



**Māori Women Promoting Food Sovereignty in
Aotearoa (New Zealand)**

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ABSTRACT

Poverty and food insecurity are issues being felt in Māori communities. Food insecurity includes the malnutrition of essential nutrients due to the inadequate intake of fruits and vegetables, exacerbated by the widespread availability of cheap, processed foods. Food insecurity has drastic implications for women, their families and society at large. Few studies have investigated this problem and even fewer have addressed the problem from a Māori women's perspective in order to identify culturally relevant and community-based solutions to food poverty, such as marae and community gardens. To achieve a fully democratic conversation about food, that is a conversation that includes a diversity of viewpoints and perspectives, we need the full participation of women and Māori women in particular. Women are involved with the food system in different ways, as producers, consumers, and providers – they play an important role in providing food security for their children. Among Māori, only 34.8% were food secure, 48.7% were moderately secure and 16.5% were food insecure (Parnell, Wilson, Thomson, Mackay, & Stefanogiannis, 2011). This is compared to New Zealand European households which were much better off (Parnell et al., 2011). Food insecurity is positively associated with obesity. From the 2008/09 Adult Nutritional Survey, 47% of Māori adults were obese and 15% of Māori children were obese, while over half, 61%, of Māori women were obese (Parnell et al, 2011). Through four empirical case studies from different regions of New Zealand, the study explores Māori women's role in promoting local food sovereignty – that is, how Indigenous women are actively defining and taking control of their own food system. In order to address social inequalities and health disparities, women's empowerment must be an essential component of research projects. The participatory nature of this research entails a more active role of the women involved, including a horizontal learning exchange amongst the women. This PhD project brings more attention to grass-roots projects, such as community and marae gardens that guide the way to a more sustainable future and represent a holistic solution to the environmental, agricultural, food and nutrition issues many communities are currently facing.

Māori women's perceptions of food issues impacting Indigenous communities, obstacles and solutions faced by the gardens, and how they perceive their actions as food sovereignty, highlight solutions based on Māori cultural values. Findings show how Māori women are promoting agroecology and sustainability through reviving traditions and the ways of their ancestors, educating tamariki (youth), whānau (families) and communities while promoting health and wellness through the act of gardening itself. This underlines the importance of valuing intergenerational knowledge and the contribution of elders through acknowledging the wisdom of the past. Returning to traditional agroecological ways of farming, such as intercropping, improving the quality of the soil through crop rotation, composting, using manure, improving water retention, and getting rid of the use of fossil fuels and toxic agrochemicals, improves the health of our soil, bodies and communities. The Māori women involved in the study are not just promoting food sovereignty, but also a way of farming and agriculture in harmony with Papatūānuku (Mother Earth) based on cultural values that run counter to mainstream capitalist values of competition, consumerism and industrialisation, which are negatively impacting our environment and are the primary cause of climate change. This research builds awareness around Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives and acts as a tool for advocacy and policy change. The results contribute to defining how Indigenous values around food growing can inform alternative, post-capitalist models of food production outside of the market-dominated system. Food is being revalued as more than just a commodity, highlighting the important cultural dimensions of food.

MIHIMIHI

Tēnā koutou katoa

Ko Atlantic te moana

Ko American te iwi

Ko Stein te whānau

No Washington, D.C. ahau

Ko Lynn Ernest Stein tōku pāpā

Ko Suzanne Moyer tōku māmā

Ko Ken Clark tōku hoa tāne

Ko Imogen-Sue Evelyn Clark tāku tamāhine

Ko Karyn Evelyn Stein tōku ingoa

No reira tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa

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PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

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MĀORI GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Ahikā – burning fires of occupation, title to land through occupation by a group

Aroha – love

Aruhe – fern root

Āta – carefully

Atua - gods

Haka – traditional war dance

Hapū– sub-tribe, to be pregnant

Harakeke – NZ flax, *phormium tenax*

Hau – vital essence

Hauhake – harvesting

Hongi – traditional Māori greeting

Hui - meeting

Iwi – tribe

Kaanga maa – white corn

Kai – food

Kai oranga – healthy food

Kaimoana – seafood

Kaitiaki– stewards of the land

Kaitiakitanga – guardianship/care for the environment

Kākano - seed

Kamokamo – Māori squash

Karakia – prayers

Karamū – identified as several forms of the *coprosma* shrub and small tree

Kaumātua – Māori elder

Kaupapa – topic, matter for discussion, subject

Kawa – protocol, often concerning the marae

Kawakawa – the pepper tree, *macropiper excelsum*

Koha – small gift

Kōkihi – NZ spinach

Kono – small basket for cooked food

Kohanga reo – Māori language preschool

Kōrero – narratives

Kuia – Māori female elders

Kūmara – sweet potato

Kura – Māori language immersion school

Mana – power, prestige

Mana Wāhine – Māori feminist theory

Māra kai – food garden

Maramataka – Māori lunar calendar

Marae – a traditional Māori tribal meeting place

Mātauranga – knowledge

Mauri ora – healthy, vital, essence

Muka – prepared flax fibre

Ngā take – issues

Ngā whakatupuranga – future generations

Noa – free from tapu

Pā- Māori settlement

Pākehā – NZ European

Papa kāinga - village

Papatūānuku – Mother Earth

Pēpi – baby

Pikopiko – fern shoots

Pito – umbilical cord

Poi – Māori performance art

Pono – truthfulness, integrity

Pou – posts

Pūhā- sow thistle

Rangi-nui – Sky Father

Rohe – tribal boundary or tribal lines

Rongoā – Māori traditional medicine

Taha hinengaro – emotional side

Taha tinana – physical side

Taha wairua – spiritual side

Taha whānau – social side

Tamariki – kids

Tāne – Māori man

Tangata whenua – people of the land, Indigenous Māori

Tangi – funeral

Taonga - treasure

Tapa whā – the four cornerstones (of health)

Tapu – sacred, restrictions

Taro – starchy root crop

Te ao Māori – Māori worldview

Te reo – Māori language

Tika – straight, correct, right

Tikanga – customary or correct way of doing something

Tino rangatiratanga – Māori self-determination

Tipu - seedlings

Tūrangawaewae – a place where one has rights of residence and belonging through kinship and whakapapa

Utu – reciprocity

Wāhi tapu – places of spiritual, historical and cultural importance to Māori, sacred site

Wāhine – Māori women

Wairua – spirituality

Whakapapa – genealogy

Whakapapa kōrero – philosophical narratives consisting of genealogies and stories passed down from ancestors

Whakatipu – nurturing

Whakatō – planting

Whakataukī - proverbs

Whānau - family

Whanaungatanga – kinship/familial connections

Whenua – land or the placenta

Whare - house