Te reo Māori trauma

A literature review prepared for Te Mātāwai

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Karakia

He karakia mō te whānau e whētuki ana ki te whai i tōna reo Māori

Tākiri mai ko te ata
I te tangihanga o te korihi manu
Ki te atatū, ki te ata hāpara – maiea!
Te ketekete a te kākā; te koekoe a te kōkō; te kūkū a te kererū –
Te korihi manu ki te atatū; ki te ata hāpara – maiea!
Te reo tārere, te reo tāruru, te reo taka kau
Te kōrihi tangata ki te awatea, ki te atapō – maiea!
Maiea! Maiea tona tupua;
Maiea! Maiea tōna tawhito;
Mea haere mai i whea ...?
Mea haere mai i Tū-whakaotinuku!
Mea haere mai i Tu- whakaotirangi!
Mea i wetewete mai i te tīrangorango, i te matangerengere -
Mea i herekore mai i te kaikiri; i te aupēhitanga -
Mea i watea mai i te whētuki;
He māpihi pounamu, he māpihi maurea ...
Kia tuturu owhiti whakamaua kia tina –
Tina!
Hui e –Taiki e!

TE REO MĀORI TRAUMA
LITERATURE REVIEW PREPARED FOR TE MĀTĀWAI

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Summary of key findings

This report is an exploration and investigation of literature relating to te reo Māori trauma.
The literature review is driven by one focus question - What is te reo Māori or Māori language trauma?

This report is an exploration and investigation of literature relating to te reo Māori trauma. The literature review is driven by one focus question - What is te reo Māori or Māori language trauma? The key finding thus far is that no published literature has attempted to define or distinguish what te reo Māori language trauma is. As a result of the research undertaken to date to produce this report, we have created a working definition for te reo Māori trauma or Māori language trauma:

Te reo Māori trauma, or Māori language trauma refers to a person's *emotional, psychological, spiritual distress, and/or physical injury caused by harmful events or by association to harmful events,* which directly impacts their ability and/or willingness to learn and/or speak te reo Māori.

Our working toward coining a definition of te reo Māori trauma begins with exploring various literature and publications such as books, journal articles, dissertations, theses, and mainstream and social multimedia platforms. This broad approach has allowed for an expansive review of literature about trauma in general, language trauma, and historical trauma as it relates to te reo Māori trauma.

Key recommendations

We have three broad areas into which we have grouped our recommendations for Te Mātāwai to consider.

1. EXPANDING AWARENESS of te reo Māori trauma, and bringing to the current discourse a clear, concise, unambiguous, definition that is distinct from definitions of language trauma and historical trauma.

Possible actions Te Mātāwai can support and possibly initiate are:

- producing podcasts with interviews and conversations specifically related to te reo Māori trauma
- producing specific reo trauma research publications with a focus on qualitative and quantitative data collection
- Producing short five-minute profile vids of Māori influencers who are currently living with, or who have experienced te reo Māori trauma, for release on social media.

2. IDENTIFYING BARRIERS caused by te reo Māori trauma that impact the health of te reo Māori and the success of Māori language strategies. This may require a two-pronged approach.

A. A macro-level approach which will require identifying barriers caused by reo Māori trauma that adversely affects the success of te reo Māori strategies. This could be done at the level of iwi, hapū, marae, whānau, and could also include institutions with reo Māori strategies.

B. A micro-level approach will require identifying barriers caused by reo Māori trauma that adversely affect individual people's willingness and or ability to learn and or speak te reo Māori.

Possible actions Te Mātawai can initiate are:

- Allocate or priotise a percentage of Te Mātāuru funding to be used by Iwi, hapū, Marae, whānau, and communities to conduct their research on identifying barriers caused by te reo Māori at both macro and micro levels.
- Prioritise te reo Māori trauma as part of the research priorities and lead a project that identifies likely barriers that are adversely affecting the success of the Maihi Māori Strategy.
- Allocate funding to develop strategies for healing from te reo Māori trauma.
- Develop a strategy to help overcome the barriers that will accelerate the success of the Maihi Māori Strategy to fulfill the vision of one million people or more using the Māori language in community immersion domains, and that the Māori language is the first language of 25% of all Māori children is achieved before 2040.

3. HEALING THROUGH COLLABORATION IS CRITICAL. Te reo Māori trauma is a kaupapa that encompasses health, education, and media. It involves an understanding of psychology,linguistics, culture, and history. It also fits into psychology, linguistics, history, culture, ethnography, geography, politics, ontology, and spirituality. The assertion 'he rongoā te reo Māori', will require a close collaboration with New Zealand Health Authority, Te Whatu Ora, and Te Aka Whaiora. In addition, collaborating with Te Māngai Pāhō in producing documentaries, short 5 minute youtube clips, podcasts, tik tok vids will play a part in altering public discourse and perception around te reo Māori trauma.

1

Introduction

Te reo Māori trauma, language trauma, and Māori language trauma have become prevalent in mainstream discourse within at least the last five to 10 years

(see Appendix 1: Multimedia Raw Data and References).

However, the arrival of Captain Cook, who in 1769 began renaming places Māori place names with European names, supplanted te reo Māori with English and instilled an inherited prejudice towards te reo Māori. Usurping the once dominant language of this land and rendering it powerless, meaningless, and without value, is, we assert, the genesis of te reo Māori trauma. Iwi Māori are living with the impacts of this trauma to this very day. The most recent developments in the conversation regarding te reo Māori trauma are evidenced in mainstream, social media, and in website blogs (See Appendix 1). Literature relating to te reo Māori, Māori language movements, revitalization efforts, and strategies within iwi, education, health, and government departments is suggestive of te reo Māori trauma or language trauma. However, there is no definition of what te reo Māori trauma is.

This report is a review of a wide range of literature with the single goal in mind to address the question- what is te reo Māori trauma?

From our initial exploration there is no definition of te reo Māori trauma anywhere in any academic or public discourse. Our 'literature' review therefore encompasses all publications we could source, i.e. written and oral literature, not just written publications. It therefore includes books, journal articles, conference proceedings, and mainstream and social multi-media, websites, Facebook, TikTok, podcasts, YouTube, blogs, television programmes, and film documentaries.

It is clear that the current discourse relating to te reo Māori trauma is distinct from historical trauma, and language trauma, however, the terms language trauma, Māori language trauma, and te reo Māori trauma have been used somewhat interchangeably, and often te reo Māori trauma appears to be implicit in the discussion of historical trauma. We propose a distinction of te reo Māori trauma or Māori language trauma from historical trauma, language trauma, and trauma in general, and provide the current working definition:

- Te reo Māori trauma, or Māori language trauma refers to a person's *emotional, psychological, spiritual distress, and/or physical injury caused by harmful events or by association to harmful events*, which directly impacts their ability and/or willingness to learn and/or speak te reo Māori.

To define te reo Māori trauma or Māori language trauma, we first need to distinguish what is trauma. What is language trauma? Māori language trauma is intimately linked with historical trauma, so how is reo Māori trauma distinct from historical trauma? Therefore the first three parts of this report are dedicated to answering these three questions:

1. What is trauma?
2. What is language trauma?
3. What is historical trauma?

The fourth part of this report explores how te reo Māori trauma or Māori language trauma is distinct in itself and so requires a discrete definition. This report will conclude with some final remarks regarding the impact of te reo Māori trauma.

As stated previously, the research conducted for this literature review was centred on one goal, to answer the question, what is te reo Māori trauma or Māori language trauma? In our attempt to answer this one question, we have intentionally steered away from reviewing literature and publications that generally deal with te reo Māori, te iwi Māori, Māori education, Māori health, language revitalization strategies, Māori psychology, clinical psychology, and racism. All of the aforementioned topics are intrinsically related to te reo Māori trauma, however, we see that te reo Māori trauma is not distinguished as such in any of the literature. As stated previously, people are pointing towards te reo Māori trauma and its impacts, however, what is needed right now is a definition, a clear, concise, unambiguous meaning of what exactly te reo Māori trauma is. It is also important to acknowledge that te reo Māori trauma is a distinctive type of trauma that impacts individual people, whānau, Marae, hapū,

communities, iwi, and institutions. Therefore, the term te reo Māori trauma and, or, Māori language trauma, is used specifically and intentionally.

The report does not set out to provide an answer to healing from te reo Māori trauma. Before we can start the healing process, we need firstly to identify exactly what this taniwha is, and how it impacts people's lives, their well-being, and their ability and or willingness to learn and or speak te reo Māori. It is important to uncover if te reo Māori trauma is adversely impacting the success of te reo Māori strategies, language acquisition, language usage in everyday contexts, and total immersion domains. Last but not least, it is critical to discover how it impacts association, engagement, and connection with whakapapa, Marae, iwi, and Māori identity. There is, at this stage, insufficient data to provide any measurable results as to the overall impact of te reo Māori trauma. This lack of data is one of many barriers to overcome in order to provide strategies or solutions to healing from te reo Māori trauma.

Finally, this is by no means a definitive authoritative report on te reo Māori trauma. It is however a start to building a significant foundation on which to build this kaupapa and requires further in-depth discussion and research. The researchers in this report are not health professionals or health practitioners. We do not specialize in health, clinical psychology, or Māori psychology. We are te reo Māori specialists, teachers, researchers, and educators. Since trauma is at the centre of this kaupapa, trauma must be addressed in the report. However, the report only deals with generic health publications that specifically provide definitions of trauma in laymans terms. Moving forward, Māori health professionals must be engaged to support the development of this kaupapa.

2

What is trauma?

In 1999, Rachel Selby published her book *Still Being Punished.* It is a collection of stories from five kaumātua, four of whom were physically punished for speaking te reo Māori at the native schools they attended as children. The fifth kaumātua attended state school where she experienced racism regularly and te reo Māori was non-existent.

These kaumātua share their pain, their fears, and their anxieties caused by the trauma they experienced growing up. Each story is a vivid description of the events that took place, the coping mechanisms each person employed to survive, and the constant fear and anxiety they experienced at the time of publication. Furthermore, the kaumātua assert that since the language revival movements of the 1980s and 1990s, they are now being punished for being unable to speak Māori. The perpetuation of punishment into their twilight years prevents them from healing from this trauma. It is clear that this book intends to provide an opportunity for kaumātua to share their stories in the hopes of empowering others to come forth and not only find ways to heal, but to also bring awareness to the detrimental impacts of perpetuating te reo Māori trauma. Selby provides an excellent overview of well-known historical events and education policies that impacted the oppression, and henceforth, the revival of te reo Māori. However, there is no definition provided for trauma or te reo Māori trauma.

Before attempting to define what te reo Māori trauma is, we must first be very clear on the definition of the term, 'trauma'.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2023) defines trauma as:

a. an injury (such as a wound) to living tissue caused by an extrinsic agent;

b. a disordered psychic or behavioural state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury

c. an emotional upset;

d. an agent, force, or mechanism that causes trauma. [and] traditionally, trauma was a term used to refer to physical injuries only, but nowadays "trauma is just as likely to refer to emotional wounds."

With regards to te reo Māori trauma, as documented by Selby (1999), the trauma the kaumātua experienced as children is consistent with the first three definitions, that is an injury to living tissue caused by an extrinsic agent, such as getting the strap from a teacher or headmaster. A disordered psychic or behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury. Again, being severely physically punished could cause physical injury, emotional and, or mental distress, and emotional upset.

Psychology Today is the original and largest publishing enterprise that is exclusively dedicated to human behaviour and deals specifically with psychology and mental health. Their purpose is to provide "authoritative translational science writing, inviting individuals and luminaries in the field of psychology". They define trauma as:

a person's emotional response to a distressing experience. Few people can go through life without encountering some kind of trauma. Unlike ordinary hardships, traumatic events tend to be sudden and unpredictable, involve a serious threat to life—like bodily injury or death and feel beyond a person's control. Most importantly, events are traumatic to the degree that they undermine a person's sense of safety in the world and create a sense that catastrophe could strike at any time.

In addition to the physical, mental, and emotional injury the kaumātua experienced (Selby, 1999), what makes this punishment traumatic, as opposed to an appropriate form of discipline, is that it was sudden and unpredictable to a child that caused bodily injury and was completely out of their control. Don Solomon was one of the kaumātua interviewed by Selby for this book (1999, pp. 21- 30) He shared that he got whacked, just for speaking Māori. He was terrified of the teacher. His sense of safety was gone and he was afraid that he could be punished anytime, without warning.

Kraybill (2019) expands on the definition of trauma by stating that "trauma can be a one-time event, a prolonged event or a series of events". She goes on to say traumatic events or injuries "shocks and changes all systems." These include:

1. Cognitive: The trauma affects the ability to process thoughts and make good judgments

2. Emotional: Looping with emotions of shame, guilt, fear, anger, and pain

3. Physical: It affects muscles, joints, digestion and metabolism, temperature, sleep, immune system, etc.

4. Spiritual: The trauma affects our worldview, the lenses with which we see reality (typically so we see it as unsafe), our understanding and meaning of life, society, and the world

5. Social: The trauma affects relationships with spouses, family, friends, colleagues, and strangers (because it affects so many so deeply, it affects structures of societies).

Don Solomon (Selby, 1999, pp. 21 - 30) recalls seeking counselling to help him get over his fear of standing up and making a speech in te reo Māori. He was referred to a psychiatrist. In the end, the psychiatrist advised Don that he couldn't help and that Don just needed to "get up there and do it" (p. 27).

The cognitive, emotional, physical, spiritual, and social impacts of te reo Māori trauma impacted Don in a way that affected his cognitive and physical ability to speak te reo Māori. It affected the looping of his emotions of shame, guilt, fear, anger, and pain. It affected his spiritual connection to his identity, his Māori worldview, his reality of being Māori, his relationship with his whakapapa, and his ability to represent his iwi and whānau in social settings on the Marae. Don Solomon is not alone in his struggle, and there is a multitude of kaumātua who share Don's pain, and because there are so many Māori who experience te reo Māori trauma and live with the impacts of te reo Māori trauma, the social structuring of Māori society, community, whānau, and Marae is adversely affected.

Ryder and Lawrenz (2022) discuss intergenerational trauma and the biological impact of trauma on a person's genes, DNA, and the possibility of inheriting trauma through our genes. They go on to state:

biological mechanisms of how trauma can be passed down through generations are still under investigation, [and] some studies suggest that trauma may be passed through epigenetic mechanisms, which can impact DNA and gene function. Epigenetic changes can be influenced by environmental factors, such as stress, and can be inherited by offspring. … Moreover, trauma can impact the communicative abilities of individuals, both in terms of their willingness to speak and their ability to do so. Trauma can also be linked to particular forms of speech or language use associated with a perpetrator or the trau-

matizing situation, and these associations can trigger intrusions and flashbacks by which the traumatic event is relived. It is possible that these associations can be passed down through generations, impacting the linguistic repertoire of future generations.

Whilst the biological science of epigenetic transfer of trauma is still under investigation, what is important to note here, with regards to te reo Māori trauma, is the impact caused by trauma on a person's communicative abilities, both in their willingness to speak and their ability to do so. The trauma experienced by Don Solomon and many others is specifically linked to speech or language and associations with speech or language can trigger flashbacks. These associations can be and have been passed down through generations of Māori, impacting our linguistic repertoire. The discussion for intergenerational transmission of historical trauma is addressed in part four of this report.

In summary, trauma, specifically te reo Māori trauma, means that a person has experienced an event that caused an emotional, and or physical injury, resulting in cognitive, emotional, physical, spiritual, and social effects that *may* impact a person's communicative abilities in their willingness and/or ability to speak. It appears that this trauma can be passed down to generations genetically and/or by association to the traumatising situation.

Nowhere in the health literature does it say that trauma can impact a person's ability to speak *te reo Māori*, however, the important takeaway, is that trauma can impact a person's communicative abilities and capabilities

3

What is language trauma?

Auckland barrister and Māori Law Society member, Echo Haronga (Walters, 2019) was interviewed by Newsroom regarding the use of te reo Māori in the court. Haronga said,

"if her client understood te reo Māori, she used it in her submissions – at their instruction – and advised the Court in advance, with judges normally supportive." However, Haronga herself, had:

"conflicted feelings" about lawyers representing the Crown … "the historic oppressor of te reo Māori" [and] using the language to present their case, when much of the criminal justice system worked against Māori, many of whom could not speak their language.

She goes on to state:

There's an issue of language trauma. Historical and present-day factors, which have worked to dispossess Māori of their reo, are the same factors that contribute to the overrepresentation of Māori in the criminal justice system. … Most Māori that I've ever come across who've been disconnected from their language, they feel it as a lack, and like a kind of heart sickness.

How Haronga uses the term "language trauma" in this context is consistent with the way language trauma is referred to in many multi-media platforms, see Morrison (2018), Newshub (2022, July 25), Katipa (2022), McRoberts (2023). See also Appendix 1 for a comprehensive collection of data and references from multimedia platforms.

Kajun Brooking posted a polarizing meme on social media to express his experience of feeling diminished because he couldn't speak Māori. This sparked an online debate that made its way to the Newshub room where Mihingārangi Forbes interviewed him, alongside prominent te reo Māori leaders and advocates. In that interview, Kajun politely called for Māori language speakers to take it easy on Māori who are not fluent in te reo Māori. Psychology expert, Kiri Waititi (Newshub, 2022) intoned that bringing

compassion to those without te reo can support their healing from language trauma. Language trauma was also discussed in the documentary, *Speak No Māori*, Directed by Katipa and released during the 50th celebrations of Te Petihana Reo Māori in 2022, and *Kia Ora, Good Evening* (2023) where Mike McRoberts documented his te reo Māori journey.

This use of the term 'language trauma' in the context of te reo Māori infers te reo Māori trauma and presumes an understanding that people know what is meant by language trauma. This presumption is likely not helpful in bringing awareness, understanding, and compassion to people dealing with language trauma when we are not explicit in our definition of language trauma.

Oxford University Press released a special issue of the journal Applied linguistics, title "Language and Trauma." The purpose of releasing this special issue was to "present work in applied linguistics which uses the tools of linguistic analysis to address the question of language in the experience of, recounting of, and possible recovery from psychological trauma, in personal, literary, and institutional contexts" (Busch & Mcnamara, 2020). They concur that "while the term trauma was originally largely confined to medicine and psychotherapy, it has recently found its way into everyday language, where it is often used, semantically overstretched, for any form of painful or frustrating experience". It is accurate that language trauma has found its way into everyday language here in Aotearoa, particularly in reference to te reo Māori. Within the current use of language trauma in everyday language, it is difficult to distinguish any form of painful experience, from pure frustration. When Kajun Brooking was interviewed about his experience that led to his meme, he did not *seem* to be in any pain, and it *seems* that his meme was posted out of frustration. This *seeming*, however, is merely an observation, and is based on the observer's opinions, rather than any real facts. This is important to note, as it points to an ambiguous understanding of te reo Māori trauma, leading to a semantically overstretched use of the phrase. Another important thing to note, with regards to reo Māori trauma, is that the experience between:

threatening situation factors and individual coping possibilities … accompanied by feelings of helplessness and defenceless abandonment … causes an ongoing disruption of one's understanding of the self and the world". (Fischer & Riedesser, 1998, p.84 cited and translated by Busch * Mcnamara, 2020).

The statement *causes an ongoing disruption of one's understanding of the self and world* is critical, because this type of trauma, as demonstrated by the kaumātua stories recorded by Selby (1999), indicates a clear correlation between the traumatic event and the feelings of helplessness and defencelessness causing a disruption to their understanding of themselves, as Māori, and their connection

to the Māori world.

Zepf (2001, 346) points out that "it is not the event that is the pivotal point, but the way in which it is experienced and processed. The definition of an event as having a traumatic effect is always retrospective. It can only be made from the experience into which it leads. (cited in Busch & Mcnamara, 2020).

Thus, while the event is impactful, the emotional response and the enduring impacts of the experience of trauma imprinted on an individual is critical. Van der Kolk (2014, 21) points out that:

We have learned that trauma is not just an event that took place sometime in the past; it is also the imprint left by that experience on mind, brain, and body. This imprint has ongoing consequences for how the human organism manages to survive in the present. Trauma results in a fundamental reorganization of the way mind and brain manage perceptions. It changes not only how we think and what we think about, but also our very capacity to think.

The fundamental reorganisation of the way the mind and brain manage perceptions is important, as this is a likely source of the fundamental shift and reorientation away from the use of te reo Māori, and perceptions devaluing te reo Māori.

It must be noted that language trauma is a result of

human action (rather than natural disasters) … [and] the emotionally and bodily lived experience of language (Busch 2017) is, through the persons involved in the traumatizing scene, always present in one form or another … . The interconnection of the experience of trauma and the role of language within this is not causal and mono-directional but complex and multilayered. Not only can language be part or cause of traumatic events but trauma can also, as a consequence, severely impact on a person's linguistic repertoire: on his or her inclination to learn languages, to use, retain, or abandon a particular language, or to take refuge in silence (Betten 2010, Thüne 2013, Busch 2016a, cited in Busch & Mcnamara, 2020).

This is perhaps the most critical aspect to understand about language trauma. Not only can language be a part or cause of traumatic events but trauma can also, as a consequence, severely impact on a person's inclination to learn, use, retain, or abandon a particular language, or to take refuge in silence. Again, anecdotal stories from kaumātua and people who have experience language trauma demonstrate the way in which the traumatic experience imprinted on our kaumātua has severely impacted their ability and, or, willingness to learn, speak, and retain te reo Māori. It has in turn, resulted in their abandonment of te reo Māori and take refuge in silence within te reo Māori contexts and domains. However, it does not

necessarily mean they take refuge in silence everywhere. The use of language, and a person's willingness to speak, connect, and communicate in English, is an indication that their traumatic experience regarding language extends to speech, or cognitive communicative abilities, only to te reo Māori.

When the kaumātua sat with Rachel Selby to tell their stories, they were able to do so fluently in English. Thus, their trauma may not necessarily be related to language in general, or to a cognitive communicative inability to speak. The traumatic experience imprinted on these kaumātua, and perhaps their uri, by association, is specifically related to the acquisition, use, and retention of te reo Māori.

It is for this reason, that I suggest, the term te reo Māori trauma or Māori language trauma be used specifically when discussing traumatic experiences that have imprinted on people causing them to abandon te reo Māori.

The concept of language trauma by association is another interesting point. As stated earlier in the report, trauma can be transmitted inter-generationally, and this will also be discussed briefly in the next part regarding historical trauma. Te reo Māori trauma, by association, at this point in time, requires more attention. However, for the purpose of this report, we will say that te reo Māori trauma by association, refers to a person who did not necessarily experience a traumatic event directly caused by direct bodily injury, mental, emotional, or spiritual distress, but rather the distress imprinted on their grandparents, parents, whānau, or even culture, has impacted their willingness and or ability to learn, speak, and retain te reo Māori.

4

What is historical trauma?

It is challenging to separate historical trauma from te reo Māori trauma, because they are so inextricably connected in our experience of colonisation, and racial oppression. However, for the purpose of this report, it is important that we do separate and distinguish te reo Māori from historical trauma. As evidenced in conversations and experiences reported in literature and multi-media platforms, this trauma is not isolated to the past, but is currently being perpetuated to this day.

Recently, there has been much political discussion regarding the Māori names given to government departments, and the Māori signage on our roads and highways. Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters is very vocal on his disapproval of prioritising the use of te reo Māori names for government departments, and the use of te reo Māori in mainstream media. He labelled the te reo Māori names for government departments as tokenism and stated that the New Zealand First and National Coalition agreement, requires that the government departments "have their primary name in English, except for those specifically related to Māori" (Franks, 2023). The agreement also requires "public service departments and Crown Entities... communicate primarily in English" (*ibid*).

The Deputy Prime Minster (Franks, 2023) went on to say that:

If 95 percent don't understand or comprehend what they're reading, then what was the purpose of that change? … If it's not giving Māori operations and speed in times in hospitals, what was its purpose? How's that to have a bunch of bureaucrats in Wellington with woke purposes trampling over the essential needs and common-sense solutions for ordinary people in this country regardless of their race or gender?

The reason for highlighting the Deputy Prime Ministers statement, is not to condone or condemn his stand, but rather to point out that the abandonment of te reo Māori, and the unwillingness to learn, use, or retain te reo Māori, is not a historical issue, but a contemporary one rooted in our history. These statements made by our Deputy Prime Minister is a continuation of the inherited prejudice brought to Aotearoa by Captain Cook in 1769. Therefore, the experience of te reo Māori trauma, is not isolated to the past, but is continuing now in our present.

So what is historical trauma?

Based on a review of literature conducted by Sotero (2006, p. 94) there are at least four distinct assumptions that underpin historical trauma theory:

(1) mass trauma is deliberately and systematically inflicted upon a target population by a subjugating, dominant population;

(2) trauma is not limited to a single catastrophic event, but continues over an extended period of time;

(3) traumatic events reverberate throughout the population, creating a universal experience of trauma; and

(4) the magnitude of the trauma experience derails the population from its natural, projected historical course resulting in a legacy of physical, psychological, social and economic disparities that persists across generations.

Included in this report is a timeline of historical events that have specifically impacted on the survival of te reo Māori (See appendix 2: Timeline of key events in the history of te reo Māori). This timeline begins with the settlement of Aotearoa by te iwi Māori and the arrival of Captain James Cook, and ends with events in 2023. It is a comprehensive, though not definitive list of events. This timeline outlines historical events that could cause mass trauma deliberately and systematically inflicted on te iwi Māori by the dominant Pākehā population. As is also evident in this timeline, there is no single catastrophic event, but a series of events that continue to this day. It is possible to say that these events have reverberated throughout the population, creating a universal experience of trauma for te iwi Māori, and that this trauma has derailed the Māori people from our natural, projected historical course, resulting in a legacy of physical, psychological, social and economic disparities that persist across generations. It is also important to note, that while te iwi Māori have a universal experience of trauma, we don't have a universal emotional response to this historical trauma. The timeline of events, also highlights significant historical events that demonstrate our collective resilience to mass trauma, and the stand that we have taken to not lose or abandon our language. Whilst we have, as a people, experienced mass trauma, we have not, as a people, completely succumbed to this trauma. We are, however, continuing to live with the impacts of historical trauma every day, and are continuing to create strategies to reorient ourselves towards our natural projected course of being a healthy, prosperous, and empowered people.

The stand that Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters (Franks, 2023) has taken, regarding the use of te reo Māori government department names, and the regular use of te reo Māori in the media, is not all that surprising, if we take into account all the historical

events that have taken place to oppress te reo Māori. These historical events have shaped the attitudes of New Zealanders about te reo Māori, reinforcing an inherited prejudice that orientate behaviours and attitudes in favour of English. Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters is not alone in his attitudes. He has voiced, what many New Zealanders think and feel, and their attitudes and behaviours are a by-product of our collective past.

The following definitions of historical trauma point to the inter-generational transmission of trauma and the far reaching impacts of historical trauma on people, communities, and populations.

Braveheart (cited in Sotero, 2006, p. 96) defined historical trauma as the cumulative and collective psychological and emotional injury sustained over a lifetime and across generations resulting from massive group trauma experiences." Faimon (cited in Soteroa, 2006, p. 96) described historical trauma experienced by the (American Indian) Dakota nation as an "indescribable terror and the legacy of terror that remains a er 140 years, as evidenced by repression, dissociation, denial, alcoholism, depression, doubt, helplessness and devaluation of self and culture." Faiman (ibid) also speaks of "inter-generational legacy of shame, guilt, and distrust embedded in collective memory and passed down through seven generations" (cited in Sotero, 2006, p.96). The Aboriginal Healing Foundation describes historical trauma as:

a cluster of traumatic events and as a disease itself. The symptoms of historical trauma as a disease are the maladaptive social and behavioral patterns that were created in response to the trauma experience, absorbed into the culture and transmitted as learned behavior from generation to generation."(cited in Sotero, 2006, p.96)

The process of assimilation was entangled in what Atkinson (2013) described as psycho- social domination, stating that "Aboriginal people would call this the greatest violence, the violence that brings the loss of spirit, the destruction of self, of the soul" (p. 69). Witihana and Smith (2014) state that "Psycho-social domination was achieved using strategies such as land purchase, warfare, land confiscation, legislation, religion, and the imposition of non-Māori cultural and social practices" (cited in Anderson et al., 2006. p. 1777).

Cheryl Smith and the research produced by Te Atawhai o Te Ao are leaders in the discussion of historical trauma relating to te iwi Māori. She discussed:

methods of sustaining well-being within the Māori community were presupposed on the basis of knowledge sustained within whānau, hapū, and iwi contexts [through] using whakapapa kōrero. Whakapapa kōrero were the foundations upon which Māori knowledge

was developed and transmitted as 'narratives about the relationships of local families with their environment and other peoples'. These whakapapa kōrero include accounts of creation and how all things came into being (Smith, 2005, p. 4).

Edwards (2009, p.i) described whakapapa knowledge as "the unbounded collection of theory, observation and experience seen through Māori eyes" (cited in Wirihana & Smith, 2014, p. 202). Wirihana (2012) goes on to say "these narratives were bodies of knowledge which espoused original tribal teachings and were maintained using the intergenerational transmission of oral knowledge across generations. (cited in Wirihana & Smith, 2014). Wirihana and Smith comment that the "knowledge articulated the methods Māori used to nurture their relationships, interact with their environments, and operate as a community" (2014, p. 202). Operating as a community, is at the centre of Māori values and attitudes, and the disruption caused by historical, and impact of language trauma, as highlighted by Kraybil (2019) whereby trauma affects "structures of society", can deeply impact a persons' orientation and attitude towards te reo Māori.

Whakapapa kōrero, narratives, and the transmission of oral knowledge, in te reo Māori, was the natural course and projection of our people and the education of generations. Historical trauma has disrupted this natural course, whereby not only is English the predominant language being spoken by te iwi Māori, in 2024, we are now needing to justify the natural use of te reo Māori in mainstream media, in government departments and public services to combat the values and attitudes within New Zealand society demonstrated by our Deputy Prime Minister.

Awanui Te Huia, in her book *He reo tuku iho* discusses in detail the impacts of historical trauma on language acquisition, stating that the struggles te iwi Māori face when learning te reo Māori "requires an appreciation of historical, political and social contexts" (2022, p. 98).

We are now in a political era where prominent leaders with Māori heritage, such as our Deputy Prime Minister, is proclaiming reorienting government departments, public services and mainstream media away from te reo Māori towards English. This inherited prejudice imbedded in our political context perpetuates negative impacts of historical trauma on language acquisition, not just for te iwi Māori, but for all people of Aotearoa. Winston Peters (Franks, 2023) stated that "95% of New Zealanders do not understand te reo Māori". Firstly, the accuracy of this number requires further examination of the 2023 census data, which is due to be released in May 2024. However, the fact that the majority of New Zealanders are not speakers of te reo Māori, points to an abandonment of te reo Māori, or the inability and, or unwillingness to learn te reo Māori is a byproduct of our collective past. The natural projection of te reo Māori was disrupted by historical events, and these historical events have shaped the attitudes of perhaps 95% of our population. Having said this, it would be inaccurate to assume that 95% of New Zealanders experience te reo Māori trauma. It is also inappropriate to label anyone with te reo Māori trauma because they are not oriented towards learning or speaking te reo Māori. What we are pointing to here, is that our collective history has impacted on the consciousness of a large proportion of our population affecting their willingness to learn and speak te reo Māori. And the intergenerational transmission of the values, attitudes and behaviours of these collective consciousness leads a large proportion of our population towards abandoning te reo Māori.

Thus, historical trauma and historical events leading to the current status of te reo Māori the values, attitudes, and behaviours regarding te reo Māori is not isolated to the past. It is clear that historical trauma has all areas of our lives and contexts and historical trauma theory is seen as the source of disparities and inequities of Māori health and wellbeing, education, incarceration, poverty, and overall disempowerment. However, historical trauma theory covers te reo Māori in relation to the way it affects our identity, our connection to whakapapa, to kōrero whakapapa, to our education, and to our overall sense of belonging. For this reason, it is important to distinguish between historical trauma and te reo Māori trauma or Māori language trauma in a way that enables us to specify particular barriers to learning, speaking, and retaining te reo Māori.

5

What is te reo Māori trauma?

For the purpose of this report, we have created a working definition of te reo Māori trauma, or Māori language trauma, that is:

Te reo Māori trauma, or Māori language trauma refers to a person's *emotional, psychological, spiritual distress, and/or physical injury caused by harmful events or by association to harmful events*, which directly impacts their ability and/or willingness to learn and/or speak te reo Māori.

Based on the literature, trauma is often caused by emotional, psychological, spiritual distress, and, or physical injury caused by harmful events. Harmful events are not limited to, or restricted to a onetime event involving a one off abuse. But these events could also occur over a period of time that affects a person's sense of safety, of health, and of wellbeing. By extension, a person does not necessarily have to experience physical injury, psychological, spiritual or emotional distress directly. They can, through inter-generational transmission, associate te reo Māori with physical injury, or emotional, psychological, and spiritual distress. The direct experience of harmful events, or the association of te reo Māori with harmful events, can in effect, cause a person to experience te reo Māori trauma. We have reframed the 5 types of trauma as outlined by Kraybill (2019) to relate specifically to te reo Māori as starting point:

1. Cognitive ability to process thoughts and make good judgments with specific reference to reo Māori;

2. Emotional looping, that is the looping emotions of shame, guilt, fear, anger, and pain relating to te reo Māori;

3. Physical health impacted by traumatic events that affects muscles, joints, digestion and metabolism, temperature, sleep, immune system, etc.

4. Spiritual connection that affects our worldview, the lenses with which we see reality (typically so we see it as unsafe), our understanding and meaning of life, society, and the world.
5. Social relationships with spouses, family, friends, colleagues, and strangers (because it affects so many so deeply, it affects structures of societies).

Once again, this is a starting point, a place from which we can launch further investigation into the cognitive, emotional, physical, spiritual and social impacts of te reo Māori trauma affecting people. There is no quantitative data that links te reo Māori trauma to the physical health of our muscles, joints, digestion and metabolism, temperature, sleep, immune system. However, if this physical health is linked to trauma, it is fair to say that it could also be linked te reo Māori trauma. This is worthy of further research, study, and qualitative data collection.

We want to reiterate, that this definition is **not a diagnosis**, and it would be inappropriate to diagnose people with te reo Māori trauma. Furthermore, it would be inappropriate to assume that anyone who struggles with learning or speaking te reo Māori is experiencing te reo Māori trauma. The purpose of providing this working definition is to be clear about what we are talking about when we are discussing te reo Māori or Māori language trauma. By being clear and specific about what te reo Māori trauma is, we can then start to identify and understand barriers caused by this specific type of trauma for the purpose of creating effective strategies to overcome, or better yet, disappear such barriers. The disappearance of such barriers will hopefully leave people unconstrained, unburdened, healthy, confident and free to learn, retain, and speak te reo Māori anytime, anywhere, with anyone.

Che Wilson of Ngāti Rangi-Whanganui, Tūwharetoa, Mōkai Pātea, Ngāti Apa, and Ngā Rauru delivered online discussions about marae trauma and reo trauma in 2022. He is one of many unique individuals who has experienced reo trauma and has found his own way of overcoming it. In his discussions, he shared about his own experience growing up without te reo Māori and the reo trauma that he experienced in his youth. He didn't define reo trauma, or marae trauma, but he did share his own experiences of exclusion from te reo Māori conversations. He also discussed experiences (not necessarily personal experiences) on the Marae that has caused marae trauma. What was interesting about his comments, is that he referred to the way in which people associate a traumatic event in association with the reo and the Marae. As stated previously in part two about language trauma, association is important. However, the association Che discussed, was association with reo and with place, and not association with people. When he talked about marae trauma, he discussed the reason why people might not want to return to the marae, is that they were punished, scolded, had an argument, or witnessed all of the above at the marae. They did not associate the distress this caused, with the person or people, but rather, they associated it with the place. When he discussed reo trauma, he talked about growing up with te reo Māori as a "secret language" used only by the adults. Those who did not speak te reo Māori were deliberately excluded from these conversations. Che Wilson, in his youth associated te reo Māori as a "secret language". However,

rather than resenting being 'excluded' by a secret language, it awoke in him a curiosity that empowered him to learn. Che is not alone in his experience of growing up hearing a "secret language". Many pakeke have anecdotal stories about their pakeke speaking Māori only to themselves, then speaking English to the next generation. What stands out in Che's kōrero, is his 'emotional response' to this secret language. Rather than orientating himself away from te reo Māori and abandoning it, his curiosity inspired him to learn and speak.

Based on the working definition of te reo Māori trauma presented in this report, Che is not someone who has been impacted long term by te reo Māori trauma. He did not explicitly state that he was physically injured, or experienced emotional, psychological, and spiritual distress as a result of hearing this secret language being spoken, but he still does assert that he has experienced reo trauma. And just because Che's experience does not fit the definition, does not mean he did not experience te reo Māori trauma[1]. It could mean that this definition requires further inquiry and refining. Once again, te reo Māori trauma is not a diagnosis, and it is not up to any one observer to determine the nature of another person's experience.

In her research, Manawa Ū ki te reo, Awanui Te Huia (2019) conducted a national study which surveyed motivations for learning and speaking te reo Māori, and barriers people faced. Some of her participants, shared how the adults would speak Māori around them, but never to them. This coincides with what Che Wilson called a 'secret language'. However, in the Manawa Ū ki te reo project, the participants discussed the way in which their parents and grandparents deliberately withheld te reo Māori from them, as way of orienting them towards English because that is what they needed to survive in the Pākehā world. It is fair to say, this was a completely logical decision. In all likelihood, the elders of the time, did not envision the long term impact of the disruption to te reo Māori transmission. This type of transmission, that is, withholding te reo Māori from the next generation, has possibly caused an associative type of trauma, where the next generation carries pain and suffering of their pakeke and tupuna.

Again, based on the working definition of te reo Māori trauma, some of the people that Awanui Te Huia surveyed, experienced te reo Māori trauma, as they learnt to associate te reo Māori with events that caused their parents or grandparents' harm. This association, in itself, created a barrier to their learning and speaking of te reo Māori.

[1] Discussions, conversations, theories about marae trauma is worthy of further research, and is possibly linked to te reo Māori trauma. However, particular research relating to Marae trauma is outside the scope of this particular study. It may however, of particular relevance to iwi, hapū, Marae, and whānau communities to investigate this kaupapa further.

Higgins and Rewi in their research of the ZePA model (2014, pp. 7-32) focused on right-shifting attitudes and values relating to te reo Māori, leading to the reorientation towards normalising te reo Māori. They outline seven values that "regulate the attitudes people have towards te reo Māori" (2014, p. 7). These values are:

- Intrinsic value
- Educational value
- Social value
- Intellectual value
- Spiritual value
- Monetary value (ibid)

They propose that "as a consequence of one's relative orientation towards or away from these values, one's perception, attitude and use of the Māori language is simultaneously oriented in the same direction" (Higgins & Rewi, 2014, pp. 7- 8).

As a result of the historical experience of being physically punished for speaking te reo Māori, parents and grandparents oriented themselves away from these values, and their perception, attitude and use of te reo Māori simultaneously oriented in the same direction. It is clear by the responses of the participants in the *Manawa Ū ki te reo* project, that their kaumātua, and parents experienced te reo Māori trauma, and by association, grew up following their orientation towards English and the Pākehā world. Again, this orientation, in itself, is a barrier to learning and speaking te reo Māori. The disruption to the intergenerational transmission of te reo Māori is linked to the catastrophic nature of historical trauma and its long lasting impacts.

It is possible that te reo Māori trauma is barrier preventing a person's willingness to reorientate themselves to the values outlined by Higgins and Rewi. In order to reorient te iwi Māori towards valuing te reo Māori, perhaps we need to understand reo trauma as a barrier in itself, and the impacts of reo trauma on the current orientation of peoples values.

Final comments

I want to end this report with a statement written by Timoti Karetu in his chapter *Te Niho o Te Ture Reo Māori* (2014, p. 85):

Kupa hipa nei te rua tekau mā whitu tau mai i te whakamanatanga o te reo Māori, he aha te aha? … Ki a au nei, ahakoa te ture me ōna āhuatanga katoa, kei te āhua ora tonu te reo Māori, otirā tōna ora nei. Āe, he kokenga ōna, engari ko taku titiro ki te ao Māori on nāianei ahakoa te whakamanatanga o te reo e te ture kāore anō kia paku rerekē ake te tahuri mai o te ao Māori ki tōna reo - koirā kē te mea nui katoa.

As Timoti Karetu points out, despite the progress we have made with regards to te reo Māori, and te reo Māori being recognised by the law as an official language of New Zealand, te iwi Māori are still reluctant to learn. The reorientation of our values that regulate our attitudes towards te reo Māori is critical *kia tahuri mai te ao Māori ki tōna reo.*

Furthermore, the relationship with te reo Māori trauma and health and wellbeing is critical. When thinking about Mason Durie's Whare Tapawhā model (1998), te reo Māori trauma affects taha tinana, taha wairua, taha whānau, taha hinengaro as a whole. The degree to which taha tinana, taha wairua, taha whānau, and taha hinengaro recquires further research and data collection. However, based on the literature review defining trauma, language trauma, and historical, te reo Māori trauma affects each side of the whare tapawhā Māori health model. Furthermore, based on the interviews conducted by Rachel Selby (1999) and 10 years later, by Awanui Te Huia (2019 & 2022), the stories all point to a missing in the lives of their participants, leaving them feeling less than whole and complete. This could be likened to the absence of walls, or holes in the current wall of a metaphorical whare the represents the foundation of their oranga.

In conclusion, this report is oriented towards one goal, that is to bring clarity to what is meant by te reo Māori trauma and providing a working towards defining te reo Māori trauma. The lack of clarity around te reo Māori trauma is, in itself a barrier, shrouded in mist of ambiguity, and collapsing it with historical trauma and language trauma. Again, the importance of clarifying and providing a working

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definition of te reo Māori trauma, is not to provide a diagnosis for people struggling to learn and speak te reo Māori, nor is it a tool to be used as way of labelling someone with some kind of disease. The point is to clarify it, to further understand and identify the barriers caused by this specific type of trauma in order to create effective strategies that will overcome, or better yet, disappear such barriers. As Moana Waitoki (2022 & 2024), before we find a way to heal, we must first understand the barriers that get in the way of healing. Healing from te reo Māori trauma is critical in achieving the audacious goals as set out in *Te Reo Mauriora* and restoring the vitality of te reo Māori. Just as importantly, this healing is critical in ensuring the vitality of te iwi Māori as a nation of people whose experience of life is unconstrained, unburdened and powerful, and whose confidence in their own sense of belonging leaves them free to learn, to retain, and to speak te reo Māori anytime, anywhere, with anyone.

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