

Family Interconnections: whānau assets and intergenerational transmission in Te Rarawa

Summary of research findings

The research

1. Whariki Research Group (Massey University, Auckland) was contracted by the Families Commission to undertake the two-year research project starting 30 April 2008. Whariki sub-contracted Te Runanga o Te Rarawa to work together on the project.
2. The purpose of the research was to explore the practical, daily and lived interconnections between Te Rarawa whānau and marae. The focus was on the whānau-marae roles that play a part in passing knowledge and assets from generation to generation.
3. Key research questions were about;
 - Marae usage; purpose/functions
 - How assets, and resources are viewed by whānau
 - Ways that whānau-marae links influence and contribute to whānau assets and the transmission of knowledge
 - Marae-based events attended by whānau
 - The ways that whānau participate at and contribute to their marae
 - Barriers to participation in marae activities
 - How whānau view their 'obligations' or roles at the marae
 - Levels of voluntary work undertaken
 - Maintaining connections with whānau
 - The impact of local and/or national policy on whānau and marae
4. Methods; Information was gathered through a series of face-to-face interviews with whānau at eight Te Rarawa marae, diaries of marae usage, an online e-survey, and a review of Te Rarawa documentation.
5. Terminology; we use the term 'assets' 'to indicate the value of whānau and marae contributions across a broad spectrum, including physical, spiritual and mental.

Findings - The following key research findings highlight the broad scope and potential of marae in terms of infrastructure, and the transmission of intergenerational knowledge and assets.

6. Functioning marae are a core asset in Te Rarawa communities

Marae are fundamental social and cultural assets as they are resources that influence the cohesion, morale, self-esteem and wellbeing of our whānau and communities.

- They are critical amenities and are of great importance to whānau and communities in a region with poor infrastructure and few alternatives
- They bring large numbers of whānau together throughout the year for a variety of occasions and are a stable 'home' for many whānau .
- Funding is critical to marae development - it draws on the same limited community resources of time, energy and money.

7. Marae: whānau roles and skills

There are numerous marae roles and responsibilities requiring diverse whānau skills and wide ranging experiences. Serious commitment and dedication, and a huge amount of voluntary work is required from whānau.

- Although relatively few whānau live near their marae, the marae roles are still fulfilled and kaumātua with specialised skills are particularly heavily relied on.
- The capacity to fulfill marae roles is an ongoing struggle and needs support.

8. **Marae and whānau: a shared commitment**

Whānau and marae are intertwined, physically, emotionally and spiritually; policies that impact on whānau, impact on marae.

- Whānau have multiple responsibilities and loyalties including caring for whānau at home and whānau at the marae.
- Marae obligations are of central importance and have implications for influencing whānau outcomes.
- Having a place to stand through whakapapa and identity provides security and support for whānau as well as a responsibility to share the marae/whānau workload.

9. **Marae are places of learning and sharing knowledge**

Learnings from marae experiences are numerous and transferrable to the home, workplace and other settings.

- A key to the sustainability of marae (and a challenge), is the ability of those who hold knowledge and skills to pass these on to the younger generations.
- Learning happens in informal and practical ways at Te Rarawa marae.
- There is respect for whānau and marae knowledge and the contribution made by each generation.

10. **Marae contribute to whānau wellbeing**

Identity and connection through whakapapa and marae are strong elements of whānau wellbeing - they provide a sense of security, collective belonging and support for whānau.

- Marae are a safe place for whānau to work through issues and problems either alone or with the help of other whānau members.
- Social connections are an important part of whānau and marae activity that contribute to wellbeing.
- Whānau wellbeing is understood in a broad and holistic sense and needs to be reflected in policy.

11. **Te ao hurihuri: policies and the current environment**

Whānau and marae are determined to keep hold of tikanga and to understand the dynamics within a changing world.

- National policy impacts on, but is not communicated effectively to marae.
- Social and cultural policies need to acknowledge the vital part that marae play.
- Marae also set policies and have a range of whānau perspectives and realities to consider when developing them.
- The economic environment creates barriers to whānau participation in marae affairs - cost and employment are two major factors that stop whānau from coming home or being in a position to be involved.

We wish to thank the marae and all the whanau who took part in this research , your input was really valuable – ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

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