

MEREDITH, Paul (Ngati Maniapoto)

Te Wananga o Aotearoa

New Zealand

No BioNote

Kaputuhi: Strengthening the Cultural Foundations of a Meeting House and a Māori Community

*Ko Ngati Maniapoto te iwi
Ko Ngati Kaputuhi te hapu
Ko Kaputuhi te whare-nui
E tu nei kei te take o Pukeroa Maunga
A, ko www.kaputuhi.org.tana wahi ipurangi
Tena ra koutou katoa*

*Ngati Maniapoto is the tribe
Ngati Kaputuhi is the sub-tribe
Kaputuhi is the meeting-house
Whom stands at the base of Pukeroa
And whom can be found on the web at www.kaputuhi.org
Greetings to you all*

Some twelve years ago I and other members of my extended family were welcomed onto a marae with the following words: “*Haere mai te iwi tahae whare i te po.*” ‘Welcome to the people who stole the house at night’, an apparent reference to our meeting house, Kaputuhi. It seemed to me that such a ‘taunt’ had to be responded to but what was the history? Had our old people really taken our meeting house surreptitiously?

This paper critically reflects on our journey of research to answer this and many other questions of identity, traditions and history for a community that is dispersed and with knowledge gaps, but with a modest meeting house as its central foci.

Like many other rural marae communities, Kaputuhi Pa has suffered from urban drift and an ever diminishing pool of knowledgeable kaumatua who provide cultural continuity between the past, the present and the future. This ongoing research is about rebuilding and strengthening the cultural foundations of a Māori community and its meeting house so that future generations will continue to know who they are and where they are from.

This paper considers our research process that has taken us from the South Australian Museum to the archives of my grandmother’s garage, from connecting and engaging with the community through marae gatherings to sharing our stories through the World Wide Web. Rather than present any formulaic procedures, the paper simply introduces our practices primarily based on local lived experience and intuition for the evaluation by others interested in research of a similar kind.