

# TE WAIATA A HINETITAMA— HEARING THE HEARTSONG

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## Whakamate i roto i a Te Arawa— A Māori suicide research project

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### Abstract

Contrary to contemporary views of the act of whakamate (suicide), traditional Māori tribal pedagogies have revealed that the death of an individual by suicide was not considered a shameful or cowardly act; rather it was viewed in its full context. The person was considered to have been impacted by a state of whakamomori (overwhelming sadness and depression) and kahupō (spiritual blindness). Viewed in this context, in the time of our ancestors, premature death through suicide was considered a human tragedy and loss of potential and was thus treated with understanding, compassion and aroha (love). Drawing on traditional Māori pedagogies contained within tribal waiata mōteatea (laments), this paper presents an example of how the wisdom traditions of Māori tribal elders can inform contemporary suicide postvention interventions. The traditions are also shown to support whānau (family) recovery from unresolved grief situations including the (modern) stigma associated with the death of a loved one to whakamate.

### Keywords

Māori, traditional, suicide postvention, storytelling, narrative enquiry

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## Introduction

Whakamate (suicide) is a major issue and of real concern to Aotearoa New Zealand (hereafter referred to as New Zealand) communities. According to the Ministry of Health (2006), approximately 500 people take their own lives by suicide every year, thereby affecting the lives of many others. Notably, despite nationwide postvention and intervention initiatives, Māori continue to have higher rates of suicide compared to non-Māori. Addressing this anomaly requires acknowledgement and detection of the multiple risk factors and life events that can contribute to a person ending their life. Broadly, these risks comprise exposure to multiple points of trauma; a lack of social support; poor family and personal relationships; and difficult economic circumstances (Beautrais & Fergusson, 2006).

Risk factors attributable to the experience of colonization and subsequent socioeconomic and educultural disadvantage are also ascribed to Māori and other indigenous youth in, for example, Canada, Australia and the Pacific Islands (Clarke, Frankish, & Green, 1997; Cunningham & Stanley, 2003; Lawson-Te Aho, 1998; Wissow, Walkup, Barlow, Reid, & Kane, 2001). Producing rapid social and economic changes during the 19th and 20th centuries, the impact of colonization and the ensuing hegemony led to Māori and other indigenous groups changing their perception of their cultural identity and social values and norms (Emery, 2008; Fanon, 1965; Friere, 1973; Langford, Ritchie, & Ritchie, 1998; Walker, 1990).

The development of negative social constructions and negative perception of self by colonized peoples is well documented (Battiste, 2000; Jackson, 2007; Smith, 1999; Walker, 1990). Such perceptions acted to further alienate indigenous communities from their cultural and social institutions. Simultaneously, by way of entrenched and systematic biases, colonized peoples were also alienated from mainstream

institutions. In tandem, these phenomena promulgated a state of “cultural depression” defined by Lawson-Te Aho (1998, 1999) as the presence of symptoms including anomie, hopelessness, helplessness, despair and grief. In New Zealand, this conditioning of disempowerment and exclusion has resulted in dysfunctional whānau (families) where violence, abuse and poor mental health are prevalent. Under these circumstances, suicide becomes the only option for some people who are no longer able to manage ongoing social or cultural devaluation and disintegration (Ajwani, Blakely, Robson, Tobias, & Bonne, 2003).

Earlier arguments support this assertion. For example, Durie (2001) maintains that suicide should not be understood in terms of a person’s immediate personal history or individual psychology alone. Rather, he stresses that where colonization has occurred, the level of intergenerational oppression and humiliation evident in an indigenous history may have become unbearable. Therefore, to end the pain and grief of intolerable suffering, suicide becomes the solution for the tortured soul.

Regardless of reason, the plethora of suicide risk factors present as multiple challenges for suicide prevention and intervention for indigenous people. The people of Te Arawa who occupy the central plateau of the North Island of New Zealand are not exempt. In recent times, the number of Te Arawa whānau who are affected by suicide has disproportionately increased. In part, this is due to a spate of youth suicides within Te Arawa between 2008 and 2013. Responding to these untimely and tragic deaths, in 2013 the Lakes District Health Board Māori Health Team raised the need for a suicide postvention research project. Subsequently, Te Waiata a Hinētītama—Hearing the Heartsong (the Hinētītama project) was launched. The project sought to understand the support needs of local whānau (families) bereaved by whakamate.

Funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand and overseen by the Health

and Disability Ethics Committee (HDEC), the Hineticama project was conducted in two phases. Phase one investigated traditional Te Arawa tribal views of whakamate. Phase two developed and trialled a suicide postvention tool using collaborative storytelling.

Phase one of the research found that:

- a traditional Te Arawa approach to whakamate was compassionate and understanding, and that whakamate was not considered an act of cowardice, but rather was viewed in its full context as a tragedy and a waste of human potential;
- in a contemporary context, the understanding of the aetiology of whakamate among Te Arawa people is limited and the approach to a suicidal death is confused.

Phase two of the research found that whānau need:

- the right person, place and time to undertake a healing process that guides them from a state of whakamomori (deep sadness) to a state of toiora (wellbeing);
- to understand the suicide of their loved one better through an analytical process involving open honest dialogue and reflexivity;
- to feel that the mana (integrity) of the deceased is restored (as part of the healing process).

To meet these needs, the suicide postvention framework *Te Matapihi ki te Ora* (the window to life) and its accompanying life review method *Te Uhunga* (the name given to the rituals that attend to the grief, mourning and recovery of whānau pani or bereaved) were developed and piloted in phase two of the research.

This paper outlines the two phases of the research project. It begins by presenting the research background and the foundations of

*Te Matapihi ki te Ora* which derive from two traditional tribal sources: the story of the young Te Arawa chieftain *Te Matapihi o Rehua* who died by suicide in the 1700s; and the Te Arawa waiata (song or lament) “*Te Atua Matakore*”, which was composed after his death. The teachings and learnings intrinsic to the story and the waiata are expounded, including the notion of “hearing the heartsong”. The paper then describes the construction and workings of the postvention framework and method and presents the outcomes of their application within phase two of the research.

### Project description

*Te Waiata a Hineticama—Hearing the Heartsong* was an 18-month-long Te Arawa-based research project that ran from 2013 to 2015. The aim of the research was to develop and trial a culturally appropriate (indigenous) suicide postvention framework and method by applying the narrative enquiry tradition.

The foundations of the project were laid by one of the earliest Māori ancestresses, *Hineticama*, the dawn maiden, who upon learning that her husband *Tāne-nui-a-rangi* was also her father, took her own life. Descending to the underworld known as *Rarohenga*, *Hineticama* transformed herself and became *Hine-nui-i-te-pō*, the Guardian of the Souls of the Dead. In Māori tradition, *Hineticama* is our first contact with whakamate. Passed down through the generations as customary knowledge, the transgressions at the heart of the *Hineticama* story are an accepted element of Māori mythology and go largely unquestioned. A story filled with shame, sorrow, grief, loss, and transformation, the heartsong of *Hineticama* set the scene for research which sought to understand and support the needs of whānau Māori bereaved by suicide; and to help address and reduce incidences of psychological distress and dysfunction caused by unresolved grief situations.

### ***Research methods and methodology***

The research was underpinned by kaupapa Māori and kaupapa Te Arawa research philosophies. Kaupapa Māori challenges traditional research norms and counteracts research practices which exploited and marginalized Māori people and their knowledge. Its utilization within this research was appropriate because, in keeping with kaupapa Māori, the research sought to maintain participants' cultural safety, promote their autonomy, and gain maximum benefits for them (Raureti, 2006).

Like kaupapa Māori, the philosophy of kaupapa Te Arawa research is akin to culturally safe research. Kaupapa Te Arawa however utilizes practices that are deemed tika (appropriate) within this distinctly Te Arawa context. The expectation that Te Arawa tikanga (traditions, customs) and kawa (protocols) would guide the research process was accepted as normal and valid. Furthermore, practices underpinned by Te Arawa values, ethics, language, courtesies and humour were taken for granted (Emery, Raureti, & Hōhepa-Watene, 2013).

### ***Research approach***

Any approach to suicide prevention needs to actively consider the community it is meant to represent, reflect the values and beliefs of the culture and occur in partnership with the community. Without the cooperation of the grass roots community, mental health promotion and suicide reduction strategies are unlikely to be successful. (Stewart-Withers & O'Brien, 2006, p. 209)

To maximize its chances of success, and in keeping with the key assertions of Stewart-Withers and O'Brien (2006), the research approach was community-driven and community-based. Conducted in two phases, the Hinetitama project gave voice and active consideration to the needs and the culture of the community it represented.

In phase one the researchers established the project whakapapa (genealogy) through an investigation into historical Te Arawa stories about suicide. This process involved a review of relevant literature and a series of three wānanga (education forums) with elders, emerging leaders, academics, practitioners, whānau and other interested parties, all of whom had been impacted by suicide. Individual interviews with key informants also occurred.

In phase two, the researchers trialled collaborative storying with whānau participants. This process involved a series of facilitated, critical and co-reflection sessions with whānau on their personal experience of whakamate followed by co-construction of meaning and interpretation (of this experience). The purpose was to create and allow alternative narratives (and their meanings) to emerge and be used as tools for teaching, learning, healing, and the creation of new knowledge.

### ***Data collection***

In phase one a total of 30 people attended the three wānanga which took place over a period of six weeks. Conducted as focus groups, participants engaged in open and robust discussion that:

- explored the aetiology of suicide;
- increased knowledge and understanding of whakamomori, whakamate and kahupō (spiritual blindness);
- applied the learning in a cultural context;
- highlighted understandings around Te Arawa beliefs, values and practices as they apply to whakamate.

Data from discussions and individual interviews were recorded and transcribed, and then analysed using an iterative approach.

Eight people from four whānau participated in phase two. This number included six women and two men aged between 42 and 74 years. Two of the participants were retired; five were

employed, and one was a community volunteer worker. To mitigate risk and ensure their safety, whānau were selected in collaboration with a local suicide prevention group and on the basis that the death of their loved one had occurred at least 12 years ago. This period of time was considered appropriate by the HDEC as it was expected to have given whānau sufficient time for healing to have commenced.

Collaborative storying was chosen as a method because it provided an opportunity to develop narratives that were more than just a “look backwards” and “a walk down memory lane”. The narratives developed enabled whānau to revisit, understand and resolve conflicts from their earlier lives that had contributed to the demise of their loved ones (Butler, 1963). As demonstrated in the participant quotes below, whānau were enabled to retrieve memories that linked the past to the present, and to construct new meanings that informed and positively influenced how the suicide of their loved one was understood:

I really liked that you could take the story beyond into a positive space. I can [now] think about my son and know where he was heading. And this is how I can speak of him to his daughter, my grandchild—positively, not just the yucky stuff. (Laura, female, 54)

I actually found peace rereading and reliving [the story] over and over. So to me it wasn't sad, it was my son's story. The love that I have for him after this process is so strong. This process and the way you've cut it all down is absolutely awesome. Thank you for listening to me; it's been a journey sometimes tough. There's a peace there now. This journey has made me feel secure in myself; I'm really peaceful. (Hera, female, 46)

As Jackson (2007) explains, the telling of whānau stories is a journey to a point of enlightenment known as *te whakamārama* (the explanation). Further, the use of narrative-type

questions to promote interviews as conversations is a culturally appropriate method for gathering research data. Inevitably, conversations lead to the recounting of experiences in the form of story.

The stories gathered were analysed using the processes of deconstruction, reflexivity and reconstruction. To assist this exercise, the researchers developed a suicide postvention framework and its accompanying life review method known respectively as *Te Matapihi ki te Ora* and *Te Uhunga*. The framework and the method are illustrated in Tables 1–3 below, which are accompanied by explanations of how *Te Matapihi ki te Ora* and *Te Uhunga* were used as tools for analysing narratives.

*Te Matapihi ki te Ora* has its genesis in the death of *Te Matapihi o Rehua*, a young *Te Arawa* chieftain who committed *whakamate* by drowning in the 1700s. Subsequently, the waiata “*Te Atua Matakore*” was composed by his *kuia* (female elder) in response to his untimely and tragic death. This story and its lessons are told in the following section. In the telling, the writers acknowledge the notion of multiple truths as explained by Jackson (2007), who states that “our people have always believed that there is never just one truth or one way of doing things. The very notion of our *whakapapa* implies generations of different stories layered on top of one another” (p. 17). The following version of the story of *Te Matapihi o Rehua* is that told by Rawiri Waru (2014).

### **Te Matapihi o Rehua**

*Te Matapihi o Rehua* lived in the 1700s. He was born and raised on the shores of Lake Rotorua and was a much loved son, grandson, father, husband and young chieftain.

*Te Matapihi* was renowned as a man of great strength and courage who brought, and sought, happiness and peace for his people. An exceptional individual, he was famed for his strategic planning and battle skills, his

compassion and kindness, and his observance of kawa and tikanga.

One day, under the threat of attack from Tūwharetoa (a neighbouring Te Arawa tribe), Te Matapihi was summoned by his koro (grandfather), the paramount chief Pukāki. Asked to prepare for battle in which he would be required to kill a foe of equal strength, skill and strategy, Te Matapihi refused because the target was a close friend. With a heavy heart and conflicted loyalties, Te Matapihi denied his grandfather, thereby providing opportunity for his younger brother Te Whanoa to take his place and, through triumph in battle, to complete the deadly task, which he did.

Humiliated by his own refusal to accept the request, and haunted by his failure to forewarn his friend, Te Matapihi suffered great distress and shame (Te Miha Cookson, personal communication, 2011). According to Dr Hiko Hōhepa (as cited in Tapsell, 2001) as the mana (power and prestige) of his younger brother Te Whanoa rose, the mana of Te Matapihi sank. Finally, consumed by sadness and despair, Te Matapihi paddled his canoe out onto the lake, slipped into the dark and cold waters of the channel known as Pikopikoiwhiti, and drowned.

After his death Te Matapihi o Rehua was accorded kaitiaki (guardian) status as befitting a Te Arawa chief. To this day he remains a guardian of Lake Rotorua where he watches over all lost and drowned souls until they too are restored to the embrace of Hinetitama/Hine-nui-i-te-pō.

Te Matapihi o Rehua was/is not defined by his final act. Indeed, to remind Te Arawa of his lion-hearted courage and his greatness in life and in death, the waiata “Te Atua Matakore” was composed by the kuia Te Hinu upon his death. The song remains to this day a permanent legacy for all generations.

## The legacy of Te Hinu

Te Hinu belonged to Ngāti Uenukukōpako, a Te Arawa tribe. A renowned composer, her relationship to Te Matapihi is assumed to be through a marriage line. Regardless, the poignancy of “Te Atua Matakore”, the lament she composed to immortalize this young chieftain after his suicide, reveals a deeply personal and reverential connection to him. The legacy of this waiata continues to enrich our lives today; it has echoed through the ages and reveals a compassionate and benevolent understanding of whakamate that illuminates a way forward for successive generations.

The restoration of tapu (sacredness) and mana to Te Matapihi o Rehua and his whānau was foremost in the composition of Te Atua Matakore. Conveying the tragedy and futility of the loss of a prodigious son to suicide, Te Hinu immortalized Te Matapihi and his suicidal act in a song which subsequently became a tribal anthem. In so doing, Te Hinu was the conduit by which the mana and tapu of Te Matapihi o Rehua and his whānau could be aptly restored by the wider collective. Thus, by enshrining the pain, grief—and greatness—of Te Matapihi in song, Te Hinu ensured that he would not be invisible to his descendants, nor they to others. But rather, that they would know the depth of his humanity, love and compassion for others, be uplifted once again by his mana, and be restored to the house of toiora.

### **“Te Atua Matakore”: A life review**

According to Yunkaporta and McGinty (2009), immortalizing a person, action or event in song, print or by other means requires the storyteller to treat the subject with sensitivity and respect. Such is the way Te Hinu crafted “Te Atua Matakore” and treated the life review of Te Matapihi o Rehua upon whom the lament focuses. On a deeper level, the waiata draws on the use of powerful metaphors to illustrate the fragility of the human spirit when overwhelmed

by the burden of life events. As part of this legacy, Te Hinu reminds us that a person need not be defined by a single act in time and that suicide, while deemed a tragedy, was not considered a shameful or cowardly act but rather a waste of human potential.

As intimated in her composition, Te Hinu was well acquainted with the many fine characteristics of Te Matapihi o Rehua. Because he was revered as a great leader of the people, she saw fit to ensure that his memory would be held dearly by future generations. Te Hinu holds that it is in the waiata's narrative that the truth or the lesson lies; that the authentic beliefs and values of the people of the time are captured and held. Through the use of metaphor, the veracity and honour of Te Matapihi are exemplified, and the depth of grief and loss experienced by Te Hinu and others when remembering his great deeds and characteristics are recalled.

### *Hearing the heartsong*

Metaphors are used to tell a story in “Te Atua Matakore”. The metaphors ensure that the integrity of the message of the composer or writer remain intact and that meaning of the story can be constantly observed and preserved (Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009). “Te Atua Matakore” calls to us to recognize the wounded soul. It reminds us that we have a collective responsibility to recognize the grief and distress in others and to nurture the mauri (soul) of the person so that it may return from a state of kahupō to one of toiora.

The healing aspects of “Te Atua Matakore” speak about truth and honour. Thus, the waiata upholds and restores the mana to the deceased person and in turn restores the mana and balance to the wider whānau. The process reduces the impact of intergenerational whakamā (shame) and soulful wounding. In turn, the legacy that remains teaches us that in order to understand the wounding, an opportunity exists for others to reflect upon and make right their possible part in the demise of a person's mana; and to

acknowledge the breaches of tapu which may have directly or indirectly led that person to a state of kahupō.

Te Hinu clarifies for us the notion that no action happens without a cause and every action has an effect. Through her actions, words and legacy building, she counsels that people should have occasion to recognize their role in the unfolding story and, where necessary, to remedy their actions. Therefore, for those who sing, and for those who listen to and understand the poignant words of the waiata, Te Hinu prompts a process of life review.

The life review process is a valuable tool with which our elders can establish their legacy. The process also provides for an individual's oral history with its important messages and learnings to make its mark on succeeding generations (Butler, 1963). Possessed of this knowledge, and through her waiata, Te Hinu saw an opportunity to inform future generations about Te Arawa cultural etiquette around death by whakamate. By compelling us to listen for and to hear the heartsong of those in distress, Te Hinu forever reminds us of our humanity, our divinity, our own vulnerability and our collective responsibility to recognize a battered heart, to hear its song, and to take steps to heal it lest it die alone.

The ancient and time-honoured words of Te Hinu continue to offer comfort to whānau pani in the 21st century. “Te Atua Matakore” is still sung today to honour others who, in death, are esteemed and marked by respect and reverence. Through this act her messages of love, compassion and understanding have endured. Indeed, they form the foundations of Te Matapihi ki te Ora and Te Uhunga; the culturally derived suicide postvention framework and method developed within the Hinetitama project to assist the life review process of whānau bereaved by whakamate. A description and explanation of the framework and its application follows.

## Te Matapihi ki te Ora and Te Uhunga pilot study

Te Matapihi ki te Ora is a culturally responsive therapeutic suicide postvention framework. Te Uhunga is the practice model by which the framework is applied. The term uhunga refers to the rituals that attend to the grieving, mourning and recovery of whānau pani. Together, the framework and method were used to facilitate a life review process that promoted recovery and redemption for bereaved whānau through introspection and analysis in the transmission and transformation of narratives.

The framework and the method are an indigenous means by which individuals (and whānau) can reveal their truth. To this end, Bishop (1998) suggests that storytelling is a useful and culturally appropriate way of not only representing the “diversities of truth” (p. 24), but also allowing the participant rather than the researcher to retain control. Jackson (2007) agrees, suggesting that Māori people have always believed that there is never just one truth or one way of doing things. The process enables the identification and exploration of correlations (or relationships) between a range of variables and the ways in which they interact with each other, so that when one variable is changed, or changes, the person is left with an idea of how the other may have also changed as a direct or indirect consequence.

In the context of this research, Te Matapihi ki te Ora was used for two purposes: firstly to determine and understand whānau bereavement needs and secondly, through reflection, analysis and co-construction of meaning from whānau stories, to assist them to a place of understanding, liberation and healing of unresolved grief. Importantly, the process did not attribute or assign blame, but rather it provided for a transformative journey of enlightenment and illumination where all who participated derived benefit.

The storying process was collaborative and involved meaning making through the

telling and retelling, and the sifting, sorting and isolation of significant life events within the deceased’s story. As well, whānau were aided to retrospectively reflect upon and include their own story with that of the deceased. This joining of stories enabled a return to consciousness of past experiences, particularly unresolved conflicts that were looked at again and successfully reintegrated in order to hear the heartsong of their loved one, and to come to peace with the past and present. The process enabled a sense of resolution resulting in less rumination and a gradual “subsidence of disturbing experiences from conscious thought” (Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999, p. 1243; see also Butler, n.d.). Restoration of the mana of the deceased was foremost on this journey. In itself, this restorative process was the epicentre of whānau healing.

### *Te Matapihi ki te Ora: Facilitating life review and reflection*

Narrative or storytelling is central to Te Matapihi ki te Ora. The framework enables “story catching”, with the storyteller genuinely and deeply heard (Rutledge, 2007) and the deceased’s life can be recorded, reviewed and analysed in the context of their past, present and (lost) potential lives.

The four rows of Table 1 each represent one of the riu o te ao Māori (Māori realms):

- Te ira tangata: the realm of physical being which relates to the mortal world that participants inhabit; their experiences within this realm and their responses.
- Hinengaro–Tamaroto, Puku–Ngākau: the realm of intellectual reasoning and emotion which denotes the nature of participants’ emotional responses to significant events in their lives. See Table 2 for more detail.
- Ngā wai e rua: the realm of the flow of life which represents a person’s state of inner being.



TABLE 1 Te Matapihi ki te Ora: Design of framework

Te riu o te ao Māori/Māori realms	Kōrero o nehe/Past	Whakaū/ Present	Whakahau/ Restoration	Ngā tohu/ Significant markers
Te ira tangata/Realm of physical being				
Hinengaro–Tamaroto, Puku–Ngākau/Realm of intellectual reasoning and emotion				
Ngā wai e rua/Realm of the flow of life				
Tōpuranga/Realm of significant affiliations and relationships				

- Tōpuranga: the realm of significant affiliations and relationships the person has.

The four columns of Table 1 represent wāhanga (sections) which are located in time. The first of these, Kōrero o nehe, refers to the life story of the individual and their whānau. The second, Whakaū, is where sorting and sifting, and the pulling of the storyline together into the deceased's "present", or life situation and circumstances at the time of their death, takes place. The third section is Whakahau. It is here that alternative narratives that can rebuild the hau (vitality) and the essence of the person are identified. Whakahau looks to restore the mana, mauri, ihi, wehi and wana (spark, life force, prestige, integrity and veracity) of the person and their whānau. Finally, the Ngā tohu section draws out both risk and protective factors present. Data entered into Table 1 was categorized based on the realm descriptors and guided by a set of key questions. Table 2 shows the realm descriptors, their English translations, and the key questions used when analysing stories and populating the framework.

Te Matapihi ki te Ora enables an exploration of the past using a multipronged approach. Guided by the key questions, the facilitator draws out significant events within the story and their impacts. These are entered into the different wāhanga and then discussed and deconstructed. Recording the narrative in a

systematic and structured manner enables implicit knowledge to become explicit.

At the same time, the Whakaū (present story) or circumstances that allegedly led to the suicide can be reconstructed and the details of the death further isolated and recorded. This allows these details to be analysed as part of the whole life review rather than being viewed as discrete unconnected units of the story.

In the Whakahau (lost potential) section the facilitator isolates factors in the story which demonstrate that, had the person lived, there may well have been an opportunity or opportunities for a positive outcome and future. Helping to restore the mana of the deceased, this process assists restoration, redemption and recovery for the whānau.

Finally, in the Ngā tohu section significant markers of either a positive or negative nature are identified from the story across all realms of the framework. The process promotes insight, greater understanding, "truth talk" and forgiveness for all significant players. This act of forgiveness and acceptance by the whānau signals the end of the process and a point of closure for the whānau.

### *Te Uhunga: The practice model*

The application of Te Matapihi ki te Ora is overlaid by the traditional Māori ritual Te Uhunga, which draws on cultural and indigenous practices for dealing with loss, grief

TABLE 2 Te Matapihi ki te Ora realm descriptors and guiding questions

Te riu o te ao Māori					
	Te ira tangata	Hinengaro–Tamaroto, Puku–Ngākau	Ngā wai e rua	Tōpuranga	Ngā tohu
Whakamārama/ Explanation	The world of the mortal person; the realm of the physical	Hinengaro: Inner female; the house of intellect and reasoning Tamaroto: Inner male; the house of intellect and reasoning Puku: The seat of emotions Ngākau: The decoder that deciphers and makes sense of the emotions from the puku	The two rivers that flow within all people: the physical water that sustains life and the spiritual water that flows from te ira Atua ki Rarohenga (the heavens to the underworld)	The people and groups of people with whom a person affiliates during their life for whatever purpose	Risk and protective factors
Key questions (analysing the story)	What was the nature of their physical experiences and their response?	What was the nature of their emotional experiences and their response?	What was the state of their inner wellbeing and what influenced it?	What significant affiliations did this person have?	What risk and protective factors were present?

and mourning. These rituals and techniques are used to transcend, transform and negotiate resolution and emancipation from the anguish and burden that has overwhelmed the bereaved. The method supports a journey along the path of healing towards acceptance and recovery. The stages of Te Uhunga are shown in Table 3.

Although located in Te Ao Māori and specifically Te Arawa, the adaptation and use of Te Matapihi ki te Ora and Te Uhunga by other iwi Māori and indigenous peoples is not discounted.

### Life review

In the shadowless mountains, the white plains and the drab sea floor, thine end at last is written. (Tuwhare, 1964, p. 26)

The words of the poet Hone Tuwhare illustrate the power of life review to give voice to the dead and, through Te Matapihi ki te Ora and Te Uhunga, to exonerate their end. Tuwhare reminds us that every person is no less in death than they were in life, and that death, albeit unnatural, is part of the cycle of renewal. His legacy speaks to the narrators in this project who played a role in restoring the mana of their loved ones whose “end at last” *they wrote*.

### Guiding the narrator

This life review process enables the narrator to move between the Māori realms and to reconstruct a series of life events that places the deceased at the centre of their (the narrator’s) story. The story can then be revisited and retold allowing the narrator to insert themselves into

TABLE 3 Te Uhunga stages and explanations

Te papanga/ The process	Te whakamārama/The purpose	Te otinga/The outcome/s
Te Whakatau	Welcome	Participants and facilitator/s are settled and ready to begin
Te Tangi	Acknowledgement of bereavement	The grief of the whānau for the deceased is recognized as being therapeutic and is embraced
Te Karakia	The establishment of solemnity and ritual	The reclamation of cultural/indigenous space
Te Whakarata	Establishing relationship/s	Create “space” for personal disclosure
Te Waiata	Sharing the narrative/s	Innermost feelings and emotions of the bereaved may come to the fore. Important and significant occasions are recounted. The rhythm of the heart (ngākau) and the core of the emotions (puku) set the tone of the recovery process.
Te Whakapapa	The layers of relationships interaction, kinships, and important events	The layers of personal, spiritual and environmental relationships are understood
Te Whakakapi	Closure and termination if possible. The closing prayer/ritual of solemnity	Completion of a very solemn and important journey of recovery, healing and resolution.
Te Koha	Reciprocal gesture of gratitude for the participants’ contributions	Denotes value with respect to the work that has been achieved and signifies satisfactory relationship and completion
Kai/hākari	The sharing of food	Symbolic of a return to the living for all involved in the Uhunga ritual

it, in the first person, as a means of personalizing and providing a broader context; and in preparation for analysis.

Once complete to the satisfaction of the narrator, the story can then be deconstructed and analysed. Meaning is ascribed to those aspects or variables which may lead to a deeper insight about the deceased’s life. Subsequently, the process can become a cathartic journey for the narrator by allowing them to develop insight and understanding into the part they may have played in the sequence of events. To date, all participants in the Te Matapihi ki te Ora and Te Uhunga pilot study have reported that the process, although at times “compassionately gruelling and raw” (Hine, female, 42), promoted long-awaited healing.

Engendering understanding and enlightenment, the pilot study provided a window of opportunity for participants to deal with their loss, confusion and unresolved grief. Through honest dialogue, participants were able to examine the multiple points of trauma experienced by the deceased. As demonstrated in the following quotes, whānau were enabled to move on from the guilt, blame and shame that is the (modern) stigma of suicide (Ware, 2010).

Because nobody talked or asked [about the suicide of my son] I had to hold it down, to suppress all those feelings. Over 20 years [I spent] depressing it. Going through this process “it” went from the pit of my guts—higher and higher and I became free. It was

like bubbles of grief and sadness popped when I talked to you [the facilitator]. (Laura, female, 54)

It's marvellous for me, from [being] down in the dungeon crying all the time . . . now I'm half way to heaven. There's a lot of relief. I've learned not to be ashamed and shy. To stand up as a person and let it flow out of you. The process has helped us to tell [our boy's] story. (Maxwell, male, 74)

## Conclusion

Ka āpiti hono, he tātai hono.

'That which is joined together becomes an unbroken line.' This expression is common to many formal speeches; it affirms the joining of the living with their departed ancestors. In a spiritual sense it is understood that the living are guided by ancestral precepts and examples. (Mead & Grove, 2001, p. 83)

Te Waiata a Hinetitama has revealed how tribal histories can be interpreted literally, metaphorically, and/or through value judgements to inform and positively influence ways forward in suicide prevention. This project has also demonstrated that recovery from the loss of a loved one by suicide is aided through narrative enquiry within Te Uhunga.

By way of words, Te Matapihi ki te Ora provided a window to the soul. Looking through the window, and guided by Te Uhunga, whānau began their healing journeys. This involved critical analysis of their stories and the development of new and alternative stories about the circumstances surrounding the death of their loved ones. As a result, whānau were enabled to shrug off stigma and long-held burdens of guilt and shame, and to perceive of their loved ones in a more positive and "ordinary" light. In turn, and as *their* lives were resurrected by those who loved them, the beauty within the

songs of the dead was brought forward to be heard, held and celebrated; and passed on so that others might hear and heal from them too.

Through this research, and as seen in the following quotes, the echo of the grief felt by Te Hinu hundreds of years before fell upon the heartsong of her descendants today and has freed them from their burden:

Through discussion I received clarity, understanding and enlightenment, perspectives and possibilities. I am grateful for the support I received in the moment. I'm feeling light—as in weight—and light as in beaming. Having read through the draft populated framework I appreciated being given the opportunity to make what I thought to be necessary changes. The emotion came with restoration potential. (Hine, female, 42)

When the mokopuna tuarua [great grandchildren] came yesterday, he [their great grandfather] took down a photo of our son, their grandfather, and started telling them about him. It was the first time he had ever done that in the 20 years since our son died. (Mere, female, 65)

Whānau in the Hinetitama project were returned to the house of toiora. Here, the souls of the living were rejuvenated and the souls of the dead, having given up their stories and been relieved of their burden, were left to lie in peace. We give thanks for the legacy of Te Hinu.

## Glossary

aroaha	love
hau	vitality
Hine-nui-i-te-pō	goddess of death
hinengaro	inner female; the house of intellect and reasoning
Hinetitama	dawn maiden
ihi	prestige
iwi	tribe

kahupō	state of spiritual blindness	tapu	sacredness
kai/hākari	sharing of food	Te Hinu	a kuia from Ngāti Uenukukōpako
kaitiaki	guardian		
karakia	establishment of solemnity and ritual	te ira Atua ki Rarohenga	the upper and lower heavens
kaupapa	method	te ira tangata	the realm of physical being
kawa	protocols	Te Matapihi ki te Ora	the window to life
koha	reciprocal gesture of gratitude	Te Matapihi o Rehua	a Te Arawa chieftain who committed suicide in the 1700s
kōrero o nehe koro	the past grandfather		
kuia	grandmother or female elder	te riu o te ao Māori	Māori realms
mana	power, prestige, eminence	tikanga	traditions, customs
mauri	life force	toiora	optimum wellbeing
mokopuna tuarua	great grandchildren	tōpuranga	realm of significant affiliations and relationships
ngā tohu	significant markers		
ngā wai e rua	realm of the flow of life	Tūwharetoa	tribe from Taupō region
ngākau	decoder that deciphers and makes sense of the emotions from the puku	uhunga	rituals that attend to the grief, mourning and recovery of whānau pani
Ngāti Uenukukōpako	a Te Arawa tribe	wāhanga	sections
otinga	outcome/s	waiata	song
papanga	process	waiata mōteatea	lament/funeral song
Pikopikoiwhiti	a deep channel in Lake Rotorua	wana	veracity
Pukāki	a paramount chief of Ngāti Whakaue, Te Arawa	wānanga	education forums
puku	seat of emotions	wehi	integrity
Rarohenga	underworld	whakahau	restoration
Tane-nui-a-Rangi	god of the forest	whakakapi	closing prayer
te ao Māori	the Māori world	whakamā	shame
Te Arawa	Māori people from the central North Island of New Zealand	whakamārama	explanation/purpose
“Te Atua Matakore”	Te Arawa waiata written by Te Hinu	whakamate	suicide
tamaroto	inner male; the house of intellect and reasoning	whakamomori	state of deep sadness and depression
tangi	acknowledgement of bereavement	whakapapa	genealogy
		whakarata	establishing relationship
		whakatau	welcome
		whakaū	the present
		whānau	family
		whānau pani	bereaved family

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