Indigenous Māori responses to COVID-19: He waka eke noa?

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The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 has had significant impacts on communities and infrastructures across the globe. Indigenous health experts have called for culturally responsive Government support to mitigate pre-existing inequities and vulnerabilities in Indigenous communities. In Aotearoa New Zealand, official responses to the pandemic typically reflect the worldviews of the settler majority, while Māori interests are treated as part of the national concern. Using autoethnographic, Indigenous voice and an Indigenous wellbeing model, Whiiti te Rā, this article contributes insights into Māori cultural values as they were reported in online platforms during the Level 4 lockdown period of March–July, 2020. The authors recorded multiple examples of Māori cultural values and practices that offered individuals, families and communities a digital-social space of safety and hope to build relational resilience, and to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 lockdown. Observations and responses aligned to the model’s six dimensions of relational wellbeing: Māori language, the natural environment, spirituality, creative and performing arts, family (and extended family) values and genealogical connections. The observations highlight that Māori have a multigenerational approach to crisis management based on ancestral wisdom and experience that can inform Government responses.

Keywords: Indigenous; Māori; COVID-19; Pandemic; Values; Psychology; Community responses.

On March 23, 2020, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern, imposed a Level 4 elimination strategy to prevent the COVID-19 virus from taking hold in the country. Borders, schools and workplaces (except for essential services), were to close, and a ban on travelling, and social gatherings implemented. The Government used a well-known Māori proverb (whakataukī) He waka eke noa, meaning We are all in this canoe together, to galvanise the nation to work collectively to survive the pandemic. Māori values offer more than a perfunctory gesture toward unity that are devoid of their cultural origins and meaning. Māori values are expressions of deeply connected ontologies and epistemologies that provide a base to guide the development of culturally specific ethics and protocols for living (Harmsworth, 2005). Proverbs used within their cultural context, serve as memory devices that link Māori experiences and aspirations, affirm Māori identity and maintain connection to the wisdom of ancestors, It is a rare privilege to be able to reach out to the ancestors and touch their minds (Mead & Grove, 2001, p. 9). Ancestral wisdom, as a source of guidance, offers insights into collective wellbeing practices and values.

Indigenous Māori health professionals in New Zealand established an expert advisory group on the 13th March to coordinate a national Māori response, and to provide expert, public health advice (Te Roopu Urutā, 2020). Despite intense lobbying by the group to have a voice in decision-making, they were excluded from the Government’s pandemic working party consultations (Te Roopu Urutā, 2020). Conversely, the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association meet with the Government’s working party to discuss their concerns about restrictions on hunting (Te Roopu Urutā, 2020). These actions violated New Zealand’s Tiriti o Waitangi (1840), and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (United Nations, 2007).
Indigenous individuals have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. (UN, 2007, Article 24(2), p. 9).

Māori leaders, although supportive of the elimination strategy, expressed their concerns that the government did not recognise the vital role that Māori have taken in responding to previous crises and pandemics.

We are still operating under the fallacy that one size fits all. A national programme, while necessary, will exacerbate health inequities. While things are being done for the general population, they don’t have an equity lens, which is essential from the beginning. Professor Papaarangi Reid. (Te Roopu Urutā, 2020).

As the pandemic took hold, governments worldwide were cautioned that Indigenous peoples and vulnerable groups would be most affected if they were excluded from COVID-19 responses (Curtis, 2020; Cormack & Paine, 2020; Steynn, Binny, & Hannah, Steynn et al., 2020). Bond and Whop (2020) commented: Alongside every public health failure in Indigenous health there have been Indigenous peoples appealing to be seen and heard, not just counted in death tolls (online). The Chief Executive of the Australian National Aboriginal Community Council Health Organisation, stated: I can’t be any blunter. If COVID-19 gets into our communities, we are gone. (McAllister, 2020). The necessity to call for moral and ethical imperatives to protect Indigenous communities during a pandemic reflect the ongoing struggles of Indigenous peoples to address structural violence and racism which has produced pre-existing injustices and hampered Indigenous solutions (Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019).

Indigenous experiences of health and colonisation

Māori, and Indigenous leaders the world over, are well acquainted with pandemics and the disproportionate mortality rates they experience compared to colonising communities (Bond & Whop, 2020; Curtis, 2020). The near genocide of Māori through colonial strategies of introducing disease, land theft and political and economic disenfranchisement was explained as a natural result of an inferior ‘race’ succumbing to white superiority: The disappearance of the race is scarcely subject for much regret. They are ... being supplanted by a superior race. (Newman, 1881, p. 477). These assumptions of the value of some lives over others are grounded in eugenics ideology that continues to impact Māori (Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019). In considering New Zealand’s racist record, Māori leaders are justified in their concerns that COVID-19 will be devastating for their communities. Historical documents also show that during the influenza pandemic (Spanish flu) in 1918, the death rate for Māori was 42.3 per 1000, compared to the European death rate of 5.8 per 1000 (Cormack & Paine, 2020). Government and city council policies at the time were openly racist toward Māori, and decisions about their lives were made without concern for Māori futures.

Evidence from previous pandemics showed that the social, economic and mental health impacts of COVID-19 is likely to be more aggressive for Indigenous populations, and for minority groups (Dudgeon et al., 2020; Júnior & Neto, 2020). Furthermore, the extent of systemic racism is so pervasive and pernicious, that the most marginalised in society will struggle to survive (Cormack & Paine, 2020). These effects, Indigenous leaders argue, constitute the pre-existing social determinants of how Indigenous people will fare during the COVID-19 pandemic (Cormack & Paine, 2020). Government health responses have also overlooked the impact on multi-generational homes, those with a disability, are incarcerated or homeless, identify as LGBTQI, two-spirit, takatāpui, fa’afafine; and the elderly, who would find it difficult, if not impossible, to comply with health messages. Furthermore, Indigenous women are more likely to bear the brunt of COVID-19, as they are more likely to work in insecure and high-risk jobs, live in inadequate housing, to be abused, to face eviction, and to have limited or no access to clean water (Ministry of Health, 2020; United Nations, 2020). A further concern is that this pandemic, like others within the history of colonisation, will pass trauma to subsequent generations resulting in ongoing trauma that may manifest as cultural alienation, physical and mental health issues, suicidal risk, limited coping skills, family violence and substance abuse (Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019).

Globally, the mental health effects of the pandemic are a significant issue that is likely to increase rates of depression, anxiety, suicide, risk-taking behaviours, family violence, drug and alcohol use and addictions (UN, 2020). Concerns are that existing mental health and social services are already under scrutiny for creating the physical, social and emotional health conditions that predate the pandemic (Bond & Whop, 2020; Cormack & Paine, 2020). Supporting communities to manage social and mental health services that enable wellbeing and social cohesion is a recommended priority in government planning documents (Ministry of Health, 2020). In keeping with Indigenous realities (Dudgeon et al., 2020; Smith, 1999) proposed that a multigenerational, systemic approach built on cultural values is needed to strengthen Indigenous communities to survive the COVID-19 pandemic.
**Indigenous cultural values in disaster responses**

Previous research on Māori responses to disaster management shows that pre-existing networks based on genealogical, or community ties consistently apply crisis responses that are immediate, culturally-relevant, inclusive and highly coordinated (Kenney & Phibbs, 2015a; Lambert, 2014). These well-connected and adaptive networks include tribal authorities, tribal communities, marae (the ancestral courtyard), tribal health and social services, and schools that enact tribal-specific cultural values and practices. During the New Zealand, Christchurch earthquakes of 2010, 2011 and 2012, and several regional floods, Māori tribal organisations responded by providing shelter, food, health services, transportation and financial support (Lambert, 2014; Thornley et al., 2015). Specific values seen in crisis responses for Māori highlight cultural values of *aroha ki te tangata* (love and compassion for all people); *kaitiakitanga* (leadership and resource management) whakapapa (genealogical ties); *whanaungatanga* (relationship building); *manaakitanga* (responsible caring) *kotahitanga* (unity), and *turanangaawaeae* (connection to place). Māori cultural values in disaster responses create social capital and social cohesion which, at an individual and population level, act as a psychosocial asset that can mitigate the impact of trauma and loss (Kenney & Phibbs, 2015a).

Ensuring physical safety during crises is also related to the importance of protecting and strengthening the *mauri*, or lifeforce, of a person, including their family and community, their cultural practices, and the environment in which they live. Indigenous concepts of wellbeing that reflect a holistic lens recognise the relationship and interdependence between physical, mental, social, environmental and spiritual health. For example, the Yawuru people from Broome North-Western Australia use the term “mabu liyam living a good life” and “Pimatisiwin,” from the Cree root word pimatisi means “to be alive” (Watene, 2020, para. 8). In Dakota, wicozani relates to overall health and well-being and in Māori, “mauri ora” means health and vitality in relation to others (Durie, 2003; Watene, 2020 para. 8). Among the Diné (Navajo) nation the concept K’é relates to recognising the ways that people are related and the importance of nurturing that connection through caring (Duarte et al., 2021).

The Ministry of Health’s psychological wellbeing messages for Māori to manage anxiety and stress were based on Durie’s *Te Whare Tapa Whā* (the four-sided house) model. Te Whare Tapa Whā, discusses the balance of four dimensions or taha (sides) of wellbeing: Taha Hinengaro (Mental and emotional wellbeing); Taha Tinana (Physical wellbeing); Taha Whānau (family and social wellbeing); and Taha Wairua (spiritual wellbeing). Given the existing inequities in the health system, and the Government’s lack of consultation with Māori health leaders, using Māori models, without considering Māori self-determination and sovereignty, misses the role of Māori leadership in a crisis. Salient concerns for Indigenous peoples are the need to ensure that cultural knowledge is maintained, or in some cases, regenerated. On the ground responses throughout the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic typically involved establishing roadblocks, food delivery, providing access to technologies, delivery of water, checking in on elders, health care, advocacy, delivering hygiene products and contraceptives, and offering transportation to medical appointments (Cram, 2020; Duarte et al., 2021; Dudgeon et al., 2020).

At the time of writing this paper, New Zealand had progressively moved out of Level 4 lockdown to Level 1. There was an additional lockdown period in August 2020 for the Auckland region which is the largest city in the country with a population of approximately 1.5 million. This article describes the Level 4 lockdown period from the perspectives of two Indigenous Māori psychologists who observed and collected COVID-19 wellbeing responses as they were reported across news, and social media platforms. Māori clinical psychologists comprise 5.01% of a total 2256 registered (licenced) clinical psychologists. As noted earlier, Government public wellbeing messages began to appear within the first 2 weeks of the Level 4 lockdown. However, Māori tribal authorities, educationalists and health and social service providers responded to community needs prior to Level 4 lockdown, and throughout the lockdown period. To organise the online observations, the authors used a recently developed Indigenous model of wellbeing Whiti te Rā (McLachlan et al., 2021) to curate Māori-specific COVID-19 wellbeing responses (described below).

**METHOD**

Indigenous autoethnography, is a research method that provides access to an insider’s authoritative voice about an otherwise unknowable cultural world (Houston, 2007). Indigenous autoethnography challenges the established way of acquiring knowledge, where the “other,” often Indigenous people, are studied, analysed and written about (Houston, 2007; Smith, 1999; Whitinui, 2014). Due to lockdown, many Māori turned to social media platforms to establish and maintain connections with friends, colleagues and relatives. The media-driven and highly digitised ecology that occurred during lockdown provided examples of Māori cultural values, wisdom and teachings.

The authors are two Māori/Indigenous clinical psychologists and researchers who worked as “essential
workers” during the March–June lockdown period. As insiders, the authors applied an autoethnographic developing methods as we go (Tomaselli et al., 2008, p. 348) approach that allowed flexibility to interact with a range of digital-social contexts. The authors had recently finished an Indigenous framework outlining Māori pathways to wellbeing for Māori Whiti te Rā (McLachlan et al., 2021). As researchers, we noted that due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the important Māori wellbeing activities we had written about were increasingly enacted in online platforms. The first author, using an insider perspective, and as a consumer of this information, began the process of recording Māori communities’ responses to lifting wellbeing during the lockdown. The time period was from the 23rd March (total lockdown) to mid-July, 2020, by which time the country had moved to Level one (on 8th June).

Key messaging and online Māori wellbeing activities accessed by the authors, and of interest to Māori wellbeing were collected. No specific search terms were used to monitor online platforms as the content was specifically related to the COVID-19 context. However, Māori, COVID-19, and Lockdown were commonly seen words.

Indigenous responses were collected as they occurred online via: social media, webinars, government briefings and ministerial reports; blogs, news media, Facebook live, Twitter, podcasts, organised webinars/symposia; Tiktok, YouTube, and Instagram, and in conversation with other Indigenous psychologists. Responses were transferred to a OneNote folder. Three hundred and twelve entries were collected. While more items could have been collected, the lead author hand-collected the items rather than using digital scooping technology. The method used was a systematic literature review, and as such coding was not utilised as the model provided the structural coding.

The first author, using an insider perspective, began the process of recording Māori communities’ responses to the COVID-19 pandemic at individual, group and organisational levels. While Indigenous autoethnographic research can comprise set methods or flexible methods (Tomaselli et al., 2008), the structure applied to the collection of online material was determined primarily by its relationship to Māori responding during the COVID-19 lockdown period. The process of curating responses involved (a) accessing online information and website documentation (b) organising material into themes; identifying outliers which were topics that impacted on wellbeing (i.e., racism, activism) (c) and organising the responses to align to the Whiti-te-Rā model. An inductive approach was used to participate in, observe and record examples of wellbeing messages that prioritised Māori futures. In this way, the authors, as insiders, were able to add their commentary about the digital-social interactions they observed. (To note, a manuscript for the Whiti model was in press at the time, and has since been published).

Whiti te rā

Whiti te Rā is a wellbeing model developed from a systematic literature review to address the lack of culturally-relevant psychological resources. The scope of the review included any Māori cultural concepts or activities that contributed to wellbeing and/or health for Māori. In total, 228 research studies yielded 36 studies that underwent a thematic analysis. Six themes were identified which were then reviewed by a subject matter expert group of Māori psychologists and Māori psychology students, who discussed and confirmed that the themes produced, aligned to Māori cultural values.

The model represents Tama-nui-te-Rā (the Sun) as a metaphor for potentiality and culturally-defined pathways to wellbeing (see Figure 1). Wellbeing, in this model, is Mauri ora—a flourishing essence, or vitality, that is dynamic and influenced by interactions with others and the environment (Durie, 2003). The model has six pathways to wellbeing represented by six hihi (sun-rays): (1) Ngā ara reo Māori/Pathways to Māori language; (2) Ngā ara Taiao/Pathways to connection with the environment; (3) Ngā ara wairua/Pathways to Māori spiritual beliefs and practices; (4) Ngā ara mahi-a-toi/Pathways to Māori creative arts; (5) Ngā ara take pū whānau/Pathways to Māori relational values; and (6) Ngā ara whakapapa/Pathways to Intergenerational relationships. The model incorporates Māori cultural values and practices that are collectively understood as comprising Māori worldviews of relational wellbeing (Durie, 2003). As a research lens, the model provides a way of organising Māori responses to COVID-19 during the lockdown period.

In Figure 1, each theme or hihi (sun ray) is separated down the middle by a line. The sides are labelled Mahuru (Comfort and knowledge) and Hono (engagement), this reflects that Māori can increase their wellbeing by either learning about, or engaging in, cultural activities.

Findings

In the following section, each pathway to wellbeing will be briefly described, followed by an example of an Indigenous response observed online, and the personal experience of one of the authors, as consumers and participants within these digital spaces collective acts of engaging in Māori pathways to wellbeing.

1. Ngā ara reo Māori: Pathways to Māori language

Pathways to language reflects speaking the Māori language informally (e.g., with family or peers), or formally (e.g., on the marae/ancestral home, or work). Learning and speaking the Māori language is a vital part of Indigenous resistance to the effects of colonisation and the
near loss of the Māori language. Every digital platform showed Māori language use: Tiktok, Instagram, Twitter, news media (Māori broadcasting), Facebook, and organised webinars. The breadth of language use included cultural performances, church services, comedy, storytelling, singing in the streets, Māori news stories and webinars. Given the intersecting nature of the wellbeing model, the language pathway was also seen in every part of the Whiti Te Rā model.

Livestream reo lessons 03 April 2020. Māori celebrities and language experts gave online tutorials to help thousands of children keep up their language learning at home. Lessons were streamed twice a day for 30 minutes, every week for 6 weeks. Well into the lockdown period, the Ministry of Education developed a televised school programme for primary school aged children. A Māori language programme was also televised. Both initiatives received positive public support.

Insider perspective: Connecting to Māori language

The first author, Waikaremoana, is a fluent Māori language speaker who is actively engaged in language regeneration for her family. A particular concern for me was that if the COVID-19 pandemic reached Māori communities, we could lose our elders and knowledge holders. Our language is endangered, and so are our customs. The communities that shared language resources at the start of the lockdown, provided a connection that felt familiar, and reassuring. Across all the digital-social spaces, Māori language was used, either as a greeting, an opening-prayer or acknowledgement, or pronouns, and place names through to full-immersion discussions and teaching webinars.

(2) Ngā ara taiao: Pathways to the environment

Pathways to connecting with the environment incorporates knowledge of, and engagement in, the natural environment. This reflects the important interdependent relationships between Indigenous peoples, spiritual beliefs and practices and the environment. During the lockdown period, Māori commented that there was less pollution due to reduced air and motor traffic, less city noise, and that they could hear birds, and notice the quietness. These changes led online communities to comment: We see our mountain and rivers like our tāonga (treasure) as though they are people, I liken Mauao (the mountain) to our koro (grandfather), and he’s ageing, he’s not in the greatest health… he’s getting pounded with visitors similar to if our koro was in hospital they limit the amount of visitors that can see him … a million people in 2019 (Murray, 2020). Survival strategies involving the environment were also noted where Indigenous communities moved inland and/or further away from main populations, or established checkpoints to keep non-locals away, and to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Online Facebook communities also used the environment to address food security issues by showing where to access food hubs, gardening tips, harvesting, hunting, food preparation and meat processing and cooking. Several New Zealand Facebook community groups demonstrated gardening, fishing and gathering practices related to the traditional Māori lunar calendar. Other examples included encouraging outdoor activities, learning about native medicines, and sharing time outdoors with family and friends.

Land and family 13 May 2020 We cannot talk about (land) whenua and (family) whānau separately as they are interconnected. (Shirley Simmonds).

Insider perspective: Connection to the environment

The second author, Andre McLachlan, viewed posts and online videos that offered suggestions on preparing gardens and crops for the coming season. An elder shared regular gardening advice, while others held online seminars about traditional gardening practices, including lunar planting knowledge. Andre commented: Living on the land is a privilege for our family. We were able to collect wild mushrooms, catch eels, and work together in our garden. Andre felt that these activities had positive wellbeing outcomes for the family he was able to show his children how to grow and cook food. Engaging with
the environment gave me a feeling of connecting with the mauri (life force and energy) of Papatūānuku (earth mother) at a time of fear and death. As a father, I felt like I was also contributing a sense of food security for my family at a time where the media were highlighting supply shortages. My children also reported a sense of pride in being able to contribute to the work in the garden and the production of food security.

(3) Ngā ara wairua: Pathways to Māori spiritual beliefs and practices

Pathways to spiritual connections include engagement in beliefs and practices associated with the spiritual world, formal religions and the environment as a spiritual and physical being. Many tribal organisations held daily (and evening) faith-based and spiritual wellbeing sessions on Facebook live to provide comfort, connection and familiarity. For example, a cultural adviser, Wiremu Nia-nia held spiritual healing workshops on his Facebook group. His discussions focussed on Māori understandings of spirituality as they relate to self-healing. Other responses highlighted tribal narratives about Māori deities and celestial cycles and their relevance for everyday living. Others used spirituality to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and government policies on Māori cultural and spiritual practices related to births, visiting loved ones in hospital, and death and funerals.

The relevance of the Treaty of Waitangi to Covid-19

27 April 2020. Dr. Claire Charters, explains that the New Zealand Government has an obligation to protect Māori cultural practices. These comments arose from the concerns raised about the restrictions imposed on Māori customary rituals and practices that affected their ability to attend funerals, hunt or fish, and to look after our rivers and waterways.

Insider perspective: Connection to spirituality

Waikaremoana observed the ways that her tribe, among others, continued everyday ceremonies or spiritual practices. A mixture of worldviews were noted: Christian religions, Māori religions with a Christian origin, and ancestral beliefs associated with the cosmos, the natural environment and the Māori pantheon. Spiritual connections of some kind could be found online at any time of the day. Dawn service, evening services and ceremonies to welcome new babies, or to farewell the deceased, could happen online. Celebrations were also held online. I watched a Facebook-live funeral service, and then the burial. There were fewer than 10 people at the graveyard to farewell our elder. Standing along the road, spaced appropriately, were mourners; singing, wailing, and doing the poi (percussion instrument). For me, this was an incredibly sad experience to observe from a distance. However, seeing the effort that family made to enable our elder to have a dignified departure was very uplifting. Despite not being able to attend significant occasions in person, Māori communities made it possible to be involved so that memories of being present are held, rather than memories of missing out.

(4) Ngā ara mahi-a-toi: Pathways to Māori creative arts

Pathways to the creative arts includes all art forms: weaving, carving, music, creative writing, drawing and performing arts (to name a few). Connection to the arts involve cognitive, social, physical, spiritual and psychological wellbeing and when used within a Māori worldview, cultural wellbeing is also enhanced. Several Māori organisations and individuals developed innovative ways to share their talents and skills online to provide a way for viewers to keep busy, to learn different skills, to connect with others or for pleasure and amusement. Master-carver Michael Matchitt provided 31 online video demonstrations on how to draw traditional Māori carving designs. Māori tribal authorities delivered craft, and school packs to families with children to keep them busy and entertained. There were also live demonstrations of Māori performing arts (kapa haka and poi), free weaving tutorials, a Māori weaponry challenge on the Tiktok platform; daily Aka (Māori martial art) health and fitness sessions, art classes, weaving lessons, and lessons on how make and play traditional instruments.

Māori 10 hit challenge

03 April 2020. The 10 Hit-Wero Challenge went viral on social media showcases Māori weaponry to inspire positivity and physical challenges during COVID-19-19. It features Māori men and women who have answered the call to show their skills and inspire others during national self-isolation.

Insider perspective: Māori creative arts

Andre engaged in whakairo (wood carving) during the lockdown period, where they worked on a series of tekoteko (standing human figures) for an entryway to a building on his tribal marae. I felt this provided a way to feel like I was connected and acting with purpose and meaning in a time when I had little control of what was happening around me. Māori creationalive practices also offer opportunities for social interaction, as the second author sought help with his mentor. I was able to Facetime call a renowned expert carver, Michael Matchitt, who would talk me through design features. Through our work together, and frequent conversations, Mike decided to develop video clips demonstrating carving designs from different tribes. He posted these online everyday. He also simplified access to resources by carving items such as soap with everyday utensils. The wellbeing-related activities that Andre described played an important role in connecting adults, youth and children to physical and
creative experiences. The video clips were shared online throughout New Zealand and Australia, which further enhanced connections between Māori living locally, and overseas.

(5) Ngā ara take pū whānau: Pathways to Māori relational values

Ngā ara take pū whānau incorporates the traditional messages and knowledge that represent the values that are actioned through Māori practices that strengthen family and collective wellbeing. Social media was replete with examples of families, individuals and organisations offering support (along the lines of the other wellbeing pathways). This was particularly important for families who were isolated, lived alone, and for essential workers. The second author chose to self-isolate from his partner and children (he was still on the property in the garage) as he continued working at the mental health service. He maintained family contact by watching them play, shopping for supplies, sending messages, building a garden together and walking with them while keeping the appropriate distance. He posted videos of himself carving while sharing wellbeing messages that his tribal organisation was able to disseminate.

Connecting to creative arts: Carving 17 April, 2020. Sharpening your tools internally … to learn more about identifying and managing your own strong emotions.

Remember loved ones for Matariki 13 July 2020. The ascension of the star cluster Matariki signals the start of the Māori New Year. An invitation to join a Facebook livestream hosted by Te Papa (New Zealand’s National Museum) to remember those who passed away in the past year. The response aligned to Māori cultural practices and values of mourning that extend over a year.

Insider perspective: Connecting to family values

Andre used examples of ancestral knowledge of relational wellbeing with the environment to share positive messages with his own tribe. In my role as a psychologist, who delivers talk therapy, it was difficult to be so far away from my people, and not fulfill my role as part of a collective. Andre was able to participate in sharing his knowledge by producing unrehearsed, short videos of himself carving and talking about cultural values contained in proverbs. His purpose was to share ancestral knowledge to help his tribe understand and respond to the COVID-19 challenges. I felt connected to my people and felt useful to the collective where I could share and promote oral traditions associated with wellbeing.

(6) Ngā ara whakapapa: Pathways to intergenerational relationships.

This pathway reflects knowledge of, and engagement with, family connections, and relationships across multiple generations. The social-digital spaces showed the importance of learning about (and accessing) family/relatives, traditional lands, significant cultural sites, and stories of well-known ancestors and events. Facebook groups provided opportunities to discuss topics related to ancestral knowledge: Protect our Whakapapa/Genealogy and Che Wilson’s Kauhau (lecture) Sessions—Sharing Tupuna (ancestral) Knowledge with the World. Tribal histories, chants, prayers, songs, stories or tribal idioms/sayings were used to share this knowledge (this also relates to the language dimension). Wellbeing strategies in this pathway also included ringing elders in known tribal boundaries, creating specific bubbles for elders, setting up causal signalling systems (a balloon on the mailbox), or leaving contact numbers in mailboxes for elderly folk, and arranging to buy food and medicines. Across the country, tribal authorities and social service agencies set up testing stations, food distribution centres, COVID-19 testing stations, and organised home deliveries of food, school supplies and medicines.

Tribe purchases seafood for their community 26 May 2020. A large tribal authority purchased large quantities of seafood from Sealord, and Moana New Zealand to distribute to families within their tribal boundaries. The interaction between families and their tribal group is an example of intergenerational values of providing food during crises.

Insider perspective: Intergenerational connection

Waikaremoana provided advice to her immediate family and extended family through organised daily digital activities: vlogs, fitness challenges, TikTok challenges, nightly Zoom calls, Kahoot games, cooking competitions and music competitions. Each of these activities were designed to build family connections and provide relief from being alone, bored, anxious, stressed, or agitated. Because I was creating psychosocial wellbeing resources as a psychologist, I was careful not to overload my family with wellbeing messages. Another family member who worked in a correctional facility held daily Facebook live breakfasts where he and his partner discussed recent news, or family matters. I was able to sit at my computer and work while I listened to my brother discuss everyday matters. Family members commented in the Facebook chat if they had something to say. When the lockdown ended, family members were able to come together and reflect on what they had learned about each other. Notably,
a nephew who had loose connections to his extended family, moved house with his partner to live closer to his family.

**DISCUSSION**

This article offers an account of Māori psychosocial responses to the COVID-19 pandemic elimination strategy from the 23rd March (total lockdown) to mid-July, 2020. The expressions of Māori cultural values and practices in the lockdown period were consistent with, and extended, existing research on disaster responses, and psychological first aid protocols following a crisis. Indigenous autoethnography approaches to research underscore the power of self-reflection and self-awareness, the reality of non-objectivity of the researcher and the importance of the story told. The appropriate collection, analysis and presentation of Indigenous knowledge also requires a methodology that originates from the same culture that participants come from (Tomaselli et al., 2008). Storytelling is one of the main ways of transmitting knowledge, wisdom, tradition and history across generations. We observed multiple expressions of Māori cultural values and practices that related to individual and family wellbeing, cultural regeneration and cultural maintenance; all of which needs to be recorded for future generations. In telling the story of Indigenous wellbeing responses during this difficult time, we confirm our resilience and our wisdom as peoples who thrive in relation to each other, and to the natural environment. Cultural values and practices that affirm social, spiritual and cultural bonds, that maintain connections to language and place, and that promote hope, are critical to strengthening wellbeing and relational resilience that can extend to future generations (Kenney & Phibbs, 2015a; Lambert, 2014; Thornley et al., 2015). By drawing on that wisdom and experiences, Māori were able to support each other during the lockdown period.

Using an Indigenous model of wellbeing and Indigenous voices, provided a lens to explore the observed online interactions, and media coverage of the lockdown period. As expected, the nature of Māori responses aligned to the Whiti model with priorities for wellbeing centering on intergenerational and family connection via: Māori language; spiritual practices, creative arts, and the environment. Consistent with previous research on disaster responses in Māori communities, core cultural values of guardianship (kaitakitanga) prompted actions that reflected values of a secure cultural-identity (Durie, 2003; Thornley et al., 2015). Also, values of compassionate caring (manaakitanga) were seen in the daily communications from tribal leaders who were responsive to current issues, and supported families with practical information about how to access health services, food and basic items. Tribal entities, individuals and social and health service providers, focussed their efforts on providing food, housing, digital connection, digital schooling, and public health messages that exemplified the importance of being safe and connected to cultural values (Lambert, 2014; Kenney & Phibbs, 2015b).

As observers of the digital-social space, we could see the comments from participants, and feel for ourselves that Māori-specific responses created a sense of calm and connectedness by normalising behaviour and emotions, learning new health routines, and connecting to safe places and relationships. Assumptions that generic principles of disaster responses are relevant for everyone misses the impact of systemic issues and the need for culturally-relevant resources. As the demand from Indigenous peoples worldwide for self-determination and self-governance is an ongoing and essential struggle, the right to live in accordance with Indigenous cultural values, aspirations and worldviews must be recognised. The cultural, social, ethical and legal imperatives embedded in Government policy must also genuinely address the socioeconomic and health inequities that are legacies of colonisation. Furthermore, the knowledge held in Indigenous communities must be available to those communities, many of whom have been alienated from their cultural worldviews (Dudgeon et al., 2020; Waitangi Tribunal, 2021).

The New Zealand Government’s COVID-19 elimination strategy consistently promotes the importance of social cohesion, unity, and compassion using Māori concepts and values (Ministry of Health, 2020). Our view is that Māori words concepts and values represent ancestral beliefs, intentions, and knowledges created over time that provide a foundation for multigenerational wellbeing responses. As noted in the introduction, Māori oral traditions are vital carriers of ancestral knowledge. We are all in this boat together-he waka eke noa means that from a Māori worldview, working together requires that Indigenous knowledge and futures is prioritised.

Limitations in this research was the lack of digital scooping software that would have provided a greater account of each item, potentially numbering the thousands. Another limitation, or issue was the highly stressful environment at the time of lockdown as Government messages and modelling calculations heightened our sense of anxiety and panic about our ability to survive the pandemic. Also, not all Māori had access to digital platforms, or indeed culturally nuanced activities and their voices are absent.

In 2021, the Waitangi Tribunal convened an urgent inquiry to hear submissions by Māori leaders in tribal, health, religious, Māori local councils, and community groups. The claimants alleged that the Government/Crown had failed to protect Māori during the vaccine rollout; during the design and shift to the Protection Framework and had failed to engage with Māori in their decision-making (Waitangi Tribunal, 2021). The
Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, enables any Māori to claim that they have been prejudicially affected by the Crown's actions that is inconsistent with the Tiriti o Waitangi, 1840. As noted earlier, Māori health leaders were concerned that Māori would experience significant inequities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The Waitangi Tribunal’s Haumaru, the COVID-19 Priority Report 2021 highlighted that despite Cabinet knowing that Māori have a connected infrastructure and could contribute to a Māori-led response, resources were withheld to the extent that Māori were placed in a vulnerable position. The Tribunal noted that the COVID-19 inquiry was a reminder of the patterns of institutional racism where the differential access to resources, cultural capital, social legitimation and political power disadvantages one group while advantaging another (Waitangi Tribunal, 2021).

While the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted Māori communities due to confinement, financial hardship, insecure housing, crowding, racism and more recently vaccination misinformation and disinformation (Hannah et al., 2021). The strengths of Māori communities are also apparent. This paper details the acts of love, resistance and cultural tradition that is central to Māori worldviews. Specifically, Māori mobilised quickly to support their people from the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the legacy of that work will be felt for generations.

Compliance with Ethical Standards: Not applicable, as the information came from public, online digital platforms.

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