

Cook Islands Māori

Background

The Cook Islands is a self-governing country in free association with New Zealand. The Cook Islands was a dependent territory of New Zealand Aotearoa in 1901. In 1965 it adopted a constitution that changed its status from dependent to self-governing in free association with Aotearoa. This allows people in the Cook Islands to hold dual citizenship there and in Aotearoa¹. In 2016, the population of the Cook Islands was 11,700².

Cook Islands Māori are part of the Polynesian group. The country is made up of fifteen islands and has eight dialects. Rarotongan is considered to be the main dialect and is the language used in Cook Islands legislation, the education curriculum, and the Bible³. Different dialects are used in Rarotonga, Mangaia, Aitutaki, Penrhyn and Palmerston. A shared dialect is used in Atiu, Mauke and Mitiaro, another in Manihiki and Rakahanga, and another in Pukapuka and Nassau⁴.

Cook Islands Māori in Aotearoa

Cook Islands Māori (nfd)	2001	2006	2013
	51,483	56,895	61,077
Rarotonga	-	-	792
Total			61,839

The majority (93.1%, 57,588) live in the North Island, and a small percentage (6.9%, 4,251) live in the South Island. Most (86.5%, 53,487) live in urban areas. Significant numbers are in Auckland (59.5%, 36,810), Wellington (11.5%, 7,113), and the Waikato (7.8%, 4,839) regions. The majority of those in the Auckland region are concentrated in Mangere-Otahuhu (20.0%), Otara-Papatoetoe (19.9%), and Manurewa (14.0%)⁵. Only 22.6% (13,764 people) of Cook Islands Māori in Aotearoa in 2013 were born overseas⁶.

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (N.Z.). (n.d). *Cook Islands*. Retrieved 10/3/2015 from <http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Countries/Pacific/Cook-Islands.php>

² Ministry of Finance and Economic Management Government of The Cook Islands. http://www.mfem.gov.ck/images/documents/Statistics_Docs/2.Social/Population_Estimates__Vital_Statistics/2016/BDM_Statistics_Report_201603.pdf

³ Timena Kiria. Oranga Tamariki practitioner and cultural advisor. Personal communication 16/6/2015.

⁴ Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service. (1998). *'E Kaveinga. A Cook Islands model of social work practice*.

⁵ Statistics New Zealand. (n.d). *2013 Census ethnic group profiles: Cook Islands Māori. Population and geography*. Retrieved 10/3/2015 from http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx?request_value=24709&tabname=Populationandgeography

⁶ Statistics New Zealand. (n.d). *2013 Census ethnic group profiles: Cook Islands Maori. Key facts*. Retrieved 1/10/2015 from http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx?request_value=24709&parent_id=24706&tabname=#

'E Kaveinga - Cook Islands Māori Cultural Framework for Practice

Purpose

To provide a guideline for working with Cook Islands Māori⁷ families within legislative frameworks including the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 and the VCA 2014.

The name 'E Kaveinga' was inspired by a Cook Islands folk hero in Polynesian myths by the name of Maui.

"Maui is a major folk hero in Polynesian myths. The story of Maui has been passed down from generation to generation. Maui was the son of a god and possessed magical powers. These powers enabled him to achieve many great feats such as snaring the sun with a net he made from his sister's hair so that we could have more hours of daylight.

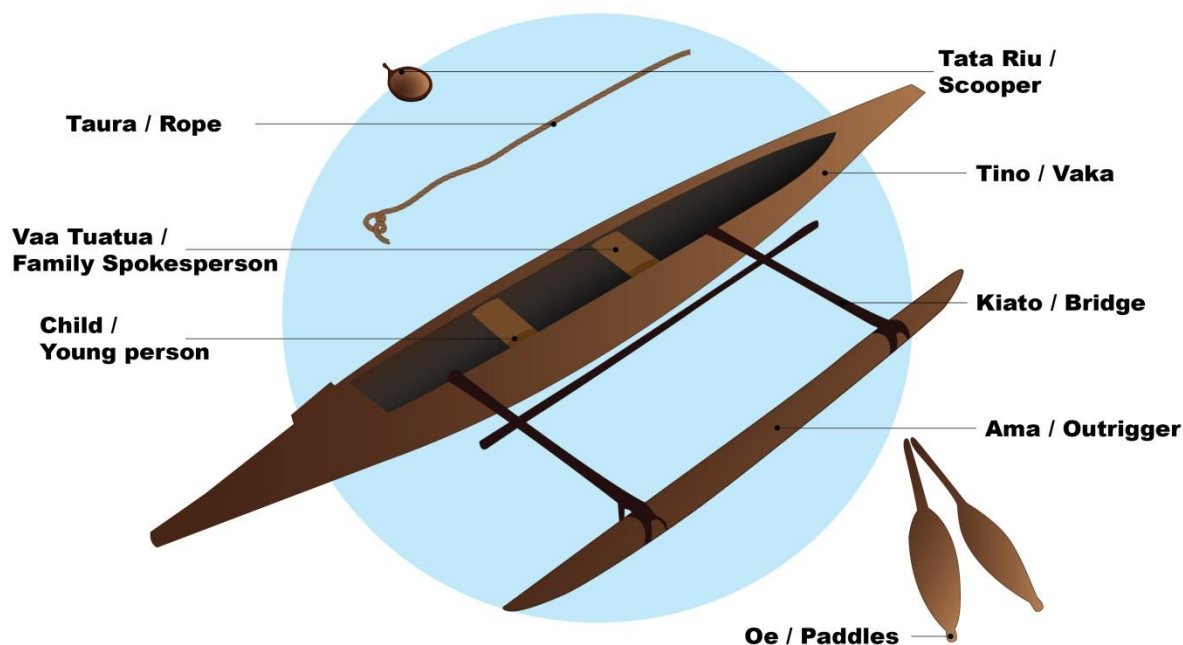
Maui and his brothers were renowned fishermen. Maui however, was different from his brothers. While they were content with life as it was, Maui was always searching for something better. His greatest feat was the fishing up of Havaiki - the land many Polynesians refer to as the homeland of their origin. Maui however, could not have achieved this feat without the help of another family member - his grandmother, Hina-te-Papa, who later chanted words of wisdom and encouragement in praise of Maui's achievement."

Maui's myth contains positive cultural messages about family relationships, family collaboration, strength, skill, and courage in the face of new challenges, overcoming problems and being successful. The surfacing of land from the depths of the sea as a result of Maui's fishing efforts symbolises a new beginning, opportunities for growth and development. 'E Kaveinga' conceptually means compass, a tool for guidance. It will continue to evolve as knowledge and skills develop and grow.

'E Kaveinga' was originally launched in 1998, and was the first Pacific ethnic specific model of practice for Oranga Tamariki and its predecessors. Training for Oranga Tamariki staff on the model was delivered in Auckland in 1998 and 1999, and was open to community agencies. Unfortunately an evaluation was never conducted of the impact of the 'E Kaveinga' on outcomes for Cook Islands children. Since 1998, the statutory social work landscape has shifted so the model has been revised.

⁷ 'Cook Islands Māori' are the indigenous people of the Cook Islands. Referred to specifically here after as 'Cook Islands' children, families, practitioners, people, or society, as appropriate.

The **Vaka** (canoe) symbolises the new 'E Kaveinga.

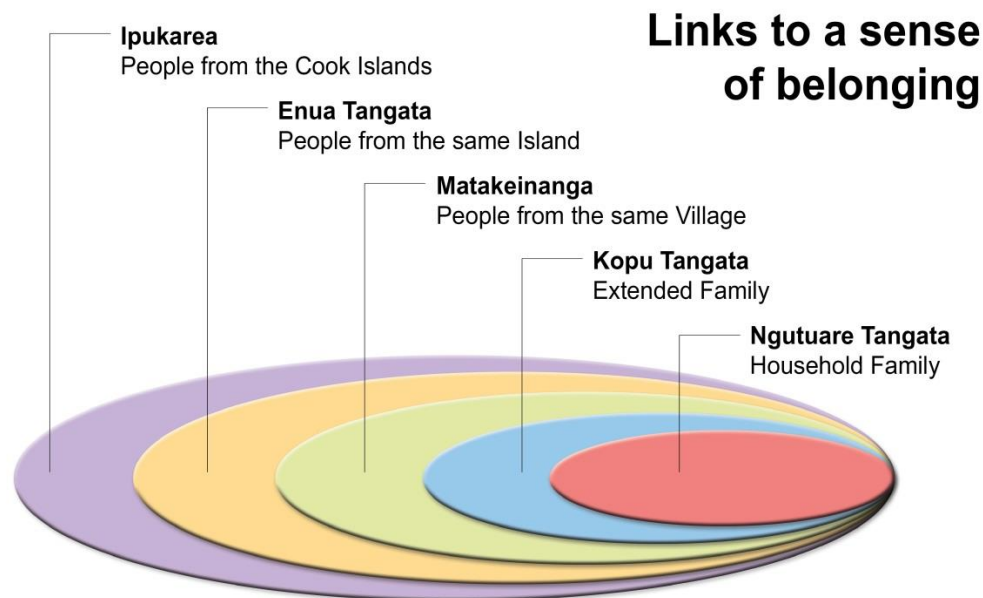


Descriptors

1. *Ama / Small outrigger*: Represents the Oranga Tamariki social worker.
2. *Tino vaka / bigger canoe*: Represents the family which includes all the different levels of *Pirianga* (relationships).
3. *Kiato / Bridge*: Represents *Pirianga* / relationship between the social worker and the family. This includes the immediate & extended family, people of the same village & island.
4. *Taura - Rope*: Represents the linking together of two sets of values & ideologies (mutual respect, humility, service, responsibility, reciprocity) and legislation which connects certain parts of the *vaka*.
5. *Oe - Paddles*: Represents the tools of Engagement, Assessment & Decision making which both the family and social worker will use to ensure that the *vaka* continues to stay the course.
6. *Nooanga - Seating or Positioning*: Represents the CHILD and the *Vaa tuatua* (spokesperson). The CHILD is positioned in the front of the *vaka* while the *Vaa tuatua* is positioned in the back of the *vaka*. The positioning of the CHILD in the front ensures that the CHILD is protected from all sides. The role of the *Vaa Tuatua* is significant as the paddler and steers the *vaka* to ensure it stays on course.
7. *Tata Riu - Scooper*: Is a small cup like instrument that scoops the excess water out of the *vaka* to prevent it from sinking. This symbolises the working partnership between the family

and the social worker. It includes responsibility for the removal of things that hinder progress for the child, young person and the family.

In order to apply the model appropriately, it is important to first understand the basic family hierarchy and structure, and traditional societal factors that characterise Cook Islands families.



From birth, Cook Islands children are recognised as belonging to a particular family (*ngutuare tangata*, *kopu tangata*) and a particular part of the Cook Islands. Children are encouraged to maintain their collective way of functioning into adulthood, remaining with parents and contributing to the financial and physical running of the household.

Cook Islands society has a hierarchical, collective, tribal structure. Each individual is seen to contribute to a larger group such as family, church, and community. Each individual has a role to play that supports and complements the roles of others. The *ariki* (high chief), for instance, is a traditional leader and accordingly enjoys a prestigious position within the community. The *mataiapo* and *ariki* are mainly based in the Cook Islands. Leaders in the Aotearoa context could be senior family members of *kopu tangata*, community leaders such as church ministers (*orometua*), healers (*ta'unga*) and other respected individuals.

Each island has a particular identity (some characteristic), social structure and associated dialect. The family's *enuā anauanga* (island/s of origin) and extended family are key identifiers, noting however that families have blood links to people from different areas. The island centric communities for Cook Islands Māori makes them different to other indigenous Pacific communities that tend to congregate based on religious and/or village affiliations.

Key Principles for Practice

1. *Tino* - The concept of 'being Cook Islands Māori' - Mind, body, spirit & soul

Cook Islands practitioners who work with Cook Islands families are able to see, hear, feel and connect on a deeper level than non-Cook Islands people, minimising misinterpretation. For example, a Cook Islands practitioner who is familiar with people from Aitutaki and Atiu would be aware that they are known to speak loudly, are often direct, and are physically

expressive. A non-Cook Islands person may incorrectly interpret such behaviours as aggression, when it may not be the case.

2. *Turanga i roto i te kopu tangata* - Positioning or status within the family

It is important to know who resides in the home and what role each person plays. For example a single mother who cares for her son may not necessarily be the decision maker. It could be her uncle who also resides in the home. Social workers can ascertain this information by asking the mother or others in the home to identify the *Mataiapo* (leader of the family).

3. *Te au Pirianga* - Relationships

The concept of *Te au Pirianga* recognises different levels of relationships significant to the child or young person. Traditionally Cook Islands children are represented by their parents or other adult family member in formal discussions. The role of children is changing and it is becoming more acceptable for them to speak in less formal gatherings, though only with the permission of a parent or elder.

The parents' roles within the family are complementary. Men have precedence and a higher profile in many positions of responsibility and power in Cook Islands society. Women are influential in family decision-making and are income earners. Increasingly, men are taking on a greater role in domestic duties. In most situations, both parents should be approached when there are concerns about a child or young person. With issues such as sexual abuse, initial contact should be made through an appropriate adult female family member.

Traditionally, Cook Islands Māori relationships do not recognise the titles of Aunty or Uncle. People in these roles are referred to instead as 'Mama' or 'Papa'. A cousin is referred to as 'Tuaine' – Sister, 'Tungane' – Brother or 'Tuakana' – older or 'Teina' – younger.

4. *Te peu enua* - The concept of the 'Cook Islands way of doing things'

This principle recognises important traditional and spiritual protocols. For example, before commencing a meeting with the family it is important to open with a *pure* (prayer). This helps to alleviate people's anxieties before an important discussion. The opening with a prayer acknowledges the importance of *vaerua* (spirituality) and the reliance on God for a good outcome. Concluding with a prayer is also important as this again acknowledges God and the collective desire for a good outcome for the child or young person.

The sharing of food is part of bringing people together, particularly if there has been conflict. This is an effective way to engage with families as is interpreted as a form of humility.

Engagement, Assessment, Decision Making

A holistic approach that encompasses physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing is needed when working with Cook Islands families.

When problems for the children stem from within the family, the social worker should be focusing his or her attention on identifying the relevant issues affecting the whole family. The physical wellbeing (*tu kopapa*), spiritual wellbeing (*vaerua*) and emotional wellbeing (*tu ngakau*) of the child and the rest of the family (*ngutuare tangata*) are fundamental and

complementary to the overall health of the family unit. If one of the elements (physical, emotional, spiritual) is problematic, then the other two will consequently be weakened.

The use of *te reo Māori Kuki Airani* (Cook Islands' language) is the most effective way to show respect, build rapport, and establish constructive relationships with Cook Islands families. It is important to keep in mind the different dialects and consult regarding any particular nuances associated with people from different parts of the Cook Islands.

Only a minority of Cook Islands children and young people speak their reo (refer to Va'aifetu Part 1). The rates are likely to be much lower for children and young people who are NZ-born, and/or are from mixed ethnicity. It is important to ascertain which language would best suit the child or young person concerned, and ensure that she/he is meaningfully engaged and included in conversations where different languages are used. Children and young people who may not be fluent in a Cook Islands reo may still understand common terms and cultural concepts used during engagement, depending on their home environment and upbringing. Hearing their native language may help alleviate a child's or young person's anxiety upon contact, and to build rapport.

Signs of concern within *Ngutuare Tangata*

***Tu Kopapa* - Physical Wellbeing**

- Presence of physical and/or sexual abuse (for example, domestic violence, excessive physical discipline, incest).
- Neglect of health, medical, physical needs (through lack of knowledge, skills, motivation, resources).
- Problem behaviour (offending, running away from home).
- Lack of supports, isolation from family or communities of significance.
- Poor housing, accommodation.
- Drug and/or alcohol abuse.
- Lack of resources (money, job, qualification).
- Physical illness due to imbalance in emotional and/or spiritual wellbeing.

***Tu ngakau* - Emotional Wellbeing**

- Emotional abuse (such as constant criticism, put downs).
- Isolation from family/community supports.
- High stress level (money worries, job pressures, relationship problems).
- Cultural conflicts.
- Conflicts between values of parent (traditional base) and a child/young person raised in New Zealand.
- Suicidal feelings, depression and other mental health issues.
- Motivation - lack of or misguided.
- Relationship difficulties (lack of respect for the - child, parents, elders; marital problems).
- Unresolved trauma (e.g. historical abuse, grief).

***Vaerua* - Spiritual Wellbeing**

- Impact of physical/sexual/emotional abuse, neglect and unresolved trauma.
- Isolation from spiritual or religious supports.
- Conflict in spiritual and/or religious beliefs (e.g. between a child and caregiver).
- Curse (*tauma'a*), possession.
- Mental illness (may be perceived as a sign of being spiritually unwell).

Useful Words and Phrases – Cook Islands

Common Greetings and Phrases	
Kia orana	Greetings, hello
Aere mai Turou (<i>formal</i>)	Welcome come in
Peea koe? (<i>you</i>) Peea korua? (<i>two people</i>) Peea kotou? (<i>more than two people</i>)	How are you? (<i>to one person</i>) (<i>to two people</i>) (<i>to three or more people</i>)
Meitaki	I'm fine thank you
Me ka tika, akakoromaki	Please, would you please excuse me, I apologise for the intrusion.
Meitaki	Thank you
Akakoromaki	Excuse me
Ka kite aere ra	Goodbye (<i>to one person</i>) Goodbye (<i>to people</i>)
Kia manuia	Blessings, best wishes
Family Terms	
tamaine	daughter
tamaiti	son
pepe	baby
mokopuna	grandchild
tama (<i>can be female or male</i>)	child
tamariki	children
metua vaine (<i>or</i>) mama	mother
metua tane (<i>or</i>) papa	father
kopu tangata	family, extended family
ruau	grandparents
mama ruau	grandmother
papa ruau	grandfather