A Māori Approach to Ageing, Spirituality and Palliative Care

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The Venerable Warihi Campbell QSO
Aotearoa, New Zealand
Ko te kupu tuatahi ka tuku ki to tatou kaihanga. Koia ra te timatanga me te whakamutunganga o nga mea katoa.

Kororia ki te matua nui I te rangi maungarongo ki runga i te mata o te whenua whakaaro pai ki nga tangata katoa.

E te whare e tu nei tena koe ki te Marae e takoto ana ki waho ra, tena koe.

Ki nga mate haere, haere, haere. Haere ki te kainga i whakaritea e to tatou kaihunga mo tatou katoa.

Ratou te hunga mate ki a ratou. Tatou te hunga ora e huihui mai nei. Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.
The first word I have to say I send to the creator. He is the beginning and end of everything.

Glory to the father in heaven. Peace on the face of the earth. Good will to all people.

To this place that stands here I greet you to the sacred earth that lies outside I greet you also.

To those that have passed on (deceased) go forth, go forth, and go forth. Go to the home that our creator has constructed for all of us.

Leave the deceased to be with the deceased. To all of us the living gathered here greetings, greetings, greetings to you all.
There were eight in our family and mum and Dad also brought up 3 mokopunas, the first child of two daughters and one son. We were from a middle income family. During that time the grandparents asked for the children so that parents could continue to work.

My Dad worked as a foreman for the Ministry of works and then out on his own a peddler fixing shoes boots and saddles.

Going to school was difficult, but we stayed on. Going to school with no shoes on, frosty mornings we followed the cows until we got to school and stood in hot water (when Dad brought the shop we were fine then).

My university has been my Marae Uepohatu, Hine Tapora, our church Ministers and elders, my professors and my kit of information has been the family who told me a lot of interesting stories to do with our Whakapapa and Genealogy.
Whakarua Park Board chairman Tame Te Maro outside Uepohatu.
The Ancestress "Hine-Tapora"
Our Wharenui Honours

Our Meeting House of "Hine-Tapora" is on our family Marae of Mangahanea, 2 kms east of Ruatorea on the road to Tuparoa Beach.

It honours our ancestress Hine-Tapora. Hine-Tapora possessed an impressive whakapapa as a descendent of the warrior Tuwhakairiora and our tribe's main ancestor of Porourangi. But she also belonged to our more 'Iwi Pohatu(Stone Age)" whakapapa of our ancestor Uepohatu. Our hapu-subtribe of Te Whanau-a-Hine-Tapora remembers that we belong to not only Ngati Porou who descend from the Horouta canoe: but also Ngati Uepohatu who descend from Maui who arrived in Aotearoa much, much earlier than any of the canoes.

(Notes from Cousin Tame Te Maro - January 1989.)
Stories at the Marae taught me also about the dos and the don’ts like being a good listener how to look after people especially those with a problem.

My Grandfather was 94 years old when he died and he use to tell me the best thing the white man brought to relieve a problem was a good old cup of tea. It warms part of the problem. Maori people living in the early 1930s on the East Coast didn’t really experience so much hardship. The depression days happened but whanau (family) were able to help and share food together.

Ngati Porou still has a lot of their own land due to the leadership of Apirana Ngata who was then the Minister of Maori Affairs 1928-1934. We had families that were experiencing poverty with help of the extended family they made sure they never went hungry. The good of that we lived a communal way around the Marae where we: Farewell our dead, had church services, welcomed our visitors and held our meetings.
When we were growing up I wondered what the big gardens were for now I can understand. When we were young we use to take vegetables to mums family and to some of our kaumatuas (elders). For then the way of life up the East Coast was a matter of teaching us how to survive when people went to gather seafood the same thing happened you got enough for your family you got extra only if you passed some of the elders on the way home.

Maori cultures respond to life in vastly different ways. Complicated by different interactions over centuries of shared history. We had to hold and preserve our cultural ways and values.

Hikurangi has the unique view as being the first mountain to see the rays of the sun. Many orators on many Marae acknowledge the mountain as a place of standing and we as descendants are so proud of this.
Whaia McClutchie elder said Tapu Tapu Tapu Rawa taku maunga. Hikurangi my mountain is sacred.

E hara taku maunga Hikurangi I te maunga haere engari he maunga tu tonu. My mountain Hikurangi never moves but rather it remains, quoted by Te Kani-a-Takirau when asked to be King.

Like many others Maoridom had to face cultural changes. Sometimes the changes were to meet new needs and aspirations and also new laws. Sometimes it depends on whether it is self directed or imposed from the outside.

Land grievances could help the economic base of tribes and improve the economic positions of the whanau. Involvement of Government and the recognition of the importance of the Treaty of Waitangi and a concern to see the rights of Maori people.
As tangata Whenua (people of the land) we are protected under the treaty. To ensure also that the language is taught in Kohanga Reo (pre-school) Kura Kaupapa intermediate/college so that they could continue to express their identity in terms of genealogy for Maori these links are important providing bonds not only with the past but with each other.

In spite of these problems we are able to share a lot of things and helping others to adjust to the new life.

Connectedness between people and the land is of importance so does the connectedness between spiritual and everyday working.

It is not easy to discuss ones culture in the language of another. Mana refers to power authority in the westerner world.
We cannot assume that because Maori has achieved in the Western world that they have mana in the Maori world. In the Maori world you have to work for it like respect, you have to earn it, it’s not given.

Therefore it is important to identify who you are and where you fit in. In the 1960s I left my home town Ruatoria on the East Coast to work in the Freezing Works in Petone under the Maori Affairs scheme.

In my basket of knowledge I came with 2 things which my Grandfather gave me as a metaphor saying respect people as they are. Grandchild you will be a magnet to people. That has been a spiritual thread in my makeup for I use it quite often when I am counseling another one is using the waterfall as a metaphor. In 1986 I joined the Ministry as a Kai karakia 1994 I was priest 1998 I was Canon then Archdeacon 2001.
In 1982 I was selected by my people to work at the Family Centre with Charles and Kiwi Tamasese. I was later joined by Flora Tuhaka. While there we realised that western approaches to therapy and community development did not work well with our people, so with the help of our elders and whanau, we developed a Maori approach to therapy and community development. I worked in the Maori Section of the Family Centre for 23 years.

In 2005, I was invited to be the Maori Chaplain at Wellington Hospital working with our people. Ten years ago there were no places for our terminally ill could go and our people cared for them at home. The kaumatua (elders) would say that is good our creator will reward you for when we talk about Palliative Care we are also talking about the spiritual aspects of life to care, love and care for ones self. Today we have Hospices where our people go, some still care for them at home.
For over 30 years a large part of my work has been to smooth the journey from life to death, from this world and for the family to say there last goodbyes. Families call on me to light the way and keep the path clear for the final journey. To up lift our family we use hymns, help them to cry to let go, and we include humour and jokes.
PALLIATIVE CARE
A Maori Perspective

To Maori families’, palliative care is a sacred encounter for our people. Palliative care is not a concept that is new for to us, while the word palliative may be new, it is something we have been doing for many generations. To Maori the word palliative means aroha, awhi, manaaki, awhina and karakia. These are values we have been taught as we were growing up and this still is an essential part of our make up.
In order to understand why I can say that palliative care is something we have been doing for generations it is important to understand Maori society. Maori social strength is based upon tribalism. Members of the tribe can be traced back to those who reached Aotearoa New Zealand in the same waka or canoe. These groups are known as iwi and are then divided into smaller groupings known as Hapu. (The word hapu means pregnant). Hapu comprise a closer kin group than iwi and trace their heritage to an ancestor several generations back. The hapu in turn are made up of a number of families known as whanau (The word whanau means birth). This is the basis for our extended whanau and this is where the support and aroha and care is nurtured throughout the lives of all members of each whanau.
When palliative care is needed, this is a time when we must face the reality of life and the closing of a loved one’s time in this physical world. So how do we attend to our whanau who at this point of their lives are told that the doctor’s can’t do anything more for them.

Firstly, we would pray for courage and strength and thank God for the many gifts we have received and to give us guidance in uplifting the whanau. Then arrangements are made for the 24 hour care by the whanau members.

Other whanau and extended whanau members will organise food for those who are doing the ongoing nurturing. This way it takes the stress off those who are taking care of the sick.
During this time some deep thoughts are discussed by the whanau with their ailing loved one as to what their wishes might be and how best their wishes may be honoured. Throughout this process there is a lot of reminiscing, singing and upholding the spiritual aspects of life. This affirms for our loved one that their wishes will be honoured.

I can best describe this with a story of a whanau member who dreamed three days before passing over into everlasting life. He woke up and said “I had a beautiful dream I was back in Hicks Bay, I could see the waterfall and in this garden there were so many beautiful flowers and some of the flowers I have never seen before and I felt so happy”.

His whanau spoke with him at length about the peacefullness of the waterfall and the restfulness of the flower garden and the peace that he found in it. [John Taiapa]. This is a very common amongst our Maori people.
As a Maori Anglican Priest and a part time Hospital Chaplain I am often involved in the palliative care of patients. I am often asked to visit patients, especially when they are low, who have asked to see a Maori minister. Often these patients belong to other denominations but they are happy just to see me. In many cases I tell them I can arrange for a minister from their own church to visit them but they say “Kei te pai” – It’s alright! Although I am supposed to be a part time Chaplain, I stay with the sick person for as long as they need me. I pray with them and I sing with them, this helps them to let go. I also work with the whanau providing support and assistance. Sometimes I arrange food for the whanau and organise accommodation within the hospital for visiting elders.

I also support and counsel the whanau when making the difficult decision to remove the life support when the end comes.
At the time of death, this is what often happens:

- Kaumatua (Senior Maori Orator) and Kuia (Senior Maori Woman) responds immediately when death occurs and embraces the bereaved whanau.
- The funeral director is organised by the priest or a whanau member.
- The Marae is notified by some other whanau member.
- The food is organised by others who are linked with the whanau.
- The immediate bereaved whanau are left to grieve for their loved one and not having to worry about being a good host.
Tangihanga (Funeral)

At the time of death the wairua [spirit] of the person is released back to their creator. The whanau will spend quite some time crying and talking with the deceased before contacting the undertaker.

Once the body has been released by the undertaker very close whanau members will dress the deceased and then have prayers before leaving to go onto the Marae or sometimes to the home of the deceased. Where the body will lie in state.
For our people at a time of sadness the elders, kaumatua and kuia and extended whanau will always stay with the whanau pani (grieving family) giving them love and support throughout their ordeal. In Maori culture a grieving whanau is never left on their own when manuhiri (visitors) come to pay their respects. They are called onto the Marae by one or two senior Maori woman. After paying their respects they will then take their seats and the kaumatua tangata whenua (host) from the marae formally greets the manuhiri, the manuhiri has the right to reply. This process also depends on how many speakers there may be. Once the speeches have been completed the tangata whenua and the manuhiri will then acknowledge the whanau pani and each other with a hongi and handshake. It is important to separate the physical from the spiritual and to replenish the soul with a good old cup up of tea and some food.
Nehu (Interment)

Day of the funeral service the casket is closed before sunrise with a short karakia. Then the main service will start a few hours afterwards the sermon is about the person and the reading from the bible reflects his life from the old world into the new.

Then we move to the graveside where the burial service starts which closes with a hymn. Afterwards welcomed again by the elders saying you have come back from the dark into the light.

Then we enjoy the meal that has being prepared by the extended family and friends.
The next job is going to cleanse the house with water and prayers this helps to make the house livable again with drinking, eating and singing. Some uncles and aunties stay awhile longer until the family has settled in.

After 1 year the family and friends are brought back for the last time to unveil the headstone. Remembering once again the good things about the person.

To you all thank you for listening to me about my people and the good things we have achieved.