Relational Well-Being and Wealth: Māori Businesses and an Ethic of Care

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ABSTRACT. Care is at the heart of the Māori values system, which calls for humans to be *kaitiaki*, caretakers of the *mauri*, the life-force, in each other and in nature. The relational Five Well-beings approach, based on four case studies of Māori businesses, demonstrates how business can create spiritual, cultural, social, environmental and economic well-being. A Well-beings approach entails praxis, which brings values and practice together with the purpose of consciously creating well-being and, in so doing, creates multi-dimensional wealth. Underlying the Well-beings approach is an ethic of care and an intrinsic stakeholder view of business.

KEY WORDS: value based management, ethic of care, Indigenous business, Maori business, sustainability, relational wellbeing and wealth, stakeholder theory

> Yet I exist in the hope that these memoirs, in some manner, I know not how, may find their way to the minds of humanity in Some Dimension, and may stir up a race of rebels who shall refuse to be confined to limited Dimensionality. (Abbott, 1884, 107)

The quotation is taken from Abbott's *Flatland: A romance of many dimensions*, which is a critique of the stultifying conditions of Victorian England. *Flatland* is a society of creatures who inhabit a two-dimensional surface. These inhabitants, including the central character, a 'square', are unable to conceive of worlds beyond their two-dimensional experience. One day, however, a sphere enters *Flatland* and invites the square to consider the possibility of multiple dimensions. Given the limited dimensionality, the square is unable to fully recognise the sphere, let alone comprehend the sphere's suggestion. In *Flatland* the square can only see the sphere as a circle; to the square the sphere has no interior and thickness. Eventually, the sphere casts the square out of *Flatland* into a three-dimensional world:

> An unspeakable horror seized me. There was a darkness; then a dizzy, sickening sensation of sight that was not like seeing; I saw a Line that was no Line; Space that was not Space: I was myself, and not myself. When I could find voice, I shrieked loud in agony, "Either this is madness or it is Hell." "It is neither", calmly replied the voice of the Sphere, "it is Knowledge; it is Three Dimensions: open your eye once again and try to look steadily." (Abbott, 1884, 122)

Owing to his experience beyond *Flatland* the square undergoes a transformation of consciousness. Now the square can see directly what he had previously been unable to comprehend – he can see that his worldview was based on a reality experienced on a two-dimensional surface that was narrow and limited. On his return the square, with new knowledge, could gaze on the wretched plains and inhabitants of *Flatland* with a different perspective.

We invite businesses to consider approaches that go beyond the limited dimensions of the bottom-line, and invite researchers to step beyond management *Flatland*s of limited perspective wherein business is somehow a universal economic truth (Henare, 2003; Petrie, 2006) comprising 'independent, rational, self-interested, utility-maximising individuals' (Peet, 2006, 91). We ask business to dare to experience another way of knowing and to consider holistic and multi-dimensional approaches based on an ethic of care which, as this study shows, can create multi-dimensional well-being through better personal relationships and better relationships with the natural world. In demonstrating how

businesses can dare to care, this article addresses the observation that there has been a deficit of attention paid to multiple stakeholders, and to the contribution of business to the well-being of society in general (Academy of Management, 2009[1]).

This article draws on the Māori wisdom tradition. Māori are the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand[2] and their values include ancient knowledge; all businesses that seek to demonstrate 'stewardship' and 'sustainability' can learn and benefit from this knowledge. Māori values can inform the creation of multi-dimensional relational well-being, and the value embodied in relationships can accrue to become the value-added propositions of the firm in the marketplace and in the wider world. By creating relational well-being, the businesses in this study demonstrate wealth in terms of its original meaning from the old English word 'welth', meaning 'to be well' (Zohar and Marshall, 2004, 2).

The Māori approach finds theoretical kinship with Gilligan's (1982) ethic of care, which also advocates a relational view of the world. Both the Māori and ethic of care approaches can directly inform stakeholder theorising by highlighting how businesses generate relational wealth, extending the work of Leana and Rousseau (2000) which focussed on the internal relations between and with employees, along with the organisation's external alliances and reputation. In their view these relations create valuable resources for the firm. In extending relational wealth to include spiritual, cultural, social, environmental as well as economic relationships, we suggest that the key attributes of building relational wealth through an ethic of care include: valuing the intrinsic worth of others; demonstrating care, empathy, and respect; and seeking to base relationships on shared values. The insights in this article contribute to the conceptualisation of a stakeholder model, which focusses on the intrinsic worth of stakeholders.

This article is organised in seven sections. In the first section the story of *Flatland* is used to problematise the atomised, mechanistic, rationalistic and materialistic world in which much of business operates. In the 'Beyond flatland' section, new conceptualisations of organisation theory are introduced, highlighting the call for an interconnected worldview in business that draws upon ancient wisdom. Some key Māori values that help to inform

well-being approaches are also introduced. The 'Methodology' section discusses methodology. In 'The ethic of care and a stakeholder view of business' section, the ethic of care approach is explored, and links to normative stakeholder theory are made. The 'Practising caring values creates relational well-being' section introduces the Five Well-beings approach and presents examples from the field research. The main contributions of this study are then set out, followed by the conclusion that business can be a catalyst and creator of multi-dimensional well-being and wealth, and can thus address the sustainable challenges that face the world today.

Flatland: an uncaring world of limited dimensionality

Flatland, in the context of this article, can be depicted as the reified, profit-dominated marketplace governed by modern business transactions in which the emphasis is typically on economic growth. Much of modern society is acculturated to the economic mode which appears to dominate many people's lives and, as in the industrial *Flatland*, is based on relationships that are typically based on the commodity mode of exchange. Habituated to this mode, people relate in utility terms rather than valuing others for their intrinsic worth. People conceive of themselves, others, and nature, in an instrumental way, that is, relationships are useful only inasmuch as the person makes some form of gain from the relationship. An inhabitant of *Flatland* is a person consumed by pursuit of material wealth, disconnected from their whole self, their heart and soul, and disconnected from others and from nature.

Abbott wrote *Flatland* during the industrial age, where important scientific advances seemed to suggest that people should conceive of themselves and others in a mechanistic way. Human labour was valued largely for its economic contribution alongside capital and material resources. Based upon the precepts of Adam Smith, individuals were encouraged to believe that they could best serve society by meeting their own self-interested needs and consequently economic activity was disembedded from social relationships, and atomised individuals were rendered as sole agents in pursuit of personal prosperity (see Henare, 2003; Petrie, 2006).

As Taylor ([1991](#), 69) suggests, in such a world people base their lives on, and are drawn into, an economic system and its promises, and thus may learn to see themselves as atomised with no need for sympathetic engagement with the wider community. Such a world is, to use Taylor's expression, a 'flattened world'.

Beyond flatland

The dominant thinking, which advocates that the purpose of business is to only produce material wealth (Friedman, [1970](#)), is an ossified mode of thinking that is the result of forgetting that people in organisations exist in a web of empathic, reciprocal relationships with many others, not only shareholders. Suzuki et al. ([1997](#), 12) believe that for many 'Westernised' societies, the 'ancient understanding of the exquisite interconnectivity of all life has been shattered', and consequently many people struggle to attain a sense of belonging.

Senge et al. ([2004](#), 194) describe a 'new' worldview wherein connectedness is 'an organising principle of the universe'. Senge (as cited in Carden et al., [2002](#), 1047) says that to believe anything other than interconnectedness is a 'massive illusion of separation from one another, from nature, from the universe, from everything. We're depleting the earth and we're fragmenting our spirit'. Bolman and Deal ([1995](#), 39) also argue that a new paradigm is required to 'move beyond the traps of conventional thinking' in organisations and suggest that this new paradigm may well be the rediscovery and renewal of an old paradigm that is 'deeply embedded in traditional wisdom'. The 'new' worldview advocated by these commentators lies beyond industrial *Flatlands* where individuals are deeply enmeshed in rationalistic, materialistic economic logic.

Indigenous perspectives offer important insights into a multi-dimensional 'woven universe' (Marsden, [2003](#)), which has not broken tradition with the 'living web of the world' and kinship with all of creation (Cajete, [2000](#); Marsden, [2003](#); Royal, [2002](#)). Unlike the Cartesian split of 'I think therefore I am', the worldview of Māori seeks to close gaps of separation, not promote separation, so that the saying 'I belong therefore I am' (Henare, [2004](#)) holds greater validity, or indeed, 'I belong therefore I am, and so *we* become'.

Māori values advance a relational view of the world that rests upon a profound commitment to developing reciprocal relationships of respect, in which the intrinsic worth of all aspects of creation is recognised. Māori values are like 'stars' illuminating the human pathway, and are amongst 'the shining treasures of the culture' (Barclay, [2005](#), 236) and help guide the creation and maintenance of relationships wherein to 'be' is to 'belong'.

Many Māori values place particular emphasis on respect and care to engender belonging. These values include: *manaaki*, meaning to show respect or kindness; *aroha*, which is to show care, empathy, charity and respect; *hau* which means to respect, promote and maintain vitality; *kaitiakitanga*, which includes stewardship, guardianship and wise use of resources; and *hāpai* meaning to uplift others. Care is at the heart of the Māori values system and calls upon humans to be *kaitiaki*, caretakers of the *mauri*, the life principle, in each other and in nature.

Methodology

Drawing on research conducted by Spiller ([2010](#)) the insights in this article emerge from four in-depth case studies of Māori tourism organisations. The Five Well-beings framework, which demonstrates how these businesses view life, including business, in terms of well-being, is the conceptual map that emerged from Spiller's study.

The *whāriki*, that is – the woven mat which in this article acts as a metaphor for the Māori worldview in upon which this research is located is woven together with Māori epistemologies (drawn from a wide variety of knowledge sources such as story, myth, legend, *pepehā* proverbs, as well as scholarly contributions) and influenced by other epistemologies, such as 'Western' philosophical and organisational theories. Smith ([1998](#)) argues that Māori research 'weaves in and out of Māori cultural beliefs and values, Western ways of knowing, Māori histories and experiences under colonialism, Western forms of education, Māori aspirations and socio-economic needs, and Western economics and global politics' (p. 191). The implication for this research is its interweaving of theory, analysis and diagnosis that weave between the Māori and Western, which thus has consequences beyond Indigenous landscapes.

A commitment to be informed by Māori research principles ensured that this study was culturally appropriate (Te Awekotuku, 1991). These principles included selecting a research topic that provides tangible benefit to Māori communities, and placing Māori values, ways of knowing, attitudes and practices at the centre of the research.

The methodology also shares features with the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Using grounded theory in tourism research is valued for its responsiveness to context, and for its potential to achieve holistic, in-depth understandings of complex tourism phenomena (Jennings and Junek, 2007). Grounded theory addresses Hardy's (2005) observation of the limited attention given to the relationship between stakeholder analysis and sustainable tourism and Jennings and Junek's (2007) comments that grounded theory can reveal new understandings of phenomena in tourism settings.

Data collection was conducted in four Aotearoa New Zealand localities and involved 54 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a diversity of organisation stakeholders. A range of businesses that reveal interconnections between diverse business approaches was a key consideration for case selection. Each business had special features that differed from the others and, when compared with each other, was expected to yield a rich and complex view of organisational reality. The businesses selected held different positions along the supply chain, from an inbound operator to specific tour and accommodation providers, and each had different target markets from luxury tours for the North American and Arab markets to a semi-domestic customer base marketing to New Zealanders and Australians. They were embedded in different North Island tribal areas, and situated in a diversity of ecosystems: geothermal, rainforest, marine and urban-bush interface.

Another important aspect of diversity was the ownership model of each business. One was a charitable trust, effectively owned by the people of the *hapū*, sub-tribe; another was a joint venture between Māori and Pākehā (New Zealander of Anglo-European descent); another was privately owned by Māori and the other business was owned by a Pākehā who had operated tours in the region for over 18 years. The last business mentioned was deemed important on the basis that the business promoted Māori cultural tourism experiences, employed Māori guides, and was mentored by *kaumātua*, elders. As the majority of Māori who participate in the tourism sector are employees it was deemed particularly important to include this last business in order that Māori employees were given a voice and not overlooked on the basis that they did not own businesses or work for Māori-owned businesses.

The transcripts associated with each business were loaded into Nvivo software to assist analysis. Codes were derived directly from each transcript and appeared as 'free nodes' and were then sorted into 'tree nodes' once patterns began to emerge. A within-case analysis was first conducted, and case narratives on each business were written. A cross-case analysis was then conducted, and Nvivo helped conceptualise possibilities. In keeping with Māori research protocols the findings were presented to diverse Māori communities as the theory unfolded.

This study explored businesses in the tourism industry. International tourism is the world's largest export earner and represents approximately 11.8% of total global exports in 2006[3] and is an industry that has major importance to Māori. Cultural tourism is highlighted as a strong growth sector for the Aotearoa New Zealand tourism industry (Tourism Strategy Group, 2007). Given that Māori tourism involves, at least to some extent, a sharing of Māori culture, it is a logical industry to study for evidence of the principles of this culture being applied in business. Furthermore, the tourism industry is often criticised for its *Flatland* type approach (Bauman, 1997; Cohen, 1972) and its consequent negative effects on local societies, cultures and ecologies (Boorstin, 1962; Bruner, 1991; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006; Krippendorf, 1989), notably on Indigenous communities (Butler and Hinch, 2007; Johnston, 2006; McLaren, 2003; Ryan and Aicken, 2005; Zeppel, 2006).

The ethic of care and a stakeholder view of business

Following the interwoven *whāriki* paradigm, the interwoven nature of this work reflects the reality of the businesses in this study where 'Western' business practice is brought together with Māori practice. The purpose of this section is to highlight that,

whilst emerging from a Māori research project, theoretical kinship is identified between Indigenous and Western approaches, both of which advocate a relational view of the world, and thus shows a pathway for how to bring ancient wisdom into modern organisations. The Five Well-beings map and its relationship to the field of Māori organisational practice synergises with Gilligan's (1982) ethic of care, and a stakeholder view of organisations. By bringing an ethic of care together with stakeholder theory, and with Indigenous views, a *whāriki* paradigm is woven – and interweaves to offer a business case for creating relational well-being and wealth.

According to the argument of Wicks et al. (1994), which resonates with Leana and Rousseau's (2000, 493) concept of 'relational wealth', an ethic of care in stakeholder vernacular 'is about creating value for an entire network of stakeholders' through co-operation, a decentralisation of power and authority, and efforts to build consensus amongst stakeholders through communication. A relational wealth view recognises that the value generated through effective, stable and trusting relationships brings benefits beyond what can be measured in 'profit' terms alone.

Businesses that seek to adopt a well-being approach can draw on Gilligan's (1982, 1995) ethic of care, which is theoretically linked to a Māori values-based approach, and forms the basis for a particular stakeholder view of the firm. Both approaches focus on the quality of relationships (Gilligan, 1995; Liedtka, 2008). Like Māori, Gilligan argues for a relational position which places a high value on the moral worth of relationships and the responsibilities that these entail:

> A feminist ethic of care begins with connection, theorized as primary and seen as fundamental in human life. People live in connection with one another; human lives are interwoven in a myriad of subtle and not so subtle ways. (Gilligan, 1995, 122)

In care ethics, relationships are characteristically empathetic, open to emotional considerations, and responsive to connectedness and attachments (Chanter, 2001, 88). Care ethics rejects the notion of abstract, fixed, and universal principles (Gilligan, 1982, 1995; Jones et al., 2007; Simola, 2003). This outlook accords with the approach taken by Māori business to act intimately, flexibly and with critical consideration to local conditions, particular contexts and the needs and concerns of others.

Without meaningful relationships which are a feature of an ethic of care approach 'human life becomes bleak, lonely and, after a while … not self-affirming' (Baier, 1993, 31). An ethic of care approach includes 'the struggle against indifference to people and relationships' (Simola, 2003, 354, cf. Gilligan, 1982). Empathy, openness, responsiveness, reciprocity, and receptiveness to the reality of others are key attributes of an ethic of care approach (Chanter, 2001; Simola, 2003).

An ethic of care ensures that multiple perspectives, or 'voices' in Gilligan's terms, are respectfully recognised, and that no voice is repressed. This relational outlook accords with stakeholder theory. Several commentators agree with Carroll and Buchholtz (2008, 30) who point out that 'caring theory is consistent with stakeholder theory … in that the focus is on a more cooperative, caring type of relationship'. Wicks et al. (1994, 483) weld an ethic of care to stakeholder theory, and describe companies as 'webs of relations among stakeholders'. Stakeholder theory's application as an ethics-based approach to business has been closely examined by scholars such as Dunphy (2000), Epstein (2008), Post et al. (2002), Phillips (1997) and Spiller (1999), and resonates with the ethic of care advocated here.

A central tenet of stakeholder theory is that organisations should be managed in all constituents' interests, and not solely confined to the interests of shareholders (Donaldson and Preston, 1995; Freeman, 1984; Laplume et al., 2008; Leana and Rousseau, 2000; Post et al., 2002).

Major stakeholder relationships contribute significantly to an organisation's wealth, argue Post et al. (2002, 46–47). They cite a range of stakeholders including investors, employees, customers, supply chain associates, communities, and other alliances. Indeed, they believe that organisations will not survive if they do not take cognisance of, and responsibility for, their stakeholders' welfare including the well-being of the society in which the business operates. Similarly, Leana and Rousseau (2000, 3) advocate for a 'relational wealth' conceptualisation of the modern organisation and argue that the way work is carried out in organisations is fundamentally about relationships.

Donaldson (2008, 175) argues, from a normative stakeholder perspective, that managers must 'ascribe some *intrinsic* worth to stakeholders'. This study argues that intrinsic worth precedes normative considerations.

Creating well-being can be achieved through consciously valuing the intrinsic worth of all aspects of the world and developing relationships according to an ethic of care. An ethic of care recognises multiple ties of attachment and affection, and thus counteracts the indifference that utilises others and the environment for personal gain and fosters the permissive conditions that encourage unsustainable behaviour in organisations. This unsustainable behaviour is epitomised by the greed that motivated individuals working in corporations such as Enron, Worldcom, and AIG, where there appeared to be a lack of care and respect, so that stakeholders were deceived and became 'things' to serve personal interests which, in a materialistic society, usually equates with unfettered, money-oriented ambition.

Practising caring values creates relational well-being

Tourism epitomises an industrial *Flatland*. Tourism is an industrial system fettered to the neo-liberal 'market ideology' which places overwhelming importance on tourism as an economic force (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006, 1193) wherein the power of the market has a grip over the whole range of cultural production, including cultural tourism (Hall et al., 1992).

Within these *Flatlands* Māori have been cast as a stereotype and the tourist as a prototype, neither being fully comprehended. Māori as the local hosts, who in order to participate in tourism must enter the two-dimensional space (*Flatland*) constructed and controlled by the global marketplace. If tourists remain in the confines of tourism *Flatlands* they will achieve a very limited understanding of the places they visit and the people they encounter. If Māori can participate in tourism only on terms governed by the power of the market, then tourism can only achieve extremely limited results as a force for change and not fulfil its potential as a vehicle for peace and understanding between peoples (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006; McLaren, 2003).

This study shows how the Māori businesses which formed its basis resist belonging to tourism in reified terms, within reified *Flatland* spaces. Instead, they focus on belonging through being in partnership with customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders.

Therefore, drawing on insights that emerged from the field, the study shows how these businesses view life in terms of well-being. What actually constitutes well-being, *mauri ora*, emerges through the conscious, reflexive engagement with the field of practice and its many communities. Māori business approaches draw on relational consciousness, and thus an appreciation for the spiritual, cultural, social, environmental, and economic dimensions of life.

The following sections are organised around the Five Well-beings approach that emerged from the data analysis. These Five Well-beings are spiritual, cultural, social, environmental and economic, and they show how the four Māori businesses, named after the native trees **Kauri**, **Rimu**, **Miro**, and **Pōhutukawa** transform caring values through praxis into *mauri ora*, meaning well-being that is consciously created. The voices of participants presented in this article provide a glimpse into the much wider body of work conducted by Spiller (2010) and are presented as narrative-styled accounts that 'enable the reader to see and hear the actors in the studied social scene, but do so in terms of the composed theoretical framework' thus aligning with a grounded theory approach (Locke, 2001, 115).

Spiritual well-being

Appreciation of a spiritual life-force that permeates all of creation, unifying all, is key to understanding how *mauri ora*, is a consciously created well-being. *Mauri* can mean the life principle, the life force, the source of all emotions, the thymos of man, and oftentimes is used to denote a person (Williams, 2004). *Ora* denotes 'well' and 'in health' (Williams, 2004). When *mauri* and *ora* come together, it can mean 'conscious' (Māori Language Commission, 1995), and is used in the context of this study to mean 'conscious well-being'.

Mauri philosophically speaking is a life-force and gives 'uniqueness and being to each individual object' and 'is immanent in all things, knitting and bonding them together' says Marsden (2003, 47), thus bringing unity in diversity and ascribing intrinsic worth to all. Being bound together through

mauri unifies all aspects of creation, and is not without differentiation, but unity appreciative of the intrinsic spiritual worth, and difference, of each.

In a 'belonging' outlook, humans belong not only to each other but also to all of creation. As Wolfgramm (2007) explains 'Māori continue to see themselves as agents in an evolving cosmological community, and use whakapapa [genealogies] to actively interpret relationships in order to bring the sacred to the centre of being' (p. 80). This is a relational view of the world, where we are called into being through our relationships, through the interaction with kin, genealogies, and events. Rocks, rivers, birds, plants, mountains, animals and oceans, all possess a genealogy, and the divine genealogical order of *whakapapa* extends through aeons to a common genealogical origin which is *Io*, the Creator of the Cosmos (Barlow, 1991; Henare, 2001, 2003; Marsden, 2003). *Io* is the coalescence of connectedness for all of creation, and affirms Senge et al's (2004) observation that connectedness as 'an organizing principle of the universe' is needed to achieve wellness of earth and human spirit.

By empathetically engaging with specific contexts, and acting on the needs in communities, including ecological communities, the field research shows how businesses draw upon Māori values such as *kotahitanga* (unity), *wairuatanga* (spirituality), *whakapapa* (genealogy), *aroha* (care, empathy, charity and respect) and *manaaki* (respect and kindness) in practice to endow a sense of belonging to each other and the natural world.

The Māori businesses in this study, expressed their desire to make a difference to a variety of communities such as social, cultural, environmental, the workplace, as well as the community created with customers and suppliers. Individuals were motivated to contribute to this greater whole and harness their personal talents and skills to serve others within and beyond the scope of their daily work. Contributing to a greater whole contributes to spiritual well-being by creating healthier workplaces and communities, and recognises the spiritual importance of making work meaningful. In serving others, one is serving one's extended self, and self actualisation occurs in relationship. For example, in one of the businesses studied, **Miro**, a guide saw a spiritual contribution in being able to 'give of yourself', to care for others, and explained that the 'purpose of life is to serve others'. One of the guide's gifts of medicine had the ability to heal through physical properties, combined with spiritual properties. For example, the guide discussed an episode where a customer's headache was healed by providing *rongoā*, meaning Māori medicine. The guide later asked the *kaumātua*, the elders, how the medicine had healed the woman of her lifetime affliction:

> I asked the *kaumātua*, "Why is that? Was it supposed to fix the migraine?" And straight away they go "*he tokotia*, your mix, and your *aroha* [compassion] and your *manaaki* [respect, kindness], that's all part and parcel of your *rongoā* [medicine]. Your *wairuatanga* [spirituality] is all inside that *rongoā*." What makes *rongoā* work is the person who is giving it to you. If you just gave it and said "here" there's a difference between that and giving of yourself. I was taught that way, to give of yourself in whatever you do … Of being able to use *rongoā*, being able to give of myself to my *manuhiri* [visitors] I say to them, I give you my last drop coz that's how we are.

Making a difference through contributing to the greater whole included helping colleagues in the workplace achieve improved work outcomes reflected in the comments of one **Rimu** employee: 'I always think of *whanaungatanga* [relationships], *manaakitanga* [practising respect and kindness] and I think I'm here for the well-being of the people'. Belonging and contributing to the well-being of various communities also included consideration of future generations and this employee felt part of an ongoing legacy that would sustain future generations: 'I'm not doing it for me, I'm doing it for my son, maybe for my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren'.

Interviewees working in Māori tourism hoped to create experiences that put customers in touch with a deeper experience, and ultimately with a self-actualising experience. Through facilitating experiences that help customers step into a Māori worldview, customers may receive deep insights about their own lives. Guiding transformation can bring spirituality to encounters and create opportunities for customers to experience a sense of their own authentic self. For example, the CEO of **Rimu** explained the contribution Māori could make to the world through the energy of togetherness: '[I want customers to] take back that Māori people are a

gift to the world, really that we still have what some cultures have lost in terms of oneness, a linking to-gether, a feeling of belonging to each other and the world'.

Māori can be spiritual guides, or facilitators, for others, to help them discover their own authentic self through the enriching spaces, and when people were connected to spirit, to *wairua*, said the owner of **Pōhutukawa**, they were then open to receiving the spirit in a way that they may not have experienced before, or in a long while:

> Well, it's pure love. It's the feeling of love, of being loved through the *manaakitanga*, through the consid-eration, through the warming … That's what they are lacking, that's what they are looking for. You know, it may not have been around them in an unconditional way for a very long time.

A number of **Pōhutukawa** customers wrote about how they felt transformed through their experiences, which could simply be the opportunity of being given time and space for self-reflection: 'I got to know a bit about [Māori] priorities in life. For me, they know more about life and humans than the Western people. I think [we] lost so many things on [our] way to success'.

These brief examples show how Māori businesses aim to develop meaningful relationships with a variety of stakeholder communities, and demonstrate how business can belong, contribute, and make a difference to the greater whole of which they form a part. Individuals working for Māori businesses can act as catalysts for transformation by helping others connect to themselves through relationships with nature, the spiritual domain, ancestors, culture, and people. Relational well-being, in this dimension is spiritual connectedness, wholeness, and unity with the intrinsic worth of each aspect of creation. In respecting the intrinsic worth of all others, Māori businesses, through practising spiritual values that create *mauri ora*, well-being.

Cultural well-being

Ropata Taylor of Wakatu Incorporation, a successful corporation with significant investments across a wide variety of sectors, says that Māori business is 'not about commercialising our culture, it's about

culturalising our commerce' ('Māori Tourism Not Just', 2007), and he encourages economic activity that does not erode culture in the process. Cultur-alising commerce is a view also held by the chair of the New Zealand Māori Tourism Council, John Barrett. He encourages Māori in business to be successful 'without losing or having to compromise their Māori values' (Ombler, 2007, 24).

Māori businesses can refer to *tika*, the ethic of the right way, which is essential for individual and group well-being (Henare, 1988, 21). *Tika* provides a code of ethics to guide action in everyday life (Mead, 2003, 6). Whereupon *tika* points to what is right, its application is *tikanga*, that is, the actual practices that uphold the ethics embodied by *tika*. Understanding how Māori businesses draw upon *tikanga* can provide insights for other businesses adopting a code of ethics. The values embedded in *tikanga* help provide stability and assist Māori businesses to reconcile the Māori worldview with the demands of a growth-oriented capitalist economy, thus responding to the call from Māori economic agency Te Puni Kōkiri (2006). A commitment to *tikanga* is a commitment to keeping the business culturally grounded and appropriate. *Pono* (true to principles), *tika* (appro-priateness), *tikanga* (custom), and *whakarite* (respect) are some values that can guide Māori cultural pro-tocol in business settings.

Tikanga represents knowledge that has stood the test of time and offers a code of ethics that guide a business to 'do the right thing' and **Kauri** had identified three key values in particular to guide their design and organisation of tours:

> We have this amazing heritage here, going back thousands of years, and in this country at least 1,000 years, and on the other side, we have this eco-nomic/business community … trying to marry those two things together with integrity is very difficult, so we're trying to find ways to anchor it all. We think we've found that to some degree in just some simple values around people's connection to place, and if you put that into a Māori dimension, it's *kaitiakitanga* [connection to place], *he tangata* [people] and *mana-akitanga* [showing respect and kindness] …. you have this set of values that you deliver off.

Customers of **Kauri** indicated appreciation for the cultural values adopted by the business, encapsulated in this quotation, which highlights an awareness of

the difference between being treated as a *manuhiri*, a visitor, rather than a commercial transaction:

> I feel like … my interests [were] very important to them. It wasn't about just making money where I'm going to get you in and get you out; it's more about: "Okay we want to take care of you, we want to run a quality tour, we want to be able to show you about our people and about our country" … I don't think I know anybody back in Hawaii that does this … [m]ost people are there for the economic, basic boom-boom – get into the island, get out.

At the heart of *mauri ora*, conscious well-being, in the cultural dimension is the relationship of respect between the business and the cultural community from which *tikanga* emerges and **Rimu** had also identified three key guiding values: *whanaungatanga*, which broadly means relationships; *manaakitanga* meaning showing respect, kindness and uplifting the mana of others; and *kotahitanga* which is to create unity. Whatever they did, said the CEO, it was important to 'get the agreement of the people'. The business did not operate as an isolated unit, with a *tikanga* separate from the village, but aimed to maintain consensus and congruency between village life and corporate activities. One employee felt that part of the business's success was that people 'do actually see' customs in action.

A commitment to *tikanga* is a commitment to keeping the business culturally real and culturally appropriate and attention to values-based processes at **Pōhutukawa** ensured that when they welcome visitors, the correct *tikanga* were followed, and commercial aspects, including payment, were subordinated to values:

> I make the reference of *manuhiri*, the visitor, and it's the same treatment whether it's Māori, Pākehā [Anglo-European New Zealander], or it's international visitors – they are all *manuhiri* [visitors]. And that is the cup of tea, the *kai*, the *mihimihi* [greeting] before the business or the cheque-book.

The practices reveal how Māori businesses create relational well-being through a commitment to ongoing learning, so that the values and behaviours of the business reflect the cultural community. The businesses incorporated *tikanga*, cultural customs, as a code of ethics that reflected the wider cultural outlook. This adapting and protecting of *tikanga* shows how Māori businesses are not rigid, static, or prescriptive in their approach but dynamic, reflexive, and responsive and affirms the important point that not all *iwi, hapu, whānau* (tribe, clan, family) and individuals share the same, static account of Māori reality. A commitment to *tikanga* by these Māori businesses shows a commitment to putting customs and ethics first and helps avoid culturally unsustainable commercialisation of their business activities.

Social well-being

Reciprocity is at the heart of *manaakitanga*, and rests upon a precept that being of service enhances the *mana* of others; *mana* is the ethic of power, authority and the common good which is 'threaded into the fabric of existence' (Henare, 1988, 18). *Manaakitanga* transforms *mana* through acts of generosity that enhances all, produces well-being and creates 'a climate whereby the *mana* of all players is elevated' (Durie, 2001, 83). Uplifting the *mana* of others in turn nourishes one's own *mana*.

Businesses, too, can be measured by their efforts to enhance the *mana* of others and strengthen the group. Businesses that fail to understand that '*mana* is enhanced when collective well-being is the outcome' (Durie, 2001, 83) may very well fail in their quest for ongoing community support. Māori businesses aim to construct community with all stakeholders, thus increasing the *mana* of others, and leaving them stronger as a result of such interactions.

Another key value that highlights the relational framework is *whanaungatanga*, which involves creating ties of affection with stakeholders. Māori businesses draw on *whanaungatanga* to build belonging in a caring environment. The term *whānau*, family, can be elastic with a wide variety of meanings underlying its use. For example, it is often used as a 'familiar term of address to a number of people' (Williams Dictionary, 2004). What is important, says Metge (1995), is the quality of group life, and the well-being of the group, associated with *whānau*. Applying *whanaungatanga* actively creates a sense of family through a relational approach, including stakeholders beyond the kin group (Benton, 2004; Bishop, 1996; Metge, 1995).

Hollow corporate rhetoric is quickly identified by Māori communities as to whether businesses 'walk the talk' of genuine engagement. Johnston (2006) highlights that many companies bring a 'benefactor mindset and expect communities to be self-effacing, accommodating and compliant' (p. 165) and whilst businesses may undertake consultation processes, sometimes these are more like 'a phase of marketing than as dialogue' and she claims most tourism companies simply skim the surface of community relations (p. 202). For a Māori business to receive its 'edge' (TPK, 2007) a business must avoid token consultation processes and corporate rhetoric and establish reciprocal pathways of benefit, which create social well-being. The examples below were affirmed in practice through participant observation.

Genuine engagement is a long-term process and for the owner of **Miro**, creating opportunities for meaningful community participation in tourism had been difficult. Despite the challenges, the owner was convinced that the organisation was responding to a need in the region. Although not Māori, this owner felt committed to the local people: 'You have to have a long-term vision and commit to people. They are not my employees – the *marae* people are part of my family and I won't walk away from them'.

The values of *he kanohi i kitea* (a face seen), is an important value whereby people, including businesses, are expected to 'show up' and participate in community life, and an owner of **Pōhutukawa** stressed that businesses must act responsibly and be active members in their communities by helping out: '… keeping your ear to the ground. Where there's a call, there's a need, then you make yourself available because you know you have that skill or you can contribute. That's what it's about'.

Reciprocal pathways of benefit that contribute to common well-being is an expression of cultural inheritance and *manaakitanga*, showing caring and kindness – calls for Māori to give visitors the 'best' and recognise customers with the same respect accorded to all visitors. A **Rimu** employee related how what they did in the present with visitors was how, as a people, they had always treated visitors – This legacy required application of *manaakitanga* within tourism:

> It's just an inbred Māori thing that … we give visitors the best of… anything… Like the old times visitors

would come and they… would get out the best of their foods so that those visitors would go away [happy]. That's why we do what we do, and how we do it.

Focussing on the well-being of people, not commercial gratification, can enhance the *mana* (personal power) of all and a way of achieving this is sharing with stakeholders, including customers and suppliers, and integrating them as members of the extended family through participation and inclusiveness. For example, **Kauri** created community with customers through an attitude that 'all [people] are equal' and emphasised the difference between 'serving' and being 'servile', with the difference being, the owner said, an attitude of 'sharing'. Creating an atmosphere where customers could be in a 'comfort zone' was a key strategy he employed to develop affinity and respect. One approach to building 'comfort into the experience' was through providing experiential opportunities where customers could co-create events. The approach of **Kauri** appeared to be successful with a number of customers saying how comfortable and welcome they felt. One said:

> Everywhere you go, they make you feel so comfortable that it does, it feels natural, and it feels like you're just going to your friend's house for dinner and enjoying a good time with the people of New Zealand … It's like going and hanging out with family more than … going on a tour. It's that personable where everybody's having a good time and it's not all uptight and everybody's not sure how to act.

Benton (2004, 46) stresses that reciprocal relationship building can be blessed by gift exchange, an explanation that accords with Durie (2001) and Marsden (2003), and that gift-giving is a way of expressing *manaakitanga*. Gift-giving was an integral part of each guide's repertoire at **Miro** and they used the persuasion of their unique personalities to build ties of affection and, as one guide suggested, a gift could be a simple heartfelt smile:

> Our clients go away learning about a bit of New Zealand and the Māori culture and they also take away with them a gift – that gift is professionally given over with a guitar at the end of the day; giving them a gift and a song. Over the years I've learnt that a gift not only can be tangible, it can be non-tangible and it also can be in the form of a smile sometimes. I pretty much

have a signature of being able to sing people a song so that their memories will last here with us forever. And that's one signature I'll never not do.

Gift-giving galvanises affinity, and emerges from natural talents and inclinations not from prescribed or enforced and 'inauthentic' motivations, again focussing on the well-being of people and avoiding a transaction approach. The Māori business approach in this study to gift-giving shows how it is an attitude not a product. For example, food was regularly gifted to guests as a surprise at **Pōhutukawa**, not as an advertised inclusion which would detract from its heartfelt meaning. If sharing became a predictable, expected component of an experience it no longer felt like a gift – either to the receiver or the giver, explained the owner. Gifting food in this way helped build connection and establish affinity:

> Even though a lot of them might not eat with us and may not even have a lot of time with us, what [gifting food] does is allow them to feel a connection with us, it's not like they had just left on their own but that we are still thinking of them … That's the manaakitanga for the visitor. It makes people feel good, it is a gift to them to make them feel good.

Social values provide guidance on how relationships can best be conducted which, in practice, can produce opportunities for developing social connections that help *mauri ora*, conscious well-being, unfold in the social dimension. The boundaries of a business are permeable, and the Māori businesses in this study are aware that business is not separate from society, but an impassioned active participant in society. In contributing to the well-being of the community, the business in turn can benefit from these strengthened relationships, and promote success in other areas when the business requires community support.

Environmental well-being

Members of Māori society are encouraged to become a *kaitiaki*, a steward and guardian of the earth's resources. In this study such resources included native forests, marine ecosystems and geothermal resources. Stewardship is enacted through the practice of *kaitiakitanga*, which has layers of meaning including guarding, keeping, preserving, conserving, fostering,

protecting, sheltering and keeping watch over (Marsden, 2003, 67), thus guiding relationships between people and nature. The obligations of *kaitiakitanga* influence the policies of the Ministry for the Environment, and are enshrined in the Resource Management Act 1991, Section 7(a):

> *Kaitiakitanga*: the exercise of guardianship by the *tāngata whenua* (people of the land) of an area in accordance with *tikanga* Māori (custom) in relation to natural and physical resources. (Ministry for the Environment, 2006)

Kaitiakitanga, Henare (2001, 202) explains, instils a view that the earth's resources 'do not belong to humankind; rather humans belong to the earth'. According to this view, humans do not exercise ownership rights but enjoy 'user rights' (Marsden and Henare, as cited in Henare, 2001, 202) and nature's resources do not exist just for use by humans, but for their own sake and have intrinsic value (Morgan, 2008; Peet, 2006).

Critical to environmental sustainability, says Royal (2002, 44), is the need for 'the world and humanity, as a whole … to make some kind of quantum paradigm shift toward a fundamental unity'. Being a *kaitiaki* fosters such unity. Thus, Kereopa (as cited in Moon, 2003) emphasises unity in his advice for people wanting to understand how they can become a *kaitiaki*:

> When one considers *kaitiaki*, you have to consider for what purpose it is being used … So it is about knowing the place of things in this world, including your place in this world. When you get to that point, you realise that thinking of all things is the same … if you are fully aware of the world you live in, what you do to a tree is what you do to yourself. So when you are a guardian … you are actually looking after yourself. (131–132)

The practices of one business, **Pōhutukawa**, can provide a rich illustration of the meaning of *kaitiakitanga*. **Pōhutukawa's** owner, a fisherman for over 30 years, had noted an alarming decline in stocks and was concerned that the species in his local marine ecosystem would disappear unless decisive action was taken. The business used a practical, effective, way of caring for the local environment, leaving the local ecosystem to regenerate according to its own *mauri*, its own life principle, by placing a *rāhui*. Mead (1997, 168) describes a *rāhui* as 'a means of prohibiting a

specific human activity from occurring or from continuing'. *Rāhui* gives space and time for restoration to natural balance, and this balance is made possible because *mauri,* life principle, is oriented towards healing and sustaining life (Marsden, 2003).

Despite lack of legislative support, ***Pōhutukawa*** had instituted its own *rāhui* on breeder fish which live to be well over 100 years old, and are critical to *hāpuku* breeding cycles. Although some recreational and tourism fishing companies targeted large breeder fish as 'trophy catches', the business avoided areas where these fish were commonly found, and moved their boat away if one was caught inadvertently.

Pōhutukawa discouraged an 'ego' based approach to fishing where quantity and competition matters, and encouraged an 'experiential' approach where it was the journey and connection to nature that mattered most. Customers were encouraged to 'enjoy the experience and privilege; help preserve the future of this fishing icon'. Another practice was to discourage counting the fish on board, and to distribute the final catch evenly between all passengers, which he explained highlighted the importance of collective wealth.

Pōhutukawa ensured that the whole fish was brought back from fishing expeditions and that all parts were used, including heads and frames (often considered to be the tastiest parts), which were distributed to the local Māori community. ***Pōhutukawa*** customers expressed appreciation for this approach to recreational fishing:

> It was pleasing to see that the local people would make good use of the heads and frames which otherwise would have been thrown away … Our fish heads and frames were given to the elders of the local iwi [tribe], so nothing was wasted, and [the owner] says it's all part of maintaining sustainable fishing.

More generally, all the businesses in the study sought to understand the limits of their local environment, and to examine their own ideas about what constitutes enough to meet their needs, and the needs of their business activities.

Economic well-being

Māori tourism businesses enjoy what is known as a 'Māori edge' (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2007) whereby the notion of 'added value' describes the advantages of being a Māori tourism business (Jones and Morrison-Briars, 2004; Wilson et al., 2006) and can sway customer purchasing decisions (Wilson et al's, 2006). Spiller's (2010) study argues that this edge is relational, and the value created in the spiritual, cultural, social and environmental dimensions accrues to foster economic well-being in businesses.

A wide body of literature acknowledges the principle of *tau utuutu*, reciprocity, as a central feature of Māori economic approaches (Bargh, 2007; Henare, 2003; Mauss, 1950/1990; Mead, 2003; Patterson, 1992; Petrie, 2006; Walker, 1990/2004). Reciprocity, from a Māori economic perspective, is not necessarily about achieving an immediate financial return, but instead can be viewed as a qualitative state of reaching long-term equivalence that has spiritual as well as material dimensions. According to the Māori economic approach, the quality of relationships is paramount, so that everyone and everything is linked in an ever-looping progression of ongoing relatedness where the parties act in good faith with each other (Mead, 2003).

A key strategy through which Māori businesses seek to create a state of ongoing, long-term equivalence is by adding value. The dynamic of adding value has been noted in a number of scholarly and industry studies (Jones and Morrison-Briars, 2004; Patterson, 1992; Te Puni Kōkiri, 2007; Wilson et al., 2006) and these studies suggest that 'added value' provides meaningful benefits for Māori business. In an economic sense, Māori businesses can be described as 'value-creating', a more apt term than the widely used 'profit-maximising' (Friedman, 1970) agent widely considered to be the purpose of conventional business. Value, as it has been described in this article, is defined in terms of relational well-being across the spiritual, cultural, social, environmental and economic dimensions.

The practices demonstrated that Māori businesses adopt an approach of adding value by fusing together an essentially Māori economic outlook, based on reciprocal relationships of respect, with the wider, Western-influenced conventions of operating in a competitive global marketplace. Māori businesses add value to supplier relationships by deepening connections through shared values, aligning goals, and adopting a long-term outlook. Measurable results are important, but so too is the qualitative

nature of relationships. The preference for trust-based relationships that cohere around a shared purpose appears to provide a distinct advantage for many Māori companies, in contrast to the usual 'arms-length' approaches that typify many commercial transactions. For example, a supplier assessed his potential Aotearoa New Zealand partner (**Kauri**) on a quality-based commercial philosophy, and did not want to work with someone motivated by a quantity-based approach that often characterises tourism:

> … what we're delivering here is a quality product. We're not looking whatsoever on a quantity basis because I believe that in order to prevail with the project that we have, the personal touch, the personal care that we're giving to the people, it really touches them when they go back.

Kauri fostered a large and diverse domestic network spanning a variety of industries that would come together according to *kaupapa*, purpose. This network included story-tellers, artists, caterers, winemakers, historians, weavers, carvers, accommodation owners, and entertainers. Persuading networked businesses and individuals to be committed to a shared vision, values, and strategy enabled **Kauri** to present a stronger proposition to the market place:

> We are building a network of people. Being able to organise that is difficult unless you have put the network in place, that the relationship is in place and they trust you. We have been building on that for some years now and have a considerable network in the North Island.

One of **Kauri's** suppliers recognised that the success of his own business rested on strengthening the Māori network which, in turn, strengthened his own value proposition in the offshore market: 'the bigger picture is the whole idea of Māori tourism and down the track that will benefit me [more than] doing stuff on my own individually':

> [the owner] has done a superb job of what he believes in and for him to network what we're trying to do here with all the other Māori suppliers and make them understand that in order to make it successful, I've been preaching him to tell them, that loyalty plays a big role for all of us to be successful.

Rimu was also 'proactive in developing networks, [and] taking a stronger local focus' by joining initiatives that had been developed with the assistance of a long-standing non-profit association of regional Māori tourism enterprises. The CEO found being a member of the association beneficial in terms of access to talent and skills that translated into cost savings:

> We all have different strengths and weaknesses and what I've found with this collective is that we tend to be able to use the strengths of everyone to forward that package. There are obviously people there with really great marketing abilities, there are people there with different contacts for website design and there are people with access to print off our brochures … there's just a whole range of different skills… so we are able to access those people at good costs to us.

Māori companies are often depicted as sharing the same goals and objectives as any conventional business – to create profitable, economically sustainable enterprises. However, many Māori companies differ from the business norm by viewing profit and economic well-being as a means to fulfil goals that serve broader well-being, including spiritual, social, cultural and environmental well-being (Bargh, 2007; Durie, 2003; NZIER, 2003; Te Puni Kōkiri, 2006, 2007). Thus, purpose is redefined as creating well-being across the five dimensions. Profit is a necessary but not sufficient dimension of business success. The data analysis revealed that for all businesses in the study, profit is not an end-point but part of the process of creating multi-dimensional well-being. According to the examples in the narratives, Māori businesses do not subscribe to a view that profit alone produces well-being. Profit is not isolated as a means without an end; profit is a means *to* an end. As a means to an end rather than an end in itself profit needs to be processed into purpose, that is, well-being.

This long-term value creation approach accords with the views of stakeholder theorists, such as Post et al. (2002) who argue that value-seeking firms increase their value over the long run as creators of relational wealth, and Kaplan and Norton (1996) who propose that value creation generates future growth for a business.

The value creation model represented by the Five Well-beings approach is a response to those who

question profit maximisation as a normative goal (Kline, 2006; Post et al., 2002). Sen (2009) similarly highlights that the market maxims of Adam Smith, upon which modern–day capitalism is supposedly but not actually largely built, called for a much wider conceptualisation of business beyond short-term profit maximisation and supposed self-interest as it is often practised today.

Conclusion

This article has explored some cardinal Māori concepts of well-being, by drawing on Māori business experience in the field. The study businesses show how values, developed by Māori over the aeons in relation to the world around them, inform business and facilitate well-being. Creating *mauri ora* is to be awake to the reality of a situation, and to relationships. This conscious awareness includes consideration of context, precedence, interrelationships, consequences, perspectives and, importantly, values and how these are applied in business contexts. The ethic of care framework, and the stakeholder model that underlies it, supports a Five Well-beings approach which entails practising values with the purpose of consciously creating well-being, and thus fostering multi–dimensional wealth.

The Māori businesses in this study take an expansive and holistic view that business can be a catalyst and creator of multi-dimensional well-being and wealth. According to this view, well-being does not equate with profit alone. The Māori approach challenges the pervading belief that shareholder interests have the right to eclipse other stakeholder concerns, and dismisses the view that well–being is principally derived from material wealth.

By adopting a largely long-term developmental view, the businesses in this study demonstrate concern for creating well-being along the way, rather than *after* creating 'wealth' in financial terms, usually considered to be the conventional business definition of wealth. The businesses in this study demonstrate that they value the economic 'bottom line', but that they are willing to make decisions that prioritise people and planet over short-term profits, and thus can be expected to yield greater long-term sustainable well-being across economic and other dimensions. This study thus represents an Indigenous response to the crisis of sustainability which is having such a negative impact on Indigenous communities (Butler and Hinch, 2007; Cajete, 2000; Johnston, 2006; McLaren, 2003; Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues' Declaration of Indigenous Peoples on Climate Change, 2000; Zeppel, 2006).

Māori businesses resist belonging to business in reified terms within reified spaces. Instead, they focus on belonging through being in partnership with customers, suppliers and other stakeholders in a way that creates well-being. They seek to improve the human condition through serving others, including the environment, and assist others in experiencing well-being. *Flatland,* as this article has shown, is not some other place, but is a shift in consciousness. Beyond *Flatland* people are *kaitiaki* – caretakers of each other and of place. Together people create *mauri ora* which is the wellspring of unfolding well-being. In such a world, a person liberates not only himself or herself, or someone else, but people 'in communion liberate each other' (Freire, 1970, 133) from the hegemonic, ossified and habituated spaces of industrial *Flatlands* by transforming them, in a relationship of belonging to each other and the world. It is a journey of unfolding interconnectedness and unity, a journey towards multi–dimensional well-being and a sustainable world. For Māori, this is *Te Ao Mārama*, the world of enlightenment.

Notes

[1]   A short highlight version of this article was published in the Best Paper Proceedings, Dare to Care: Passion & Compassion in Management Practice & Research, Academy of Management Conference, 6–10 Aug 2010, Montreal, Canada.

[2]   Aotearoa is the ancient name of this country that came about when Kupe's wife saw the North Island for the first time. New Zealand is a relatively recent name given by settler society.

[3]   The World Tourism Organisation.

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