

Living by the Maramataka: Mahi Maramataka, Indigenous Environmental Knowledge Systems and Wellbeing

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Abstract : The focus of this research is mahi Maramataka, 'the practices of Maramataka' as a traditional and evolving knowledge system and its connection to whaanau oranga (wellbeing) and healing. Centering kaupapa Maaori methods and knowledge this research will explore how Maramataka can be used as a tool for oranga and healing for whaanau to engage with different environments aligned with Maramataka flow and optimal time based on the environment. Maramataka is an ancestral lunar environmental knowledge system rooted within korero tuku iho, Maaori creation stories, dating back to the beginning of time. The significance of Maramataka is the ancient environmental knowledge and the connecting energy flow of mauri (life force) between whenua (land), moana (ocean) and rangi (sky). The lunar component of the Maramataka is widely understood and highlights the different phases of the moon. Each moon phase is named with references to puurakau stories and environmental and ecological information. Marama, meaning moon and taka, meaning cycle, is used as a lunar and environmental calendar. There are lunar phases that are optimal for specific activities, such as the Tangaroa phase, a time of abundance and productivity and ocean-based activities like fishing. Other periods in the Maramataka, such as Rakaunui (full moon), connect the highest tides and highest energy of the lunar cycle, ideal for social, physical activity and particularly planting. Other phases like Tamatea are unpredictable whereas Whiro (new moon/s) is reflective, deep and cautious during the darkest nights. Whaanau, particularly in urban settings have become increasingly disconnected from the natural environment, the Maramataka has become a tool that they can connect to which offers an alternative to dominant perspectives of health and is an approach that is uniquely Maaori. In doing so, this research will raise awareness of oranga or lack of oranga, and lived experience of whaanau in Tamaki Makaurau - Aotearoa, on a journey to revival of Maramataka and healing. The research engages Hautu Waka as a methodology using the methods of ancient kaupapa Māori practises based on wayfinding and attunement with the natural environment. Using ancient ways of being, knowing, seeing and doing the Hautu Waka will centre kaupapa Maaori perspectives to process design, reflection and evaluation. The methods of Hautu Waka consists of five interweaving phases, 1) Te Rapunga (the search) in infinite potential, 2) Te Kitenga (the seeing), observations of and attunement to tohu 3) te whaingā (the pursuit) and deeply exploring key tohu 4) te whiwhinga (the acquiring), of knowledge and clearer ideas, 5) Te Rawenga (the celebration), reflection and acknowledgement of the journey and achievements. This research is an expansion from my creative practices across whaanau-centred inquiry, to understand the benefits of Maramataka and how it can be embodied and practised in a modern-day context to support oranga and healing. Thus, the goal is to work with kaupapa Maaori methodologies to authenticate as a Maaori practitioner and researcher and allow an authentic indigenous approach to the exploration of Maramataka and through a kaupapa Maaori lens.

Keywords : maramataka (Maaori calendar), tangata (people), taiao (environment), whenua (land), whaanau (family), hautu waka (navigation framework)

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