

Mai i te Pū ki te Wānanga: Interpreting Synchronistic Meaning Through a Wānanga Methodology

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ABSTRACT. Making sense of synchronistic meaning between seemingly unrelated events is normalised within a Māori cultural context. However, westernised methodological approaches to exploring such phenomena are not so. Wānanga methodology, as applied through the dissemination of the concept of wānanga, offers a relevant, customised and culturally appropriate approach to facilitating interpretation and knowledge generation related to researching meaning between synchronistic events. Wānanga is a multifaceted, holistic approach derived from a Māori cosmological and ontological perspective that validates naturally inherent processes in connecting people to phenomena. Through these connections, we can interpret our interconnected relationships between events, objects and places to draw insight into their deeper meaning. Therefore, wānanga methodology extends our understanding of reality and how it can be interpreted. It further highlights the importance of Indigenous methodologies in offering new and innovative ways to explain and elicit meaning about the world.

Keywords: wānanga; Māori; ontology; cosmology; methodology; whakapapa

How to cite: Matamua, N., Moriarty, T. R., and Tassell-Matamua, N. (2023). Mai i te Pū ki te Wānanga: Interpreting Synchronistic Meaning Through a Wānanga Methodology. *Knowledge Cultures*, 11(1), 84–97. <https://doi.org/10.22381/kc11120235>

Introduction

Foundational to Indigenous Māori ontology is the interconnectivity between all phenomena across time, place and space. Such multifaceted and dynamic connections are most commonly articulated through the concept of whakapapa, an encompassing genealogical tree that extends back to the beginning of time, linking people to the animate and inanimate, physical and spiritual. These connections bind humans to the environment in ways that activate naturally inherent processes (e.g., intrinsic feelings, intuition, sense of knowing) that enable meaning and understanding to be inferred between events, actions and intent. For Māori, this process of attributing synchronistic meaning to seemingly unrelated events is often ascribed the term *tohu* (signs), signalling a particular response, solution, direction, or caution to a current issue that requires attention by the perceiver. Recognising phenomena as *tohu* requires the perceiver to be open to interpreting reality in ways that may not align with the positivist perspective that dominates much of westernised research. It challenges established epistemologies and their associated methodologies, invokes a broader exploration of what cause and effect could look like and implores deeper consideration to be given to interpreting the meaning of supposed synchronistic events. Given our current world environmental crises, including the issues specific to Aotearoa|New Zealand, regarding the biosecurity incursions of kauri dieback and myrtle rust on our native tree species, such an approach provides a refreshing and unique opportunity to (re-)activate Indigenous knowledges and apply them in innovative and uncharted ways.

Contextualising the Need for an Alternative Methodology

Due to the nature of *tohu*¹ and the highly subjective and nuanced interpretations that it/they instigate, it is important researchers adopt methodological approaches that accommodate the worldview from which the phenomenon associated with the *tohu* is embedded. Yet, such subjective and culturally relative interpreting that seeks to make meaning outside of westernised objectivity is more often than not confined to the category of psychological abnormality or pathological disorder due to its deviation from dominant discourses of what normative is (Cardena et al., 2017; Moreira-Almeida et al., 2011). Social conditioning leads many to accept normative as that which derives from and/or aligns with the dominant positivist approach of needing to verify, confirm or prove understandings of the world via observation. Consequently, phenomena are often placed within explanatory frameworks that adhere to westernised scientific law and its assumption the universe is made of anatomical particles that behave in predictable ways and function by rigid mechanical laws (Marsden & Henare, 1992); laws that stem from a western ontology that informs understandings about what can and cannot be considered ‘real.’

Expansion of this dominant western scientific approach within academia, and to Indigenous populations through ongoing systemic and systematic colonisation, has dictated and manoeuvred social thinking towards seeking truth in particular ways. Indigenous peoples researching within academia have been required (both consciously and unconsciously) to assimilate to this truth and adopt western-centric methodologies in order to meet unspoken criteria about how research should be conducted and the types of assumptions that can be made. Yet, Māori are more holistic and abstract when making sense of reality, drawing on such cultural expressions as pūrākau (traditional stories) or karakia (incantations) to explore intangible phenomena such as wairua (spirituality) or non-human centred phenomena within te taiao (environment). This way of thinking about the world sits beyond the confines of dominant western ways of doing research and requires extending thinking about what is possible, as well as extending the frameworks within which such thinking is developed.

The need for the application of a Māori worldview has thus been important to Māori seeking ways of explaining truth and has navigated Māori research into the ongoing emancipation of itself from the assertions of western approaches to research. This has led to the creation of context-specific research methodologies that have emerged from within and are centred on an Indigenous Māori ontological perspective. Of notable distinction is Kaupapa Māori Theory, a philosophy that facilitates Māori approaches to research (Walker et al., 2006) founded on a Māori ontology, thus giving purpose to both the methodologies and the methods used. In exploring the naturally inherent meaning that enables Māori to attribute synchronistic meaning between seemingly unrelated phenomena, we draw from this same Māori-centric ontology and its philosophical foundations to propose the Māori process of wānanga as a relevant, customised and culturally appropriate methodological approach. Our aim is to highlight the importance of using such culturally nuanced approaches as wānanga, discuss some of the concept's deeper meaning and articulate its relevance as a methodology for generating knowledge in relation to synchronistic meaning. We also offer our own example of the wānanga process as applied in research by drawing on traditional knowledge within karakia (incantations).

Wānanga as a Methodology

A methodology, according to Hammond and Wellington (2020), 'refers to the rationale that the researcher puts forward for the application of particular research methods' (p. 128). It is the process by which researchers give intention and purpose to their approach, sharing their underlying strategy, plan and design for selecting methods and linking those methods to the desired outcomes (Crotty, 1998). Given research methodologies are organised around philosophies (Nicholls, 2009), which are themselves informed by epistemological and ontological assumptions, our rationale for a particular methodology necessitates not only consideration of the worldview from which it arises, but also a critical self-assessment of our own

worldly perspectives. This point is highlighted by Crotty (1998), who notes that the application of a specific methodology requires the evaluation of our assumptions about reality and, therefore, thinking carefully about our theoretical perspectives. The importance of these points is that methodologies are not shelf-ready products. Rather, consideration is required as to their construction and application to best facilitate knowledge about the types of research questions for which answers are being sought. If the ontology and epistemology underlying the methodological approach are not aligned with the nature of the phenomena being explored, it is difficult to ascertain whether the knowledge being produced is transformative, non-marginalising, or validating of the cultural context from which it arises. Therefore, the importance of developing and using culturally appropriate methodologies, such as wānanga, is about presenting a unique set of parameters for what is considered possible when interpreting reality. It lays out its own distinctive guidelines to be what Hammel (as cited in Nicholls, 2009) refers to as being a unique philosophical and ethical approach to creating knowledge that guides how research should proceed. Wānanga, therefore, differentiates itself from a western paradigm of qualitative research by including not only its own ontology but also cosmology in developing and producing knowledge that is reflective of the cultural reality from which the knowledge originates. For Māori research and researchers, it informs a type of Indigenous methodology that arises from an Indigenous episteme (Kovach, 2021), responding to calls for social justice to expose power dynamics between ontological perspectives through a structural intervention that creates a space for cultural practice (Smith, 1997), thus empowering both Indigenous researchers and their research to enact tino rangatiratanga (self-determination).

Our Position as Researchers

Given Māori aspirations for self-determination and the need for researchers to consider their own positions in relation to the phenomena they explore, by necessity, we (the authors) must also cogitate our own positioning relative to our methodological approach when understanding synchronistic meaning. Reflexivity is prudent for understanding intent, purpose and underlying assumptions about the world and how they may impact knowledge generation. Therefore, we acknowledge ourselves as researchers who whakapapa Māori and endorse Māori cosmological and ontological perspectives. We are conscious that our assumptions about reality align with Indigenous Māori worldviews and our theoretical perspectives will be navigated toward seeking answers through this culturally informed lens. We also seek a methodology that normalises and facilitates philosophical and ethical approaches that lead not to polarities of right or wrong and possible or impossible but rather to a truth relative to a context that validates naturally inherent processes (i.e., intrinsic feelings, intuition, sense of knowing). With this in mind, we consider wānanga as an appropriate methodological approach to generate knowledge that speaks to a particular type of truth, a truth derived from a Māori worldview.

Although our understandings of what wānanga is and how it may function are likely synergistic with the understandings of other Māori, our own unique worldviews as researchers will lead us to interpret and produce knowledge that may differ from other Māori, therefore positioning our particular application of wānanga as just one particular approach. Our application of wānanga as a methodology is not motivated by the need to establish a singular truth. Rather, applying wānanga as methodology is but one demonstration of a process for generating knowledge that seeks to give meaning, purpose and contextualisation to what is happening between humans and the natural world.

Understanding Wānanga and its Application to Research

Understanding how wānanga may function as a methodology requires touching on the origins, meaning and contextual nature of its application to synchronistic meaning. The concept of wānanga itself is connected to the traditional form of higher learning associated with *whare wānanga*, Māori traditional houses of learning. These traditional Māori educational institutions were sites for the transmission of prized tribal lore and crucial to the preservation of this knowledge through successive generations (Best, 1934). The origins of wānanga and the knowledge shared within are intimately intertwined with Māori cosmology and ontology, with such legendary heroes as Tāne (atua² of the forest) attributed with giving humans access to higher forms of knowledge by ascending to the pinnacle of the twelve heavens in order to obtain the three baskets of knowledge (Best, 1934).³ The acquisition of these celestial baskets coincides with the first wānanga, containing knowledge relevant to understanding the breadth of phenomena relative to the context of Māori lived experiences. Walker (1986) notes, in particular, the first basket, *te kete tuauri*, as containing ‘ancient knowledge of gods,’ positioning *tohunga* (experts) who have learned this divine knowledge within the context of the *whare wānanga* as possessing a particular understanding and skill set when working with such divine energy or intangible phenomena. This ancient ability to not only learn about but also work with such energies necessitates consideration of the dynamics of the *whare wānanga* in facilitating the process and making sense of such divine energy. With the genesis of wānanga as deriving from *whare wānanga*, the current fundamental construct of wānanga may be inferred as subscribing to and endorsing realities premised on the contents within the aforementioned three baskets of knowledge. Given these baskets encompass knowledge that extends to the metaphysical nature of reality, we can begin to make assumptions about the world in ways that align with this ontological and philosophical perspective. Therefore, the origins of the wānanga process provide a foundation for exploring synchronistic meaning beyond the scope of the current dominant world views of reality. It offers a narrative that normalises our ability to research and enquire into what might seem unexplainable phenomena and to take what is referred to by Edwards (as cited in Mahuika & Mahuika, 2020) as courageous space in not seeking the approval of established thinking.

While contemporary wānanga in its various forms has evolved somewhat from the traditional whare wānanga, it continues to situate knowledge and understanding as deriving from such Māori narratives, as noted in the aforementioned quest of Tāne for knowledge. These narratives are linked to Māori through whakapapa (genealogy), offering a different perspective on our relationship to knowledge and what it means to know. Knowledge from this point of view is more than just facts or skills learnt and developed over time; it is also a legacy passed down through generations, beginning with the atua as acts, gifts and attributes imparted to humanity and the environment (Paenga, 2010). Wānanga thereby reflects the notion of knowledge as an inherent ability, something felt or sensed, connecting all things back to the spiritual realm from which the baskets of knowledge were obtained. This way of seeing the world positions knowledge as not just external, in needing to always go out and acquire or witness phenomena, but also to trust and believe in innate abilities. Therefore, wānanga, as a methodology, not only extends the possibilities of what reality can entail, but also privileges such innate abilities for interpreting and understanding reality.

The word wānanga has a dynamism that can be understood by examining how the term functions and how its application can vary. Some authors have highlighted this point, noting wānanga as both a noun and a verb (Smith et al., 2020; Mahuika & Mahuika, 2020); it is something that can be done but can also be a thing, person, or place. Smith et al. (2020) refer to this dual application as related to the notion of space/place, where people converge and immerse themselves within a particular topic or subject matter. This convergence between such aspects as discussion, spaces, people, objects and location emphasises wānanga as a multifaceted, holistic knowledge production process. Its consideration of spaces and places is relevant to creating a physical, intellectual and spiritual environment where collective assumptions about the world can be voiced and validated. Wānanga, therefore, is more than just the process of intellectualising between people. It is about awareness of the world around us and acknowledging the need to position ourselves and create spaces to connect with research. It suggests that knowledge production or understanding becomes enhanced when not done in isolation but when whakapapa connections with the external world, through being both relational with others and our surrounding environments (Mahuika & Mahuika, 2020), are facilitated.

The dynamism of this knowledge production is not solely limited to external or observable phenomena, such as physical places and spaces or people, but is inclusive of the space/place within our own consciousness. This notion of an inner wānanga is noted by Mahuika and Mahuika (2020) as being a meditative practice whereby individuals assemble with an intent and transcend into a state of deep knowing that allows emerging insights to arise (Spiller et al., 2020). These deep states of consciousness are assisted by a raft of protocols, such as karakia (incantations), whakawhanaungatanga (relationship building) and shared kai (food), which Smith et al. (2020) consider vital for intellectual, social, relational,

emotional and spiritual transcendence. In this sense, wānanga is both a process for priming ourselves for deep inner contemplation and also an inner state of mind facilitated when creating knowledge and guiding understanding. The intent of wānanga, on both an individual and collective level, is to agitate deep thinking about and investment in the phenomena under research and to challenge established thinking about everyday reality. It, therefore, normalises holistic methods by applying culturally appropriate and relevant protocols as a means of elevating one's consciousness to maintain investment and focus on the particular phenomena for which understanding is sought.

Wānanga, as a process for exploring synchronistic meaning between events, is not only reliant on space/place and inner mentality for processing and creating knowledge but also draws on one's capacity to rongo (to sense). Rongo is not limited to the sensory modalities typically associated with western understandings (e.g., vision, smell, hearing, taste, touch) but also includes senses emanating from hinengaro (mind), puku (stomach), ngakau (heart), manawa (pulse), wairua (spirit) and whatumanawa (the inner eye) (Pohatu et al., as cited in Dell, 2021). Sensing through these expanded bodily sites is what Dell (2021) refers to as 'the whole body listening,' where our sensors take in external information as events occurring outside the body, which we then interpret and ascribe meaning to. Such embodied sense-making extends western understandings, which are postulated as brain or mind-centred of how knowledge can be produced, to include ngakau-centred (heart-centred) understandings (Smith, 2008) that evoke the whole body to 'listen.' Listening in this context is about becoming cognisant of the myriad of emotional experiences and physical sensations that occur within us when perceiving *tohu* and combining these experiences and sensations with our deeper state of consciousness to elicit a sense of knowing. Wānanga normalises the importance of emotions (Mahuika & Mahuika, 2020) and, therefore, can become an indicator for validating truth or reality. It moves beyond intellectualisation to include the entirety of sensory experiences, allowing data collection sites to not only occur impartially or externally from the observer but also to occur subjectively as internalised feelings and thinking, which produces a sense of knowing or knowledge that is valid from a Māori world view.

Understanding what constitutes *tohu* is also important for understanding what the sphere of reality can encompass through wānanga. Many *tohu*, according to Mitira (1972, p. 255), 'are the result of observation,' thereby implying that through perceiving or recognising certain changes, abnormalities, actions, or events, significance is generated. This calls into question the nature of what is 'observable' or 'observation' from a Māori perspective. When considering Māori cosmology, ontology and epistemology, what is perceived as 'observation' is grounded in a different set of parameters from what is objectifiable through a western lens. Use of all our senses and our innate abilities are privileged within a Māori context, going beyond the physical to the realm of the spiritual. As an example, dreaming is a portal through which various *tohu* can present themselves (Mitira, 1972).

Considering this point, such observations from a Māori perspective can be validated through external observations as seen with our eyes, but also through ‘seeing’ with our minds or spirit while both awake and asleep, conscious or unconscious. Wānanga, then, challenges reductionist understandings of states of consciousness and implores contemplation on the assumptions about reality that are unconsciously attached to research methodologies and phenomena under exploration. In juxtaposition to many western methodologies, it also embraces self-collection of data and self-assessment of that data to determine if a specific observation is a *tohu* and what it possibly means.

When considering wānanga as a method for making synchronistic meaning between seemingly unrelated events, it becomes important to understand some aspects of how a connection with certain *tohu* is made and how meaning is made of them. Someone who endorses a Māori ontology is likely to identify and rationalise *tohu* in different ways than those aligned with a western ontology. For example, a scientist may observe a rare native bird in an unfamiliar area of forest and attribute the sighting to an epistemology that endorses assumptions founded in Darwin’s theory of evolution. In this context, the bird’s presence may be explained by the lack of predators or lack of competition for resources, thus enabling the bird species to thrive and expand into new territory. Although such an explanation is also acceptable within a Māori worldview, it is limited due to it being centred on the bird and its immediate environment. The bird is perceived as detached from human relationships, and the meaning of its presence is explainable only within the context of the scientific paradigm. Consequently, the bird affords no meaning to humans and may not be perceived as a *tohu*. For Māori, however, such a rare sighting may invoke quite a different response, being explained as, for example, appearing to signal some imminent event or circumstance, or notifying that a cultural norm has been transgressed and so consequences will ensue.

When *tohu* appear, they activate a whole-of-body sensory response, which can be thought of as the flowing of energy and can be associated with the concept of *ihi*, a vital force or magnetism that radiates outwards and that people are attracted to (Marsden, 1992). Timoti et al. (2017) note *ihi* as emanating from significant events, locations, objects and people and explain how *ihi* can be used in conjunction with the concepts of *wehi* and *wana*:

The concept of *ihi*, *wehi* and *wana* could operate as single emotions or together as an assemblage. *Wehi* is a response to *ihi* and means to be ‘in awe’ or overcome with admiration, reverence, or fear. It is also described as an emotional reaction to the acknowledgement of *ihi*. *Wana* is interpreted as the inspirational force and the result of combining *ihi* and *wehi*. It is a heightened emotional state that unites a range of emotions and connects people to place, objects, landmarks and other people. (p. 4)

Combined, these concepts reflect a confirmation process by which external stimuli are perceived and processed internally and collectively to make meaning and sense

of the world. When considering synchronistic meaning, it allows significant past events to be identified as emanating *ihi*, which is then reaffirmed through acknowledgement of *wehi*, which is the sense of an emotional attraction or being drawn to that particular event. Consolidation of external and internal sensing elevates individuals to a state of *wana*, a higher level of consciousness where a connection is made with the event, facilitating a state of creativity and openness to interpreting and making meaning of the information received from these events.

Also relevant to this triad of concepts is *mauri*, a life force or essence by which all phenomena are bound (Marsden, 1992). Timoti et al. (2017) note *ihi*, *wehi* and *wana* as emotions and, therefore, indicators for assessing the vitality of *mauri*, and further note *mauri* as intrinsically connected to *whakapapa*. *Mauri*, as a life force or energy, therefore, draws humans to the constant interplay of both tangible and intangible energies. Hence, perceiving *tohu* creates a connection to the essence of what is being observed, providing sensory information via the triad of *ihi*, *wehi* and *wana* to enable interpretation and assessment of the status of the *mauri* of the *tohu* being experienced. This then assists in understanding what *tohu* might mean in terms of the relationship to it/them and the obligations or actions that may follow. *Wānanga*, as both methodology and method, therefore, incorporates the myriad of concepts and phenomena relevant for dissemination, explanation, analysis and generation of knowledge as it relates to exploring synchronicity from a Māori perspective.

Wānanga, then, provides new opportunities for conceptualising cause and effect and how meaning might be attributed to the external world. It enables holistic and dynamic ways of enacting observation and innovative and abstract ways of measuring phenomena. It provides a catalyst for thinking about the world and contemplating the relationship and obligation to it and sets a foundation for considering research in the same manner by perceiving *tohu* and using intuition to understand and maintain the *mauri* (life force) of research projects, so they can flourish with deeper insight.

Our Process for Applying Wānanga

Having overviewed *wānanga*, we now explain our application of *wānanga* as a methodology as it relates to synchronistic meaning. In doing so, we draw on *karakia* (incantations), an ancestral practice that informs and guides our movements in the present and the future by providing a basis for understanding the world and how we can conduct our practices within it. *Karakia* can be, in essence, a *tumu*, or a post, to tie one's figurative *waka* (voyaging vessel, often translated as 'canoe') to that strengthens a connection to culture and place, and, in this case, to our research. Therefore, contained within the following *karakia* (Te Kawa Maiorooro) is a source of validation for the approach of *wānanga* within our methodology.

Te Kawa Maiorooro

Ka takina te kawa

Ko te kawa nui,

Ko te kawa roa
 Ko te kawa whakatiketike
 i āhua mai nō Tikitiki-o-te-rangi
 I tipu ko te pū
 Ko te weu
 Ko te rito
 Ko te take
 Ko te pūkenga
 Ko te wānanga
 Ko te taura
 Ko te taurira
 Tēnei rā te awhi-nuku, te awhi-rangi
 Nō te orooro o Io-Matua
 I pue ia i te taketake
 I Ueue-nuku, i Ueue-rangi
 Tēnei ka hohou
 Ki runga ki te tupua,
 Ki runga ki te tawhito
 Ki te runga ki te kāhui o ngā Ariki
 Kia puta ēnei taurira ki te whaiao, ki te ao mārama
 Haumi ē, hui ē,
 Tāiki ē! (Te Kōkau, 1898–1933)

Of particular relevance in the preceding karakia are the lines referencing te pū through to te wānanga, which acknowledge the growth stages of a tree from the first emergence from the seed (te pū) through to the tree flourishing (te wānanga). This part of the karakia is a metaphor for the growth of knowledge. Once the initial growth emerges (te pū) from the seed, the tree establishes its roots (te weu). From here, the new shoot (te rito) emerges above the soil. Once the rito is seen, the tree's base (te take) is established, which allows the swelling (te pūkenga)⁴ of the tree's size, with the action puke meaning to swell (Moorfield, 2023). The action of wana, to sprout, to come alive, to grow, to bud (Moorfield, 2023), is present in each stage of a tree's development as it emerges from the seed and grows below and above the soil. Once the tree is grown, every phase of new growth must, also, wana. For instance, the new leaves that sprout and the flowers that bloom must wana. This then leads to the use of the word 'wānanga' as a nominalisation for the verb 'wana.'⁵

In relation to our research, wānanga, within the context of exploring synchronistic meaning, began with the inception (te pū) of the project and a deliberating process of seeding our research intent and purpose. In this space, we focused on the potential of our creativity to produce what it was we intended to achieve. For the purposes of our project, it entailed interpreting the deeper meaning of synchronistic events across time and in relation to the history of kauri dieback and myrtle rust in Aotearoa|New Zealand. The roots (te weu) signified the project taking hold to embed and situate the phenomena in question within the ontology

and epistemology of wānanga. This process allowed us to set the paradigm through which to explain or elicit understanding about synchronicity, therefore opening or elevating (te rito, new shoot) our research to new parameters for interpreting the world. From a strong base (te take) emerged our research plan, our strategies and methods that we intended to apply. Our research project involved consolidating our cumulative thinking into a preliminary plan of how and why we would investigate synchronistic meaning in this way. Once this foundation had been established, it allowed for the project to swell (te pūkenga) in growth. This stage included aspects that further contributed to and refined our research methodology, including the culturally relevant protocols and space/place considerations related to wānanga that evoke knowledge creation. Wana (to sprout) is the manifestation of all the other growth stages. It is our plan in action derived from our collective and collaborative thinking in making synchronistic meaning. An aspirational state of achievement that is both individually and collectively reaffirming. As with the growth of the tree, each stage of this research growth phase following the first sprout also requires a sprouting, wana, of ideas and understandings (te wānanga). Therefore, the construction and development of our research within the framework of a wānanga methodology in relation to a Māori karakia, has been guided by our intention for the research to wana, so it may sprout and blossom, or in other words, become transformative.

Reflecting on the aforementioned explanations of wana as part of an assemblage with ihi and wehi, we note wana as part of a process that validates the emotions and sensations that we used to gauge the vitality of mauri (life force, essence) (Timoti et al., 2017). Given we have enacted wana throughout these growth stages within our tree metaphor, we infer our construction and application of wānanga in researching synchronistic meaning as being developed and validated in accordance with ihi, wehi and wana. Privileging our ability to draw on our whole-body sensory experiences, emotions, sensations, depth and state of consciousness and the environments in which they thrive, we were able to assess the mauri (the essence, or life force) within our research and achieve a sense of wana. This guided the pathways and options we took during our research, which were considered appropriate to follow in seeking a particular truth.

Conclusions

Cosmological and ontological foundations of a wānanga methodology provide a theoretical approach appropriate for generating knowledge and meaning of synchronistic events across time, place and space. It transcends dominant positivist approaches to research, opening and connecting both the researcher and their research to a wider sphere of metaphysical reality and mechanisms relevant to assessing and interpreting it. Wānanga prizes; our connection to knowledge and space/place, our thinking through both inner contemplation and collective collaboration, and our ability to use naturally inherent processes in both internalising and externalising phenomena to give meaning to the world around us.

For exploring localised environmental issues related to biosecurity incursions of kauri dieback and myrtle rust on our native tree species, wānanga methodology (re)initialises our interconnected holistic ways of interpreting and generating knowledge about synchronistic meaning to provide innovative and interesting insight into our relationship with these pathogens.

Wānanga methodology, as described above, is but one example of Indigenous knowledge systems important to the expansion and ongoing challenge to dominant understandings of the world and the ways in which knowledge can be generated. Importantly, such Indigenous approaches prevent us from isolating phenomena to a positivist paradigm of cause and effect to integrate people and their belief systems in making sense and meaning of the world. In doing so, we begin to apply a ‘bigger picture’ view of the world, redirecting our interrogations from seeking elusive ‘silver bullet’ outcomes from research to evoking understanding of our position relative to it. It has the potential to shift us from a symptomatic focus on worldly issues to understanding the broader scope of our ongoing relationship to them and the effect that wider events, actions and intent have.



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Acknowledgements

This work is funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (Mobilising for Action theme of the Ngā Rākau Taketake programme of the Biological Heritage National Science Challenge in Aotearoa/New Zealand C09X1817).

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Notes

1. The word ‘tohu’ is used to indicate both plural and singular; the meaning of which is often inferred from the context that the term is used.

2. Although often translated as ‘god,’ the meaning of the term atua is nuanced, and might more appropriately be described as a specific energetic life force that manifests as bird and forest life (Tassell-Matamua et al., in press).

3. The three baskets of knowledge, also known as Ngā kete o te Wānanga, is knowledge retrieved from the supreme god (in some narratives this is ‘Io’ and others ‘Rehua’). These

bodies of knowledge are ordered and contain various types of knowledge relative to the spectrum of phenomena within Māori life.

4. Te pūkenga is the nominalisation of the verb ‘puke.’

5. The word ‘wānanga’ can also be used as a verb meaning to discuss, to deliberate, to consider (Moorfield, 2023).

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