

# BEING MÄORI IN THE CONTEXT OF POVERTY, PROSPERITY AND PROGRESS

“He reo no Io, i rāngona whitikia te moana,  
Tera te whenua kua tohia mo koutou kei te uru,  
Ko Io Taketake hei whetu mo te pō,  
Ko Tangaroa hei arahi mai i runga o  
Te Moananui-ā-kiwa;  
Te hoe nuku roa”

## 1.0 FACT

Māori are over represented in the lower socio-economic profile and perform poorer in comparison to non-Māori in a range of educational, health and income indicators. However being Māori is more than a socio-economic profile.

## 2.0 LATEST GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The “closing the gaps” strategy is the latest government lead initiative intended to improve Māori socio-economic disparity. The focus is on finding Māori solutions to Māori problems – building on the by Māori for Māori philosophy. This initiative has not been without its critics. There are commentators that have labeled this strategy as a form of separatism and others who questioning whether it can truly make a difference. Simon Chappel’s paper “Māori socio-economic disparity” argued that although there are significant socio-economic gaps, Māori are better off today than at any time other time. He argues that socio-economic disparity is not just a Māori or an ethnic issue and therefore resources should be distributed to the needy and disadvantaged rather than only to Māori as suggested by the “closing the gaps” strategy.

## 3.0 MÄORI DEVELOPMENT:

Māori development is a vehicle for prosperity and progress. Māori development is generally focused in five broad areas: development in a cultural, social, and economic context plus the development of political autonomy and natural resources. The goals are to achieve economic self-sufficiency, cultural affirmation, social well being, environmental sustainability, self-determination and mutual beneficial partnership.

While Māori development can occur at the individual level it is more often focused at the group or collective level. Within a Māori context groups include the more contemporary urban Māori and pan-tribal organisations, and within more conventional societal structures there are the iwi, hapū, or whānau. It can also within a non-Māori context such as government departments, educational institutions and the church.

Tino rangatiratanga or autonomy is intrinsically linked to any discussion of Māori development. The desire to control ones destiny, to be in the decision-making role is often pivotal. Therefore political development is a priority.

### 3.1 Cultural Development

Cultural development involves cultural affirmation - maintaining and developing a cultural identity. It is necessary to provide opportunities for those interested to access and participate in cultural activities and cultural organisations such as the marae. Protection of taonga<sup>1</sup> is directly linked to cultural identity and well being, which contributes to both social and cultural development.<sup>2</sup> Without cultural identity positive Māori development is incomplete. ‘*There is not much point in an effective Māori organisation if it lacks a Māori heart.*’<sup>3</sup> The cultural uniqueness of Māori is determined by te reo Māori, by Māori cultural values, Māori knowledge, social structure and heritage. If these taonga are lost so is the unique character of the Māori people.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the preservation of taonga, knowledge and elements of Māori identity allows

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper the word taonga will be used in a generic manner to refer to Māori knowledge, te reo, Māori culture and heritage. Therefore taonga are all aspects of te ao Māori that are held in esteem by Māori.

<sup>2</sup> New Zealand Conservation Authority, 1997, *Finding common ground: He rapunga tahitanga. Summary: Māori customary use of native birds, plants and other traditional materials*, page 9.

<sup>3</sup> Durie, ET, 1994, ‘Keynote Address’, in Department of Māori Studies, Kia Pūmau Tonu.

<sup>4</sup> Greaves, T, 1996 ‘Chapter 2: Tribal rights’ in Brush, S and Stabinsky D(Eds) *Valuing local knowledge. Indigenous people and intellectual property rights*, Island Press, California.

the 'retention of a cultural identity and the maintenance of a way of life'.<sup>5</sup> The diversity or pluralistic nature of Māori society is an asset.

### 3.2 Social Development

The rights to participate in society, equal opportunities and a minimal standard of well being are goals of social development. These rights are affirmed by Article III of the Treaty of Waitangi and numerous United Nations Declarations. If there is a role for the state in Māori development it is to provide social parity for all New Zealanders.

Development of social resources such as human capital is a means of facilitating Māori advancement. Creating the capacity to participate and the means to be independent.

### 3.3 Economic Development

Economic development is essential to provide a platform for cultural, social and political development. Alienation of Māori from their ancestral land has had two major impacts on Māori society. Firstly it has deprived Māori of an economic base from which to develop and secondly it had destabilised traditional societal structures.

### 3.4 Political Autonomy

Māori development is linked to political autonomy. There is a desire to control ones destination, to make decisions and take responsibility for the paths that are chosen. Obtaining self-sufficiency by self-determination. Although this suggests independence it does not rule out development in partnership. Whether that be with the Crown or through the development of mutually beneficial relationships such as the Sealords arrangement.

### 3.5 Natural Resources

The development of natural resources originates from the Māori concepts of manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga. There is a responsibility to protect and preserve for future generations and a possibility of using natural resources as an economic base to facilitate further development.

## 4.0 RESEARCH AND MĀORI

Strategic Māori development is the key to maximising limited resources and skills. Information is essential for making informed decisions. Historically aggregated data sets based on statistical definitions of "being Māori" have been used to make inferences about Māori people. There are three major problems with this type of analysis. Firstly it explains Māori people in socio-economic terms and does not account for the range of circumstances, experience and aspirations of Māori or "to make provisions for links and relationships between culture, individual and group dynamics, change over time and socio-economic standings."<sup>6</sup> Secondly, it perpetuates the notion of Māori as a homologous group. Lastly the tendency to compare the performance of Māori against non-Māori has overshadowed what achievements that have occurred. For example despite lower participation rates and educational attainment than non-Māori there have been considerable achievements. Enrolments at both the early childhood and tertiary education level have increased.

According to Statistics New Zealand there have been an increase in Māori early childhood enrolments between 1986-1996. 18.9% of Māori children were enrolled and 46.3% of these children were enrolled at kohanga reo. As a comparison 21.6% were enrolled at kindergarten and 19.3% at childcare centers. Between the 1991-1996 period kohanga reo accounted for 51.3% of the growth in early childhood enrolments.<sup>7</sup>

During the 1986-1991 period the proportion with a tertiary qualification increased from 16.1% to 22.6%. This was a much greater increase than that seen in the non-Māori population that increased from 33.3% to 35.5%. Between 1991 and 1996 the number of Māori enrolled at tertiary education more than doubled. Ministry of Education data in 1998 also showed an increase in tertiary enrolments from the previous 5 years with 25602 Māori making up 11.9% of the total student population.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Durie, M.H, 1998, *Te Mana, Te Kawangatanga*.

<sup>6</sup> MH Durie, TE Black, IS Christensen, AE Durie, ED Fitzgerald, JT Taiapa, "Te Hoe Nuku Roa: A Māori identity measure," Journal of the Polynesian Society, Dec, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> New Zealand Statistics homepage.

<http://www.stats.govt.nz/domino/external/Web/nzstories.nsf/e127148b777b78de4c2567f90073c009/10ad9fefff8695284c256807001733ba?OpenDocument>

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of education homepage.

[http://www.minedu.govt.nz/web/document/document\\_page.cfm?id=3333&p=1046.1047.1051](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/web/document/document_page.cfm?id=3333&p=1046.1047.1051)

There have also been significant achievements in the area of well-being. While life expectancy for Māori has been much lower than non-Māori the gap has reduced considerably. A Māori female child born in 1951 could expect to live to an age of 56, a male child to the age of 54. A Māori child born in 1996 could expect to live to an age of 72, a male child to the age of 67. The gap between Māori and non-Māori have reduced from 15 to 7 years for females and 13 to 7 years for males.<sup>9</sup>

Sudden infant death syndrome rates for Māori dropped by 25% in 1997. According to Dr Pat Tuohy the Chief Advisor, Child and Youth Health, this “helps support the excellent work done by Māori and Pacific SIDS groups who have been working for many years to reduce SIDS in their communities”.<sup>10</sup>

Māori fertility rates are now almost level with non-Māori rates. This has been attributed to the change in economy, societal structures and the widespread use of contraception. Whether the closing of this gap is actually a benefit to Māori is debatable.

The number of Māori people in New Zealand has never been this high. In 1996 people of Māori descent made up 16% of the NZ population. Since the first New Zealand Census in 1856 the Māori population recovered from a low of 42113 people in 1896 to 524031 in 1996.

## 5.0 TE HOE NUKU ROA

The Te Hoe Nuku Roa project<sup>11</sup> is a longitudinal survey of Māori households that builds on the philosophy of Matatini Māori or diverse Māori realities. “*Māori individuals have a variety of cultural characteristics and live in a range of cultural and socio-economic realities.*”<sup>12</sup> The project explores the actual circumstances of Māori people, without presuming what a Māori person is.

It is a valuable source of information with the potential to contribute in areas of community development through to input into government policy. The data can be used to describe the actual circumstances of Māori so that development of policies and programmes can be better targeted at addressing Māori needs. Another use is the identification of trends for future planning. The integrity of the project lies in its Māori frameworks and the usefulness of the project in the first instance to the participants and the Māori community.

A range of social, economic and cultural factors and their impact on individuals, families and households are investigated. This includes current states, needs and aspirations of the participants relating to their identity, te ao Māori, ability and use of Māori language, their health, education, employment, income, housing, the household, and lifestyle activities.

The project incorporates a Māori relevant framework<sup>13</sup> to gauge personal and family development. It objectifies the context in which Māori families and individuals exist. It proposes an integrated and holistic approach to personal and family development with a simultaneous focus on cultural, social and economic dimensions. The longitudinal component offers an opportunity to chart the natural history of Māori individuals and families to assess the impact of policies and programmes to address their specific and general needs.

### 5.1 Findings from Te Hoe Nuku Roa

Data from the project supports the idea of diverse realities and with regard to individual identity has shown that “being Māori” is many things.

*“The relevance of so-called traditional values is not the same for all Māori, nor can it be assumed that all Māori will wish to define their ethnic identity according to classical constructs. At the same time, they will describe themselves as Māori and will reject any notion that they are “less Māori” than those who conform to a conventional image” – Durie 1995.*

#### Summary of findings:

Most participants identified as Māori

<sup>9</sup> New Zealand Statistics homepage.

<http://www.stats.govt.nz/domino/external/Web/nzstories.nsf/a969a4a9bd1f27ae4c2567f90073c00a/a721d094139951ca4c256808000b58f6?OpenDocument>

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Health homepage.

<http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/7004be0c19a98f8a4c25692e007bf833/872969e884c8aa4f4c2567930081d5c1?OpenDocument>

<sup>11</sup> for more detailed information visit our website at <http://www.tehoenukuroa.org.nz/>

<sup>12</sup> MH Durie, TE Black, IS Christensen, AE Durie, ED Fitzgerald, JT Taiapa, “*Te Hoe Nuku Roa: A Māori identity measure,*” Journal of the Polynesian Society, Dec, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> MH Durie, TE Black, IS Christensen, AE Durie, ED Fitzgerald, JT Taiapa, “*Te Hoe Nuku Roa: A Māori identity measure,*” Journal of the Polynesian Society, Dec, 1995.

There were a range of household compositions.

- Couple with children the most frequent household composition
- Household numbers ranged from 1 to 15 members

There were a range of abilities and knowledge of tikanga and whakapapa

Few participants have ready access to marae nor do they spend inordinate amounts of time there.

Participants share similar aspirations, similar cultural values and similar histories.

*"Te reo is important and I want to improve my own level"*

*"I feel good but I have a serious medical condition that requires medication."*

*"I want to buy a house but it would take 10 years before I have the deposit."*

*"I'm unemployed but have supported my extended whānau financially in the past month."*

*"My education is fair but I aspire to complete a tertiary degree."*

Diverse realities and a range of ideas about what constitutes "being Māori" are not new concepts to those of us who have worked in this area. However they have particular implications for policy development.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

Māori society is fluid, dynamic and extremely complex. This complexity is related to a series of dichotomies; diversity versus commonalities, interconnectiveness versus isolation, aspirations versus experience, Māori centered versus other centered, dynamic versus static, externalities versus internalities, community versus individuality and reciprocity versus self/linear.

Positive social change is about recognising these complexities and essentially focusing on choice, access, participation, satisfaction, information and knowledge and aspiration in both mainstream and Māori centered situations. In a government policy context this means creating opportunity, or independence rather than dependence on the state.