

WHANAUNGATANGA

Te whānau, te hapū, te iwi and te waka are underpinned by a set of kinship rights and obligations which together serve to strengthen each member as well as the family and wider groupings. From this develops a strong sense of belonging, which is referred to as whanaungatanga.

Te whānau was the basic unit of Māori society. It consisted of a household of up to 30 people or more, and comprised three or four generations at any one time. It lived together under the direction and guidance of kaumātua and kuia. This was the family into which a person was born and socialized. As the fundamental social unit, it was food producing, residential and land-holding. The whānau held all its houses, tools and effects in common, but other things such as fishing nets were shared within the hapū. Te whānau had its own internal authority structure and was the group in which the basis day-to-day decisions were made. (Henare)

Individuals expect to be supported by their relatives near and distant, but the collective group also expects the support and help of its individuals. Many tikanga prescribe ways of restoring a balance in relationships because it is recognized that relationships are fragile and need to be nurtured. An associated principle is that of kanohi kitea, a face seen, indicating that kin members need to be seen and the bonds of whanaungatanga kept strong.

The whole essence of whanaungatanga (of belonging to whānau) is a deeply in-grained concept. This desire or necessity to unite individuals with one another and strengthen the kinship ties is a basic cultural value. While whanaungatanga embraces whakapapa, it focuses on relationships. Thus, it reaches beyond actual whakapapa relationships and includes relationships to non-kin persons who become like kin through shared experiences. Although a high value is placed upon whanaungatanga and its obligations, the ideal is difficult to achieve. (Mead)

▲ Think about relationships in some groups at Manukau City Council in which you are a member and compare:

Group *Are relationships in that group similar or different to concept of whanaungatanga? How? Why?*

1.

2.

3.

▲ how important is it for you to feel a strong sense of belonging to each? Does that importance vary in relation to the type/size of the group?

▲ How is the concept of whanaungatanga the same/different from membership in groups at the MCC?

Henare, Manuka (1988) in 'Nga Tikenga Me Nga Ritenga O Te Ao Maori: Standards and Foundations of Maori Society' in *The April Report: Future Directions, Volume III, Part One, Associated Papers*. Wellington: Royal Commission on Social Policy, pp 11-14.

Mead, H.M. (2003) *Tikanga Maori: Living by Maori Values*. Wellington: Huia



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