



## Grandparents role in traditional Māori society

In traditional Māori society, children were seen as belonging to, and being the responsibility of, the wider whānau and hapū. Children quickly learnt to identify with their hapū community.

The natural parents were not the sole caregivers – child-raising involved grandparents, uncles, aunts, great-uncles and great-aunts.

This collective responsibility and these kinship ties ensured the safety and welfare of children, who were seen as representing the future heritage of the tribe.

This principle was conveyed in the Whakataukī /proverb:

**‘He kai poutaka me kinikini atu, he kai poutaka me horehore atu,  
mā te tamaiti te iho’**

Pinch off a bit of the potted bird, peel off a bit of the potted bird, but the inside is for the child – save the best for the child.

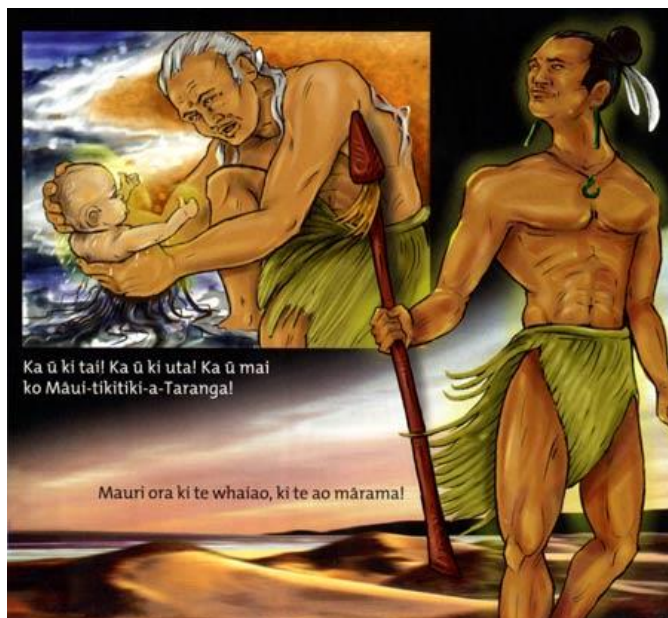
Grandparents, in particular, would raise children so parents could provide for the family. As a result of this nurturing, grandparents were the first educators of the children, and in particular were responsible for imparting traditional knowledge to them.

[Reference](#)

# Translations

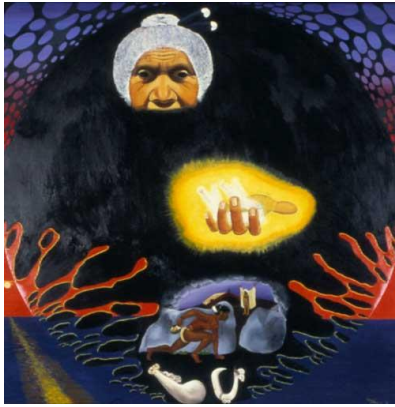
Kaumatua	Elderly man or woman
Koroua	Elderly man
Kuia	Elderly woman
Tupuna Tāne	Grandfather
Tūpuna Tāne	Grandfathers, Grand-uncles, great-uncles
Tupuna Wahine	Grandmother
Tūpuna Wahine	Grandmothers
Mātua kēkē	Uncles, aunties
Whāea kēkē	Aunties
Whaea kēkē	Aunty
Matua kēkē	Uncle

## Māori books featuring Grandparents



Tamanui-ki-te-rangi, the grandfather of Māui, rescues his mokopuna (grandchild) from the sea. As Māui's kaumātua it fell to Tamanui to raise Māui and teach him his whakapapa (genealogy) and tribal traditions. Traditionally, it was common for kaumātua to whāngai (foster) their mokopuna.

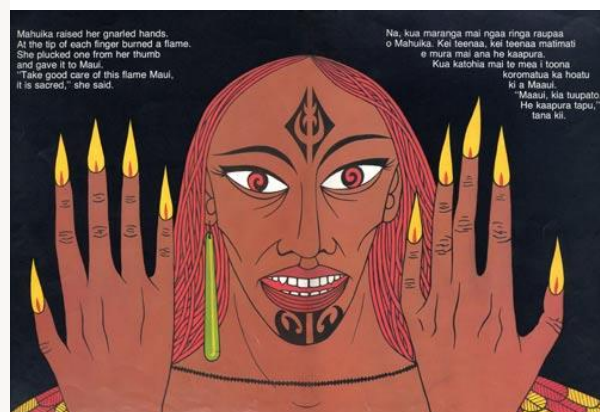
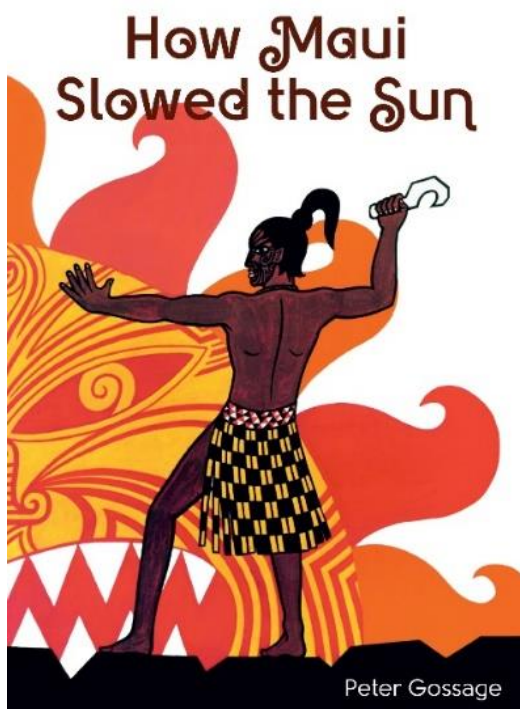
[Reference](#)



Artwork by Robyn Kahukiwa

Muriranga-whenua, one of Māui's kuia (gandmothers) is shown holding out her jawbone to her mokopuna (grandchild). Māui (shown below) made a patu (club) of his kuia's jawbone to fight the sun, and later fashioned it into a fishhook with which he fished up the North Island.

[Resource](#)



Children's book

Mahuika, goddess of fire and grandmother of the demigod Māui, is by Peter Gossage. One of Māui's heroic feats was to retrieve Mahuika's fiery fingernails from the underworld and bring them to earth to provide fire for warmth and cooking.

[Resource](#)