

MOKO WAHINE

A framework for guiding and nurturing Māori women leaders

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Abstract

This article has been inspired by doctoral research that focused on the pathway to leadership for wāhine Māori. For the purpose of the study, a mana wahine theoretical framework was created to analyse the lived experiences and character of several Māori women leaders. Known in the study as the Moko Wahine framework, it is embedded in Māori cultural values. A key aspect of the Moko Wahine framework is the potential to strengthen the Indigenous identity of women leaders who are of Māori descent. This theoretical framework is drawn from the characteristics and values of Moerangi Ratahi, a Māori woman leader of Ngāti Awa who lived from the mid-1800s through to the late 1900s. However, I present the framework for all wāhine Māori because the principles are not iwi-specific. I introduce here the Moko Wahine framework as a tool to guide and nurture Māori women who sit in leadership positions now and in the future.

Keywords

cultural identity, framework, Indigenous women, mana wāhine, Māori women, moko

Introduction

I am a wāhine Māori who derives from many ancestors who arrived on the Mataatua waka, and the much earlier inhabitants of Aotearoa New Zealand known as Te Tini o Toi. As I stood in my homelands and looked around Aotearoa, I saw an unbalance of leadership between wāhine Māori, tāne Māori and non-Māori. The influence of colonial beliefs and values has resulted in Māori women being discriminated against (Johnston & Pihama, 2019).

According to Grant Thornton (2018), in Aotearoa women in senior management roles have dropped 19% since 2004. It is crucial to address this unconscious bias, and in some cases conscious bias,

that has become a model that contributes to devaluing mana wahine. As explained by Smith (1994):

Our struggle as Māori women is our own struggle. To lose control of that struggle is to lose control of our lives. We are not in a position, therefore, to simply endorse or graft on to the projects of white women. We must develop according to the reality and logic of our lives. (p. 48)

Although Māori have suffered immense grievances at the hands of the Crown since Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed, Māori women have lost more because of race and gender. For example, Johnston (2005) explains that:

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Pakeha men came to New Zealand influenced by a long history of law and practice that assumed that a woman's role was confined to the domestic, "private" sphere. These powerful assumptions prevented Pakeha men from recognizing Maori women as political leaders and representatives of their tribal groups and ultimately led to the state's denial of Mana Wahine. (Section 1A, para. 8)

The failure of the Crown to protect the rights of equality that existed between Māori women and men before the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi has left Māori women marginalised (Mikaere, 1994). Paterson and Wanhalla (2017) assert that "thirteen Māori women are known to have signed the treaty" (p. 20). Many at that time were unable to write or speak English, which is the reason some chieftainesses applied their moko kauae as their signature or mark (Higgins & Meredith, 2011). Early authors focused on Māori male leaders and practically wrote wāhine Māori leaders out of history; however, the presence of mana for Māori women is identified in tribal names, traditional Māori waiata, pūrākau, manuscripts and many other forms of oral traditions.

To undertake the research, I identified the need for a theoretical framework that would be completely wāhine Māori. Ngāhuia Te Awekotuku (2012) states that the value of mana and identity is held in the wearer of moko kauae. Therefore, I created a framework using a moko kauae symbol.

To begin this article, I provide an overview of Māori women and leadership. This is followed by a discussion on the significance of moko kauae to the study and an outline of the key principles of the Moko Wahine framework.

Background

Prior to Pākehā arrival to Aotearoa, Māori had systems in place for their survival, and the sustainability of the tribes was through a physical and spiritual balance (Mead, 2003). Evidence of female leadership is recognised in many tribal names that acknowledge their chieftainess and tipuna kuia. For example, Te Whānau-a-Ruataupare, Te Aitanga-a-Mate of Whareponga and Te Whānau-a-Hinepare are also known as Ngāti Hinepare, and Ngāti Hine, to name a few (King, 1992).

The characteristics of many chieftainesses found in oral histories demonstrate that Māori woman leaders were informed socially and politically. These women were developed with a purpose and with determination to lead their people into the future (Mikaere, 2017). Evidence is also found in the lives and experiences of Dame Te Pūea Herangi

(King, 2003), Dame Whina Cooper (King, 1983), and the many wāhine Māori leaders of the past. However, as a result of colonisation, some Māori are disconnected from their identity as Māori (Spiller et al., 2020).

Moko kauae

The wearing of moko kauae is a bold statement of identity and colonial resistance. In the late 1800s, when women were fighting for their right to vote, Māori women joined the Women's Christian Temperance Union. In doing so, they had to relinquish their right to wear moko kauae (Pihama, 2021). The moko kauae is a symbol reserved for Māori women that connects to Māori genealogy, which determines the natural right to be worn. Moko and identity are described by Penehira (2011):

Māori women have an identity that is unique to them and their ancestry. Moko is shown to be a valid expression of identity, which adds to their wellbeing as Māori women. The voice of Māori women has been silenced in many ways through the process of colonisation. Moko provides another narrative through which that silencing is directly challenged. (p. 214)

The significance of moko lies in more than its design. When each line is inked on the skin, an invisible line emerges. The visible and unseen lines are the unification of the body and soul, the world of light and the world of spirit (Winitana, 2011). Moko has a history that dates to when Māori lived in two worlds, the spiritual and the physical, and could freely travel between both (Mead, 2003). In the 21st century, there is a resurgence of wāhine wearing moko kauae. This is their journey and it contributes to reinforcing te mana o te wāhine in contemporary society. Māori women continue to assert their right to leadership positions, as explained by Pihama (2018):

Moko kauae is a part of a wider political and cultural resurgence that is an assertion of tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake. It is an assertion of our political, cultural, social and spiritual aspirations as whānau, as hapū, as iwi, as Māori. Within such a context moko kauae is embedded within a critical cultural regeneration that is deeply influenced by the political context of our time. (para. 16)

Authors have identified that Māori women applied moko kauae to their chins at varying stages of their



FIGURE 1 Moerangi Ratahi and the Moko Wahine (female tattooing design) framework (Sangl, 1980)

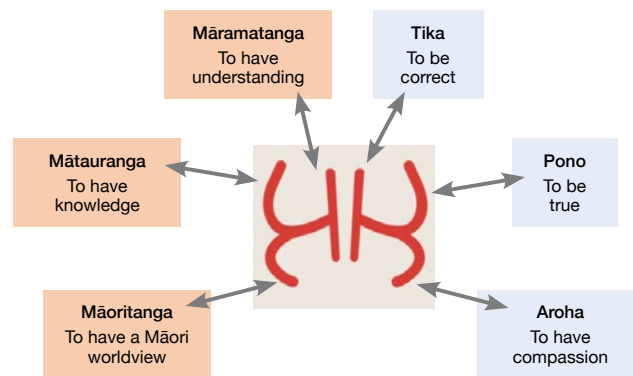


FIGURE 2 Moko Wahine (female tattooing design) framework

lives. As stated by Higgins (2004), “The mana of a woman was reflected in their moko kauae, it was a symbol of their status” (p. 104). Māori recognise moko kauae as a design that provides testimony to the wearer of her mana, proven through whakapapa. Higgins (2004) explains that “moko is still regarded as a symbol of mana. The survival of moko kauae into the twentieth Century has primarily been influenced by the political motivations of Māori to retain their identity as people” (p. 66).

The wearing of moko kauae has survived colonialism through courageous wāhine Māori who continued to wear the mark of their female ancestors (Pihama, 2018). The efforts of Pākehā to oppress wāhine Māori identity in this sense has failed. To hold firm to Māori values, beliefs and culture is to decolonise (Smith, 1999). The context of our current environment for wāhine Māori is one of the key reasons that I decided to wear moko kauae. It is not only my right and identity but also my resistance to colonial ideologies that discriminate against wāhine Māori (Pihama, 2001).

The Moko Wahine framework

The Moko Wahine illustration is born from the moko kauae of my kuia Moerangi Ratahi who is

estimated to have been born between 1865–1870. Much of her life was spent as a healer and nursing aide for the Māori prophet Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki. The design of her moko kauae has nine distinct parts that define her character as a leader and healer, both spiritually and physically, because they are the key descriptors of her life (Figure 1). In her lived experience and as a wāhine Māori who lived an old Māori lifestyle, Moerangi was a person who served the people with authenticity. She was dedicated to supporting, teaching and showing compassion to others. She did not speak English, yet understood it. From her moko kauae design, I drew six parts, which I place as principles of the Moko Wahine framework (Figure 2).

The guiding principles

The Moko Wahine framework has two vertical lines in the middle that run parallel to each other. On each side of the two middle lines are two curved lines that are mirror images representing opposite elements. The three guiding principles on the right side are Tika, Pono and Aroha. The union of these three principles provides a wairua element that existed in the pre-European time frame. According to Pomare (2010):



FIGURE 3 Tika (correct)

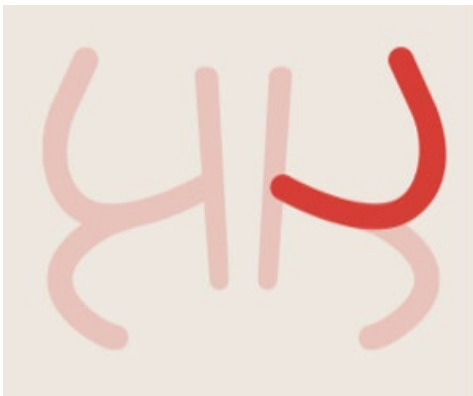


FIGURE 4 Pono (true)



FIGURE 5 Aroha (compassion)

Through the teaching of the customs and practices that our tupuna left us, we will begin to restore the tapu of our people so that they will be able to face life with dignity and value, and tapu that has been diminished or trampled can be restored. The principles for addressing tapu are tika, pono and aroha. (p. 2)

The right-hand middle line of the framework represents Tika, which derives from the word tikanga (Figure 3). According to Mead (2003),

“the concept of tika, or being correct is a base principle that applies to all tikanga. So, the practice of a particular tikanga needs to be correct and right” (p. 25). If a leader is seen to be correct in their performance, people will continue to follow them. Tika legitimises how the outcome of the performance is achieved. It is the root of *tikanga*, meaning *correct procedure*. A leader who is Tika sets the right examples and models what they expect from others. It is the principle concerned with doing things right and in the right way. When it is implemented and executed correctly, Tika is reflected in the leader’s level of success and acknowledged through the response of the people. Tika is the protocol, procedures and policies that give ethical guidance in all you do (Mead, 2003).

The curved right-hand line represents Pono (Figure 4). Moorfield (n.d.b.) defines Pono as “to be true, valid, honest, genuine, sincere.” Good leaders inspire followers by demonstrating the qualities of truthfulness. Leaders should be dedicated to the work that they do and must commit to it. Being a truthful leader strengthens relationships with the communities that the leader is responsible for. If a leader is walk the talk, it is evidence of a solid character. An effective leader who follows the principle of Pono is one who leads with integrity. If it is applied to daily life, Pono challenges leaders to be consistent and authentic. Pono reveals reality in its true form. It is the integrity of thought, action and speech that aligns with the principle of Tika. Pono challenges Aroha to be Tika and not to violate tapu by a misplaced or misguided Aroha. It challenges Aroha to add joy and feeling to actions conducted through Tika only (Pomare, 2010).

The bottom right-hand curved line is Aroha, which represents compassion (Figure 5). According to Adams (2008), “Aroha refers to the binding process of love, compassion and empathy that bring people together into a sense of common accord” (p. 239). Aroha is a crucial attribute that demonstrates generosity and sincere concern for others. It recognises the suffering and struggles of others and the desire to help improve their situation. It is a sacrificial element and often places leaders in a position of giving without the expectation of receiving. Aroha is about compassion for others and not for oneself. It motivates people to go beyond their reasonable expectations to support and bring about joy in the lives of others. Aroha encourages and restores compassion and generosity through actions and language. It transcends and integrates the principles of Tika and Pono (Mane, 2009).

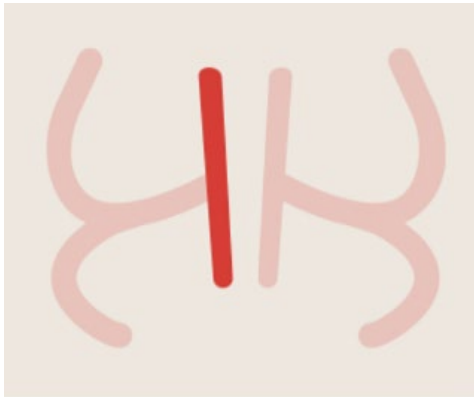


FIGURE 6 Māramatanga (understanding)



FIGURE 7 Mātauranga (knowledge)

Aroha is having regard for other people that makes one seek their well-being and gives a sense of joy, contentment and peace of mind, which contributes to one's own well-being. It is caring for people that makes one seek the restoration and reconciliation of diminished well-being to bring them to a place of hohourongo (Pomare, 2021). According to Pere (1997), aroha is the spectre and breath of the divine source, which means unconditional love. Aroha is the natural spiritual essence of life that begins in the womb. It derives from wairua and is nurtured in the whare tangata. For wāhine Māori, who are the guardians and protectors of generations, it is fundamental to their mana.

The three complementing principles on the opposite left-hand side of the Moko Wahine framework are Māramatanga, Mātauranga and Māoritanga. They represent the physical qualities obtained through life experience.

The left-hand middle line is Māramatanga, which represents understanding (Figure 6). As explained by Royal (2005), “Our usual experience of *māramatanga* occurs on an everyday basis in such activities as a conversation. Here we converse and thereby pass *māramatanga* between each other. However, with respect to *māramatanga*, it is up to the receiver to determine whether they understand or not” (p. 140). Māramatanga is achieved when a person comes to understand knowledge, a phase of enlightenment, realisation and clarification. A leader may not have all the skillset to respond to a situation; therefore, they must employ the help of other experts. Māramatanga involves the enlightened weaving of knowledge, expertise and authority to nurture and unfold knowledge to achieve well-being. According to Royal (2005):

Another kind of “knowing” and “knowledge” considered here is *māramatanga* which can be literally translated as “illumination”. *Māramatanga*,

hence, is connected with degrees of *mārama* (understanding). One might consider a spectrum of understanding where one end of the spectrum indicates no understanding and illumination. The other end of the spectrum is distinguished by great illumination, understanding and wisdom. (p. 140)

To learn and gain knowledge, one must listen and have the ability to capture what one is hearing. There is a difference between listening and hearing to retain information. Royal (2005) explains:

Firstly, we can say that *mātauranga* is often used to refer to that type of knowledge that is passed, exchanged and transferred between people. For example, the words that one utters to explain something are a type of knowledge passed from one person (the speaker) to another (the listener). We would refer to this type of knowledge as *mātauranga*... this is something we collect. (p. 138)

The top left-hand curved line is Mātauranga representing knowledge (Figure 7). Mātauranga is explained by Mead (2003) as follows:

Learning is a life-long process and even if one chooses not to go to a school learning occurs. There is, in fact, an ever-changing and expanding pool of knowledge to grasp. There is so much to learn that it is not expected that any one person would ever learn it all. (p. 305)

Mātauranga indicates learned experience that provides knowledge. It is about developing the mind and reaching beyond the limitations of circumstance and adversity.

The principle of Māoritanga draws from core values and beliefs within tikanga Māori that encourage a Māori worldview. Tikanga Māori encompasses the action of supporting and



FIGURE 8 Māoritanga (Māori worldview)

caring for others, especially visitors. For example, manaaki is explained by Mead (2003) as follows:

Manaakitanga is best understood as a basic principle of behaviour that applies to most ceremonies and should be a guiding principle for everyone. Values have to do with principles or standards of behaviour. So, there is an expected standard of manaakitanga that is considered to be appropriate. All tikanga are underpinned by the high value placed upon manaakitanga, nurturing relationships, looking after people, and being very careful about how others are treated. (pp. 27–29)

Ani Mikaere (2011) explains the essence of whakapapa from a wahine Māori perspective:

Whakapapa embodies a comprehensive conceptual framework that enables us to make sense of our world. It allows us to explain where we have come from and to envisage where we are going. It provides us with guidance on how we should behave towards one another, and it helps us to understand how we fit into the world around us. It shapes the way we think about ourselves and about the issues that confront us from one day to the next. (pp. 285–286)

Whakapapa connects a person to their iwi, to their identity. It is then the role of the person and iwi to manaaki others, which is the reason that I have collated these three fundamental values of manaaki, whakapapa and iwi into the principle of Māoritanga since they are key attributes of Māori as a people.

The bottom left-hand curved line is Māoritanga, representing an authentic Māori worldview (Figure 8). A Māori worldview is defined by Royal (2003) as follows: “The worldview is the systematisation of conceptions of reality to which members

of its culture assent from which stems their value system. The worldview lies at the heart of the culture, touching, interacting with and strongly influencing every aspect” (p. 57). The traditional philosophies of a Māori worldview have been learned, integrated and employed through participation in traditional Māori rituals and ceremonies (Mead, 2003). Māoritanga is a way of life that connects Māori to their identity. It is seen in how they think and how they move into action (Moorfield, n.d.a.).

Discussion

To assess the effectiveness of the Moko Wahine framework, an exploration into the lives of Māori women leaders from diverse backgrounds and career paths was undertaken. An analysis underpinned by the Moko Wahine framework was completed to identify whether the mana wāhine leaders upheld any of the principles of the framework. Many of the mana wāhine leaders profiled in the research are known for their achievements. This part of the study was not intended to establish a general opinion of leadership for Māori women, but to provide insight into their characteristics through their experiences and journey.

The mana wāhine leaders selected for the research were Distinguished Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith—Education, Moana Maniapoto, MNZM—Music and Film, Honourable Nanaia Mahuta—Politics, Pania Newton—Environment, and Dame Lisa Carrington—Sport.

Each of the leaders showed they had unique pathways to their current positions. Analysis of the lived experiences of the mana wāhine through applying the principles of the Moko Wahine framework revealed that they were Tika in their achievements and challenging the status quo on behalf of Māori society. For example, Distinguished Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith is a founding member of the Māori group known as Ngā Tamatoa, who fought for Māori rights and against racial discrimination. She was also an initiator in forming Aotearoa’s Māori Centre of Research Excellence named Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga. In her career, both national and international, she encourages a decolonised education system and ways of thinking for Indigenous peoples (Royal Society Te Apārangi, 2018).

Moana Maniapoto has been instrumental in bringing about the acceptance of Māori language and culture in music and broadcasting platforms. Her achievements as an award-winning artist and filmmaker are acknowledged in the NZ Music Hall of Fame (Perrott, 2004). Moana continues to use

these forums to bring about a positive change for Māori and society as a whole.

The Honourable Nanaia Mahuta is Aotearoa's first female Minister of Foreign Affairs. As the Minister of Local Government, as well as Associate Minister for Māori Development, she has contributed to policies that have lifted opportunities for Māori communities, including the newly implemented Māori Wards in local government (Mahuta, 2022).

Pania Newton is a protector of land and Indigenous rights, as is evident in the movement she led at Ihumātao. She along, with supporters of the cause, raised national and international awareness of historical injustices that continue to affect Māori. In doing so, the movement stopped the planned urban development of their tribal lands ("Ihumātao Protest", 2020).

Dame Lisa Carrington is a world champion, known both nationally and internationally as a powerful sportswoman. According to (Rae, 2020), the Aotearoa sport sector has a history of discriminating against women; therefore, we can imagine the pathway to world champion status for Lisa was not without barriers. Lisa has been recognised for her achievements in obtaining many gold medals and awards and recently was honoured with the title of dame by the late Queen of England.

The research found that the mana wahine leaders have contributed to advancing Māori and women. Their dedication is shown in their success that was achieved through years of efforts to support positive change for Māori and women in society. The Moko Wahine framework recognises this style of leadership as Tika, Pono and driven from a place of Aroha. All five of the mana wāhine leaders gained Mātauranga and Māramatanga through educational institutes and life experiences. The results of the analysis acknowledged that all five mana wāhine had consciously or unconsciously dedicated their lives to elevating the positioning of Māori and society. The Moko Wahine framework is an application of Indigenous knowledge that if implemented in a new leadership programme supported by wāhine Māori mentors, the potential to increase the number of mana wāhine leaders of the future will become a new reality.

Conclusion

The Moko Wahine framework is based on Māori ideology and the natural qualities of wāhine Māori as nurturers of life and knowledge holders. As explained by Lavallée (2009), "The application of an Indigenous research framework in the academy is an important theoretical contribution and

provides a different way of knowing, one that endeavours to decolonise the academy" (p. 37). The design of the framework is purposeful and emphasises Indigenous knowledge as a living body typically passed from generation to generation that is linked to cultural identity.

As stated by Spiller and Wolfgramm (2015), Indigenous worlds, cultures and knowledge systems developed over thousands of years continue to be expressed through social structures, languages, symbols, art, science, technologies and diverse undertakings. Many of these knowledge systems have nurtured and sustained Indigenous peoples and their environments across time, space and place through robust evaluation processes. These processes have stood the test of time, expressed through multiple and vigorous systems of lifelong learning.

Further study regarding pathways to leadership for Māori women underpinned by Māori-centred frameworks is warranted to contribute to transformative outcomes that will grow future Māori women leaders with a Māori worldview. I commend Māori women who have fought to gain leadership roles and are leaders within their whānau, hapū and iwi. Because of them, future generations of wāhine may be inspired to follow in their footsteps for the betterment of Māori society. The fundamental key for te mana o te wahine to be recognised and acknowledged is for Māori women to continue to stand and voice their concerns, even if it goes against the social norm or what is deemed as acceptable. It is the responsibility of wāhine Māori to put into action a purposeful plan for nurturing and educating future Māori women leaders so that their daughters and granddaughters may be better placed in future society.

Glossary

aroha	compassion
hapū	subtribe
hohourongo	peace
iwi	people; tribal kin group
kuia	female elder
mana	prestige, status, authority, influence, integrity; honour, respect
mana motuhake	autonomy, independence, authority
mana wahine	authority or status of a woman
mana wāhine	authority or status of women
manaaki	care

manaakitanga	hospitality, kindness, generosity, support	tino rangatiratanga	self-governing; having absolute independence and autonomy
Māoritanga	Māori worldview	tipuna kuia	female ancestor, female grandparent
mārama	brightness, clearness; understanding	tupuna	ancestor, grandparent
māramatanga	understanding; literally, illumination	wāhine	women, females
Mataatua waka	migration canoe which landed at Whakatāne	wahine Māori	Māori woman
mātauranga	knowledge	wāhine Māori	Māori women
moko	Māori tattooing designs on the face or body done under traditional protocols	waiata	song
moko kauae	female chin tattoo	wairua	spirituality
Moko Wahine	female tattooing design	whakapapa	genealogy
Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga	New Zealand's Māori Centre of Research Excellence; literally, horizons of insight	whānau	family; nuclear and extended family
Ngā Tamatoa	a Māori activist group formed in the 1970s	whare tangata	house of humanity
Ngāti Awa	a tribe based on the eastern Bay of Plenty		
Ngāti Hine	a tribe based within Northland, New Zealand		
Ngāti Hinepare	a tribe based on the east coast of New Zealand		
Pakeha; Pākehā	a person of predominantly European descent		
pono	true		
pūrākau	stories, narratives		
tāne Māori	Māori male		
tapu	sacrosanct, prohibited, protected, restricted		
te mana o te wahine	the authority of a Māori woman		
Te Aitanga-a-Mate	a subtribe based on the east coast of the North Island, near Gisborne		
Te Tini o Toi	tribe of people who once lived in an area of Whakatane		
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	the Treaty of Waitangi		
Te Whānau-a-Hinepare	a subtribe based on the North Island, near Gisborne		
Te Whānau-a-Ruataupare	a subtribe based on the North Island, near Gisborne		
tika	correct		
tikanga	custom		

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