

## **Wairua and cultural values in evaluation**

**Vivienne Kennedy, Fiona Cram, Kirimatao Paipa, Kataraina Pipi,  
and Maria Baker**

Wairua (spirit) is threaded through the cultural beliefs, practices, and values of Māori, the indigenous peoples of New Zealand. It is an inherent part of the daily life and cultural vitality that is embedded in Māori services and programmes. In a wānanga (forum for discussion and learning) Māori and Pasifika (peoples from the Pacific Islands, especially Polynesia, who reside in Aotearoa New Zealand) evaluators were asked to share their thoughts about how they acknowledge, value, and represent wairua in their evaluation work. Seven principles emerged from this sharing: Mauri—feeling connected; Aroha ki te tangata—respect for people; Manaaki ki te tangata—generosity and sharing with people; Kaitiakitanga—guardianship; Kia tūpato—taking care; Whakanoa—cleansing of the spirit; and Mōhiotanga, mātauranga and māramatanga—knowledge, collective wisdom, and enlightenment. In this article Māori evaluators discuss Aroha ki te tangata, Manaaki ki te tangata, and Mauri. The evaluators examine how rituals of encounter, and the building and maintaining of relationships strengthen the ā-wairua (spiritual) connections with evaluation participants that last beyond the life of any single evaluation; whilst engendering notions of care, respect and obligation. It is hoped that the exploration of these

experiences will prompt other evaluators to contemplate how wairua is woven into their culturally responsive evaluation practice.

## Introduction

It is time/space to speak of the spiritual dimension of life. Do not curl away in anti-religious dismay or leap into dogmatic exaltation. This discussion of spirituality is not a religious idea, we just think it is. Shake that belief off and clear your mind. Wairua/wailua (spirit) is as real as the tangible and mindful realms. (Meyer, 2014)

Māori are the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand. As Māori evaluators we try to keep up to date with current evaluation and research theories and methods. We also strive to manage projects professionally, including being financially accountable. We continue to improve our skills and push the boundaries of Western evaluation by integrating our cultural practices into our work in order to best serve our people well. We also involve ourselves in writing activities that enable readers to glimpse our practices as Māori. However, even when speaking only for ourselves, the responsibility of correctly and appropriately representing Māori culture to meet tribal and academic accountabilities is an overwhelming task, and even more so when the material is to be published and made available nationally and internationally.

As Māori we source our cultural strength, knowledge and capital from our ancestors who created our traditions to integrate seamlessly with the realities of life on earth and Māori cosmology (Marsden, 1993). The colonisation of Māori, for the most part, has successfully separated divine practice out from the realities in which we live, marking sacred practice as invalid and less than worthy. To this day writing about traditional cultural concepts across western academic mediums and worldviews is a bit tricky due to the marginalisation of Māori traditional spiritual practices. It involves contemplating an

all-encompassing force such as mauri (life force) and attempting to write about it in a way that it will be readily recognised by our people; understood by indigenous and non-indigenous people; and will meet the academic and theoretical conventions of evaluation and research. To this end we have deliberately chosen to look inward and resisted any urge to compare our world with a Western worldview that has been implicated in Māori marginalisation.

The expressions of wairua (spirit) and wairuatanga (spirituality) we explore in this article are by no means exhaustive; they are only some of the many cultural and spiritual practices that were discussed and used in the course of our evaluation commitments. We hope that the exploration of our experiences will prompt other evaluators to contemplate how wairua is woven into their culturally responsive evaluation practice.

the essence of a[n indigenous] person has a genealogy that can be traced back to an earth parent, usually glossed as an Earth Mother. A human person does not stand alone, but shares with other animate and, in the Western sense ‘inanimate’ beings, a relationship based on a shared ‘essence of life’. The significance of place, of land, of landscape, of other things in the universe, in defining the very essence of people, makes for a very different rendering of the term essentialism as used by Indigenous peoples. (Smith, 1999, p. 74)

This quote from Smith (1999) reminds us about the refusal of indigenous peoples to be spiritually separated from our mother earth and all our relations that co-exist on this planet with us, or, indeed, separated from the cosmos. Smith also highlights the need to name the difference between an indigenous ontology (understanding of reality) and a Western ontology that excludes this shared “essence of life”, or mauri. If indigenous evaluators step into a Western ontology to undertake evaluations, then the spiritual is excluded as either intangible (and unable to be evidenced), or simply irrelevant. For this

reason we chose to write into this evaluation space—to make explicit the important place of spirituality within indigenous evaluation by exploring how Māori evaluators are thinking, feeling, and practicing in ways that are informed by our belief systems. This article first explores general understandings of spirituality, and the role of spirituality in the design and delivery of Māori programmes and services. We then describe our journey as Māori evaluators in this space and what we hope to accomplish in this article.

### **Spirituality**

Pihama (2001) noted that often spirituality is acclaimed as religion. Hinterkopf (1998) delineated spirituality and religiousness, and non-theism and theism, for the purpose of spiritual counselling in a culturally respectful way. She adhered to Shafranske and Gorsuch's (1984) definition of spirituality as being a unique and personal experience, whereas Shafranske and Malony (1990) viewed religion as an adherence to the beliefs and practices of an organised church or religious institution. Hinterkopf suggested theism in the Western sense relates to the belief in God, the Creator, or a Higher Power. Non-theism, by contrast, can be seen to borrow from Eastern traditions of spirituality that include extraordinary events such as visions, past life, and out-of-body experiences. Hinterkopf pointed out that many people are spiritual but not religious in the theistic sense, hence the need for a comprehensive definition of spirituality. For indigenous peoples Meyer (2014) described “a spiritual dimension un-linked to religious dogma, described in ethereal, mystic, and yet experiential terms” (p. 3435).

The difference between spirituality and religiousness often brought indigenous peoples into conflict with missionaries determined to impose and convert “heathens” to monotheism. Within the short history of the colonisation of Aotearoa New Zealand the churches

and their missionary work had a complex relationship with Māori that implicated them as both perpetrators and moderators of colonial agendas (Cram & Pitama, 1998; Walker, 2004). Smith (1999) wrote:

Concepts of spirituality that Christianity attempted to destroy, then to appropriate, then to claim, are critical sites of resistance for Indigenous peoples. The values, attitudes, concepts and language embedded in beliefs about spirituality represent, in many cases, the clearest contract and mark of difference between Indigenous peoples and the West. (p. 74)

Henry and Pene (2001, p. 235) noted that British culture was in direct contrast to that of the Māori political economy and therefore Māori suffered through the “systematic introduction of British rule”.

Māori social, cultural and spiritual institutions were eroded, alongside the expropriation of land and resources, the diminution of language and cultural artifacts, and the assimilation of Māori into Western society. However, traces of the traditional culture resonate in contemporary Māori beliefs and practices.

Durie (1985), in his article on Te Whare Tapa Whā, made a space for spirituality in contemporary Māori health practices and beliefs. Alongside a wairua dimension, Māori hauora (health) is now conceived of as embodying tinana (physical), hinengaro (mental), and manawa (emotional) aspects of a person within the context of their whānau (family), taiāo (environment), and iwi katoa (society) (Ministry of Health, 2002; Pitama, Robertson, Cram, Gillies, Huria, & Dallas-Katoa, 2007). For Durie, wairua is essential, and the most basic requirement for health.

Without a spiritual awareness, the individual is considered to be lacking in wellbeing and more prone to disability and misfortune. A spiritual dimension includes religious beliefs and practices but is not synonymous with regular church-going or strong adherence to a particular denomination. It acknowledges man’s [*sic*] limitations

over his [*sic*] environment and the need to humble oneself to the elements. (Durie, 1985, p. 483)

Cram, Smith, and Johnstone (2003) found that wairua is the most widely mentioned aspect of Māori health. It is “the key to understanding health and illness as it gives access to the whole person, not just their physical symptoms, allowing healing to take place” (p. 4). Cree scholar Wilson (2008, p. 3) also noted the importance of spirituality to health and wellbeing; that it cannot be compartmentalised as one aspect of the indigenous worldview. Rather, spirituality, like physical, mental and emotional health, is an integral part of indigenous wellness.

Such writings (Durie, 1985; Murchie, 1984; Smith, 1999) about the place of spirituality within the health realm were one of the first inroads to government agencies acknowledging and valuing the connectedness Māori have with a view of the world that includes a strong and present spiritual dimension. In the next section the implications of this worldview for service delivery are explored.

### ***Conceptualisation of indigenous knowledge in research and evaluation***

For Māori, wairuatanga is threaded through beliefs, values, and practices. It is an inherent part of daily life and cultural vitality. Spiritual values are therefore embedded within Māori services and programmes and are often implicit in the assessments given by evaluators about how effective these initiatives are. For example, kaupapa Māori, the “conceptualization of Māori knowledge” (p. 15), has its origins in a spiritual base that underpins the thoughts, beliefs, values, and interactions of Māori (Nepe, 1991). Simmonds (2009) credited kaupapa Māori as “providing the space to engage with knowledge derived from a blend of spirituality, mythology, and lived experiences” (p. 15). When Pohatu (2011) described the importance of

mauri he spoke about the importance of spirituality within the evaluation space:

Mauri is crucial to the wellbeing of relationships and issues (kaupapa). It informs how and why activities should be undertaken and monitors how well such activities are progressing towards their intended goals. (Pohatu, 2011, p. 1)

Māori may encounter worldviews different from their own when they go to work, shop, receive health care, or welfare and other services from non-Māori peoples and organisations. These encounters may place their own values and beliefs into sharp contrast, rather than them being “normal” or ordinary (Reid & Cram, 2004). While this may not be the case if they attend a Māori service or organisation, the role of spirituality within service and programme delivery still needs to be acknowledged by non-Māori funders. When spirituality is acknowledged it can be valued as an essential component of Māori wellness (and possibly even funded). For it to be acknowledged, evaluators will have to ask after it, and be able to incorporate it into their evaluation methodologies and reporting. It is also about evaluators “being ready intellectually, emotionally, physically, and spiritually to fully absorb cultural knowledge” (Archibald, 1997, p. 69).

### ***The present article***

In March 2013 a group of 21 Māori and Pasifika (peoples from the Pacific Islands, especially Polynesia, who reside in Aotearoa New Zealand) evaluators gathered within a wānanga (forum for discussion and learning) to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences about the spiritual dimension of evaluation. A written overview (Kennedy, et al., 2015) provided a description of seven principles that emerged from this wānanga. These principles were: Mauri—feeling connected; Aroha ki te tangata—respect for people; Manaaki ki te tangata—generosity and sharing with people; Kaitiakitanga—guardianship;

Kia tūpato—taking care; Whakanoa—cleansing of the spirit; and Mōhioatanga, mātauranga and māramatanga—knowledge, collective wisdom, and enlightenment. Kennedy et al.’s overview reflected the start of our journey as Māori and Pasifika evaluators to make what is often implicit regarding wairua in our evaluation discussions and reporting, more explicit. We did not aim nor claim to define wairua; instead we portrayed some aspects of spirituality that we consider as researchers or evaluators when working with our people in a culturally responsive manner.

This article continues the conversation about wairua in evaluation with Māori as we enlarge upon three of the seven principles: Mauri; Aroha ki te tangata; and Manaaki ki te tangata. These three principles formed a natural cluster as they all relate to a way of being with our people in loving, caring and respectful ways. This article provides a glimpse into the totality of wairua. We, the authors, caution that while we are not experts on the topic of wairua, neither are we novices. We speak only of our experiences as Māori evaluators as we cannot and do not purport to speak for our Pasifika colleagues. Most Māori, many of whom conduct their lives outside the halls of academia, will easily understand the language (grounded theory) that is used.

## ***Exploration of cultural expressions of wairua***

### **Aroha ki te tangata**

Aroha ki te tangata, a respect for people (Smith, 1999), also translates as “love or compassion for the people” (Kennedy, et al., 2015 p. 156). In our evaluation work with Māori we strive to make a difference; not because it is our job, but because of a genuine interest in and love for our people that culminates in a desire to see people well and fulfilling their potential. This compassion for people also acknowledges that Māori have a strong sense of connectedness with one other, with

the environment, and with the cosmos. This connectedness is made explicit in the practice of rituals that express people's compassion, respect, and responsibilities towards one another.

Aroha ki te tangata is the principle that prompts us as Māori evaluators to enact our responsibilities to connect ā-wairua (spiritually) with participants involved in an evaluation (Cram, 2001). There is a sacredness (tapu) of all things, especially of the person. Before there is kōrero (discussion), there is assurance that the evaluator, the participant, and the location are free from tapu. To show compassion (aroha ki te tangata) Māori evaluators engage in cultural rituals of encounter (Jones, Crengle & McCreanor, 2006; Kennedy & Cram, 2010) and whakawhanaungatanga (relationship building). These help ensure that essential connections are made between themselves and evaluation participants (Kennedy & Cram, 2010), and “actively interpret relationships in order to bring the sacred to the centre of being” (Wolfgramm, 2007, p. 80).

Participating in Māori rituals of encounter means identifying oneself with one's people, both living and dead, with tūpuna (ancestors) and atua (gods). By doing so, there is a remembering and acknowledging of one's forebears, their knowledge, and their values and customs that have been passed on through the generations. The application of aroha ki te tangata means some flexibility in the evaluative approach to mana whenua (those with authority over land) and their rituals of encounter (Jones et al., 2006). By ensuring such, we uphold the mana (status) of the people, and engender a willing relationship of that community with the evaluator (Jones, Ingham, Davies & Cram, 2010).

This ā-wairua connection might be considered as something that normally develops between those physically present during an encounter. However Māori researchers have demonstrated the importance of such rituals, for example, when accessing factory personnel records,

including the lifting of tapu through karakia (prayer) because there was a chance that some of those whose lives were recorded had passed away (Keefe, et al., 1999).

Not all of the people we encounter may want to, or know how to, engage with us in very traditional ways (Edwards, McManus, & McCreanor, 2005). Aroha ki te tangata incorporates processes that allow Māori to define their own space and to meet on their own terms (Pipi et al., 2004; Kennedy & Cram, 2010). This approach of evaluation participants being in the ‘driver’s seat’ then continues throughout the evaluation. As evaluators, our prime purpose is to show a genuine valuing of those involved with and affected by the evaluation (Kidd, Gibbons, Lawrenson & Johnstone, 2010), and to foster the recognition of wairua so that the evaluation can proceed safely and smoothly.

#### *Case example*

Aroha ki te tangata means that, as evaluators, we are sensing what is going on for people all the time and picking the moments that kōrero may flow freely, yet sustaining the tapu and mana of the person. An example that Te Kapua talked about is when she was conducting an interview with someone who had recently experienced a traumatic event with her family, which required sensitivity when talking about particular whānau members.

I could sense that it wasn’t the right time to “go there” yet, so quickly skipped to the next question, which is not what I usually do as I love to hear about this topic if people are willing to share. Thinking back perhaps she knew that I might already know about the event and it was me who was not ready to discuss it. About 15 minutes into the interview, the topic of children came up again, and this time I felt ready to “go there” as I could tell (from what she had already shared with me) that she would feel safe to talk about it, and she was and did. (Te Kapua sharing during the wānanga)

### *Implications for practice*

Aroha ki te tangata means that, as Māori, we are mindful and respectful of the individual or group we are engaged with at all times before, during, and after any ‘evaluation’ contact we have with them. It means that, as evaluators, we bring a deliberate compassion to the situation and view others as complete persons, with the accompanying recognition of their wairua. This deliberate compassion is responsive to both state and context (see Table 1). *State* refers to the inner mental, physical, or spiritual state of a person, and that person’s ability and readiness to respond to an evaluative inquiry. *Context* is the outer world that a person is moving in, such as that person’s intimate partner relationship or community, and the care we need to take in order to help them navigate this world so that our evaluative inquiry does not place them at risk.

### **Manaaki ki te tangata**

Manaaki ki te tangata (generosity and sharing with people) (Smith, 1999) places high value on looking after people, and caring for and nurturing them (Mead, 2003). Relating manaaki ki te tangata to an evaluation context means applying the principles of caring for others as a purposeful expression of mana towards them (Pipi et al., 2004). The sharing of kai (food) or koha (gifts) is often associated with manaakitanga (hospitality), as a tangible demonstration of the mana of the relationship. This raises the need for evaluators to ensure that resources are available to enable manaakitanga, and for Māori to fully participate in the evaluation (Kennedy & Cram, 2010).

The sharing of kai is an enactment that has a history of ritual. In the past atua were acknowledged for the kai they provided, the source of its being (e.g., Tangaroa (god of the sea) and kaimoana (sea-food)). After ritual eating of kai occurred people were deemed free of restrictions (tapu). A process of whakanoa (the freeing of restrictions)

by the offering of kai remains a valid practice for evaluators as it completes the rituals of engagement with Māori, and provides for a safe spiritual space for both parties to kōrero. Often special kai will be shared with the evaluators from the participants’ personal resources as acknowledgement of appreciation of their engagement with the evaluator. It should be noted that refusal of koha or kai given by Māori is deemed an insult to some, and may be regarded as a minimisation of their mana and the relationship.

Table 1. Aroha ki te tangata considerations and practice

Considerations	Examples	Practice
<p>State Consider the state (mental, physical, spiritual) of the person/ group and his/her/ their ability to converse and participate at various levels and the appropriate time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A participant’s ability to talk about sensitive issues, and to what depth.</li> <li>• A participant’s level of comfort with the subject, process and timing.</li> <li>• Appreciation of what a participant might consider to be tapu and noa.</li> </ul>	<p>Requires probing, facilitation, clarifying, reframing, constant checking, understanding the participant’s level of attention and focus, appropriate chunking of information (too much, too little, too academic, etc.).</p> <p>Tiakina te wairua o te tangata—take care of the spiritual wellbeing of the person/group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure tapu is not violated</li> <li>• ensure rituals of encounter are conducted and respected.</li> </ul>
<p>Context Understand the context from which the person/ group is/are speaking. Build the person’s/group’s mana and recognition of sacred spaces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When working in small rural Māori communities, seek to understand their world view from that community context.</li> <li>• Women who have been in violent relationships or victims of sexual abuse might respond to questions differently, particularly if they trigger traumatic memories.</li> </ul>	<p>Mā tōna wā—appreciate the time and space required for conversations to occur</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognise the sacredness of those who have been marginalised; and the evaluative session together may foster healing</li> <li>• ask people to recall experiences, rather than relive them.</li> </ul>

As Māori evaluators participate in and support appropriate rituals of encounter they foster collaboration and reciprocity (Pipi et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2006), which in turn creates the sharing of collective knowledge and wisdom (Pipi et al., 2004). This means sowing the seeds of relationships for the evaluative period and being cognisant of the subsequent connections made with Māori communities, with possible expectations of reciprocity subsequent to the evaluation.

In the spiritual context, *manaaki ki te tangata* promotes cleansing of the spirit of self and others, which is especially pertinent in certain situations, such as when the subject matter may raise personal or challenging issues. In any situation, the evaluator ensures a person's *mana* is maintained, and their experience and contribution appreciated. In addition, Māori evaluators ensure their own self-preservation and professionalism are intact with effective peer support and reflective opportunities regarding *wairua* in evaluation.

#### *Case example*

*Manaaki ki te tangata* means that, as a Māori evaluator, there are expectations to *tiaki* (to care for, protect) the *kōrero* received, with an understanding that there will be an interaction of *wairua* when working with people. This premise requires ongoing reflection and deepening of one's sense of *wairua*, while considering how to give back to a person, in order to acknowledge the *wairua* connection. A concept of *koha kōrero* (contribution of discussion or stories) appreciates the gift of *kōrero* from participants and the reciprocal expectation of the Māori evaluator to best look after the *kōrero*, and to consider how best to honour it for what it is. This concept also pertains to providing feedback, and to ensuring a point of safe counsel when unexpected situations arise for Māori providers, or when concerning circumstances are revealed.

During an evaluation with a Māori provider, it was evident that the holders of the vision for the organisation lay with the kuia [female elders] on the board. The context was a challenging one, where the kuia were struggling to understand the complexities of a situation that resulted in spiritual ramifications. I felt that the best way to manaaki [support] them was to kōrero in te reo Māori [the Māori language] and invite their reflections. I found the kuia drawn to te reo [the language] and to me for counsel of the situation. This then resulted in additional kōrero with the kuia about strategies for ensuring everyone's wellbeing throughout the next stage of their work. (Kataraina sharing during the wānanga)

## **Mauri**

During the wānanga to discuss the connection between wairua and evaluation, Māori evaluators confirmed the value of mauri in creating and maintaining relationships. A simple explanation of *mauri* is “life force”, a form of energy found in all living beings. Mauri can be described as charisma, vigour, vibration, unseen force and connection. According to Pohatu (2011), mauri is crucial to the wellbeing of relationships and overcoming issues. In combination with other Māori words, mauri can describe the mental and physical state of an individual's or family's life force. Three states of mauri are shared here—*mauri moe* (unconscious state), *mauri oho* (proactive state), and *mauri ora* (state of wellness). These concepts are used widely amongst Māori to describe states of wellbeing; in the last two decades Māori social service providers have embraced these concepts and variations on the theme to develop their service delivery approaches to better respond to the needs of individuals and family. It is therefore timely to consider mauri as it relates to the evaluation experiences of Māori evaluators.

### *Mauri moe*

An example of mauri moe is someone who is in a state of potentiality or expectation; someone who is not yet aware of how to bring that potential into reality. This state may also be described as a safe place, where one may be vulnerable, anxious, depressed, or unwell. In this state one can attract good or bad experiences. The following are some experiences evaluators shared at the evaluation wānanga that show a range of states of mauri moe.

Kiri noted that she needed to be mindful of how her state impacts others when she feels stressed, sleep deprived and unwell, as this state is reflective of a depleted life force that requires attention in order to engage well with others. Another state of mauri mentioned is a personal state of trust that the journey we are on as evaluators will become clear. Roxanne spoke of walking into the unknown; unclear of the reasons why or how she became involved in a particular evaluation, until she met someone who helped her make sense of her journey and “join the dots”.

Spiritual safety was a topic that came up regularly throughout the wānanga. For Te Kapua, safe engagement with strangers saw her use her senses to guide how she responded and connected with people. She did this by first observing her responses and feelings, as she accessed her mauri to guide her first impressions when she met people. The mauri within her then guided how she responded and connected with people. For Laurie, having personal knowledge about his whakapapa (genealogy) allowed him to make formal connections. He acknowledged that mauri is expressed by showing genuine interest in evaluation participants, and by expressing an attitude of care. Laurie’s counsel to other evaluators was that “If people see this attitude of care, they will welcome you, but if they see you just coming for the data, they will probably not be that open.”

Fiona spoke about taking time to be quiet and settled in order to

be responsive. She suggested we tune into a quiet and settled place for ourselves to be, so that we are neither leading nor directly influencing others about what they should be feeling, what they should say, or what they might think we want to hear or talk about. Fiona explained:

Part of finding this quiet place is about the rituals that take place in our encounters when I'm often asking people how they would like to begin. Part of this is about me not wanting to impose a spirituality on a situation that may be inappropriate, and part of it is about wanting to acknowledge the rangatiratanga [sovereignty] of those I'm with to both protect and direct the context.

Mauri moe is a state where the vulnerable can seek solace, sanctuary and safety. Tim spoke of how his aunt's waiata (songs) relieved his anxiousness when visiting certain places. He advised that once she explained to him about historical events that had occurred at those places, and then sung him a song, he felt "completely cleansed and free of that spooky feeling".

The previous experiences show that there are external and internal processes that occur to support communication when mauri moe is engaged. Prime physical health charges the wellbeing and supports a vibrant mauri; trust supports stability when the destination and journey is unclear; taking contemplative pauses helps access mauri as a guide for appropriate interaction; while genuine caring for others supports authentic exchanges. Lastly, having knowledge of the past, and how it relates to the present, helps support a peaceful mauri.

### *Mauri oho*

Mauri oho describes an awakening to action—a move beyond the state of mauri moe—which may require one to be courageous and begin engaging with others and their world. As Māori, and as evaluators, our own lived experiences prepare us for intuitively knowing the hardships our people endure. Thus, our mauri is primed to intuit

the unspoken struggles of Māori within an interview setting. In this way, mauri is the connective tissue that bonds one with another in a relationship of reciprocity and respect.

The next practice example makes a number of points about connection, obligation, and responsibility. Maria makes the point that there is a kaitiakitanga (duty of care) that emerges when gathering stories about and from people. The responsibility of care involves another process, that of koha and of reciprocation. Maria explained:

When you make a connection with somebody, be it a short-term occurrence or a one-off engagement, that connection stays. In our line of mahi [work] there's a potential that people will share kōrero that possibly they've never shared before, so we as researchers and evaluators have an obligation to look after that. You have to honour that; you have to recognize it. Part of that, about looking after wairua, is about kaitiakitanga. We need to know how to look after that [wairua interaction as researcher and participant], and at the same time you have to look after yourself. That koha [gift] and giving back [reciprocating], there's a whole mauri in that, and I think that's a feeling of depth, life meaning and of responsibility.

The above example reflects on the obligation and care we as Māori evaluators must take when awakening the mauri of another. This is especially so when we gather people's experiences for data. Therefore, we have a duty of care to acknowledge that at times those experiences may have been hard lived and at times painful. As Māori evaluators the acknowledgement of other's feelings and mauri is encased in a space of tikanga and includes a cycle of reciprocity—an obligation to maintain relationships and ensure the proper representation of their words, feelings and experiences.

#### *Mauri ora*

Mauri ora is the state of wellbeing where words such as *capable*, *confident*, *engaging*, *whole-hearted* and *satisfied* may be used to describe the

life force of the person, the person's family, or place. When a person is in a state of wellbeing there are a number of traditional ways of protecting one's wellbeing. The following experience shared at the wānanga shows a number of aspects of mauri: first, how an evaluator experienced the mauri of an environment; secondly, how a greenstone taonga (treasured pendant) she wore took on the mauri of that environment; and thirdly, how karakia was used as a force to protect her mauri.

Kellie was conducting an evaluation of a rehabilitation programme with male prisoners at a prison. She told of being physically ill the day following an interview with a prisoner, of being unable to work, and of the greenstone taonga she wore around her neck taking on a revolting smell. A discussion with her aunt revealed the need for Kellie to keep herself safe. Kellie was quick to point out that she realised the negative effects had emanated from the prison environment, and she contemplated the effects of this environment on inmates.

If that is what the system does to me when I am in there for an hour and a half, what is that system doing to that tane [man] that I was talking to who was in there on a rehab[ilitation] programme? Where is the space for us as evaluators to report that, that is, the impact of the environment and systems? If that's what it's like for us as evaluators and researchers, imagine what it is like for our people inside those systems on a daily basis.

In this respect the greenstone taonga became the vehicle to carry the bad energy felt by Kellie from her interview with the prisoner. When Kellie came out of the environment the taonga continued to carry the conversations and energy of that encounter, and of the prison environment. Karakia is a cleansing force, which was used to neutralise the negative forces within the taonga and within the psyche of our colleague.

This example showcases an underlying Māori belief that mauri can be transferred between people, inanimate objects, the earth or

an environment such as a prison. In this case, Kellie and her taonga became beacons for the mauri of the prison, and thus her distress the following day. Kellie became ora (well) once prayers were undertaken to clear her mauri and her taonga.

### *Mauri in summary*

For Māori evaluators, mauri is a pervading force that exists in personal and interpersonal spaces with self, others, and the environment. Mauri moe requires wellbeing, trust, certainty and authenticity in order for genuine communication to take place. Once this occurs and the mauri is awoken (oho) consideration is then given to ongoing relationships, such as how to adequately acknowledge people's experiences, feelings, and words; what to give back (reciprocate with) for that which has been taken (received); and how to acknowledge the mauri that was expended in order to tell the story. Effectively, to maintain the state of mauri ora, we as Māori evaluators need to know, or have access to people who know, how to cleanse our spirits when required.

## **Discussion**

In instigating a wānanga to discuss spirituality within our evaluation practice as Māori evaluators we were striving to make explicit those things that we might not always articulate in our evaluation reports. This may be because audiences for our evaluations at best do not understand, and at worst do not value wairua as an intimate part of Māori service delivery and therefore of our approach to evaluating the work and success of Māori and iwi provider organisations. We are mindful of the words of Douglas-Huriwai (2012), that

[Māori] culture is enormously spiritual... The risk we run if we approach our spirituality in a passive manner is that we reduce these most intimate of times into little more than a role play, a performance with no substance. The substance to everything we do as

Māori relies on a foundation built from a spiritually deliberate base. This means that we have an obligation as Māori to become more spiritually aware.

Our responsibility as Māori evaluators is to: recognise and acknowledge wairua in our work; understand our limitations in this area and discuss this more deliberately; to include cultural supervision in projects where wairua and cultural values in evaluation need to be explored or explained; reflect on our practice and the extent to which we understand the contribution that tikanga approaches enable understanding of findings; and critically reflect and write about the extent to which our practice can further marginalise our spirituality. In other words, our intent is to become more explicitly aware of the role of wairua in our work and to share this awareness with others.

This article is part of that journey. In it we have expanded upon three of the seven principles arising out of a wānanga where Māori and Pasifika evaluators spoke explicitly about wairua within their evaluation practice. We used the dialogue of the wānanga to inform the further exploration of *Aroha ki te tangata*, *Manaaki ki te tangata*, and *Mauri*.

For *Aroha ki te tangata* and *Manaaki ki te tangata* we examined how rituals of encounter and relationship building, and of sharing and receiving hospitality, build and strengthen connectedness between people ā-wairua. These spiritual connections enable the space and power distances between people, and especially between evaluators and those we are charged with evaluating, to be mediated so that sharing and open dialogue can be pursued. This connection lasts beyond the life of any one evaluation, and our responsibility as evaluators is to honour the connections we make by touching base with people, sharing our knowledge and learning, and assisting with other mahi, where and when we can. In this way we are able to spiritually engage in the Māori “economy of affection” in our professional lives (Henry & Pene, 2001 pp. 2, 5).

The description of mauri was a little more circumspect, with mauri moe, mauri oho, and mauri ora being about the contemplation of who we are as evaluators, how we take action in our world, and how we strive for wellbeing for ourselves and the people we engage with. We find wairua in all that we do, including our evaluation work. This spirituality is not in opposition to other ways of understanding reality; rather it is a “level of consciousness” (Meyer, 2003, p. 253) that complements other ways of knowing. Thus, wairua provides a more complete window to our world, with this world being about the ties we have with one another and the ways in which our work strengthens these relationships.

While we have been looking inward at the Māori world for further understanding of these principles, we are aware that Māori or even indigenous peoples are not alone in seeking to expand what counts as our lived realities within research and evaluation. Reason (2000), for example, contends that seeing action research as a spiritual practice will enable practitioners to “understand action research in a deeper and more profound manner” (p. 3) and perhaps help heal the rift between the scientific study of material things and the religious study of spiritual things. Furthermore, Reason suggests spiritual practice is an everyday practice, that is not necessarily some mystic, esoteric, other-worldly practice, but that is also a part of everyday life. This resonates with our own experiences and how we have tried to write about wairua as an everyday practice that builds and strengthens caring and respectful relationships between Māori, between Māori and the environment, and between Māori and the cosmos. This extends Wilson’s (2008) writing about indigenous ontology as relationships that go beyond relationships between people, to relationships with all living and non-living things. While we understand this from a cultural perspective, our challenge now is to grow our understanding of what it means for evaluation with Māori to honour this far broader relationship ethic.

## **Concluding remarks**

This article on wairua and cultural values in evaluation has enabled a small group of Māori evaluators to inwardly reflect on aspects of our evaluation practices that are based on who we are as Māori, and our connections to one another, the land, and the universe.

The opportunity to consider how we represent wairua in evaluation and how in adhering in our practice to three of several principles, namely *Aroha ki te tangata*, *Manaaki ki te tangata* and *Mauri*, has provided some insights that will lead to understanding for others. It is our intention to later explore the remaining four Māori principles: *Kaitiakitanga*—guardianship; *Kia tūpatō*—taking care; *Whakanoa*—cleansing of the spirit; and *Mōhio tanga*, *mātauranga*, and *māramatanga*—knowledge, collective wisdom and enlightenment, that emerged from the *wānanga* in order to contribute to the body of knowledge around the importance of spirituality within indigenous evaluation.

It is timely for us as Māori evaluators to further explore and share our evaluation experiences and practice relating to the spiritual dimensions as we feel we are only just scratching the surface of this kaupapa (topic). Using Māori principles to guide critical reflection of our evaluation practice and to make sense of both the tangible and intangible elements of *iwi* and Māori programmes and services adds depth of understanding to our evaluation findings. In this regard we trust others will also reflect on and have regard for how wairua is woven into their culturally responsive evaluation practices.

## **Acknowledgements**

We express gratitude and appreciation to our friends and colleagues who in the interests of exploring what it is we do culturally in the research and evaluation space in terms of spirituality, generously shared their knowledge and experiences. *Ngā mihi nui ki a Maira*

Daymond, *rātou ko* Tepora Emery, ko Debbie Goodwin, ko Te Kapua Hohepa-Watene, ko Wikuki Kingi, ko Sharmaine Nolan, ko Laurie Porima, ko Tim Rochford, ko Pale Sauni, ko Kim Smith, ko Roxanne Smith, ko Kellie Spee, ko Clark Tuagalu, ko Bryce Turner, ko Angela Wallace, ko Louise Were, ko Nan Wehipeihana, ko Tania Wolfgramm. Ngā mihi aroha—with greatest sympathy, Angela passed after a long illness 26 June 2014.

A presentation on this topic was made at the 2014 ANZEA Conference, Wellington, 7–10 July (Kennedy, Cram, & Paipa, 2014).

Prime responsibility for the sections on Aroha ki te tangata and Manaaki ki te tangata lie with Kataraina Pipi and Maria Baker. Prime responsibility for the section on Mauri lies with Kirimatao Paipa.

## **Glossary**

**ā wairua** spiritual, spiritually

**Aotearoa** New Zealand

**Aroha** Love

**Aroha ki te tangata** A respect for people

**Atua** God, deity

**kai** food, meal, to eat

**kaimoana** seafood

**kaitiakitanga** guardianship, duty of care

**karakia** prayer, grace, blessing, chant, acknowledgement

**kaupapa** topic, agenda, issue

**koha** gift, donation, contribution

**kōrero** talk, speak, discussion, stories

**kuia** elderly woman, female elder

**mahi** work, job, activity

**mana** status, cultural authority, prestige, esteem

**mana whenua** those with authority over land

**manaaki** support, take care of, protect

**manaakitanga** hospitality, support, kindness

**Māori** Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa

**māramatanga** enlightenment, understanding

**mātauranga** wisdom

**mauri** life force, source of emotions, living essence

**mirimiri** massage, rub, soothe

**mōhiotanga** knowledge, understanding

**paru** unclean, dirty, soiled

**Pasifika** Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Islands, especially  
Polynesia, now residing in Aotearoa New Zealand

**rangatiratanga** sovereignty, self-determination, autonomy

**reo** language

**tane** male, man  
**Tangaroa** god of the sea  
**tangata** person, people  
**taonga** treasure, property, possession(s)  
**tapu** sacred  
**tikanga** custom, practice, procedure  
**tinana** physical (in terms of a component of health)  
**tipuna/ tūpuna** ancestor, grandparent (male or female)  
**tupato** beware, careful  
**wairua** spirit  
**wairuatanga** spirituality  
**wānanga** forum for discussion and learning, learning sessions  
**whakanoa** cleanse, to remove tapu  
**whakapapa** genealogy, lineage, descent  
**whakawhanaungatanga** relationship building  
**whānau** family, families, family members – immediate and extended

## **References**

- Archibald, J. (1997). *Coyote learns to make a story-basket: The place of First Nations stories in education*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada.
- Cram, F. & Pitama, S. (1998). Ko tōku whānau, ko tōku mana. In V. Adair & R. Dixon (Eds.), *The family in Aotearoa New Zealand* (pp. 130–157). Auckland: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Cram, F. (2001) Rangahau Māori: Tona tika, tona pono. In M. Tolich (Ed.), *Research ethics in Aotearoa New Zealand: Concepts, practice, critique* (pp. 35–52). Auckland: Longman.
- Cram, F., Smith, L., & Johnstone, W. (2003). Mapping the themes of Māori talk about health. *New Zealand Medical Journal*, 116 (1170). Retrieved from <http://www.nzma.org.nz/journal/read-the-journal/all-issues/2000-2009/2003>

- Douglas-Huriwai, C. (2012, July, 24). *Māori spirituality: A wairua on auto-pilot?* Retrieved from <http://craccum.ausa.auckland.ac.nz/?p=1578>
- Durie, M. H. (1985). A Māori perspective of health. *Social Science & Medicine*, 20(5), 483–486.  
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536\(85\)90363-6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(85)90363-6)
- Edwards, S., McManus, V., & McCreanor, T. (2005). Collaborative research with Māori on sensitive issues: the application of tikanga and kaupapa in research on Māori sudden infant death syndrome. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 25, 88–104.
- Henry, E., & Pene, H. (2001). Kaupapa Māori: Locating indigenous ontology, epistemology and methodology in the academy. *Organization*, 8(2), 234–242. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1350508401082009>
- Hinterkopf, E. (1998). *Integrating spirituality in counseling*. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.
- Keefe, V., Ormsby, C., Robson, B., Reid, P., Cram, F., & Purdie, G. (1999). Kaupapa Māori meets retrospective cohort. *He Pukenga Kōrero*, 5(1), 12–17.
- Kennedy, V., & Cram, F. (2010). Ethics of researching with whānau collectives. *Mai Review*, 3. Retrieved from <http://www.review.mai.ac.nz/index.php/MR/article/view/381/560>
- Kennedy, V., Cram, F., & Paipa, K. (2014, July). *Wairua and wānanga warm the whare*. Paper presented at the ANZEA Conference, Wellington.
- Kennedy, V., Cram, F., Paipa, K., Pipi, K., Baker, M., Porima, L., Sauni, P. & Tuagalu, C. (2015). Beginning a conversation about spirituality in Māori and Pasifika evaluation. In S. Hood, R. Hopson & H. Frierson (Eds.), *Continuing the journey to reposition culture and cultural context in evaluation theory and practice* (pp. 151–177). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Kidd, J., Gibbons, V., Lawrenson, R. & Johnstone, W. (2010). A whānau ora approach to health care for Māori. *Journal of Primary Health Care*, 2(2), 163–164.

- Jones, B., Ingham, T., Davies, C., & Cram, F. (2010). Whānau tuatahi: Māori community partnership research using a kaupapa Māori methodology. *Mai Review*, 3, Retrieved from <http://www.review.mai.ac.nz/index.php/MR/article/view/392/548>
- Jones, R., Crengle, S., & McCreanor, T. (2006). How tikanga guides and protects the research process: Insights from the Hauora Tane project. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 29, 60–77.
- Marsden, M. (1992). God, man and universe: A Māori view. In M. King (Ed.), *Te Ao Hurihuri—Aspects of Maoritanga* (pp. 117–137). Auckland: Reed Books.
- Mead, H. M. (2003). *Tikanga Māori: Living by Māori values*. Wellington: Huia Publishers.
- Meyer, M. A. (2003). Hawaiian hermeneutics and the triangulation of meaning: Gross, subtle, causal. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 27(2), 249–255.
- Meyer, M. A. (2014). Holographic epistemology: Native common sense. In Smith, C. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology* (pp. 3435–3443). New York: Springer. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-0465-2\\_6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-0465-2_6)
- Ministry of Health. (2002). *He korowai oranga—Māori health strategy*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.
- Murchie, E. (1984). *Rapuora: Health and Maori women*. Wellington: Māori Women's Welfare League.
- Nepe, T. M. (1991). *Te toi huarewa tipuna: Kaupapa Māori, an educational intervention system*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Auckland: Auckland.
- Pihama, L. (2001). *Tibei mauri ora: Honouring our voices: Mana wahine as a kaupapa Māori theoretical framework*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Auckland: Auckland.
- Pipi, K., Cram, F., Hawke, R., Hawke, S., Huriwai, T., Mataki, T., ... & Tuuta, C. (2004). A research ethic for studying Māori and iwi provider success. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 23, 141–153.

- Pitama, S., Robertson, P., Cram, F., Gillies, M., Huria, T., & Dallas-Katoa, W. (2007). Meihana model: A clinical assessment framework. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 36(3), 118.
- Pohatu, T. W. (2011). Mauri: Rethinking human wellbeing. *Mai Review*, 3, 1–12.
- Reason, P. (2000, May). *Action research as spiritual practice*. Paper presented at the Learning Community Conference, University of Surrey, UK. Retrieved from [http://www.peterreason.eu/Papers/AR\\_as\\_spiritual\\_practice.pdf](http://www.peterreason.eu/Papers/AR_as_spiritual_practice.pdf)
- Reid, P., & Cram, F. (2004). Connecting health, people and country in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In K. Dew, & P. Davis (Eds.), *Health and society in Aotearoa New Zealand* (2nd ed., pp. 33–48). Auckland: Oxford University Press.
- Shafranske, E. P., & Gorsuch, R. L. (1984). Factors associated with the perception of spirituality in psychotherapy. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 16, 231–241.
- Shafranske, E. P., & Malony, H. N. (1990). Clinical psychologists' religious and spiritual orientations and their practice of psychotherapy. *Psychotherapy: Theory / Research / Practice / Training*, 27(1), 72–78. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-3204.27.1.72>
- Simmonds, N. B. (2009). *Mana wahine geographies: Spiritual, spatial and embodied understandings of Papatūānuku*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Waikato, Hamilton.
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. New York & Dunedin: Zed Books & Otago University Press.
- Steinhauser, E. (2002). Thoughts on an indigenous research methodology.
- Walker, R. (2004). *Ka whawhai tonu mātou: Struggle without end* (rev. ed.). Auckland: Penguin.
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Black Point, Nova Scotia, Canada: Fernwood Publishing.

Wolfgramm, R. M. (2007). *Continuity and vitality of worldview(s) in organisational culture: Towards a Māori perspective*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Auckland.

### ***The authors***

Vivienne Kennedy, Kimi NZ Ltd

Email: [viv@kimi.maori.nz](mailto:viv@kimi.maori.nz)

Fiona Cram, Katoa Ltd

Kirimatao Paipa, Kia Maia Ltd

Kataraina Pipi, FEM (2006) Ltd

Maria Baker, Independent researcher and evaluator