

Whāia te Manaaki: manaakitanga and hauora for Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai

Video #3 themes explored:

- Role modelling good behaviour
- Sharing your skills

Tēnā koutou e te whānau

Kiri here coming to you again with ideas, the whakaaro shared by our people of Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai last year when we undertook some iwi research exploring manaakitanga.

This is the third video in a series, looking at the different themes that emerged from the research findings.

I've talked about the concept of manaakitanga being behaviour that acknowledges the mana of others as having equal or greater importance than one's own, and that manaakitanga elevates the status of all.

Today I want to discuss two concepts - the idea of role modelling and also sharing your skills as an expression of manaaki. And before we move onto that, I'll share an example from a whanaunga about what manaakitanga means to him.

He described manaakitanga as having two branches. He talked about the importance for him to be connected to his Marae, and that his tamariki, his children having that connection. He described how he actively maintains that connection and recognised that not everyone may feel comfortable or confident to be on their Marae. So, his first branch of manaakitanga is about extending a hand, offering support and awahi to those of us who whakapapa to our iwi but may be whakamā or shy about coming back. Our whanaunga is making a suggestion that in order to manaaki others, we need to be connected to our Marae and recognise it as a part of us. The second branch of manaakitanga was again related to the Marae and was about finding out what our ahi kaa need – that's our people who have remained local to keep the homes fires burning, finding out what support they need, and then facilitating ways to meet their needs.

These examples relate to actions and the active expression of manaakitanga.

I mentioned the idea of role modelling, and when we think of this idea, it can be about how our actions are observed and perceived by others. It's also about noticing how other people, particularly those we admire, conduct themselves. With a focus on the positive aspects of role modelling, many of our whānau express that this is an important concept relating to manaaki, not only on the Marae but in all of the things we do, how we live our lives and who we connect with.

One whanaunga spoke of his gratitude and his aroha to his parents, for the mahi they do and how their leadership has contributed to the Kāpiti community. He said growing up he didn't recognise it, but now that he's an adult he's proud of the mahi his parents have done.

In recognition of this awesome role modelling, he and his whānau spend time with his whānau on a regular basis. In fact it's something he's prioritised in their lives.

Our whanaunga describes this:

..we go up to Ōtaki every Friday, I get the workers train from the city and my wife takes our tamariki up there in the car, earlier to beat the traffic and I meet them up there and we have a kai with Mum and Dad and whoever is there. Aunty is often there depending on the time of the year. My sister sometimes comes along, sometimes we'll stay the night, go and see Grandad the next day. So we do that every Friday..

We had a kōrero about the realisation that if we see people from our own whānau achieving cool things, it resonates with us and we then realise, actually I can do those things too. We shouldn't underestimate the influence we have on others. Which is probably all the more reason we should be checking our own behaviour!

This leads me to a conversation I've had alot through the years and it came up a number of times throughout the research also, about the kūmara not singing of its own sweetness. You know the whakautī, the proverb that I'm referring to – *Kāore te kūmara e kōrero mō tōna ake reka*. We know that having humility is a trait that Māori give high regard to. One shouldn't be too boastful of their actions. Some believe that the whakatauki represents manaakitanga, that practising humility means putting others before yourself.

So it can be tricky when one doesn't want to put their hand up and say, "hey I'm pretty good at that, I reckon I can share that skill of mine to help others". There's a fear that we'll be the tall poppy and may get knocked down, we're not being humble. Some of the whānau we interviewed felt that this is exactly a time when we should show manaaki to others by not judging, and embracing any of our whānau who put themselves out there to awahi others.

There are a number of ways in which we can be active role models without feeling like we are singing of our sweetness. If we recognise that we have a particular skill that will benefit a project, we should be sharing it. Many believe it's our collective responsibility to step up and by doing so we encourage others to come on board.

Our whanaunga talks of knowledge transfer to whakamana others, share what you know so others can shine. He said that doing this sort of mahi makes you feel good, it's not just about helping others and being altruistic or noble, there's benefit for you and that links directly to your wellbeing.

Another whanaunga gives this example of role modelling on the Marae:

So, you know, if you got raru going on in your whānau, it's quite nice to come on to the Marae and see good models, working models happening and I reckon that stuff in itself, modelling that and watching that is healing and you go back to your whānau and you've kind of got your world right again you know?

Quite a few of the whānau we interviewed talked about keeping connected with comms and what's happening in and around the rohe of Kāpiti. One said that manaakitanga is receiving a message from cousin Kristie in the office saying "hey, this thing is happening, like you guys should come along". He said we need to keep doing this, to keep reaching out to our own people because we're not all in the same place, and six years ago I may not have thought to do something positive on the Marae.

Of course we don't have to look back far to remember the deeds of our tīpuna and the goodwill and manaaki that they expressed for their whānau and their iwi. Those leaders of ours were advocating long before we came along for their people to care for each other to think collectively. As one whanaunga said during the research, "there's no place for individuality amongst iwi. It's never been a place for one or two people to rise above others. We're better to work together, to whakamana others and achieve goals collaboratively".

That's a great note to end this kōrero on whānau. I hope you've enjoyed hearing these examples of role modelling good behaviour and sharing our skills with others.

I look forward to sharing more in the near future.

Hei kōna, mauri ora.