



MANAAKITIA Ā TĀTOU TAMARIKI

Children's
Commissioner

Mokopuna Voices

Summary 2021

New Zealand's Sixth Periodic Review under the
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

“Adults have
different
whakaaro
(ideas) to
us”

- Face to face engagement

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Reporting Stage: Alternative Report

Submission of The Children's Commissioner

15 August 2022

The Children's Commissioner is an Independent Crown Entity established under the [Children's Commissioner Act 2003](#) and represents 1.2 million mokopuna (children and young people) in Aotearoa New Zealand (Aotearoa) under the age of 18.

The Children's Commissioner is Judge Frances Eivers (Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato).

Note on the use of the word 'mokopuna', a word drawn from indigenous Māori knowledge, and used in this document to refer to all children and young people under the age of 18 years.

Moko - Māori tattoo, logo, trademark; puna - spring, pool.

Mokopuna is commonly known as the Māori word for grandchild. It also has meanings from the two words which make it up – moko and puna.

Moko can refer to a logo, a trademark. Thinking about that meaning, moko is a traditional Māori tattoo on the face or body, a logo or trademark of their ancestors – a sacred vessel containing the wisdom of their ancestors. This sits well with kōrero (discussion) that whānau (extended family unit) have about characteristics and traits of ancestors being visible and observable in the behaviour of mokopuna.

Connecting moko with puna links the idea of intergenerational connectivity across whakapapa (genealogy), with the notion of a residual place that the collective wisdom of one's forebears can be found in. How poetic to be referred to as 'a sacred vessel containing the wisdom of your ancestors'.

Mihi / Acknowledgements

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā iwi o ngā hau e whā. E rau rangatira mā, me ngā mokopuna mai ngā motu whānui, tēnā koutou katoa.

Nei rā te mihi maioha ki a koutou ngā mokopuna e pou kaha ana ki te whakaputa ngā whakaaro kia hāpai i ēnei rangahau, kia mōhio, kia mārama ai tātou katoa kia kuru pounamu te rongo. Tēnā koutou.

Tēnā hoki koutou ngā whānau whānui, ngā kaiako, ngā kura wānanga me ngā kaimahi e poipoiā ngā mokopuna. Ko tō mātou manako ia kia rere tonu ēnei kōrero mō te oranga o ngā mokopuna, kia tū rangatira ai rātou ki roto i tēnei ao hurihuri.

He taonga te mokopuna, kia whāngaia, kia tipu, kia rea. Nō reira manaakitia a tātou mokopuna.

Translation

To all the peoples, speakers, and tribes across the four winds. To all the chiefly people, and to the mokopuna around the world, greetings to you all.

I want to acknowledge and appreciate all the children and young people who have shared their voice, thoughts, and knowledge with us to help support this research, to learn and understand so children and young people can live their best lives.

I acknowledge all the families, teachers, learning institutes and those who work with children and young people. Our aspirations are that this report helps improve the wellbeing of mokopuna, so they stand strong in this ever-evolving world.

A child is a treasure, to be nurtured, to grow, to flourish. Therefore, take care of our mokopuna.

I acknowledge the people and organisations who contributed to making this summary possible. This includes community partners, organisations, and schools from around the country who helped with the survey.

I thank the [Children's Rights Alliance Aotearoa](#) for their support in developing content for the Have Your Say! Children's Rights, Children's Voices toolkit, which formed the basis of the engagements and subsequently, was an important part of this report.

About Us

The [Mai World Team](#) is located within the New Zealand Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC), and endeavours to model best practice for engaging with mokopuna across Aotearoa New Zealand. Working with schools and community groups, Mai World provides a way for mokopuna to contribute their views so they can be heard by a range of audiences, so their voices can influence Government and community decisions they care about and that may affect them. The voices contained in this report were heard by members of both the Mai World Team, and the broader Strategy, Rights and Advice Team at OCC.

Context

For the peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand, Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Te Tiriti) the Treaty of Waitangi is accepted as the founding rights instrument. Te Tiriti provides the template for partnership and unity between 'Tangata Whenua' (Māori) as the original occupants of this land and 'Tangata Tiriti' (non-Māori) as visitors. OCC have highlighted the insights unique to Māori under the heading of 'Tangata Whenua' while insights from other cohorts are presented under 'Tangata Tiriti.' This includes insights drawn from all other mokopuna OCC engaged with, including Pacific¹ mokopuna, and disabled mokopuna. All mokopuna self-identified with different cohorts.

Who OCC heard from

In October 2021, OCC heard from a wide representation of mokopuna and collected voices from five face-to-face engagements and an online survey to inform this report. One of these engagements was with mokopuna Māori in a rumaki Māori (Te Reo Māori immersion classroom).

The surveys reached 611 mokopuna from a range of schools and community partners; 99 survey respondents identified as mokopuna Māori. The online survey was distributed to schools and community partners alongside a toolkit, so they had the option of either facilitating discussions with mokopuna or distributing the online survey. OCC conducted five focus groups with 50 mokopuna.

¹ Pacific Island peoples, indigenous peoples of the Pacific Islands.

What OCC asked

The purpose of this project was two-fold:

1. Support mokopuna to have their views heard by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in preparation for the New Zealand Government's sixth periodic review of the Children's Convention².
2. Hear and share the views of mokopuna on areas identified by the United Nations in the List of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR)³.

To design the engagements and discussion topics, OCC considered the LOIPR, existing OCC reports containing mokopuna voices,⁴ Te Whare Tapa Whā⁵ (a widely recognised Māori model of wellbeing), and other relevant domestic issues, which helped ensure that OCC was asking mokopuna about their whole world. Below are the questions and prompts OCC used to both guide engagements and develop the survey:

- I feel accepted as Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand
- I have opportunities to learn and express Māori culture when I want to at school/kura and/or in my community (e.g., speak te reo Māori, waiata (song), kapa haka (cultural performance group), karakia (prayer, recite ritual chant), pūrākau (narratives), and history)
- My whānau has access to marae (traditional meeting places of Māori) and/or cultural activities such as collecting kaimoana (seafood), weaving, carving, and waka ama (canoe rowing)
- I can go to the doctor/access medical help when I get sick
- I can get around my community safely
- The house I live in works for me and my whānau
- The house I live in is warm and dry
- I spend time in nature
- I have opportunities to practice traditions that are important to me
- The issue of climate change is important to me
- I feel that the Government is doing enough to take action on climate change
- I feel that I belong at school/kura
- I feel that I can be myself in my community
- There are spaces in my community where I can play
- My whānau can access the supports they need

² The Children's Convention is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which New Zealand ratified in 1993

³ CRC/C/NZL/QPR/6

⁴ See: [Publications | Office of the Children's Commissioner | Office of the Children's Commissioner](#) (occ.org.nz)

⁵ See: [Te Whare Tapa Whā | Mental Health Foundation](#)

- I feel well supported by my school/kura
- I feel that my views are listened to and taken seriously about issues I care about at school/kura and/or in my community
- I know how to have a say in decisions that the Government makes
- I feel that the Government takes action on issues that I care about

Who OCC asked

OCC distributed the survey to schools and community groups alongside a toolkit to enable them to run face-to-face discussions before completing the survey (if desired). Overall, the OCC received 611 survey responses. The Mai World team ran five focus groups, which resulted in 60 mokopuna participating in focus groups both online and in-person.

How OCC analysed the results

The outputs from the survey and face-to-face engagements were considered as part of a two-day analysis hui (meeting). This involved the core project team, additional OCC facilitators and a small number of additional people who had not been involved in the project until that point. The purpose of the workshop was to come to a consensus on what the overarching themes were for in-person, online face-to-face engagements and online survey.

Limitations

As with any project, there were limitations to OCC's approach:

- OCC were limited in the ability to engage extensively in-person due to COVID-19 Alert Level changes, which restricted travel between regions in New Zealand;
- During engagements many mokopuna recorded their own voices on post-it notes, which were then collected afterwards. This made it difficult to attribute demographic data to the voices. All mokopuna in one of the face-to-face engagements were disabled so OCC are able to give this identifier; and
- OCC was not resourced to deliver engagement with mokopuna Māori exclusively in Te Reo Māori. As such, OCC cannot guarantee the voices of these mokopuna were captured, as there were some elements which were discussed only in Te Reo Māori.

What OCC heard

For the majority of mokopuna the OCC heard from, their lives in Aotearoa New Zealand are going well. However, for some mokopuna there are factors that affect the full realisation of living a good life in Aotearoa New Zealand. This included ensuring mokopuna are supported by their communities, mokopuna have what they need for their whānau (extended family unit) to thrive, and to be heard on issues that matter to them.

The following five key insights were drawn from analysis of all face-to-face engagements and survey results and should be read in the context of other reports submitted to the Committee that share mokopuna voices.

1. There are places where I can be myself, but not everywhere
2. Safe places to hang out help me create my community
3. My whānau needs the right support so that we can thrive
4. I want to be heard by my community and Government
5. Climate change matters to me and I want to know more

1. There are places where I can be myself, but not everywhere

Tangata Whenua

Mokopuna Māori told OCC that feeling judged by others was a barrier that prevented them from being themselves. To be themselves, mokopuna Māori spoke about needing to feel a sense of whanaungatanga (belonging). They said that being surrounded by aunties, uncles, and other people in the community who knew them and their whānau was essential for this to happen.

"...no 'cause we have judgemental people at our school and people are scared of what everyone thinks" - **Survey**

Several mokopuna Māori within the survey talked about the difficulties they felt at school and how they didn't feel like they could be themselves amongst their peers.

"...I don't feel like people would want to know me for who I am" - **Survey**

Tangata Tiriti

Many mokopuna told OCC about the importance of having places where they can practice their cultural traditions including clubs, marae, church, and schools.

Traditions and celebrations often involve their wider whānau coming together, which mokopuna told OCC offers opportunities to speak their language and helps them to feel a sense of belonging.

Many Pacific mokopuna also said that attending church was an important part of their life and formed an important part of their community, culture and family practices. These mokopuna told OCC that it was a weekly activity where they can speak their language and participate in traditions such as White Sunday⁶ together. Some mokopuna told OCC that their church organises activities and games for them.

Some mokopuna had experienced judgement in their communities, they said they did not feel they could be themselves in their community. Many disabled mokopuna told OCC that people in their communities make assumptions about them and their abilities, which creates a barrier to being themselves in the community.

"A lot of people come up, and their first question is why are you in a wheel chair? And they haven't asked who I am or what my name is. It's just that's what they see" - **Disabled Mokopuna**

OCC heard about the way that teachers act and speak to mokopuna plays an important role in whether they can be themselves. Mokopuna also told OCC about bullying and experiences at school that made them feel like they don't belong.

"Depends on who you are around...not around teachers"
- **Face to face engagement**

"To be honest some of my teachers have given up on me" - **Survey**

OCC heard from disabled mokopuna that being themselves at school depended on the support they receive, and when they feel fully supported they can be themselves and achieve. It is important that their achievements are valued. Some disabled mokopuna told OCC about the struggle of having their achievements as para athletes recognised at school, particularly when their accomplishments are compared to their peers.

"It's about finding the right school. You want to find a school that has a good character, wanting to help every single person." - **Disabled mokopuna**

"...At school they try modify or help with activities so I can push through."
- **Disabled mokopuna**

"When it came time for the big awards, they brushed me off because it was paralympics. I am holding a world record..." - **Disabled mokopuna**

⁶ White Sunday is a day of celebration of faith in Pacific communities. Its significance and celebrations differ across Pacific nations and communities. It holds significance for faith, family and culture.

2. Safe places to hang out help me create my community

Tangata Whenua

Some mokopuna Māori told OCC they felt the most accepted when they were surrounded by things that were important to their identity. They said the spaces where they didn't feel accepted were those which didn't recognise their cultural identity, such as shopping malls.

"...in all honesty it would be really good to have more Te Reo Māori in schools starting from preschool all the way up to University" - **Survey**

Some mokopuna Māori in the survey named racism and bullying as challenges which made them feel they weren't accepted in Aotearoa. They also identified the role Te Reo Māori played in increasing feelings of acceptance.

"I practice (te reo Māori and kapa haka) with whānau every week" - **Survey**

Tangata Tiriti

OCC heard from mokopuna about where they like to play or hang out in their communities. These were places where they feel safe and where there are often people they know and trust. Examples included their homes (or of their friends), fields, courts, parks, backyards and sports facilities. Mokopuna also mentioned spaces where they can play games.

Some mokopuna talked to OCC about the importance of places to hang out that were free and located in their community so there weren't travel costs. The mall and the supermarket were places where they could meet up cheaply. Some older mokopuna told OCC they wanted more free facilities that are age appropriate for them where they could hang out.

Some mokopuna told OCC they get to spend time in nature in their communities. OCC heard about activities they enjoy like going to the beach and climbing mountains, swimming, playing sport, fishing and diving. They talked about how school provides important time to play outside such as at morning tea and lunch time.

3. My whānau needs the right support so that we can thrive

Tangata Whenua

Some mokopuna Māori OCC spoke with said the supports their whānau needed included having whānau as neighbours and living in a community that watches out for each other. No mokopuna Māori in the face-to-face engagements mentioned support agencies in their understandings of whānau support. This is in-keeping with the Māori word for support, manaaki, which means to take care of, give hospitality to, protect, and care for others.

However, in the survey some mokopuna Māori did refer to social service agencies in their responses.

“Rongoā mai te ngahere (Medicine from the forest)”

- Face to face engagement

Some mokopuna Māori OCC spoke with shared examples of how whānau wellbeing was interwoven with the practices of their tūpuna (ancestors) passed down from generation to generation. For some, practicing cultural traditions that were important to them meant spending time with their whānau, interacting with the natural world, and visiting culturally significant areas.

Tangata Tiriti

Some mokopuna told OCC their whānau are their biggest source of support and are who they turn to when they need help. OCC have heard this consistently throughout these engagements, and many others. Some mokopuna told OCC that when their whānau need support this comes from their wider whānau, friends and community. Some told OCC their whānau also receive Government support.

“Good neighbours, friends and family. So yes we have great amounts of support.” - Survey

"Sometimes the Government departments make dads life hard and it upsets everyone" - **Survey**

"Yup WINZ⁷ green cards lol and quotes" - **Survey**

"my family is ridiculously supportive - around sports and activities that I do. Even though things are difficult they help me push through it"
- **Disabled mokopuna**

Some disabled mokopuna told OCC they don't always receive the support from the Government they are entitled to and that their whānau has to fight to ensure they receive support.

"My family can mostly access the support they need. However they do need to fight a lot for me. There are lot of inequities among the disabled community where we don't all get an equal change to get the support that we need." - **Disabled mokopuna**

"Anything I need my parents either have to pay for or fight for"
- **Disabled Mokopuna**

"My doctor needs to be accessible and to respond to my needs"
- **Disabled Mokopuna**

Most mokopuna OCC engaged with felt that it was easy to go to the doctor when they need. However, some mokopuna said there are barriers to accessing appropriate medical care such as cost and long waiting times. Mokopuna told OCC they would like to access medical care independently of their guardians.

"It is quite hard to get a doctors appointment in the same week we ring though. Sometimes we get an appointment that's two weeks away as that's all that was available." - **Survey**

"Yes, but only if both of my parents agree. I should be able to seek medical help without their permission when I need it" - **Survey**

OCC heard about eligibility and supports varying for disabled mokopuna depending on where they live and how old they are. Mokopuna said how this makes it difficult to access the specialist care they need. They told OCC about the impact this has on their everyday lives.

⁷ Work and Income New Zealand provides social welfare in New Zealand. This is sometimes provided in the form of a payment card which contains a cash balance that can be used to buy approved items. The physical cards are a green colour.

"I am trying to get surgery that would change my life"

- **Disabled mokopuna**

"I'd love to see the Government change is the ages in which you're in the kid services vs the adult service. Some departments have different ages, one is 15 and one is 18. I think 15 is too young to be in adults services. People can get lost in the system. I'm scared that when I turn 15 or 18 I won't be able to access it well anymore." - **Disabled mokopuna**

"I used to get shoes made for me... once I turned 16 they weren't paid for... normal shoes don't sit on my foot as well or support my ankles, I need shoes that fit on my feet." - **Disabled Mokopuna**

Housing should support me and my whānau

Many mokopuna that OCC engaged with said their house works for them. However, others said their homes are not big enough, lack spaces to play, and are cold. Some wanted their home to be different as that would support their whānau to live together and to be healthy.

Some mokopuna told OCC that they want their houses to be big enough for their extended whānau to live together and for them to have their own space. They told OCC that rent had gone up which meant their whānau were living in smaller homes which didn't have spaces for play. Some disabled mokopuna said that most houses are not accessible to them which makes it harder to find suitable accommodation and to live independently.

"Rent is expensive" - **Face to face engagement**

"New houses are too close to each other because of the housing problem. No backyard." - **Face to face engagement**

"Living with parents at the moment, maybe forever. It's hard to get a house that's affordable or accessible for me" - **Face to face engagement**

Some mokopuna told OCC about the struggle to heat their homes in winter due to the cost of heating. Mokopuna said they used blankets to keep warm to avoid high power bills. OCC heard from disabled mokopuna that a warm dry home was essential rather than a nice to have.

"Cold and mouldy, too poor for heating." - **Survey**

"...If I am not in a warm, dry home I am susceptible to colds. I am not able to clear my throat because of cerebral palsy.." - **Disabled mokopuna**

4. I want to be heard by my community and Government

Tangata Whenua

"Adults have different whakaaro (ideas) to us" - Face to face engagement

Many mokopuna Māori told OCC that the adults in their lives could be bossy and could make them feel like they weren't being taken seriously. They made it clear that this wasn't true for all adults, just the ones who ignored them. According to the survey results, less than half of mokopuna Māori felt their views were listened to.

"At my school we don't really express our views that much unless we are asked by the teachers" - **Survey**

Some mokopuna Māori told OCC how having kaiako Māori (Māori teachers) at their school was important to them. They also told OCC they were more likely to feel heard and taken seriously at places such as marae and in the Māori community.

Tangata Tiriti

Many mokopuna told OCC they don't feel heard as they are considered too young to have a valuable opinion and to have their points of view listened to within their community and by Government. The majority of mokopuna told OCC that voting was an important way of having a say, however, they are too young to vote.

"Adults since they are older, they think our opinions don't matter"
- **Face to face engagement**

"They don't come to us or email us asking for our opinion they only ask those who are over eighteen" - **Face to face engagement**

Some mokopuna told OCC they wanted to communicate with decision makers through music, songs, drawing and creating animation, rather than simply talking.

I feel heard when I am involved

OCC heard about the different places where mokopuna feel heard in their community, including youth specific spaces, church, and marae. Mokopuna said they there feel heard as they can contribute their ideas to how these places are run and the types of activities that are available.

"Yeah, on the marae I can share my ideas and they do it. They are show not tell" - **Face to face engagement**

I don't see action on the issues that are important to me

OCC heard about frustration when the Government promises to take action on particular issues, but it takes too long or Government fails to follow through on the promise. Some mokopuna said they want to see action on the issues they see daily in their communities such as poverty, homelessness, and suicide and mental health issues.

"Climate change, housing crisis, voting age, mental health, queer rights, disability rights, etc are all issues that impact young people and Government is doing practically nothing" - **Survey**

Some disabled mokopuna shared their experience of meeting with decision makers who had listened to them, but then brushed them off. They told OCC the Government has not considered their needs and that there had been very little action for disabled people.

"You notice the ones that take notes and the ones who don't take notes, you know you are wasting your time...They either play us down like we are nothing or they say we'll try and do something and then 10 mins after they forget" - **Disabled Mokopuna**

5. Climate change matters to me and I want to know more

Tangata Whenua

When we asked about climate change, multiple mokopuna Māori in the face-to-face engagements said they didn't know much about climate change and didn't feel able to comment further. However, in the survey results over half of all mokopuna Māori said climate change was an issue they thought was important. Some of these mokopuna thought the Government was doing ok while others did not.

"Climate change is a national and global issue and I think the Government has not done enough to resolve this issue as well as it being an important issue to youth and rangatahi considering it is one of our biggest and something that will affect us in the future." - **Survey**

Tangata Tiriti

Most mokopuna who responded to the survey agreed that climate change was important to them, however, OCC also heard from those who were ambivalent or didn't know enough about climate change.

Some mokopuna shared it was important to them as it will affect people and animals in the future if no changes are made now. Some Pacific mokopuna told OCC they worry about the impact of climate change on the Pacific. For those with whānau in the Pacific, they talked about how they may lose the places their whānau are from if sea levels rise.

"Climate change is pretty important for me because of the places that might be gone" - **Face to face engagement**

Some mokopuna said they want to learn more about climate change at school and told OCC this would help them to have an informed opinion. They wanted the Government to find ways to make climate change understandable and to tell them about the actions that the Government is taking to prevent climate change.

"They have all these marches and conferences but nothing really seems to be happening " - **Survey**

"It's very important, but I just know nothing about it" - **Disabled mokopuna**

Some action is being taken but I would like to see more

Mokopuna held a variety of views on whether the Government is doing enough about climate change. Some mokopuna said the Government is doing enough on climate change, such as banning plastic bags and straws. Others told OCC the Government needs to do more and a number expressed concern at how long it is taking to see action.

"It is the feeling of myself and many of my peers that the Government of Aotearoa NZ and other worldwide Governments are simply committing token gestures, and not doing anything that will effect real change to halt climate change. We feel that we will be left to pick up what pieces we can of a broken planet. I have even heard adults say things like, It's okay, the kids will fix it all." - **Survey**

“They have all
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- Survey



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