

**Arā ko ngā kupu tuku iho o te Ahi Kaa He hononga whenua, he hononga wai, he hononga tangata  
/ Those who keep the home fires hold the knowledge connections between the land, the waters  
and the people.**

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The learning, teaching, practice and retention of Ngāti Pikiao cultural knowledge (mātauranga) is fundamental to cultural continuance and, in turn, to the personal and collective health, wellbeing, and existence of Ngāti Pikiao people. In times past, intergenerational passing down of cultural knowledge (mātauranga) and cultural values, occurred naturally through 'taura here'. That is, through the raising of mokopuna by their tūpuna as first teachers. The process of 'taura here' (maintenance of ancestral ties and connections) involved active intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values (mātauranga); it was a natural and deliberate process that was enabled through papakāinga living - where intergenerational communal living on whenua tūpuna was the norm and everyday life, and living, was the main site of education and schooling. In this context, the notion of kaitiakitanga was also lived and enacted through the web of obligations that the people had to te ira Rarohenga - the underworld, te ira Atua - the overworld and te ira Tangata, the mortal world - they inhabited. This presentation shares 'kupu tuku iho' (wise words and stories on life and living) from Ngāti Pikiao Kōeke (tribal elders) in the '*Kōeke a kō ake nei - towards intergenerational positive aging for Ngāti Pikiao people*' research project. The research is funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand and hosted by the Ngāti Pikiao Iwi Trust in collaboration with Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology, Rotorua. The presentation illuminates the ways in which Ngāti Pikiao kōeke express and live kaitiakitanga through their everyday kuia, koroua and tribal elder (kōeke) roles. The presentation is a demonstration of how the higher learning abilities, and intellectual wisdom of our Kōeke has developed, grown and endured despite an imposed colonial education system that censured, debased and all but eradicated their first language, culture and ways of being and knowing. Despite spending their prime years in the sawmills, dairy factories and building our roads and dams, the extant and innate capacity of our Kōeke to guide, lead, serve and care for our people, our lands and our waterways has never left them. Now our Cultural Ambassadors, Iwi Governors and the Ahi Kaa, their kupu tuku iho are a demonstration of lifelong learning and lived, 'interdisciplinary' kaitiakitanga in action. In turn, the research project, process and the stories that have been told, recorded and written, are a contemporary means by which to ensure that intergenerational transmission of mātauranga, and holistic expressions of kaitiakitanga, continue.