

# Chapter 19

## Kaitiakitanga: Notions of Indigenous Active Care and Guardianship

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### ABSTRACT

*The chapter draws from notions and experiences of kaitiakitanga (guardianship) in the context of a pūrākau (indigenous narrative) approach to understanding and developing a Kaupapa Māori conceptual framework. This approach acknowledges Mātauranga Māori (Maori bodies of knowledge) as the theoretical basis for Kaupapa Māori praxis, particularly in the field of health and social services. A pūrākau approach includes utilizing whakapapa kōrero (genealogical narratives) as it informs the use of traditional principles, beliefs, and practices (tikanga) in working alongside Māori whānau, hapū, and iwi. These purakau identify natural elements represented in the form of Ātua, or Gods. Through whakapapa (genealogical descent), Maori episteme positions tangata whenua within nature. The indigenous worldview recognizes the inter-connected relationships, obligations, and responsibilities that underpin the philosophical positioning of kaitiaki practices.*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss notions of kaitiakitanga from the author's position. The content will acknowledge whakapapa korero (genealogical narratives) in relation to understanding experiences of kaitiaki principles and practices. The journey to understanding the significance of storytelling began during years of study. Narrative approaches to therapy and counselling became an interest of my undergraduate degree, and has incrementally developed a more in-depth understanding of how this applies to indigenous practices.

The chapter will further discuss how 'narratives' about the world around us are developed; and how Maori, identify narratives as Pūrākau, in features such as the creation stories. These Pūrākau (narratives) will illustrate the human genealogical connections to creation and the natural world.

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## ***Kaitiakitanga***

The chapter will also highlight how Maori perceive the natural world as Atua, Gods and Goddesses who rule over their designated natural domains. The whakapapa or genealogy of of Atua will then lead to how humanity came into existence, tying Maori through genealogical connections from the spiritual world through to the natural world; which can be apply kaitiakitanga through narrative practice

Finally, this chapter will provide an analysis of kaitiaki principles according to whakapapa korero. This analysis will inform the theoretical foundation for a kaitiaki model of practice

## **NARRATIVES**

Maori Narratives or purakau include the people we engage with and our beliefs about ourselves within our cultural context. Māori developed beliefs about experiences based on whakapapa, (genealogy). Terry Dobbs and Moana Eruera (2010) state that whakapapa is often referred to as the foundation of Maori world-view (p.12). Dr Rāpata Wiri (2013) also discusses whakapapa as being the central framework of Māori epistemology (p.6-8).

Post-modernist theory stipulates social constructionism as the theory, which supports why we as a society of people develop beliefs about our experiences. This is often because of what is, or has been socially constructed. Boghossian (2005) states that both the abstract thought that some things are created by societies, and the thought that some beliefs owe more to social values than they do to the evidence in their favour, are as old as reason itself (p.2).

Storytelling is a format for articulating and delivering knowledge generated through observation, experience and understanding. For indigenous communities, storytelling is an approach to articulating and understanding cultural values, beliefs, worldviews and understandings. The objective of storytelling is to utilise metaphors, which illustrate multiple ways of knowing, understanding and perceiving the world around us.

## **Social Constructions**

Social constructionist theory recognises epistemological influences, such as cultural identity, practices and world-views. Boghossian (2005) explains that there are two perspectives in terms of understanding social constructionism. This is important to consider in terms of understanding the significance of using narratives as an approach to understanding knowledge and experience (p.1). The first perspective is recognizing what has been constructed socially, such as values, beliefs, practices, norms, institutions etc. The other perspective recognizes what naturally exists independently of us, something of which we (human beings) did not create ourselves. These two perspectives for Māori are not segregated, rather intertwined as one perspective, which is Te Ao Mārama. According to Ranginui Walker (2004, p.11), the origins of Māori society are laid out in three major myth cycles. Walker, (2004) further explains that the central characters are gods, which represent the natural elements such as Papatūānuku/ Earth Mother and Ranginui, Sky Father, - their progeny who consist of their offspring who then created their human descendants (p.12).

Whakapapa or genealogy is the foundation for Maori narratives, particularly in articulating our traditional creation narratives. Walker (2004) acknowledges that for Maori, oral transmission of these narratives are integral to understanding Maori culture, episteme, traditions, beliefs' and values. The transmission of these narratives from generation to generation is a traditional Māori practice. Walker

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