Ko te pae o te atua mai i nga whakaaro hohonu nei, hei oranga mo te ira tangata

Pirihi Te Ohaki (Bill) Ruwhiu and Leland A. Ruwhiu

With adherence to cultural protocol, in heart felt dialogue, greeting all who stand on pathways of similarity and difference, to colleagues and Tauiwi partners, as father and son we would like to present our thoughts in Te Komako regarding the centricity of wairuatanga in our mahi as Tangata Whenua social and community work practitioners. As the title of the article indicates, we firmly support the view that humanity’s battered soul can draw sustenance from and thus become revitalised by spirituality (Benland, 1988; Sermabeikian, 1994; Ruwhiu, 1999; McKay, 2003). Furthermore, social and community work embellished by spirituality has the inherent capacity to advance and promote healing and wellbeing when engaging with those deemed ‘poor in health’ (Northcut, 2000; Gotterer, 2001). As Canda and Furman (1999: 9) postulate:

Social work in its best sense can be considered a spiritual vocation … that there is an awareness of suffering and the possibility of transformation. It means that there is a motive of compassion to work together with other people to help us overcome obstacles and achieve our aspirations. And it means that spiritually sensitive social workers practise unconditional positive regard for clients and hope in the possibilities of resiliency, reconciliation, and realisation of social justice.

A father’s message – Kaumatua Pirihi Te Ohaki (Bill) Ruwhiu (JP) speaks:

Tihei Mauri Ora. Ten a koutou e nga Atua o te Rangi a Tanenui-arangi, a Ranginui me to koutou māngai a Io. Tena koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa. E Papatuanuku tēnā ra koe. Ki o tātou tini mate kua wheturangitia ki tua o te Araí, haere, haere, haere, a te wa ka tutuki ano tatau. Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, nga mana nga Hapu, nga Iwi, nga whānau, ko tēnei te mihi arohanui-ātu kia Koutou Katoa.

Kia kōrui nga mana whakaritenga mo te pukapuka kōmako, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou tēnā koutou. I wero atu ki ahau, kia whakatakoto o oku nei whakaaro he āhapi te mana o to tatau tino rangatiratanga. No reira e huri ana o oku whakaaro me nga moemoeā ki te reo tuarua.

I approach this assignment sincerely and humbly with the thought and hope that it would be of interest, relevance and value to whanau engaged in the social services. The subject I would like to draw attention to is entitled ‘spiritual awareness’ or ‘wairuatanga in action’. There are two parts to my korero. Part One focuses on a range of ethical dilemmas relating to cultural and spiritual awareness facing those of us who work with whanau Maori who are ‘poor in spirit and body’. Implicit is a challenge to Maori social and community work practitioners to synthesise your cultural/spiritual identities to become stronger professionaly. Part Two, entitled ‘A labour of aroha – A mahi of love’, explores a statement that provides me with much strength to labour in the social services terrain for our people. My purpose in taking the time to unravel this statement is not about self-embellishment or vain
pride and ambition but rather a simple gift to those engaged in the mahi. It is shared with you all in the spirit of love. It draws together a combination of cultural and spiritual insights on wairuatanga - spirituality.

**Part One: Ethical dilemmas to ponder**

I have been working as a kaumatua for Nga Puna Wai Aroha, a Maori Drug and Addictions service – part of the Hawkes Bay District Health Regional Authority and for the past five years situated in Hastings – and have come to the conclusion that the greatest miracle I see today is not necessarily the healing of sick bodies, but the healing of sick souls. The cause and effect of this spiritual problem is not only found with those men and women who come seeking wellness but this sense of spiritual dearth also seems prominent within identifiable praxis of those who are part of the social and human services professions – especially when one discusses the composition of what is termed their ‘best practice’ framings. Nash and Stewart (2002: 53-54) reinforce this type of innuendo where exploration by social workers into the validity and legitimacy of spirituality or metaphysical dimensions of healing, appears less desirable:

Overall dominant cultural beliefs influence thinking in the helping field and discourage practitioners from evaluating spirituality’s potential usefulness. Moreover, that discouragement often leads to a particular emphasis on ‘having the right people around you’ to cover the spiritual dimension. Subsequently, in my eyes, social workers rely on kaumatua such as myself to fulfil all the spiritual engagement points, when in fact they themselves should also be strengthening that very area within their own being, for the broader wellbeing and welfare of those they are working with. Even more significant, is the realisation that one does not suddenly become attuned to working under the label of kaumatua with expertise in wairua matters. No, that journey began as a child and was built on ‘step by step’ through life. Seeing a local kuia karakia to a kaitiaki taniwha, being taught about ‘Nga Patupaiarehe’ and having my horse react to their presence, having to deal with spiritual gifts such as moemoea, or noting the passing of loved ones as Te Ao Turoa sent its messengers. Feeling the strength of kaumatua as they stayed the natural elements using incantations. Understanding and implementing the healing powers of spiritual manifestations such as faith and hope through karakia. All these were cultivated through life-long pursuits and experiences of wairua in action as service to others. Given this perspective, I feel there is a famine and lack of knowledge and understanding in our development of Taha Wairua, as there is a tendency to just skim the surface in spiritual matters.

**Part Two: A labour of aroha, a mahi of love**

May I suggest a simple answer to this problem! Turn to God and live. That spiritual awareness is often subdued in the wake of quality assurance leaning towards scientific and academic specialised training. Let me unravel what the statement ‘Turn to God and live’ means to me as a kaumatua in this particular field of practice. First, it means that I must be culturally and spiritually at ease, aware and competent in assessing/engaging and inclusive by nature, in order to work with Maori whanau who are suffering from addictive influences. I am of a particular faith for a reason. A mother’s word moved my whanau into that frame of reference and it gave me light. That faith has brought me closer to God. I was also born with a deep, rich cultural heritage that has sustained me throughout my seventy-plus years. That has brought me closer to Matua kore anake. Peace within self needs to be acquired before peace is recognized in one’s practice. Reconciliation between my religious self and
my cultural heritage has provided me with spiritual awareness that is not prideful, boastful nor intimidating. It speaks with a quiet reassuring voice of contentment. That’s what I mean by being culturally and spiritually at ease.

My second point concerning that statement ‘Turn to God and live’ unpacks the importance of spiritual relationship-building and spiritually safe practice. At such times of deep supplication, I find that those suffering respond to a soul that doesn’t denigrate their sense of spiritual and cultural identity. The client/worker interrelationship is strengthened as soul speaks to soul and then real sharing occurs and as ‘knowledge is gathered, enlightenment really does follow – ka kohi te toi, ka wahi te matauranga’ (MacKay, 1995: iii).

A third point reflected in that statement, invokes a condition of practice: I must be competent in using tools of access and engagement that open up the wairua dimension to draw miracles from ‘te kauae runga’ that may benefit tangata turoro. From my point of view, sharpening up my cultural and spiritual tools requires competency in the use of karakia, noho puku, mata kite, mate kite, moemoea, pukorero, tauparapara, whakapapa and te reo Maori. These tools of engagement unlock the healing elements of wairuatanga and need to be circumnavigated regularly, with ease and competency. For example, Kuka (2000) provides a very clear position about spiritual awareness that I strongly relate to when dealing with whanau who are suffering followed by a justification concerning one of those aforementioned desired areas of competency, in this case Tauparapara (proverbial saying and linked genealogy):

It was more satisfying as rongoa was never administered by itself. It came with korero and karakia and often those were the most important aspects. All respondents felt that doctors of Western medicine limited their time too much and didn’t hear what they were saying about their needs and so were often unable to help (71). . . . The tauparapara provides an illustration of how cultural and spiritual precepts which arise from indigenous science, continue to sustain the people (97).

As kaumatua for Nga Puna Wai Aroha often I am asked by Maori users of this service to provide karakia – a blessing of the wairua, as a means of assisting them in their struggles to overcome various addictions. In those crucial moments, the physical ailments are out of balance with their souls (Lyndon, 1983; Marsden, 1992; Durie, 1994; Ruwhiu, 1999). Subsequently, through karakia, that is when spirit speaks to spirit and shifts the impossible to reality (Ihimaera, 2004). The imbalance of human passions and desires controlling their every act of addiction is challenged by acknowledgement that the esoteric dimensions of reality can indeed provide saving grace and moves the battle from within to above. Mokomoko (2000: 27) sums the importance of seeking balance within the healing matrix of Maori wellbeing, inclusive of spiritual matters, as follows:

Tikanga Maori, as an aspect of health, is about values and belief systems that focus on maintaining balance and harmony between people and their natural, physical and spiritual world.

Finally, ‘Turn to God and live’, means that I must always remind those around me that wairuatanga does exist and can impact hugely on the wellbeing of whanau and more importantly, can influence the way a social/community worker engages with those they are working with. At our Tangata Whenua Caucus national hui for the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers held in Rotoma 2004, a challenge was put forward for Tane Maori working in the social services to share their ‘pearls of wisdom’. Here is my contribution. It explains where I get my fire in the belly, my passion to serve others, my sense of being in this world, my rock that I built my practice on. I realise that some might view this as ‘religious fervour’, but this is central to how I am able to engage as both a minister of a faith and also as a Maori practitioner of healing with my culture intact.
To all, whether you are Catholics, Protestants, Anglican, Rātana, Buddhist, or Mormon, my message is simple: know that Jesus Christ the Son of God provides a prime role model for anyone considering service to others (Cooper, 2000). In our faith, he is Jehovah of the Old Testament, and Messiah of the New Testament. His life, death, resurrection and relationship with our eternal primeval parents, provides a blueprint for service to others, the roots of selflessness, mana-enhancing inter-personal behaviour and sacrifice, processes that often appear missing in the lives of those who are experiencing addiction. Integrating his essence into one’s practice in addictions is not discouraged and clarifies even more the roots to spiritual healing (May, 1994).

Within the confines of matauranga around Christ being our Saviour and Redeemer two central points of understanding emerge. First, the impact of interceding work with, for and on behalf of, people in pain and suffering has been clearly displayed by our Saviour’s actions of service support and fellowship. Essentially, we become the beneficiaries of his mercy and grace in this world of trouble and uncertainty. Second, reciprocity should underpin all efforts to rehabilitate. Through service to others healing consolidates. His peace, expressed in service and support, can fill our hearts and ease our minds. This point often goes astray, but in practicing karakia the change in heart bears witness to such support.

I know that his wairua influences every good deed that our lives are built upon. Therefore, those words of old, describing Christ as, ‘… the way, the truth and the light – Ka mea a Ihu ki a ia, Ko ahau te huarahi, te pono, te ora’ John 14: 6 (Barlow, 1992: 238), really does provide me with significant role-modelling to assist in my efforts with whanau who use our service. May his wairua be our guiding star. As evidenced by my practice under the kaupapa of Nga Puna Wai Aroha, an in-depth understanding and working knowledge of wairuatanga has led to miracles. Those whom we work with should not be denied miracles, therefore the challenge to all social and community work practitioners is to set your house in order. Seek the spirit of truth and it will influence for the better all who you come in contact with.

 Ko Ihu Karaiti, te matariki o te Ao katoa. Ko matariki te whetū hei aratika e. He tutuki noa ki te mutunga, Haere mai i runga i te aroha e, Kia manawanui kia rangimarie, Te whakapono me te aroha, Hei āwhina i te ture wairua e, Haere mai i runga i te aroha e, Kia manawanui, kia rangimarie.

**A son’s message - Dr Leland A Ruwhiu speaks.**

Tena koutou e nga kaumatua, nga raurangatira ma me nga whanau whanui i roto i te mahi kaiawhina o te motu o Aotearoa, hei oranga me te katoa. Ko tenei te wa, e mihi tautoko atu ahau ki te matauranga hohonu o toku matua. E tika ana ona whakaaro mo te mea nui o te ao, ko te taha wairua. Engari, kaua e wareware koutou i tenei whakaaro tika i roto i o tatou nei mahi. Mehemea, ka ngaro te taha wairua, ka mate te tangata kikokiko. No reira, ka huri oku whakaaro inaiane ki te kaupapa i mua i a tatou.

**Ko te whakamana o te kaupapa**
To be able to speak after my father on Wairuatanga is an honour and a privilege not often enjoyed by intergenerational male posterity of the same whanau. In my father’s korero, a poignant challenge emerged. His wero implied the need for those of us working in the social and human services to sharpen up on our own spiritual awareness abilities. Building on that wero, my article definitely moves away from a proposition made by Payne (1997) to concentrate on mapping out a global universal perspective ‘within social work’ as cultures are not ‘monolithic or exclusive’. It concentrates instead on critiquing wairuatanga and its
functional place in home-grown social/community work practice here in Aotearoa New Zealand. It adds specifically to a growing body of knowledge (Maori intellectual property) surrounding ‘wairuatanga’ and becomes another building-block to ‘best practice’ for Tangata Whenua social and community work practitioners with whanau Maori.

In my childhood, I remember vividly the influence of wairuatanga (spiritual/cultural/ideological/philosophical) matters, as it rendered food, places and events safe, as it gave name to new life, as it provided comfort to the poor in spirit, as it lightened the burden of those in mourning, as it gave respite to those plagued with sickness and illness, as it strengthened one from fear, hate, envy and indulgence, as it guided home the lost and weary, and as it gave purpose to life.

In latter years, it has brought a sense of identity and self worth, and it has given meaning to sacrifice and selfless service for and on behalf of others. It has reinforced notions of interconnectedness and belonging, it has provided inner strength and a sense of ‘knowingness’ to advocate as an informed Maori voice in chosen fields of practice within the social and community work profession. It has added validity and legitimacy to my cultural worldview (Ruwhiu, 1994; 1995; 1999b; 1999a; 1999; 2001a). It has also been a humbling journey into interdependency between the human and spiritual dimension, once the realisation sets in that healers never do their work alone (Metge, 1995; Mokomoko, 2000; Ihimaera, 2004). These strands provide a ‘matrix of understanding’ concerning cultural knowledge and empowerment sources that ‘wairuatanga’ contains.

Lee (1994) pointed out that cultural knowledge and empowerment involved the strategy of embracing one’s own culture and using it to understand and make sense of new knowledge and other people. Furthermore, Graham’s (2002) research explored the potential of cultural knowledge within the black communities in Britain to strengthen social and community work responsiveness, by ‘unfolding hidden histories, and tapping into their intellectual property about their own wellness’. As one of Graham’s respondents contended:

... if you have no knowledge of yourself – who you are and your potential when living in a white racist culture in our terms this is continuous traumatic stress because you never know what is going to happen from one day to the next. You have to have a buffer that protects you - that holds you together and that is what cultural knowledge does. This propels you and enables you to plan for the future and to be creative about the future (2002: 45).

In light of this description of ‘cultural knowledge’, before proceeding, let me pose a challenge to Maori social and community work practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand. Please define wairuatanga without using the terms spirituality, spiritual, spirit, esoteric, religion or religious. Furthermore, remembering the korero ‘Te mana o te kupu’ – ‘the power of the word’ (Ruwhiu, 2001; 2001a), what equivalent words could I use in English that would add clarity to the mana of ‘wairuatanga’.

In answer to my own wero, my translation of wairuatanga is influenced by the following rationale: if wairuatanga permeates through all activities in the living and non living spheres (Best, 1924; 1924a; Whai Ora, 1987; Barlow, 1991; Marsden, 1992) then it provides me with a life-line to explore the ontology of humanity, our intercession with the gods, and the interconnectedness of our being with all other dimensions of reality (Te Hurinui, 1959; Salmond, 1991). As mentioned earlier, of equal significance has been its propensity to validate my worldview, and its very nature creates an active space/site of critical dialogue (Foucault, 1977) and also a source of empowerment that gives right of passage into numerous ideologies, philosophies, conceptualisations and theories articulated and practised by my ancestors (Sinclair, 1976; Walker, 1990; Waitiri, 1993; Bradley, 1995; Ruwhiu, 1995). Another characteristic to consider is the political nature of wairua emphasized in
my keynote korero to the Tangata Whenua Takawaenga o Aotearoa Ropu (Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers – Maori caucus), at Kohupatiki in Heretaunga. Such a whakaaro bears witness to the depth and centricty of this power concept in Maori activist whakaaro. As I stated:

The relational dimensions of Tangata Whenua have always placed the spiritual dimension, Te Kauae runga, in the parent role. Inherent in this dimension is the foundation stones of all, political ideological and philosophical thought, action and behaviour. So traditionally critical thought has always harnessed wairua as a means of protest and redress . . . (Ruwhiu, 1999b: 34)

Therefore, my definition of wairutanga encompasses spirituality, but paramountcy resides in defining it as the root source of ‘my cultural ideologies, philosophies, conceptualisations and theories’ that substantiate my politicised identity as a Maori social/community work practitioners. This means that my activities as a Tangata Whenua social and community work practitioner and scholar in Aotearoa New Zealand are influenced not just by spiritual imprints but also by political, ideological, theoretical and philosophical ones. Much like a code of practice clearly displaying a collaborative working relationship between the ‘known’ and ‘abstruse’ metaphysical dimensions of reality. My cultural intellegencia therefore places my worldview foremost in any critique concerning my indigenous practice in this profession. In essence, my critical reference about social and community work practice and theory is firmly planted in my own culture. Only then can I truly participate as an equal in collaborative and meaningful dialogue with those who know not, or have little understanding of my culture. As Hooks (1990: 13) put it:

The shared space and feeling of ‘yearning’ opens up the possibility of common ground where all these differences might meet and engage one another.

Exploring ‘te pae o te atua’ and its significance to social and community work practice is one critical space that engenders that type of ‘yearning’.

Nga tahu korero
I have broken my contribution into three interconnected sections. First, I will examine the literature about spirituality and wairuatanga within social and community work practice, in definitional and functional terms. Second, a specific whanau pukorero/story is explored and a brief of ‘wairuatanga in action’ will be constructed by identifying key principles, entities, tools of engagement, issues and interventions, using my ‘ko au framework’ (Ruwhiu, 1999). That particular framework emphasizes the interrelationship between three dimensions of reality: the spiritual, natural and human terrains – correspondingly titled, Wairuatanga; Te Ao Tuora; and He Tangata, He Tangata, He Tangata. Finally, the third segment will detail four foundation principles that Maori social and community work practitioners might consider in strengthening their ability to navigate effectively te taha wairua with whanau Maori in need.

Section One: Literature on Spirituality and Wairuatanga
The purpose of this section is to extend the material presented earlier by drawing together some threads of understanding about spirituality and wairuatanga from the literature. As social and community work practitioners, when interacting with people who are in crisis, the essence of both client and worker spirituality, or religious manifestations through faith fellowship, or cultural ideologies, philosophies and theories that explain the world, or power relationships and protocol, often seem quite incongruent with each other, and therefore not always successfully measured nor viewed as ethically appropriate dimensions to draw from when carrying out informed assessments and exploring/embarking on best practice intervention strategies with people in need (Northcut, 2000; Cooper, 2000; Grotterer, 2001).
With this in mind, it is not surprising to find that there appears to be general agreement about the difficulty in describing exactly what spirituality is (Pellebon and Anderson, 1999). It is not synonymous with religion (Canda and Furman, 1999). It influences humanity at both the micro (primal forces) (Strohl, 1998) and macro (transcendent states) (Siporin, 1985; Lajoie and Shapiro, 1992) levels of understanding. It adds another dynamic in potential conflict of values/beliefs between worker and client (Gotterer, 2001). Yet it would be perilous not to consider its impact on the health and wellbeing of both the worker and clients seeking professional services. In response, both Sermabeikian (1994) and Cascio (1998) expand on the importance of spirituality as a values/belief source that we as social workers need to be able to engage with appropriately for healing purposes. Stewart (in Nash and Stewart, 2002: 53, 54) sums up in an overview of the role that spirituality, and to a lesser extent religion, has in advancing competent social and community work practice:

Overall dominant cultural beliefs influence thinking in the helping field and appear to discourage practitioners from evaluating spirituality’s potential usefulness . . . As spiritual invites the metaphysical realm it does not easily represent what is observed in the material world . . . Religious and spiritual dimensions of culture are among the most important factors that structure human experience, beliefs, values, behaviour and illness patterns. There is a growing sensitivity to religious and spiritual issues as an important part of helper’s competence in working in culturally diverse environments.

The influence of wairua tanga is monumental when it comes to engaging with Maori/Tangata Whenua of Aotearoa. Its centricity to all human and social linking strategies is evidenced by Barlow (1991) who provides insight into the karanga or calls of welcome onto the marae, where the focus is not just on calling the living forward but also reaching their loved ones who have departed. Throughout all procedural forms of interactions between humanity there is intercession and dialogue between the living and the dead, the physical natural and spiritual dimensions, between ira tangata and ira atua (Best, 1924; 1924a; Te Hurinui, 1959; Ngata, 1959; 1961; 1970; Jenkins, 1988; Marsden, 1992; Salmond, 1991). Furthermore, Walters and Walters (1987: 11) break down the word wairua: ‘wai – water’, ‘rua – two/second stream’, and emphasizes its role in furthering one’s ‘enlightenment’ abilities. In addition, Hulme (1999: 27) reminds us all of the influence that wairua has in the lives of whanaau, as she defines and clarifies its significance to individual wellbeing:

. . . you have a wairua – an unseen double, a soul-shadow, your own spirit. This is absolutely personal to you: it is your spiritual essence. Now, we think your wairua can detach itself while you sleep, and go visiting. It can go to the realm of the dead and return with news (provided it doesn’t eat anything the dead offer it). It can go among the living (some people are said to be able to do this consciously). It can even make itself known while you’re conscious – sometimes you are attracted to someone you don’t know, who later turns out to be whanauka (part of your relation-group), and then you say ‘My wairua knew you before I did’.

Wairua was historically instrumental in establishing a protocol of interrelationships between the human, natural and esoteric dimensions of reality (Ruwhiu, 1999). The addition of ‘tanga – the collective’ to ‘wairua’, signposts the existence of a body of knowledge and culture wisdom/cultural intellectual property that can be accessed, added to, critiqued and advanced. For example, Henare (1988) and Barlow (1991) raised the point that all things living and non-living had both a physical manifestation as well as a spiritual identity. More importantly, that spiritual identity was created before physical manifestations of those entities materialised. In particular Barlow (1992: 152) writes of this understanding.

E peenei ana te whakaaro o te Maori, he tinana wairua, he tinana kikokiko too nga ma katoa, ahaka o whena, he wairua tooa; te moana, he wairua tooa; te kararehe, he wairua tooa; heke iho ki te tangata, he wairua tooa. I mua atu i te whakaahuatanga o te tangata i te oneone, he wairua ia - i noho tahie ngaa atua (Barlow, 1991: 152).
Transcribed as ‘The Maori believe that all things have a spirit as well as a physical body; even the earth has a spirit, the sea has a spirit, and so do the animals, birds, and fish; mankind also has a spirit. Before man was fashioned from the elements of the earth, he stood as a spirit and dwelt in the company of the gods’.

To me this signifies why it is important to understand how to engage with the promptings of the spirit, whether from human, esoteric or natural dimensions. Such culturally relevant knowledge/wisdom alongside the acquisition of appropriate skills and tools of engagement in the wairuatanga dimension covered earlier by my father, would assist in providing culturally significant social and community work assessments and interventions that indeed seek to whakamana whanau seeking support. A significant factor to take into account during this exploration of both spirituality and wairuatanga in relation to social/community work practice is that good analysis, dedicated and disciplined research (Nash and Stewart, 2002), and a desire for excellence will foster rich conceptual data. However, that needs to balanced by passion and compassion (Trute, 2002), respect and love for the people in question, and a record of utilising these concepts in practice which only occurs if you live the journey.

Section Two: Whanau pukorero

Section two unravels a ‘lived whanau journey’ with wairuatanga. One whanau pukorero has been selected amongst many to illustrate the interrelationship of the spiritual/ideological and philosophical terrain of wairuatanga impacting on the health and wellbeing of my whanau. A brief of wairuatanga in action (assessment/intervention plan for practitioners) is then built on the identification of key principles, entities, tools of engagement, issues, and a range of intervention strategies.

Mum and Mohaka

Hastings was our papakainga. We had been raised there as children. It was home. Our fires of occupation fiercely burned there. But in 1973, Uncle Hemi (one of my father’s younger brothers) who was on holiday in the North Island visited our whanau. He lived with his whanau in Timaru, Te Waipounamu. That visit prompted my parents to consider a lifestyle change so in 1974 while I was in my sixth form year at Church College of New Zealand (CCNZ), a co-education boarding school in Hamilton, my parents made the move with my seven brothers and two sisters to that South Island location. After my seventh form year I came back to Timaru to be with whanau. A brief stint in the Army Territorials (part of 2 Canterbury Battalion) was replaced with working fulltime to save for a full-time proselytising mission for the church we belonged to. It was during the last 6 months of my stay with whanau that trouble surfaced between my father and me. Mood swings were apparent and my younger siblings feared me. Furthermore I was quite disrespectful towards my parents. What blew me away was that I also knew my father could well have knocked my lights out on those occasions when I trampled over the mana of my whanau, but instead he just grabbed and held me in a bear hug until I settled down. When I finally got called to serve in the Auckland Mission, I didn’t want my parents to accompany me to the temple in Hamilton to take out my endowments, so an uncle did the honours instead. However, I began to miss my whanau terribly when I got posted to Whangarei, Kawakawa, Moerewa, Kaikohe and Kaitaia. I did a stocktake of the events and apologised to my parents, in particular my dad for my behaviour prior to going out on my mission. It was then that my Dad sent me an audiotape with the following account recorded for my benefit. His challenge was for me to listen so that I could comprehend. ‘E whakamarama ana ahau te pukorero hohonu o toku Matua’.
The pukorero began when my parents were newly-weds, living in a small two-bedroom bach as part of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints labour missionaries fraternity, involved in building CCNZ and the Temple in Temple View, Kirikiriroa/Hamilton. My father detailed the following event that was to be a re-occurring issue for my mother Waikaraka Emily Ruwhiu (nee Pere) while carrying her first six children. At that time she was about six months pregnant. I was that unborn child. It was 1957. Apparently, my father had just returned from offloading the wharf in Auckland bringing supplies and equipment for the building projects at Temple View. As he entered the kitchenette and two tiny bedroom unit, a man whom Dad described as handsome of Oriental complexion, wearing a black suit, white shirt and bow tie, about 5ft tall was leaving. My father assumed he was a new labour missionary introducing himself to people in the camp.

However, when he went into the bedroom, he was confronted by the following scene: My mother (a petite, slight woman just over five and a half feet tall) was on the bed and her whole body was twisting and turning in a distorted manner, her hands were positioned like the heads of a ngarara/serpent, rotating completely around and in my father’s words, ‘her eyes looked much like that of a serpent, ready to pounce’. Dad tried to assist my mother, but she threw my father off her with ease. He realised he needed help and rushed down the road bringing back a close friend, ‘Uncle Bill Katene’, to assist him in the administering of a blessing to my mother. It took a while completing that ordinance. She then settled and fell asleep. Upon awakening Dad asked her what had happened and this was her reply. She had decided to take an afternoon nap on the bed and as she was looking up at the ceiling she saw two serpents (one black and one gold) come out of the ceiling and enter into her mouth. She tried vomiting them out but couldn’t. And that’s all she remembers.

My mother was confronted by these ngarara on many occasions but only while she was hapu. These ngarara came to her, in all different places: through the window screen while driving, or in the home while doing various household chores and activities, etc. Each time she had such an experience, Dad would provide a priesthood blessing of wellness for my mother. However, again she would have these manifestations. My father began to question the power of his priesthood. When Mum was hapu with my brother Charles (number six child), Dad had a dream that conveyed a very strong message to him that he needed to take Mum to see one of her direct blood relatives from Mohaka to be blessed to get rid of this condition completely. My father didn’t take her straight away, because he wasn’t sure if the message in the dream was right. Eventually he was forced to do so, after these attacks increased in frequency.

So three months later both went to see Uncle Jim Brown, a direct bloodline relation of Mum’s from Mohaka. After speaking to him about Mum’s condition, Uncle Jim gave her a blessing, and then told them the following: that these ngarara came from Mohaka. Apparently the colours of the snakes (gold and black) were the colours of Mohaka. From that time to this my mother has not experienced those manifestations, however two of my siblings began experiencing similar things. Robert (a year younger than me) was eight years of age when he started sleepwalking and having bad nightmares. This meant going back to Uncle Jim for a blessing. That behaviour stopped.

Next my sister Marino, who would have been three years old, also started experiencing very difficult health problems and Uncle Jim gave her a blessing, so for quite a few years she experienced good health. Justification for these types of situations was linked back to land grievances in Mohaka and my grandfather who held the kaitiaka mantle regarding whenua in that area. And even today the ‘Pere whanau’ continue to count the costs.

The tape hadn’t ended. My father then went on to say: ‘Son, the reason why I’m telling
you this is that just before you were to go out on your mission I went outside our homestead in Hurley Street, Timaru, one evening and there standing outside our property was that same man, of Oriental complexion. It was a sign for me, son. I knew who he was and also knew what he wanted. He didn’t want you to serve a mission. That is why I hugged you.’

**Brief of wairuatanga in action (assessment/intervention plan for practitioners)**

*Identifying key principles:*

**Wairuatanga:**
- Your cultural identity is something that you should always take with you.
- Everything living and non-living has a wairua, has a mauri and is bound together by the cultural adhesive of mana. The ‘ko au’ framework that draws on ‘mana enhancing social and community work practice’ (refer to Ruwhiu, 1999 – chapter two).

**Te Ao Turoa:**
- This dimension is tuakana to the human terrain. Therefore natural places are critical spaces of dialogue that impact on the health and wellbeing of humanity.

**He tangata, he tangata, he tangata:**
- There are generations of people to consider when unfolding the issues suffered by one person if one views a person as a whanau. Valuing whanau in all its diversity.

*Identifying key entities:*

**Wairuatanga - the spiritual/ideological/philosophical/political terrain:**
- Ngarara, makutu, the man of Oriental complexion, perceptions of land ownership, valuing cultural knowledge in healing. Understanding the importance of whanau dealing with pain through the generations.

**Te Ao Turoa – the natural terrain:**
- Places of historical significance: Otaua, Horoera, Waipiro, Mohaka, Heretaunga, Timaru
- Living in Timaru for a reason, moving back to Ngapuhi roots. Spiritual spaces of significance – Temple View and CCNZ.
- Places of growth and development: Schools and communities

**He tangata, he tangata, he tangata - the human terrain:**
- My immediate whanau and in particular my teina (Robert Hawi) and tuahine (Marino). My father Pirihi Te Ohaki Ruwhiu and mother Waikaraka Emily Pere.
- Extended whanau who were connected by direct blood line (Ruwhiu whanau, McIlroy whanau, Huriwai whanau, Pere whanau, Paringatai whanau, Wharepapa whanau, Toheriri whanau, Huka whanau, Te Aho whanau, Te Aohaere whanau, Peha whanau, Pahau whanau, Tahuru whanau, Te Karoro whanau, Reed whanau) and in particular regarding this pukorero, Uncle Jim Brown and Uncle Hemi Rangatira Ruwhiu and Hineringa, an eponymous ancestor of Ngatipahauwera - a hapu from Mohaka.
- Whanau connected by kaupapa (e.g. Uncle Bill Katene). My mother’s father and his legacy – My grandfather, affectionately called Gangan - Hawi Pere, son of Mate Huka and Tamihana Pere. Labour Missionaries and Proselyting missionaries. CCNZ whanau.

*Identifying key tools of engagement: spiritual/cultural gifts in action.*

**Wairuatanga:**
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Respecting God the father and his son Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost.
- Iwitanga. Respecting Atua Maori and placing Matauranga Maori alongside other areas of knowledge.
• Using the knowledge and wisdom acquired from life, training, education to benefit whanau.
• Having a worldview and a position on issues surfacing – the impact of colonisation on whanau, etc.

Te Ao Turoa:
• Timaru – a place to rest and recuperate as a whanau.
• Temple/Kirikiriroa – a place to rest the soul
• Ngapuhi papakainga – a place of remembrance
• Mohaka – a place of contestation and belonging

He tangata, he tangata, he tangata:
• Dad – ability to understand the power and function of moemoea – dreams and interpretation of dreams. Seeing demons.
• Mum – a seer
• Leland – discerning spirits
• Robert – a conduit
• Marino – a conduit
• Uncle Jim – the ability to intercede on behalf of humanity to the gods using karakia.
• Gangan – Kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga.
• Hineringa – mata kite/mate kite/rongoa, a healer.
• Uncle Hemi – whanau tautoko
• Uncle Bill – magnifying his priesthood, hoatanga.

Identifying key issues to engage with.

Wairuatanga:
• Placing Maori knowledge and cultural wisdom at the forefront of healing (Valuing and engaging with Matauranga Maori in healing)
• Manifestations of wairua in healthy and non-healthy ways.
• Recognizing the cultural gifts and responsibilities passed down through the generations.
• Dealing with the impact of religion in a whanau.
• History of colonisation and its impact on whanau.
• Understanding the dynamics of whanau.
• Following the promptings of the spirit.

Te Ao Turoa:
• Safe and unsafe areas for whanau to be in.
• Where are the whanau healing places/spaces?

He tangata, he tangata, he tangata:
• Mate Maori or mental health problem
• Coping with intergenerational and across generational – passing down of hara (difficulties) and the human cost of this.
• Role modelling of healthy practices between Tane Maori (father and son).
• Understanding the underlying issues that people bring into a relationship.
• Unpacking messages implicit in history of a whanau and the interpretation of these.
• Assessing the importance of extended whanau.
• Dealing with remorse and sorrow.

Identify a range of interventions.

Wairuatanga:
• Exploring the dynamics of wairuatanga currently held by whanau.
• Planning around the acquisition of knowledge and Matauranga Maori.
• Identifying the cultural/spiritual gifts that whanau have and developing ways to keep our fires warm with our loved ones.
• Run whanau wananga about whanau, hapu tikanga me nga oritenga.
• Use Maori concepts and Maori practices to connect the wairua, whanau, hinengaro and tinana to the kaupapa explored.
• Decolonisation processes for whanau.

Te Ao Turoa:
• Visiting key critical places/spaces that impact on whanau wellbeing.
• Identifying safe zones for whanau.
• Identifying unsafe zones for whanau.

He tangata, he tangata, he tangata:
• Mana-enhancing social and community work practice would involve the following: Sharing our stories and spending time building up whanau resilience by timelining and unfolding the whakapapa of events and situations. Utilisation of whanau wananga. Affirming the functional role of key whanau members in healing. Strategizing to move that knowledge through the generations. Explicating concepts of whanau and its impact on health and wellbeing. Mapping out whakapapa with the history of Aotearoa New Zealand.

This brief of wairuatanga in action (Assessment/intervention action plan for practitioners) is something still in development mode, but displays clearly the multiplicity of dimensions Maori practitioners face in healing endeavours with whanau. That is why it is important not only to know about,

. . . the entire set of social parameters and rules of engagement which Maori use to dialogue and interact with all the other dimensions of the universe, but that knowledge needs to be grounded in principled practice (Ruwhiu, 2001: 63).

Section Three: Foundation Principles – Wairuatanga
Finally, this section allows me to weave the threads together by providing a further critique of four foundation principles that inform my practice in the wairuatanga dimension. This is where my principled practice is measured. I expect debate and discussion over these principles but at least that will occur in our critical space, structured by our ways of thinking and doing. Such an approach:

. . . embraces the importance of locally produced knowledge emanating from cultural histories, philosophies, social interactions and experiences of daily life. In this way cultural knowledge is nurtured and spiritual connections are made relevant in the social realities of daily life (Graham, 2002: 41/42)

As with my father’s korero, here are my ‘pearls of wisdom’ in the form of four foundation principles:

Principle One:
Put your culture back into professional practice as an informed decision. Often people enter into learning, training or work environments but leave their cultural realities at the door. A respected social service colleague of mine from another discipline and different cultural reality reminded me of the power of knowing your ‘root culture’ (Aiyar, 2002 unpublished). Holding that close to you, being culturally congruent (Stephens, 1999) as you move through contrasting environments and owning its presence via your values and beliefs (Freire, 1972) as they inform your practice, does provide colour diversity and should command respect alongside the culture of work and colleagues. Benland (1988: 465) aptly
describes the environment outcomes for social and community work practitioners who adhere to this principle:

\[\ldots\] social workers who have an awareness of, a respect for, and a commitment to the enhancement of, the human spiritual will find words to communicate their perception. And then we might find we are a people of vision, a people of wisdom, whose cities have faces, whose cultures have heart and compassion, and whose offspring have heritage and hope.

**Principle Two:**
A client is a whanau and you are whanau to that client. So in terms of the first part of this principle, if the most micro-engagement point with Maori is the whanau (Metge, 1995), then an individual client must be a whanau. That is clarified by a much-used slogan within academic circles, ‘As individual as the collective’. Individuals are not only ‘human manifestations of their tupunua’ (Mokomoko, 2000; Kuka, 2000) but that they are also surrounded by loved ones from the past, present and future (Ruwhiu, 1995). Sometimes they aren’t loved ones (Hulme, 1993). Tauroa (1986: 14) in describing the ‘karanga’ provides further evidence of this view by articulating that:

The karanga awakens the emotions. It brings an awareness that what is happening is not just a simple act of going onto a marae – there is a presence of people, both physical and spiritual. If that rationale is true then when you are seeing an individual person, because they bring all of theirs with them, and you have yours with you, a ‘hui of entities’ is occurring (Barlow, 1991). Such dialogue pasts the spoken word, as spirits converse with spirits (Sinclair, 1976; Pere, 1979; 1982; 1991), as potentiality converses with potentiality, as past present and future engages with the reality of healing. That is why my father highlights the wero, ‘to be at ease’ and ‘reconciled’ with ‘wairuatanga’ in our own lives as Maori social/community workers before having to engage with and manage the multiplicity of contact sites generated by a person and theirs in crisis.

The second part of this principle challenges a major premise in our profession about distancing the work realities from one’s personal life. My position on this ethical point is that successful work by Maori social and community work practitioners is vivified as they understand the dynamics of being another whanau member to those whom they are working with. There will be times when they will be enacting tuakana, even matua roles within that client-worker environment, while certainly on occasions they will be guided by those they are working with.

**Principle Three:**
Gifts of the spirit are real and can embellish your professional practice with whanau Maori and at the same time there is an exchange of gifts occurring during the client/worker interventions. The first part of this principle simply states the following: Know your spiritual/cultural gifts. That means that you will need to identify, understand, utilise and strengthen them to aid you in your mahi.

The second part of this principle, deals with reciprocity. There are always benefits and costs to engaging with whanau. For the whanau, it could well be receiving support to deal with trauma. For the worker, that engagement benefit might be added wisdom and experience in a particular field of practice. There are some instances where the cost is also evident. I carry things with me even to this day on my shoulders that are in fact the burdens of others.

**Principle Four:**
Engage in mana-enhancing social and community work. Drawing from the ‘ko au’ framework (Ruwhiu, 1999; 1999a, 2001; 2001a), the cultural adhesive that binds the Maori world
together is mana. Every one has mana. Hulme (1993: 27) describes mana in this fashion:

- You have a personal power or property called mana, which is partly inherited, partly decreased or increased by your own actions. Your mana cloaks and shields you, and can ward off bad influences. It can, however, be affected by other peoples actions.

This understanding has influenced the development of my ‘Mana enhancing social and community work practice model’ (Ruwhiu, 2005 unpublished). It is not the same as strengths-based practice. Its origins emerge out of Maori ways of doing, thinking and feeling. Ramsden (1990: 18) captures the essence of this korero when she wrote:

- All things animate and inanimate we regard in kinship, respecting and sharing the mauri, the life force, of everything.

Part of the journey in aligning this principle to my practice has been based on realising the interconnectedness of humanity with the natural and spiritual dimensions of reality. In addition, knowing exactly what is meant by, ‘if you trample over someone else’s mana you are effectively trampling over your own.

In a discourse that Sir Peter Buck wrote to Sir Apirana Ngata, he makes the following observation in relation to bench-marking that I think nicely sums up the challenge I’ll conclude with here: Apparently it had to do with where you stand in the analysis spectrum, but its meaning is relevant to us even today. Sir Peter says:

- I have digressed enough and must return to my first paragraph. Whilst the Pakeha regards us from the higher altitude of his culture and stresses how far we are behind, we on our side must scan the heights to realise how far we have to struggle upwards (Sorrenson, 1987: 12).

Subsequently, these four founding principles beg your critique so that as Tangata Whenua social and community work practitioners we can also strengthen our practice using wairuatanga within our profession for the benefit of our whanau.

Noreira e te iwi, kia kaha, kia maia, kia manawanui. Engari kaua e wareware ki enei korero tawhito, e hara te toa i takitahi, engari he toa takitini.

The father and the son are one – we speak in unison

In the early hours of the morning embers gasp for breath . . . the fire is almost out. A father’s call and son in weary mode follows, wood for burning the journey starts. Wisdom selects the place and youthful zeal fills the trailer high. The homeward journey short, and soon a fire is roaring, delightful tunes through wood so dry. Again the heath is warm and breakfast begs to feed our household risen . . .

It’s been an interesting process of combining two similar yet different streams of knowledge and wisdom concerning ‘spiritual awareness - wairuatanga’ into one whole. As Conda and Furman state:

- Spirituality (wairuatanga) is the heart of helping. It is the heart of empathy and care, the pulse of compassion, the vital flow of practice wisdom, and the driving force of action for service.

At a time when we are about to celebrate Te Ahi Kaa – our right of occupation in this profession of social work in Aotearoa, our combined advice to Maori social and community work practitioners is that in cultural terms make sure that your te ahi wairuatanga is fed, that it is burning brightly, and that you are warming your soul from it. My father leaves you with thoughts to ponder over– these are his words to support you in your mahi. To me, his wairua speaks and warms my soul, he invigorates my ideologies, and consolidates that sense of whanau that is ours to hold on to.

- I hanga mai te matauranga i o tatou matou tupuna. Hei hono i te ao wairua ki te ao kikokiko – our knowledge has come from our ancestors to join the spiritual world to this our mortal realm.
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