Māori is the language, as this is what makes us unique (Smith L., 2012). In doing this research it is inevitable that I use and engage with te reo Māori me ōna tikanga, and the more I do this the more knowledge I will gain. This is another way in which Kaupapa Māori is enacted by and for Māori: it strengthens my determination to learn my language through my passion for weaving.

Although this work shares something in common with ethnographic research (Punch and Oancea, 2014; Tobin, 2014; Wilson, 2008) especially because it is committed to practicing, observing, and interpreting raranga—by studying my own weaving, within my own whānau of weavers, my interpretive framework remains grounded in Kaupapa Māori.

1.2. Mana Wahine

More specifically, my research is situated within mana wahine theory because this research is about Māori female knowledge, female voices, female understanding, female education, female art, craft, and design. The term mana wahine is applied to women as individuals, while the plural form wāhine refers to all women or womanhood (Pihama, 2001). Mana wahine is the knowledge and understanding of the world as viewed by a Māori female (Smith L., 1993). It is concerned with understanding and interpreting the world from two perspectives – the first is female and the second is Māori (Pihama, 2001; Smith L., 1993).

Some views of mana wahine link with Western feminist thinking, but other Māori female scholars believe it goes further as the enactment of a female political viewpoint, way of being, and way of understanding that is coupled with Māori tikanga (Mikaere, 2011; Pihama, 2001). The feminist construct consists of political struggle for identity and voice, societal deconstruction and it is through these determinants that we rewrite the role of women and challenge ‘norms’ in the liberation of the female voice. Jenkins and Pihama’s (2001) interpretation of mana wahine emphasises the need for Māori women to assert themselves and take control of the spaces they inhabit and create. To understand mana wahine as a term, and not a collection of words, Smith suggests that it is “a strong cultural concept that situates Māori women in relation to each other and upholds their mana as women of particular genealogical groupings” (Smith L., 1993, 61).

Mana wahine is also politically motivated because it was established in reaction and response to the exclusion and omission of Māori women in decision-making processes since colonisation and continuing today (Smith L., 2012). Before colonisation, Māori women and men were equal in status and mana (Gabel, 2005; Pihama, 2001). In Māori culture women and men have their own mana, and we can see female mana through atua wahine, women holding Rangatira, women being of chiefly ranks, women educated to the status of tohunga, matakite, kairongoā, etc. But imposed Western hierarchies and gendered practices meant women were not given the equivalent rights of Māori or Pākehā men (Gabel, 2005; Higgins & Meredith, 2011; Smith L., 1993). Without such rights Māori woman’s experiences have been very different to the futures our tīpuna dreamt for us. We work hard now to reclaim our space, to occupy our space and to ensure this space endures for our future generations.

Many indigenous theorists will attest to the fact that Indigenous female knowledge has suffered the consequences of colonisation within Aotearoa New Zealand, and on a global scale (Durie, 2005; Mikaere, 2011; Ralston, 1993; Smith C. W., 2007). I use the term mana wahine without “Māori” because I believe it is implied in the term. Using mana wahine as a methodology is reinforcing indigenous ways of knowing and being in the world that are concerned with place-making in, and through, theory and practice (Durie, 2017; Gabel, 2005; Mikaere, 2011). The presence of mana wahine within the literature before the 1980s is limited, as Māori women were concentrating their intellect in other areas such as nurturing and sustaining their whānau needs and their homes. This work contributes to the gaps in knowledge over time, and for my whānau.

1.3. Raranga, whakapapa, and mana wahine

The Williams Māori dictionary (2000) describes mana as “authority, control, influence, prestige, and power” – a translation and interpretation of mana that I understand takes a very masculine stance. To include a female perspective and interpretation of mana I suggest that mana is the power to determine, the authority to act and effect change, and the trust of the collective.

Māori believe that mana lives in the physical and spiritual realm and we experience it in many ways (Pere, 1994). We are born with mana, it is inherited as a birth right, it is a manifestation of our whakapapa and the responsibilities we carry (Higgins & Meredith, 2011; Mead, 2003; Simmonds, 2011). Mana grows as we age, taking form through our actions as we move through the ages and stages of life just as the physical body shows the signs of age and wisdom (Pihama, 2001). We know that our tīpuna

believed in Atua Māori, and obtaining mana and power through the mauri provided by Atua was a source of authority and honour. It was not given or received without significant consequence, responsibility, and accountability to lead your whānau or hapū (Mead, 2003; Puketapu-Hetet, 2002).

The realm of our Atua wāhine is the true whakapapa of all Māori female knowledge; it is our starting point. The first source of information for all things wahine derives from them - whakapapa tells the story, and we connect to it through the continuation of our given gifts and skills. Hine-te-iwaiwa is the atua wahine we attribute all female knowledge and creativity within the woven arts, and standing beside her is a mighty place to begin, and a solid platform to develop my understandings and interpretations.

Mana wahine guides my practice-based research, and shows how mātauranga embedded in the practice of weaving continues to answer problems for us today just as they did for our tīpuna, those explorers and innovators who traversed the seas to settle here in Aotearoa New Zealand. I understand that mana wahine Māori is embedded in the weaving arts, and raranga is the foundational platform for which all knowledge within whānau is sustained.

Mana wahine Māori exists in our unconsciousness because of being, doing and continuously learning about Māoritanga, about Māori practices and beliefs. It is released when we need to call upon our unique cultural experiences and knowledge to draw informed conclusions about where we position our interpretation and actions. Embedded in the thing that is woven are the collective successes of our tipuna wahine to hold on, to create a sustainable culture, to pass on traditions, to reverse engineer and problem solve, to think strategically, and to engage with technologies to advance the collective wahine and larger whānau.

Pihama (2001) discusses how the state of being wahine is how females move through time and space in a transformative way. In te ao Māori we move through the stages of life at a rather slow pace and we need to have achieved certain milestones before claiming to have achieved knowledge befitting of a particular age or stage. The ages and stages in te ao Māori are more concerned with mental and emotional development than with physical appearances, and I understand being wahine involves a transformation undertaken through rites of passage that inform my thinking and belief system. The first lesson I learnt came from a discussion with my teina Lynette, who advised me that I am still a rangatahi, young person!

Just as tikanga guide my passage through womanhood, tikanga guide the practice and meaning of raranga. The word tikanga is a construction of things that are right or tika (Mead, 2003; Royal, 2012). Tikanga are not fixed to a time or place, but rather evolve in response to whānau expectations and challenges to meet the needs of the people within the time and space they inhabit (Mead, 2003; Metge, 2015).

2.0 Locating my weaving

I started by asking what we know about raranga and female knowledge, and that means starting with Hine-te-iwaiwa, the atua associated with the ngā mahi raranga, ngā mahi toi o te Whare Pora, all woven arts pertaining to her house. Female atua are active in Māori cosmology and my research draws on their influences and special characteristics to reinforce and confirm how traditional knowledge is adapted over time. Weavers acknowledge Hine-te-iwaiwa as the presiding atua, she both protects and nurtures the role of wahine in the creation and life cycles of the whare tangata (Mead, 2003). A special gift given of Hine-te-iwaiwa is the hei tiki, a pendant depicting a swimming taniwha is said to represent fertility (Mead, 2003). It is through the hei tiki that Hine-te-iwaiwa assists wahine, in some accounts the tiki was used and placed on the wahine to invoke the blessing of good fertility (Best, 1898).

Stories of Hine-te-iwaiwa vary between tribal boundaries, across the island distances each with their own interpretations and mātauranga. She is known by many names such as Hine-te-iwaiwa, Hina, Hina te iwaiwa and Hinauri and Hinaura (Best, 1898). I know Hine-te-iwaiwa as the protector and guardian of childbirth, women, and female creativity; the arts pursued by wahine, their pūmanawa. Hine is also associated with the cycles of the moon. It is important to understand the connections here too – the lunar cycle provides the calendar for female menstruation or īkura, and Hine-te-iwaiwa is the protector of the whare tangata, the house of humanity, the beginning of whakapapa (Mead, 2003).

In te ao Māori there are three domains unique to wāhine Māori, where wahine are kaitiaki, the protectors of taonga. First is the whare tangata or house of humanity (Higgins & Meredith, 2011) and the female reproductive system or womb of the world (Mead, 2003). Second is karanga, the first call of welcome and acknowledgement on the marae is always a female voice (Gabel, 2005). And third, moko kauae – the female chin tattoo (Higgins & Meredith, 2011). In this cosmological order, raranga is associated with the whare tangata and whakapapa, forming a vital space of Māori learning and making. Mana wahine acknowledges women as creators of life and protectors of future generations. The whare tangata was the first container and raranga produced the everyday containers that entire whānau, hapu, and iwi counted on to survive—and thrive for generations.

The following description by Puketapu-Hetet provides what I have experienced to be the most accurate description of raranga:

In raranga, an equal number of adjacent weaving strips cross diagonally over each other so that alternate strips lie in the same direction. Basic raranga consists of each strip passing alternately over and under each consecutive weaving strip. Unlike whiri, there are always an equal number of weaving strips (Puketapu-Hetet, 2002, wh. 43).

Hiroa (1924) and Puketapu-Hetet (2002) provide the most detailed accounts of plants, material, and preparation protocols. With some sixty years between publications it is a true testament to Māori tikanga that both recounts are near identical. Hiroa details the materials with meticulous description and care, and Puketapu-Hetet develops these further in her publication.

Raranga has provided a beautiful woven pathway for many wāhine to share mātauranga in their own unique ways. It offered, and continues to offer, inter-generational lessons embedded in stories and instructions. Many wahine use storytelling to capture their whakapapa, their history of weavers, and the stories as told through their weaving. The art of weaving has been through several revivals since the colonisation of Aotearoa in the early- to mid- 1800s; each time the revival was led by a tohunga raranga motivated to pass on their mātauranga properly.

The first revival to note is that of Rangimarie Hetet (Ngāti Maniapoto) that came about after the Māori Women's Welfare League (MWWL) was established in 1951. Once the League gained momentum, they started to branch out into other social welfare and cultural activities to further promote their cause. In 1953 they approached Hetet to participate in a weaving wananga – her role was to show the attendees the traditions of weaving by observing her in action (Paki-Titi, 1998). The work of the MWWL was to encourage Māori women to reengage with traditional arts, as the League was established by and for Māori women to monitor the health and wellbeing of women and their children (Paki-Titi, 1998; Te Kanawa, 2009).

Another revival took place in 1983 initiated by Ngoi Pewhairangi who was working in adult education on the East Coast at the time sought to facilitate a workshop for weavers – Māori and Pacifica peoples (Ka'ai, 2002). She was not a weaver herself but an authority in many other Māori arts such as kapa haka and te reo Māori – having successfully set up the Te Ataarangi Māori language programme that is still running today (Ka'ai, 2002). Ngoi was also a composer of waiata, many of which we still sing today. This move was instrumental in reinvigorating weaving knowledge through the creation of a weaving network known as the Aotearoa Moana nui a kiwa Weavers. This group is now known as Te Roopu Raranga Whatu o Aotearoa.

Over time, weaving finds other materials, other ways of knowing and doing that force materials to stretch to their full potential. Just as the harakeke plant has endured over time, raranga adapted and come back with different and complex products. For example, the use of synthetic materials in raranga came at a time when knowledge preservation was at the forefront of the minds of our kuia and tohunga raranga: “Capturing the techniques of the Māori weavers in metal, or in materials that will survive time” (Puketapu-Hetet, 2011).

In laying the tūāpapa for the remainder of this korero, I begin within the pā harakeke, then branch out to the whānau, to the mātauranga of the weaver, and ultimately to the taonga created. We can liken this to the experiences of weaving, as we overlay each whenu in the weaving of this kete kōrero.

2.1 Te Pā Harakeke

I was able to locate very little research that addressed the significance of the Pā Harakeke, the place where harakeke grows, the source of so much maintenance, material and meaning. But a number of technical publications about the harakeke plant (*Phormium tenax* / New Zealand flax) offer insights into the structure and strength of this incredible, and renewable, material.

Hiroa (1923) offered insights about the adaptation of Māori weaving after the great migration of waka to Aotearoa, noting that Māori adapted their weaving techniques to what was readily available, notably the harakeke and wharariki plants. And McAllum (2005) comments on the lack of material related to flax planting and management from the 1930s, when indigenous peoples and their knowledge preservation systems were under profound threat of erasure. But Wehi (2009) reviews over two thousand whakataukī that reference harakeke, *Phormium tenax* and all species of plants, to identify how Indigenous ancestral whakataukī contributed to the preservation and care of the plants.

Weavers select the rau based on the item they are weaving, and so that the right sized rau is selected. The main reasons for careful selection was to reduce waste and effort in preparation (Hiroa, 1923). Work by Harris and Woodcock-Sharp (2000) offer scientific insight into the strength of New Zealand flaxes when traditional softening techniques are used on 11 different varieties of harakeke. They explore the relationships between fibres, strength, stiffness and ease of stripping, and their findings have been used to reinforce previous studies on harakeke, including the work by Orchiston in her classification of variations of muka for naming of harakeke varieties.

But my experience and our stories have taught me that the weaving journey becomes real as soon as the weaver enters a pā harakeke, their pā harakeke. We are looking for a healthy vibrant plant to harvest, a plant with many whānau and strong rau standing up straight. The relationship a weaver has to our pā harakeke is one of reciprocity. It reflects the cyclical nature of the seasons and the needs of both the plant and weaver. A weaver knows which plant we have harvested from, which clusters need to be rested, and where to start their cutting the next time we enter the special place of our pā harakeke.

I have witnessed and practiced harvesting and selecting harakeke since I was a child. I observed my aunts hunched over, fully leaning into the harakeke, not a care in the world and always in their happy places. Harvesting for the benefit of the plant was always the number one rule. Harvesting for the plant meant completely clearing out all the rau except the three central shoots. Cleaning the harakeke—to clear away the dead or dying rau—as you go is part of the care and regeneration weavers practice. When harvesting for a specific taonga to commemorate a special person or event weavers may be more selective over the rau. Weavers will have, or have access to, pā harakeke with many varieties growing, varieties for specific purposes such as kete-making, whāriki-making, or piupiu-making. The very nature of the harakeke plant is regeneration of whakapapa, and wāhine are seen to emulate the pā harakeke. There is a clear sense of kaitiakitanga involved in these practices.

As a weaver I prefer to follow a cyclical approach too, as I find this allows for better regeneration of the plant and stronger rau when the plants are regularly harvested. When I foster a more holistic and regenerative relationship with the plant and its health, care, and maintenance, I am excited when I step into a pā harakeke. I am inspired to create, and I have a real sense of purpose and connection.

The harakeke plant itself embodies whānau. The rito, or central shoot, is known as the child. The rito is protected by the awhi rito, the two parental rau. These three rau form the basis for every pā harakeke and the future rau.

Sitting and reflecting on this aspect of the weaving process I can make connections to my tīpuna. Their knowledge of care, protection, and regeneration has been handed down through generations of women in my whānau as well as by the plants themselves. Locating specific knowledge within the pā harakeke we can access female knowledge pertaining to the creation of whakapapa, the nurturing of whakapapa, and whakapapa as a complete lifecycle.

Image 1: Harakeke plant
<https://teara.govt.nz/en/diagram/13162/harakeke-plant>

When cutting we locate the whānau cluster and rau we want to cut. Gently easing your hand down the rau and pushing it away from the central three rau, we then bring the knife in and cut away from the central shoots on a diagonal. We always cut away from the rito and the protecting awhi rito. Cutting inwardly would risk cutting the whānau shoots, ending the life cycle.

Image 2: cutting flax in a community pā harakeke, Te Awakairangi, 2020

The images above show the harakeke needing some clearing and cleaning out of the older, dried leaves to allow airflow around the whānau. The colour of the harakeke should be vibrant—if it's dull then the harakeke isn't ready for harvesting. Generally, we see dull harakeke immediately after the kōrari stem of the flax have flowered.

When the cutting and clearing is finished and the weaver has taken all that they need for the project, it is time to tidy up around the plant and collect all the leaves – good or bad - and take them all away. Once it was common practice to return the offcuts and any dead leaves to the base of the harakeke plant. Weavers would bury these offcuts to give back to the plant, and Papatūānuku. Now, weavers will take extra care to keep

plants clear of bugs and infections. Once a bug and infection set into the harakeke it takes lots of care and harvesting, soil correcting, and complimentary planting to bring them back to health. I practice the full removal of all dead and offcut harakeke. Harakeke doesn't compost as the fibres or muka are hard to breakdown. When I was harvesting from the pā harakeke plants in Christchurch in the early 2000s we were required to remove all harakeke harvested.

The stage after harvest is splitting the rau, or blade, into whenu, or strips. The term we use to explain splitting the harakeke into whenu is toetoe, or the removal of the outer edge and the spine of the harakeke rau, and the sizing of whenu into even lengths for weaving. The accurate sizing of the weaving whenu is vital to ensure an even and consistent weave. Hiroa (1923) explains that the sizing of whenu requires accuracy. He does not mention the use of the haehae, a traditional tool that has prongs evenly spaced to ensure accuracy. Takirikiri is the process of removing the whenu from the base of the rau. Working in a downward direction, the objective is to remove only muka from the butt. This method of separation is used today when preparing harakeke to make a bag or container that begins with a whiri to bind it.

Scraping the ends is the final stage of preparation before weaving; it involves the removing of any surplus or dense fibres to leave only the soft muka. When I do this, I hold the rau in my hand and look at it from all angles, turning it over and over in my hands, and sliding my hand across it to feel the muka inside. Then I hold it up to the light to see the muka, ngā aho tapu. Te karaka! The fragrance! I can only describe the scent of harakeke as the smell of green. Everyone has that smell from the taiao that they associate with a colour and for me it's harakeke and the colour green. When the kōrari is in full bloom I can also hear the playful song and wings of the tūi flapping above me, as they circle around the pa harakeke to watch me in my work, to monitor my movements.

2.2 Te Whare Pora

The space known as Te Whare Pora exists in the way weavers set their weaving space and engage with the practice of weaving. It was once a very tapu and sacred space where weavers engaged in many ceremonial lessons to fully capture the skills and knowledge of a master weaver (Puketapu-Hetet, 2002). Te Whare Pora can also represent the space where weavers protect and nurture scholarly endeavours in the woven arts.

Over the last fifty years Aotearoa has seen a significant increase in the participation of female weaver and academic voices describing the art forms of weaving. The publication of handbooks and manuals came about when the weaving art form was in decline (Hiroa, 1924; Puketapu-Hetet, 2002). Hiroa (1924) and Puketapu-Hetet (2002) provide the most detailed accounts of plants, material, and preparation protocols. Weaving handbooks range from the introductory guides as compiled by Pendergrast (2011) and Brown (2012), where they show us the foundational skills and techniques of weaving baskets or the larger unsoftened waikawa basket. Ngawaka (2013) offers the kete whakairo instruction manual, a wonderful collection of photos, step by step instructions, and most importantly, the tāpiki, or locking off process. Kete whakairo have a unique weaving process as the piece is woven inside out. It is a

testament to the weavers' skill, as the work must be turned to reveal the fine pattern work involved.

One of the people I look to for mātauranga of raranga and the woven arts within Te Whare Pora is my aunty Roka Ngarimu-Cameron. She explains her experiences of growing up in a whānau of weavers and observing the tikanga. At a time when Christianity was transforming the way traditional arts were practiced, she recalls ceremonial practices being discouraged, and rarely performed. Aunty Roka believes that through the Māori arts we can strengthen our communities, learn more about our whakapapa, and embed tikanga for future generations. In her work she emphasises the importance of symbolism in weaving, the connections we have with the pattern makers, the stories they tell, and the need to reproduce these things and nurture the memories. Her work shows how she grapples with colonisation and decolonisation, Christianity, and spirituality—grounding all her mātauranga in the reclaiming of mana motuhake and tino rangatiratanga, asserting sovereignty over the land, and self-determination.

2.3 Techniques and Tikanga

Beauty, ingenuity, and diversity of the craft – that's how Pendergrast (2011) experienced weaving, and how he explained what he saw and did with other weavers, across his many years of collecting and learning about raranga. When discussing kete construction, he simply distinguishes between generic and specific types. First, he notes that the everyday kete, the item used for the manual tasks of the whanau, begins with the three-ply plait and has a whiri spine. The second type is the kete whakairo, the elite of basketwork, recording whānau and hapū specific patterns. Weaving kete whakairo encapsulates whakapapa, mātauranga, and stories within hapū boundaries (Pendergrast, 2011).

Best (1898) had also identified the differences between roughly woven kete for temporary use, and the more elaborate and decorative kete used to hold taonga and koha. He described kete and woven container types, including the kete putea, used for small things such as ornaments, and the kete kopa, a woven item like the putea but with a flap to enclose it, and secured by a cord. Best also records specific words and terms no longer used, terms associated with different types of baskets that no longer exist, such as the pu-kirikiri, a basket for storing kumara seeds or the ngehingehi, a long basket for squeezing crushed berries. He described all these as woven with the utmost skill and precision, with a very neat appearance.

In early ethnographic accounts, raranga is referred to as plaiting. While plaiting is used to refer to any over-and-under weaving, it generally requires three or more active segments—and raranga generally uses two (or more pairs). It is the pairing of these two segments that creates the weave, therefore it requires equal numbers and mathematical precision to successfully craft a kete, rourou, or kete pikau. In his publication *The Evolution of Māori* (1924) Hiroa describes plaiting, weaving and basketry as “the three Graces of the lower culture”. Hiroa (1924) limits his scope to that of checker and twilled works, and it is the checker-work pattern or style that raranga closely emulates.

Checker-work, as defined, consists in each weft passing alternatively over and under each consecutive crossing weft. This plait is termed takitahi (singly) (Hiroa, 1924, p.713)

While this is the best description available for the physical making or doing of raranga, it is difficult to differentiate between the three distinct processes of container making as he uses them interchangeably at times. It is also worth noting here that even though Hiroa brings a Māori perspective, his limited knowledge of weaving practices did not allow him to correctly assign weaving terms. Since a lot of the historical records omit the female perspective entirely, there remains a large gap in our collective knowledge.

My experience of doing the actual weaving is the exciting part. This is where weavers start to visualise our creations. My personal approach is to close my eyes and let my mind wander, and wonder, with the harakeke plant that gifted me its rau.

My weaving space prioritises whānau, locating myself in the central zone of the whare, the living room. I occupy half the space on the floor and have on many occasions had the pleasure of weaving with one of our pets, either the cat or the dog. Whether I'm inside or outside weaving I set up my space to allow me to move the rau across my body as I take the rau from unprepared piles of whenu ready to weave. It allows me to get into a steady rhythm and consistency with preparation. Preparing harakeke is hard on the body, it's rough on the hands and demanding on the back. Over time our techniques have evolved to allow for efficiencies and less wear and tear on the body. When I prepare large quantities of harakeke I like to stand and use a shelf brace for the hapine, it's very effective and allows me to work upright at the perfect height.

Weavers tools vary depending on the proficiency of the weaver, I have learnt over time how to get by with just a knife or my taonga maripi, a pounamu weaving taonga gifted to me. This is distinctly different from a weaver who has all the embellishments and include other woven arts in their raranga, they will usually have quite large 'tool boxes'.

The techniques I use to tapiki or for casting off depends on what the kete will be used for. Casting off a piece of work is just as important as the weaving, making a mistake at this stage could mean our work literally falls apart. We know when it's time to cast off or finish our weaving when the whenu starts to become inconsistent, and thin. Weavers hands know the right time to tapiki, the feeling of the whenu changes but what we are most concerned with is maintaining strength in the weave. When attaching the handles, we are asking the weave to take all the strain from the weight of the kete and all that it holds.

3.0. Kete Mātauranga

As I hope I have made clear by now, raranga is more than the design and production of objects that might end up in museums. The language of weaving is a beautiful expression of relationships, endurance, and creativity. When I weave, I feel a connection to the plant, the process, and most of all, I feel a connection to my tīpuna. There is a dynamic relationship between teacher and student when it comes to

raranga. The practice of connecting and layering can be described as the enactment of whakapapa. There is always a clear beginning, as the joining of whenu in pairs is likened to the joining of male and female to create new life.

Weavers are kaitiaki, we are protectors, we are nurturers, we are creators and, with all these things combined or woven together, become the knowledge preservers.

I am responsible for my whānau stories and honouring them
I am responsible to my tīpuna wahine
I am responsible to my whānau who journey with me
I am responsible to the harakeke plant and all its descendants
I am responsible to Hine te Iwaiwa

Doing research that looks at mātauranga Māori means retelling, translating, and in some instances, interpreting stories and memories. I am also accountable to those whose stories are told and retold through memories, experiences, and even our myths and legends. These things are not easily translated into a step-by-step guide, but they can be internalised and used to guide us in our creative endeavours.

Weaving is a ritualistic practice; it asks the weaver to perform specific tasks at each stage of the weaving process, from laying the tūāpapa to attaching the handles. Some weavers explain this as creating the whakapapa of their woven piece. The whakapapa requires two individual or singular things to come together, as we cannot stand or exist alone. This means that when weavers say ‘one’ what we really mean is ‘two’. Our weavers were skilled at preserving knowledge and whakapapa through their interpretations, their one-of-a-kind pieces, or special taonga commemorating events and people of importance (Puketapu-Hetet, 2002).

In other words, weaving-as-practice creates taonga and mātauranga, and embodies whakapapa and mana wahine. Māori women have always fulfilled the role of first educator, providing the examples for tamariki to watch, learn, and do (Mead, 2003; Metge, 2015; Gabel, 2005). We can see how wāhine and their influence form the basis for understanding the world around us, and how raranga establishes mana wahine within the context of Māori design.

Image 3: Auntie Roka Ngarimu-Cameron, Hāwai marae, August 2018

I come from a long line of weavers. Linked through whakapapa blood ties, connections through whenua and hapū, women have shown me how mana wahine manifests itself through our actions and service to our communities, and it is wāhine who have shaped my learnings and lessons through mahinga raranga.

Auntie Roka Cameron is a master weaver, historian, kaitiaki, and teacher of the woven arts. She grew up surrounded by a whakapapa of weaving, born into the art and a true tohunga raranga. Skilled in all the woven arts, she has been teaching and creating for decades. Auntie Roka first taught me to weave putiputi in Waitati, Dunedin back in the mid-

1990's at Te Whanau Arohanui, a marae based whānau foster home, and I re-connected with her when I discovered she had moved home, back to her papakāinga in Hāwai, back for whanau, and to rebuild her marae.

Image 4: Me and Aunty Kath, Ōpōtiki, 2018

The other guiding voice for my whānau research was my Aunty Kath, who passed away in 2019. A matakite, kaitiaki and protector of people, the taiao, and especially her beloved fishing, she was the older sister to my mother Doris and her twin sister Dyan. Her stories and memories are also woven into this kete as a taonga for future generations of weavers in our whānau.

I also want to introduce my mother, Doris, and my aunty Dyan. My mum is a treasure trove of creativity and inspiration, turning her hand at anything she dreams up. As part of our shared practice for this research, my mum shared her memories of weaving, watching her mother methodically working in her weaving circle Uhengaparaoa.

My teina Lynette also contributes to this kōrero by providing a sounding board for my many interpretations of tikanga and kawa pertaining to wahine, mana, atua and ako.

Image 5: Mothers and daughters teaching and learning weaving, Mangaroa, 2021

Her stories and understandings are also part of this raranga. I refer to her for reo Māori translation, interpretation, understanding and context for many of the concepts explored in my research.

Each of these wāhine have mana wahine manifested in similar and unique ways of understanding the world, and they have reminded me that my research is with, and for, all of us.

3.1. The Letters

For the final part of my thesis I have written letters to the wahine who taught me about weaving and to the ones I now teach. Without this inter-generational knowledge we cannot weave.

The first letter is to Aunty Roka. The second letter is to Aunty Kath. The third letter is to my mother, Doris. The fourth, fifth, and sixth letters are to my daughters Miah, Taylor and Summer.

The letters, and the kete woven to hold them, are gifts. The reader can see images, but the original work is not submitted as part of the thesis. However, I have included the text of each letter below so that all readers have access to that mātauranga.

Image 6: Kete mātauranga, Mangaroa, 2021

Image 7: Kete Papakirango woven for Aunty Roka, Mangaroa, 2021

Dear Aunty Roka

I'm writing to share with you the beautiful memories I have of our times together. In particular I recall one beautiful autumn morning when I had organised to come out and meet you at Tunapāhore marae for a day of weaving and kōrero. When I arrived, we sat and began our first weave of kōrero, sharing stories about your children, my brothers and sister, and their kids. Over a cup of tea, we did our untying of strands of whakapapa - looking at the parts that had severed over time (some relationships no longer standing) and rejoicing in the new flax threads, the mokopuna that had joined our whakapapa. Weaving between master and apprentice happens before you even cut the first fibres, it is strengthened and bound first in the exchange of whakapapa and aroha.

The karanga to weave was present as eagerness and excitement balled into one, as your tauira I was keen to take advantage of the opportunity to master a new weave. As tauira I wanted to make sure that I was. While walking outside together you asked me if I wanted to do my own karakia, saying we would harvest near each other. Suspecting this was a test to see if I knew what I was doing, without hesitation I said yes, I can do that. I walked towards the harakeke and started to feel the rau. I like to run my hands across, up, and down the rau to feel the thickness of the muka as well as the strength of the rau. While doing this you remind me that we check with our fingernails and run them gently across the rau to gauge the muka content.

I'm used to knowing how many rau to harvest, but this time round I had to ask how many I would need. I showed you the size of the kupenga kete that I wanted to weave, and then you were able to tell me how many rau I would need. I was experiencing the true tauira role with all the insecurities and uncertainties that come with it, and you were so beautifully patient, moving with a calm grace and speaking so softly. It was so exciting to be learning with and working alongside my teacher.

I expected you to direct all my movements, I was nervous and keenly aware of your watchful, reassuring presence. To be invited into a pā harakeke is special, in my experience it shows a great deal of trust. I stood in that pā harakeke and looked around, taking in the taiao and the kakara of the moana and the harakeke mixing. I said my karakia, selected the harakeke bush I wanted to harvest from and got to work collecting the 60 rau you told me I'd need to weave this kete.

One of the enjoyable parts of harvesting harakeke is doing it alongside others and sharing stories, insights and general gossip, the conversations and observations are so priceless. I thoroughly enjoyed harvesting beside you, stopping to talk here and there but steadily working way in our own spaces. We talked about the history of the rohe, the whakapapa we connect through in Te Whakatōhea, and we worked and talked further about the plants and surrounding native species growing around the marae.

As you shared the pā harakeke with me you explained that when our people rebuilt the marae, the hapori also had to plant the maara kai to feed everyone and the harakeke to provide containers for the harvest. When Pakeha set up an orchard next door, many machines and new people came to the land. They brought new plants and erected

shade boundaries, and they used synthetic fertilisers and chemical sprays that still drift onto the marae. Your eyes filled with tears and your body trembled when you told me how resilient harakeke is, how it was the strongest of all the native species we plant because it survived all this. Just like we have.

You told me how the kupenga kete was once used in the hapori to collect and store kai, and about the importance this weave had to your daily life and living in the papakāinga. As you were doing this, I could see your mind drift off to a time long ago. It reminded me of the look one gets when casting the mind back to our earliest memories of exploring the taiao and its gifts, collecting kai and many other treasures. I remember learning the whakapapa of the marae, hearing about the journey to rebuild the whare nui, and adorning the inside with tukutuku, carved pou, woven whāriki with many other embellishments. We talked about all of this while harvesting harakeke. Collecting, observing, and remembering together many shared experiences through raranga. When we were done with harvesting, and satisfied that we had enough of the best materials for the job, we headed back to the porch of the Whare Toi Rimu, the house where many lessons and teaching takes place, the place you described as many woven treasures and knowledge collected.

Preparation for this kupenga is surprisingly quick, sitting and chatting and methodically working away to break down each rau, strip the spines and size the whenu for weaving. This kete has a whiri base so each whenu must be “pulled” from the main, hard stem of the harakeke. You sat weaving your rourou, the project you were working on, and verbally instructed me to weave kupenga, watching my whenu placement, my tension and technique for adding whenu into the whiri base.

I learnt a few things during this lesson, and I wanted to focus on the tension of my starting whiri. I would normally sit and use my feet for tension, but you showed me another method. It was to stand at a bench and use a nail to hold the whiri, which offered good tension and the opportunity to stand took pressure of my back. Initially preferring this method to my usual seated style, I soon realised that as the whiri grew it brought different challenges for me as the weaver. Standing offered me the option of movement. One thing I noted was my body positioning, at times it was odd as I had to reach for my whenu. Usually when I’m sitting on the ground with my harakeke whenu on either side of me I can quickly position things around me as I occupy space on the floor. I found it hard at times to hold the whiri and all the whenu as the piece started to grow bigger and bigger.

When I was ready to begin my raranga you stopped your mahi and demonstrated the kupenga weave, specifically showing me how to hold the harakeke in a relaxed way for the net style weave. The net weave requires a more relaxed tensioning to achieve the consistent net construction and design. Just like any kete this one is woven in a circular way, one ara at a time, moving the weaving around to create and build it up to the size you want.

Immediately I was excited about the new weave I was learning, and I was excited to make another connection to my nannies and tīpuna, to know they used these kete to collect their kai. I happily wove until it was time to tapiki, the locking off steps.

The lessons and experiences of weaving this kupenga kete were reinforced in the way you instructed, shared, and nurtured me as a weaver. You encouraged breaks to review and reflect on my tension, the shape of the kete, and my tinana - making sure my body was feeling balanced for weaving. During the weaving of this kupenga kete we talked more about the role of the weaver and sharing weaving knowledge as a natural thing for you.

You were born to be a weaver, to tell stories with your hands. Born and raised in a dirt floor hut on the papakāinga at Tunapāhore marae you recalled the stories of your nanny, her lessons, and the staunch religious upbringing you had. You talked about your love for design and creating solutions and told me it's the part you love the most about weaving, because you are designing and innovating from traditional knowledge.

I was able to see and experience how a small papakāinga deals with the effects of changes to their local environment. How they manage their wairua and hinengaro through these challenges, and the resilience of traditional practices of ngā mahi toi, our Māori arts. You explained kupenga as being the female version of net-making, similar in the way we craft and begin the weave with a base whiri, but different in that we don't do the same karakia over what is made as you would with a fishing net. We talked about the different roles women and men fulfilled when they were young, how our traditional practices required us to protect, nurture and retain weaving knowledge and embed it in the weaving we create.

Taking me through the roles of women and men weavers, you explained that women were usually tasked with weaving the baskets for kai storage, eating, and utilities, whereas men were tasked with weaving the baskets and nets for collection and catching of kai. You touched gently on the nuances and differences being in the way the karakia are performed and who would perform them. Listening to you talk about how it was the men who wove the fishing nets, traps and snares helped me understand why this knowledge isn't easily accessed or readily available unless you can find someone to manaaki you in learning.

I spent some time sitting in the whare and started to ponder the idea of female and male realms and asked how this had affected your learning and teaching. Your face lit up when you spoke of the men in your family - my uncle Kerry, my three cousins and their sons and the many whāngai sons who are learning to weave. The joy in your voice as you reminded me of the time, we were all weaving together in Dunedin at Te Whanau Arohanui Trust in Waitati, where you first taught me to weave a putiputi. You were so proud to say that all your sons can weave and knew how to tend a pā harakeke. The part that made it special was looking across and seeing Uncle Kerry working with piritā vines, trying to weave them together to make his version of a kūtai cage to protect the Whakatōhea kūtai from the starfish. He was grinning and muttering to himself that working with piritā isn't nearly as fun as working with harakeke, as it behaves differently and isn't kind to the hands.

I was intrigued by the way you spoke, and how your eyes would glass over as you were transported back to your childhood memories, sharing these moments as if they were recent adventures. You reminded me that you grew up in a time when electricity wasn't

connected at the marae, sleeping on kuta mats in your whare. You talked about your mum sweeping the whare out with her handmade broom, how she would sprinkle water on the dirt floor to reduce the dust. I sat listening to your memories, feeling a connection to my tīpuna, feeling a connection to my turangawaewae and what exists on the whenua. The people you talked about, the places you showed me and the experiences you told me of made me feel like I was living it with you. I had an overwhelming sense of belonging.

Talking about the way men and women would weave when you were young, and how you observed the nannies, aunties, and your mother each day making food baskets and storage containers was such a precious moment to share. Hearing you talk about being so young and following along behind the women, observing their ways, and soaking in all they had to share made me feel like I was also sitting with the women on the marae atea, talking, weaving, and making decisions about papakāinga living, all while sharing their knowledge with each other. You told me how all the nannies kōrero comes back to whakapapa. The weaving of baskets and the weaving of whakapapa happens at every opportunity.

I will always treasure the time spent with you in the pā harakeke and the lessons learnt while talking and weaving. The sharing of mātauranga and the empowering way mana wahine exists in whanau was shown to me in the way I experienced your manaakitanga of whānau and your kaitiakitanga of Te Whare Pora.

Aroha nui,

Selena

Image 8: Kete kupenga woven for Aunty Kath, Mangaroa, 2021

Dear Aunty Kath

I write this letter to you even though you are no longer here with us. I write this letter to you because you were so generous in your sharing of whakapapa with me, who walked me through the faces and names, through the many, many stories of our whānau, generations of joy and pain. I am imagining us now, sitting at your round table drinking our coffee and sharing our stories and understanding of our experiences.

I think one of the things I love most about you is how you could share your experiences with me in such an open and honest way. You told me stories that others wouldn't believe with such conviction and truth! You shared with me how your later life as a matakite would weigh heavy at times, and you'd take refuge and relief from your visions by connecting barefooted with papatūānuku and cleansing with water while always doing your karakia. I remember all the times I saw you in your committed practice, a dedicated act every day. When I would turn up early in the morning to see you, you'd be either doing your morning animal feeding rounds or sitting outside eyes closed, reconnecting and rebalancing.

I hope you know that your stories continue to be shared and retold, like the fierce mana wahine you were changing and influencing the lives around you. I am forever proud of the whakapapa we share, as our lineage stretches back to Muriwai and beyond. Like all learners under your tutelage I felt that you weren't quite finished teaching me. There was still so much I craved to learn about our whānau traits, stories, and our heritage, but our time was cut short. I still carry the tales we had, and I share some of our moments and memories with my children so your legacy can continue on.

You were so giving of your mātauranga, reminding me that you were merely the conduit between the world we know and the world we have forgotten. We could weave whakapapa over cups of tea, feeding our tinana, hinengaro and wairua with the lost stories of our tupuna - the stories you retrieved through your moemoeā or visions. My heart longed for our nannies in photos that you held on your walls - brought to life with the stories of whānau adventures and mischief stretching as far as Te Hokianga right back to our home in Ōpōtiki.

Our whānau all knew you as a protector, discoverer and kaitiaki of our whānau, the taiao and especially the creatures in the moana. You were the caretaker of our whānau whakapapa and stories. We all knew you weren't a weaver of physical materials; your skills were in the woven universe, tales and stories is where your creative world lay. Still, you would tend the pā harakeke around our whānau whenua, eventually passing this role of kaitiaki on to me. The prolific growth, size, and quality of the harakeke around our whānau whenua is second to none and the harakeke is native to the area we live in, with great quality for making kete and whāriki. I know you enjoyed watching the tūi drinking from the kōrari and even when you moaned about the overgrowth, I knew that you were secretly chuffed that the pā harakeke was thriving and you loved watching the colours of the kōrari change throughout the spring-summer seasons.

You told me stories of the whenua where you lived in Otara, down Parauta Road. How this land was gifted back to our whānau through our nanny Kateruri Gundry and her brothers, each whanau line still occupying a section of land. Our nanny Kateruri was very knowledgeable about the history of Te Whakatōhea, her hapū affairs and being a formidable businesswoman, having learnt from her mother Matarena Waitangi how to manage schooners and the comings and goings of an active wharf full of schooners. You shared with me how our nanny owned her own schooner, named “Mere”. We later found the stories of our Nanny Kateruri printed in a 1940 edition of the Bay of Plenty Beacon, commemorating this wahine who lived to recall Opotiki’s early days. *Do you remember how excited we were to make another whakapapa connection?*

We marvelled at the story of how our nanny knew Reverend Volkner and his wife. On a trip she took with them to Auckland she warned them not to return to Ōpōtiki as there was trouble stirring. Little did Volkner and his wife know what was to ensue - the public hanging and the wrongful crucifixion of our tupuna Mokomoko.

You carried great mana and authority in your later years and we often likened you to our tupuna Kateruri, even calling you by her name. You must have drawn strength from her a lot in your work as a matakite, from the stories I know of our nanny and the times I shared with you I can attest to you both being strong wahine who understood the duty and responsibility you carried for your people - true mana wahine. We spoke of your haerenga to Northland to Te Hokianga too, to the place where Kateruri was born, and how you could trace our whakapapa back to her father’s Te Rarawa tribe. We spent many occasions talking about Kateruri and links she gave us through whakapapa to Te Rarawa and Te Whakatōhea.

One of the special stories I remember was of nanny Amelia (Kateruri’s daughter). You told me you used to stay with her down by the wharf, and you recalled rows and rows of harakeke, big, wide harakeke bushes, down where the Kōwhai trees once grew along the Waioeka river. You told of your strongest memories of the place: sleeping in the harakeke bushes, being lulled to sleep by the hypnotic fragrance of green harakeke. You shared memories of whole paddocks planted in weaving harakeke. Upon hearing this story, I set off and did some digging to find out that Uhengaparaoa, Nan’s weaving group, leased land near where you remember the harakeke growing down the wharf end of town. Did you know that those were the paddocks they used to cultivate top quality harakeke to supply the weavers who made wine bottle holders for a business that operated for a few years in the 1960s?

You would watch me raranga each time I came home to do more research. I would sit on the floor in your whare, set myself up in your lounge and you’d sit at the kitchen table watching and talking to me as I worked. You would be amazed at the way I’d be hunched over with my raranga in hand and my legs wrapped around the kete like a

protective wall. I'd be holding a conversation with you or we'd be watching TV while I wove. Most times you'd mirimiri my back or neck after a day of raranga.

This reminds me of the putiputi that we made together on one of my trips back home to do rangahau. I'd come round to your whare to harvest from the whānau pā harakeke, and while I was preparing my whenu for another kupenga kete you asked me to teach you how to make a putiputi. I stopped my prep work and I quickly did a hapine of a couple of rau. Sitting you down in your chair outside, putting the prepared rau in your hands, we were ready to weave. We were working away on our one up-one down, under-over, under-over pattern, pulling every second strip back with our fingers. You found it hard to get both hands working, holding the tension and growing the weave. Making putiputi is an automated process for my fingers, moving smoothly like a machine with pistons firing, having made hundreds of them the actions tend to become second nature. But persevering with the weave and techniques of folding, turning, and twisting, you got to the end and I showed you how to tie it off. I wove a collection of putiputi for your vase and I would often see you admire them.

I asked you once about what you remembered of your mother, nanny Phyllis, and the weaving you did with her or saw her doing. You shared your memories of her time in the Uhengaparaoa weaving group, many of the members Māori women from Ōpōtiki who were related in some way. You told stories of how she would spend days with the other kairaranga working on many different projects up and down the coast, as far up as Te Kaha. She would always be travelling to weave or help weavers to finish projects. You told how Nan was methodical in her making of the wine bottle holders commissioned by NZ wine through the Uhengaparaoa weaving cooperative. I imagined her making wine bottle holders and likened it to how I felt about making putiputi with you - the process etched into the tendons in her fingers that the movements felt like they led themselves. I wonder if you saw her in me?

You'd listen to me talking about weaving and explaining why we do this, why we do that. It was so free and easy to talk to you about weaving. Once you'd had enough, you'd simply get up and go for a nap, or you'd tell me it was time to go visiting and I could stay or come along. Sharing the weaving of whakapapa with you was one of the greatest gifts you could leave with me. I hope you know that I'll keep what knowledge you imparted safe and I'll continue to add to the kōrero for future generations to know you as the special and fearless aunty you were.

You are forever in my heart,

Selena

Image 10: Kete takirua woven for our Māmā Doris, Mangaroa, 2021

Dear Mum

It's springtime, and I'm sitting at my table looking out the window of my whare at the harakeke plants that are thriving, lined-up entwining, weaving naturally across each other. I thought it was an ideal time to give thanks for the flourishing journey we have shared through weaving.

I am penning letters to some of the wāhine in my life who have influenced me and my many lessons about raranga, and I remember the stories you told me of your māmā, Nanny Phyllis and her weaving journey.

Nanny Phyllis was the eternal ākonga, always learner and teacher, of weaving, creating, crafting, mastering, and then sharing her gift with others. These stories sparked the pūmanawa inside me, the inquisitive and ever-searching goal to connect with her and all our other gifted weavers through time. I had to know more about the wāhine in our whānau, I needed to know more about the gifts I had inherited, our rich weaving history and all that our mana wahine tupuna continue to teach us.

I've been thinking about the story you told me of when Nanny Phyllis began her journey in Te Whare Pora, the house of weaving. "Your Nan was taught all the weaving crafts by her cousin Tini, from Ngati Awa". It was wonderful how you wove our whakapapa into the story- that Nan and her cousin Tini were craftswomen of both the physical and spiritual realms of weaving. As Nan learnt to weave whāriki, kete, tukutuku, and tāniko, she also learnt of the responsibility to maintain the knowledge of her hapū Ngati Hokopū ki Te Whare o Toroa.

Māmā, remember when I had to check in with you and ask what our marae was in Whakatāne as I couldn't find Wairaka Marae? How we laughed about that and how you had always known it as the marae down by the Whakatāne Heads? I can imagine that this was not an easy admission, as so many of our whānau had been displaced, but in sharing these stories we can revive our whakapapa of what I now know to be Ngati Hokopū marae and that Wairaka is the whare.

We shared quite a few firsts in our kōrero of whakapapa, paying homage to Nanny Phyllis as eternal ākonga. I learnt of our Stewart whakapapa, and how your nanny Eliza Webb (nee Stewart), was from Whakatāne and how this was her whenu of harakeke we were weaving together, threading, pulling the strands tighter and stronger with each conversation.

This letter and these photos serve as part of our raranga journey together, and what I hope to pass on for my children and future mokopuna. Our beautiful tupuna wāhine, Liza and Helena, the women whose mātauranga I now share with my children, as we collect and harvest harakeke. Your nanny Liza and great grandmother Helena were great friends and entrepreneurs, innovators with their hands as tools. They were dressmakers, lace-makers, kakahu weavers and raranga masters. Trading their knowledge and skills through making tāonga, to be cherished through the generations - their hands like mine with strips of history folded over through time.

Māmā, it's so exciting to share this kōrero with you to show you my appreciation and learnings over the years! During my research I've learnt of how weavers were revered for their contributions to their whānau, hapū, and iwi and how valuable they were to the wealth and sustainability of their people. Their taonga and creations were traded or used to show prestige and mana of a hapū, and whānau. I appreciate this mātauranga now even more so, when I create with my hands, I can feel the ways in which I am contributing to the wealth and wellbeing of my whānau. Whilst I learn of the past, I love that I can share in these memories with you Māmā, as I add in my whenu now. Weaving our whakapapa through raranga reinforces so many connections to my tupuna in these pictures, connections I am now understanding as being the grounding in our whānau, hapū and iwi mātauranga.

Māmā, I found this article of Nan while she was a part of Uhengaparaoa Māori Art Forms Co-operative Society Ltd. How cool is that! Do you remember this weaving group and the wine bottle holders they used to weave? There are still so many questions to ask, to continue the weaving of whakapapa and raranga!

Uhengaparaoa Maori Art Forms Co-operative Society Ltd.

carving are being produced and selling well. All goods produced by the Co-operative are Uhengaparaoa, a very beautiful, high-ranking Maori maiden of the Whakatohea people, who in her time brought about a resurgence of Maori arts and crafts, was the name chosen for the Maori Art Forms Co-operative—a significant name for a significant development of the Maori people.

In May 1967 Alex Upham, a post primary teacher of Opotiki, heard the following words from a speech given by Dr W. B. Sutch. 'There is a very definite need for high quality art forms for the souvenir trade, and immediate steps should be taken to ensure that these should be available. Many so-called 'Maori' souvenirs sold to the tourist in this country at the present time are of poor quality and certainly they can lay no claim to authenticity.'

In June, Alex Upham passed to his wife Betty, and a friend Betty Te Maipi, the aims and objectives for a co-operative to produce authentic Maori art forms, and said, 'I think you should do this. It will ensure that the Maori people keep their arts and crafts alive, and that they shall reap the benefit.' This was the beginning.

Government Departments were informed of what was being done and their encouragement and moral support was received. By October the prospectus was ready, and sent out to 1,500 people. Premises in Church Street, Opotiki, were rented, and so on 1 November, 1967, the Uhengaparaoa Maori Art Forms Co-operative Society Limited began operations, Betty Upham being Chairman, and Betty Te Maipi Secretary to the Board of twelve Directors, two thirds of whom are Maori. Three people were working on the premises, others working in their homes, and supplying their products to

the Co-operative. Shares were coming in—now shareholders number nearly 80, and there are ten people working on the premises.

Shares are one dollar, the minimum holding being five, the maximum six hundred, but whatever the holding each member has only one vote. This ensures that the Co-operative cannot be taken over by any person or group of people.

The Co-operative approached a New Zealand wine producing company, to see if they would be interested in a flax bottle-holder for their wine, if one could be produced. Their immediate answer was 'Yes please!' A holder was produced, the very first in New Zealand, thanks to Mrs Taiaro Emery of Omaramutu. These holders have proved very popular, and are helping the promotion of New Zealand wines. Supplying the demand for these bottle holders keeps four people busy weaving them.

Some very fine ketes, taniko weaving and

Busy making the flax bottle-holders.

There she is, Nanny Phyllis, first on the left, smiling the smile I see when I look at you Māmā. Please let me know, do you take comfort in knowing you can do the things she did? Do you craft when you're missing her or when you need to feel that connection to her again?

I want to let you know how special it was when you and Aunty Dyan came to stay at Labour weekend, and Lynette came too. We had our first wānanga to learn tāniko with you, your two daughters and sister learning together, weaving with words and string. Here we are, sitting together, filling the lounge with stories and laughter, our tāniko holding and collecting the aroha. Look at us with all our materials and tools spread out, me with my good old weaving tin that's been with me since I learnt to weave. Now we set ourselves a new challenge, to continue with our intentions to maintain and nurture our shared mātauranga Māori, our taonga tuku iho within our Ngāti Hōkōpū whakapapa.

Māmā, I am so grateful that I inherited this taonga, this gift of weaving in the physical and spiritual realms. Thank you for your mastery, your sharing of your gifts and the memories of your Māmā, our Nanny Phyllis. I know that through your intimate relationship with Nanny Phyllis, you learnt all she had to teach. My greatest hope is that one day my children will be able to retell these very stories and know that the reason why and how to weave is because of their connection to their tupuna, their nannies and māmā, who were all gifted the love of weaving.

Aroha nui,

Tō tamāhine, Selena

Image 13: Kete takitahi, takirua, woven for Miah, Mangaroa, 2021

Dear Miah

You may not know the great parts you played as the rito, the one who centred my weaving world, so these stories I recall for you as your māmā, your awhi rito. Many of the lessons I learnt in the pā harakeke were with you, Miah-moo. Some of the most treasured memories were of taking you, my girl, out to harvest harakeke with me and the stories we'd share.

Going to collect harakeke was always an adventure for us, the two of us heading out to do our work, our missions, to share in the taiao. We would get ourselves ready with all the necessary tools and snacks to spend a good amount of time in the pā harakeke. From the age of two you were an avid learner with heaps of natural curiosity, you would be right beside me watching and listening to the sounds of the pā.

When we'd arrive at the carpark and find our spot, I would worry about finding a safe place to park but you were always eager for me to park by the pond so you could see the birds and play. Despite your size and age, I always felt safe in the pā harakeke with you Miah, you were my piwakawaka, darting around the pā, watching, alert, and embracing the taiao. I felt safe taking you to this special place and sharing the taiao with you.

When it was time to head down to the pā you knew exactly the path we needed to take to get to the good harakeke bushes. Like piwakawaka, you were always eager to flit off ahead and lead the way, off you'd go, enjoying the freedom of being outside and at times you'd find the spot to harvest. Each time we entered the pā, we learnt something new, whether it was looking out for recent cut marks and avoiding those bushes or learning how to count clusters. You'd move along the path counting the tīpuna in each harakeke whānau cluster to see how many generations we could cut.

I marveled at how much you instinctively knew, you understood from a young age the language of harakeke, of harvesting and caring for our taiao. Each story I'd tell you'd retain- recalling them with each trip we'd make. There was always one thing I'd remind you: why we harvest the harakeke not just for weaving but for the health of the plant, and how important it is to take the tīpuna (the outer strands) and to leave the rito and awhi rito to continue growing. This is when you knew that the harakeke plant was itself

a whānau. Understanding that we weave with the tīpuna rau because they are ready to be used in a different way. When we would clear the pā harakeke you understood that the tīpuna rau would eventually brown off and die so instead of watching that happen we would harvest them and turn them into treasures, in a different form.

You were always listening, always asking questions, and engaging in discussion with me. This is where treasured learning happened for you, and I. Much like the harakeke plant we were the rito and the awhi rito - sharing and exchanging our knowledge and understandings, weaving new knowledge together.

Once we found our spot to harvest, you'd look up at me with your big brown eyes seeking confirmation that we'd found the right spot. You then knew it was time to do our karakia as an offering of gratitude to Papatūānuku, an acknowledgement to the taiao and asking for the universe to guide our hands in collecting and harvesting. Over time you could recognise the changes in the pā harakeke and knew that when the kōrari were in bloom, the harakeke needed to rest, and we didn't harvest from those plants. You loved the colours of the kōrari and watching the tūi swoop between bushes. Like the chatty piwakawaka, I would hear you telling them not to fight even back then you understand what it was like to be a kaitiaki (guardian) of the taiao. We spoke of how we need the tūi as they drink the nectar and spread the harakeke seeds, you'd laugh when I'd tell you how they spread the seed in their teko.

On one trip, I spoke of the lesson of why we leave the kōrari to grow. I remember this day as I showed you how this creates new whānau clusters, emphasising that this is how the harakeke plant multiplies, it splits in two from the central shoot from the rito and forms two new whānau clusters. Miah, this is the way nature shows us whakapapa and regeneration of whakapapa. Now that you are grown, I hope that there are a lot more lessons about whakapapa that we can share - as the new shoots emerge in your own whānau.

When there were other visitors to the pā harakeke you'd alert me that there were people coming, keeping your watchful gaze. You'd tell me which part of the pā they were going to and how many people there were. Like nosey piwakawaka you would chitter chatter with the other visitors and weavers coming to the pā, asking them what they're doing, if they can weave like your mum and, sometimes, you'd check to see if they knew what they were doing cos your mum could help them. You were always on guard, clearly this taiao was yours but you also knew to be cautious and report back to mum.

There were some really practical lessons learnt during our adventures, like how to run your hand down the rau and gently pull it outwards. I would ask you, "*Why do we cut the harakeke like this, bub?*" and you'd say to me "*so the rain can't kill the plants*". A simple and true explanation. We cut the harakeke by pulling it to angling it away from the central shoot and cutting away from the plant. It's important to take your hand down as far as you can go before cutting as the rau continues to grow, naturally decomposing and eventually returning to the whenua.

I would speak to you about the energy the harakeke puts into growing. For every rau that isn't cut properly we needed to help the harakeke plant by removing as much waste as possible. Tending the harakeke is a job for all weavers who treasure the taonga and understand that its preservation comes in the way we meet its needs and not just taking what we want. These are hard lessons, ones we don't often understand until we are grown - much like you are now.

I miss these moments that we shared and the ways in which our growth and understanding of the taiao would overlap, cross and weave like the harakeke - we were at peace with our piece of the world. Casting my mind back 18 years to recall our adventures in the pā harakeke has shown me how much has changed for both you and me. For myself, I don't go into the pā alone anymore or with my little piwakawaka because you're all grown up now and living in a different city. I have a pā harakeke at home and tend to that regularly. It is in the same paddocks that I share alongside the animals and your siblings. I'm teaching them the same things that I taught you Miah but at times I reflect on what is missing from these teachings.

We had a tikanga, you and I, our rules we followed and our practices that took care of us during our time in the pā harakeke. We took what we needed and came back regularly rather than taking too much and not being able to use it all. I remember fondly when we were done harvesting together, we would look around the pā harakeke and you'd ask me, "Mum, what are you going to make today?"

Sometimes that was easy to answer and at other times I would have to sit and think about what I was going to make with our harvest. One thing I did know was that the journey we took always came with new lessons and learning and for that I am forever grateful to my piwakawaka.

I look forward to many more lessons and memories in the pā harakeke with you Miah.

Aroha nui,

Māmā

Image 15: Kete takitahi woven by Taylor, Mangaroa, 2021

Dear Taylor

Together we've been weaving flowers for quite a few years and you've always had an eye for detail and the intricacies of weaving. So, I'm going to take this opportunity to remind you of the time we wove kono together. As usual we started this process in the pā harakeke outside our home. I remember it was a fine day, one fit for weaving. I asked you if you wanted to weave with me and make some baskets. Your desire and eagerness led us through the pā harakeke and right up until we did our karakia, asking for guidance of our hands to take only what we needed for our lesson. From here you worked your way through the harakeke plant, selecting your rau and helping me harvest and clear the overgrowth from around the bushes. When we'd cut enough rau we took them and spread the harakeke out on the grass.

You asked me why we were doing this and were surprised when I said it was to give the bugs time to jump off the rau. It also made you squirm a bit to know just how many bugs lived in the pā harakeke too. Leaving you to spread the rau out in the sun I went inside to grab us some towels, you asked again, what are those for? You always had an inquisitive look on your face, just as I'm told I get when I'm considering the meaning or reason for something. You gave me the chance to slow down and explain things to you at each step, always questioning and wondering. It was nice to relay and impart the process that has become second nature to me - it was an opportunity to retell the story.

I would proceed to tell you that these towels are for wiping down each rau. The look on your face was priceless, as your eyes shifted from the harakeke to me, then back to the harakeke. I have always admired your creativity and your love to try new things, but the process of tidying up the mess part of the journey never appealed to you. You make me laugh as I remember all the times you wanted to weave, bake, cook, sew, or paint. The excitement in your eyes always made me happy.

We kept at it because there was so much still to learn. I picked up a rau and showed you how to inspect it, what you should be looking for and how to gauge how much can be used for weaving. Because of your sharp skills, your eye for detail and your curiosity, I could share all the ways in which you could connect with the rau. I showed you how to hold each rau in your hands and turn it round and round. Showing you what to look out for such as the imperfections of brown spots - explaining those to be a disease that harakeke is susceptible to, a fungal infection that weakens the harakeke. We talked about the pretty patterns these imperfections make.

We talked about the difference between diseases in the harakeke and bugs attacking. In true Taylor-style, with interest you asked *what kind of bugs?* So, I showed you a rau that had what looked like holes in them, little circular voids. Little holes made in the underside of the rau are the work of the widower caterpillar. That's when I told you about the notcher caterpillar, and how he chews the edges of the rau. You looked at the harakeke plants and you were trying to find these caterpillars, until I explained to you that they only come out at night time to eat, we hardly ever see them and getting rid of them is quite the mission. Your wide eyes caught in the action of science at play - your desire to know more edged me further on to the topic of bugs and amphibians

as I shared with you about the time I was harvesting near a swamp and I was nose deep in the harakeke bush when a frog jumped up the rau and gave me a hua of a fright.

It was the first time I'd seen a frog in the pā harakeke and now, I see them all the time when I harvest near water. I can recognise their teko just as I can recognise the teko of snails, and other bugs. I told you about the time I was harvesting in Taita, a pā harakeke not close to water and I realised the rau were covered in weevils. I hadn't seen such an infestation before and when I got home, I looked up what kind of bug it was. This is when I learnt that these bugs were called the mealy bugs, and could be wiped off easily. They didn't appear to affect the structure of the plant like the caterpillar, but on learning more about this bug it was clear that an infestation was detrimental to the plant's health. We both keep a keen eye out for these bugs.

As we sunk into the ecosystem of the harakeke, I took the opportunity to tell you more about what can hinder a harakeke plant from growing big and strong. I told you about the scale insect and how it leaves behind a white substance on the underside of the rau. Depending on the severity of the infestation you can sometimes still use affected rau to weave with. They just required some care and cleaning.

The last thing I talked to you about was the yellowing of the rau, and how we don't see this in our pā harakeke for a few reasons. We regularly harvest from our pā harakeke and we would pick up on any changes in the plant. We have companion planting in areas where bugs are more prolific, and we also use an apple cider vinegar and water mix around the plants to keep bugs that carry diseases away. I told you about the seriousness of this disease and how it gets into the plants and causes them to die off slowly. There isn't much that you can do about some of the infestations in harakeke other than to dig the whole plant up and remove it, to prevent it from affecting the rest of the plants around it.

You asked me if I'd ever had to pull out the whole whānau of harakeke because of bugs and disease, and I'm glad to say I haven't - it's not an experience I ever wish to have but I could understand why it may need to be done. However difficult, this story shows that if we ever needed to remove a whole whānau, I would for the preservation of our pā harakeke and all the other plant life in our taiao that could be affected. This lesson can be transferred to life in general, where separation, although difficult, sometimes needs to be done. This is one of the beauties of the harakeke plant - it stands as a metaphor for how we can be affected by our surroundings and how we can support ourselves through active care and support for our growth.

I watched you that day, thinking hard about what I was telling you. I knew you were thinking hard because the creases in your forehead were prominent and you were working the rau in your hands methodically wiping and inspecting your work. You more than likely will carry this trait with you through life - inspecting, investigating, led by your intrigue - you are a brilliant child!

Once we'd worked through our harakeke and made our piles of clean rau, we started on the stripping and sizing. You started by watching me prepare a rau: I would take the rau and fold it in half, then use my thumb and pierce the outer edge and spine. My

hands moved quickly as I was talking. I noticed your hands were moving, imitating mine. I was reminding you to watch out for the muka as you slide your hands up the rau to strip away the outer edges and spine, urging you to be careful that you don't cut your hands as harakeke can be unforgiving and slice your fingers like a paper cut, as deep and as sharp. Again, you were concentrating and processing the actions and the words, I could see it ticking over in your mind. You would smile as I say my famous saying "*your hands are your tools so look after them*".

You got me talking about my many muka cuts and what were the worst ones as we worked. I told you about the time I was working with some really thick harakeke, it had lots of muka in it and we'd chosen it to make some tātua for your Auntie Lynette's secondary school kapa haka group. I was working away alongside my good friend Mike, chatting away and working at pace when I felt the muka slicing my index finger. It was a deep cut, perfect and clean. It needed butterfly strips and I had to learn to weave with one less finger. I showed you how I had to hold my hands. Remembering as I'm telling you that it taught me how to hold harakeke better because it took two of my fingers out of commission. To get my rhythm and balance in the ara I had to stop using both index fingers.

We both set about our work, you with your bundle and me with mine, sitting side by side as we worked to strip the edges and size with our haehae. You learnt about the haehae tool when you were little and how we use it. Our haehae are made from your Koro Bob's old sheep shearing combs, and I've had them for nearly 20 years. They are still in action, still the same shape and while some are more worn, bent or slightly broken, they still do their job. They remind me of your koro and the hard work he used them for. These things all allowing for moments to step back in time, for telling you other stories as we weave. Stories of your koro, your nanny's and my adventures, all life lessons shared while preparing harakeke and weaving.

Like me and your Nanny, you work methodically, every rau you prepare is dealt with efficiently, but at the same time I watch your cast offs being left scattered all around you. You take such care in preparing but still have much to learn in being a tidy worker. That has never been a priority for you but hopefully through more guidance, care and stories we can shift to see what is to gain from a clear space. So, I showed you how to keep your area tidy and why, you listen but remind me that you like to do one tidy up at the end, we each have our way.

Once we were ready to weave, I showed you the kono and asked you how big you wanted to make your one. Showing me the size with your hands we then lay out the sized strips of harakeke until we got a width that you're happy with. As always there was a mixture of excitement, concentration, and determination on your face.

We worked in unison, side by side, creating our criss-cross with two strips of harakeke, I showed you how to weave in each strip to make your foundation, overlapping, bending every second strip back, placing a new strip down and repeating this until all your strips are woven into a mat. We did a quick check of our work, tightening up the strips and securing the corners. Then it was time to show you how to make a corner. I told you to come and stand behind me so you could watch my hands, to see how I was sitting and what position was best for this work. I explained how to use your whole hand to manipulate the strips to bend in opposite directions, it's not easy to do corners and it took you a few attempts before you could see and feel the harakeke doing what you wanted it to do.

You watched me count the strips for my corner as you also counted your strips to make yours. I reminded you that the count is the same for both sides and if you get that wrong your kono will be wonky, your ara won't connect and you'll need to undo it. That's when you asked me to check your count. I smiled, what I now realise is my teacher smile and it's what I do when you're on the right track. We made a few adjustments and you were away again working independently. You've always had a consistent weaving tension, you learnt this from your putiputi making and my constant reminders, checks and making you undo things and do them again. At the time I'm sure you were frustrated but that has lent itself to the beautiful weave that you currently have.

As you set off to find your weaving ara, your pathway you can feel when you have successfully got there, the adulation beams across your face. I no longer need to help you with your raranga, you knew what you're doing from there. When it came time to tapiki you knew exactly what style you wanted, I showed you how to get a good clean finish and then you carried on casting off and trimming up your kono. You still have that kono today - when you first made it, we used it as a pen holder in the kitchen, then you took it for your paint brushes and now you use it for your makeup. The function of your kono changing as you grow.

Those are some of the lessons and understandings we shared when we made kono together Taylor - I hope you can look back on this letter and see yourself as the woman I see you to be: strong, capable and determined with the ability to extend and grow through your weaving journey. You are like me, and all your Nanny's.

Aroha mutunga kore,

Māmā

Image 18: Kete takirua, woven for Summer, Mangaroa, 2021

Dear Summer

Smiling and eager to play with harakeke - that's how I remember our first time doing raranga together. I prepared your rau for you and you sat beside me so you could see the angle I was holding the harakeke and how my knife was making easy work of softening the strips.

You've learnt heaps since our first putiputi making wananga together, you can now hapine your own rau. I love sitting beside you now listening to you talk through your process "*shiny side up, hold on tight, and off we go!*"

Your knife would judder along each strip as you practiced holding on tight and running the knife's blunt edge along to break up the fibres of the harakeke. Eventually you learnt that the strips should feel like a soft leather and that it should be easy to manoeuvre each piece into its natural woven slot of the takitahi weave. That's the weave you learnt first through weaving putiputi.

I would show you how to size your putiputi and pierce the rau with something sharp, using your eyes to judge a consistent size. This also took you a fair few tries before you got it right, but now, you can easily prepare a rau for a putiputi. Now, we sit side by side again and have our prepared rau in front of us, with six strips lying flat on the ground. We keep the stems quite long so we can cut them down to size at the end. It was hard for you to position your long legs and arms to fold your body into place, and at times I needed to physically move you into position. This made your sister giggle and roll her eyes, but she was always doing that to you, wasn't she?

The first instructions for takitahi were to start by pulling every second strip back towards you. It must have helped for you to say the process out loud as you worked through the steps, talking and reassuring yourself as you worked across the rau of six strips, pulling every second one back. I would then show you how to manipulate the strips and fold it across, then putting all the second strips back in place you could see the weave starting to happen.

We would repeat these steps until you only had one left. This is when it would get a bit tricky for you, as it usually does for learners, as harakeke wants to follow a natural path and will sit in a particular way. For putiputi we were making the harakeke follow an unnatural path, or ara, that was circular in form.

We sat with our rau in front of us and I would show you how to turn the rau in a counter clockwise direction. Taking the last strip up to meet the rest, you then would turn your whole rau by sliding it and repeat from the start, drawing every second strip back towards you, folding the strip over the top and so on and so forth. You would continue to repeat your steps out loud for each strip of harakeke, adding in a few of your own

descriptors to remind you to fold and crease the harakeke to make it sit properly. Round and round you went with your putiputi, a cyclical weave that you worked at until you reached the end of your rau.

At the end of your rau I would show you how to tapiki a putiputi. I remember having to do this quite a few times before you had the confidence to do it yourself. First tying off the strips in a knot, I showed you how to slide them through to the back and secure these strips to the stem. The look of accomplishment on your face the first time you made a putiputi still brings a smile to my face.

Another memory I want to make sure to share with you was of the day we were out in the pā harakeke, doing my usual spring cleaning of the overgrowth and winter leaves. As I was working away you were outside with me, Summy, and you were talking and asking me lots of questions about different plants. You laughed when my reply was, “I’m good with harakeke, and that’s about it.”

It was at this time that I took the opportunity to share with you some weaving tikanga like I have done with your sisters. As you watched me cutting, I explained to you that we only take the outer leaves and the three central shoots are left to continue growing. We spoke of the harakeke plant as a whanau, and by taking the outer leaves you are taking the grandparents and great grandparents and so on.

It was refreshing to hear your take on the process as I’d never really thought about it this way before, but you said that you weave with the grandparents, like you weave with your ancestors. It was such a simple yet powerful statement, and one that I don’t think you’ll come to appreciate until you’re an adult. The power of that statement still excites me every time I think about it. The idea that we weave with our grandparents is something that I want you to remember forever, it’s a lesson that is far reaching in its impact and relevance to our daily lives.

So, my Summy, I’ll wrap up this letter by reminding you of that kōrero we shared. Remember this, you are never alone in your journey and through weaving you can connect to an eternal thread of whakapapa.

Ka nui te aroha,

Māmā

3.2. Reflections

Throughout this body of research, I collected information and created knowledge by speaking with others, weaving with others, learning with others, teaching others, and sharing what I know. All these activities allowed me to connect to, and with, my whakapapa and the knowledge within it. I now know what it means to take knowledge and put it back into the world, to be part of the cycle to preserve, nurture and sustain mātauranga of weaving and the pā harakeke.

Embarking on this raranga rangahau provided the space to explore just how far-reaching our tīpuna kōrero really is, and to see it enacted each time we engage with the taiao, the pā harakeke and the activities of raranga. I now know what it means to take the knowledge given and put it back into the field. This is role of mana wāhine and kaupapa Māori theory: to locate and position our kōrero in terms of our understandings and aspirations as a people.

With this kōrero I have shown design researchers how wāhine preserve mātauranga and share it within their whānau. It is through whakapapa and storytelling that we come together to weave our own unique kōrero. Weaving alongside my daughters is the most important taonga I can give to them. We are not only doing raranga, we are creating and preserving it for ourselves and future generations.

When design research looks at raranga, it should understand its place within the traditional knowledge cycle and that it is central to all that is created. Design is also the essence of what weavers do. We test new materials to weave with and we push materials and techniques to their limits—although we don't necessarily see limitations but rather opportunities to try something else. In my whānau, we design and preserve, we make and remake until we perfect, and we teach.

Māori design is grounded in ako, the reciprocal relationship and expectation of teaching and learning from others. As a weaver I know I am constantly in a state of ako, my proficiency in weaving grows each time I engage with raranga. True mastery of weaving only comes from time and repetition, with careful guidance by our tīpuna, the pā harakeke and our tikanga.

Raranga is a way of retaining knowledge and tikanga. If we continue to engage with the artform, and continue to craft, then we will have this taonga for future generations to enjoy and use. The rangahau within these pages is an expression of my lived experiences, and if the knowledge shared looks and feels different, it is because it is different. It prioritises mana wahine and mātauranga, it places whānau at the centre, and shows design researchers how to explain Māori weaving—and how to be part of it.

We weave worlds with our tīpuna, taking from the past, doing in the present and preserving for the future. I am forever grateful to the wāhine who came before me, who laid the tūāpapa, who captured their mātauranga in the whenu and stored it for us to know and share today.

Bibliography

- Best, E. (1898). The art of the Whare Pora: notes on clothing of the ancient Maori, their knowledge of preparing, dyeing, and weaving various fibres, together with some account of dress and ornaments, and the ancient ceremonies and superstitions of the Whare Pora. *Auckland Institute*, 625-658.
- Brown, A. (2012). *Weaving a large container from New Zealand flax*. New Zealand: Browncraft Ltd.
- Durie, M. (2005). Indigenous knowledge within a global knowledge system. *Higher Education Policy*, 18, 301-312.
- Durie, M. (2017). Kaupapa Māori: indigenising New Zealand. In T. Hoskins, & A. Jones, *Critical Conversations in Kaupapa Māori* (pp. 1-10). Wellington: Huia Publishers.
- Gabel, K. (2005). Hine tū, hine ora. *Yearbook of New Zealand Jurisprudence*, 79-103.
- Harris, W., & Woodcock-Sharp, M. (2000). Extraction, content, strength, and extension of Phormium variety fibres prepared for traditional Māori weaving. *New Zealand Journal of Botany*, 38(3), 469-487.
- Henry, E., & Pene, H. (2001). Kaupapa Māori: locating indigenous ontology, epistemology and methodology in the academy. *Organization*, 8(2), 234-242.
- Higgins, R., & Meredith, P. (2011, October 10). *Te Mana o te Wāhine Māori*. Retrieved from Te Ara The Encyclopedia of New Zealand: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/te-mana-o-te-wahine-maori-women>
- Higgins, R., & Meredith, P. (2017, June 1). *Te mana o te wānihe - Māori women*. Retrieved from Te Ara The Encyclopedia of New Zealand: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/te-mana-o-te-wahine-maori-women>
- Hiroa, T. R. (1924). The evolution of Maori clothing. *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 33(1), 25-47.
- Ka'ai, T. (2002). 'Pewhairangi, Te Kumeroa Ngoingoi,' *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, first published in 2000, updatd January, 2002. Retrieved October 20, 2018, from Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5p25/pewhairangi-te-kumeroa-ngoingoi>
- Mead, H. (2003). *Tikanga Māori: Living by Māori values*. Wellington: Huia Publishers.
- Metge, J. (2015). *Tauira: Māori methods of learning and teaching*. Auckland: Auckland University Press.
- Mikaere, A. (2011). *Colonising Myths - Māori realities: He rukuruku whakaaro*. Wellington: Huia Publishers.
- Mikaere-Hall, A. (2017). Constructing research from an indigenous Kaupapa Maori perspective: An example of decolonising research. *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, 15(3).
- Ngarimu-Cameron (MNZM), R. H. (2019). Weaving the two cultures of Aotearoa/New Zealand together: from the art of making traditional off-loom

- garments to a contemporary practice of on-loom weaving. *Textile, Cloth and Culture*, 17(2), 158-167.
- Ngawaka, M. (2013). *Kete Whakairo plaiting flax for beginners*. Trafford Publishing.
- Ormond, A., Cram, F., & Carter, L. (2006). Researching our relations: reflections on ethics and marginalisation. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 2, 174-193.
- Paki-Titi, R. (1998). *Rangimārie: recollections of her life*. Wellington: Huia Publishers.
- Pendergrast, M. (2011). *Raranga Whakairo Māori Plaiting Patterns*. Auckland: Penguin Group (NZ).
- Pihama, L. (2001). Tihei Mauri Ora: Honouring our voices. Mana wahine as a kaupapa Māori theoretical framework. The University of Auckland.
- Pihama, L., Cram, F., & Walker, S. (2002). Creating methodological space: a literature review of Kaupapa Māori research. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 26, 30-43.
- Puketapu-Hetet, E. (2002). *Maori Weaving with Erenora Puketapu-Hetet*. Auckland, New Zealand: Pearson Education New Zealand Limited.
- Puketapu-Hetet, E. (2011, August 14). an interview with Erenora Puketapu-Hetet. (S. Gibson, Interviewer)
- Punch, K., & Oancea, A. (2014). *Introduction to research methods in education* (second ed.). London: Sage.
- Ralston, C. (1993). Māori women and the politics of tradition: what roles and power did, do, and should Māori women exercise? *The Contemporary Pacific*, 5(1), 23-44.
- Royal, T. (2012). Politics and knowledge: Kaupapa Māori and mātauranga Māori. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 47(2), 30-37.
- Simmonds, N. (2011). Mana wahine: Decolonising politics. *Womens' Studies Journal*, 25(2), 11-25.
- Smith, C. (2007). Straying beyond the boundaries of belief: Māori epistemologies inside the curriculum. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 32(1), 43-51.
- Smith, C., & Laing, R. (2011). What's in a name? The practice and politics of classifying Māori textiles. *Textile History*, 42(2), 220-238.
- Smith, G., Hoskins, T., & Jones, A. (2012). Interview: Kaupapa Māori: the dangers of domestication. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 47(2), 10-20.
- Smith, L. (1993). Getting out from down under: Māori women, education and the struggles for mana wahine. In M. Arnot, & K. Weiler, *Feminism and Social Justice in Education: International perspectives* (pp. 58-78). Great Britain: Burgess Science Press.
- Smith, L. (2012). *Decolonizing Methodologies* (second ed.). Dunedin: Otago University Press.
- Te Kanawa, K. (2008). Mai i te ao kōhatu - an art form derived from mātauranga Māori as a gift from the ancestors. *Te Kaharoa*, 1(1), 139-151.
- Tobin, B. (2014). *Indigenous Peoples, Customary Law and Human Rights - why living law matters* (first ed.). London: Routledge.

- Wehi, P. (2009). Indigenous ancestral sayings contribute to modern conservation partnerships: examples using *Phormium tenax*. *Ecological Applications*, 267-275.
- Williams, H. (2000). *Dictionary of the Māori Language* (7th ed.). Wellington: Legislation Direct.
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Canada: Fernwood Publishing.

List of Images

Image 1: Harakeke plant, www.teara.govt.nz/en/diagram/13162/harakeke-plant, 2021

Image 2: cutting flax in a community pā harakeke, Te Awakairangi, 2020

Image 3: Aunty Roka Ngarimu-Cameron, Hāwai marae, August 2018

Image 4: Me and Aunty Kath, Ōpōtiki, 2018

Image 5: Mothers and daughters teaching and learning weaving, Mangaroa, 2021

Image 6: Kete mātauranga, Mangaroa, 2021

Image 7: Kete Papakirango woven for Aunty Roka, Mangaroa, 2021

Image 8: Kete kupenga woven for Aunty Kath, Mangaroa, 2021

Image 9: Kateruri Gundry, great-great grandmother, date unknown

Image 10: Kete takirua woven for our Māmā Doris, Mangaroa, 2021

Image 11: Uhengaparaoa Māori Art Forms Co-operative Society Ltd., Nanny Phyllis (left), Ōpōtiki, 1968

Image 12: Nanny Phyllis and my brothers

Image 13: Kete takitahi, takirua, woven for Miah, Mangaroa, 2021

Image 14: Me and Miah, Wainuiomata, 2004

Image 15: Kete takitahi, woven by Taylor, Mangaroa, 2021

Image 16 Taylor's first konae, Mangaroa, 2019

Image 17: Taylor weaving konae, Mangaroa, 2021

Image 18: Kete takirua, woven for Summer, Mangaroa, 2021

Image 19: Summer weaving putiputi, Mangaroa, 2021

Image 20: Me and Summer weaving together, Mangaroa, 2021

Appendix A: Glossary of terms

ako	learning, lessons, teaching
Aotearoa	New Zealand, Land of the Long White Cloud
ara	pathway
Atua wahine	female goddess
awhi rito	support shoots, parent leaves of harakeke plant
haehae	sizing tool
haerenga	trip, journey
haponi	community
hapū	subtribe
haro	soften (the process of softening harakeke)
hinengaro	mind
iwi	tribe/tribal
kāinga	home
kairaranga	weaver
kaitiakitanga	guardian or guardianship
kakahu	cloak
kākara	fragrance, aroma
karakia	ritual blessings
kawa	customs
kete	bag
konae	small flat basket
kono	small square basket
kōrari	flower stem of the flax
kuta	Eleocharis sphacelata - a rush growing to about 1m wide
kūtai	Mussels
kupenga	net
maara kai	food garden
mahinga kete	bag making
mana	self-determination,
mana wahine	female self-determination, Māori female identity
manaaktianga	support
manuhiri	visitors
Māori	Indigenous people of Aotearoa
marae	complex of buildings around the marae
matakite	seer
mātauranga	knowledge, specifically Māori knowledge. Can also be written as mātauranga Māori.
mauri	vital essence
mihi	speech
moana	sea, ocean
Moemoeā	dreams, aspirations
muka	flax fibres

ngā	the (more than one thing)
nui	big, great in size
Ōpōtiki	a small town in the Eastern Bay of Plenty
Ōtepoti	Dunedin
pā harakeke	flax garden (as distinct from a maara that is a garden for food)
Pākehā	non-Maori, most often referring to Anglo settler cultures and their descendants
papakāinga	village, home base
Papatūānuku	Earth mother, earth
pirita	Supplejack
Pīwakawaka	Fantail
powhiri	a welcome ceremony on a marae
pūmanawa	creativity, uniqueness
putiputi	flower
raranga	weaving
rau	leaf or leaves
rito	central shoot of the harakeke plant
rourou	small flax woven food basket
taiao	environment, natural world
tamāhine	daughter
tangata whenua	local people
tapahi	cut
tapiki	cast off, turn in the strands of a piece of weaving (to finish it off)
tātua	belt
tauirā	student, learner, example
Te Ao Māori	Māori world
te whakanikoniko whare	dressings of the meeting house
Te Whare Pora	House of Weaving,
tikanga	protocol
tinana	body
Tīpuna	ancestors
tohunga raranga	master weaver
tūāpapa	platform
tukutuku	latticework
wahine/wāhine	female/females
waiata	song
wairua	spirit
wānanga	expert guided instruction requiring intense concentration and dedication to knowledge and ako.
whakaaro	thought, thinking
whakapapa	genealogy, lineage
whakatauaikī	proverb as spoken by a named person

whakataukī	proverb
whānau	family
whare	home, house
whare nui	meeting house (on a marae)
whāriki	mat or mats
whatu	plait, plaiting
whenu	strips of harakeke/flax
whenua	land