Chapter 5
Growing raukura
Brenda Soutar with Te Whānau o Mana Tamariki

He karakia whakatu i nga pou rārangi o nga purapura/tipu, mō te wā anō e whakaritea ai te māra hei whakatō kai.

Nā Te Wharehuia Milroy i homai
Nā Mana Tamariki te taki

Toko koi i te pō
Te pō nui
Te pō roa
Te pō uriuri
Te pō whāwhā
Te pō tē kitea
Te pō tē whāia
Ko te toko a Tai e nuku
O te atua i te pō
Tūturu ōwhiti whakamaua kia tina
Tina!
Hui e, tāiki e!

This karakia was gifted to Mana Tamariki by Professor Te Wharehuia Milroy. It is used to erect row markers in the garden and for planting. It is one example of how the knowledge held by the whānau of Mana Tamariki was deepened through our Centres of Innovation (COI) project. This knowledge will in time be imparted to the children, and intergenerational transmission of a Māori way of knowing and being will be in process.
Introduction

Te Kōhanga Reo o Mana Tamariki was established in late 1989. We aim to uphold the concept of mana tamariki, which makes the children the central focus of all activities in each learning environment and is defined as:

• “children’s status”
• “empowerment of children”
• “young peoples’ authority”.

Our declared objectives illuminate our core values:

• Mana Tamariki has a holistic view of human development.
• The only spiritual dimension the organisation promotes and upholds is one that is indigenous Māori.
• Mana Tamariki recognises that Māori with special needs also have a right to their ancestral language and culture and commits to provide for them.
• We aim to develop the students’ confidence, creativity, self-esteem, pride in being Māori and love of learning.
• Mana Tamariki aspires to standards of excellence for each learning environment and each individual child.

Mana Tamariki seeks to engage with Māori families to focus on the learning, growth and development of their children.

When we had been running for five years, we established a new primary school—a total immersion Māori language school—Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Mana Tamariki under Te Rūnanga nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa, which by 1998 extended into the wharekura, the secondary department.

Language revitalisation through intergenerational transmission

Between 1990 and 1995, we had worked closely with 30 families in which most of the parents only spoke English to their children. As a result of the strong partnerships we formed with our families in relation to their child’s commitment to the Māori language, the children who emerged from Mana Tamariki were fluent speakers of Māori. They were au fait with and settled in Māori cultural functions.

During those foundation years, we actively sought a greater understanding of sociolinguistics. We embraced key international theories, in particular the work of Joshua Fishman (1991) and Bernard Spolsky (1998), both of whom confirmed the whānau development model as essential—in other words, children and their families as active participants and leaders in the revitalisation of their language and culture.

In 1995, when Mana Tamariki introduced a policy for all new families that required “at least one parent to commit to speak only Māori (never English) to all the children enrolled in Mana Tamariki including their own”, we were the only kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori we knew that did so. The Māori language zone
that had once been confined to the kōhanga reo was suddenly expanded to include all the places the families journey during their daily routines.

Te Aho Matua

The founders of Kura Kaupapa Māori developed a guide for kura kaupapa Māori schools to follow to ensure the essence of the schools remained spiritually, culturally, linguistically, pedagogically and administratively Māori. It is called Te Aho Matua o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori (Mataira, 1987) and aligns with the tenets of early childhood philosophy and practice and Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996). Te Aho Matua is now recognised in law (The Education (Te Aho Matua) Amendment Act 1999), which kura kaupapa Māori are required to operate in accordance with. At Mana Tamariki, Te Aho Matua is also embraced by our kōhanga reo.

Te Korowai o Te Aho Matua is the name of our new building, and it is linked to the guiding philosophical documents of both the kōhanga reo movement—Te Korowai (Te Poari Matua o ngā Kōhanga Reo, 1992), and the kura kaupapa Māori movement—Te Aho Matua. We combined the names to reflect our belonging to both approaches. Our architects were able to design the roof to symbolise a korowai (cloak) wrapping over the building. In our kōhanga reo, Te Whāriki is also central to our pedagogical approach.

The Mana Tamariki COI research project

Mana Tamariki was selected in Round Four of the Ministry of Education’s COI programme, which was to run for the calendar years 2008–10. As part of the government’s 2009 budget, a decision was made to terminate the COI programme at 30 June 2009. This meant our research project, and those of the other two centres in our round, was ended mid-stream. The Mana Tamariki whānau wish to make it clear that this article is about one part of our research that needs to be considered in the full context of a process cut short.

Ngā Pou Turuturu

The expertise Professors Margaret Carr and Te Wharehuia Milroy brought to our project has been invaluable. Our research associates were given the title of Pou Turuturu by Mana Tamariki, a name we selected to reflect their role. Turuturu are stakes used by weavers to hang garments, freeing the weaver’s hands and thus enabling her or him to concentrate on the work. In this analogy, the Mana Tamariki whānau is the weaver, the research is the garment and the two Pou Turuturu are the stakes upon which the weaving hangs until it is complete, at which point the turuturu are released.

Margaret Carr was Co-director of the Early Childhood Curriculum Development Project that developed Te Whāriki and was Co-director of the early childhood exemplar project, Kei Tua o te Pae: Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars (Ministry of Education, 2004). Margaret’s institution is the University of Waikato. Mana Tamariki benefits from Margaret’s previous experience in the COI programme.

Te Wharehuia Milroy was formerly a commissioner for Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori—the Māori Language Commission—and a Professor in the Māori Studies Department at the University of Waikato. He is a Tūhoe kaumatua and has produced written works on a wide range of traditional and contemporary Māori issues. Wharehuia is a current member of the Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust, the Waitangi Tribunal, the Māori Reference Group for the Tertiary Education Commission, and is an adviser to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Ministry of Justice. He is a teacher for Te Panekiretanga o te Reo language programme for advanced students.
Te tamaiti hei raukura

The Mana Tamariki COI project has been built on the notion of *te tamaiti hei raukura*—the child as a high achiever who exemplifies the hopes and aspirations of their people. This is the ultimate goal of Te Aho Matua.

**Our research question**

Our research question asked “How can we strengthen the reciprocal relationships between te reo, children as raukura, whānau and Paki Ako?” These relationships are shown in Figure 1. *Paki Ako* is a term that explains the method we use to document and assess learning in our kōhanga reo. Mana Tamariki developed Paki Ako as our adaptation of Learning Stories (Carr, 1991).

**The garden project**

The Mana Tamariki vegetable garden project is one pathway by which we have been exploring the research question.

Our limited knowledge of traditional rituals and practices regarding vegetable gardens meant learning to consult the Māori planting calendar, which was a new challenge. We are indebted to Te Wharehuia Milroy for his guidance.

We forged a new relationship with Dr Nick Roskruge, lecturer in Māori resource development and horticulture with the College of Sciences at Massey University. Our kura had worked with Nick more than seven years ago when the school had a garden project at their site. However, the kōhanga was not involved in that project. Nick invited the staff to view the Massey gardens and collect crops for the Mana Tamariki project. This led to the registration of Mana Tamariki with Tahuri Whenua Incorporated Society, the National Māori Vegetable Growers Collective representing Māori interests in the horticulture sector. Tahuri Whenua strives to ensure Māori have access to relevant resources in the horticulture industry. Several schools are members of Tahuri Whenua and have developed robust garden projects as a result.

Guided by Te Wharehuia Milroy, the Mana Tamariki whānau performed a predawn ceremony in June 2008 to spiritually prepare the area set aside for our vegetable garden. The ceremony concluded with a whānau breakfast. Several aspects of the ceremony contributed to whānau development:

- Parents, staff and children acquired new learning through wānanga with Te Wharehuia Milroy, tribal wānanga and research including oral accounts from individuals, reading and discussion.
- Te Wharehuia gifted karakia text to Mana Tamariki, which led to the building of knowledge amongst the Rangitāne (local...
iwi) members responsible for carrying out the karakia at the ceremony. This group of four—three parents/grandparents and one teacher—met together to learn and create a beat/tune to carry the words of the karakia.

- Collectively turning the soil was a unifying task that enabled all to partake.
- Everyone has felt part of the garden developments since.

The following further explanation of the pure ceremony was provided by to us by Te Wharehuia Milroy:

A very basic reason for conducting rituals which are associated with planting of seeds or plants in the bosom of Papatūānuku is to maintain and sustain the management of the necessary balance between nature and cultural activities. This management is sustained because there is a Māori belief Māori are 'of the soil' and their creation stories bear this point out. Furthermore, and again according to these beliefs, humans can only contribute to the health and welfare of their communities, when they are able to understand how to manage the dictates of nature with the dictates of culture. It was practice to conduct rituals in activities of this sort so that the required balance was achieved between human needs and nature's own requirements. The critical element in this balance is having an understanding of the whakapapa between humans and Papatūānuku (of the soil), Tāwhirimātea (of the weather), Tūmatawenga (of human endeavour) and of Ranginui (of celestial influences, moon, stars). There are other members of this kindred structure that need not be mentioned here, suffice to use just these examples as important agents in the influences that essentially affect human life. Important to mention that concomitant with this is for the people to have a belief in the taha wairua, the spiritual demesne in order for the impulse of life to be actuated. (Personal communication, 11 September 2008; italics are Milroy's)

In August 2008, our maara tapu (sacred garden) was planted before dawn. Te Wharehuia Milroy explained to us that this ritual was to set up a rāhui (when a place is deemed out of bounds for a certain period of time) state. This was followed by what is called Te Huamata. This is a ritual wherein kōpuru (seedlings/seeds—seed potatoes in this case) were taken
by the whānau to the garden and the karakia was conducted. Afterwards, the rāhui was set up so that no person entered or disturbed it until the pure ceremony, when karakia were again used to purify the garden and remove its restrictive ritual impediments. The first fruits were harvested in March 2009 and were eaten in “a dedicatory feast to Papatūānuku, Ranginui, and other instruments of influence in the religious life of the Māori” (Milroy, personal communication, 11 September 2008).

One of our parents experimented with a frost cover using traditional materials. This was part of a commitment we made to try always to use natural and/or traditional methods in the garden. The fence surrounding the maara tapu was built by one of our parents from locally sourced manuka. The fence was built without nails, each paling bound in place with natural rope.

In the second and now final stage of our term as a COI we began to document the children’s interaction with the garden through a lens that zoomed in on te reo. We have been exploring through the children’s conversations how it is that the intergenerational transmission of language and cultural practices regarding the garden is taking place.

In closing

The Mana Tamariki whānau, children, staff and parents embarked on a steep learning curve when we began the garden project. Almost everything was new to many of us but so familiar in other ways. Although at times we struggled to take up the challenges gently laid by Te Wharehuia, our commitment was sincere and this ensured we maintained focus on the goal. We were heartened when Te Wharehuia Milroy wrote:

*Mana Tamariki* has committed wholeheartedly to submitting itself to a return to principles of a past life. Not the least in this commitment has been, and is, firstly its ability to start from limited knowledge of that past, and allow that to develop into a gathering belief in who it is. Secondly, there are more than favourable prospects that Te Maara will be an enduring factor in developing a sense of sharing in collective tasks because that community has grown within itself, that aspect of its Māori moral philosophy. Thirdly, and most importantly, the tamariki will be the inheritors of this knowledge and wisdom. When they have learnt to manage a balance between nature’s imperatives and what humans do to turn natural products into matters of cultural activities (harvesting, cooking, eating all other rituals that require food), it is my belief that as they are ‘*of the soil*’ (or the water for that matter) there will be a natural progression by them to reestablishing those practices and moral values of the past into theirs and their own children’s lives.

(Personal communication, 11 September 2008)

Our COI journey was a commitment undertaken by the whole Mana Tamariki whānau. How we enable ourselves as a whānau to continue to explore this research question is a challenge without the support and assistance of the COI research programme. Part of our role, though, as advocates for children and their whānau is to take up such challenges, and so we move forward having been strengthened by our experience as a COI.

References


