

Where the heart lives: the enduring homesteads tying Māori to their heritage

Level: Intermediate

1 Warmer

- a. Talk to a partner or in small groups. What do you know about Māori?
- b. Now do this short Māori language quiz. Join the Māori words to their English equivalents. Then find the words in the article where they are either translated, explained, or described clearly in context.

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1. Aotearoa | a. land |
| 2. whānau | b. spirit |
| 3. tūrangawaewae | c. families |
| 4. tūpuna | d. ancestors |
| 5. whenua | e. elderly Māori man |
| 6. koro | f. New Zealand (= land of the long white cloud) |
| 7. wairu | g. the place where your feet stand |

2 Key words

- a. Write the correct words from the wordpool next to the definitions below. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

abandoned ancestor colonization determined effort
enclaves homestead nurture remote yearning

- someone who is related to you who lived a long time ago _____
- a farm, including the farmhouse and any other buildings on the land _____
- provide the care and attention necessary for a young child, animal, or plant to grow and develop _____
- far away from other cities, towns, or people _____
- areas of a country or city where a particular group of people live _____
- the act of taking control of another country by going to live there or by sending people to live there _____
- physical or mental energy needed to do something _____

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8. not willing to let anything prevent you from doing what you have decided to do

9. a strong feeling that you get when you want something very much, especially something that you know you may not be able to have _____
10. left empty or no longer used _____

b. Use some of the key words above to complete these sentences.

1. No one lives on that farm. It was _____ twenty years ago.
2. I have a constant _____ for the sound of the sea.
3. My grandparents were from a _____ village in China.
4. He tells everybody that his _____ went to the US with the Pilgrims.
5. Even from a young age, I was _____ to be a jazz musician.
6. The _____ was half-hidden in a large group of trees.
7. I don't want to do this anymore; it takes up a lot of my time and _____.

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Tess McClure

21 October, 2022

- 1 When the Makiha family pulled down their house, they decided to bury it. Piece by piece, they took down the wooden house and buried it carefully in the ground, like an ancestor, in the Hokianga soil.
- 2 “It is right to bury it,” says Rereata Makiha. “Buried in the ground, to sleep. Prayers are recited so that it may rest forever, as if it were a person.”
- 3 “A homestead is like a mother – it looks after the family. It protects, feeds and nurtures the family – if you care for your home, it will care for you.”
- 4 More than a building, the Makiha home, now being rebuilt, is one of many homesteads across Aotearoa New Zealand. Often remote and inaccessible, these houses have been home to generations of Māori families, tying bloodlines to the place of their ancestors.
- 5 Some can be reached only by boat, helicopter or many kilometres on foot – others are enclaves in cities. For many families, they represent more than physical shelter: they represent unbroken ties between whānau (families) and the land.
- 6 Director and producer Kimiora Kaire-Melbourne has made a new *Whakaata Māori* documentary series. It examines the importance of homesteads to different generations of six Māori families, and the work the families are doing to save them.
- 7 Kaire-Melbourne says “tūrangawaewae” is the best word to describe importance of land and home to the Māori worldview: “It literally means ‘where your feet stand’.”
- 8 Many Māori families kept their homesteads even though colonization pushed huge numbers of Māori off their land. By 1920, just 8% of New Zealand land remained in Māori ownership, down from 80% just 60 years earlier. This led to a dramatic population shift, as thousands of people moved to the cities to look for work. Between the mid-1930s and 1980s, Māori went from about 80% rural to about 80% urban.
- 9 “Māori are not a homogenous group. We’re all very different, have different experiences. But because of colonization and moving to cities, I think that a lot of Māori have lost their connection to the land,” Kaire-Melbourne says.
- 10 For some families, looking after the homesteads has taken years of effort. “I think that if you saw it, you’d wonder why we tried to even save the house,” Tangimaioakumatua Moring says of the Ponga homestead. “It was in a bad condition.”
- 11 Moring, now a grandmother herself, was born in the house. “I felt it was my job to make sure that the house was saved,” Moring says. “I really was determined to come home.” For her, a journey back to the Ponga house required a trip by helicopter to the Parinui land in the remote Hokianga. “It was very emotional, coming home,” Moring says. “It’s always like that for me when I come home because my tūpuna (ancestors) are there. And coming home is really coming home to them.”
- 12 For the Makiha family, the pandemic made them want to rebuild on the homestead land, building future homes for the next generation. “Covid, the economic crisis and the yearning to return home to our whēnua was the reason we decided to rebuild,” Maihi Makiha says.
- 13 Kaire-Melbourne’s own family homestead in Rūātoki was looked after by her own koro, ensuring his great-grandchildren would always have a home to return to.
- 14 “For generations, Māori have felt the need to leave their tribal land, for work opportunities, education or another reason ... And therefore, some of these homesteads have been empty or abandoned. But some families have been able to look after their homesteads, and that’s a beautiful thing,” she says.
- 15 “It’s one of those foundations that I think every whānau should have. It’s that sense of belonging,” says Matemoana McDonald. “A homestead has its own wairua (spirit) that you feel when you come on to the whenua.”

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3 Understanding the article

a. Are these statements True or False according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. The Makiha family thought of their old house as a family member.
2. They burned the wood of the old house.
3. The Makiha family are building their new home in the city.
4. Poverty and disease pushed thousands of Māori off their homesteads for a new life in the city.
5. Kaire-Melbourne says that Māori who live in urban areas have never lost their connection to their family lands.
6. Many of the Māori homesteads are in areas that are not easy to get to.
7. Tangimaioakumatua Moring had never been to her family homestead until the Covid pandemic.
8. Rereata Makiha believes that your home will take care of you if you look after it.

4 Key language

a. Without looking at the text, complete the phrase from the article.

“A h_____ is like a m_____ – it looks after the f_____. It protects, feeds and n_____. the f_____.”

b. Now create other similar comparative phrases of your own using these (or other) beginnings.

Her garden is like a ...

Their living room is like a ...

The children's bedroom looked like a ...

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5 Discussion

- a. Go on the internet and find the article written for *The Guardian* titled 'Where the heart lives: the enduring homesteads tying Māori to their heritage' by Tess McClure. Look at the photos that accompany it. Is this how you imagined the homestead to look?
- b. Then discuss these questions:
 - How many times have you moved house in your life?
 - How close do you live to your childhood home now?
 - How important is/was the physical place of 'home' to you now and when you were a child?
 - Where do your ancestors come from?
 - Where do you feel that you belong?

6 In your own words

- a. Go to the official Te Ara website and read some of the many traditional Māori stories there, under stories A–Z: teara.govt.nz/en.
- b. Sit in small groups and retell some stories to each other.