

Speech at 21st Century Education

Tena koutou katoa

Tena koutou me nga ahuatanga o te waa

Nga iwi o konei, Te Waiohua, Te Kawerau-a-Maki, Ngati Whatua, Tainui waka me nga hau e wha tena koutou, tena koutou tena koutou katoa

E nga mate haere atu ra

*Ka piti hono tatai hono
Te hunga mate ki te hunga mate
Ka piti hono tatai hono
Te hunga ora kit e hunga ora*

Na reira tatou o te ao ora

Kiaora huihui mai tatou katoa

E nga mana e nga reo , rau rangatira ma huri noa I te whare nei, tena koutou

*Mai Nga kuri a Wharei ki Tikirau
Mai Tikirau ki Maketu
Ka tu ake ahau I runga I te mauri o toku nei waka o Te Arawa
Ko Ngati Rangiwewehi te iwi
Ko Tarimano te marae
Ko Te Rotorua-nui-a- Kahumatamamoe te moana
Ko Te Awahou te awa
Ko Tawakeheimoa te tupuna
Ko Paora Maxwell ahau*

I have been asked to speak today on a topic close to my heart, entitled “Family violence a 20th century crisis”. I am also speaking today not only as one who has experienced first hand violence within my own whanau but also as one of the Trustees of Te Kahui Mana Ririki, a recently formed trust that was set up to lobby and advocate for *tamariki*. Although I am aware that there has been a huge wave of violent crime in Aotearoa in the last 15 years (approximately a 115% increase) and a violent crime occurring in this country every 43 minutes, I will be focusing my *korero* today on violence towards *tamariki*. So what are the statistics relating to violence against children. Here is a snapshot of the picture as it stands today;

Snapshot of Child Abuse & Family Violence

- ✚ NZ has one of the highest child homicide rates in the developed world (5th out of 30 OECD countries)
- ✚ NZ’s child harm rate is the highest in the OECD countries;

- ✚ OECD report New Zealand at 23rd out of 24 countries for health and safety outcomes for our children
- ✚ There are 25 hospitalisations from child abuse per week in Aotearoa;
- ✚ There are 10,500 cases of known child abuse cases per year in NZ
- ✚ There are 5,500 children currently in care in NZ, as a result of child abuse
- ✚ Children who are very young (under 3) and who are adolescents are particularly at risk from child abuse;
- ✚ Maori children are 3 times more likely to be killed than non-Maori children
- ✚ New Zealand children remain overwhelmingly more likely to live in poverty than adults. According to the Ministry of Social Development's Living Standards Report (0) in 2004, 26 % of children lived in severe or significant hardship
- ✚ Maori infants had an approx 6 times higher relative risk of dying from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

Incidentally abusers are typically close family members & the abuse perpetuated by women as much as men. It seems that the most common factor in child abuse is chronic supervisory neglect as a result of emotional detachment. Also interestingly the result of the biggest study on child death in NZ (published in 2007 in the book Lives Cut Short) is that poverty is one of the biggest risk factors in child abuse – not ethnicity as the popular media would have us believe.

So what you have heard and seen is an appalling report card outlining this country's abysmal record in this area. But these statistics are a mask of the lives that have been lost. Lets give these stat's a few names and faces, these are *mokopuna*, children, nieces and nephews that Maoridom have lost forever;

✚ 1991: Two-year-old **Delcelia Witika** was bashed, burned and hit so hard that her appendix burst. She was left in her cot to die while her mother and her partner went partying. They were both jailed for manslaughter.

✚ 1992: **Craig Manukau's** mother turned the radio volume up trying to drown the noise when the 11-year-old's father kicked him to death in their home.

✚ 1994: Babysitters had seen three-year-old **Jordan Ashby** with bruises and black eyes - and a doctor had said those earlier injuries were consistent with him falling off his bike - before his mother's boyfriend Phillip Rakete, beat him to death.

✚ 1995: After the Children and Young Persons Service had ignored claims of abuse and after social workers did not tell the Family Court about fears made by a public health nurse, her father beat 11-month-old **Veronika**

Takerei-Mahu to death.

- ✚ 1997: Massive head injuries killed 10-month-old **Jaydon Perrin** while he was in the care of his mother Leanne and her boyfriend Aron Vercoe who was charged but acquitted of murder.

- ✚ 1997: CYPS had removed three-year-old **Tichena Crosland** from the care of her mother Moana Whakamarurangi and given custody to her father David Crosland three months before she died of traumatic head injuries and with a badly damaged vagina. He was found guilty of murder but not rape.

- ✚ 1999: After months of violent beatings, seven visits to hospital in a year and 40 examinations by health professionals, four-year-old **James Whakaruru** was punched and kicked to death by his mother's boyfriend, Benny Haerewa, who was out of jail after earlier attacks on little James. Another child watched and actually handed Haerewa a jug cord, steel vacuum cleaner pipe and a hammer as the 45-minute beating and stomping went on. Convicted of manslaughter, Haerewa was sentenced to 12 years.
- ✚ 2000: **Hinewaoriki (Lilly-bing) Karatiana-Matiana** died from cerebral swelling after being shaken. She had bruising and lacerations to her genitals. She died in her cot on her second birthday while her mother was out partying. Two aunts who had been 'caring' for her were jailed.

- ✚ 2000: **Mereana Edmonds**, 6, was beaten to death by her mother Belinda and her lover Dorothy Tipene. Mereana suffered three serious brain injuries and 30 cuts, bruises and abrasions to her body. Among other things, she had been thrown into a shed all night when she wet her bed. Her mother was jailed for eight years, her partner for 27 months.

- ✚ 2003: **Tamati Pokai**, 3, was beaten to death by his 'foster father' after the child brought home a packet of jelly beans from kindergarten.

- ✚ 2003: Fifteen-year-old **Rocky Wano**, already hooked on booze and drugs, had come home from Rotorua for Christmas. His angry father kicked and beat him to death after he was called to get Rocky from the Waiiroa Marae, finding him drunk.

- ✚ 2004: **Tangaroa Matiu** was beaten to death with a fence paling by his stepfather after soiling his pants. His mother got seven years for manslaughter, her husband life for murder.

- ✚ 2005: Harley Wharewera, 19, was jailed for 10 years and Jeremy Tawa, 23, for two after attacks on **an unidentified two-year-old boy** whose home they shared. The boy was thrown against walls and beaten, forced to eat dog faeces. His mother, Jill Tania Tito who knew what was happening, was jailed for 18 months.

Steel yourself now, here are some photo's of this violence, these are pictures of poor little Ngatikaura's lifeless body as it lies battered and bruised and dead as a

doornail on the coroner's table. What bought about these injuries?

🚩 2006: Ngatikaura Ngata, 3, was beaten to death with weapons also after soiling his pants. His mother and stepfather are serving eight years for manslaughter.

*E kii ana te korero a nga tupuna "E kore e ngaro nga kakano I ruia mai I Rangiatea"
E hoa ma, kua mate nga kakano nei. Na reira koutou nga tamariki I mate atu I enei
mate kino , haere haere haere atu ra.*

*Hoki atu koutou ki o matua tupuna , ma ratou ke e manaaki i a koutou, nga hineariki
me nga tamariki o te Ao*

The hard question has to be asked of all of us what has happened to us when parents, close *whanau* members and even in some cases grandparents are inflicting this on our *tamariki*?

There have been suggestions in the media and also fuelled by dubious scientific research that Maori are prone to be violent and that the abuse and murder of Maori children is somehow innate to being Maori. What we do know, not only intuitively, but also by accounts from early 19th Century Missionarys' written observations, is that Maori were generally kind and nurturing caregivers and the place of children in this society was an exalted one, the very word *tamariki* encapsulates this status.

Please take the time to note what the reverend Samuel Marsden wrote in 1814.

Rev. Samuel Marsden 1814-

'I saw no quarreling while I was there. They are kind to their women and children. I never observed either with a mark of violence upon them, nor did I ever see a child struck'

'The chiefs.. are accustomed to public discussions from their infancy. The chiefs take their children from their mother's breast to all their public assemblies, where they hear all that is said upon politics, religion, war etc. by the older men. Children will frequently ask questions in public conversation and are answered by the chiefs. I have often been surprised to see the sons of the chiefs at the age of four or five years sitting amongst the chiefs and paying close attention to what was said.'

Marsden went on to say ,

'The children are generally very easy, open and familiar at the first interview, and show an anxiety to pay every little attention in their power to the strangers. There can be no finer children than those of the New Zealanders. Their parents are very indulgent, and they appear always happy and playful and very active.' [ed. Elder, 283]
'The New Zealanders do not correct their children lest they should abate their courage or subdue their violent passions. Hence the children are in no subjection to their parents.' [ed. Elder:479]

So the real question for all of us is that what has changed since these times and what circumstances have meant that we are seeing levels of abuse and injury to Maori

children are way out of proportion to our numbers? What has taken our tamariki from a children's Nirvana to this

Some social historians, such as Rawiri Taonui from Canterbury University explain it concisely in this way, quote;

“...That this is all part of the colonial legacy that afflicts impoverished and alienated indigenous minorities. Theft of land reduced Maori to poverty. Suppression of *te reo* produced cultural alienation. Urbanisation since the world wars have exacerbated these both. Maori who were rejected by the dominant culture and distanced from ancestral culture, were concentrated in poor housing, working for low wages or on welfare & subjected to across the board racism. What we have created is a generation of parents born in the 1970's, 80's & 90's who entered an intergenerational cycle of poverty, alcohol, drugs, hopelessness and frustration. “

It seems to me that the violence committed against Maori society and culture by colonial powers in the 19th century is reaping it's own violent rewards today. That's to say nothing of the violence that the state is still committing against Maori vis a vis the foreshore and seabed confiscations and the “terrorism” raids on Tuhoe.

These are all primary contributors to the problems and the dysfunction in 2008, however, be very mindful that I cite these explanations not to excuse the beating and killing of children today but as a means to understanding the problem and to finding the appropriate solutions.

So what are some of these solutions, here are some of them as I see them,

1. **Firstly support the lobby to have government policy changes in relation to children;** An example is supporting the Every Child Count's consortium's call for a cross party parliamentary caucus on children that puts children's welfare at the centre of policy making. (This organization, ECC, incidentally has a whole range of policies and platforms aimed at addressing issues like disadvantage in the early years, child poverty and child abuse) However successful lobbyists might be in getting politicians to address some of these issues we should be mindful though of the thoughts of people like Meihana Durie who writes, quote “..... unless Maori had a sense of ownership of any state programmes or policies then they would run the risk of being dismissed as modern versions of colonial prescriptions” He goes on to say “ Culturally based human services will be essential to the development of appropriately responsive services and any public health model of welfare initiative will need to be developed in the context of a culturally responsive service directory” end quote. In other words, there have to be *kaupapa* Maori solutions led by Maori to solve Maori problems. At this time I should pay my respects to the hundreds of Maori who are involved in programmes at the cliff face in this area of family violence, much of their work goes unlauded and is hugely under resourced, yet they do tremendous work in running successful kaupapa Maori programmes aimed at violence prevention & re-education.
2. **Secondly; Support any policy that looks to alleviate child poverty.** I have mentioned before how 26 % of children lived in severe or significant hardship and that there is a strong correlation between poverty and abuse. We also have

to address issues of Maori economic development & help raise the standard of living of Maori families.

3. **Support programmes that reconnect Maori with their culture.** I also believe also that alongside initiatives that ensure the economic wellbeing of all NZ children, that it is in the reconnection of Maori with *whanau, hapu and iwi* that will help restore the dysfunction that currently operates in some Maori *whanau*. I might also add that that is where many of you as educationalists will play a significant role.
4. **Take a personal responsibility to be collectively concerned.** There is an old *Pakeha* proverb that says something like this “ It takes a village to raise a child”, I think that there is merit in that for all of us, Pakeha & Maori alike. That we not only all look out for our own *mokopuna* & children, nieces & nephews but that we also look at for our cousin’s *mokopuna*, children, nieces & nephews and further we also look out for the *whanau* down the road & their *children* as well. Let is not be like Nia Glassie’s neighbors who watched as they saw her hung on the clothesline or purposefully stranded on the roof and heard her plaintiff cries for help and ignored them. Don’t underestimate the power of individual concerns expressed collectively. Indeed, this is how Te Kahui Mana Ririki came to be formed from a gathering of a network of influential Maori and professionals who met in Wellington late last year together with another group of concerned Maori, led by Dr Hone Kaa, that were holding a summit on child abuse around about the same time. Both groups were motivated, in part, to there being a distinct lack of a public Maori response in this area and we decided to establish the Trust to facilitate this response. Just to give you a brief background to the Trust and the work it hopes to do over the next few years.

The name of the Trust says it all, *Te Kahui* means the gathering of forces and *Mana Ririki* means the power of children. There is also something of the reclaiming of the name Te Kahui. As we gather today here in West Auckland, let us all remember there is a young man, barely out of childhood himself, by the same name, Chris Kahui who is currently on trial for the alleged murder, at his own hand, of his young twin sons. Whether the law finds him guilty or not we will have to wait and see but all I can say is that he has all the risk factors stacked against him. He’s Maori, he’s young, ill educated, from a poor background & allegedly he’s had a violent up bringing. Incidentally when he was bailed to a small town outside Auckland in December of last year, he and his lawyer after driving to the township were looking for directions, they stopped and asked a group of people the way, this group told them to follow them to a nearby marae. It seems the people of the marae made it clear that Kahui was not welcome and he and his lawyer left voluntarily. This in itself sends a strong message, where Maori community leadership is standing up and saying that what he had allegedly done was not acceptable and that he was not welcome. I applaud this type of action by Maori leadership and we all need to follow this example. The tragedy for Chris Kahui is that he possibly made this visit years too late, hypothetically if he had been back on this marae as a young child and been inculcated with good Maori values he may very well not be in the boat that he currently finds himself in.

TKMR recognizes that it has an enormous task and has taken on the following objectives;

- Te Kahui Mana Ririki will provide a positive strengths-based approach to highlight issues around child poverty and abuse, by bringing together relevant organisations and stakeholders that place tamariki at the centre of their mission
- (Te Kahui Mana Ririki) It will focus on the health and prosperity of tamariki and their whanau through advocacy and collaboration
- (Te Kahui Mana Ririki) It will Provide the strategic Maori voice to promote, advocate, and lobby for effective solutions to Maori child homicide and family violence
- (Te Kahui Mana Ririki) It will develop a Maori ‘think tank’ to draw together relevant research. Te Kahui Mana Ririki will encourage positive changes in thinking about Maori children and their status in families, communities and society
- Te Kahui Mana Ririki will focus on the health and prosperity of tamariki and their whanau through advocacy and collaboration

The organisation will in the short term fund raise and establish a secretariat with research, advocacy and an all important communications function.

Finally there’s a *whakatauki* that asks us what is the most important & precious resource in the world, the traditional response is, *he tangata he tangata he tangata*, it is man it is man it is man

For this kaupapa, I suggest we adapt this proverb to read;

He aha te mea nui I roto I tenei ao

He tamariki he tamariki he tamariki.

What is the most important treasure in the world, it is children it is children it is children

Kiaora huihui mai tatou katoa.