

## Chapter 2

### Our Conceptual Framework

This chapter discusses the Tātai Whakapapa as the conceptual framework of kaupapa Māori, of Te Kōpae Piripono and of our research. Tātai Whakapapa encompasses the Whānau Atua (the first celestial family) and its fundamental significance to our research.

#### 2.1 Te Tātai Whakapapa as the conceptual framework

The kaupapa (philosophy) of Te Kōpae Piripono is articulated by our opening karakia, Tātai Whakapapa. It affirms the kaupapa Māori paradigm that underpins and guides Te Kōpae Piripono and our research. This framework enables us to understand and to organise the indigenous concepts of Te Ao Māori, the Māori world, that are the essence of our operation and practice. The tātai whakapapa, as recited in our opening karakia, alludes to the creation of the universe, recounting the genesis of the atua (gods), and then of humankind. The story of the karakia tells of Māori descent from Io, from the primal parents, Ranginui and Papatūānuku, and from their celestial offspring, through to the present day. The story is a metaphor that explains the natural order and the place of human beings in that order. It provides assurance and hope for the future. An understanding of our cosmogonic genealogy must be the base or beginning point for those pursuing kaupapa Māori (the Māori paradigm) and mātauranga Māori (traditional Māori knowledge and learning). And so it is at Te Kōpae Piripono.

A closer look at our whakapapa for these purposes requires us to know the story of the original family. It is from the atua matua that all in the universe descend. The story begins with nothingness. Out of the void there evolved a blackness, and stages and stages of night, that eventually led to Te Po Tiwhatiwha, the night of a glimmering light. It is at this stage of night that we become aware of Ranginui and Papatūānuku embracing tightly as one, **one unified forebear** of human kind - the male and the female in unison (Io). The union was all at once loving, secure, and yet stifling for the many male offspring who could not move, develop or grow, within the embrace. The story is a template for our own family experiences. Some members of the family wanted to break free, and would destroy the parents by forcefully separating them if necessary. Some

wanted to remain in the security of their parents’ embrace, and opposed their separation. Others wished to negotiate a separation with all parties for the benefit of all. Some clung to the mother, others to the father. This was the first instance of conflict within the family group...resolved by negotiation. Tānemāhuta successfully forced the parents apart, for the benefit of the offspring. From the separation emerged Te Ao Mārama. Some of the offspring burst out on their own finding and creating new opportunities, others clung to either parent protectively, or because they lacked confidence to leave. All the offspring developed and grew, they set about exploring their new environments and as they did so they created the natural world and all in it.

The divisions and alliances, differences and similarities, affections and dislikes, between members of the family continued, and continue to the present day. The ongoing conflict between the brothers is said to account for life’s disasters and misfortune. Much of our ritualised behaviour and cultural practice, is concerned with reconciling the competing interests, balancing the opposing forces and maintaining stability between the atua and their domains, to maintain an ordered system that allows diverse elements to coexist in complementary and harmonious relationships, resulting in an integrated whole.

Achieving perfect balance requires that accord is maintained between atua, each of whom has a particular disposition. The six main atua, we characterise in the following way:

*Ranginui = Papatūānuku*

|                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Rongomātāne</i>   | <i>calm</i>            |
| <i>Tānemāhuta</i>    | <i>knowledge</i>       |
| <i>Tangaroa</i>      | <i>capacity</i>        |
| <i>Tūmatuenga</i>    | <i>authority</i>       |
| <i>Hamietiketike</i> | <i>resourcefulness</i> |
| <i>Tāwhirimātea</i>  | <i>outer unrest</i>    |
| <i>Rūaumoko</i>      | <i>inner unrest</i>    |

*Figure 2.1: Atua Dispositions*

Ranginui and Papatūānuku are characterised as integral components of each atua – Ranginui representing the non-physical, intangible and spiritual elements of each atua, and Papatūānuku representing the physical, concrete and tangible elements. Anxiety, aggression, confusion, jealousy, greed, selfishness, are some of the emotions that will gain paramouncy within the domain of an individual atua, if internal balance is not achieved, by resolving inner tensions. Where there is inner turmoil, there can be negative implications for the other atua and their domains, and for the whānau as a

whole. The balanced strengths/attributes of each atua allow for the efficient reconciliation of disagreements. Fear can be stimulating and challenging, but it must be balanced by the experience of accomplishment, and confidence in one's ability to respond to the fear-invoking circumstances. If one is not equipped with the tools to manage risk, one may be immobilised by the threat of the 'other'.

The divine offspring of Ranginui and Papatūānuku provide a template for our own behaviours, today. Our skills for collective living, and collective skill, must be practiced and current, to achieve natural balance in the modern day. The Kōpae research has been concerned with identifying and refining strategies that can achieve that balance at Te Kōpae Piripono and beyond. There must be reconciliation on an individual level if reconciliation and harmony is to be achieved for the whānau, for the group.

Our contention is that a dynamic whānau, where all members are balanced and in harmony, is the perfect environment for our children to thrive and to develop to optimum levels. Unless each member of the whānau is becoming whole and complete, the potential for the whānau to be whole and complete is limited. The Kōpae research, therefore, provided the opportunity to explore strategies that facilitated that development on both individual and collective levels.