Jack Gray

Kia ora, tenei te mihi kia koutou. Warm greetings to you all. My culture shares 'tikanga', a way of doing, a conceptual framework based on notions of ancestral continuum and the passing down of codes, which embed land, sea, and sky within our consciousness. As the descendants of oceanic navigators, we as contemporary Maori still follow ancient practices of mapping to situate and connect place to person. In our traditional greeting, I would recite my 'pepeha'—an oratory statement that places my 'mana' (power, authority) beneath the status of a tribal mountain, of our river, of our canoe (from our first navigators) of our meeting house (acknowledging the name of our first ancestor). Finally after all of these many genealogical citations, only then would we say our own name. Our name is always last, because we humbly do not put ourselves first. The land and all that has come before us is first and so it shall be for the next generation and the one after that. When Maori greet each other we constantly listen to find connective histories. Most likely we are distantly related and in doing so, it balances the space between where we may find mutual cooperation. In times long gone, these recitations would sometimes mean the difference between life and death, love and war. Reciprocity went both ways, and intertribal trauma inflicted upon one generation could be rebalanced in the next, perhaps killing, perhaps intermarriage. Contemporary Maori now deal with balances of other torn and shredded histories. But we are blessed with the knowledge that what was broken before, can and should be restored for the next. Tihei Mauriora. Let there be life.

Ko Mitimiti ahau, I Am (of) the Place, Mitimiti

In February 2015, I participated in a major physical renovation of our wharenui, our tribal meeting house, at Matihetihe Marae, part of a four day television makeover show, *Marae DIY*.

Mitimiti, an isolated rural Māori village (on the West Coast of the Upper North Island of New Zealand), converged with urban-based relatives who joined with locals to restore the heart of the community. My dance company, *Atamira*, also journeyed from Auckland to support this transformation. We painted, sanded, scraped, planted, dug holes, and lived this collective tribal effort. These experiences formed part of our cultural preparations towards the making of our dance show, "*Mitimiti*" for Tempo Dance Festival.

A significant moment during the DIY came when a new tekoteko (wooden carving of our ancestor) Tumoana, was placed atop a central pou (pole) at the entrance to the wharenui (for the first time in decades). Stories were shared as we huddled around witnessing, reflecting on how and why our meeting houses from the North (unlike other marae around the country) were atypically carving free, and how non-Catholic Māori were (at one time) unable to be buried at our ancestral grounds because of spiritual differences. Contemplating moments like this, restoring mana (presence, authority) in our present day is uplifting to me, a descendent of generations before, who left rural areas like Mitimiti en masse, in search of urban opportunities after World War 2.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767716000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Photo 1. A post-DIY Marae aerial view of the freshly completed wharenui, Tumoana at Matihetihe Marae, Mitimiti in February 2015. Photo credit: Connie Graham (aunt, DIY painter).

I grew up in Auckland, Aotearoa (New Zealand)'s most populated city. Compare Mitimiti's population of 60 (on a good day) to Auckland's 1.4 million, and it's understandable to see the distance between them. The Māori name for Auckland (Auckland was named after a British Governor General to India in 1840) is "Tamaki Makaurau," isthmus of a thousand lovers. A Matariki (Māori New Year) event I attended included stories about this area's famed voyagers who remind us now of our customary relationships to bird migrations, changing seasons and landscapes, recounting the ways we fished, hunted, fought wars, arranged marriages, hid in caves, carried large canoes overland.

As a child I was drawn toward learning Māori language through songs and dances, and as a young adult, captivated by the beautiful black voids of artist Ralph Hotere's paintings, where my imaginative expression surfaced through the use of contemporary dance. I founded *Atamira* Dance Collective as a platform for Māori Contemporary Dance artists to create new work in 2000. Ten years later, I reconnected with my tribal genealogy (after my Grandmother's death) only to discover Ralph Hotere was from Mitimiti too.

Looking back at my practice-making in dance, I can say that my research is continually about the same things. Manaakitanga - the artful practice of relational making.

Through my dance research with *Atamira*, I have explored different ways of relating to Mitimiti the place over the past five years. I develop choreographic portraits with different dancers and visit my tribal lands at least once a year. I travel abroad yearly to North America to exchange Indigenous knowledge as a writer, teacher, performer and facilitator, and return to New Zealand to cultivate this process, deepening the work we might do and increasing impacts it might have. It is by no coincidence that the godwit's flight from New Zealand to Alaska is the longest non-stop flight of any bird.

These journeys and seasonal migrations have evolved through continual dialogue with others, influencing how we might contemplate and engage practices of Indigenous collectivity. I developed a series of week-long activations called Cultural Informance Lab (Bay Area, California, 2014) and Transformance Lab (Lenapehoking and Ohlone Territory, 2015), whereby Pacific, Indigenous, Native and American dancers, artists, scholars and community members were invited to participate in series of free and curated talks, discussions, workshops, performances, lectures, presentations,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767716000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

think tanks at Universities, dance studios, Museums, art galleries, dinners at people's houses, hikes out in nature at rivers, mountains, beaches and even an overnight sleep in a karate dojo.

I always make people sing—to most American people's horror. What can I say, being Māori, no one gets off lightly! Through these processes of formal cultural ritual, we discover the importance of choosing to name and/or embody our own personal and contemporary relationships to people and place. We might discuss new ways to explore our social dynamics (rebalancing settler and Indigenous power) to innovate responses where we collectively might agree on new resolutions. Critically, these Labs encourage multicultural perspectives to be heard. Creating platforms for collective consciousness, offered for most participants, a new beginning, to inhabit shared spaces together cleansing traumatic histories of domination. Healing therefore, was essential to the success of each specific process.

Coming from a strong culture of self-determination, Māori vehemently hold onto traditional protocols, claiming ancestral right to land and practices of being. For us, knowing and speaking pepeha (naming places of origin) and respecting ancestral paths always guarantees us turangawaewae, someplace to stand. Fragmented by urban drift, not having access to my pepeha till later in life, caused invisible rupture to my cultural sense of belonging. I witness disconnection around me on multiple levels, made worse by prevailing Western cultural attitudes that ancestry and land is, for the most part, unnecessary to personal wellbeing.

Going into someone else's lands without powhiri (ceremonial process meant to show respect), I should enact (or at least do parts of) protocols to respect our welcoming (or being welcomed). In many of the places, the Indigenous people, who would have been tangata whenua (people of the land), had literally been removed for centuries. Those who remained, were either disempowered or treated tokenistically. Others simply didn't know how to do their rituals anymore. To reconstruct new possibilities of being welcomed, the Labs co-devised strategies to acknowledge these sacred structures so cultural values could be activated (e.g. making safe spaces in relationship with the unseen - the dead, ancestors, gods, goddesses, creator spirits). Complex because of oppressive colonial histories, it is now the reason why global Indigenous artists are so invested in meeting diverse needs.

In Aotearoa, we gather to share intimacy, knowledge and to connect on deeper levels. We call this ritual, wananga, meaning time/space, a specific intention of gathering for shared and common goals. Māori unconsciously shift away from Western modalities, in the same way Native Americans might go to ceremony. We sing, dance, pray, speak, eat, sleep and remind ourselves of our beliefs and value systems to continue on into our daily contemporary lives. During *Marae* DIY, 120 tribal members pitched in, from elders helping in the kitchen, to taking care of the children, to men doing hard labour, to women ensuring everyone was taken care of, achieving the most important transformation of all - the restoration of our collective power.

I'm certain all Indigenous people understand the concept of "Wananga Time." Within this frame, stripped of 'normal' expectations, we naturally open up to unexpected possibilities. Perhaps staying up so late you might see the sunrise, or remembering being present is all about being in that exact moment. Wananga gives us 'time' to build bridges with others, the inklings that happen when you are peeling potatoes with a relative in the wharekai (kitchen) or listening to snoring masses sleeping under the same roof. Within this context, much like creative dance rehearsals in a studio, there is acceptance of fluid and open connectivity.

I carry a kohatu, a rock, named'*Te Puna o Te Ao Marama*' ('the Spring of the World of Light'). It binds me to a tribal story of Kupe the first Polynesian explorer's son, Tuputupuwhenua, who as legend goes, didn't want to stay in the Hokianga (a harbour) but instead desired to return to Hawaiiki (original homeland) with his father. The God of Wind, Tawhirimatea overheard their squabble and transformed Tuputupuwhenua into this spring, so that he would always stay rooted in the Hokianga.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767716000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

As I learn these stories, I ingest my genealogy, so it becomes memory, tying me to my land. Infused with the breath of my ancestors, songs filter my blood, knit my bones, prick my skin with sweat. The poetic meaning of genealogy, whakapapa, 'to stir the earth' is transferred through my dance.

This *Mitimiti* I am making, dancing, recreates itself, in many iterations through different lifetimes. Though the physical form of *Mitimiti* the show births in Auckland in 2015, I know its futurity will eventually see lands as far away as Lenapehoking, New York City.

My wairua (spirit) leaps off Te Reinga, the departure point, towards Turtle Island. I have whakapapa links there, to Ruatepupuke II (my fathers wharenui at the Field Museum in Chicago) and Paikea (the Whale Rider, a carved ancestral tekoteko) stored privately at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. Though my ancestors reside in other lands, I am living proof that their children, and their children's, children's children, have not forgotten. We will return.

Tenei te mihi kia koutou te whanau

Aku tipuna aku rangatira

Tena koutou tena koutou tena koutou katoa

Emily Johnson

I'm a choreographer and I make performance installation. I am from a very small town on the Kenai Peninsula of Alaska. I'm Yup'ik on my father's side, and my Alaska family is from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. I share this because it's where I'm from, and it's also where my work is from: the physical place of Alaska, and the confluence of my heritage and performance work.

Catalyst

I view our bodies as everything: culture, history, present, future at once. I'm trying to make a world where performance is a vital part of life, where it's an integral connection to each other—our environment, our stories, our past, present, and future.

I do see dance in everything and everything as dance—you sitting reading, birds migrating, construction outside—and I think about how the dances I make are in conversation with these already existing dances in the world. It's this conversation between the performance and the rest of the world that is exciting to me. How do my performances exist in relation to the harvest of salmon? In your memory? In the world of the everyday? The sublime and the boring, normal, or even nasty evil parts?

For the past seven years I have making a trilogy of works, *The Thank-you Bar, Niicugni*, and *SHORE.*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767716000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press