

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

Level: Advanced

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 bedrock colonization constellation determined
dismantled enclaves endured homestead manifestations
nurture scattered spur on vacant yearning

1. taken apart; separated into small pieces _____
2. provide the care and attention necessary for a young child, animal, or plant to grow and develop _____
3. a group of people or things that are similar, related, or that form a pattern _____
4. a farm, including the farmhouse and any other buildings on the land _____
5. spread over a large area _____
6. lasted for a long time _____
7. areas of a country or city where a particular group of people live _____
8. evidence that something exists or is present _____

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9. the act of taking control of another country by going to live there or by sending people to live there

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

11. encourage someone to do something _____
12. a strong feeling that you get when you want something very much, especially something that you know you may not be able to have _____
13. empty because no one is living there _____
14. left empty or no longer used _____
15. the ideas and principles on which a belief or system is based _____

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

1. My relatives are _____ all over the country.
2. No one lives on that farm. It was _____ twenty years ago.
3. The demonstrations should be seen as _____ of the people's discontent.
4. After he _____ the machine, he realised he didn't exactly know how to put it all back together again.
5. I have a constant _____ for the sound of the sea.
6. The city contains both Spanish and Arabic _____.
7. These traditions have _____ for hundreds years.
8. There's an increasing number of _____ flats in the block.
9. Even from a young age, I was _____ to make it as a jazz musician.
10. The _____ was half-hidden in a large group of trees.

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Passed through generations of families and scattered across New Zealand, the homes are lasting connections to ancestral land

Tess McClure

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- 1 When the time came for the Makiha family to pull down their house, they decided to bury it. Piece by piece, they dismantled the wooden frame and weatherboards, laying them carefully to rest, like an ancestor, in the Hokianga soil.
- 2 “It is only right to bury it,” says Rereata Makiha, who led the family through the ceremony. “Buried within the ground, to sleep. Prayers are recited so that it may lay to rest forever, as if she is a person.”
- 3 “A homestead is much 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 a constellation of homesteads scattered across Aotearoa New Zealand. Often understated, at times astonishingly remote and inaccessible, these homes have endured through 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 that have transformed around them. For many families, they represent more than physical shelter: they are physical manifestations of the unbroken ties between whānau (families) and the land.
- 6 Director and producer Kimiora Kaire-Melbourne’s new *Whakaata Māori* documentary series examines their significance to different generations of six Māori families and the work to save them.
- 7 Kaire-Melbourne says “tūrangawaewae” is the most accurate word to describe the importance of land and home to the Māori worldview: “It literally means ‘where your feet stand’.”
- 8 Many Māori families maintained homesteads in defiance of a tide of colonization that saw huge numbers of Māori driven off their land. By 1920, just 8% of New Zealand land remained in Māori ownership, down from 80% just 60 years earlier. The change in ownership heralded a dramatic population shift, as thousands of people flocked to the cities in search of paid 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 lived experiences. But I think that something that a lot of Māori have lost through the impacts of colonization and urban drift over time is people have struggled to reconnect or haven’t had that connection to the land,” Kaire-Melbourne says. “Not to forget who you are, but to lose sight of it.”
- 10 For some families, maintaining the homes has taken years of effort. “I think that if you saw it, you’d be wondering why we ever tried to even save the house,” Tangimaioakumatua Moring says of the Ponga homestead. “It was in a bad state of repair.”
- 11 Moring, now a grandmother herself, was born in the house. “I felt it was my place 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 I just feel that coming home is really coming home to them.”
- 12 For the Makiha family, the pandemic helped spur on plans to rebuild on the homestead land, creating future homes for the next generation. “The effects of Covid, the effects of economic crisis as we’ve all endured and the yearning to return home to our whēnua was the reason and the purpose,” Maihi Makiha says.
- 13 Kaire-Melbourne’s own family homestead in Rūātoki was part of the inspiration for the documentary, she says. It was maintained by her own koro, ensuring his great-grandchildren would always have a home to return to.

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- 14 “For generations, Māori have felt the need to leave their tribal territories, whether it be for work opportunities, education, whatever it might be ... And for that reason, some of these homesteads have been vacant or abandoned. But for those families who have been able to maintain homesteads, that’s a beautiful thing,” she says.
- 15 For the families she documents, it helps form the bedrock of their lives. “It’s one of those foundations that I think every whānau should have. It’s that sense of belonging,” says Matemoana McDonald. “I think that’s what the homestead actually does: it 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 gave the same respect to their pulled-down house as they would to a family member who had died.
2. They burned the wood of the dismantled house in a form of cremation.
3. The Makiha family are building their new home in the city.
4. Poverty and disease drove thousands of Māori to leave their homesteads for a new life in the city.
5. Kaire-Melbourne says that, despite having to move to urban areas, Māori have never lost their connection to their family lands.
6. Many of the Māori homesteads lie in remote areas that are not easy to reach.
7. Tangimaioakumatua Moring had never been to her family homestead until the Covid pandemic.
8. Renovating, rebuilding and maintaining their family homesteads has enabled the people interviewed in the article to obtain a closer relationship with their ancestors and a greater sense of being part of the land.

4 Key language

a. Find phrases in the article that fit with the meanings.

1. put someone's body (or the pieces of something precious) in the ground (paragraph 1)
2. as an act of refusal to obey a person or rule (paragraph 8)
3. the gradual and steady move of large numbers of people away from the countryside and into towns (paragraph 9)
4. in a bad condition (paragraph 10)
5. when it is appropriate or fitting for someone to do something (paragraph 11)
6. the feeling that you are accepted by a place or group of people and that it's right for you to be there or be part of it (paragraph 15)

b. Now use the phrases to talk about the article.

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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?
 - Is there a place where you feel you belong? Where is it?

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.