

ABSTRACT

Tangohia Mai te Taura (Take This Rope)

Toiroa Williams

Keywords: Whakatōhea, Mokomoko, Whānau, Whenua

Emanating from my PhD thesis *Tangohia mai te taura (Take This Rope)*, this presentation discusses a practice-led research project that asks: ‘How might approaches to Māori documentary making serve to elevate whānau narratives of experience and function as an artistic mode of redress?’ The project generates a photographic essay in discourse with *whakataukākī* (significant saying), composed *waiata* (song), oratory, and a documentary that collectively considers connections between our murdered ancestor Chief Mokomoko, *whenua*, and *whānau*. By framing ‘documentary’ as something inclusive of film but also embracing oratory, *toi pūkare* and photographic essay creation, the study considers ways in which a researcher dealing with vulnerable family narratives might work cooperatively with a *rōpū* of artistic collaborators within *Mātauranga Māori* (Māori customs and knowledge) and *kaupapa Māori* (Māori research approaches). Emanating from the *Kaupapa Māori* paradigm, the study employs a *Pūrākau* methodology (McNeill and Pouwhare 2018; Pouwhare, 2016; 2019), where a tree functions as a metaphor for connecting explicit and esoteric knowledge. In such research, *mahi* (practice) operates like osmosis, drawing sustenance from roots that reach down into the realm of *Te Kura Huna* (what is unseen, genealogical, esoteric or tacit), drawing knowledge up into *Te Kura Tūrama* (the light of what is explicit and seen). The significance of the study lies in its potential to rethink documentary inquiry as culturally located practice. In so doing, the project will contribute to the corpus of knowledge about the wrongful execution of Chief Mokomoko and the resulting impact of land confiscation on our *whānau*. It will also extend how processes of indigenous, photographic and filmic documentation might function as a form of *raranga* (weaving), where interwoven strands are employed to create a fabric of understanding that may increase feelings of value, identification and historical redress.

References

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