

BOOK REVIEW

Te Kai a te Rangatira: Leadership from the Māori world. Tapiata, Rawiri J., Smith, Renee and Akuhata-Brown, Marcus (Eds.). (2020). Te Kai a te Rangatira Collective with Bridget Williams Books. 456 pp. ISBN: 978-1-988587-73-8.

In a mammoth commitment to the kaupapa, *Te Kai a te Rangatira: Leadership from the Māori World* was compiled through the work of over 80 volunteers, including 30 rangatahi who conducted interviews with Māori leaders from December 2017 through February 2020. The challenge was to contribute to their communities by recording and sharing the knowledge of over 100 kaikōrero with Māori leaders from throughout Aotearoa New Zealand who are dedicated to improving the lives of others. The product of thousands of hours of interviews, *Te Kai a te Rangatira* captures a vast array of Māori leaders in the 21st century and their insights into the attributes of effective leadership.

The title comes from the well-known whakataukī: Ko te kai a te rangatira, he kōrero. The last book bearing this title was a similarly ambitious and significant textual taonga for Māori communities: the monolingual dictionary *He Pātaka Kupu: Te Kai a te Rangatira* (Māori Language Commission, 2008). The dictionary is “a landmark Māori-only language resource”, the result of seven years’ research by Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (Māori Language Commission) (Royal Society Te Takarangi, n.d., para. 1). On a grand scale, this new book—rightly called a taonga for all iwi, hapū and interested tauwiwi—keeps the torch of anthologised interviews with rangatira Māori burning.

Building on the work of Selwyn Katene (2013, 2015), Paul Diamond (2003) and Amy Brown (1994), *Te Kai a te Rangatira* surpasses its inspirational predecessors in its ambition, scope and sheer size. Indeed, in a nod to these forebears, Willie Jackson, in his interview in *Te Kai a te Rangatira*, paraphrases Tā Tipene O’Regan’s maxim—“If you don’t have any fire in your belly, then forget about being a leader” (p. 162)—which provided the title for Diamond’s exploration of Māori leadership: *A Fire in Your Belly: Māori Leaders Speak* (2003). Te Kai a te Rangatira Collective has chosen leaders from a wide range of backgrounds: marae, iwi, art, literature, health, education, youth work,

social work, politics, business, governance and more. True to the collective’s inclusive vision, they interviewed a range of eminent kaumātua and kuia, as well as “those in hāpai ō roles, working in the background” (p. 13). No arbitrary hierarchies of leadership or community contribution are imposed. Instead, the book is structured by the neutral presentation of leaders in alphabetical order.

The kōrero addresses failure; self-care; the taumaha nature of most leaders’ work; important attributes and methods of a leader; how to care for and protect one’s whenua; how to unify the people; the individual and collective imperative of learning mātauranga from one’s elders and seeking advice; decolonising the mind; creating opportunities for youth leadership and development; the “awesome” qualities of ordinariness in a Māori leader, who need not be an academic, but who nurtures the people (p. 122); profound respect for manual labour and menial tasks; and environmental, genealogical and geological knowledge. We learn reverence for the mana of older generations, those exhibiting “real mana – he mana tō te kupu” and those who “didn’t slice each other open in public” and held one another true to their word (p. 209).

This book contains epic pūrākau and kōrero tuku iho—brilliant moments of oral history, recorded for posterity. These gems include Charlie Crofts celebrating Tā Tipene’s negotiation style and successes during the Ngāi Tahu settlement process and Moana Jackson recalling the “amazing” two-hour karakia during the 1992 session of the working group drafting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (p. 161). Other highlights include the committed bilingualism of the volume, with interviews being conducted in the language of each interviewee’s preference; Patricia Grace on Te Kore, The Void, or the realm of potential being, and its glimmer of latent potential for creatives; Halkyard-Harawira and Hone Harawira on He Taua’s anti-racist protests in the 1970s and the 1981 Springbok Tour

protests; Amohaere Houkamau on traditionalism versus women's liberation; Ngamoni Huata on whenua knowledge held by elders, and the "wealth of history [that] comes from the geothermal plateau" (p. 146); Tame Iti on protest in general, and the "radical" protest group Ngā Tamatoa in particular (p. 156). Linda Tuhiwai Smith touches on the same topics as Iti:

The label "activist" was seen as negative . . . something worse than a criminal. The media reinforced it, and you still hear it. To me, I thought, "How great to be called a Māori activist, because what's the opposite of that? A Māori who does nothing." (p. 324)

Readers are also treated to Graham Smith on the practice of cultural and political decolonisation, kura kaupapa, and the "correlation between controlling our language and the power to control our own lives" (p. 323); and the powerfully anti-capitalist kōrero of Annette Sykes:

[I am] very suspicious of the leadership in the Māori world now . . . that says we should worry about making money and not spend money on the poor. I think values are starting to be contaminated by the values of property rights and the values of capitalism as opposed to the values of caring and manaaki and whanaungatanga that should guide us. (p. 340)

As is evident from the content summarised above, there is extensive coverage of Māori activism from the 1970s and 1980s, with Willie Jackson noting the "hatred and resentment that came from Pākehā society" towards his uncle, Ngā Tamatoa stalwart Syd Jackson, and recalling that "Ngā Tamatoa was seen as some sort of rebel group in the 1970s – almost like an IRA group" (p. 165). However, contemporary activists are not neglected. Tina Ngata, for example, speaks presciently about the need to "whakapapa forward"—to be a good ancestor and act in accordance with what will best serve your mokopuna (p. 244). She comments on the significance of mātauranga Māori as "an incredible advisory resource" with regard to climate change, ocean wellbeing, and so on, and discusses strategies for bearing your own mamae and elevating other people's voices and aspirations in important arenas without also shouldering their pain or burdens (p. 246). There are beautiful back-to-back interviews with Tā Tipene and his daughter Hana O'Regan, displaying Hana's erudition and Tā Tipene's gift for one-liners, pepeha

and whakataukī. Eerily beautiful whakataukī and kōrero are also offered by Tom Roa and Poia Rewi.

Although obviously focused on elders, we also hear from several generations of rangatira wāhine, including Rose Pere, Kahurangi Aroha Rereti-Crofts, Kahurangi Iritana Tawhiwhirangi and Kahurangi Tariana Turia, in addition to Grace, Sykes, and Smith. Through these women, we learn of even earlier wāhine toa, inspirational women leaders and change-makers. Sykes, for example, recalls speaking at Eva Rickard's tangi and having Tainui men try to stop her, before mana wāhine turned things around:

And then the women from the protest movement came forward. They had all been told by Eva that we had to make this stand. I was never as proud as I was that day. . . . That moment when you know that your tribe would protect you for challenging something. . . . That's how change is made. (p. 343)

To supplement your reading experience, there is a digital archive of video interviews, portrait photography and further information about the interviewees available at <https://www.tekaiaiterangitira.com>. One major hope for the extension of this project is that the full interviews will eventually be added to this database, stored in national and local archives, and remain publicly accessible for generations to come. As *Te Kai a te Rangatira* reminds us, we can all learn from the wisdom of contemporary leaders, which simultaneously transcends and transforms with time. With the project being undertaken from beginning to end by youth volunteers, it is only fitting that the proceeds from book sales will be directed to future rangatahi development. Tautoko, tautoko!

Glossary

Aotearoa	Māori name for New Zealand; literally, land of the long white cloud
hāpai ō	to take up, support, shoulder
hapū	kinship group, clan, tribe, subtribe
he mana tō te kupu	the word has power
iwi	extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people, nationality, race
Kahurangi	Dame
kaikōrero	speaker, narrator
karakia	prayer, ritual chant

kaumātua	adult, elder, elderly man, elderly woman	tangi	rites for the dead, funeral
kaupapa	purpose, policy, matter for discussion, initiative, plan, scheme, agenda	taonga	treasure, anything prized
ko te kai a te rangatira he kōrero	the sustenance of chiefs is words	tauiwi	foreigner, European, non-Māori, colonist
kōhanga reo	Māori language preschool	taumaha	weight, heaviness, burden, seriousness
kōrero	speech, narrative, story, news, account, discussion, conversation	tautoko	agreed; I support that
kōrero tuku iho	history, stories of the past, traditions, oral tradition	Te Kai a te Rangatira	main title of the reviewed book; literally, the sustenance of chiefs
kuia	elderly woman, grandmother, female elder	Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori	Māori Language Commission
kura kaupapa	Māori-language immersion school	wāhine toa	strong women, women warriors
mamae	ache, pain, injury, wound	whakapapa	genealogy, lineage, descent
mana	prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power	whakataukī	proverb, saying
mana wāhine	mana of Māori women	whanaungatanga	relationship, kinship, sense of family connection—a relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging
manaaki	support, hospitality, caring for	whenua	land, country, nation, state
marae	courtyard; the open area in front of the ancestral meeting house, where formal greetings and discussions take place		
mātauranga	knowledge, wisdom, understanding, skill		
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge, wisdom, understanding, skill		
mokopuna	grandchild(ren)		
Ngā Tamatoa	Māori activist group established in the 1970s; literally, The Warriors		
Ngāi Tahu	tribal group of much of the South Island, sometimes called Kāi Tahu by the southern tribes		
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent		
pepeha	proverb, saying of the ancestors, figure of speech, motto, slogan		
pūrākau	myth, ancient legend, story		
rangatahi	youth, younger generation		
rangatira Māori	Māori youth		
rangatira wāhine	women chiefs, women leaders		
Tā	Sir		
Tainui	term used for the tribes whose ancestors came on the Tainui canoe and whose territory includes the Waikato, Hauraki and King Country areas		

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