He Kapua
Whakapipi,
He Kapua
Whakapapa.

He Kapua Whakapipi, He Kapua Whakapapa.

Accumulating and layering connections to whakapapa through the practice-led material exploration of papermaking.

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Exegesis in support of practice-based thesis, Master of Design,
Auckland University of Technology.

Abstract

He Kapua Whakapipi translates to cumulus clouds, while the word whakapipi means to pile upon another, stack or accumulate. In this project, He Kapua Whakapipi (accumulating clouds) represents being shrouded in a blanket of the cloudy and unknown; while He Kapua Whakapapa (layering clouds of descent) refer to the primordial parents of the Māori world, Ranginui and Papatūānuku and the tūpuna that come before me. Through accumulation and layering, I begin to form connections to my whakapapa by taking the cloudy or unknown and making them tangible through the material practice of papermaking.

My Ngāti Kuri tūpuna shared an interconnected, spiritual connection with the land and natural materials, formed through whakapapa links. Through the practice of plant-based papermaking, I develop a sense of identity and relationship to my Ngāti Kuri whakapapa. This practice-led exegesis is informed by a Kaupapa Māori paradigm that stems from ancestral knowledge. This research employs concepts of mātauranga Māori and decolonised methodological approaches, thereby challenging my prior worldview, in order to view the world through an Indigenous lens. The methods of connecting, journaling and creating, are influenced by Linda Tuhiwai Smith's Twenty-Five Indigenous Projects (2021) and grounds the work.

The research is explored through three phases. Firstly, submerging myself in theoretical knowledge to begin to understand the links between whakapapa connections to Ranginui (Sky Father), Papatūānuku (Earth Mother) and tūpuna (ancestors); secondly, through knowledge around harvesting plant material using customary practices; and thirdly, by incorporating, practical knowledge situated around the practice of papermaking to create whakapapa connections to Atua using the forms of paper clouds and rocks.

Whakaahua 1. Zak Thomson, cut harakeke, Auckland, 2024,

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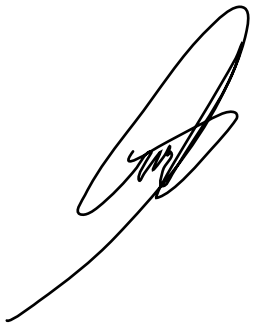
Attestation Of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the Acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:



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To my iwi and whānau this research is for us and the preservation of knowledge of our whakapapa for future generations.

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Lastly, to my tūpuna, I see you, I feel you, and I embrace you as you continue to guide me through this journey.

Notes

The chapter titles for this exegesis uses terms related to different Kapua (clouds) formations. These descriptions depict the stages of how I felt as I move throughout this research.

Okewa (Nimbus clouds), dark blanket of unknown as I begin to form connections with my whakapapa.

Pūtahi (Stratus clouds), patchy and spread out but the connections are beginning to form.

Kapua whakapipi (Cumulus clouds), connected, well-formed clouds. The word whakapipi alone means to pile on one another stack or accumulate. Kapua whakapipi also reminds me how the harakeke plant grows; in clumps of iwi, hāpu and, whānau.

Throughout this exegesis I share snippets from my journal entries, as journaling was one of the methods for this research. It is important that the reader can see my point of view at the time of responding, and how I began to make connections while visiting specific locations. These writings are coloured in green in the later chapters of this exegesis.

Pepeha

Ko Maungapiko te maunga

Ko Pārengarenga te wahapū

Ko Kurahaupō te waka

Ko Ngāti Kuri te iwi

Ko Te Hiku o te Ika te marae

Nō Te Tai Tokerau au

Ko Thomson tōku whānau

Ko Zak tōku ingoa

Whakaahua 2. Zak Thomson, Maungapiko, 2024, Kapowairua, Northland

Kupu whakataki | Introduction

Growing up in rural Matakana, I have always felt this strong connection to the whenua (land). I was taught that the whenua provides for us, but I lacked a spiritual connection or worldview that many Indigenous Peoples possess. Because I lacked this worldview, I believed that whakapapa solely meant genealogical human lineage. My Māori mother Tanya (Ngāti Kuri) grew up in the foster system and was raised by a Dutch family, therefore she grew up with their cultural and spiritual beliefs. My father, Neil is a Pākehā of English and Scottish descent. This combination meant I was raised with a strong Pākehā perspective. Like many young Māori, I have grown up with a disconnection and loss of knowledge around my whakapapa. For as long as I can remember, I have felt this lack of identity, as if part of myself was missing. In her master's thesis on whakapapa, Rauna Ngawhare (Ngā Mahanga-a-Tairi) (2019) sums up how this lack of identity is common in many young Māori:

> *I used to wear a mask of cultural identity to protect me from the missing pieces of my whakapapa. A cultural mask of identity built my confidence to address my language inadequacy where a head nod or one-word response would see me through a conversation in te reo Māori. My cultural mask protected me from growing up without my language, with fragments of my whakapapa. My Māori identity or cultural integrity never fell into question or disrepute while wearing this mask. There are others like me, searching for answers, so we explore our whakapapa to help us unmask. (1)*

Rauna Ngawhare's term 'unmasking' is a term that I resonate with. For so long, I chose to stay shrouded by a blanket of clouds. Although I recognised my whakapapa Māori, I sat quietly, observing in a state of Kai te noho puku (withdrawn and not taking part). It is through this research that I am able to 'unmask' or step out of the clouds. It is from the writings and works of Maureen Lander (Ngāpuhi, Te Hikutu), Dorothy Cloher (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Kuri), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Porou) and Hirini Moko Mead (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Tūhourangi) that I begin to understand the concepts of whakapapa and perceive it as more than just human lineage; it is everywhere and encompasses everything we see, touch, smell and hear. This research is grounded in a Kaupapa Māori framework and is underpinned by a Māori worldview. Māori researchers Leonie Pihama, Sarah-Jane Tiakiwai, and Kim Southey (2017) describe this framework as:

> *Kaupapa relates to notions of foundation; plan; philosophy and strategies. Kaupapa Māori, therefore, indicates a Māori view of those things. It relates to Māori philosophies of the world, to Māori understandings on which our beliefs and values are based, Māori worldviews and ways of operating. (7)*

This practice-led exegesis poses the question as to how a papermaking practice can create whakapapa connections to Atua (gods, deities) through the forms of clouds and rocks. All humans whakapapa back to Atua as the creators of our world. Atua can also be described as ancestors with 'continuing influence'. For me, this influence is expressed within clouds. Cumulus is derived from the Latin word cumulo which can be translated to accumulating. The word kapua whakapipi translates to cumulus clouds, while the word whakapipi alone means to pile upon another or stack. To me, He Kapua Whakapipi (accumulating clouds) represents being shrouded in a blanket of the cloudy and unknown; while He Kapua Whakapapa (layering clouds of descent) refer to the primordial parents of the Māori world, Ranginui and Papatūānuku and the tūpuna that come before me. As kapua are made up of small water particles they possess this ungraspable quality to them, I am unable to embrace them, but they still surround around me. Through accumulation and layering, I begin to form connections to my Ngāti Kuri whakapapa by taking the cloudy or unknown and making them tangible through the material practice of papermaking. Through Māori origin stories, I begin to unpack how traditional concepts situated around whakapapa can build a connection through the practice of papermaking.

1. Okewa | Forming Connections

1.1 Understanding whakapapa

He mea nui ki a tātau ō tātau whakapapa.

Our genealogies are important to us.

(Hēmi Pōtatau 1991, 1)

Whakapapa, the Māori word for genealogy, translates to “the process of layering one thing upon another” (Ngata 2011, 6). Whakapapa plays a vital role in the identity of Māori and “connects us with our tūpuna, whānau, whenua, iwi and marae” (Ngāti Rārua Ātiawa Iwi Trust 2019). In te ao Māori (Māori world) we believe everything contains its own whakapapa. As Māori biologist Mere Roberts (2013) explains “Whakapapa as a philosophical construct implies that all things have an origin” (93), this means that whakapapa is not only connected to people but extends to places, words, objects, animals, and all plant matter. When I first entered the Master of Design programme, the idea of connecting with my whakapapa seemed to be an out-of-reach process. I began to question what whakapapa is and how I could create a personal connection. To better understand whakapapa, one must start with the origins. As stated by Māori researcher, Jude Roberts (2006) whakapapa can be broken down into four 'stages' as described below:

The cosmic whakapapa, *which describes the creation of the universe by Io, the supreme god.*

The whakapapa of gods and goddesses; *which talks about the creation; for some tribes this is Ranginui (Sky Father) and Papatūānuku (Earth Mother).*

The whakapapa of mortal beings, *Tānenuiārangi and Hineahuone are one example of the first man and woman on earth.*

The whakapapa since the migrational travels *from Hawaikī to Aotearoa, or the genealogy of people in Aotearoa. (5)*

Even though origin stories vary between iwi, the majority of creation stories contain the story of the separation of Ranginui and Papatūānuku (Royal 2005, 1). From early beginnings they can be described as being in a tight embrace with one another, shrouded in a state of darkness; also known as the state of Te Pō (the perpetual night). Their offspring, Tāne Mahuta, Tāwhirimātea, Tangaroa, Tūmatauenga, Haumiatikitiki and, Rongomātane wondered what life would be like if Ranginui and Papatūānuku were separated allowing light to enter the world. This is described by Grey (2018):

Rangi and Papa, or heaven and earth, were the source from which, in the beginning, all things originated. Darkness then rested upon the heaven and upon the Earth, and they still both clave together, for they had not yet been rent apart; and the children they had begotten were ever thinking amongst themselves what might be the difference between darkness and light, they knew that being had multiplied and increased, and yet light had never broken upon them, but it continued dark. (12)

Tāne Mahuta then proceeded to separate his parents, with “His head firmly planted on his mother the earth, his feet he raises up and rests against his father the skies, he stains his back and limbs with mighty effort" (Grey 2018, 23). These six offspring became the Atua of the earth and therefore have an important role in the pūrakau (stories) of Aotearoa. There are many other Atua, including many female deities, but these six are the most widely known. Traditionally, both male and female were regarded as equal, both playing an important role in the creation of life, this is described by Māori lawyer and philosopher Ani Mikaere (2017) “The understanding that creation itself was dependent upon both female and male elements ensured that the principle of balance between women and men was honoured in daily life” (73). It was not until the European missionaries came to Aotearoa, that they brought with them their Christianity teachings, and with this, resulted in the marginalisation of wāhine in Māori origin stories (Mikaere 2017, 73).

Although Ranginui and Papatūānuku are the primordial creators of the world. Their son, Tāne Mahuta became the Atua of forests and everything that inhabits them. This means that not only is Tāne Mahuta the creator of animals and plant matter, but he is also considered the creator of humankind (Taonui 2011, 2).

1.2 Ngāti Kuri arrival stories

Ko takoto kē ngā kōrero a ngā mātua mo te whenua.
The foundation of mana whenua was set by the ancestors of ancient times.
(Ngāti Kuri Deed of Settlement Ratification Guide 2013, 7).

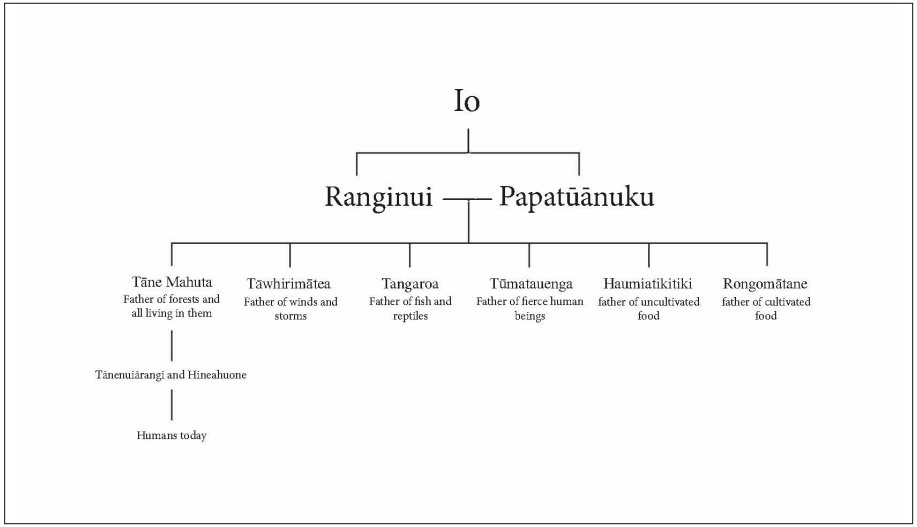
Many, if not most Indigenous cultures harvested natural resources. My Ngāti Kuri tūpuna shared a spiritual connection with the land and natural materials, as shown in The Ngāti Kuri Deed of Settlement Ratification Guide (2013) "Ngāti Kuri holds a particular cultural, spiritual, historical, and traditional connection with all the whenua in our rohe. This is made evident in our close relationship with over 400 named sites of significance in Te Hiku o Te Ika" (137). This interconnected relationship between humans and natural materials is formed through whakapapa links (Harmsworth and Awatere 2013, 274). As I examine my Ngāti Kuri lineage, I see how whakapapa is not as clear-cut as it seems. In the text The Tribes of Muriwhenua, Cloher (2022) states that during the early formations of iwi tribes, it became a "complex and dynamic process of evolution" (34).

According to the Ngāti Kuri Deed of Settlement Ratification Guide (2013), Ngāti Kuri traces its tūpuna back to Pōhurihanga (Ngāti Kaha), the captain of the Kurahaupō waka (canoe) that "landed on the south end of Te Huka beach, near Tom Bowling Bay at the top of the North Island"(8). On the way to Aotearoa, the Kurahaupō waka suffered damages and became temporarily stranded at Rangitāhua (the Kermadec Islands) for repairs (Cloher 2022, 34). As a result of this event, "It is believed some passengers switched to the Aotea waka to ensure whakapapa lines continued if the Kurahaupō did not make it" (Ngāti Kuri Deed of Settlement Ratification Guide 2013, 7). As described by Cloher (2002), "Ngāti Kaha established their first papakāinga (settlement) close to where they landed"(34). This is where they were met with the people of Te Ngake (also known as Te Ngaki), who had already been living there for several generations and are believed to be the founding people of the area to an ancestor named Ruatamore (Ngāti Kuri Deed of Settlement Ratification Guide 2013, 13). These Ariki (aristocrats) "enjoyed sole and undisturbed occupation on this land for almost four centuries prior to the arrival of Pōhurihanga" (Ngāti Kuri Deed of Settlement Ratification Guide 2013, 8).

Pōhurihanga married Maieke, a chiefly woman of Te Ngaki and they produced four children who settled in different parts of northern Muriwhenua (Muriwhenua Fishing Report 1988, 255). This is detailed by Cloher (2002): "Taiko moved to Parengarenga Harbour, Toroa to Muri-moto where a segment of the Tainui canoe

people under Te Paenga joined him. Muriwhenua went to Cape Karikari, and Whatakaimarie remained at Kapowairua. This means that most of the tribes in the Northland region can trace their whakapapa back to the children of Pohurihanga and Marieke" (35).

After reading this, my perception of the meaning of whakapapa began to shift, not only viewing it as a line of human lineage, as we often do in Pākehā family trees. But rather, understanding that whakapapa is a living entity that we are bound to through connections to Atua, people, plant matter, traditions, and physical objects through a never-ending, complex, interwoven web. It also plays a significant role in how Māori lived, acting as a framework in which culture, politics, language, and religions formed an overreaching identity (Mahuika 2019, 4).



Whakaahua 3. Zak Thomson, layers of whakapapa, 2024

1.3 Papermaking as a form of connection

As a practice, papermaking comes from China credited to Cai Lun in 105 CE, almost two millennia ago (Hunter 1978, 50). At that time, my Māori ancestors were still living further north of Aotearoa, in the Pacific. Before the invention of paper, different cultures employed various materials to communicate and preserve knowledge across generations. The Chinese utilised left-over cotton to produce cotton scrolls, while the people of Tonga, Samoa and other Pacific Islands used beaten bark from paper mulberry trees to create tapa. These materials have similarities to modern-day paper, but they do not meet the criteria of true paper since they lack the fusion of individual fibres (Studley 2014, 62). Although these materials were produced to record items of importance, my Māori ancestors at the time did not have a written language. Instead, they passed down information orally through whakataukī (proverbs), waiata (song), kōrero tawhito (history), pūrākau (stories), whakapapa (genealogy) and through toi (arts) like that of raranga (weaving) (Calman 2012, 1).

The innovative technique of papermaking involved utilising leftover cotton waste and various plant fibres like bamboo and the mulberry tree. The process consisted of boiling the plant fibres for several hours to break down the cellulose bonds holding them together, the plant material is then beaten to separate these fibres, resulting in a pulp-like substance (Hubbe and Bowden 2009, 1757). To physically create a sheet of paper, a tightly woven mesh crafted from bamboo fibres was fixed to a bamboo frame. This mesh screen was then immersed into the vat and raised again, enabling the water to drain while the remaining cotton and plant fibres formed into a sheet of paper (Hubbe and Bowden 2009, 1762). Since then, handmade paper has evolved, seeing for example, the invention of the mould and deckle which placed a mould on top of the screen creating uniform sheets of paper (Bloom 2017, 67). As a result of the Industrial Revolution, the craft of handmade paper was replaced using mass-produced machinery, thus becoming a dying art form (Jain & Gupta 2021, 238).

In Aotearoa, papermaking has a much shorter timeline; the first paper believed to be produced was made from harakeke (Phormium tenax) in 1861 in Te Tōangaroa (Mechanics Bay), Auckland (Shep 1997, 157). This identifies that the harakeke was and still is a versatile plant that could offer many benefits not only to Māori, but to Europeans as well. Unfortunately, an industry for producing harakeke paper was not sufficient as the raw material lacked the strength cotton and other plant fibres possessed (Cruthers, Carr and Laing 2009, 107). It wasn't until Europeans were well-established in Aotearoa that they began to import papermaking machines, with the first commercial establishment, Woodhaugh Mill, being built in 1876 (Shep 1997, 157).

1.4 Contextual review

The paper mulberry tree (Broussonetia papyrifera), originally from Asia, played an essential role In Chinese history as it was one of the first bark fibres used by Cai Lun to produce handmade paper (Tang et al. 2017, 82). Introduced to the Pacific 5000 years ago, renowned scholar Te Rangihīroa (Sir Peter Buck) states that aute—the paper mulberry tree—is included on the list of plants brought to Aotearoa by the ancestor Whakaotirangi on the Tainui waka (Hiroa 1949, 63). Te Rangihīroa concludes that "there was ample evidence that cloth was made from the bark of the aute in the North Auckland area", quoting the following (Hiroa 1949, 63):

Nga kahu o to matou kainga	The garments of our home from where we
i rere mai ai i tawahi,	sailed from the other side, was aute,
he aute nei, he rakau aute,	an aute tree, the bark of that tree being
mahia ai te peha o taua	manufactured, whilst, the wood of the tree was
rakau, a, ko te tinana	used for fishing net floats.
o te rakau hei poito kupenga.	

When I think of the migrations that my tūpuna undertook, I automatically envision this as the movement of people. What is interesting to see is the beginning of the migration of plant matter, like the paper mulberry tree, through its travels from Asia down through the Pacific and then on to Aotearoa. Making Aute (barkcloth) and papermaking share similar processes of breaking down fibres to create flat surfaces to either draw or paint on, but they are achieved differently. Both practices first undergo a soaking process called 'retting' (explained in section 2.4 creating). The fibres are then beaten. In traditional papermaking terms, beating refers to breaking down the plant material into individual fibres. In contrast, beating in aute refers to beating the fibres until they expand into a flat sheet. In a sense, the practices of papermaking and aute share this interwoven connection of whakapapa ties originating from the paper mulberry tree.

Nikau Hindin (Te Rarawa and Ngūpuhi) is a Māori artist reviving the lost toi of Aute. Hindin's work is used to "mark time in a uniquely Māori way, reflecting the maramataka and celestial navigation mapping, inspiring us to remember and move in the ways of our tūpuna" (Blundell 2022). Aute, similar to tapa, consists of beating the inner bark from the mulberry tree, also called aute in Māori. Once the tree reaches eighteen months old, it is cut, and the outer bark is peeled away. The inner bark of the tree undergoes a soaking process known as retting. It is then beaten with traditional tools such as shells and wooden beaters. As the bark is beaten, it expands into a thin cloth-like material up to three times its original size (Conor 2020).

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Whakaahua 4. Nikau Hindin, title unknown, 2019, Aotearoa Art Fair, https://artfair.co.nz/artwork/nikau-hindin/

Hindin's work began in 2013, and it took many years of practising and perfecting her skill set before she could begin using the cloth for other purposes (Blundell, 2022). As Hindin perfected her practice, she began to paint tukutuku and tāniko weaving designs on her aute to map out the stars through seasonal changes, expressing that "The lineage of my patterns comes from the tukutuku and tāniko weaving designs. I do a lot of research and calculations for every star map I create. I did a series that documented what time the stars rise and set during Rākaunui (full moon), over six moon cycles. This helped me to understand the seasonal changes of the stars and visually see it as a pattern." (Conor 2020).

Further, Hindin likes the idea that her "compositions are predetermined by the declination of the stars and the times they rise and set. This is knowledge our ancestors would have known like the back of their hands and used to navigate to Aotearoa" (Blundell 2022). Similar to my practice of papermaking, Hindin expresses that using natural materials in a culturally traditional way poses a lot of planning and patience; she harvests during the summer months and paints the aute during the winter months. As this is part of tikanga customs, I began documenting the flowering and seeding seasons of some native trees of Aotearoa to honour these traditional customs, thereby deepening the connection with my whakapapa.

Cora-Allan Lafaiki Twiss (formerly Wickliffe) is of Māori (Ngāpuhi, Tainui) and Niue (Alofi, Liku) descent and like Hindin, is reviving the art form of hiapo (barkcloth) which has not been practiced in Niue for many generations due to the introduction of commercial-made fabric in the 1900s (Seve-Williams and Fa'avae 2020, 6). The process for producing hiapo follows the same process of aute. Cora-Allan's practice of hiapo is self-taught, which means she has not been able to learn from elders (Masterworks Gallery 2023). I cannot help but see a continuing theme of practitioners utilising self-taught traditional methods as a form of connection to their culture. There is a comforting feeling seeing other people going through the same experiences I am faced with, showing me that I am not alone through this journey.

In 2020, Cora-Allan shifted her practice of hiapo into the space of performative art for the opening of the Moana Legacy (2020) exhibition at Tautai Gallery in Auckland. Viewers watched as Cora-Allan took black paint and painted over her hiapo titled *Our last supper with you revised* (2020). "Hiapo is considered sacred and is passed down through generations" (Wickliffe 2020). Expressing that she felt like she was breaking this cultural cycle, Cora-Allan sums up how she felt:

> *At that moment, I felt the weight of my grandfather on my shoulder and remembered him passing on to me his love for the knowledge of patterns.*

> *I then passed this knowledge of cloth onto the shoulders and hearts of everyone who was standing in the room. The brush hit the cloth and I was moved by the gasp of the collective. My shoulders released a tension I didn't know was there, my heart no longer in my mouth. (Wickliffe 2020).*

The cycle she mentions guides the viewer down a new path, a path of not remembering the physical object but the transaction that had just occurred between herself and the viewers, stating, "This creates an intense emotion between myself and the audience" (Wickliffe 2020). I resonate with Cora-Allan's thoughts as I, too, feel the weight of my whakapapa as a practitioner moving into Indigenous research. In this sense, 'Our last supper with you revised (2020)' can be viewed as similar to my practice. The physical making uses traditional materials and methods, but the final artefacts are not 'traditional'.

Whakaahua 5. Cora-Allan Wickliffe, Our last supper with you revised, 2020, Tautai Gallery Opening,
Photo Isoa Kavakimotu, https://pantograph-punch.com/posts/remember-with-me

Maureen Lander (Ngāpuhi) is an artist who works in the space of toi (Māori art) as a way to connect with her whakapapa. Lander's modular piece, Flatpack Whakapapa (2017), emphasises this, comprising of many different raranga (weaving) techniques, intertwining connections between her practice and natural materials. The work features a range of weaving techniques, including whiri (braiding) and whakairo (patterning) and depicts a collection of connected panels. These connections symbolise whakapapa and aho tuku iho (ancestral lines handed down) through artistic practices. Using the concept of 'flatpack furniture' the insulation can be dismantled and folded. While the approach of the work takes on a Eurocentric view of flatpack furniture, the techniques and overreaching concept connects Lander to her whakapapa. Lander explains that "Whakapapa is not stagnant but always with us" (Govett-Brewster Art Gallery 2017) In saying this, it creates an opportunity for adding more panels as her whakapapa expands over generations.

Whakaahua 6. Maureen Lander, Flatpack Whakapapa, 2017, Teuru, photo Sam Harnett, https://www.teuru.org.nz/whats-on/calendar/maureen-lander-flat-pack-whakapapa/

Mark Lander is a paper artist here in Aotearoa. It is interesting to see how Lander's practice utilises both tikanga Māori and harakeke milling machinery introduced by the Europeans. It is from Lander's educational videos online that I learnt and developed my own papermaking practice. Lander's piece The Rain Cloak (2020) is a commissioned piece for the Chamber Gallery in Rangiora. The installation was commissioned to cover a large-scale art piece by Nathan Pohio and draws its inspiration from a traditional Māori pākē (rain cloak) (Lander 2021). Pākē is constructed from harakeke and other plant matter that is 'thatched' (similar to roof tiles) and acted as practical wear to provide protection and shelter for our tūpuna while out in the rain (Tamarapa and Wallace 2013, 5). Lander created six pieces of harakeke paper hung floor to ceiling that stretched across the entire room. Using the concept and materials of a traditional pākē, Lander was able to recontextualise this through his papermaking practice and rather than using the cloak as a protection from the rain, the harakeke paper became a protection cloak for Pohio's artwork.

Whakaahua 7. Mark Lander, The Rain Cloak, 2020,YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogDr1INI0V4

Another artist working in the paper-pulp space who shifted my thinking about how we view paper is Hong Hong, an artist who uses the pulp in a paint-like way rather than making traditional sheets of paper. Hong's practice begins by forming a base layer of pulp on a mesh screen while allowing it to dry outside in the open air. As she adds more pulp over the days, she encourages debris, insects, and foliage from surrounding areas to settle into the drying pulp. Passing storms also play a role in the outcome of her work, as the wind creates ridges and tears on the surface of the paper. Explaining that this process allows her to capture a still photograph of the space she is working in, "acting as a geographical and meteorological marker for the voyage of my own body in time and through space" (King 2022). Through her practice, Hong began to connect with her Chinese heritage. She explains that as a young girl growing up in China, she would visit Buddhist temples and write "good wishes on a scroll of paper and put it into the trees in the temple" (King 2022). From these early experiences, Hong began to see paper as a "metaphysical, transcendental" object that could bridge the material with the spiritual world through trans-temporal channels (King 2022).

Furthermore, paper pulp artist Susan Warner Keene's view on the papermaking practice echoes that of Hong Hong; she views the practice as a role for human cultures to pass on knowledge to other generations, whether this is through physical practice or information and stories kept on paper (Babcock 2015). Keene's paper is typically made from flax or abacá fibres and discusses the living qualities these fibres produce. Specifically keeping in mind that she is dealing with living membranes and observes how they behave, Keene makes comparisons to the paper and to our bodies, and how we carry marks of injury and age with us, referencing that "we are similar and connected to plant matter more than we think" (Babcock 2015).

Although Hong and Keene are not Māori artists, I cannot help but find similarities in how Hong, Keene and I consider and use plant materials. In particular, there is an enduring connection between papermaking in China, using the paper mulberry tree, and its use in creating aute, hiapo and tapa. I like to think that I am utilising the practice of papermaking almost as a 'bridge', beginning to create these trans-temporal[1] channels with my whakapapa—not necessarily through the practice of papermaking itself, but by using the practice of papermaking to build a community of harvested materials, people, and locations.

1. Using the practice of papermaking to connect myself (present) to tūpuna (past) through the notion of using methods of tikanga to harvest from locations the same as these tūpuna once did.

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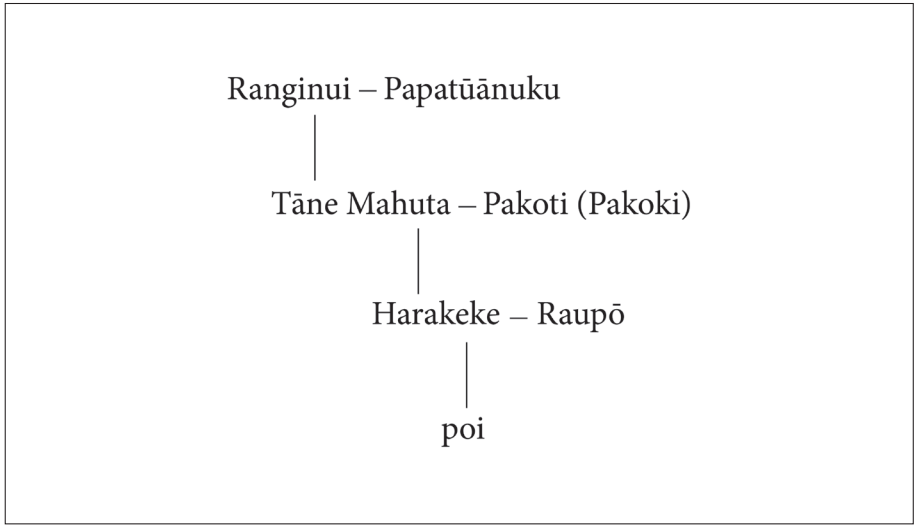
Whakaahua 8. Hong Hong, title unknown, 2022, Photo Chris Gardner,
http://www.honghong.studio/installation-views/85eugr8s0m61bktbel9loiu89ywx6e

1.5 Forming a connection to materials

As previously mentioned, forming paper involves breaking down individual fibres from either plant or tree matter. To further form this connection to my whakapapa through my practice of papermaking, selecting the correct type of fibre was beneficial. The harakeke, also known as Phormium Tenax or New Zealand flax, is a flax-like plant that grows in fan-like patterns. Often confused with its relative, whararikі (mountain flax) harakeke grows much more significantly, with some plants growing up to five meters tall and preferring more saturated soils, and often found in swamp lands or near coastal areas (Cowell 2023). Harakeke also represents the symbolism of a whānau (family). This connection to a family is evident in the fan-like way it grows. The inner shoots of the flax are called the rito (young centre shoot, representing the child); next to these are the mātua (parents) and the outer stems, which are harvested first are called the tūpuna (ancestors) (Swarbrick 2007, 2). A single plant of harakeke can be called a pū harakeke (hapū) while a bunch of plants together is called a pā harakeke (iwi), (Scheele 2007).

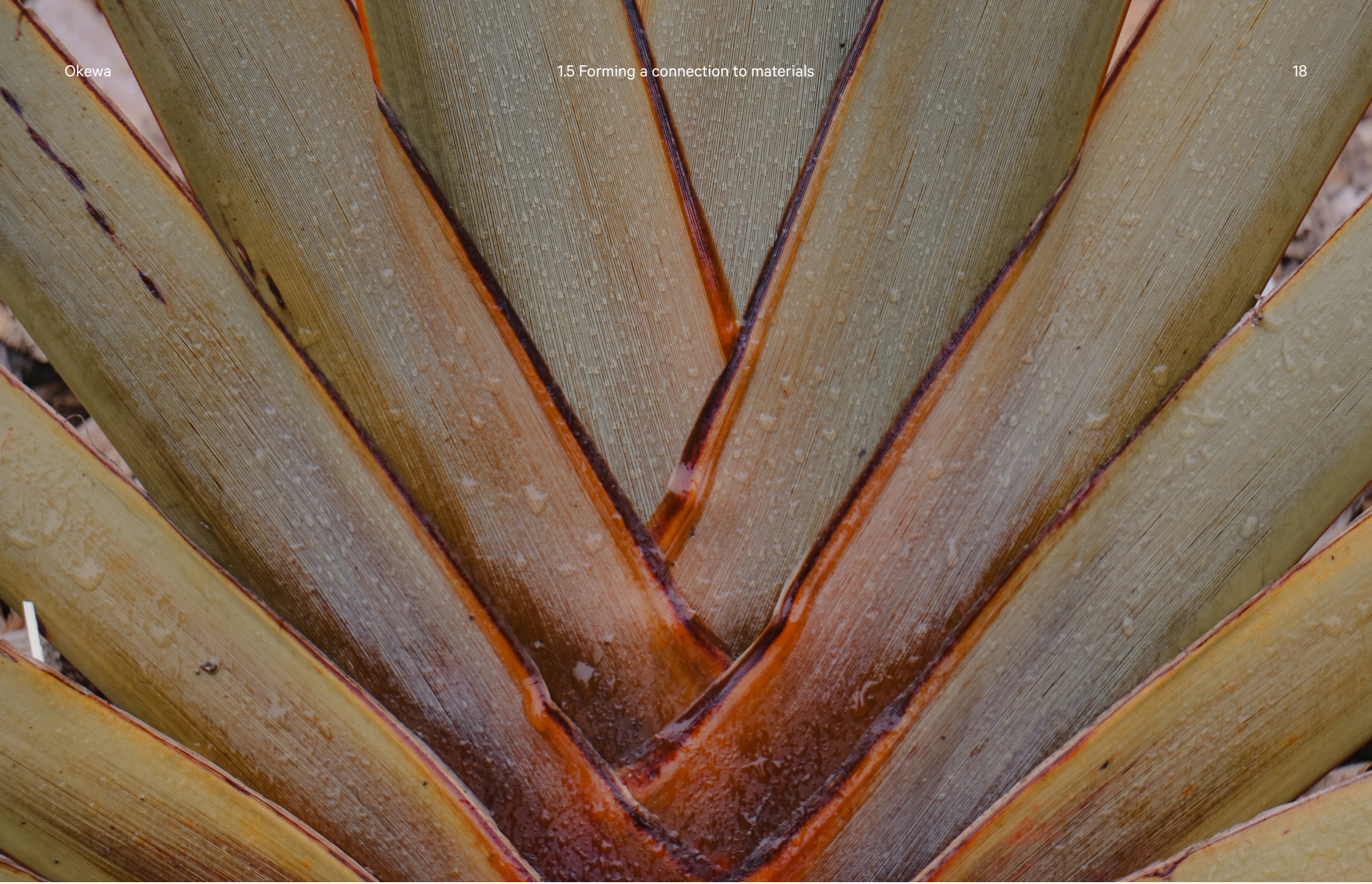
Like all living beings, the harakeke forms its own whakapapa. The harakeke shares the same father (Tāne Mahuta) as the first wahine, Hineahuone (Grace and Kahukiwa 2018, 43). Furthermore, the Harakeke is a father himself. The harakeke and the raupō (bulrush) together birthed the poi (Paringatai 2004, 15). This link between all living beings emphasises that all whakapapa can be traced back to the world's creators, Ranginui and Papatūānuku. Ka'ai (2008) reiterates "For Māori, this definition extends humans relationships into connections between humans and their universe"(58).



Whakaahua 9. Zak Thomson, whakapapa of the Harakeke, 2024.

In the past, a kairaranga (weaver) could identify over fifty cultivars of harakeke (Carr et al. 2005, p93). These kairaranga were initiated into the Te Whare Pora, and as scholar Jacqueline McRae-Tarei, her a kairaranga (2021) states “Te Whare Pora in its transliteration is ’The Ancient House of the Art of Weaving’ of formal learning where a potential weaver would be observed and tested. This knowledge pertained to the specialised body of knowledge of weaving that pertained only to the kāhui kairaranga including tikanga, karakia and whakapapa” (28). Furthermore “Once the weaver had acquired the approval of the hapu in her performance as a kairaranga they were blessed as carriers of mauri (individuals, in which the essence (Māori knowledge and lore) is located)” (Te Ratana 2021, 40). As Michelle Riley (2004) notes “Harakeke was pliable and durable enough to be woven into shelters and whare, baskets for food gathering, cooking vessels and storage, sleeping mats, footwear, snares to hunt birds, nets for fishing, lashings for waka, weapons and adornments” (7). Some of the most popular ceremonial clothing was made from cultivars, that produced a pure white, strong fibre like those of the arawa and kōhunga (both harakeke cultivars) (Scheele and Orchiston 2005, 10-13).

European settlers began to develop an interested in harakeke fibres, for items such as sails, ropes and sacks (Cruthers, Carr and Laing 2009, 104). Before the invention of machinery that striped the harakeke, Māori hand-dressed fibre for the Europeans (Matheson 2000). As a result, there is “evidence that Māori were expected to provide cheap labour and free information on processing of fibre” (Cruthers, Carr and Laing 2009, 104). Fibre that was hand-dressed by Māori was considered higher quality than machine-dressed fibre, as fibre that was machine-stripped produced a coarser fibre (Matheson 2000). The first harakeke mill in Aotearoa was established north of Wairoa in 1875 (Shep 2003, 157). According to Cruthers, Carr, and Laing (2009) “Approximately 8–9 tonnes of green leaf were required to produce 1 tonne of dry fibre. A skilled employee could cut 3 tonnes of green leaf a day. Leaves were cut at ground level from 6–8 years old plants growing in swamps and fed through the stripper” (105). Once synthetic fibres were created, the need for natural fibres dropped as synthetic materials were cheaper to produce (Scheele 2005, 6). Early on I began incorporating the customs of tikanga into my practice to further strengthen the connection between myself and the plant matter I was harvesting. Tika means ‘right’ or ‘correct’ which means tikanga can be described as the way in which Māori acted both morally and ethically. Renowned scholar Hirini Moko Mead (2003) describes it as follows “A normative system deals with the norms of society, with what is considered to be normal and right. Tikanga Māori was an essential part of traditional normative system, since it dealt with more behaviours with correct ways of behaving, and with processes for correcting and compensating for bad behaviour” (6). Like many other natural materials, there is tikanga to follow during the harvesting stages of the harakeke to maintain tapu (sacred or under Atua protection). This means that tikanga customs played a



Whakaahua 10. Zak Thomson, harakeke, 2022, Auckland

significant role in the way Māori lived their day to day lives. Forsha (2017) suggests "Tikanga is not an absolute or a daily specific set of rules, rather it evolves through consistency and behaviour that is based upon precedents from one's family and culture" (91). Furthermore, kairaranga Gloria Taituha (2021) states "The tikanga applied is to harvest a manageable amount of harakeke to minimise waste; one must always be conscious to harvest what you need, not what you want" (114).

Tikanga Custom	Reason
A karakia (prayer) is said before cutting the first blade of harakeke.	This is to thank Tāne Mahuta for gifting us this material.
Always cut on the diagonal, away from the centre of the plant.	This helps water to drain and not flood and kill the heart of the harakeke.
No Harvesting is allowed during the night or when it's raining.	This is believed the be a general health and safety protocol.
No harvesting during the time the korari (flower) is growing.	This ensures all of the plants energy is focused on the reproduction of the harakeke.
Only cut the tūpuna blades (the outer older blades).	This ensure that the inner blade (rito) is protected.
Ensure each blade cut is cut at equal heights.	This ensures the harakeke growth energy is equal.

Table 1. Te Papa Tongarewa, tikanga customs of harvesting harakeke, https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/topic/3623

1.6 Contextualising clouds

Initially, the creation of paper cloud formations was not intentional. At first, I began experimenting with how I could allow the fibres of the paper to have autonomy over how they formed as I tipped a soup-like mixture of water and harakeke fibres over my mould. Once I hung the paper and viewed them from a different viewpoint, I noticed that they began to resemble cloud-like formations.

In te ao Māori, kapua (clouds) can represent a variety of meanings. Not only did they represent physical formations of clouds warning our tūpuna of incoming weather conditions, but they are mentioned in the Māori origin stories when the great explorer Kupe and his wife, Kūrāmarotini, discovered Aotearoa (Williams 2015, 21-28). When Kūrāmarotini saw the cumulus clouds accumulating above the horizon, she yelled, "He ao! He ao! He Ao-tea-roa! A cloud! A cloud! A long white cloud!" (Williams 2015, 21-28). Along with the stars, sun, wind, and ocean, kapua are among many forms of navigation methods that helped our tupuna while exploring the Pacific and when situated over land, kapua typically stacks upon another, forming a V-shape cloud (Evans 2011, 69). Waka navigation author Jeff Evans (2011) also describes how certain landscapes could reflect colour on the underside of these kapua:

> *The reflection of land colour on the underside of a cloud is also used to locate land. Which coral reefs and coral sand give a whitish reflection, while Islands with vegetation produce a dark reflection. Atolls and Islands with large dry reefs often reflect a pinkish tinge. These reflected colours are usually very subtly different to the colours of other clouds in the general vicinity that are not situated directly over the island. (70)*

Kapua also takes on many personifications and makes up one of the many creation stories associated with the world's creation. In a poetic sense, kapua can be viewed as a lament between Ranginui and Papatūānuku, the primordial parents, in which they long for one another after being separated by their children. Said to dwell within Te Ahoaho o Tukapua (the open space of Tukupua, or the house of mist and clouds), kapua wander across the breast of Ranginui and throughout the open space between Ranginui and Papatūānuku, creating a blanket of protection over Ranginui which Best (1982) details:

> *Tane said to Tawhirimatea (origin and personified form of winds). "Go forth and procure the moist emanations from the body of our mother, Papa-tuanuku. Then ascend and arrange them on the body of our father, Rangi-nui, as a covering to protect him." Even so Tawhirimatea procured the following: Te Ao-tu, Te Ao-hore, Te Ao-nui, Te Ao-roa, Te Ao-pouri, Te Ao-tutumaiao, Te Ao-kapua, Te Ao-tauhinga, Te Ao-parauri, Te Ao-whetuma—all cloud-names, some at least being personified forms of clouds. (307)*

Sandy White Hawk, a Native American scholar (Sicangu Lakota tribe), is the founder and Director of the First Nations Repatriation Institute. White Hawk, an adoptee herself, works with foster or adoptee adults and their families who are struggling with their identity after being taken from their families, helping them "to return home, reconnect, and reclaim their identity" (The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition 2012). Returning home and being submerged in traditional practices like Ceremonies, sweat lodges, and Sundance is what began the healing process for White Hawk. In an interview, White Hawk expresses that "In the Wabléniča Ceremony, we can stand in the circle, open that part of our heart, and let the medicine of smoke from the sage, the sound of the drum, and the song go into that dark place and begin healing" (spears 2023).

The loss that fostered or adopted Indigenous Peoples experience can be attributed to being raised outside of their culture, this is because Indigenous individuals aren't submerged in their cultural language or customs (Simpson, Landers and White Hawk 2024, 2). This means that they "often have no one with lived experience that can help them navigate integrating their racial/ethnic/cultural identity" (Simpson, Landers and White Hawk 2024, 3). For these Indigenous individuals there is often

an ambiguous loss that lingers over them. According to Simpson, Landers and White Hawk (2024) ambiguous loss can be broken down into two sections. The first, ambiguous loss as a result of foster care of adoption which can be described as “associated with numerous losses related to access to information about their families of origin, as well as the lack of direct access to their families of origin, community and culture”. Secondly, ambiguous loss that can stem from foster care and adoption which can be described as “effects that were produced or brought about as a result of the ambiguous loss that stem from foster care and adoption” (7-8).

Although I am not a child who was fostered or adopted, my mother was. In an interview, Erica Newman describes how children from fostered or adoptees often feel expressing “As an adoptee descendant, I have always felt floating, not knowing exactly where I fit. Drifting around, not knowing how to ground myself” (Munro 2022) This intergenerational disconnect can be viewed like the harakeke plant. In a conversation with Natalie Robertson, my supervisor, she asked: “without the nurturing of the mātua (parent), how can the rito (child) flourish?” (28 Feb, 2024). Although I do not pass this blame onto my mother whatsoever, as she, too, was not nurtured, I can’t help but wonder what my childhood might have been like if she had found her own cultural identity.

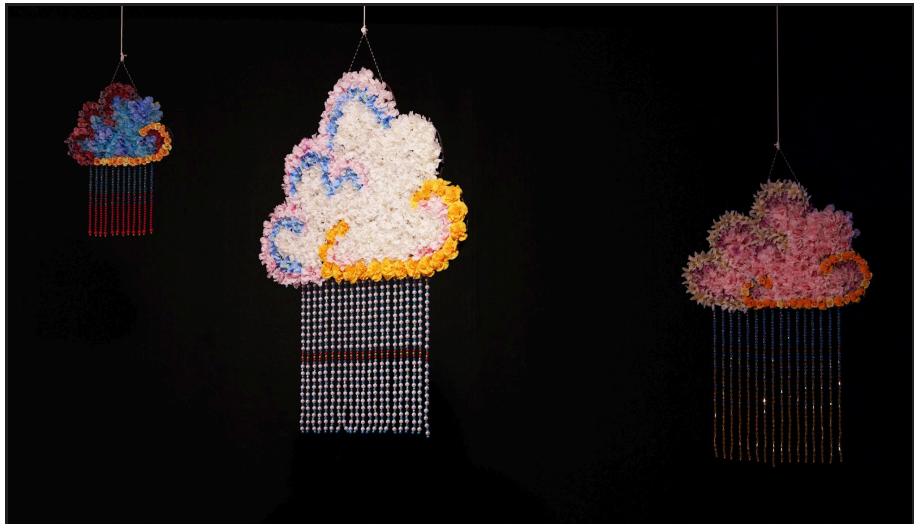
Whakaahua 11. Zak Thomson, cumulus cloud, North Shore, 2024.

One project that influenced my thinking about kapua was the installation of Paper Clouds (2017) by the Bridge Company. Paper Clouds (2017) is a collaboration between Stuart Allen and Cade Bradshaw. The project, hosted over eight public workshops and logged over 800 hours, was created by the local design and architecture community members using only bond paper, staples, wireframes and LED lights. Allen and Bradshaw describe the project as a “collaborative endeavour, constructed by more than 90 individuals, building on the strength found in numbers, the group’s collective effort yields a result greater than the sum of its parts” (Costarangos 2017).

Whakaahua 12. Bridge, Paper Clouds, 2017, Bridge, https://bridgesatx.com/paper-cloud/

Another artist working with cloud formations is Sione Monū. Monū creates clouds grounded in cultural traditions and is a multi-disciplined artist who works in photography, performance, moving image, fashion and adornment in the Tongan diaspora. Their work, Ao Kakala (floral clouds), explores the traditional fine art practice nimamea'a tuikakala (floral designing) from Tonga and "embody the vibrancy and contradictions inherent to diasporic life." (City Gallery Wellington 2023).

Like the project paper clouds (2017) Monū practice began by using participants as a way to create garlands for them, stating, "using sticky contact paper and florals from the environment of each person I was making them for." (Hancock 2021). This reminds me of the way I have been working. Rather than using materials from people, I have been using harakeke from specific locations to signify this connection between myself and my whakapapa to form a cultural identity. As their practice developed, Monū began to create cloud formations, explaining "I continued experimenting with flower designing with plastic materials. It's something that our aunties and family in the diaspora would use a lot to mimic the bright colours of the natural florals they use in the islands, which they obviously didn't grow here" (Hancock 2021). In Tonga, nimamea'a tuikakala is traditionally practised by females, meaning Monū did not get the opportunity to learn this skill. Much of the work Monū creates looks at generational relationships with culture, meaning they make work that "honours their cultures' beliefs on their own terms" (Scape Public Art 2021).



Whakaahua 13. Sione Monū, 'Ao kakala (installation view), 2021, The Art paper, photo Sam Hartnett, https://www.the-art-paper.com/journal/sione-monu-and-christopher-ulutupu-in-conversation-with-robbie-handcock

Whakaahua 14. Zak Thomson, Māori Bay Muriwai, 2024

Kapua became an essential conceptual framework that aligned with my understanding of the spiritual connection between humans and natural materials. Influenced by projects like Paper Clouds (2017) that build a community through the participation and collaboration of local designers and architects, my project can begin to create a community of its own through traditions, people, locations, and plant matter. As indicated by my title, He Kapua Whakapipi, He Kapua Whakapapa, I feel and sense a similarity between kapua and whakapapa. They are both continuously gathering, growing, connecting, dissolving, and observing. In theory, clouds may seem connected, but they form a web of intersecting relationships of layers, accumulating on top of each other, which at first can be viewed as unknown and cloudy, like my personal experience during this research.

As Erica Newman described, I, too, have felt floating or drifting. I think of myself as being shrouded in clouds, covered in a blanket of the cloudy and unknown. Kapua are made up of tiny water particles but have this ungraspable quality to them. They could consume me, but I still wouldn't be able to grasp them. For me, this shrouding of clouds can begin to be contextualised through paper kapua by taking the cloudy or unknown and making them tangible through the material practice of papermaking. In a way, as I look up to the clouds, I like to think of kapua as tūpuna floating by, giving us a quick glimpse into the lives they once lived, leaving us with many questions and, at times, unknown answers.

When considering how this research might be developed further, I am still determining where this project could take me. The Cloud Workshops by Deborah Smith and Melissa Anderson Scott in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) are the type of creative space/s to which I consider this project could contribute. The Cloud Workshops opened in 2008 and work with children who have lost a family member. The workshops "seeks to provide a place where art can be a medium for them to reflect on this situation in a creative and supportive environment" (Cloud Workshop 2008).

I see the potential for a collaborative large-scale exhibition of paper kapua by creating a safe space for rangatahi (youth) or even adults. This would create a space for Indigenous rangatahi who have been adopted or are in the foster system that have been raised without an Indigenous parental figure. This could also be expanded to adults like myself, who have been raised by an adoptee or been in foster care. These workshops could help individuals who feel like they are also shrouded by clouds, turning cultural disconnections by the layering of their own whakapapa into tangible clouds utilising traditional practises of harvested plant materials.

Whakaahua 15. Zak Thomson, clouds at sunset, North Shore, 2024.

2. Pūtahi | Methodology

2.1 Methodological approach

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021) points out that we often default to Western research approaches taught within institutions when researching Indigenous themes. I acknowledged early on during this research project that in order to form an authentic connection with my whakapapa, I needed to 'unlearn' the Westernised and Eurocentric paradigms we are taught in mainstream New Zealand education institutions. Instead, I needed to shift my worldview to that of an Indigenous perspective, thus allowing myself to form authentic connections to my whakapapa through my practice. The methodological framework that this research project is guided by is grounded in a Kaupapa Māori paradigm. A Kaupapa Māori research framework can be described as for "Māori by Māori" and emphasises Māori ways of knowing, being and doing while recognising the importance of Indigenous perspectives (Cram et al. 2021, 50). As described by Bishop and Glynn, Kaupapa Māori is the "flourishing of a proactive Māori political discourse"((1999, 61), while Sharples argues Kaupapa Māori is "a new concept in schooling" but grounded on the basis of "Māori customs and traditions" (1998, 27). Distilled, a Kaupapa Māori framework creates open spaces for Māori, acting as a way to include and encourage more Māori researchers to conduct research without being "limited by the legacies of previous research" (Smith 2021, 239).

As discussed, whakapapa is made up many layers. One of these layers consists of Kaupapa Māori which is embedded with mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge and ways of learning), te reo (language), and tikanga (traditional values and customs). These three fundamental sublayers helped me build these connections to whakapapa but also form the foundation of this research. It is important, as the researcher, to uphold these practices from the initial phases and beginning of the project all the way through to the end of the research. This forms a connection between the research and those that are being researched (Cram 2021). As someone who has primarily been raised in a Pākehā whānau, I have felt disconnected from my Ngāti Kuri iwitanga (culture), not only as a designer but as an individual. In this sense, the research acts as a personal journey between the research and myself, the researcher, to learn, grow and connect with my whakapapa. This research also assumes an autoethnographic consideration since whakapapa is the door that welcomes both tangata whenua that speak te reo, but also those whose stories are related to sacred mountains, lakes, rivers, and oceans in Aotearoa. Autoethnography is a methodology that aims to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) to understand cultural experience (ethno), (Ellis 2017, 1). As outlined below, my methods are influenced by Linda Tuhiwai Smith's 'Twenty-five Indigenous Research Projects' (2021) which helped me feel anchored throughout this research project when things felt cloudy or unknown.

2.2 Connecting whakapapa and whenua

Forming a connection to my whakapapa was the primary motivation behind this research, beyond relationships with people. It became a way for me to connect with the entire living world. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith suggests "Connectedness positions individuals in sets of relationships with other people and with the environment. Many Indigenous creation stories link people through genealogy to the land, to stars and other places in the universe, to birds and fish, animals, insects and plants. To be connected is to be whole" (Smith 2021, 9).

As someone who has not been bought up immersed in te ao Māori, to find a connection meant beginning with the creation stories of Ngāti Kuri and other Te Tai Tokerau iwi. From this, I could make my way from these beginnings to the present day. I began to form deep connections with Atua, tūpuna, locations, and plant matter through texts and visiting specific and significant locations. This also included studying the native plants and trees of Aotearoa, their seeding seasons, flowering and harvesting times. By doing this, it allowed me to build a community, not only with artists and designers, but also with tūpuna, locations and plant matter. Most of the time, when I wanted to harvest harakeke or any other natural materials that went into the production of my paper, I would first sit and talk with the plant, telling them of my intentions and what my research involved. This is described in my journal entry from 21 October 2024:

Today, I am visiting the pā harakeke at Unitec. It is the first pā harakeke that I have ever visited. I didn't come here today to harvest; I came here to talk with them. I began by walking around examining the harakeke to see if I could identify different cultivars, as this is still new to me, I haven't been able to.

As I sit on the bank across from the pā harakeke, and tell them of my intentions, I can hear the small puna (stream) running through the middle of it. Although I am in the city, the puna is all I can hear along with the birds chirping away. In the distance I can faintly hear bagpipes, it seems ironic that here I am trying to form a connection with these plants, yet I'm still reminded of the Pākehā perspective I was raised in (my paternal side of the family is Scottish).

Once I did this, if the conditions were right, I would use tikanga customs to guide the harvest, which strengthened my connection to the whenua and environment. About halfway through the research, I felt a great shift in my worldview and how I felt towards the natural environment which became present and at the forefront of my mind. Driving around the Auckland suburbs, where I live, rather than noticing the houses or cars, I would catch myself observing more plant matter and connecting visually to the whenua and the environment.

2.3 Journal writing

Journal writing allowed me to establish a strong sense of identity within my practice and by engaging in self-discovery through reflection, annotation, and self-evaluation, these greatly assisted me to begin creating connections to and with my whakapapa. The primary journalling method I utilised throughout this research can be divided into two sections. The first section involves metacognitive journalling, a practice commonly taught in Western institutions. Metacognitive journalling helps develop skills such as self-assessment, where the researcher can evaluate their own thinking processes, as well as self-management, enabling them to guide their own personal development (Liuolienė and Metiūnienė 2009, 33). It is important to mention that although this research follows a Kaupapa Māori framework, the use of Western methods is acceptable when and if it contributes to the experience of Māori (Cram 2021).

The second section is the act of journalling, a process that I found significant. Throughout this research, I decided to keep a journal that provided a platform to reflect on and where I could document my emotional experiences from a personal perspective. Ian Hughes (1996) suggests that:

A research diary is a record of the researcher's involvement in a project. While the contents of the diary are sometimes used as data, they are

> *different from the information, observations, records or other data, which are collected because you think they may yield information about the phenomena under study. The diary contains information about the researcher, what the researcher does, and the process of research. It complements the data yielded by the research methodology.*

As someone who did not journal prior to this research, journalling has become an everyday part of my life. Throughout this research, when I would travel somewhere new, the journal acted as a way for me to document how I felt at that moment and what I saw in the environment around me. For example

> *Yesterday I visited Te Hāpua for the first time since I was 8 years old. It's a lot smaller than I remember. I went and visited passed tūpuna at the urupa. Four generations rested before me but I felt nothing. I can't help but think, how am I supposed to feel? How am I meant to form connections with people I have never met? In a way I almost feel more lost than I did before. I kept trying to remind myself that whakapapa is more than people. I think because I was raised in a pākehā environment my mind automatically connects whakapapa with family lines. It's 6am, and it's my first morning waking up in Kapowairua. It's a surreal experience, I have never been here, but sitting under Maungapiko I feel this overwhelming sense of security and welcoming. I can't but not think about my tūpuna who use to call this exact spot home. Imagining the way they lived, how they acted, were they constantly in fear of being intruded? I'm reminded of this one story I recently read in the history of Muriwhenua, where a chief, Ihutara, made his men run up and down Maungapiko to prepare for war; I feel like I can imagine these men running through the native bush up and down training for these future wars. (03 January 2024)*

Looking beyond all the cars and tents that lay beneath Mangapiko, I felt that I could reimagine through my writing and research, how the landscape might have looked in the past, as if it was telling me itself. This enabled me to form connections to these ancestral places as if I had known them forever. Furthermore, documenting and sharing knowledge can take many forms. When we view knowledge through an Indigenous lens, we recognise that it does not necessarily need to be confined to text-based documentation. In te ao Māori, before the invention of written language, stories, knowledge, and emotions were expressed and passed down both orally and through physical taonga (artifacts). In this sense, my final artefacts become a form of journalling, incorporating cultural connection through my paper making.

2.4 Creating

For me, the method of creation was about experimenting. It was once I was able to form these connections that I began creating. From the beginning of this research, I knew that I wanted to do something with my project that shifted away from my undergraduate Communication Design degree. This was the stage where I could experiment with transitioning into a multidisciplinary practice. As I had made paper previously, I had knowledge of the process it takes when forming sheets of paper, but I had never produced fibres from harvested materials, nor had I ever moved into the space of sculptural work. Because of this, I used my design practice to ground myself in the project, creating a repository of knowledge that could then be handed down to family members. As mentioned earlier, the early stages of my papermaking practice was learnt from Mark Lander's online videos. Since then, I have also taken a workshop at the Whangārei Papermill where I was able to further my knowledge and adapt my initial process.

Producing fibres from harvested materials requires patience, due to the lengthy process. In a way, the practice of papermaking can be viewed as 'slow' making. As articulated by designers Barbara Grosse-Hering, Jon Mason, Dzmitri Aliakseyeu, Conny Bakker and Pieter Desmet (2013) "Slow Design is a design philosophy that focuses on promoting well-being for individuals, society, and the natural environment. It encourages people to do things at the right time and at the right speed which helps them to understand and reflect on their actions" (3413). Slow design is made up of several design principles, these are: reveal, expand, reflect, engage, participate and evolve (Strauss and Fuad-Luke 2008, cited in Grosse-Hering et al. 2013, 3413-3413). Two of these principles have strongly emerged in my practice. The first, revealing, sees materials and processes in everyday life that can be missed (Grosse-Hering et al. 2013, 3413). I witness this daily with papermaking, as paper is so accessible, it has become easily disregarded. The second, reflecting, contemplates the environments and materials we use through "reflective consumption" (Grosse-Hering et al. 2013, 3413). Throughout my practice, I have used customs of tikanga to culturally harvest materials appropriately. This includes only taking as much as I need to save the continuing growth of the plant for other generations. My practice can be broken down into four sections which are described below:

Harvesting fibre: This process involves sourcing harakeke that was significant to me, introducing myself to the plant prior to harvesting and following the customary protocols of tikanga Māori while harvesting. I normally try to collect three bundles of twenty blades of harakeke at a time as long as there was enough, and I wasn't stripping the entire plant.

Chopping and retting: Once the harakeke is harvested, the keel (harakeke middle stem) and sides of the harakeke blades are removed. Then, I divide each half of the

blade into three sections (six sections from one stem of harakeke) and then cut these into roughly 20mm pieces. Since harakeke can dry quite quickly after harvesting, it means that each time I harvest it, I have roughly three days to get it all chopped up. Initially, I used to harvest and make the pulp in the same week to avoid it drying out. Amie Knight, the tutor at the Papermill in Whangārei, taught me the process of retting in a workshop. In traditional papermaking, retting was achieved by putting plant matter into a river or a body of water for three-four weeks and allowing the natural organisms to break down the cellulose material 'gluing' the fibre together (Melelli, Jamme, Beaugrand and Bourmaud 2022, 9). As an alternative soda ash is used to help this process as it only takes hours opposed to weeks (Tavares, Antunes, Ferreira, and Felgueiras 2020, 6). Once the harakeke is chopped, the pieces are added to a bucket of water along with two scoops of soda ash to begin the retting process. According to Amie Knight, for optimal paper this should be done for around four to eight months, however as I didn't have this amount of time, I normally leave mine for three to four weeks. This process became a lot more manageable because it meant that I did not have to harvest and process the pulp in the same week. So, one week I would harvest and begin the retting process and the following week I would begin using a bucket of harakeke that had been retting.

Boiling: Depending on the length of time that the harakeke has been retting will impact on how long it needs to be boiled. Harakeke that has been retting for three to four weeks often only requires about three hours of boiling, while harakeke that has only been in the retting process for a couple of days might need to be boiled for six to eight hours. As the harakeke boils the outer cellulose material begins to turn a darker green, almost black. Once this happens, I then take a piece and beat it with a mullet to test if the outer material breaks away and the inner fibres are easily obtained. If this is the case, I will stop the boiling process.

Beating and pulping: Once the boiling process is complete, the harakeke is moved into a sack and rinsed until the water runs clear. It is then beaten with a wooden mullet to help further soften and separate the fibres. At this stage, commercial businesses would then use a Hollander beater to process the fibre down into a soup-like pulp. As I don't have access to one of these machines, I used a longer process that has worked well for me. I first place small amounts of the harakeke into a blender, blending small batches at a time. Once it has all been through the blender, I will rise again, followed by another round of beating and will continue the same steps until I get the desired consistency of pulp. Sometimes this process can take an entire day.

Forming sheeting of paper: Typically for this project, I have been using a 250mm x 250mm mould and deckle. This has become a preferred size as it is not too small, but it is not so big that I cannot couch (transfer) it easily. The pulp is added to the vat, and I tip my mould and deckle into it. The sheets of paper are then transferred on to a felt sheet and placed on a rack to dry. During my workshop at the Papermill,

I learnt the technique of couching on to a plastic sheet. This process creates a smooth side as it dries. Typically, this doesn't matter for the production of my clouds but it did for the front pages of my book. Once I have couched eight to ten sheets of paper, I then press it between two blocks of wood to remove any excess water and then leave it on the drying rack to dry.

2.5 Experimenting

During the papermaking process, I began by experimenting with producing a range of fibre thicknesses, from longer fibres to more long coarse fibres. I now had the fibres to produce paper, but I still needed to figure out the direction of my work. To begin with, I often felt insecure because I did not present as Māori, and felt that my work would not be taken seriously. I felt that this sense of isolation held me back during the beginning of my creation stages. I knew that to achieve this connection, I needed to move past this. Smith (2021) describes creating in Indigenous spaces as "Indigenous peoples' ideas and beliefs about the origins of the world, their explanations of the environment, often embedded in complicated metaphors and mythic tales, are now being sought as the basis for thinking more laterally in current theories about the environment, the earth and the universe." (22) As I began to explore the use of kapua, the unknown space between Ranginui and Papatūānuku excited me, forming a metaphoric message between my personal journey and the research; cloudy and unknown. I knew what I wanted to achieve, but because I needed to gain experience in sculptural work, I found it challenging to make anything look aesthetically pleasing.

Whakaahua 16. Zak Thomson, harakeke fibre, Whangarei, 2024

Whakaahua 17. Zak Thomson, drying paper, Whangarei, 2024

Whakaahua 18. Zak Thomson, making paper, Whangarei, 2024

3. Kapua Whakapipi |

Ranginui ki runga, Papatūānuku ki raro: Between sky and earth

3.1 Kapua, whenua: paper clouds, paper land

Clouds began to play an important role in my work as they occupied the amorphous space between Ranginui and Papatūānuku and represented the stage where I was, and still am, with respect to my connection to my whakapapa—cloudy, shrouded, hidden from view. Clouds swell, constantly moving and changing, intersecting with one another. Sometimes they can be viewed as one but are in fact layers of multiple clouds stacked on top of each other, reminding me of the layering of whakapapa through origin stories. As sculpture was a new discipline for me, moving into this space created the opportunity to have fun while experimenting with how these clouds might look. Using a similar concept to the Bridges paper cloud project, while also considering a connection to whakapapa through the work of Maureen Lander, I began to explore how I could push my papermaking practice to form hanging clouds by continuously building and layering on top of one another. Each cloud is built upon a community, not in the form of people, but from the harakeke that was harvested from locations that were of significance to me. These included locations of whakapapa such as Te Hāpua, Kapowairua, Te Tōangaroa (Mechanics Bay), Matakana, and Kaipara Flats, where I grew up.

As previously mentioned, papermaking is a slow process. Fibre alone can take weeks to produce, while the physical formation of paper is also just as slow. Papermaking began as an enjoyable practice, and it felt important to me that while continuing to make paper through this research it remained so. As Lindsay De Roos (2021) explains “It has become a routine in which my mind simply wanders, and my body takes control. I only make paper to rest, and when it becomes a chore, I stop. I don't want my body to correlate any kind of stress with making paper.” (43) Although De Roos’ (2021) comments correlate with stress through the papermaking process, it was something that stuck with me early on during this research. While trying to shift my worldview, I didn’t want my focus to be on academic progress nor becoming stressed through comparing myself to the amount of work other students had presented; I wanted my connection to whakapapa within my practice to feel genuine, so I would stop when it became a ‘chore’. This isn’t to say I didn’t set aims to keep myself progressing throughout the past year. My goal was to make at least thirty to sixty sheets of paper a week which ended up being around eight-sixteen pieces each day that I would work on my clouds. The first clouds were created by pouring a soup of water and fibre over a large mesh frame. The paper was very porous and had this translucent quality when held to the light, creating a cloudy storm-like appearance. As the paper was made this way, it lacked the flexibility and strength to be hung.

The second era of the clouds were made by constructing a wire frame and then layering the community of paper on top of it. By incorporating a wire frame, it allowed the paper to be manipulated which changed the way it sat and dried. As each sheet of paper was made and then laid on the wire mesh, a process that is like ‘felting’ was used to create seamless lines between each sheet. This made me think:

> *While constructing these clouds, I have been using a process like felting. As I lay one sheet of paper next to another, I then try to blend the edges in by gently rubbing the exposed fibres to the sheet beside it creating a uniform sheet of paper. This reminds me of the structure of whakapapa. We are all connected to people, locations, and plants. While each harakeke fibre comes from a different location or even a different cultivar of plant they identify as the same plant making them the same, but all grew in different locations without a connection to each other. This reminds me of myself, I am connected to I assume thousands of people through whakapapa, I don’t know them, I probably never will but we all originate from the same people which forms a connection (10 February 2024)*

As the clouds dried, they visually resembled a cloud-like formation, but lacked an airiness to them. Instead, they resembled a rock formation. Frustrating as this was, it revealed a ‘happy accident’. Clouds sit with Ranginui, while rock formations can be interpreted as the clouds of Papatūānuku. Clouds form rain, which in turn, cause soft rocks to break down into soil from which the harakeke grows thus, creating an overreaching cycle that we are all connected and rely on each other as a community to grow and prosper.

Whakaahua 19. Zak Thomson, drying clouds, North Shore, 2023

Whakaahua 20. Zak Thomson, first era of clouds, Auckland, 2023

Whakaahua 21. Zak Thomson, kapua & rocks, North Shore, 2024.

3.2 Book design

As I moved into a multidisciplinary practice, it felt important that my project was anchored in the discipline of Communication Design, due to my education. My initial idea was to use the journal I was writing alongside my exhibition, as a way to see my evolving thought process. I realised this idea might not be appropriate as if I knew people were going to be reading my journal it might hold me back from writing authentically. The parallel book publication, He Kapua Whakapipi, He Kapua Whakapapa has provided me with a method to consolidate and map information learnt throughout the journey that I had undertaken. As I began to learn more about my whakapapa, I soon realised that this work and research meant much more than being just about people and the book developed into a repository of archived knowledge. This includes; connections to people and places, forming a connection to the plant world, log books, papermaking processes, journal entries, photographs and samples of paper.

Instead of creating a single-sized book with chapters, I made the decision to create a series of three books in a range of sizes. Stacked on top of another, this helped divide the book into three different sections which could then be bound together using the perfect bind method. The three stages are influenced by the Māori concept of mauri, that represents each state as I moved through creating this repository of knowledge. Taina Whakaatere Pohatu (Ngāti Porou, Rongowhakaata, Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki, Ngai Tamanuhiri, Ngati Kahungunu) (2011) explains these three stages as:

> **Mauri moe –** *considered a proactive state, the untapped potential within Māori bodies of knowledge with their attendant wisdoms to inform Kaupapa and relationships.*
>
> **Mauri oho –** *Mauri oho is also considered a proactive state. It is the point of being awoken from a particular state of mauri moe. What, when, how and why is personal and contextual to time, place, kaupapa, purpose and relationship.*
>
> **Mauri ora –** *Mauri oho signals the intention to strive towards mauri ora, which is interpreted here as being fully aware of the transformative potential in our individual and group responsibilities and activities. (4-7)*

This led to the development of using terms that relate to each stage of mauri. The first stage, tēra pea (growing interest) forms an interest between my whakapapa Māori and the spiritual connection that stems from this knowledge. The second stage is kua oho (has awoken), I am awake, beginning to emerge from the cloudiness; utilising this obtained knowledge to source and harvesting plant matter. And lastly, e manawanui ana (is committed) is the state of commitment as I experiment through my practice.

Tēra pea (growing interest): size (105x148mm), begins to tell the origin story of whakapapa and my tūpuna along with the whenua that is connected to my iwi, Ngāti Kuri. I had not visited my whenua since I was eight years old, so it was important that I spent some time there. In January, I spent four nights in Te Hāpua and Kapowairua to create a connection with my whenua. While I was there, I utilised my methods of journalling and creating (photographing) to develop content for the book.

Kua oho (has awoken): size (127x180mm) begins to tell the story of connecting with plant matter. This included documenting their flowering and seeding seasons, along with, how to and when it is appropriate to harvest certain plant matter using traditional customs of tikanga. I also documented how natural materials are used in my papermaking practice detailing the harvesting, pulping and the experimentation of natural pigments to dye fibre.

E manawanui ana (is committed): size (148x210mm), is a selection of sample paper that I have experimented with during this research. This includes paper thickness, fibre lengths and using natural materials to dye fibre along with information from my logbook that documents the type of cultivar, fibre length, boil time and any additives like dyes that have been added.

Overall, the book becomes a taonga that can be preserved and passed down to my future children or other family members as a starting point if they want to form their own connections to our whakapapa or if they wish to make their own paper.

Whakaahua 22. Zak Thomson, book design 1 & 2, 2024

Whakaahua 23. Zak Thomson, book design 3 & 4, 2024

3.3 Kapua - Installation

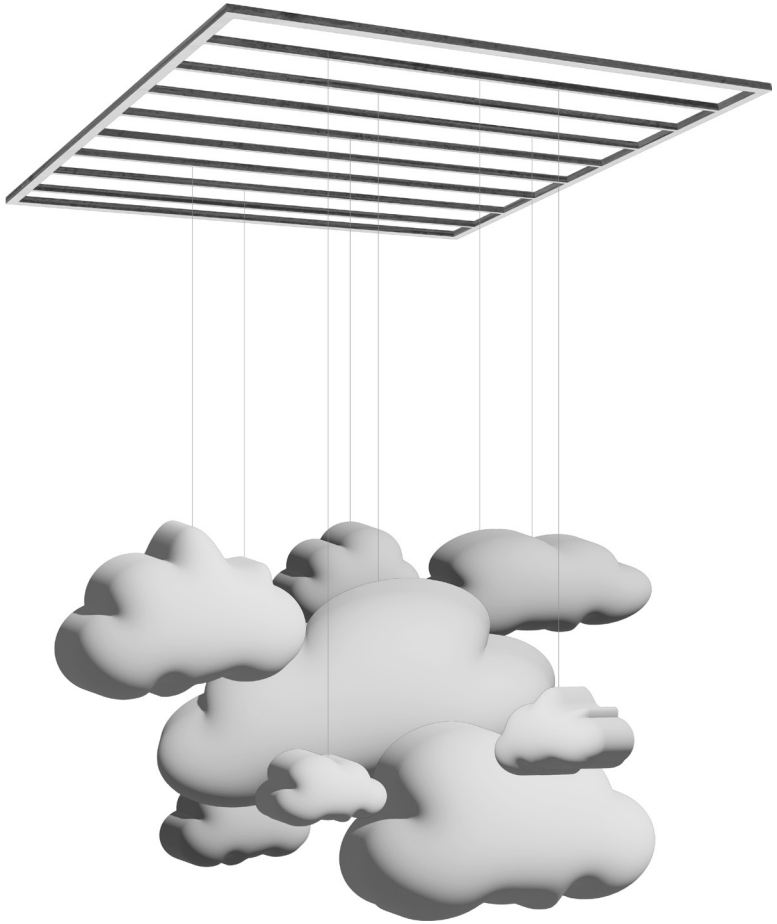
When it comes to installations, many working parts help create the final installation. I have never installed an installation; this territory is new. The final artefacts that will be presented for my examination will consist of two main elements. The first is the suspended paper clouds, while the second is the book. Together, these create the final work that is He Kapua Whakapipi, He Kapua Whakapapa. The first part that makes up my master's installation is the paper kapua. In total, I intend for there to be ten kapua whakapipi paper clouds. As cloud formations symbolised the various stages as I moved throughout this research, finishing at kapua whakapipi (cumulus clouds) felt the most appropriate as the final as it symbolises my destination of forming a connection with my whakapapa.

The largest cloud measures roughly 800mm x 400mm, while the remaining nine scale down in size from there. Initially, I hoped to have many more clouds, similar to the Bridges paper cloud installation. I wanted to emulate the word whakapipi, which means to stack upon another continuously. Unfortunately, throughout my making process, I have realised how much work this would entail and that, in a sense, each kapua already captures this by stacking multiple fibres on top of each other. Each cloud contains a pulp mixture of fibre from locations significant to me. Although these plants are related biologically through whakapapa links, they do not know each other personally; reminding me of Maureen Lander describing whakapapa as fluid and continually growing and expanding.

Whakaahua 24. Zak Thomson, cloud example, 2024

There were other factors to consider when hanging the clouds, like what they would be hung from and what material would be used to hang them. To hang my paper kapua, I created a wooden frame measuring 1500mm x 1500mm. Unlike my first era of clouds that used square wire mesh (seen in whakaahua 19), the final frame for my installation will have wooden centre rods that will create a system for me to strategically hang the clouds, so they feel like real kapua whakapipi. Clear nylon will suspend each cloud. There were discussions about using harakeke to produce rope made from extracted muka. Although this idea sounded promising at the time, after I learnt to extract the muka and spin it into string, I realised that with the string being visually seen, the clouds lacked the 'floating' element that we associate with cloud formations.

The second part of the installation is the book. The book will be beside the suspended clouds on a wooden plinth. The book plays an important role, as without it, there is no context for the hanging kapua. Further, the book also shows a transformation of myself as a communication designer transitioning into multidisciplinary practice.



Whakaahua 25. Zak Thomson, Installation visual, 2024

Kupu whakatepe | Conclusion

This practice-led exegesis has examined how the practice of papermaking can begin to form connections to whakapapa and Atua through the forms of clouds and rocks. Using pūrakau, I have begun to understand the concepts of mātauranga Māori, like that of whakapapa and the customs and practice of tikanga. Through this knowledge, I have examined how these concepts have played a significant role in how my tūpuna once lived—allowing me to build a community of not only past tūpuna through pūrākau but also of significant locations that are affiliated and connected to my iwi, Ngāti Kurī, and plant matter like the harakeke.

Many artists are working in the space of papermaking to form a connection to their Chinese culture. Although I recognise papermaking as a traditional Chinese art form, there seems to be a strong connection between the practices of traditional papermaking and the Māori toi of aute through the shared use of the paper mulberry tree, in a sense creating their own whakapapa links. Throughout this process, I have considered the practice of papermaking as a 'bridge', allowing me to form genuine connections by opening trans-temporal connections to the past. Using papermaking as a bridge has allowed me to incorporate customs of tikanga while building the community of tūpuna, locations and plant matter.

My methodological approach has allowed me to feel grounded in the work while also shifting my worldview from a Eurocentric lens to viewing the world through an Indigenous one. The layering of clouds played a pivotal role in how I view the spiritual connection between all living beings and shows that we all live in this open space between the world's creators, Ranginui and Papatūānuku. This spiritual connection has allowed me to view whakapapa as more than just human lineage, but the layering of all living beings around us. Throughout this research, I have mentioned feeling shrouded by the clouds. Although I still feel somewhat this way, the Pūtahi clouds have begun transforming into Kapua Whakapipi (layering of clouds) and Kapua Whakapapa (decent). In doing this, I have embraced the ungraspable cloudiness and transformed it into tangible paper kapua that has helped deepen my connection with my whakapapa and begun to form my own sense of cultural identity. I hope that others facing similar experiences of cultural identity can lean on this research to help them navigate the cloudy or unknown. To conclude, I would like to end with a whakataukī that that has helped me grasp onto the past while navigating my way into the future, not only as a practitioner but as a young Māori finding my own cultural-identity.

Kia Whakatōmuri te haere whakamua

“I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past.”.

He whakamātakitaki Exhibition

Whakamarotai atu ka whakahoki mai ano ki te kapua whakapipi.

Stretch out, but return to the sheltering cloud.

The final installation, He Kapua Whakapipi, He Kapua Whakapapa (18-22 June 2024), comprised of two pieces. The first was the hanging paper kapua, which had nine total, was suspended by a 1500mmx1500mmx3mm wire mesh frame. Each cloud was created using harvested harakeke fibre from specific locations significant to my iwi, me, and my papermaking practice. The second part of the installation is the book (148mmx210mm) that acted as a repository of knowledge learnt throughout this research that could be preserved and passed down through generations that follow. The two pieces were exhibited in the Nguti Kaka Gallery One and were positioned in the far rear corner in front of the window. From a viewer's viewpoint, this allowed the kapua to blend in with the natural sky behind it.

There were some minor changes to the final installation that were previously described during this exegesis. The first was replacing the wooden frame and opting for a 1500mmx1500mmx3mm wire mesh. The wire mesh blended in with the gallery's existing hardware and allowed the kapua to feel as if they were 'floating' rather than suspended from a frame while also giving me autonomy to change the placement of how the paper kapua was suspended. The second is the replacement of the wooden plinth and using an acrylic bookshelf for the publication so the viewers' attention is focused on the paper kapua. Lasty, replacing the clear nylon for 1mm wire rope. It was advised by the gallery team that clear nylon catches the light, which might portray a 'floating' look that I was trying to emulate.

Whakaahua 26. Zak Thomson, He Kapua Whakapipi, He Kapua Whakapapa exhibition (1), Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland, 2024.

Whakaahua 27. Zak Thomson, He Kapua Whakapipi, He Kapua Whakapapa exhibition (2), Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland, 2024.

Whakaahua 28. Zak Thomson, He Kapua Whakapipi, He Kapua Whakapapa exhibition (3), Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland, 2024.

Whakaahua 29. Zak Thomson, He Kapua Whakapipi, He Kapua Whakapapa exhibition (4), Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland, 2024.

Whakaahua 30. Zak Thomson, He Kapua Whakapipi, He Kapua Whakapapa exhibition (5), Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland, 2024.

Whakaahua 31. Zak Thomson, He Kapua Whakapipi, He Kapua Whakapapa exhibition (6), Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland, 2024.

Whakaahua 32. Zak Thomson, He Kapua Whakapipi, He Kapua Whakapapa exhibition (7), Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland, 2024.

Whakaahua 33. Zak Thomson, He Kapua Whakapipi, He Kapua Whakapapa exhibition (8), Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland, 2024.

Whakaahua 34. Zak Thomson, He Kapua Whakapipi, He Kapua Whakapapa exhibition (9), Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland, 2024.

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