

HE WHARE, HE TAONGA

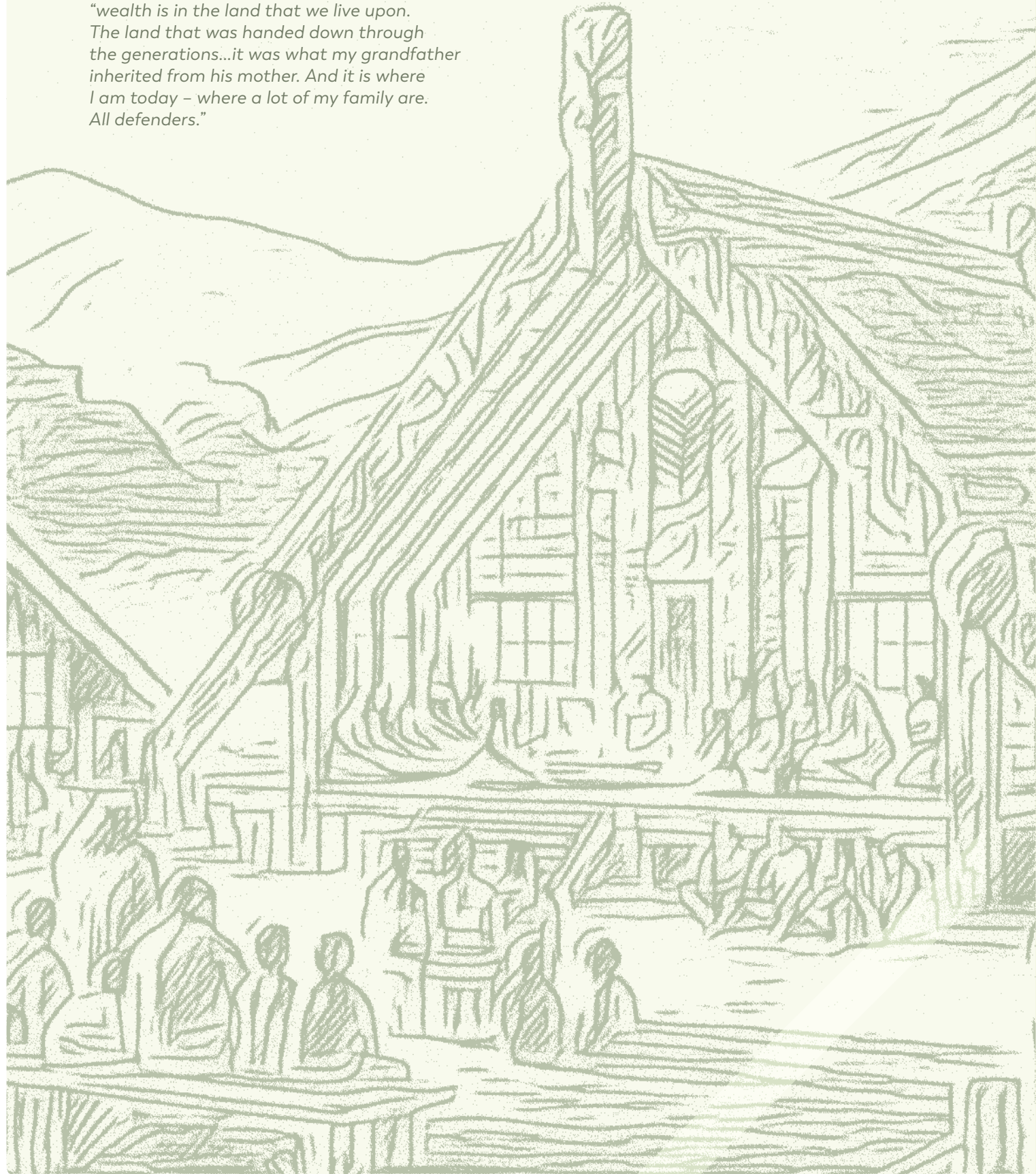


Connecting Mahi Tūkino and Housing Poverty in Hauraki:
Wāhine Give Voice to Compassionate Solutions



Te Whāriki Manawāhine Research
2024

"She held the dirt and said, "what you have in your hand, learn to smell it, it belongs to you, it is important you know that the whenua you stand on is yours." And she said, "wealth is in the land that we live upon. The land that was handed down through the generations...it was what my grandfather inherited from his mother. And it is where I am today – where a lot of my family are. All defenders."



HE WHARE, HE TAONGA - A CALL TO ACTION

"We bring the voice of the people to the attention of the various government agencies. But we're not just wanting to have a hui; we're wanting action and movement happening within our rohe."



The evidence documented in this research report has spearheaded the following Call To Action to our government from Hauraki Wāhine, who participated in this study.

Hauraki Wāhine Calling to Action Our Government

Hauraki Wāhine Māori and their whānau stand at a pivotal moment in history and seek the ear and support of the New Zealand government. Our voices carry the weight of generations, and it is time our voices are heard and acted upon.

We call upon the government to recognise the intersection between whānau violence,

housing poverty, and the persistent unmet housing needs of Hauraki Wāhine Māori. We categorically state and know that our well-being is intertwined with the nation's progress in redressing housing poverty in Hauraki.

Wāhine, central to this research, have articulated solutions that are pivotal to addressing housing poverty in Hauraki. This is an invitation to our government to enter a meaningful partnership with Hauraki Wāhine to rectify the causes of housing poverty in our region. With you, we can forge a future where Hauraki Wāhine and their whānau thrive, thereby contributing to a stronger, more inclusive Hauraki and Aotearoa.

In partnership with Hauraki Wāhine leaders, we urge our government to take the following actions:

- Engage in effective dialogue with Hauraki Wāhine Māori leaders and their whānau, hapū and iwi to encourage appreciation and compassion for our community's unique challenges.
- Support policies and initiatives that address the systemic barriers in the health, education, and social services sectors that are contributing to the persistent connection between mahi tūkino (family violence and sexual violence) and housing poverty in Hauraki.
- Honour te Tiriti o Waitangi by ensuring Hauraki Wāhine Māori have a seat at every local and national housing policy and funding decision-making table.
- Fund Hauraki-led bespoke housing solutions, voiced by Hauraki Wāhine.

Guidance for Actioning the Solutions

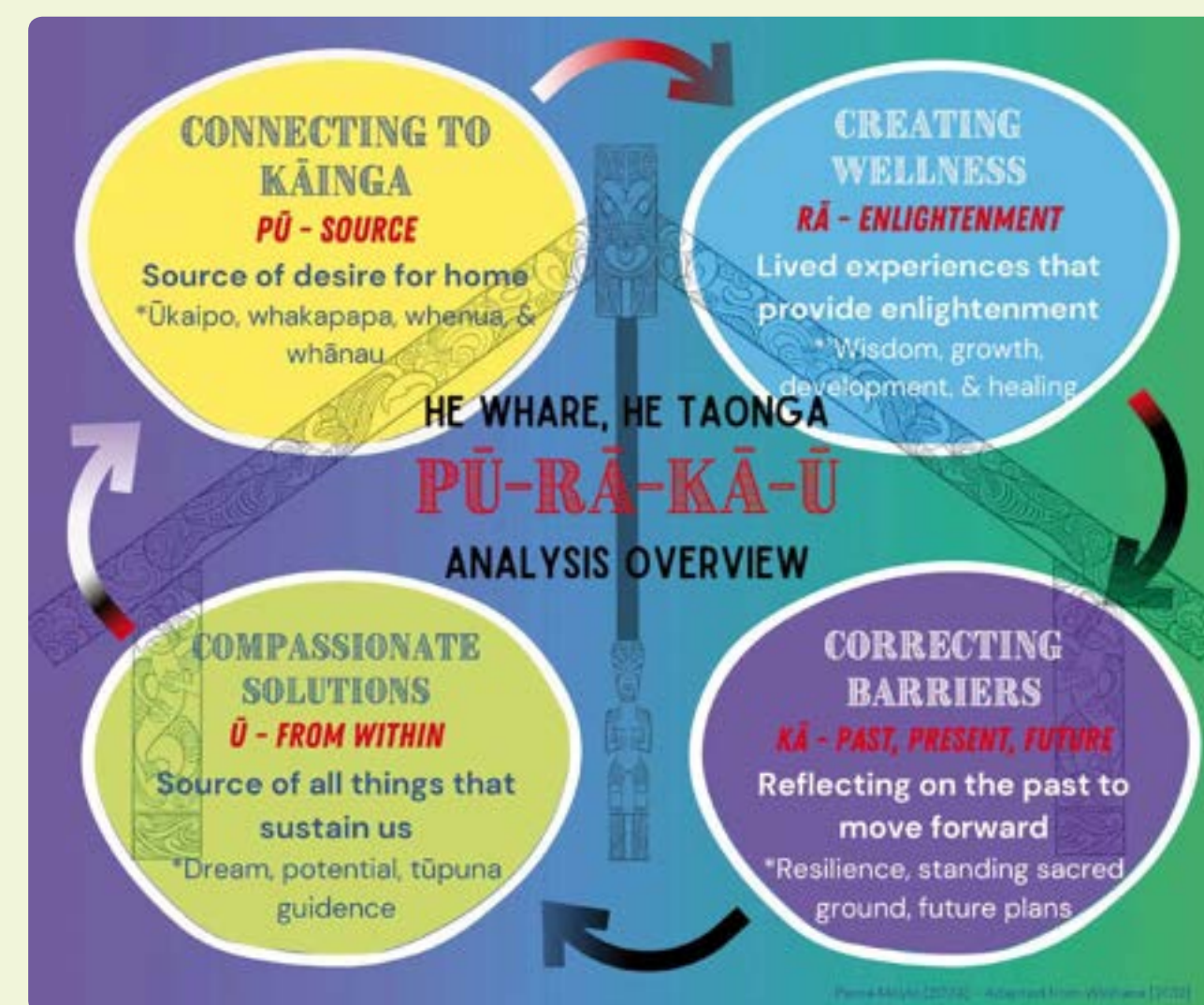
The solutions are addressed throughout this report and specifically in Chapter Two. The outcomes from actioning the solutions are depicted in the infographic in the next section, supported by qualifying narratives.



TRANSFORMATIVE OUTCOMES for LOCALLY LED HOUSING SOLUTIONS

Wāhine and whānau from Hauraki identified housing solutions that fall within the following key outcome areas:

1. Connecting to Kāinga – Pū (Source)
2. Creating Wellness – Rā (Enlightenment)
3. Correcting Barriers – Kā (Past, Present, Future)
4. Compassionate Solutions – Ū (From Within)



Pū - Connecting to Kāinga

For Wāhine and whānau, 'Kāinga' is more than just a home; it is also about safety, stability, and security, and whānau controlling their lives and aspirations. Kāinga includes the connection to culture, people and communities - the essence of home.

By fostering connections, safety and empowerment within Māori communities, the way is enabled for transformative change in housing policies and practices. The foundations of Kāinga reside within the communities across the Hauraki rohe. Growing safe, stable, and secure Kāinga within these communities requires efforts across all four key focus areas.

Rā – Creating Wellness

A key to creating wellness is transformative housing solutions, that address the root causes of violence and housing inequality within communities. This includes teaching tamariki survival skills and self-care early in life. It is also about developing a healthy mindset, being drug and violence-free and being present for tamariki as much as possible.

Wellness also includes the recognition of whakapapa, of connection to whenua, as well as multi-generational living, villages raising mokopuna together, being connected to one another and finding strength in common purpose.

Creating wellness highlights the importance of recognising and honouring the holistic well-being of Wāhine and whānau escaping whānau violence, within the context of Te Ao Māori.

Prioritising and the creation of conditions that support holistic well-being, drawing on the strengths of whānau, Kāinga, and mutigenerational villages are key. Compassionate approaches are foundational to wellness and acknowledge the humanity and dignity of individuals experiencing hardship.

Kā – Correcting Barriers

Housing poverty is primarily a socially constructed obstacle preventing Wāhine and whānau from addressing their housing aspirations and prospects for advancement. We need to understand the multifaceted drivers and impacts of housing poverty, as well as institutional and systemic violence from government agencies that Wāhine experience. Wāhine consistently highlighted, those forms of violence were more destructive for them than the violence they faced at home.

One of the enablers for creating a compassionate housing system is rectifying the intersecting complexities Wāhine experience when navigating abusive government support services. Housing solutions require having realistic and functioning Wāhine and tamariki-centred policies and approaches. The intent is to create and implement compassionate housing solutions by discontinuing the current systemic and behavioural violence within government agencies.

Wāhine and whānau and their communities hold the key to addressing the barriers to housing poverty and the impact of mahi tūkino. Shifting government funding to local Hauraki tangata whenua services is an enabling transformative action that government can take to support locally-led solutions.

Ū - Compassionate Solutions

Accessible healing pathways are key to compassionate, safe, and secure Kāinga for Wāhine.

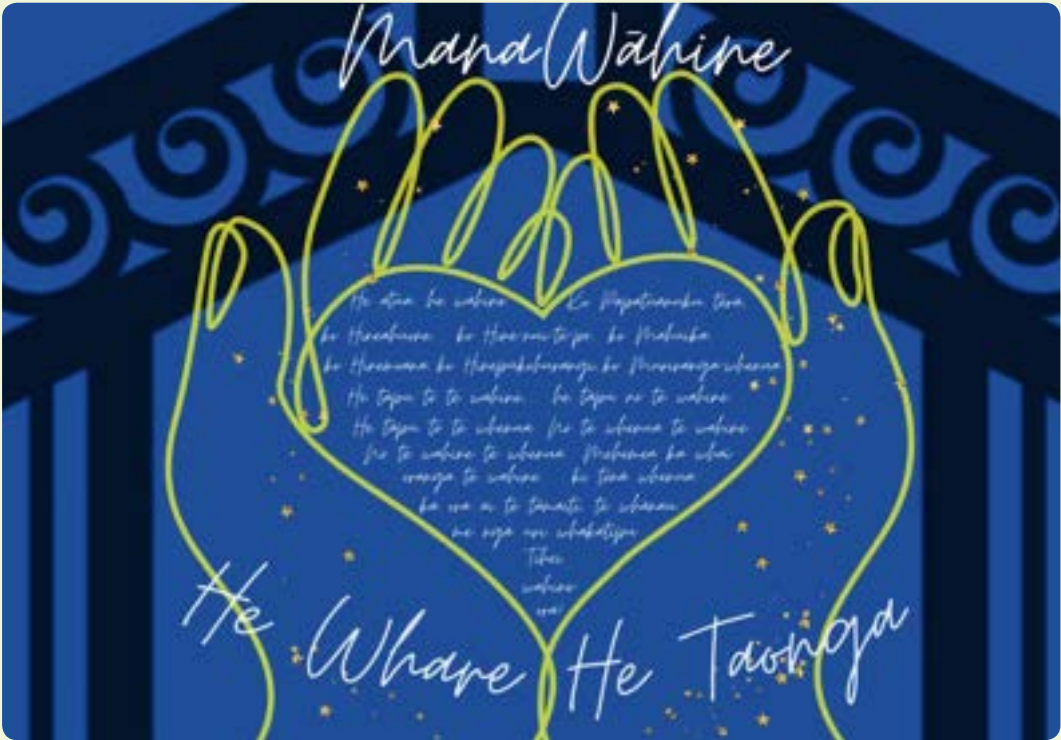
Reconnecting Wāhine to whenua, tikanga Māori and traditional Māori values is a transformative action that can strengthen those pathways. It includes the art of whakarongo; of actively listening to their stories, believing their truths, and understanding their needs, resulting in compassionate action being taken to support the healing process for Hauraki Wāhine and whānau.

Transformative Outcomes, Compassionate Actions

Hauraki Wāhine are resolute in realising transformative housing outcomes through implementing compassionate actions that are articulated throughout this report. Their documented pūrākau of the mahi tūkino and housing poverty connection are their unsolicited evidential contributions to this investigative study.

WHAKATAUĀKI

“He atua, he Wāhine. Ko Papatuanuku tērā, ko Hineahuone, ko Hine-nui-te-pō, ko Hinemoana, ko Mahuika, ko Hinepūkohurangi, ko Muriranga-whenua. He tapu tō te Wāhine, he tapu nō te Wāhine. He tapu tō te whenua. No te Wāhine te whenua. No te whenua te Wāhine. Mehemea ka whai oranga te Wāhine ki tōnā whenua, ka ora ai te tamaiti, te whānau, me ngā uri whakatipu. Tihei Wāhine ora!”¹



In the context of our research, our whakatauāki has provided a touchstone for considering our theoretical pathway, so that retelling Wāhine pūrākau pivotal to our study honours Wāhine lived experience, their spiritual ancestry and that of the researchers.

This whakatauāki was crafted over many months by our research team. It has been tipuna-guided and acknowledges that Wāhine Māori are the human expression of He Atua Wāhine. We are the whenua; the whenua is Wāhine, the land from which all humans are created. As it is in the annals of ancient lore, Wāhine Atua, Mana Wāhine are central to the creation of the universe, and therefore, we are the protectors of all descended from the divine spark of Atua Wāhine.

Our team was also drawn to the ancestral guidance ensconced in the following Hauraki tribal saying, “Haere mai ki Hauraki, he aute te awhea.”² We drew on this tribal saying as it exemplifies the fertility and mana of Hauraki. As receivers and holders of Wāhine kōrero, our role had been predetermined and reflected in the whakatauāki. The layered depths and richness of Wāhine pūrākau, highlighting the intersection between mahi tūkino and housing poverty in Hauraki, remained at the forefront of our thinking.

The whakatauāki invites those who access our study He Whare, He Taonga to connect with Hauraki to share in what we offer, a pathway of compassionate solutions to housing Hauraki Wāhine, who live with the realities of mahi tūkino and housing poverty.

1 The research team are Paora Moyle, Lesley Kelly, Ciara Duncan, Irene Kereama-Royal and Denise Messiter.
2 <https://teara.govt.nz/en/object/757/the-aute-plant>.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

HE WHARE, HE TAONGA - A CALL TO ACTION	3	Putting Wāhine and their whānau, hapū and iwi into Hauraki housing	24
TRANSFORMATIVE OUTCOMES for LOCALLY LED HOUSING SOLUTIONS	5	Bridging past successes to future housing solutions	26
WHAKATAUĀKI	7	Summarising the Findings	27
TABLE OF CONTENTS	8		
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	9	CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY	28
The Brown Paper Bag Team	9	Mana Wāhine Methodology	28
Te Whāriki Manawāhine o Hauraki	10	The Brown Paper Bag method	28
		Waha Pikitia method	30
CHAPTER 1 - THE BACKSTORY to HE WHARE, HE TAONGA	12	Ethical approval	31
Purpose of He Whare, He Taonga Research	13	Wāhine participants - Selection and circumstances	31
Amplifying Wāhine Voices	13	Semi-structured interviews	31
		'Themalysis' a take on thematic analysis	31
		CLA and Pū-Rā-Kā-Ū analysis framework	32
CHAPTER 2 - FINDINGS	16	CHAPTER 4 - DEMOGRAPHIC and LITERATURE SNAPSHOT	34
Infographic - Signposting our Findings	16	Demographic Snapshot	34
PŪ-RĀ-KĀ-Ū Themes	16	MSD Emergency Housing and Public Housing Numbers	34
CONNECTING TO KĀINGA: 'PŪ' - The desire for home	17	Te Whāriki Emergency Housing Occupation Numbers	36
Home is not about building whare; it's about building communities	17	Summary	36
CREATING WELLNESS: 'RĀ' - Lived experiences that provide enlightenment	17	LITERATURE SNAPSHOT	37
Wellness is reflected in our children's laughter and play	17	International Context	37
Well-being is in multigenerational living	18	Aotearoa Context	38
Treating Wāhine and whānau with compassion	18	Hauraki Context	38
Inequity restricting whānau from thriving	18	System Barriers and Changes to Improve Housing Outcomes	39
CORRECTING BARRIERS: 'KĀ' - Reflecting on the past to move forward	19	Persistent Disadvantage: A Systemic Generated Problem	42
Wāhine wear the burden of violence	20	Our Concluding Position	45
The Kāinga Ora housing system struggle - "not a choice"	20		
Systemic racism and no houses	20	CHAPTER 5 - A SYMPHONY OF WĀHINE VOICES	46
Discrimination against tamariki with neurodiverse needs	21	A Symphony Summarised	55
Increased violence during Cyclone Gabrielle	22	CHAPTER 6 - KEY INFORMANTS SPEAK	56
COMPASSIONATE SOLUTIONS: 'Ū' - From within, the source of all sustenance	22	Summarising Key Informants Speak	63
Binding the generations together	22	REFERENCES	64
Living compassionate solutions	23		
Hearing, believing, and housing, Wāhine Māori recovering from mahi tūkino	23		
Leveraging national and international covenants	24		
Redesigning empathetic housing policies	24		

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Thank you to Te Whāriki Manawāhine o Hauraki Research team: Paora Moyle, Lesley Kelly, Ciara Duncan, Irene Kereama-Royal and Denise Messiter. And to all who were involved and not mentioned, you and we, know who you are.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the opinions and information expressed in this report. While we consider statements in the report to be accurate, if there are any incorrect statements, they are unintentional errors, and therefore, we do not accept any liability for those.

The Brown Paper Bag Team



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³ <https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/2777-building-better-homes-towns-and-cities-national-science-challenge>

Te Whāriki Manawāhine o Hauraki

Te Whāriki Manawāhine o Hauraki (Te Whāriki) - Hauraki Women's Refuge has been operating a professional, specialised mahi tūkino service for 40 years, supporting all communities within the Hauraki rohe. As a Tangata Whenua service, the organisation stays connected to Hauraki, whānau, hapū, and iwi through their staff, 95% whakapapa to Hauraki.

Te Whāriki hosts events that are kaupapa-based as an approach to conversing with whānau, hapū, and iwi about the services they deliver, what whānau needs are and how to increase the organisation's accountability to Hauraki whānau. Te Whāriki provides services and programs for women, men, and children who are experiencing or have experienced mahi tūkino, including the transmission of historical and intergenerational violence.⁴

From 2018 to 2020, Te Whāriki conducted a series of conversations with Hauraki whānau. The conversations focused on what is needed, and how to support whānau living with the effects of mahi tūkino. As an outcome of those engagements, Te Whāriki Manawāhine o Hauraki embarked on implementing a transformation programme we named "Kāinga Kōrero." At the heart of this programme is raising the voices, aspirations, capability and commitment of Hauraki Wāhine and their whānau to heal from the effects of mahi tūkino. This research study is integral to our transformation programme. It dovetails with two of the organisation's six transformative projects. One is He Whare, He Taonga, which focuses on advancing the philosophy "Ma te pā he tamaiti hei whakatipu - it takes a village to raise a child", and the other, on Hauraki Data Sovereignty.



Te Whāriki Manawāhine Research

Kāinga Kōrero is the strategic context from which Te Whāriki supported the research team to conduct this study

"Connecting Mahi Tūkino and Housing Poverty in Hauraki: Wāhine Give Voice to Compassionate Solutions."



⁴ <https://www.hud.govt.nz/our-work/he-taupua-fund/>

CHAPTER 1 - THE BACKSTORY to HE WHARE, HE TAONGA

*“Ma te pā, he tamaiti, hei whakatipu.”
It takes a village to raise a child.*

Te Whāriki’s position on housing is that Wāhine and their whānau deserve a safe, warm home regardless of socio-economic status. The He Whare, He Taonga housing project envisions a future where tamariki are raised in non-violent villages founded on mātauranga me tikanga Māori. These are villages where Wāhine Māori and their whānau are fully supported to recover from their lived experiences of mahi tūkino, and they are thriving.⁵

In 2020, Te Whāriki secured strategic planning funding from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.⁶ With that funding, Te Whāriki developed a housing strategy informed by Wāhine and key Informants to deepen the organisation’s understanding of the underpinnings of housing poverty for Hauraki Wāhine and their whānau. Te Whāriki found that the dire private and public rental housing shortage in the Hauraki region has created a crisis for Hauraki whānau. Furthermore, the profound impact of whānau violence, and systemic entrapment forces many Hauraki Wāhine and their whānau into homelessness. This crisis highlights the Call To Action for targeted mātauranga Māori solutions to address the intersecting challenges of mahi tūkino and housing poverty (Te Whāriki Mana Wāhine o Hauraki, 2021).

The next section outlines the housing solutions pathway that came from Wāhine pūrākau central to this research. The subsequent chapters speak back to these solutions and provide the rationale and qualitative evidence for them.



⁵ <https://hauraki.refuge.co.nz/>

⁶ <https://www.hud.govt.nz/our-work/he-taupua-fund/>

Mapping Hauraki Māori Housing Solutions

Te Ara Whakakaupapa: Mapping Hauraki Māori Housing Solutions

INPUTS

- Research on existing Hauraki housing programs and their impact on local initiatives.
- Collaboration with local planners, housing experts, and local community stakeholders.
- Data sovereignty on current and local housing infrastructure and needs.
- Funding options, including public, private, and partnership models.
- Whānau, hapu, iwi, community input into housing options.



OUTPUT

- Intervention logic model to clarify the HWHT theory of change, activities, outputs, outcomes, impact, and evidence-building opportunities.
- Gathering insights to inform policy, housing pathways and communications as told through kōrero pūrākau of Hauraki wāhine Māori and their whānau who experience family violence and related housing poverty and key informants, that contribute to raising awareness of the challenges, and opportunities for advancing Hauraki Māori housing solutions.
- Development of a meaningful data collection framework, research, and data sovereignty capability.
- Journal article communicating mātauranga and insights on the evidence that informs local housing solutions for wāhine Māori who experience family violence and related housing poverty.



ACTIVITIES

- Gather evidence-based analysis of the housing solutions for Hauraki wāhine Māori and their whānau who experience family violence and related housing poverty.
- Use evidence to inform Hauraki Māori community housing provider organisation.
- Use the evidence to inform Kainga Ora builds that support the delivery of responsive transitional housing for Hauraki wāhine and their whānau.
- Use evidence to build data sovereignty and progress measures towards housing outcomes. Provide insight into what institutional and agency positions are, that can facilitate housing solutions for wāhine Māori and their whānau.



OUTCOMES

- The key long-term outcome of this project is to illustrate how transformative housing options for wāhine Māori experiencing family violence and related housing poverty can significantly contribute to healing their trauma and ending their violence situation/s.
- The project outputs and outcomes will inform the development of a rationale and a long-term housing strategy for vulnerable wāhine Māori and their whānau in Hauraki.

IMPACT

- Provide multiple options for access to SAFE housing, influencing housing policy for wāhine Māori experiencing family violence and related housing poverty.
- Design financing models and fit for purpose home ownership models for these wāhine and their whānau.
- Integrate all housing kaupapa into housing typologies and fit for purpose tenancy agreements for these wāhine and their whānau.
- Increase the ability for Te Whāriki to engage and lead on all levels of Hauraki Māori housing.

Poora Moyle - Waha Pikitia 2024

Purpose of He Whare, He Taonga Research

Our research aimed to investigate how providing secure housing can serve as an intervention to address the underlying causes of mahi tūkino, particularly focusing on the adverse impacts experienced by Wāhine Māori and their whānau. The primary driver for our research project is to understand the relationship between persistent disparities, housing poverty and mahi tūkino experienced by Hauraki Wāhine Māori.

Amplifying Wāhine Voices

Wāhine, seeking support from Te Whāriki face profound challenges in finding suitable and sustainable housing, which can force them back into the violent situations they were trying to escape. These challenges often include homelessness, isolation from whānau and community support, and the critical need for confidentiality and anonymity in their pursuit of assistance. Despite these intersecting persistent, systemic and structural obstacles, their hope for a long-term housing solution fuels their determination and courage to strive for a new beginning.

To that end, He Whare, He Taonga aimed to amplify the voices of Wāhine and whānau affected by the intersection of whānau violence and housing poverty. In amplifying their voices, so are those of their ancestors:

Their stories... create the space for inviting and re-engaging with all the voices and echoes of the past, the present, and the future. The ancestral voices, the insightful voices, the negative voices, the all-knowing voices, the suppressed voices, the unanswered voices, and the voices that have been silenced through colonisation and institutionalisation” (Messiter, 2023; p. 111).

Departing from the Conventional Research Report

Recognising the historical silencing of Wāhine voices, the research team departed from a conventional report structure, instead adopting a back-to-front approach, ensuring that the perspectives and experiences of these often-marginalised individuals remain front and centre throughout the report. This methodological choice reflects a commitment to centring the rights and interests of those directly impacted by the issues under investigation.



Three New Mana Wāhine Methods

Presented in the following sections are our findings, which include narratives from Wāhine korero pūrākau (Māori women’s stories). Subsequently, a brief section outlines our methodology detailing the ‘Brown Paper Bag’ (process guide), ‘Waha Pikitia’ (depiction guide) qualitative data collection methods, along with the ‘Pū-Rā-Kā-Ū’ approach (analysis guide) used to analyse Wāhine korero pūrākau. This clarifies why these specific methods were chosen and how they contribute to centring the voices of Wāhine.

Following this, we summarise relevant demographic data, international, national and Hauraki literature, highlighting its significance in contextualising our findings. We conclude our report with a ‘Symphony of Wāhine Voices’ gathered from the Wāhine and key Informants of their perspectives in shaping future interventions and policies.



CHAPTER 2 - FINDINGS

This research finds there is a connection between Wāhine Māori lived experiences of mahi tūkino and their housing situation, pointing to housing poverty as a primary factor. The overlay of mahi tūkino with housing poverty creates a situation where Wāhine and their whanau face a double layering of harm. Wāhine want solutions, and to actively participate in designing and implementing solutions for resolving the mahi tūkino - housing poverty connection.

In support of the Call To Action voiced by Hauraki Wāhine who participated in this research, our team has committed to promoting innovative solutions articulated by Wāhine navigating mahi tūkino and persistent intergenerational housing poverty. We firmly believe that through this approach, we can ignite significant change.

The findings presented in the next infographic are drawn from our Pū-Rā-Kā-Ū themed analysis, which follows the infographic.

PŪ-RĀ-KĀ-Ū Themes

Four overarching themes emerged from our Pū-Rā-Kā-Ū analysis. They are Pū - Connecting Kāinga, Rā - Creating Wellness, Kā - Correcting Barriers, and Ū - Compassionate Solutions. These themes are the outcomes that He Whare, He Taonga strives to realise.

Signposting our Findings



Pū examined the source of the desire to be home, define home, be free from whānau violence, connect to (reclaiming) Kāinga, and all that Kāinga means. Rā looked at the inspirational and enlightening lived experiences of Wāhine towards creating individual and collective well-being. Kā looked to the past to see what worked before and how this guides future aspirations and pathways to correcting barriers to housing. Ū the source of all that sustains us; heard and received a myriad of compassionate solutions towards meaningful change in housing policy and practice to ensure the dignity, security, and tino rangatiratanga of Wāhine and whānau Māori in Hauraki. The four overarching themes are presented next.

CONNECTING TO KĀINGA: 'PŪ' - The desire for home

Pivotal to this research for Wāhine was the theme of Pū, described as a deep desire for home and how home is collectively defined as Kāinga. Kāinga embodies a longing to connect to it, extending beyond "four walls" or physical location. It signifies safety, stability, security, and whānau controlling their lives and aspirations. Kāinga encompasses the connection to culture, people, and communities, the essence of home.

"Home is a place to be and belong, and in that belonging, you are able to live your life surrounded by people you are connected to."

Wāhine also shared concepts important to them: hope, desire and dreaming. The hope of finding a safe haven, the desire to think, feel, and plan for a long-term housing solution, and to dream of one day owning and occupying their own home. These concepts fuelled their determination for a new start despite the harm they described experiencing at home and from specific community professionals and services.

Home is not about building whare; it's about building communities

More broadly, Wāhine participants talked about surviving and not being defined by violence and harm, or the intentional severing of their whakapapa, being forced into homelessness. Rather, they are defined by their resilience, their resistance to continuing settler-colonial harms, and their desire to find a home. A key insight drawn from Wāhine pūrākau is that their housing journeys are not just about building whare, but about building communities that raise healthy mokopuna.

In support of this, two key informants referred to the need for comprehensive definitions of what home means. This includes remembering what home is from past generations; that it is about reclaiming home, looking after one another, and how we do well in that space.

The research found that for Wāhine and their whānau, it is imperative to place Kāinga at the heart of our collective efforts. By prioritising the deep desire for home and fostering connections, safety, and empowerment within Māori communities, we pave the way for transformative change in housing policies and practices. In talking about their lived experiences of mahi tūkino and housing poverty with the research, Wāhine begin to create well-being for themselves.

CREATING WELLNESS: 'RĀ' - Lived experiences that provide enlightenment

Rā, the theme of creating wellness is a call to heed the insights gleaned from Wāhine sharing their experiences of whānau violence and housing poverty. Their stories illuminate potential pathways forward, urging us to listen, learn, and take decisive steps to address the root causes of violence and housing inequality within our communities.

Wellness is reflected in our children's laughter and play

Wāhine stressed the importance of sharing their experiences of whānau violence and housing poverty to bring attention to the issues affecting their well-being and that of their tamariki. Wāhine defined 'wellness' as a state involving feelings of safety, happiness, and freedom from violence. Creating wellness and the conditions that enabled well-being was most notably reflected in their children's faces, behaviour, and demeanour, particularly during play. For many women, being well was about being prepared for any event. This meant teaching tamariki survival skills and self-care early in life should they be separated from their mother for any reason. For other Wāhine, wellness was a growing wisdom that required them to take care of themselves first, develop a healthy mindset, be drug and violence-free, and be present emotionally and physically for their tamariki whenever possible.

Well-being is in multigenerational living

From a key Informant - service provider perspective, well-being for Wāhine escaping whānau violence included *“the whole recognition of whakapapa, of connection to our whenua, that doesn’t take us away from our meaning of Te Ao Māori” and it came from a space of “well at least I’m in control of my life, and I’m on our whānau whenua.”*

Key Informants described how the conditions that created well-being came from whānau, from Kāinga, from multigenerational villages raising mokopuna, being connected, and finding strength in common purpose unity. Reflecting on the past, Informants praised Hauraki whānau who *“were beneficiaries and their homes dilapidated, but they owned their homes, grew their own kai, homelessness was minimal, and young people always had a home to go to.”* They stressed the importance of traditional whānau and community ties for Māori well-being.

Treating Wāhine and whānau with compassion

Key informants also expressed the importance of compassionate engagement by service providers when dealing with Wāhine and whānau. They emphasised a whole-of-whānau approach where whānau lead their housing aspirations without being blamed for the family violence or housing poverty. Instead, their lived experiences are respected, enabling them to participate in developing pathways to housing solutions.

Conversely, key Informants also articulated what well-being is not, stating that whānau should not be made to live in conditions that stifle thriving, such as Wāhine being forced to return to violent homes or *“to live as white-is-right households, and to turn all the brown people into white living people.”*

For service providers, it highlights the critical importance of recognising and honouring the holistic well-being of Wāhine escaping whānau violence within the context of Te Ao Māori. Their well-being is intricately tied to their connection to whakapapa and whenua and the sense of control and belonging that comes from being on whānau land. Service providers must prioritise creating conditions that support this holistic well-being, drawing upon the strengths of whānau, kāinga, and multigenerational villages. Learning from the examples of Hauraki whānau, who, despite facing challenges, maintained strong community ties and minimal homelessness through ownership of homes and self-sufficiency in growing kai.

Service providers must work towards fostering traditional whānau and community ties as foundational elements of Māori well-being initiatives.

The key insight here is about service providers integrating compassion into the housing system through building trust and fostering empowerment. This can be achieved by creating a supportive environment where individuals feel respected and heard. A compassionate approach is crucial in addressing critical issues like family violence and housing poverty, as it ensures that support is provided with empathy, understanding, and a genuine desire to help improve Hauraki whānau Māori well-being.

Inequity restricting whānau from thriving

Key Informants emphasised that the well-being of whānau is closely connected to what they termed the ‘service well-being spectrum.’ At one end of this spectrum are government services, while at the other end are local organisations. This means, services that are restricted in their capacity and capability to support whānau to thrive due to lack of funding, have constrained ‘service well-being.’ Restrictive legislative processes compound this issue at the local government level, expressed in the following informant quote, *“Legislative and regulatory restrictions stop our people from actually thriving within their own whenua Māori.”*

Additionally, local organisations were identified as contributing to restricting whānau well-being. Informants discussed how these organisations accumulate housing wealth, perpetuating ongoing inequities. *“Church groups, pākehā organisations, and pākehā CHPs [community housing providers] have significant stock that has been largely acquired through government funding”.* One Informant described this situation as detrimental to Hauraki well-being, particularly regarding the dwindling whenua. They questioned, *“How do we long-term invest in, or build whānau capacity, if we only plan to do so on dwindling whenua Māori?”* Another Informant spoke of the critical need for Aotearoa to create housing well-being for whānau haua. *“Only 3% of housing in the whole of Aotearoa is accessible in some form [for disabled people], and Māori are the largest disabled group”.*

The connection between whānau well-being and the ‘service well-being spectrum’ spotlights the need for systemic change and community empowerment to address barriers and promote sustainable well-being in Hauraki and beyond. Wāhine and key Informants all referred to ideas of looking to the past to see what worked before, applying lessons learnt to correct the present barriers, and building whānau capacity in Hauraki.

CORRECTING BARRIERS: ‘KĀ’ - Reflecting on the past to move forward

The theme of Kā, “correcting barriers,” emerged when Wāhine talked about looking back on their lives from the present moment to move positively forward into the future. In terms of the barriers to well-being, the following quote succinctly summarises the state of housing poverty for Wāhine Māori escaping violence in Hauraki: *“In Hauraki, 46% of the housing stock are holiday homes in the Thames-Coromandel district council area and are unavailable for rentals. Then you’ve got old housing stock and cold, damp and really poor houses. And you know there’s considerable vulnerability around housing in Hauraki when a real estate agent says to a woman who has water*

seeping down the walls and brown tap water, “Oh well, like it or lump it, get out if you don’t want it.” This goes back to government policy, where they’re relying on market rentals to meet the needs of people who don’t own their own homes, and people [landlords/agents] are charging high rents because they can. So, Hauraki’s got a significant crisis, and you top that with women who are faced with the challenges of mahi tūkino, it’s pretty dim.”

Recognising housing poverty as a primary obstacle for Wāhine is crucial for addressing their well-being and prospects for advancement. By understanding the multifaceted impacts of housing poverty, stakeholders can work towards implementing targeted interventions to improve housing affordability, quality, and access to essential amenities.



Wāhine wear the burden of violence

This research explored the significant barriers faced by Wāhine in accessing housing, particularly stemming from the violence they described experiencing both within their own homes and in their communities. A key finding from their detailed accounts highlighted that **“Wāhine wear the burden of the violence”**. This was mostly experienced as **“societal violence”** through the various government agencies they engaged with or were **“forced to engage with”**. In many ways, this engagement had **“a much greater impact [on their lives] than the violence they experience at home.”** Each Wāhine provided examples of unreasonable and conflicting expectations, contradictory conditions, and court orders imposed by one or several government agencies, highlighting the complex and oppressive nature of navigating government support systems. The involvement of multiple agencies, such as the Ministries of Justice and Social Development, Oranga Tamariki and the New Zealand Police, illustrates the intersectionality of these women’s challenges.

A particularly poignant finding is where these agencies wield the threat of child removal as leverage to force Wāhine to relocate away from their home areas. It speaks to the societal violence these women describe experiencing through their interactions with state representatives, which makes them vulnerable and fearful. **“They fear their tamariki being uplifted...They’re better off being invisible than seen,” “...a lot of people have been made victims,” “this system creates harm”, and “our Wāhine carry the burden of risk for failed successive government policies over many years.”**

The finding that wāhine wear the burden of the violence highlights the critical necessity for comprehensive solutions that effectively address housing insecurity and systemic violence, thereby better protecting the safety and well-being of Hauraki Wāhine and their whānau.

The Kāinga Ora housing system struggle - “not a choice”

Wāhine highlighted systemic barriers within Kāinga Ora as significant obstacles to equitable access to secure and suitable housing for themselves and tamariki:

- Wāhine are often unreasonably held accountable and financially burdened for damages to a house caused by their partner or ex-partner.

- Wāhine and their children are frequently subjected to abrupt evictions from Kāinga Ora properties without adequate notice or justification.
- Wāhine are often compelled to accept housing options that increase their risk of experiencing violence.
- Prioritisation for housing assistance often requires Wāhine to agree to relocate from their home area, disrupting community ties and support networks.
- Wāhine are disadvantaged in housing allocation processes if they decline housing options outside their home area, resulting in extended waiting periods.
- Kāinga Ora has been observed allocating housing to families from urban areas like Auckland and Hamilton, overlooking the housing needs of local Wāhine.

Key Informant kōrero also supported Wāhine accounts of Kāinga Ora systemic barriers, saying that housing through Kāinga Ora was **“not a choice.”** Being on the Kāinga Ora housing list was no different to being on a property manager’s list for market rentals. The only distinguishing feature is who the landlord is. Informants also say that **“Kāinga Ora have been culturally negligent in their planning approach and have failed to recognise the expanding and contracting living needs of Māori and Pacific whānau.”** This planning oversight, they say, has contributed to excessive waiting times on the Kāinga Ora housing list, inappropriate housing builds and, for Hauraki, over a 30-year wait for new Kāinga Ora housing builds.

An overarching theme emerging from the research is that the Kāinga Ora housing system exacerbates the numerous and intersecting challenges Wāhine encounter. Rather than serving as a support system, Kāinga Ora housing compounds existing issues, making it harder and, in some cases, near impossible for Wāhine to improve their circumstances.

Systemic racism and no houses

The Wāhine highlighted systemic barriers to housing in Hauraki, including difficulties in obtaining mortgages or affording new house construction, being priced out of the housing market, facing unaffordable market rentals, having to compete with others for market rentals, and no available social or emergency housing.



Wāhine spoke about being coerced into accepting the view by government agencies that Motel accommodation is an acceptable place for raising their tamariki and that more need to be built to solve the severe lack of housing. For example, **“...what the? You try bringing your whānau up in a motel unit.”** They talked about government agencies and community services putting them down by using labels such as **‘homeless’** and **‘overcrowding.’** Those labels, they say, have come from the system using architectural designs suited to nuclear families, not tangata whenua and Pacifica whānau. Those labels, they say, are **“...a ruse they [government] use to get Māori and Pacifica out of their homes”**.

Wāhine recounted experiencing discrimination due to their identity as Wāhine, as Māori, being single parents, and being denied housing eligibility by Kāinga Ora for trying to escape violent situations. This treatment left them feeling demoralised and exhausted, significantly impacting their sense of well-being.

Discrimination against tamariki with neurodiverse needs

Wāhine expressed concerns regarding themselves and their tamariki facing adverse impacts due to discrimination. Our key finding focuses on Wāhine seeking housing, who have tamariki with challenging behaviours resulting from neurodiverse conditions and disabilities. Wāhine recounted experiencing judgment from private

landlords and agents due to their children’s conditions, which are often incorrectly attributed to whānau violence or inadequate care.

One Wāhine noted, **“Well, even kindy (kindergarten) is a bit of a struggle...they just even burden me for his behavioural issues too. Like they tell me my baby is ADHD. He’s just on the go all the time and he gets bored easily.”** Being turned down as a suitable tenant nine times out of ten is the expected outcome for these Wāhine, who said they had experienced the same discrimination when attempting to enrol their tamariki at a local kindergarten or school. Having an enrolment application turned down also meant that the Wāhine and her tamariki were limited in where they could live.

Furthermore, Wāhine also spoke of having little choice but to live in unhealthy housing conditions that made their tamariki sick, including excessive mould, cold temperatures due to inadequate heating, brown tap water and insect infestations. Despite numerous efforts to get landlords and real estate agents to respond, their concerns fell on deaf ears, with no corrective action taken. Consequently, their children’s poor health increases their risk of being reported to Oranga Tamariki for inadequate care and/or neglect. The failure to address these issues reflects a serious systemic disregard for Wāhine voices and their agency in resolving these critical issues.

Essentially, the discrimination faced by Wāhine and their tamariki with neurodiverse conditions in housing and education compounds their challenges, limiting their options for suitable living arrangements, and negatively impacting their children's health. This highlights the urgent need for systemic change to ensure equitable and compassionate treatment for Wāhine Māori and their tamariki.

Increased violence during Cyclone Gabrielle

Key informants discussed the heightened risk of family violence on Hauraki whānau during periods of extreme stress, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Cyclone Gabrielle, and subsequent extreme weather events. A key Informant commented: *“We’re seeing a significant increase in family violence, and whānau seeking support for that and oranga hinengaro.”*

Pressures included *“loss of power, poverty, inadequate heating, and avoiding the impacts of family violence fits into the whole mix of things. Add the fact that we’ve had 10 extreme weather events in 2023, and it’s clearly identifying that Pare Hauraki needs attention, a level of fairness, and equity within the area for our people.”*

Informants also emphasised the necessity for additional research in Hauraki to comprehensively examine the impacts of COVID-19, extreme weather events, and the housing shortage, particularly addressing the social housing requirements of whānau Māori. They also reinforced the importance of embracing the ongoing housing initiatives Te Whāriki Mana Wāhine O Hauraki implemented in Manaia, Koputauaki, and Kennedy Bay as part of this research. This research should prioritise the needs of whānau Māori and incorporate compassionate housing initiatives to create safer and more supportive communities.

COMPASSIONATE SOLUTIONS: ‘Ū’- From within, the source of all sustenance

In the theme of ‘Ū’, compassionate solutions from within, Wāhine participants shared how they might achieve their aspirations of a home, and not just a house. They spoke of the importance of never giving up hope and being guided by tīpuna. They also touched on ideas of potentializing compassionate pathways that lead back to Pū: the source of the desire for home, for Kāinga.

The following infographic depicts compassionate pathways that lead Wāhine to give life to their solutions and to live their dream.

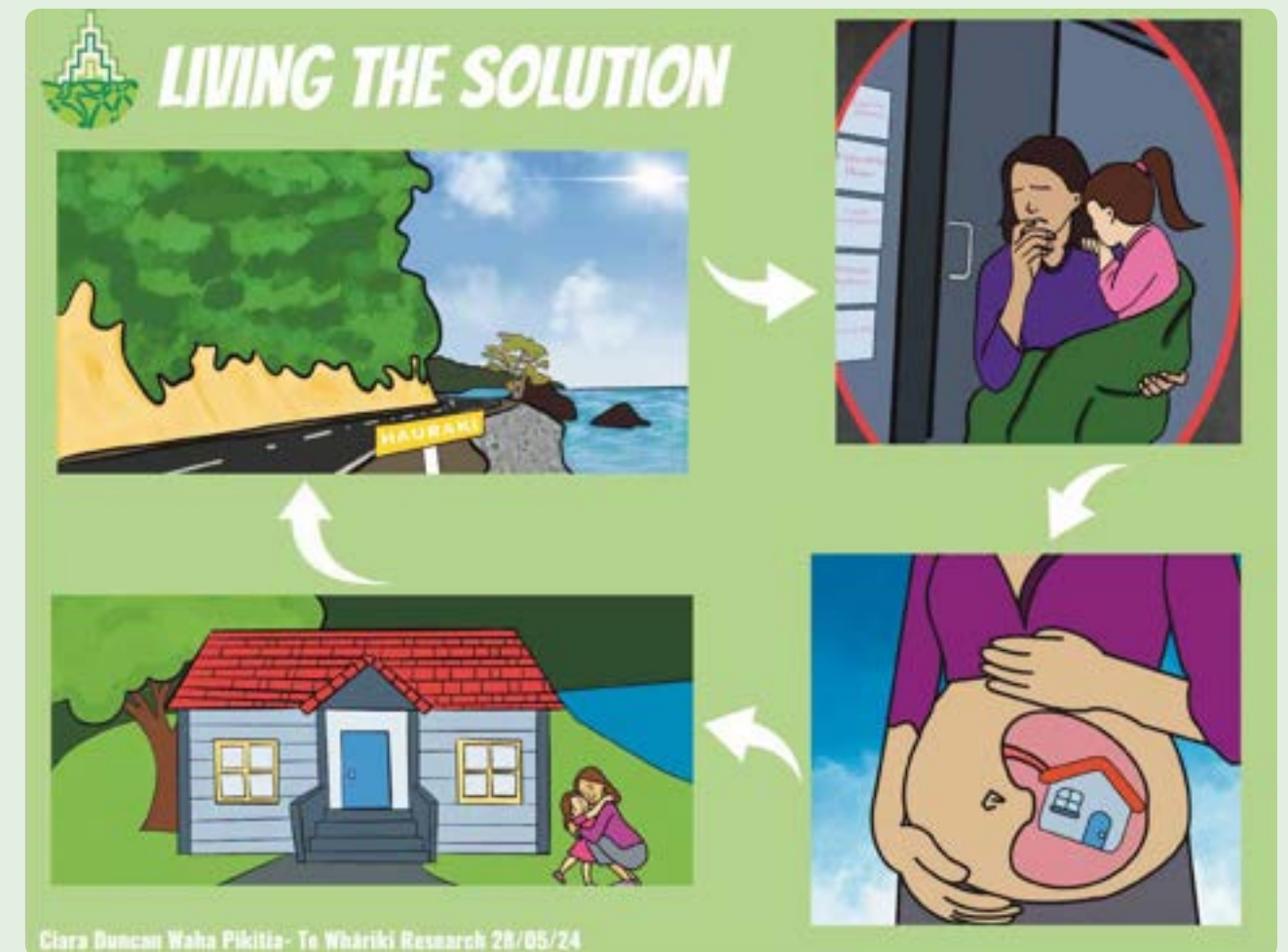
Binding the generations together

Wāhine talked about compassionate solutions that come from the heart, remembering, and reclaiming the past and how we used to live together in papakāinga with multi-generations of whānau taking care of each other, bonded through whakapapa. Each generation supported the next in this environment, with grandmothers as *“the glue binding the generations together,”* passing on essential knowledge and skills.

They discussed the concept of villages raising mokopuna, where the whenua acts as a nurturing and sustaining mother, a place of being, belonging, and embrace—a place to stand, protect, teach, and guide toward truth and correctness. They emphasised housing as a Tiriti right, aligned with the agenda of rangatiratanga. They advocated for *“government and Pākehā social services to step aside,”* as Wāhine Māori, confronted with the spectre of whānau violence, expressed a desire to *“no longer rely on the coloniser.”*

The significance of these discussions lies in recognising and reaffirming traditional Māori values and practices within communities. By emphasising the importance of compassion, intergenerational care, and connection to the whenua (land), Wāhine are advocating for holistic approaches to socially created issues. Their call to recognise housing as a Tiriti (Treaty) right aligns with the pursuit of self-determination and sovereignty (rangatiratanga) for Māori people. Additionally, their desire for autonomy from colonial structures in addressing whānau violence reflects a shift towards reclaiming agency and tino rangatiratanga. These discussions represent a broader movement towards cultural revitalisation, empowerment, and decolonisation within Māori communities.

Living compassionate solutions



Hearing, believing, and housing, Wāhine Māori recovering from mahi tūkino

Reinstating and reconnecting Wāhine to whenua and tikanga Māori, traditional Māori values, will help address the persistent impact of colonial barriers faced by Wāhine who have endured the debilitating effects of mahi tūkino. This includes the art of whakarongo, hearing, understanding, and believing their experience of living with and through mahi tūkino and their journey back to physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, and spiritual well-being.

“What’s essential for them in terms of safety is being heard, is being believed and is being understood, and then turning what’s being heard, what’s being believed and what’s being understood into action by those who have the authority or the power to do so.”

Compassionate solutions are also about reconnecting Wāhine to tīpuna knowledge, confirming they are whenua and come from the whenua, that the whenua is you and you belong to it.

“She held the dirt and said, what you have in your hand, learn when you smell it; it belongs to you. And if you go like this [motions], it is important to know that the whenua you stand on is yours.” And she said, “if you become an owner of that property like you are now, you are wealthy... Wealth is in the land that we live upon. The land that was handed down through the generations... it was what my grandfather inherited from his mother. And it is where I am today – where a lot of my family are. All defenders.”

By actively listening to Wāhine stories, believing their truths, and understanding their needs, we can take compassionate action to support their healing process and reconnect them back to their whenua.

Leveraging national and international covenants

Wāhine and key Informants emphasised, housing as a Te Tiriti o Waitangi right and the alignment of Te Tiriti with international covenants ratified by New Zealand. These include the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as well as the (CEDAW), the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly.

Additionally, some key informants noted New Zealand's status as a founding member of the United Nations and its membership in the United Nations Human Rights Council. One of them noted, *"Te Tiriti articles outline what our rights are as tangata whenua... under UNDRIP, UNCPRD... under the UDHR. Housing should be recognised as a Te Tiriti right, something inherent and natural for us to fulfil."*

The assertion of housing as a Te Tiriti o Waitangi right, reinforced by alignment with international agreements, signifies a call for action to ensure equitable access to housing for tangata whenua. It emphasises the importance of recognising Indigenous rights within national and global frameworks and stresses New Zealand's responsibility to uphold these principles as a member of the international community. This highlights the urgency of addressing housing disparities and advancing Indigenous rights to promote social justice and equality.

Redesigning empathetic housing policies

Wāhine and key Informants all addressed redesigning the system so that Wāhine and tamariki who are healing from mahi tūkino can live safely and with dignity from a mātauranga Māori platform. They discussed papakāinga housing on state-owned land and integrating wrap-around community hubs:

"We need to be developing papakāinga style housing on state-owned whenua, and not just our whenua which is what, less than 5% now...we need to build on state-owned lands and invest in kāinga with social support, education, and health hubs because that's how we grow whānau well-being, hauora, and collective well-being, but more importantly cultural identity and positioning as Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa."

A compassionate system deliberately does away with re-identifying the tangata whenua status of Wāhine and their whānau by refusing to use labels such as 'homelessness' and 'overcrowding'. These labels do not address the causes of housing poverty. Instead, the labels are levers for shifting the blame of failed colonial and neo-liberal policies that have escalated the reach of housing poverty onto Wāhine and their whānau, who carry the burden of risk for mahi tūkino.

"One of our major recommendations is a redesign of the system to do away with the labels ['homeless' and 'overcrowding'], and just house whānau...The other thing is a caring, compassionate approach to the way that government services are provided."

This section reiterates the importance of redesigning the housing system to be more inclusive, culturally compassionate, and supportive of the holistic well-being of Māori communities, particularly Wāhine and their tamariki, who wear the disproportionate impact of historical and systemic injustices.

Putting Wāhine and their whānau, hapū and iwi into Hauraki housing

Embracing a Māori-led approach to housing means prioritising and implementing relationships that continually strive for a genuine partnership under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, within and beyond the system. It involves creating a compassionate, community-centred housing system supported by aligning legislative and regulatory frameworks. This approach is reflected in the stories and insights shared by Wāhine and key Informants.

"We need to decolonise and reconstruct the way we are forced into a system and society. We want to ensure agencies are Māori driven...they need to know the layout of Hauraki iwi and hapū and whānau; they need to understand relationships here."

"There also needs to be this kōrero within local governments around the legislative and regulatory restrictions that stop our people from actually thriving."

"I don't think you can have a solution without having a true partnership with Māori, it can't be one-sided."

The choice, of the space taken up by her infant's car seat, or the space that allows this wāhine and three tamariki to comfortably sleep in their car.



"I ditched my baby's car seat so we had room enough to sleep"

“... start to devolve funding locally and, build those relationships, partnerships, and build up the Māori housing sector, because there is severe inequity between the Māori housing sector and non-Māori housing sector.”

“There needs to be this closer kōrero between government agencies, and iwi, hapu, and marae, and kaupapa Māori, iwi Māori organisations around the realities of Pare Hauraki...Sub-standard housing exists amongst our whānau – the infrastructure is pākaru and needs fixing.”

Key informants discussed potential solutions that are innovative and drew on successful historical examples that have helped support their whānau members on the pathway to home ownership.

Bridging past successes to future housing solutions

Key Informant's innovative solutions focused on accessing finance, measuring poverty, and implementing multigenerational housing arrangements. Additionally, there were discussions on leveraging mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) as a practical solution to accommodate Wāhine and their whānau recovering from the impacts of mahi tūkino. Key Informants emphasised the importance of integrating home ownership into service provision, including the provision of financial literacy. Some spoke to past government policies that facilitated Wāhine and whānau Māori to utilise the Family Benefit as a deposit for purchasing a house, suggesting the government should reconsider such approaches. As one participant recalled:

“Like, through Māori Affairs when we could use our family benefit as a deposit for a house mortgage... back to the days when the government would give a low-interest loan for people to buy their own homes.”

Wāhine and key Informants also shared ideas about practical and pertinent housing solutions. These solutions emphasise the importance of considering the real-time income of Wāhine and their whānau affected by mahi tūkino and the systemic obstacles they face in accessing suitable housing. They propose that entities with access to public and private funds for housing developments must change their perceptions regarding housing for whānau, particularly those with low incomes, including beneficiaries.

Moreover, whānau need to be actively involved in the planning process.

“On average, a whānau salary in Hauraki is \$30,000, so at a fundamental level, we need to change our thinking around social housing and intergenerational housing, and who it's for... [Wāhine] being a part of planning common sense housing that looks after our multigenerational whānau, labourers, and lower earners.”

Informants also advocate for a multigenerational approach to housing, suggesting that families should have the option of lifetime leases, lease-to-buy agreements, or other arrangements. This would allow the home to be passed down to their tamariki in the future.

“The home could be passed onto sons and daughters and as Tiriti partners, made landless, we should have an automatic right to a home and to live multi-generationally if that's what we want to do.”

Multi-generational housing is a means to activate mātauranga Māori living solutions to realise the vision of “Ma te pā, he tamaiti hei whakatipu.” Informants assert that multi-generational housing is cost-effective and accommodates diverse needs, including those of whānau members living with disabilities.

“Once you give whānau the ability to look after one another by not having to travel, the nanny looks after the moko, and the moko learn from the nannies...more eyes on the babies and so the house is safer. You've also got aunties there teaching everyone how to cook, how to function every day and how to provide for and protect one another. We want our whānau closer, but we can't because there's no housing here in Hauraki. Housing becomes cost-effective if it is designed to fit with people's needs...”

Multigenerational housing as an approach will integrate the socio-economic realities of raising tamariki and caring for kuia and koroua in a multi-generational housing complex. Rather than relying on service providers offering wraparound services, whānau do this for themselves with service providers acting as backup, not the primary support system.

Summarising the Findings

Connecting to Kāinga key insights reveal the many aspects of home, which go beyond just its physical form and location, to include culture, community, and belonging. Hauraki Wāhine in this research drew attention to home as a place of safety, stability, and whānau deeply rooted in ancestral connections, their whakapapa and whenua. These Wāhine bravely expressed hope for safe housing solutions, and despite facing violence, homelessness, historical, and social injustices, they exemplify remarkable resilience in their pursuit of belonging and security.

Creating Wellness insights centre on the enlightening experiences shared by Wāhine, creating pathways towards wellness amidst their experiences of mahi tūkino and housing poverty. In defining wellness, especially for their tamariki, Wāhine stories highlight the significance of safety, happiness, freedom from violence, recognition of whakapapa, connection to whenua, and healthy villages raising mokopuna.

Correcting Barriers is about reflecting on the past to move forward, to reveal a landscape of systemic entrapment and societal injustices Wāhine Māori face in Hauraki. From entrenched housing poverty to discrimination in housing service provision and education, the barriers are multifaceted and deeply ingrained. The Kāinga Ora housing system, for example, exacerbates these challenges, further marginalising Wāhine and limiting their options.

Compassionate Solution's key insights focus on the essentialness of actively listening to Wāhine stories, believing their truths, understanding their needs, and how compassionate action can be taken to support the healing process for Wāhine and whānau. Accessible healing pathways are key to safe and secure Kāinga for Wāhine, and reconnecting them to whenua, tikanga Māori and traditional Māori values, is a transformative compassionate action that can strengthen those pathways.

He Whare, He Taonga findings, confirm that there is a connection between mahi tūkino and housing poverty experienced by Wāhine Māori in Hauraki. At the core of this connection is the discrimination they face in their communities for trying to escape whānau violence and find a safe haven. The discrimination lubricates the componentry of persistent disadvantage and systemic entrapment, keeping Wāhine houseless and often forced to return to the violence at home.

Wāhine Māori in Hauraki are compelled to navigate government agencies such as Oranga Tamariki, Kāinga Ora, and the New Zealand Police, who hold them accountable for the violence they often have no choice but to endure. A key finding of this study is that Wāhine bear the burden of the violence, such as being forced to accept substandard (damp, cold, and mould-ridden) housing conditions, as well as living with the constant threat of having their children removed by Oranga Tamariki due to these conditions. This highlights the need for research to investigate beyond the violence at home and examine how systemic violence creates barriers to safety and healing for Wāhine and whānau.

The qualitative findings from interviews with Wāhine and Informants signpost the urgent need for innovative housing solutions tailored to the specific needs of whānau Māori, particularly those impacted by mahi tūkino and systemic violence. Drawing from historical successes and contemporary challenges, Informants' proposals advocate for a shift in perceptions and policies regarding housing access and ownership. They highlight the importance of financial literacy and mātauranga Māori and call for a more inclusive and proactive approach that prioritises the well-being and self-determination of wāhine and their whānau. The findings aim to foster stronger communities and address socio-economic disparities by promoting multigenerational housing models and integrating cultural values. Ultimately, the Call To Action is clear, meaningful change in housing policy and practice is essential to ensure the dignity, security, and tino rangatiratanga of wāhine and whānau Māori in Hauraki and beyond.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

“Write with your eyes like painters, with your ears like musicians, with your feet like dancers. You are the truth sayer with quill and torch. Write with your tongues of fire. Don’t let the pen banish you from yourself. Don’t let the ink coagulate in your pens. Don’t let the censors snuff out the spark, nor the gags muffle your voice. Put your shit on paper.”

(Moraga & Anzaldúa; 2022, p. 173)

Mana Wāhine research methodology (Pihama, 2001; Simmonds, 2011), was employed to elevate Wāhine experiences of whānau violence and related housing poverty in Hauraki. The research adopted a pūrākau, pū (base) rākau (tree) approach as a qualitative data collection method (Lee, 2005), and ‘Pū-Rā-Kā-Ū’ as an analytical framework (adapted from Wirihana, 2012). Additionally, a design-as-you-go approach was employed that incorporated two new methods, the ‘Brown Paper Bag’ and ‘Waha Pikitia.’ These Mana Wāhine methods aim to capture Hauraki Wāhine uniqueness in expressing their experiences of whānau violence and housing poverty.

Mana Wāhine Methodology

“Mana Wāhine, is a theoretical and methodological approach that explicitly examines the intersection of being Māori and female” (Simmonds, 2011, p. 11). When used concurrently and articulated through the eyes of contemporary Māori communities, the struggle for emancipation from oppressive colonial systems is exemplified while passionately expressing the desire to be liberated from that struggle (Moyle, 2014).

Mana Wāhine, informs and empowers Māori women to think about and understand their place in the world on their terms, according to their whenua-scape, while giving meaning to this. It is both a framework and a movement that has emerged because Māori women are no longer willing to be ‘othered’ or to have their lived experiences defined and redefined by others (Simmonds, 2011).

This project intentionally illuminates the voices of Wāhine Māori, enabling them to be key contributors towards housing solutions in Hauraki. It is from this standpoint that we come to understand societal violence, whānau violence, and related persistent housing poverty experienced by Hauraki Wāhine Māori and their whānau. Mana Wāhine allows us to move between these spaces to challenge, navigate, rediscover, and articulate our Wāhine tipuna ancestry. As such, we as their living representatives must write ourselves back into our herstory and embark on greater ways of making our voices heard and understood.

In the same way, our Wāhine participants expressed their desire to be a part of this research, and despite what they face daily, they are not silent about what matters to them. Even when they do not always have the resources they need, Wāhine described passionately how they do the best with what they have, to take care of themselves and their tamariki.

The Brown Paper Bag method

The position of Wāhine doing their best with what little they had, kept appearing during our research as a ‘brown paper bag.’ Our team decided it symbolises this research and is a guiding emancipation method. The team also mused how its plastic counterpart symbolised colonisation:

In comparison, the plastic bag is a hangry [hungry and angry] item, meaning it consumes more than it can safely carry. It’s an imposter; in the water, it appears as a jellyfish, and it is the number one killer of the Blue Whale. That’s colonisation, something that presents as good for you, slowly chokes you to death, and takes 400 years or more to break down.

The brown paper bag also appeared as a tool for one of our research wānanga.

I went to the supermarket down the road to buy some flipcharts, but they didn’t have any. I bought some kai and other stuff, and, walking back to the car with my brown paper bags, I thought we’ll pull these apart and use them. You have to be open to the possibilities, opportunities, and options and to the obvious and the most appropriate answer at that time.

The paper bags were dismantled fold-by-fold and then flattened out to write on, as we jotted down our ideas and documented a process for weaving our project together. The bags were transformed from holders of goods to useable parchment for documenting and navigating our thinking. Our research team talked about kai for our whare, kai for thought, kai for our soul, and the unobtrusive, ordinary brown paper bag being the guiding symbolic and physical repository of our research journey.

The paper bag appeared again during the interviews with participants. A participant’s son, a boy with autism, was running around the yard of

the safe house with a paper bag mask on. In his short four years, he had experienced a lot of violence between his parents. When asked what his superpower was, he responded, *“Oh, I can be anybody I want, and you can’t see me.”*

In this sense, the paper bag could be described as a place for this boy to speak from or hide in, as a coping mechanism, a protectant, or a distraction. It might be a freedom that allows you to pack up what little you have, of a quick escape, of leaving an unsafe situation to start a new life; a metaphor for the journey of a person’s life starting anew with a bag that’s full of potential and unknowns.

The paper bag might convey the idea of four walls, limitation, or being frustrated or feeling couped up, and carrying hard stuff items like whānau violence and sexual violence, intergenerational trauma, that if too overburdened the bottom falls out of it. Thus, indicating the bag’s vulnerability and how quickly it can be disposed of. Or it represents ideas of value, worth, poverty, disability, protection, security, or freedom; and often the answers we seek can be right in front of us.



It reminds me of the kōrerō that the answers are in basics, no flashy flashy things, and the solutions are just right there.

Symbolic of all that is home in Aotearoa, the brown paper bag was used for various everyday whānau purposes. Where things were ordinary, a familiar place, the norm, and conveyed simplicity and the humble appreciation for the small daily joys of life.

The brown paper bag takes me back to childhood when things were a lot slower. It's the childhood connection and connection to the past. It's a different world today, so busy and complex. The brown paper bag was what you used to go to the shop and get the bread and come home again. Just simplicity and peace.

In our team discussions, we became aware of the 'brown paper bag test', used in the 20th century as a racist discriminatory practice within African American communities (Carlton, 2022).

When we didn't have the white flimsy paper, we got the hardy brown paper. It represents the participants because at another time the brown paper bag was used as a test of skin colour; if you were darker than the bag held to your face then you were excluded from privileged spaces such as a school or a club.

This is not too dissimilar to what the Wāhine described when they, for example, were denied housing based upon being Māori, women, single and poor. It suggests that the paper bag has a herstory here in Hauraki that conveys different ideas and meanings depending on the context and the perspective of those viewing it. Ideas of being poor, brown, and lower class, as the bag is what they use to carry their belongings and kai. In contrast, it might signify protection and security.

The paper bag is what we as kids in state care carried our worth around in as we were trucked from placement to placement. The bag held all of that, and in some ways for a while, it protected the sum-total of a child's worth.

Made of stiff brown kraft paper, the paper bag represented resilience, substance, and versatility.

Even now as I touch the paper bag it's a lot stronger, its substance feels solid like it could take a beating, sorry for the use of that pun [laughter]. We pulled them apart and they naturally became a part of our wānanga and our kōrero.

So, it represents a range of things for me, like their versatility, deconstructing the paper bags to put our thinking on, and getting the job done!

The brown paper bag is a descriptor of the research insights and how these are woven with the solutions throughout the project.

There is something in this korero that speaks to me about a return to a system that is simple and accessible, usable, resourceful, and multi-purpose; it's a descriptor of where we might go with our solutions. Whilst we use the paper bag analogy to help sort our thinking our wānanga and our ideas, I think too it has a place in our solutions. We can reuse it [the approach] and recycle it again and again.

Whilst the brown paper bag has been used to hold our initial writings about our research journey and insights, we realised that there are other tools, as extensions of pūrākau, that depict the lived realities of those in Hauraki who are so often silenced. One of those tools is *Waha Pikitia*.

Waha Pikitia method

Waha Pikitia, is an original data collection method incorporating photography, infographics, and other media to engage marginalised groups in visually communicating and documenting their lives. During the interviews, participants asked our interviewer for ways to “*see ourselves in the research beyond just a quote*” or receiving a transcript or a final report. As a result, one of our team created Waha Pikitia; influenced by the adage “*a picture is worth one thousand words*”. It is a powerful idea that a single image can convey a wealth of information, more than a thousand words ever could. Visual communications as digital storytelling is an important way of passing on knowledge and uses various tools to help diverse people create powerful and emotionally engaging personal narratives (Lee, 2009). Translating dense research data into compelling visuals makes the information more accessible and understandable to a broader audience.

This form of data collection enables Indigenous world views, Māori cultural values, and collective expression in research methods. It also allows Māori research participants to not have to rely on the spoken word alone, and the common one-off qualitative interview. Rather it allows for them to be self-determining and a part of the decolonising research, process.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval for this research was gained from UNITEC. Access to the raw data is restricted to the research team only and in line with the Wāhine and key Informants’ ethical approval and informed consent. Every care has been taken to protect the anonymity of participants. Informed consent forms have been held separately from the data, and transcripts held in password-protected digital files. All data will be destroyed after seven years.

Wāhine participants - Selection and circumstances

Twenty-three (23) Wāhine Māori were selected to share their intergenerational experiences of mahi tūkino and related housing poverty. Eight (8) Wāhine were key Informants invited to participate as Hauraki Māori health and social service providers and local government. They had been recommended by other agencies.

The other fifteen (15) Wāhine were recruited from a list of thirty (30) using an anonymised random selection process from the Te Whāriki client database. They each had an established relationship with their Te Whāriki support worker, who facilitated engagement with the research interviewer. The women were all over the age of 16 years, had whakapapa connections to Hauraki, and lived in or close to Hauraki.

At the time of their interview, seven (7) Wāhine were housed in emergency housing or a refuge safehouse. One of those Wāhine had just come out of prison, and another, who was a long-term resident in the safehouse, was unable to get housing because of a manslaughter conviction she said she received from trying to defend herself from her partner’s violence.

Most of the Wāhine living in the safehouse at the time of their interview had one or more children. Four of the Wāhine had at least one child with a clinically diagnosed neurodiverse condition, and one child had a profound disability. In all, there were fourteen children, ranging from one (1) year to thirteen (13) years.

Eight (8) of the fifteen Wāhine interviewed were not in emergency housing when they were interviewed. Of these eight women, three (3) lived on whānau whenua surrounded by other whānau from their hapū, and the other five (5) lived in some form of permanent to semi-permanent dwelling.

One lived in a caravan at a caravan park, and one had been living in her car for three years but had recently accessed a house through Kāinga Ora. The remaining three rented privately. Almost all the participants talked about having some form of connection to gang whānau, either through their partner or adult children.

Semi-structured interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews were undertaken, lasting between 40 to 80 minutes. Wāhine were asked to describe where they grew up, what the concept of ‘home’ meant to them, what being safe and well meant, what affected their housing journeys, and what needed to change to meet their housing aspirations. The kōrerō pūrākau interview process supported the Wāhine to tell their story in a way that enabled autonomy over their lived experiences (Lee, 2009). After transcribing the interviews, all identifying features were removed (such as names, place names and geographical area), and a code was given to each Wahine. Whanaungatanga, karakia and kai were a part of establishing connections. In some of the interviews, Wāhine were supported by her Te Whāriki kaimahi. Koha was also given to Wahine at the close of their interview.

‘Themalysis’ a take on thematic analysis

Through wānanga, brown paper bags captured our team’s unpacking of the Wāhine responses to our question: *What are the housing challenges for Hauraki Wāhine Māori and their whānau who are experiencing housing poverty arising from their experiences of mahi tūkino?* At one of our wānanga, we unpacked a process of ordering our themes by using the notion of Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) (Inayatullah, 2019).

We brainstormed ideas around organising and interpreting the qualitative data (the issue through the eyes of the Wāhine participants and key Informants) and what legitimates the issue, such as “whose worldview shapes the issue, whose voice is being heard and whose is not?” We considered the social, economic, and political structural factors involved, such as societal and systemic violence. The goal is to understand better the backstory and roots of the issue and, therefore, an opportunity in the long term for meaningful change in relationships and social systems to occur.

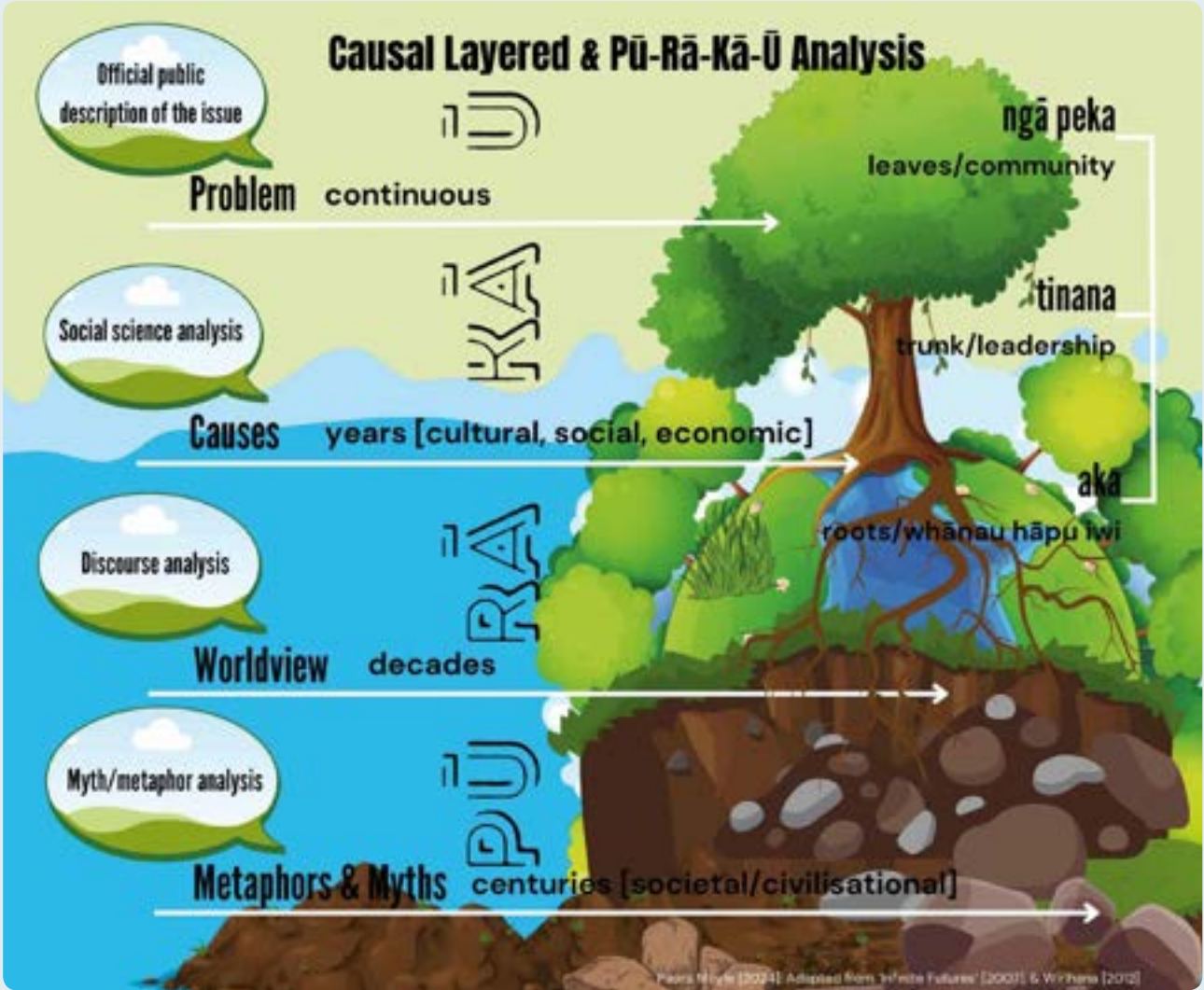
CLA and Pū-Rā-Kā-Ū analysis framework

The CLA and Pū-Rā-Kā-Ū analysis framework adapted by one of our team from the work of Wirihana (2012) was used to unpack and organise the participants’ kōrero (see infographic below). One of the unique features of combining the CLA and Pū-Rā-Kā-Ū is the ability to explore the different layers and the roots of an issue over space and time.

In the context of conveying the significance of this approach, the framework can be depicted as a tree; the roots represent whānau, hapū and iwi, the trunk symbolises leadership (tinana), and the leaves depict the community (ngā peka). In the context of time, the continuous problem/s in the present are represented by the young leaves of the tree, the causes over years are the roots of the tree, the worldview over decades are the compacted layers of earth, and the metaphors/ myths over centuries are the rocks and stones.

Each part contributes to the overall health and growth of the system over time. It connects us to our roots, enlightens us through our experiences, inspires solutions from within, and encourages us to correct barriers by reflecting on our past, present, and future. It is a framework that analyses and guides us towards action and change.

CLA and Pū-Rā-Kā-Ū enabled the intentional fore-fronting of Wāhine voices and helped uncover the layers inside the stories (Lee, 2009). These layers were then sorted into broader elements and insights. The layers are crafted from Wāhine verbatim quotes, aiming to compile quotable insights from the Wāhine pūrākau. Our thinking is that the quotable insights do not require retranslating; what is required is letting Wāhine insightful voices speak for themselves, which is their living analysis response to our overarching research question.



CHAPTER 4 – DEMOGRAPHIC and LITERATURE SNAPSHOT

DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

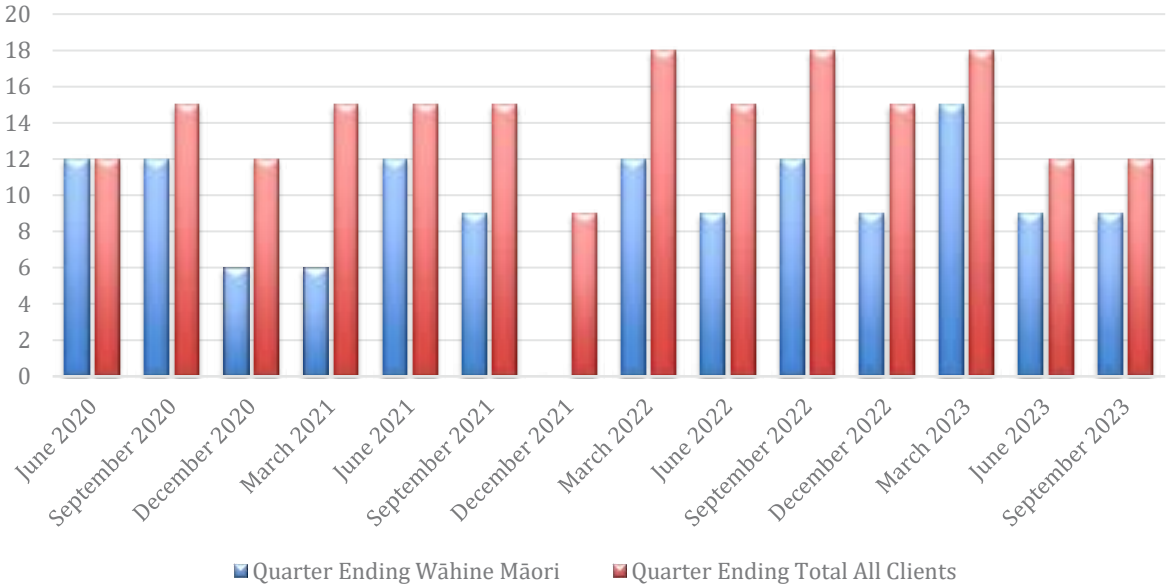
Emergency Housing and Mahi Tūkino Correlation in Hauraki

The emergency housing and mahi tūkino-related information outlined in the next section is limited to the Thames Coromandel District Council and Hauraki District Council regions. The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) data is sourced from their approved emergency housing suppliers (motels) and Public Housing Register (PHR) from 1 January 2020 to September 2023.

Data from Te Whāriki Manawāhine o Hauraki (Te Whāriki) highlighting the emergency housing occupation rates from 1 January 2020 to May 2024 are also used. This data and that from MSD provide an insight into housing poverty experienced by Hauraki Wāhine, with lived experience of mahi tūkino.

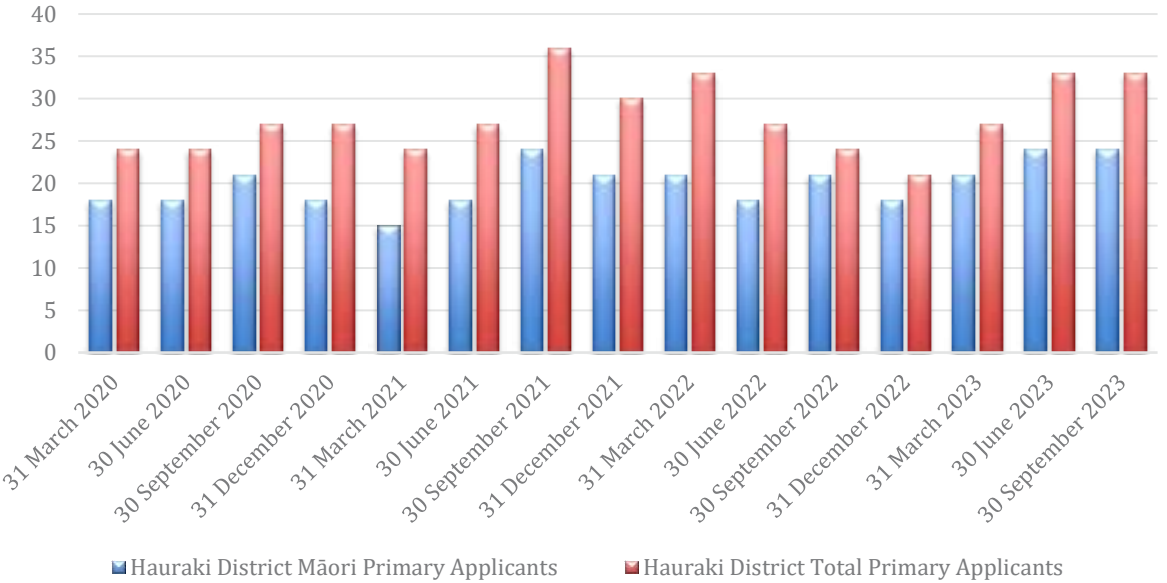
MSD Emergency Housing and Public Housing Numbers

Wāhine in Hauraki in MSD Emergency Housing
Jan 2020 - Sept 2023



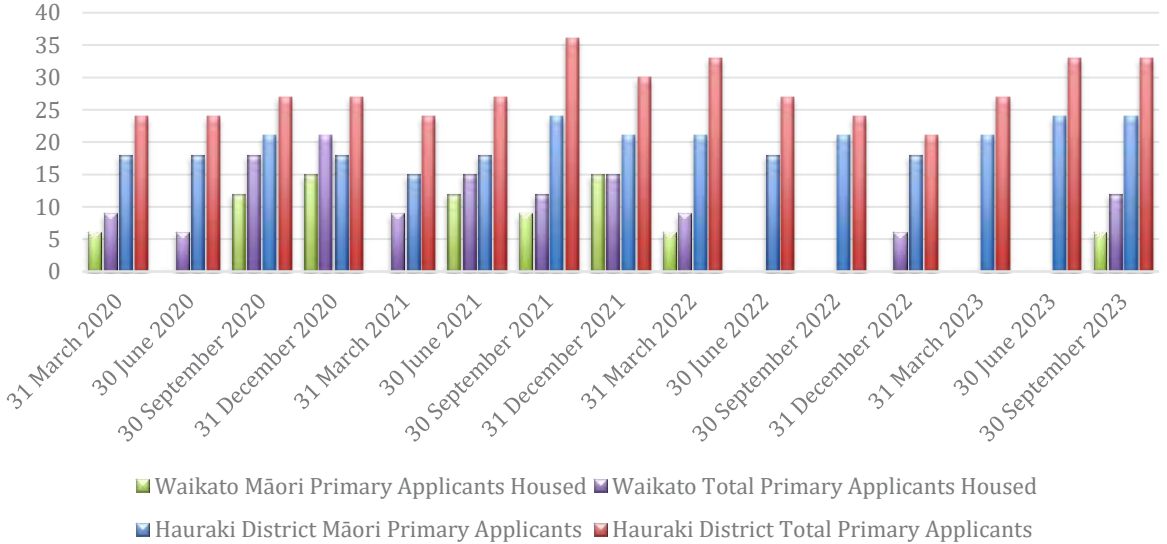
This graph shows that 105 Wāhine lived in emergency housing from January 2020 to September 2023; of that total, 70 or 66% were Wāhine Māori.

Wāhine in Hauraki on the Public Housing Register
Jan 2020 - Sept 2023



This graph represents the quarterly reported numbers of Wāhine with at least one tamariki on the PHR. From January 2020 to September 2023, there were approximately 720 Wāhine. 300, or 42%, identified as Wāhine Māori. 417, or 58%, did not identify as Wāhine Māori.

Wāhine on Public Housing Register, Violence-Related
Flag & Housed
Jan 2020 - Sept 2023



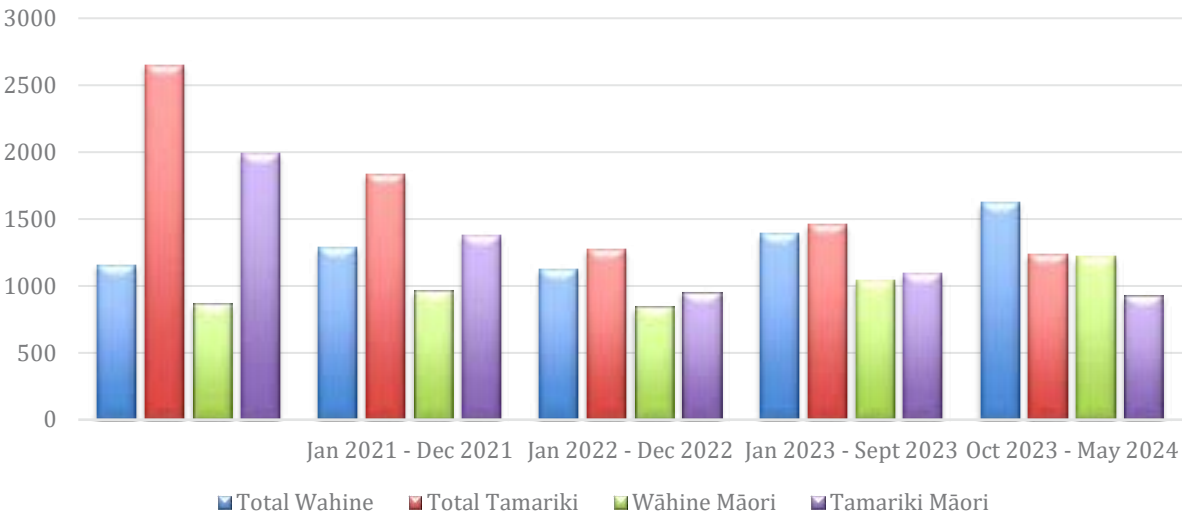
This chart shows, by quarter, the number of Hauraki Wāhine Māori on the PHR with violence-related incidences housed between Jan 2020 and Sept 2023. In total, 132 Wāhine with recorded mahi tūkino were housed. 81 or 61% identified as Wāhine Māori, and 51 or 39% did not. It shows they were housed in the Waikato region, as this is where the recommending case manager for Work and Income was based at the time of the application, which can differ from the actual residential address.

Te Whāriki Emergency Housing Occupation Numbers

From 1 January 2020 to 30 May 2024, Te Whāriki received 500 referrals from the Waikato Integrated Safety Response (ISR)

and provided mahi tūkino-related emergency housing support to 80 Wāhine and their tamariki. Stays in the organisation’s emergency housing went beyond the timeframe limits for emergency housing due to the lack of demand-driven public housing and private rentals in the Hauraki region.

Occupancy Rates in Emergency Housing Provided by Te Whāriki
Jan 2020 - May 2024



This chart shows the quarterly occupancy Bednights for Wāhine and tamariki who met the criteria to stay in emergency housing provided by Te Whāriki. In total, Te Whāriki provided 15,000 violence-related emergency Bednights. 6,589, or 44%, were Wāhine emergency Bednights. 8,449 or 56% were tamariki emergency Bednights. 11,250, or 75%, were occupied by Wāhine Māori and their tamariki.

On average, Te Whāriki provide 3,000 mahi tūkino-related emergency Bednights to Wāhine and tamariki, and 2,250 of those are for Hauraki Wāhine Māori.

Summary

The data on emergency housing and public housing information from MSD and Te Whāriki indicates that there is a correlation between mahi tūkino and housing poverty for Wāhine and their tamariki. Specifically, the data shows that Wāhine Māori make up:

- 66% of all Wāhine in emergency housing
- 42% of those on the PHR
- 61% of those on the PHR with recorded mahi tūkino incidences who were housed
- 75% of all Wāhine and their tamariki in emergency housing provided by Te Whāriki

LITERATURE SNAPSHOT

International Context

International research indicates that violence is the leading cause of women’s housing instability and homelessness (Aigbolosimon Famous, 2023; Bhattacharjee & Narayan, 2024; Cuthill, 2019; Springer, 2022). The demographic groups most in need of housing solutions encompass older women, young women and girls, women with disabilities, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women with large numbers of children, and women residing in rural and remote regions (Fraser, 2023; Pathak et al., 2019).

Research also indicates that many women are forced to return to their abusers due to a lack of housing (Mayock & Neary, 2021; Phipps et al., 2019). Furthermore, the evidence shows that poverty poses the most significant obstacle to finding appropriate housing, leaving women without the income or resources to meet their basic needs, let alone access meaningful employment or supportive networks (Bassuk et al., 1996; Jury et al., 2017). Other systemic barriers compound the challenge, with complex processes hindering access to essential supports like income, health, legal aid, and housing (Nikora et al., 2012). Additionally, navigating justice and social service systems often re-traumatises victims, forcing them to recount their experiences multiple times to access necessary assistance (Bukowski, 2009a; Charvin-Fabre et al., 2023; McMinn, 2021; Nikora et al., 2012).

The international evidence describes the significant external challenges and barriers women face, including racism and discrimination from landlords and social housing agencies, further complicating their search for safety and stability (Bukowski, 2009b; Chen, 1993; Lewis et al., 2020). These barriers present multifaceted obstacles that needlessly worsen these women’s lives, making their situation more dire. The ramifications of this are evidenced by higher-than-average statistics of poor health resulting from violence, including physical injury, stress, depression, PTSD, and addictions (Cresswell, 2018). These negative health effects of violence act as a barrier to housing, while simultaneously forcing women to live in unsafe and unacceptable conditions (Bukowski & Buetow, 2011; Johnson, 2009). As such, these women experience a vicious, self-perpetuating cycle where poor mental and physical health makes it difficult to access appropriate housing, and inadequate housing exacerbates their health and well-being (Cresswell, 2018).

Impact on Indigenous Women

Low life satisfaction and feelings of poor safety are also associated with a higher risk of victimisation, with more than half of those who experienced violence showing symptoms of high psychological distress (Devries et al., 2013). This risk is significantly more pronounced for Indigenous women (Blagg et al., 2018; Learning Network, 2018). Scholarly sources indicate that Indigenous women and children experiencing family violence, frequently cycle in and out of homelessness due to limited safe housing options. Despite attempting to leave, they often decide to remain, have no choice but to remain, or are forced to return to unsafe housing situations (Bullock et al., 2020; Devries et al., 2013; Learning Network, 2018; Long, 2015).

There is no single solution to family violence-related homelessness for Indigenous women and children, especially when relocation means moving away from extended family and community (Meyer, 2012). Nonetheless, common recommendations point to a standard approach, including the development of culturally appropriate responses to family violence, improved integration between housing, family violence, and child protection services, and enhanced access to crisis and transitional accommodation options. It is believed that implementing this standard approach should reduce rates of injury and death among Indigenous women and decrease the number of Indigenous children taken into state care by child protection services, while significantly increasing the availability of social housing stock (Calgary Domestic Violence Collective and Calgary Action Committee on Housing & Homelessness, 2013).

The review of the literature highlights the significant global contribution of violence against women to housing instability and homelessness, a situation notably acute in Aotearoa, where Wāhine Māori and whānau are disproportionately affected.

Aotearoa Context

In Aotearoa (New Zealand), Wāhine Māori are more likely to experience family violence than their European counterparts (Fanslow et al., 2010). Compared to other women living in Aotearoa, Wāhine Māori carry the greatest burden of family violence as victims of assault and homicide. Wāhine Māori are three times, and tamariki are four times more likely to be victims of family violence-related homicide (NZ Family Violence Clearing House, 2017). The decision to leave a violent situation is complex for wāhine and tamariki, and these complexities urgently need to be more widely understood. To support women leaving violent relationships in Aotearoa we must prioritise access to safe and affordable housing (Cram et al., 2023).

Structural and Systemic Entrapment

Within current legislation, inadequate, insecure housing and unsafe homes are reasons for the removal of children, and mothers are often forced to face an untenable position. If shortages in crisis and long-term housing mean a safe home away from the perpetrator cannot be found, women risk child removal whether they leave or stay (Cripps & Habibis, 2019).

This risk of child removal was also a key finding in Wilson, Mikaere-Hall, Sherwood, Cootes, and Jackson’s (2019) study on the experiences of Māori women in violent relationships. Despite living with abusive partners wāhine Māori in this study did not perceive themselves as vulnerable, until the moment came when they needed to reach out for support. One of the greatest fears these women held, was one of losing custody of their children to the state and this was a significant deterrent from seeking support for the violence they experienced at home. These wāhine either had direct experience with their tamariki being placed in state care or knew of others who had faced such situations.

Further, the Wilson et al. study found that government support agencies often adopted a deficit-focused and victim-blaming stance.

Rather, than understanding the situational and contextual challenges these women face, the agencies concentrated on what the women were failing to do. This left Wāhine feeling powerless, unprotected and muted, by the very system that was supposed to support them. Wilson et al. describe this:

Systemic entrapment for Māori women in relationships is not rooted in a single cause; it’s intricate and varies based on the women’s current situations, their resource availability, and their previous interactions with essential services for ensuring their and their children’s safety. Moreover, seeking necessary assistance was often accompanied by feelings of shame and a heightened sense of vulnerability due to their circumstances and the need to request aid. At such times, the women’s need for help was critical, as it was the only way to continue providing care and safety for their children (Wilson et al., 2019, p.32).

The study emphasised the critical need to address the multifaceted aspects of structural inequality that wāhine Māori encounter. Further, the impacts of colonisation in Aotearoa are not merely one aspect of their struggle but are integral to the very system that perpetuates their persistent inequality and deprivation.

In the next section, we discuss the Hauraki context of colonisation, where extensive land confiscation and alienation contribute to critical levels of deprivation, dependency, poor health, housing poverty and social outcomes evidenced in the current inequalities for Hauraki (Waitangi Tribunal, 2006).

Hauraki Context

According to the 2018 census, the deprivation statistics indicate that in 2018, 4590 Māori were living in Hauraki. The statistics show that the Māori age structure is much younger than non-Māori, with 33.5% under 15 years compared with 13.7% for non-Māori. Hauraki’s median income was about 20% lower than that of Aotearoa. The median income for Māori 15 years and over was approximately \$23,000.00 compared with \$26,000.00 for non-Māori. This means that the resource available for Māori children (under 15) from Māori adults (15 and over) was approximately a third less than that available to non-Māori children from non-Māori adults.

The Māori unemployment rate (8.2%) was more than double the non-Māori rate (less than 3.5%). Between 2006 and 2018, the Māori population grew 6.5 times faster than the non-Māori population of Hauraki, which indicates a community under stress (Waitangi Tribunal 2006; Stats NZ, 2018). Thus, Hauraki whānau experience disproportionate rates of family violence and disenfranchisement from whānau, hapū, iwi, whenua and reo, along with the systemic impacts of racial and gender bias. Increasing numbers of Wāhine Māori are disclosing intrafamilial violence (Te Whāriki Manawāhine o Hauraki, 2021).

Despite the Hauraki context, Hauraki Wāhine remain resilient in their determination to realise compassionate Hauraki housing solutions that rectify the mahi tūkino-housing poverty connection. Their resolve is evidenced by leading the compilation of a strategic housing plan in 2021, implementing the Te Manawatahi o Hauraki Housing Network, and more recently co-designing and contributing to findings in this study. By recognising and acting upon these findings, policymakers, stakeholders, and community leaders, in partnership with Wāhine Māori, can work together to implement meaningful solutions and create lasting positive change in housing outcomes for Hauraki Wāhine Māori and their families.

The next section summarises systemic barriers to housing and proposed solutions discussed at length, in four recent and significant reports.

System Barriers and Changes to Improve Housing Outcomes

Our research team is aware of the limited studies regarding the impact of systemic barriers for Wāhine and whānau with housing needs impacted by mahi tūkino. However, we acknowledge that many whānau experiencing or who have experienced mahi tūkino will have likely contributed their voices to the four following inquiries (in summary):

- 1. Stage One Kāinga Kore report on homelessness by the Waitangi Tribunal, 2023.
- 2.Right to Adequate Housing by the United Nations Special Rapporteur, 2021.
- 3.Inquiry report by the Human Rights Commission into the Right to a Decent Home 2021.
- 4.The 2021 report by the Productivity Commission on the nature and causes of persistent disadvantage in New Zealand and the system changes required to dismantle those.

1. The Waitangi Tribunal Wai 2750 Inquiry - Stage one Kāinga Kore

The Waitangi Tribunal Inquiry, Wai 2750, is a kaupapa inquiry into contemporary Māori Housing issues brought to the tribunal by whānau, hapū and iwi from across the country. Their claims allege the Crown’s failure to ensure adequate housing standards for Māori living in rural and urban settings or to deliver state services, programmes and support enabling Māori access to adequate housing.

Stage one of the inquiry focused on Māori homelessness from 2009 to the present, which was undertaken in 2021. In 2023, the Tribunal released Kāinga Kore, its report on stage one and the Tribunal’s report about Māori homelessness. The Tribunal found that the Crown had breached its treaty obligations regarding the principles of active protection, equity, and good government in that:

- It formulated a definition of homelessness in 2009 without adequate consultation with Māori, and it took little to no action to address rising levels of Māori homelessness in subsequent years.
- It formulated a Māori housing strategy but did not implement it.
- It tightened access to the social housing register despite Māori reliance on social housing while reducing public and/or social housing stock. ⁸

The Tribunal also found that the Crown has continued to breach the Treaty of Waitangi through its limited consultation about its new housing strategy, its ongoing failure to collect thorough homelessness data, the shortcomings in inter-agency coordination, its continued failure to reform the welfare system to improve outcomes for Māori, and its lack of support for rangatahi experiencing homelessness (Waitangi Tribunal Report, 2023). Stage two of Wai 2750 is due to commence in 2024.

2. Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing

In February 2020, at the invitation of the New Zealand Government, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing visited Aotearoa (The Rapporteur).

8 Coxhead, Judge CT (2023, 17 May) Letter (foreword of report) to Ministers Jackon, Woods, Davidson, Allan, Davis, Little, Russell, Sepuloni, Prime (pp xi – xiv).



In 2021, in her report to the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Rapporteur highlighted that the housing emergency confronting New Zealand is a human rights crisis that the Government must urgently address (p. 1). She also noted the high rates of homelessness, inaccessible housing stock, unaffordability and escalating rents, and substandard conditions, including overcrowding. The report also highlighted a lack of secure tenancy for renters, social, affordable, and community housing for those in need, as well as a lack of affordable family dwellings available for homeownership (p.9).

The Special Rapporteur highlighted that the housing crisis was being experienced more acutely by Māori, Pacific Peoples and other ethnic communities, people with disabilities, single parents (particularly single mothers), youth and children, and those living in poverty (p. 2).

Māori Suffer Worst Housing Outcomes

In the report, the Rapporteur details the debilitating socio-economic circumstances that are part and parcel of Māori living with the worst housing outcomes in Aotearoa, highlighting they (p. 14):

- Were disproportionately represented among homeless populations.
- Experience a higher rate of disability than non-Māori (32 % of the total population, when adjusted for age).
- Have a lower median weekly income.
- Represent 60 per cent of those receiving Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants for short-term emergency accommodation.
- Were 36 per cent of social housing tenants.
- Are four times more likely to live in overcrowded housing conditions than people of European heritage.
- Homeownership rates in 2018 were 47 per cent, compared to 64 per cent for the general population.
- Are 32% of those under 25 years old living in homeless situations.

Adequate Housing and Te Tiriti o Waitangi

The Treaty of Waitangi (the Treaty) and the right to adequate housing in New Zealand were fundamental to establishing rights, obligations, expectations, and responsibilities for all New Zealanders.

Further to this, considering the Treaty in a meaningful way requires “an exploration” of the country’s history of colonisation, land dispossession, forced assimilation and racism, and the contemporary consequences of these on and for Māori (p. 5).

The report highlights that the poor housing outcomes for Māori require significant and urgent targeted action to meet their current housing needs (p. 14) to promote both human rights and restore Treaty rights.

As well as recognising the Treaty as the source of rights and expectations for all New Zealanders, the right to adequate housing is highlighted as extremely important to improving the housing outcomes of whānau (p. 5). The characteristics necessary for housing to be adequate include:

1. Legal security of tenure,
2. Availability of services, materials, facilities, and infrastructure,
3. Habitability,
4. Accessibility,
5. Location, and
6. Cultural adequacy (p. 4).

Further, the right to decent housing should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace, and dignity alongside an adequate standard of living and other rights such as the rights to food, water, and sanitation (p. 4).

International Treaties

The right to a decent home is enshrined in international human rights treaties, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Over the last 50 years, successive New Zealand governments have signed these human rights treaties, which include the responsibility for implementing the right to a decent home in Aotearoa. In the face of having ratified these treaties, the Commission highlights:

Despite these promises and binding responsibilities, our housing system is in crisis. For many people, the simple goal of an affordable, healthy, accessible home is beyond reach (p. 9).

3. Human Rights Commission Inquiry into the Right to a Decent Home

In 2021, Te Kāhui Tika Tangata Human Rights Commission (the Commission) launched a national inquiry into the right to a decent home. It released its final report in July 2023,

“Implementing the Right to a Decent Home in Aotearoa: Fairness and Dignity for All.”

In summary, the Commission’s report illuminated breaches of housing rights in Aotearoa and outlined steps to take to ensure a housing system they consider would improve the housing outcomes of whānau.

The Right to a Decent Home and Te Tiriti o Waitangi

In its report, the Commission champions that the right to a decent home must be shaped by and give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (p. 10). Further, the Commission highlights that recognising the country’s colonial history and the ongoing impacts of colonisation on the rights and well-being of whānau is essential to realising the human right to a decent home.

The systematic dispossession of Māori from their land, pervasive systemic racism and culturally inadequate government housing policies continue to hinder Māori housing initiatives, both on ancestral Māori lands and general land titles. Specific instances of land loss, racist policies and self-discriminatory practices have perpetuated inequity, and these detrimental effects on Māori housing persist to this day (p. 10).

The Commission acknowledges that giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi is complex. However, at a minimum, partnership and collaboration with Tangata Whenua provides an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and will ensure collective decision-making (p. 10).

Housing Systems and Challenges

Regarding housing system challenges and failures, the Commission highlighted that we still face a housing crisis caused by decades of institutional neglect, including failure to give effect to a decent home (p. 12). On top of the housing crisis, complicating factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and response, serious building industry supply issues, and a challenging global economic environment were also raised.

The Commission highlighted that whānau live with the unrelenting compounding impacts of historic institutional failure and the fallout of a global economic environment presenting in Māori lives as increasing levels of hardship, poverty, and homelessness. This situation, says the Commission, was aggravated by the failure of successive governments to implement Te Tiriti o Waitangi grounded accountability arrangements.

In response to its findings, the Commission has advocated for six high-level system corrective actions intended to enable the realisation of the right to a decent home. The recommendations are for the Crown to:

- Commit to legislative recognition of the right to a decent home, shaped by and giving effect to te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- Integrate the right to a decent home into housing policy-making processes.
- Appoint one or more human rights, Tiriti and equity officers within our lead housing and housing policy agencies.
- Fulfil the obligations in te Tiriti o Waitangi, including recognising, respecting, and supporting Māori tino rangatiratanga regarding Māori housing.
- Strengthen accountability and participation across the housing system in a manner shaped by and giving effect to te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- Implement effective accountability measures that adequately protect and enforce the right to a decent home for everyone, including renters and residents in emergency and transitional housing (p. 35).

4. The Productivity Commission Inquires into Persistent Disadvantage

The New Zealand Productivity Commission Te Kōmihana Whai Hua o Aotearoa (Productivity Commission), in its 2023 report, “A Fair Chance for All”, says persistent disadvantage is “ongoing, whether for two or more years, over a life course, or intergenerationally (p. 15).” They found that Māori, people with disabilities, Pacific peoples, and sole parents experienced higher rates of persistent disadvantage compared with the rest of the peak working-age households in New Zealand (p. 24).

Persistent Disadvantage: A Systemic Generated Problem

The Productivity Commission emphasised that there have been numerous reports and recommendations on addressing disadvantage, yet it persists. One of the reasons, as highlighted by the Productivity Commission, is a lack of political commitment. Even when there is commitment, factors within the public management system can create or exacerbate disadvantage rather than reduce it. This includes decision-makers not being held accountable and corrective actions not being promptly applied.



The Productivity Commission also reported that although sector-specific policies have received attention on many occasions, there has been much less investigation on the role of the public management system itself in addressing persistent disadvantages (p. 26).

The Drivers of Persistent Disadvantage

The Productivity Commission reports there are four underpinning barriers driving persistent disadvantage. These are:

- Policy and service responses that are strongly skewed toward those with political, social, or economic power. This creates and or perpetuates power imbalances and entrenches the persistent disadvantage cycle.
- Discrimination and the ongoing impact of colonisation through policies that continue to disadvantage Māori. Institutional racism and discrimination against other groups of which Māori are members include Pacific peoples, women, migrants, LGBTQ+ communities, sole parents, and people with disabilities.
- Siloed and fragmented government and public services focused on providing standardised services to individuals through ministries and agencies focused on separate individual sectors.
- Short-term systems focus the preference of voters and politicians on the immediate issues of the day at the expense of addressing long-term challenges and solutions (p. 26-27).

As stated in the report by Dr Ganesh Nana:

There is no single approach that works to overcome persistent disadvantage. But there are common themes: locally led, whānau-centred, centrally enabled approaches; trusted relationships – holding each other to account – between funders, providers, and the people and their communities; and learning from the voices of people and their communities. In short, people, families and whānau thrive when they have access to resources, are empowered to grow and develop on their terms and feel a sense of belonging within their communities. A cross-party, long-term commitment to partnership and adequate resourcing efforts to break the cycle of persistent disadvantage is needed to ensure a fair chance for all (The NZ Productivity Commission, 2023, p.4).

Correcting Persistent Disadvantage for Whānau Māori

The Productivity Commission reports that rectifying persistent disadvantages for Māori requires a long-term intergenerational political commitment. This will require a government that is steadfast in recognising and accepting the ongoing impacts of colonisation form part of the economic and social context, advantaging some sectors of New Zealand while disadvantaging others. Māori are among those who live with the ongoing debilitating realities of persistent disadvantages (p.10).

The Commission says strengthening the protective factors against persistent disadvantage will help create a system enabling all people to get what they need to live a better life. The protective factors include adequate income, housing, health and social connection, cultural identity and belonging, knowledge and skills, access to employment, stable families, and effective government policies and supports (p. 28).

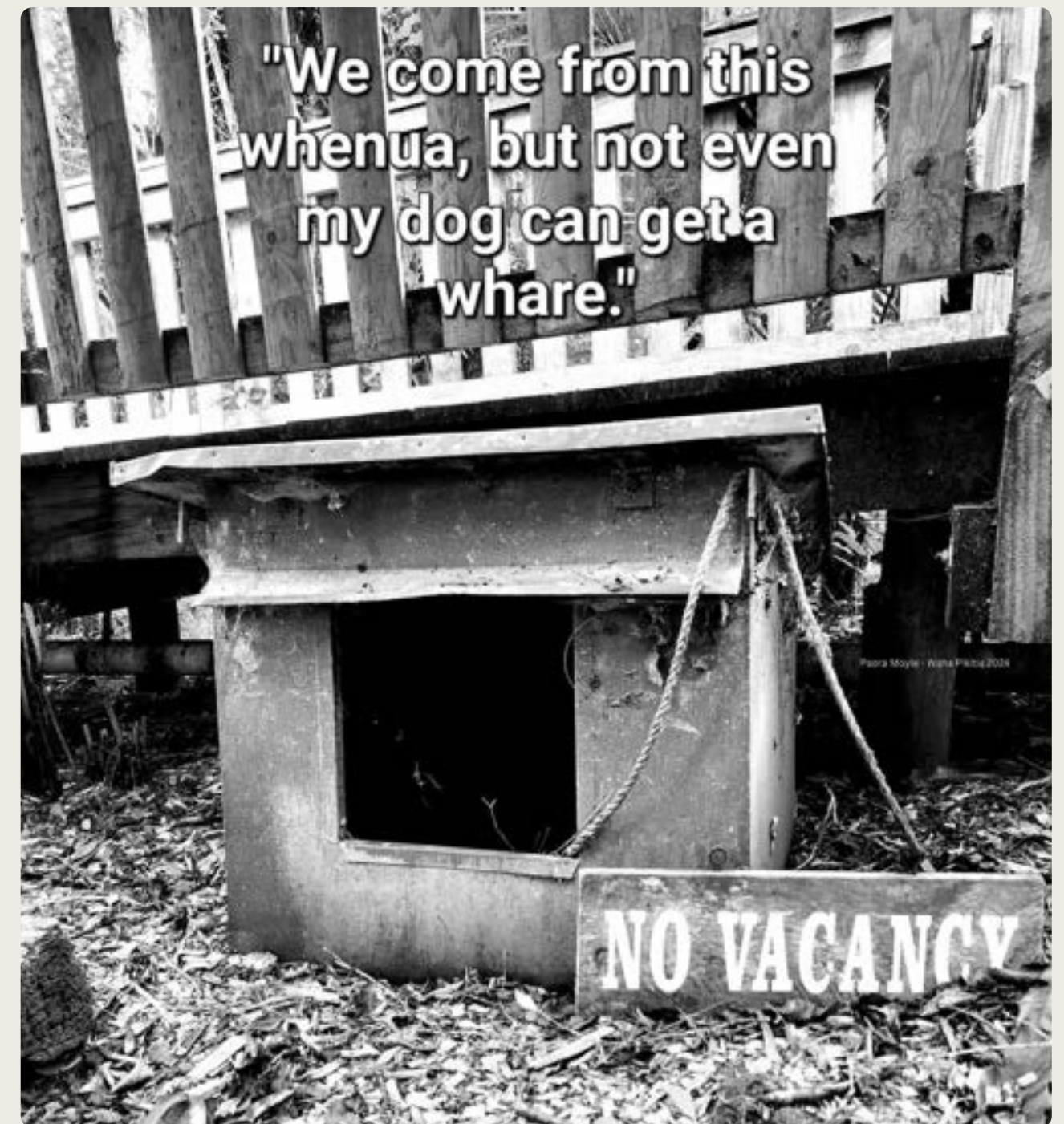
Focus on Solutions that Address Persistent Discrimination

The He Whare, He Taonga research team knows that the interconnected nature of systemic barriers faced by Wāhine Māori in the housing poverty space is not new, nor is this new information for those who guard the systemic barriers, pointed out by the Productivity Commission. Yet, successive governments seem hellbent on commissioning another report, perhaps hoping that it will be the one that miraculously nullifies all others, therefore absolving them of their responsibilities to rectify the systemic barriers eloquently and forthrightly described by the Waitangi Tribunal, the United Nations Special Rapporteur, the Human Rights and the Productivity Commission. Concurring with each other, systemic barriers intergenerationally prevent Māori from accessing a decent home in their country.

Our Concluding Position

Our study, He Whare, He Taonga, is a deliberate attempt to see through the persistent interconnectedness of systemic barriers. We are doing this by bringing into the picture the connection between mahi tūkino and housing poverty. Alongside that picture is showcasing the solutions proposed by Hauraki Wāhine, including illuminating the unseen solutions for addressing persistent housing disadvantages for Hauraki Wāhine and their whānau.

Bringing into the picture, the connection between mahi tūkino and housing poverty!



Concluding with Wāhine Voices

The next two chapters contain a symphony of insights from the Wāhine and key Informants.

Placing these at the close of our report is our team acknowledging their voices have been front and centre in this research, and so it is that their kōrero closes it. After all, this research is about

their living truths and aspirations for correcting the mahi tūkino and housing poverty connection that is preventing Wāhine and their whānau from entering solutions-driven housing pathways in Hauraki. Their voices of dreams yet to be realised and hopeful determination that their solutions driven by compassion will be a reality in their lifetimes.

CHAPTER 5 – A SYMPHONY OF WĀHINE VOICES

Pūrākau shared by Wāhine participants central to this project spoke about what ‘home’ and ‘kāinga’ mean to them and their whānau, what makes them feel well in their lives, what barriers they face that impact their housing journey, and what they see might be solutions to accessing quality housing in Hauraki, even if it is to only dream of a home-place.

Connecting to Kāinga - “home is where my heart is”...

Home, to me, is not literally a place with four walls and a roof. It’s the people inside of there that make my place a home. For me, it’s my tamariki. That’s what makes a home. There has to be love in there to make it home. (P1)

It means having strong values and beliefs. It means feeling safe, feeling grounded, feeling loved, feeling important, feeling, and knowing where you’re coming from. K (P4)

It’s independence...you have your own house and no controlling. Yeah, it’s freedom. (P15)

Just comfortable and, warm and inviting. I don’t need nothing spectacular. But yeah, somewhere comfortable. I thought a big caravan would be a dream come true. Home is where I park it. (P2)

Home that’s around having relationships and remembering what it was like to live together before it all fell apart, before colonisation even. Recall whānau, deserve the right to be in a space, to do well in that space, that is clean, that is dry, that is warm, that is not violent, and just be able to breathe, just to have heart. Mums and dads want to have a home, not just a housing home. But that’s not the reality for our whānau. (P3)

Home is where the heart is... Somewhere that I can call home, not a house, not just where I live, but it’s mine. I make the rules; I set the rules. I don’t ever see myself owning a house. We live on the minimum wage so even renting one, I would make my home. (P5)

Home has been Women’s Refuge and, for some, a very long time...

Living here [Refuge], he [young son] says he wants to go home to here, because this has been our home for nearly 3 years. He’s 4, he’ll be 5 in June. Even now, he knows he’s never had a home. And he’s calling this place his home. He says, “Mum, I want my own home”... he’s trying to tell me he wants all his family together in his own home. I feel like it might be a little bit of a struggle taking him out of here, as he’s familiar with everyone here and going to a new whare just means it’s me and him, he’ll be isolated. But I want him to know home is mum, wherever I am, you are with me, I’m your home. (P4)

It is really quiet, it’s peaceful, it’s clean, it’s tidy, you know... it’s the little things. Yeah, you don’t have to look over your shoulder...I get to the gate [Refuge], and I just look up; I’m home. (P6)

Home has been a caravan, a motel...

We came up here [the area] for a new start. Yeah, I’ve lived everywhere, I’ve lived with whānau, lived in a caravan, lived at a camping park... Yep, I’ve done the whole motel thing, that’s where we came from when we came into here [Refuge]. (P11)

Home has been a car...

A typical day [living in her car] I wake up at 5am because I’ve gotta go to the local [town] toilets to have a quick wash down with my flannel because they don’t have a shower up there...have a quick wash, brush my teeth, try and clean myself up, spray myself with perfume, go back to my car, and then have a snack bar for breakfast because I didn’t have dishes to carry around and stuff, fold up my bed, fold up my stuff – so everything looks normal. Put the seat up, cover everything so it just looks like I’ve come from my own house and go to work. Start there at 7:30, work 2 jobs. After work I go back to my car. That was the daily routine. (P9)



Home has been many different places...

Growing up we’ve moved all around the country, all around the North Island. We were always in housing corp houses so that also meant that we were also in bad areas. We got brought up in bad areas but we also got brought up in amazing areas. (P12)

Home has been where Wāhine live off the land and sea...

Yeah! Cause that’s what I loved about our old house, we had feijoas, avocado, apricots, grapes, lemons, mandarins. Yeah. It was awesome. It was gated, it was like even though it was only a 2-bedroom backhouse, it was enough section for my daughter to ride her bike around, to have a tramp, and have a little pool – it was enough. (P5)

It’s just dear for everything down here. See up north well, we didn’t need to worry about that cause we lived by the sea. You know. We’d go catch kaimoana, we got fish – we got everything. So, I didn’t need to worry and plus, my mother-in-law, her partner; he works in a meat works up there so there’s just heaps of food. (P10)

Home has been in urban communities that look after one another...

And I’m not talking just gang-wise because the likes of [area], even though there’s a big gang... they also look after their community, and they’re the first ones who were out and helping with the flood and all that kind of stuff. (P12)

**Creating Wellness -
“my babies smiling and running free”**

From the Wāhine pūrākau, we ascertained that having a home-place is where they can express themselves and give sense-making and meaning to their lives and their connections to their communities. When all these elements are present, they can see more clearly what wellness or being well looks like for themselves and their tamariki.

When my kids are well, then I know that I'm well. What makes me happy and feel good, because they're learning different things, like being on the tramp, tryna ride a bike, being around the other children, being in the park – you know, to me that makes me really happy. (P10)

Happy, yeah, that's how I know they're well, is if they're happy... Cause when they're grumpy, upset, anything like that they both come to me but if they're off doing their own thing, I know they're good. (P5)

You know when they play and all of that. That's fun to me, that's happy. That's a good thing you know, cause every time we went to the park up there [previous home] they'd just be sitting. Yeah, since we've been here, they go up on the slide now, the tramp. They're doing everything they didn't do before. (P6)

My babies' smile. My babies' freedom. So just being here [Refuge], my 12-year-old has been able to be 12; running around in the playground, not having to stay in her room when he comes home. I don't think she realises it but she's exhausting. (P1)

Wellness is being able to do all the things that others who don't experience family violence and housing poverty might take for granted...

When I'm away from him, I'm happy. Just do whatever I want. I wanna go to the shop, I can go to the shop. I wanna buy clothes, I will buy clothes. Take my kid to the beach, play at the playground. Go shopping, buy whatever he needs for school. He's gonna be laughing, playing. I just wanna have him talking. Like “Mummy, come here, watch me”. (P15)

Well-being is teaching your babies how to fend for themselves...

Yes, they are only babies but to me, it's like, “Nope. Do this, get your clothes ready, get `in the shower, wash yourselves” – I make them do everything themselves. “Change yourself, dry your hair,” everything. But I just make sure that they're dry properly and just cook them breakfast, lunch, or tea. And that's all I do, anything else they do it for themselves. (P10)

This is the same for tamariki who live on their own whenua...

Sometimes we have it tough. So yes, what I said to my children, and I still say to them every morning, is that there are no guarantees that Mama will be home at the end of the day. And I'll come out like this, you know the world works in mysterious ways and this is just to remember that each time is an important time, cause there's never ever any guarantees. At least I know that if I'm not there, of course, they'll miss me, but they'll be okay, there's still stability. They know what stability is. And that is so important to know that you have a space that belongs to you, and you belong to. (P3)

Being well is doing what needs to be done for a mama and her tamariki to begin healing...

I got my daughter in counselling as well. She goes to see the counsellor once a week. Just because of what I put her through the last 9 years. I know that there's bound to be stuff that she doesn't wanna talk to mummy about, whether it might make mummy angry, might make mummy upset, so I wanted her to have that outlet and learn. I've learnt about myself since being here because I do these women safety programs. (P5)

Being well is having a safe space in which to breathe, grieve, and miss home and loved ones...

Yeah, cause she was even like, “we wouldn't do this if we were still with daddy aye mum?”. That's the main thing that she misses in [area], is her school and her friends. But she also realises that was not the life that we want, when, we were in [area]. This is a totally different life. (P5)

I was born in [a town], but I've lived up North all my life. Coming here it's all new to me because don't have no family here and it's like I'm here by myself with my 4 kids. (P10)

Everybody has a past. I've moved forward. I've learnt from my mistakes. I'm not perfect. But I'm always helping in the community and I'm always wanting to learn new things. To have a better life you know for me and my children. (P4)

Some participants described being well in terms of mana, resilience, and never giving up...

Perseverance. Having enough mana to get through everything, even when it's been taken from you. Riding the wave just going through everything but always making sure that you've got each other. Like, me and my boy, I'll always make sure that I'll never ever leave him again. (P14)

I think he knew then that this lady was not gonna give up; she's not gonna go away. “I need to fix it because this lady's got such a big mouth; she's gonna create trouble for me.” Which I would've done because I had enough of sleeping in a car. I had enough of making excuses for my deaf daughter who comes from a boarding school into wherever we could sleep type situations. (P9)

For my baby, I think it would mean he just needs me to be well. Because when I'm having a down day, I'm oblivious to what's going on around him. He can still feel my mamae. Safe and wellness for me is staying clean, surrounding myself with people that can empower me and change my mindset as opposed to surrounding myself with people who just want to self-destruct. It's proving myself to my baby. Because he can say, wow, mum can really pull herself out of this, and that's teaching my baby strength, making me feel safe because I feel like I'm doing a good job as a mum. And I know there's always consequences for everything. After everything I've been through, I've weighed everything out, and yeah, I know what's my triggers and stuff. Self-reflection is what I do a lot, too, because when I'm all aligned, and I'm struggling and all of that, I self-reflect so that I know I can become more mindful of what not to do and what my baby reacts to, what he doesn't react to like everything that works for him is what I need to keep practising. Because we've changed our whole lifestyle, and it's still foreign to him, but he's getting there, and what only really happened is keep it consistent with him. Even living here, the dynamics of the house can just be well. (P14)

Wellness is in starting over and learning to love yourself for the first time...

My path was just a struggle; depression stepped in, and there was no light for me. Then I became a Christian and I found that there was another that walked that same journey as me, his name's Jesus. He was condemned, he was ridiculed, he was stoned, he was whipped, he was all sorts. Same kind of whipping we've been getting all our lives, and I thought “wow, I already knew ya mate. You're me. Oh, cool, I like you; you're awesome, dude.” And I thought, wow, I'm gonna put myself into his shoes and keep walking, but with a humble heart, a peaceful voice, harmony and the care and the knowledge to do better. (P9)

Self-love, self-care, perseverance, trusting the process, gratefulness, love, whānau, connectedness. Even spirituality as well cause you got to get really into, you know, well, I know that things happen for a reason, but when you look into your spirit, you're actually becoming more mindful and aware of your own self-like even if you gotta break yourself apart to find the ugly. You gotta do that shit to like figure out who you really are. And that's wellness for me because if you can't handle the ugly about yourself, then you ain't shit. Honestly, you can't be miss perfect – there's no such fuckin' thing. [laughing] You gotta just learn to love yourself. (P14)

Some participants described wairua as the kaitiaki that protected them throughout their lives...

A lot of times when I was sexually molested, my kaitiaki used to come to me and keep me safe...when I could hear him coming down the passageway, I had this awesome gift where I could click my fingers and just sleep. Because of the terror and how scared I was, and I was hidden by ghosts a lot of the time, as crazy as that may seem. (P2)

Correcting Barriers - “so that we can finally live in peace”

There were and are many barriers that impacted the lives and housing journeys of the Wāhine, including the sexual and physical abuse upon them as tamariki...

Yes, that's how it started off. We used to share the same bed...And then that's when it went actually full-bore into the incest. I can remember my twin brother always talking about how my mother used to say, “I'd never take my meal ticket to jail”, and these sorts of things play on your mind when you're quite young. (P2)

Growing up, as young tamariki, even though we were not in the system, we were bounced around family. We would grow up in, I think, my earliest house I can remember us growing up in would be in [city]. Then something would happen. Some dynamics would happen within the parental relationship; abuse, physical, sexual abuse happens – and that’s through with my three siblings at that time. So, we didn’t have any stability when we were young tamariki. (P12)

The dynamics and impacts of living with a gang whānau...

We had Black Power, which is the Auntie’s and Mongrel Mob, which is Mum’s [gang whānau]. From three years old I remember the abuse - the sexual abuse, the physical abuse definitely - and that was dominating abuse from Uncles, from Aunties, from family friends, their friends. They played this game when you’re a kid, to keep you quiet; shut your mouth. They take the light bulb outta the room...take a handful of change and chuck it in the room and tell you to go find it and close the door. And that was you for the rest of the night. Cold, hungry. That was our activity to keep us busy, away from the drinking and the drugs. I remember that clearly. (P12)

And intimate partner violence...

The first two years of our relationship was a lot of love and telling me what I wanted to hear, basically he studied me... groomed me. After those two years, what I was hearing about it him, he was showing it. Physical violence, a lot of psychological abuse, manipulation on a master level. I have a very intelligent abuser with very, very strong connections. We’re not just talking through gangs, we’re talking through business people. (P1)

He broke into the house. He broke the windows, the phones, and my toe. He tried to make me lose the baby by punching me in the stomach then we ended up being taken to the hospital and then to the safe house where I stayed there for a few. The police were involved and then didn’t allow me and my daughter to go home...Then I was given notice to move and the due date for me to move out was when I was due to have baby. I couldn’t find anywhere to live. It was near impossible. So, I stuck all of my stuff into my girlfriend’s shed and lived in a garage. (P2)

A barrier is living in a constant state of fear, not being able to breathe, or move, or make decisions for yourself...

He’s even degrading my children. To their faces. For me, I can take a hit. Easy. I’ve been taking it for a long time. But when you start coming for my kids, that’s another mamae. You know? And it’s taken four and a half years to get to today, and now I’m scared as. Because I’ve gone against the biggest abuser in my life, and I know his connections are far widespread. He’s even said it to my face, “I have a seat at every table.” (P1)

Wāhine who have been incarcerated...

It’s easier for them to be inside [in prison] because they get everything. Everything’s there. When they come out, they gotta struggle, they gotta fight for housing, they’re being judged all the time – then the house that they go into is in a poverty-stricken area where they need to fight just to go to work a decent place – to earn money, to pay for that rundown, shared living. (P12)

Wāhine who have to live with unrealistic orders from the state...

Our girls are always judged. Always, their background, they’re Māori. For me, I feel they put unrealistic orders on them like [MOJ, OT, Police], “you can’t be seen, you can’t be with your partner, you can’t have a partner for two years until you do this course or until you finish this” – that’s not realistic. That’s not realistic at all. It’s because we are Māori; but we’re people, people. (P12)

Being forced to live in another part of the country to keep your children...

If I get sick or anything happens to me, I have to pay. Just to go and see a doctor or just to go to the hospital. And then up there [North], see, it’s all free. And that’s what I noticed down here; everything down here is all about money. And it’s just hard, you know, juggling both. Having that world where everything was free and then having another world where now I have to pay for everything. That’s what makes me just wanna go back to, cause I had it all there...now I’m back to you know, square one again. (P10)

Houselessness and meth addiction...

Domestic violence, I gave him [baby] to my mum and dad while that was happening...I was addicted to meth. So, I abandoned him and left him with my parents while I was chasing his dad. It took me to move from [town] to [town] where I recovered there, while his dad was in prison, and I got him [baby] back. But then we ended up homeless. That looks like living in the car, going from place to place, sleeping on everyone’s couches [couch surfing]. But you know not really being welcome there. Homelessness looks like it impacts everyone around you too. I know my parents were just worrying every night wondering where I was sleeping. (P4)

Houselessness can also be a result of racism, discrimination, and unstable housing...

So why we went into emergency housing was because the landlords there, they had to sell the house. And that’s what’s happened to me the last two times of renting a private property so that’s made me scared to back into private again because I could be turned out in a month or so. So yeah, why we went in there was cause of, not kicked out of our home, but kicked out of our home and couldn’t find anywhere. (P5)

My housing situation has continuously moved because of, selling and unstable housing. I’ve tried getting a housing New Zealand house, a Kāinga Ora home. Still on the waiting list after 2 years. (P4)

The one homeowner that I did meet, I got the feeling he saw that I was Māori and kind of was like, can we just make this quick. Never heard from him again. My nights are spent crying, because my family has stopped living. All I want is a home for my children. A warm dry home for my kids to grow up in. It’s hard when people just look at you and just see a Māori girl. She’s living in Women’s Refuge, so she probably has a violent partner. (P13)

They’re not giving homes to our babies. And that’s exactly what it is, for one they’re Māori or it’s an independent mother with six kids. We are either sucking out of the benefit or they’re just gonna have another child to get another benefit. That’s already the thinking...you know that’s a European individual and here’s a Māori individual. There’s violence happening over there, no difference from the violence happening over here, there’s violence everywhere. So yes discrimination, absolutely. (P14)

Kāinga Ora, a significant barrier...

The manager of the Housing New Zealand, he had a problem with me at that time. He had taken me to court for damages to a Housing New Zealand home that I had for 15 years. But nobody [from HNZ] fixed it. And I tried my best as a mum to fix it myself. Punched holes from domestic violence... He took me to court for that, and it was rectified when the judge saw my case. “How can she fix it after 15 years of sitting in it, when your men don’t go in and do their job?” That was wiped out but that still caused conflict and years later- 3 years later I’m not getting a home. (P9)

The emergency is today! Not in six months, it’s today, right now! So, I understand that you’re put on a list, you’re categorized and to get up the list you have to say you will move away from the area. I’m sitting in little old [town], a house comes up in [another rohe], they ring me, and they say, “we’ve got a three-bedroom, do you want it?”, I say, “no I don’t wanna be in [another rohe]”. “Oh well then you go to the bottom of the list”. So, we’re still stuck in wherever we are. That’s part of the problem; is that we’re not housing people in the areas that they wanna be, and where their whakapapa connections and strengths are. (P3)

One woman just exited her 15-year relationship of physical, verbal, emotional abuse and she needed a new home, and he was a gang member. We went to [name of town] and these Housing New Zealand people didn’t know enough of her I believe or just took it for granted that she’d come out of an abusive relationship with a gang member, and chose her a house on a Black Power gang street for her to go back into the situation she had just come out of...I said, “These people all know each other so soon as you move in, go shopping, your house is gonna get emptied. We know how they roll because you’ve been there, I’ve been there.” She said to me- she broke down in tears, “if I say no, the guy [Kāinga Ora] said I’ll never get another house and I’ll go to the bottom of the list.” Now I gotta go back to my car with my 2 babies and ditch baby’s car seat, so we had room to sleep. (P9)

When whānau are evicted unreasonably...

Okay, well I've been in state houses. I think we lived in [local town], a good 14 years. We had a bit of a dispute when my ex-partner went off at the housing corp [HNZ] workers. They used to just turn up randomly and say they rung up and they spoke to us or some bullshit like that when they never even ring up or we weren't expecting them and didn't know that they were coming. One time when my boy was sick and they wanted to come in, we were like yeah you're not coming in because you know, we got a sick boy here. One of the housing corp workers swore at my ex-partner. So they had a big argument and we ended up basically going downhill from there. We were evicted. (P2)

Affordability...

It's all about affordability, majorly because of their tamariki. You either work and you put your tamariki in care that you can't afford, or you stay home, and you can't afford that whare. It's a never-ending cycle of poverty. I concur because I live that poverty. They've got their tāne who abuse them, and they still go back because that's their normal. (P12)

Affordability is a huge thing cause I'm looking on TradeMe at the moment, and it's more than what my whole benefit is, and I know we get accommodation supplement but that will just add to the rent. Out of my league yep, out. And also with me, with the housing crisis that's on at the moment, why would a landlord take a beneficiary over someone who's working 40 hours, full-time, good wage? (P5)

No houses and the process of finding one takes its toll...

But with just finding houses through TradeMe, I have to give my bank statements, I have to give them everything for them to just turn me down. You have to do this 20 times, 50 times, 100 times over and that's letting random people go into my finances but that's what I have to do to find a house? And then it also takes a toll on your wairua if you're just getting turned down, turned down, turned down. (P5)

There's no houses! Even renting, and the list is so long where you're even on the Facebook pages looking for houses, and there's nothing. And so many rules for houses as well. The house is your home, you make of it what you will, but you treat it- then I'm coming in every three months to check up on your living. (P12)

Being continuously turned down for a house is demoralising...

I have applied for what feels like 40 plus houses since I've been here [in Refuge]. I've been to roughly 20 house viewings. The other 20 houses I applied for we didn't make the short list. When I go to the viewings there's like 30+ other people there so we're all dying to get into this one home. I've talked to multiple homeowners on the phone. Phone calls start off real promising. They hear that I'm in great credit and I don't have a criminal record. I always pay on time, clean and tidy but as soon as they hear I'm apparently a current MSD client, living in Women's Refuge, that's it. I don't hear back from them. Not even to say, sorry you didn't make the shortlist. Just no communication at all. (P13)

The more Māori you are, "oh, we've only got a three bedroom so it's not gonna suit your two children and two adult's life-style, sorry". They don't even do that nowadays, they just say, "sorry, you were unsuccessful". You know, no reason why. Is it because of my skin colour - Because I'm getting judged straight away. (P12)

It makes you give up hope...

Why bother? That's how it feels, why keep trying if it's just gonna be the same outcome? So when I first came [into refuge] my goal was find a house, find a house, find a house. Kids were in school, get my car legal, find a house - that was my goal. Since getting turned down for all of those houses, I've just pushed it aside now, and I'm just waiting on Kāinga Ora, cause it was really- is the word 'debilitating'? (P5)

No houses available in Hauraki...

I was a worker then, so I was working at a restaurant as well as trying to support my daughter, as well as trying to find housing. The beginning was a very hard journey. I watched 10 houses go to Aucklanders: out-of-towners... I took photos of those had empty houses when they were empty. Me and my car, each 1 by 1 documented them and watched people move in them to my sadness. And I slept in the car...I'd even ring Housing New Zealand and say "look there's a house available on [name of street], can I please have that home. I'm tired of sleeping in my car, trying to work"...The depression hit me. (P9)

I've been in the Refuge since March the 4th. It was the hardest choice coming here but I had no other choice. Being here has been a real struggle, mentally, emotionally. I don't have my whānau around to help me. To support me. It's just me and my baby. (P13)

When it comes to structure and routine, they could be non-existent. But I understand every woman comes from a different walk of life, but that really affects the day-to-day care of our babies because we all have different ways. And it can get quite overwhelming too, disruptive and all that stuff. That's one of my challenges with my boy is that some come in and it's quite chaotic which is acting out from where they've been and their journeys. And then others are quite shut down-withdrawn. Yeah that's a big thing here in this place too is a lot of drama. (P14)

The safe house is meant to be a short-term solution...

Yeah, and the more you keep engaging with it [drama], the more you're breathing life into it. The more that life is just being, that is the life here and it's hard to escape. Even our babies can feel it. It's not good for my son with his ears flapping, he's repeating things that he shouldn't be but it's because he's listening to adults talking and that's ugly. It's not healthy for our kids. Especially for kids who come from trauma, they could associate different things with their trauma. (P5)

We have different mothers in here and I'm not naming any, but they disassociate themselves from their responsibilities and stuff like that. For me in this whare, I look after every baby like they're my own. I treat everyone with respect as much as they respect me. But when it comes to, we have our journeys and our own light at the end of the tunnel. But we can't really get there if we're stuck in this place where it's just clouded- yeah. (P1)

Tamariki with neurodiverse conditions...

Well, at the moment even kindy [kindergarten] is a bit of a struggle. So made it through an assessment at the hospital for him. His last kindy made a referral for him, they just even burden me for his behavioural issues too. Like they tell me my baby is ADHD. He's on the go all the time and he gets bored easily. (P2)

That's why I can't do anything, like now. Can't look for a house, just can't do anything. It's only my son that they find a school for. But he's really good. He just has autism, he doesn't hurt other kids. He never hurts other kids. (P15)

I could hear, cause even though my son's not talking, I could hear him excited and kicking the back of my seat when we were driving down the driveway cause he was excited to be home [refuge]. Oh, not using words. He's 'talking talking', little words here and there but he's not saying, "yay I'm home!". He's showing it through his emotions, through his body, yeah. (P5)

You see he's blind and he's always calling out to his dad. Cause he's always heard that male figure around. He's 5. He's actually in the room right now and that's all he does. He's got pillows and sits in the room all day. He doesn't walk or anything, he just gets around on his knees. (P10)

Being forced to live in conditions that make tamariki very sick...

I was living with family; the house was overcrowded. Me and my children were living in a living room. It was cold. It was damp and full of mold. My 2-year-old was constantly getting sick. We were in and out of [district] hospital. It was that bad we almost lost him once. (P13)

Whilst the participants described the barriers to housing they experience, they were equally generous in their descriptions of how they survive, grow, heal and what some of the solutions are. These are highlighted next.

Compassionate Solutions - "so, we all grow up as one"

In the previous section, participants generously described the barriers to housing they experienced. They were equally generous in their descriptions of how they survive, grow, heal and what some of the solutions are, highlighted in the following quotes. The lead-in quotes outlining how they protected themselves and their tamariki.

I'm not letting my babies go and live with monsters like this. Even if it's the last thing I f***ing do bro. My babies have pure hearts, loving hearts. Those are me in miniature form. They're not getting access to my kids, they ain't as long as I'm alive I will fight these c***s. Even all by myself. (P1)



Reaching out to Women’s Refuge for support, creating new beginnings and connections...

Coming here, being a broken woman myself with broken women. And when they call on me or talk to me, I’m not just gonna sit back, I’m not about to watch another woman fall. So, I give them words of encouragement. Try and help them, just support them in whatever way I can. (P1)

Survival means knowing and seeking the healing supports...

We’re safe here cause we got 24/7 monitoring. But we need counselling, we need therapists up in here. And not all of us are talkers. Not everybody wants to talk. But there’s other therapy like training a wild horse. And I know that’s what my baby girl needs. (P1)

Becoming conscious of the degree of impact of the violence upon tamariki...

But it wasn’t until I was threatened by OT [Oranga Tamariki] that they would take my kid. That’s when I was like ‘I need to get clean, I need to leave him’ but then I was still seeing him. Even with my conditions being on a non-association, I was staying with him out of fear sort of thing. That was up here, and a lot of the abuse was still happening behind closed doors. But I couldn’t disclose that because id incriminate myself. So, that was the life- but even that life and my baby being exposed to that it still wasn’t healthy it still wasn’t love. Because I wasn’t putting him first. (P4)

Healing for tamariki takes time, patience and understanding...

And I thought I was doing the right thing by my baby by keeping both his parents together- oh but my son would say to me “nah”- like he remembers things like the other day he mentioned the incident that happened when he was 2 that I didn’t know that he knew and he said it out loud and I was absolutely heartbroken but I walked away, took a deep breath and shrugged it off just carried on because I don’t understand how a 2 year old – but now and because he’s grown older, I’ve missed so much of his life not paying attention. So, he’s really resilient my baby and he gives me strength every day. I struggle with him still. Like his [son’s] temper is just through the roof. But that’s an indicator to me that that’s something I need to work through with him. I need to get on his level to help him heal from his trauma. (P4)

Remembering how to laugh again, to have a sense of humour...

Housing prices need to drop [laughter]. To win lotto would be great. But then let’s try and afford a ticket first [laughing]. (P5)

I thought to myself sitting in my car one night, it’s not gonna stop until I speak up [being able to get a whare]. So, I’m going to go to the Mayor of Thames office and ask her if she can help me get a meeting with the manager of Housing New Zealand so we can sit down. I need a home! (P9)

I think we need people helping people and looking after each other and a home is really, really, mentally important for everybody. (P4)

Te Tiriti rights and human rights covenants are solutions...

Tiriti articles outline what our rights are as tangata whenua, but we are consistently denied them when we try to access state housing. It sits under UNDRIP, it sits under UNCRPD, it sits under the UNHDR, and HDCR. It should be a Tiriti right to be housed and something that we should be doing naturally. (P1)

Solutions include dreaming of a whare, of the potential...

My dream is that I don’t want a big, flash thing. I just want a bedroom, couple of bedrooms, a lounge, a small kitchen and just a toilet and a shower – I don’t want it BIG you know...and we would all go to the beach and spend the whole day there and go out there swimming with the kids, and just having a big barbecue, a feed and go out fishing. A day at the beach - my children would love to do that. (P6)

I’ve always just wanted my own little 2-bedroom house, nice, small, clean, tidy, don’t even care what the outside looks like, I just want it to be mine. My house, warm and comfortable. I say even though it’s just me, I could have a spare room for anyone that comes over, my grandkids. Yeah that’s me but I’m a fair bit off from getting that done at the moment. (P11)

Solutions came in the form of papakāinga that looks after the whole whānau...

I’m privileged cause I come from a village. There’s not a lot of opportunities for our babies here. Whether it’s exposure to sports, or music, or theatre, or those kinda things. My children have often asked me, “Mama, why don’t we go to [town]”,

and my response to that is that the most important gift that I can give them, is an intimate relationship with their Nanny, with their Koro, with their Aunties, with their uncles, with their cousins – so we all grow up as one. So, we are evidence that it takes a village to raise a whānau. So many other whānau don’t and then in our work with them, we become that village for them. We have to become their village for them because we have babies raising babies, whaea. (P3)

Our whenua, a place to stand...

Well after the gathering of my family on the one side of me, I te taha o toku papa, what was strong and evitable and had a lot to do with one’s thinking; what we thought of our home life or what we thought made up our thinking was, what we were told as kids and the principles that we were brought up in. I had my aunty, my father’s sister and she would tell us part of our history and she’d say, “don’t get a swelled head”. I know what she told us was true and correct but then for us not to go around and say this or that, and because she said “someone might come along wipe your feet from under you.” It was an old saying back in the days that if you said something, someone would come along and they’d take your feet away from you and you’ve got nowhere else but to run. And she said, “be careful with what you say and do.” (P8)

Whenua, like a mother, nurtures and sustains...

Whenua and parenting is the most important thing in the whole wide world. Unfortunately, our government doesn’t support that...That’s the importance of a village and actually passing that skill base down so that we can be surviving. Cause we’re not teaching our kids the basic things of how to go to the moana and collect kai, how to go into the ngahere. You know the basic things so that we’re going back into the taiao; the moana, the ngahere, our streams, there are things that we can survive from and then that’s that whānau engagement as well. You know papa going out fishing with their kids. (P3)

Solutions are in knowing the whenua is yours and you belong to it...

And the other thing was, she held the dirt, and she went like this she said, “what you have in your hand, learn when you smell it, it belongs to you.” And if you go like this [motions], it is important to you to know that the whenua that you stand on is yours. And she said, “if you become an owner of that property like you are now, you are wealthy”, and she said, “it’s up to you to maintain that.” Wealth is in the land that we live upon.

The land that was handed down through the generations...it was what my grandfather inherited from his mother. And it is where I am today – where a lot of my family are. All defenders. (P8)

My mum was the eldest. They’ve all gone now and there’s only us. So, in that time they built this house, and everybody came home...She was the glue and yeah - a homestead. She was the glue that kept us all together. (P7)

Be strong in who you are and know who you are and where you come from. Not necessarily the marae or iwi, but wherever or whatever, your life happens to be at the time. Be strong and don’t forget your connections. (P8)

Once you give whānau the ability to look after one other by not having to travel; nanny looks after the moko, the moko learn from the nannies. The younger ones go out to school or work, more eyes on the babies and so the house is safer. You’ve also got aunties there teaching everyone how to cook, how to function every day and how to provide for and protect one another. We want our whānau closer, but we can’t because there’s no housing here in Hauraki. (P1)

A SYMPHONY SUMMARISED

Connecting to kāinga, creating wellness, and correcting barriers through compassionate solutions are the themes extrapolated from the responses of Hauraki Wāhine to our research team exploring the connection between housing poverty and mahi tūkino. The depth and breadth of their responses evidence there is a connection. That connection is not obvious; it is hidden by the systemic and structural impediments that drive persistent disadvantage, as described by the Productivity Commission. This is further complicated and exacerbated by the public management system’s covert view that Wāhine are responsible for the violence that has been inflicted on them and their tamariki. This is intensified by unrealistic felt-sense expectations placed on them singularly or collectively by Oranga Tamariki, Kāinga Ora, and Health and Social service providers to ‘just get on with things’ while carrying the emotional, spiritual, and societal wounding that comes with mahi tūkino.

The next chapter weaves the pūrākau of key Informants around the pūrākau of the Wāhine.

CHAPTER 6 - KEY INFORMANTS SPEAK

Key Informants for this project were sourced by word of mouth. They work across a broad spectrum of government and community organisations, that are directly engaged with Hauraki Wāhine and their whānau recovering from the effects of mahi tūkino and related housing poverty.

Connecting to kāinga is reclaiming home

Home isn't an address, and it's not a mailbox... Home isn't a house; home is a place to be. And listening to the Wāhine that we [agency] support, home is somewhere you feel you belong and in that belonging, you can live your life with people who you're connected to. That may be whakapapa whānau, that may be kaupapa whānau. But home is somewhere you feel safe, somewhere you can express who you are, somewhere you can bring up your tamariki and mokopuna, your mokopuna tuarua in a space that makes sense and is relevant to who you are, and who your whānau are. (K11)

I think it's stability, it's safety; it's a sense of belonging. This is home; this is where I live. (K12)

Home is where the supports that we [the agency] provide are no longer needed because whānau feel confident, healthy, and in control of their lives. (K13)

We have whenua, and on that land, there are whakapapa connections; it's more than a whare. It's the connection to the whenua, and housing is the 4 walls and how we bring about whānau connectivity amongst that landscape. (K18)

Now we are having to remember what it was like before we were made homeless. We are researching the broadest definitions of 'home', and reclaiming what 'home' means, and how we be well...and look after each other in that space. (K14)

Housing backstory

Most of our whare were railway homes, or Housing Corp homes – our people were workers of the railways. They [railway houses] were a particular design when the railways closed down, Housing NZ at the time took them over and then they were made state homes, were upgraded and painted all the same colour. The houses were owned by the railways, some people brought them and went through Housing Corp, but some didn't qualify.

Those that owned their homes were not maintained because of economic situation, most of our people were doing labour jobs then. Housing Corp invested minimally, and houses were falling to pieces. The whenua was gifted, and whānau were living as a village, all in dilapidated homes, yet they own them, and they were all beneficiaries. Everyone had a home, homelessness was minimal, there were street kids, but they all had a home to go to. Our Māori community was really strong when growing up and then we moved to the city for jobs. (K15)

Through Māori Affairs when we could use our family benefit as a deposit for a house mortgage. But all that good social investment in our people has eroded over the years since, including our being a part of planning common sense housing that looks after our multigenerational whānau, labourers, and lower earners. Until the late 1980's when National brought in market rent, multi-generations of whānau lived harmoniously in a lot of the older houses and then whānau couldn't afford the rent anymore. The home could be passed onto sons and daughters and as Tiriti partners, made landless, we should have an automatic right to a home and to live multi-generationally if that's what we want to do. (K14)

So, MSD [Ministry of Social Development], inherited housing from Housing New Zealand or Housing Corp, back in the day. And so, the front-end of that came across which was the assessments for public housing. Then MSD picked up emergency housing when it became a need. Out of that, MSD has become more and more involved inside the community housing space; Refuge for example, being one of them. When we cross over to the regional public services, our role inside that has been around coordinating government agencies to work on local solutions. For example, the work that's happening in Manaia for whānau up there, it's led by Te Whāriki, supported by others, and we try and link, cut the noise, and do what we can do to support that happening. That's it in a nutshell. (K12)

Current Hauraki housing situation

In Hauraki, 46% of the housing stock are holiday homes in the Thames-Coromandel District Council area and are unavailable for rentals. Then you've got old housing stock and cold, damp and really poor houses... you know there's considerable vulnerability around housing in Hauraki when a real estate agent says to woman who has water seeping down the walls, and brown tap water, "oh well, like it or lump it, get out if you don't want it." This goes back to government policy where they're relying on market rentals to meet the needs of people who don't own their own homes and people [landlords / agents] are charging high rents because they can. So, Hauraki's got a significant crisis, and you top that with women who are faced with the challenges of mahi tūkino, it's pretty dim. (K16)

Here in Hauraki, individual whānau living in their own houses is unattainable. You can't get a mortgage and your circumstances don't allow you to access market rentals so you might have to live in social housing conditions ... we don't have any of those [social housing], so, that means you go to emergency housing [MSD] ... [if] we don't have any of that ... you have to leave the area to go and find somewhere else to live. (K11)

We can't afford new builds! On average a whānau [Māori] salary in Hauraki is about \$30,000 so at a fundamental level, we need to change our thinking around social housing and intergenerational housing, and who it's for! (K14)

Any opportunity to purchase a home at a reasonable rate...you're priced out of market because of the demand for housing. That leaves you with private property investors, and where in Thames, are you gonna build where you can get a resource consent? (K12)

There's not enough housing for what we have going on!... chuck in there ten recent weather events, and we now need workforce housing. When they bring workforce housing in, the hotels, the people opening boarding options, flatting, whatever it is, they're all gone. Then we're heading into a drought season, and they're expecting about 300,000 people this holiday season because everyone wants a bit of beach, which is huge. That creates a whole melting pot of issues ... put[s] pressures on our infrastructure... (K12)

The East Coast is beautiful and is known for its beaches, and semi-urban/rural approach, which attract a lot of our holiday homeowners ... same for those bays on the West Coast closest to Thames ...

[with]in Pare Hauraki more than 50% of homes are owned by holiday homeowners ... use only when it's summer. There is very limited choice in terms of what is available for our whānau who need homes right now. (K13)

Most of our whānau Māori, who are prevalent in some of the most unfortunate statistics, are living on the West Coast, which doesn't get the [East Coast] attention and doesn't attract many tourists. Unfortunately ... our whānau are struggling with [not] having the opportunity ...to build those happy, strong, safe homes. (K13)

Many homes owned by whānau Māori were built in the 1800's when there weren't any restrictions on the foundations ... we've been doing several repairs [to] ensure that whānau have a healthy, dry and warm home... it's acknowledging that we haven't received any recognition or housing funding into the rohe. (K13)

Sub-standard housing exists ... infrastructure is pakaru and needs fixing. Whānau just make do with what they have, power passed through the window and [no] fittings for disabled, there is no support. (K18)

So, it's not a case of central government coming along and going, "I think I'll spring a couple of houses there." In the long-term, making positive generational changes, won't come out of central government approaches, they will come from whānau, from kāinga, from our own communities ... Our generations just keep expanding, and we have to house them somewhere. I don't think you can have a solution without having true partnership with Māori. (K12)

There's no catering to the multi-generations! They [Kāinga Ora] constantly build for the 18% of society that make up a mum and a dad, and 2.5 children. Māori, Pasifika, and migrant communities all live multi-generationally (K14).

We need multi-generational housing because it saves the state money and resources...What makes them think we want to live without our koroua, kuia, and mokopuna generations? You want us to live as white-is-right households, to turn all the brown people into white living people? Kāinga Ora have been culturally negligent in their planning approach and have failed to recognise the expanding and contracting living needs of Māori and Pacific whānau. (K14)

When Pākehā or mainstream talk about ‘overcrowding’ it’s based on a Western architectural design for nuclear families, but it’s a ruse they use to get Māori and Pacifica out of their homes. However, they have no problem with our whānau crammed into out-of-sight, caravans, and motels. Hypocrisy! (K14)

I don’t know how many hui I’ve gone to and people have said, “I don’t know why we just don’t pay for more motel units.” – what the? You try bringing your whānau up in a motel unit. (K12)

There’s so much research out there on the impacts of overcrowding, of food poverty, that just poverty in general, has on whānau violence. They definitely live within overcrowding, when there are no other options for them to go to, to move to. How can you truly work with whānau, to live within a healthy home, when you don’t have all the the resources that are necessary. From an agency perspective when working towards aspirations you’re restricted within a rohe that doesn’t have the ability to provide options for social housing resources, that actually meet needs. We’re also building whānau hopes up and this is during Cyclone Gabrielle, when we’re seeing a significant increase in family violence, oranga hinengaro, and whānau seeking support. (K13)

One of the key barriers is systemic barriers. Across the country, I’ve heard about the way government agencies treat whānau. We know that there’s a housing crisis, we know government policy has meant that there’s a housing shortage, but our people themselves get blamed for the predicament they’re in and they’re labeled homeless. (K16)

Everybody thinks homelessness is related to drugs and mental health, actually it’s not. And how whānau term homelessness is different to what agencies term homelessness; it’s not just four walls. (K12)

There is kōrero around ‘choice’ in terms of moving to other areas where the resource is more available, but it’s that whole recognition of whakapapa, of connection to our whenua, it takes us away from our meaning of Te Ao Māori. There needs to be this closer kōrero between government agencies, and iwi, hapu, and marae, and kaupapa Māori, iwi Māori organisations around the realities of Pare Hauraki. (K13)

Wāhine wear the burden of the violence

Some of the stuff we see happening in the Hauraki, is that if you apply for a Kāinga Ora house you’ve got to take what you get given. Meaning it mightn’t be in Hauraki, and most of its not, it might be Auckland, and if you don’t take the place they give you in Auckland, then you don’t get a house. And, that process is just repeating, continuing to disenfranchise our people from being able to live at home, and home is Hauraki. It’s not a choice, it’s an ultimatum. (K11)

One Wāhine that comes to mind because we’ve had a long relationship with her whānau. She had to leave Hauraki because that was her only option. They offered a house in Hamilton, and if she didn’t take the house then she wouldn’t have anywhere to live, which meant that she had to return to a violent relationship. I remember her being on the phone to them [Kāinga ōra], she wasn’t talking about the house, she was talking about, “You’re asking me to leave Hauraki; I don’t want to, I want to stay here, this is my home.” (K11)

It’s not a choice! When Wāhine are asked to indicate in their housing assessment if they would be willing to relocate to another area. This supposedly bumps them up the wait list, so when you are escaping partner violence and desperate for a whare, so that OT does not place your babies with the abuser, or worse uplift them into state care. (K14)

We’ve had hundreds of whānau who that has happened to, and particularly we saw a lot of it happening over Covid, and then the fallout after Covid, and they just chose to live in their cars because they didn’t want to leave. They wanted to stay in Hauraki, wherever inside the rohe was their papakāinga, and I don’t mean papakāinga in the sense of anything else other than where they feel connected and located to. (K11)



Māori are overrepresented on the [MSD housing] waitlist... and that data comes from people saying, “I want a housing assessment.” They get screened by four questions to see if they should have one... So, if you’re like a lot of our Wāhine Māori, they don’t ask for anything. It’s a case of “I don’t wanna say anything.” “I don’t wanna draw attention.” Or “I don’t really want them [the agency] to know what else is happening to me.” We do get Wāhine that come in and tell us, but often it’s because they’re so desperate. (KI2)

There’s a bias out there in the community, with private rentals. It’s perceived, if I write a support letter, they [Wāhine] have been in refuge. There’s another bias too, I don’t know what changed but years ago we could write that letter [to HNZ / WINZ] and that would work. Today you don’t write a letter! (KI7)

There’s a lot of discrimination out there still. You know, if you’re in the running with 30 other people for one property [Hauraki], or 100 other people in Auckland, where do you think a Wāhine Māori with tamariki will sit on that list compared to a professional out working? (KI2)

When you’ve got something that says, “we’re going to outlaw your ability to wear your gang tattoo on your face”, well I don’t know how you’re gonna do that in a human rights situation because you can wear whatever you like on your face... It wasn’t that long ago that we had hijabs banned from Court, right? Pretty much stripping a woman naked and putting her on public display, and she’s got no choice...suddenly you get a lot of people who have been made victims. (KI2)

That’s why we say this system creates harm! It’s racist and the institutional racism is well entrenched. Right from the shop-front service delivery to the policy level where you’ve got non-Māori people making policy decisions, and service design in an uninformed, ignorant, arrogant way. So, I feel for our whānau, and I am amazed by their resilience despite all the shit that gets thrown at them. (KI6)

There is no compassion in the system. Everywhere we went, we heard of the trauma and harm that’s been created by the system when people are most vulnerable. They access the services; they’re treated like it was their fault. So, one of our major recommendations is a redesign of the system to do away with the labels, and just house whānau. But the other thing was that we needed a caring, compassionate approach to the way that government services are provided. (KI6)

Our women wear the burden of the violence when Oranga Tamariki place their child with the perpetrator and the woman comes into the safe house. Or they’re [Wāhine] told by MSD you can’t stay in an emergency house because your partner keeps coming there and you’re no longer eligible for that service from them. (KI7)

When women come to you [the agency] with their tamariki and they got two black eyes, they don’t even know what home is. They don’t know what safe is. They don’t know what they need, and we’re saying to them, “tell us about your life.” And they have had a lifetime of being quiet. They fear their tamariki being uplifted...They’re better off being invisible than seen. (KI2)

They [Wāhine] can’t access a housing service unless they’re engaged or enter the safe house, which is really hard because we [Refuge] often don’t have a space. We’re full of women and children escaping serious family violence, which includes institutional or systems violence, that we’re seeing a lot more of today. (KI7)

State policy, legislation, & development restrictions

The issue is, we’re seriously restricted through state policy, development, and legislation. There’s a lot of people and research out there, all clambering for a piece of the Māori housing and design pie. And it doesn’t matter who does it, the fact is there’s not enough social investment by the state to help our whānau be secure in warm, dry, accessible, and safe homes. For things to change the power and control definitely has to move to Māori. (KI4)

We want healthy homes, safe homes, happy homes, homes that are there for our whānau. That’s what we’re looking for with Pare Hauraki and unfortunately, the government of late, have given more focus to the urban areas and have further isolated those of our whānau living within rurality. (KI3)

So, you’ve got this vertical decision-making process where Ministers drive their agenda, make decisions which may address an issue in one space, and severely impact in another. For example, they’re reviewing the emergency housing system, but what does that mean? They didn’t recognise that there was a crisis. Generally, people could only go to WINZ and then they said, well okay we’ve got this list of motels that you can live in...this bloody hotchpotch system is just reactive and has no design around it. (KI6)

There also needs to be this kōrero within local governments around the legislative and regulatory restrictions that stop our people from thriving within their own whenua Māori, within their own papakāinga establishments, or even trying to further build on that. That is the day-to-day struggles of Pare Hauraki. (KI3)

Papakāinga building constraints

There are all the constraints around building on papakāinga. If, because of legislation you can claim the right to the papakāinga, then there are a whole range of compliances that you have to go through to enable you to even live there, let alone it being designed as a papakāinga. The white person’s law has set us up to be homeless, to experience housing poverty. Whether that poverty presents as, can’t go back and live on your own land because you may have been adopted and therefore, you’re not allowed to whakapapa to your whenua. It may be that you were a ward of the state which means that you haven’t got information that enables you to whakapapa to your whenua. In other words, our whānau, our Wāhine carry the burden of risk for failed successive government policies over many years. And all those failures were based on neoliberalist policies that assumed that the one percent of resourcing should stay in the hands of those that own it, and that those who are poor need to prove their worth. (KI1)

With the impacts of colonisation and gold mining, we’ve already been disadvantaged as Te iwi Māori in terms of the whenua that we can recognise as whenua Māori, let alone of having the ability to utilise whenua Māori for the purposes of building papakāinga, because the total land availability is smaller than the actual need of our whānau. (KI3)

We’ve done a hundred-year strategic planning, and part of that planning includes us lobbying council to transfer the authority to us, to consent our own people. It’s not just consenting the whenua, it’s about looking at things, not from an individual perspective but a collective perspective. We’ve got about eight whānau trusts, so we would consent the trust to build and draw on our own resources. We’ve got planners, we’ve got architects, we’ve got civil engineers, and all those people inside our iwi kāinga. We would draw on their expertise to pull together and put together kāinga developments that are future proofed. (KI1)

There’s lots of talk of ‘partnering with Māori’ in the housing space. Great, but we need to be developing papakāinga style housing on state owned whenua, and not just our whenua which is what, less than 5% now. How do we long-term invest in, tautoko or build whānau capacity, if we only plan to do so on dwindling whenua Māori? I think we need to build on state owned lands and invest in kāinga with social support, education, and health hubs because that’s how we grow whānau well-being, hauora, and collective well-being, but more importantly cultural identity and positioning as indigenous peoples of Aotearoa. (KI4)

Inequity and persistent disadvantage

Local council and regional councils...they’ve done all these hundred-year plans, looking at climate change stuff, and it wasn’t until we went to visit the house sites with the town planner that we saw the plans, that very clearly showed us where all the flooding would be. They’ve got all this information and they’re not sharing it with people, and people need to know that now...they were talking about how many houses were needed across Hauraki, what the average medium income is, but it was all for tauiwi. I said, “Well, if medium income for Hauraki Māori is \$23,000 a year (this whole room full of tauiwi just look) and you’re talking about medium rent of \$500 a week, just do the math.” There’s this whole, what the Productivity Commission call, “persistent disadvantage” that is continually perpetuated by councils who have an innate vote of confidence in themselves. They think that they know what to do with the information, but they don’t know, because they don’t even know how we work as a people. (KI1)

Church groups, pākeha organisations, and pākeha CHiPs [community housing providers] have significant stock that has been largely through government funding. That inequity needs to be addressed, right along the housing continuum; short-term, medium-term, affordable rentals and affordable home ownership. Like, back to the days when the government would give a low interest loan for people to buy their own homes. (KI6)

What is ‘affordable housing’ in Hauraki? Only well-off people can afford affordable housing and that’s why half the places here are, empty, rich white Aucklanders’ holiday homes. While our people live in cramped dilapidated conditions. (KI7)

Insufficient recognition of Hauraki housing poverty

We've got a social sector commissioning model that's been developed which started from a bottom-up, what are the needs of your communities, how do we partner with you to reduce those needs...We're saying it needs to be led by Māori and those non-Māori organisations need to get back, and support that. Actually, start to devolve funding locally and, build those relationships, partnerships, and build up the Māori housing sector, because there is severe inequity between the Māori housing sector and non-Māori housing sector. (K16)

There needs to be an assessment of the actual housing needs focused on Hauraki, renting, ownership, then investing in that gap, where they are living and how they are living. (K15)

Pare Hauraki is an alliance that is represented by seven of the twelve iwi of Hauraki with local government, with the district councils, and two iwi-mandated organisations. There is insufficient recognition given to Pare Hauraki in terms of housing poverty, in terms of the relationship between housing and hauora, and in terms of the impact that this attitude has on the well-being of whānau Māori within our rohe. (K13)

You're up against this generic allocation approach of population-based funding formulas. Many of our whānau will not respond to surveys because of the potential for attracting attention that they don't need. We saw these two budgets ago when the allocation was made to areas, to various rohe, based on need, but the analysis was based on the East Coast, where we had the least number of whānau Māori living. It disadvantages our people of Pare Hauraki having their needs judged on pure population base. The formula needs to be based upon the actual level of poverty for our whānau as opposed to the easiest way of counting numbers. (K13)

In late 2022, we took agency officials out to many of our iwi kāinga and no one would've actually realised that they existed because you have to come off the main roads to actually see where our whānau are populated. Not through all our iwi kāinga because some we purposely left out of the road show because we wanted to avoid attracting attention to some of the conditions of the homes, where if applying the legislation, they would consider them as inhabitable and should be condemned. The officials were surprised at the conditions. But these are where there is no other option for that whānau.

Power, poverty, inadequate heating, and avoiding the impacts of family violence fit into the whole mix of things. Add the fact that we've had 10 extreme weather events in 2023, it's clearly identifying that Pare Hauraki needs attention, a level of fairness, of equity within the area for our people to ensure that they too feel the benefits of healthy, happy, warm homes. (K13)

If we're looking at what some of the future aspirations are for our rohe, is actually getting that recognition and not getting the spotlight for, oh here's where all the negative statistics all build from - here's the spotlight from a pure equity approach to actually meeting the needs of a people, you know, Nga iwi o Hauraki who have been disadvantaged by various government mechanisms from having a voice. And this is where we come into the piece...we bring the voice of the people to the attention of the various government agencies. But we're not just wanting to have a hui, we're actually wanting some action, and some movement happening within our rohe. (K13)

Not just a whare build; but a community build

Based on what I hear whānau saying, what's essential for them in terms of safety is being heard, is being believed and is being understood, and then turning what's being heard, what's being believed and what's being understood into action by those who have the authority or the power to do so. From that point then the conversation continues into, if we were to do this for you tomorrow, like build you a house, what would that look like? Where would it be? How would it operate? What type of community would you be living in? (K11)

I don't think that you can move away from haukāinga aspects of our future, but I also think that we need to do the work within whatever that community looks like to ensure it's safe for kids. Because on our marae you have hidden predators, and we have to be open about dealing with that properly. Like our old people used to hush it up...what I like about Te Whariki, where they work with the whole whānau and have a unique difference to just a refuge. (K12)

I would like to see more focus around home ownership, conducting financial literacy, managing debt and savings, and having Kiwisaver, and how they can get their children into their own homes. We have to do it ourselves not just wait for golden windfall. It's never in our kids minds that can own their own homes, with this generation of debt [student loans] and how the banks can still loan money if they are able to get qualified and drive towards home ownership, and support of their whānau. (K15)

We need to decolonise and reconstruct the way we are forced into a system and society. When we go into the agencies, we look brown and are put at bottom of the list. We need to have trust that advice they [agencies] give is in our best interests, that agencies are reflected by our people- OT and the housing industry. The Crown is investing into iwi and Māori because our people don't trust by Māori for Māori in a kaupapa Māori environment. Our people are so colonised, and do not trust intuitively in our own values. They've resorted to "it is what it is", but hell no, we are not grateful for this situation. We want to ensure agencies are Māori driven, we don't have the jobs, we don't have the agencies at our fingertips, they need to know layout of Hauraki Iwi and Hapū and whānau, they need to understand relationships here. (K15)

Summarising Key Informants Speak

The key informants' insights are complementary to those of the Wāhine, who shared their pūrākau about their experiences of mahi tūkino and housing poverty. In the main, informants spoke about redesigning the current housing system.

A redesigned one would function within the context of a Te Tiriti partnership; it would actively remove legislative and policy restrictions that perpetuate persistent social and economic discrimination of Māori. The system would have Māori at its core and a policy framework supporting multigenerational, compassionate public housing solutions. Overall, the new look system would believe Wāhine Māori; it would favour low-interest loans and the development of papakāinga on state-owned whenua, and it would actively devolve funding at a local level to support whānau, develop villages that uphold the mana of Wāhine Māori and their tamariki mokopuna.

Wāhine and key Informants central to this study, have brought the voice of Hauraki people to our attention and contributed to a call for action, so that our tamariki remain with their whānau and can be raised in healthy villages, and our women are respected for their leadership and cosmological origins.



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