



# “I will not waste my hau”

Narratives from mōrehu who will not stay silent

Te Atawhai O Te Ao Symposium

Friday, 19 August 2022

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*Ngāi Te Rangi, Ngāti Raukawa ki Waikato*

# Overview

- Kaupapa Māori research
- 16 Mōrehu (Survivors) of familial childhood sexual abuse (FCSA)
- Aged 35-68
- North Island hapu/iwi



# Format

- Introduce kaiāwhina (contributor)
  - Age | # Perpetrators | Age of Incidence
  - A snippet for characterization
- Pūrākau focus
- Commitment to creating change
- Outcomes

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# “Melody”

60y | 5 | @ 2-10y

*I’ve lived through HIV, I’ve lived through  
Hepatitis. I’ll live through this.*



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# “Melody”

*I told my dad. The way he dealt with it was just so wrong, it made it worse. He beat him in front of me and kicked him out, but then accused me of destroying our family, and ‘was I sure?’*

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# “Melody”

*I told my dad. The way he dealt with it was just so wrong, it made it worse. He beat him in front of me and kicked him out, but then accused me of destroying our family, and ‘was I sure?’.*

*So I really had destroyed a family over abuse. That’s what the teenager thought...People wanted me to believe that telling was wrong, and I got absolutely no offer of assistance, and no-one to talk to about it; and no-one wanted to talk about it.*

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# “Melody”

*Then, I find out that the same uncle that abused me had abused [others]. It was going from family member to family member. Because no-one talked about abuse in those days. I was going to have to be the one that brought it all out, to protect the children in [the next] generation, or the generation under them. I couldn't [protect the others], because I didn't know, but their children. I have been able to do that. But it's a very lonely and alone place to be in, because you're ostracized because no-one wants to talk about it. No-one wants to deal with it. It's in the too hard basket, and fear of conflict or whatever.*

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# “Melody”

*I used to have all the family [stay over the holiday period], and when everyone would arrive, I would have a hui with all the kids at the front and the parents at the back and I would talk about the kawa of this marae. It applies here the same as a marae of what is acceptable and what is not. I would get the kids to say it; “no kissing, pinching, pushing, shoving, touching. No touching others’ bottoms, vaginas, or penises”. Say it as that. They could only have one each. They would put their hands up.*

*But then, what was wonderful is the parents would start asking questions. Like, I remember my brother coming to me and he goes, “So Sis, when do we start talking to the kids?” Because they’d see me doing it, and how engaged the kids were.*

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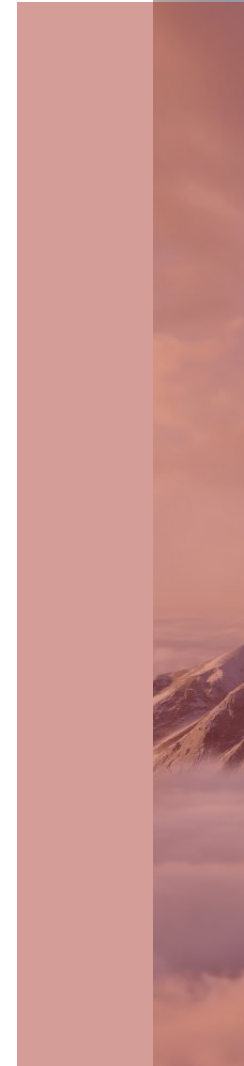
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# “Jen”

45y | 3 | @ 5-11y

*I went and studied at the library to learn how  
not to be my family*



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# “Jen”

45y | 3 | @ 5-11y

*“How to be a nice  
person”*

*they have books about it*

*“How not to be an  
abuser”*

*they have books about  
it!*

*“How to deal with your  
anger”*

*Books about it!*



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# “Jen”

45y | 3 | @ 5-11y

*I went and studied at the library to learn how  
not to be my family*

*I actually went and taught myself how to  
be a decent human.*



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# “Jen”

*I had a group of friends at school there was about 12 of us girls and 8 had been abused by someone that they knew and that was our support group. And we'd get together and we'd talk about all this stuff “oh my neighbour did that” or “my grandfather did this”*

*[My family] were quite openly, “you don't ask about that stuff”. [If I said anything] I was told to shut up  
...[I would think] “why don't [we talk about] these things, am I not part of you? You can't be my people”. I used to look through [my mum's important documents] and say to her “Where's my real birth certificate? Who are my real family?”*

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# “Jen”

*I actually remember sitting in a room full of people...big dinner and stuff...the whole family, you know husbands, wives and kids. And I remember sitting in a corner, curled up just watching as [my perpetrator] abused a little girl while he talked to her father. Hands right up under undies room full of people.*

*I thought “I’m fucked! I’m fucked. Mate, these people own guns, they could kill him, they’re doing nothing”.*

*...the last time he tried to abuse me, [another of his victims] was there and she was in on it. And I was just like “no fucking way” and I got the fuck up and walked out and it never*

*happened again.*

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# “Jen”

*[Then, I met my future husband's sister, and] she said to me “Don't let him win, if you hurt yourself, he will win, you need to live.”  
And so I did.*

*I talk about my abuse; I talk about our lives and our childhood. I talk about it through my life, through my day, every day. Because it's real, it happened. Don't make out it didn't, and my brothers and sisters are like “why do you feel the need to have to bring it up”.*

*Why do I have to feel like there's a need? Like there's some problem with me because I still converse about it or I speak openly in front of my children about it? These things are real man. Silence gives them power.*

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# “Jen”

*[My niece] was 5 when [my brother] left and she was living with my mother. When my mum passed, the rest of the whānau basically kicked her out of the house – her and her baby. She was 16, with a baby, grandmother her whole world...she got into trouble with the baby's father down the line, got picked up by the cops with the baby...and they wanted somewhere to send her. I didn't really know her much at the time 'cause her mother kept her away, 'cause you know we're 'the bad ones'. But she told the police that I was probably the only one that would give her a chance. So she rang and I pretty much had to make an instant decision over the phone...otherwise she would have to stay there, and they would take the baby away to foster care for the night. So I said yes. We picked up her up and she was so scared. She cried and we just laughed and made a joke of it, you know, “phewf, now you're the bad one too eh? Looks like you came to the right place”*

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# “Jen”

*And now all their kids come to me. “I feel like I’m home when I’m here Aunty”. Because Aunty’s the one “no no that’s not right” .*

*But it’s made [me] very ostracized from [my] siblings for a long period of time. I can easily go years without seeing them. My sister lives 5 mins drive from my house, I drive past her street all the time.*

*But her kids come and see me every week.*

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# Final Words

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# “Melody”

*I will not waste my hau... I'll never, till the day I die, keep  
the conspiracy of silence because it does not keep people  
safe.*

# “Jen”

*My girls often ask “why do you help them, why do  
you?” Because that is us, that’s who we are.*

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# Questions?

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