

Chapter 6

He korowai o nga tupuna¹

This chapter describes the story of Jake who was eighteen years old at the time when he first met Wiremu. He had been referred to our Māori CAFS service by the crisis team as a result of an incident in which he had seriously harmed himself. His Māori CAFS social worker met with him and later requested that Jake meet with the cultural therapist (Wiremu) and the psychiatrist (Allister) on the team as he was puzzled by some unusual experiences in which Jake told of hearing voices. This account begins with the background to Jake's situation and continues with Wiremu's perspective on meeting Jake.

Introducing Jake

What immediately impressed itself on me (Allister) in meeting Jake for the first time was that he was wearing an unusual ensemble - a fashionable black leather jacket and contrasting pyjama trousers. What interested me was not so much his wearing pyjamas but the fact he bothered to attend at all when he had so recently awoken. Responding to my curiosity in this regard, Jake described a late night the night before farewelling a friend who was leaving for overseas. Consequently when his mother Heather had tried to rouse him for the third time fifteen minutes before our 1pm appointment time, he had been in something of a rush to leave the house. Jake insisted that he wanted to meet with us privately, excluding his mother. He indicated that matters had been strained between the two of them in the lead up to the appointment. After Willie, his Māori CAFS social worker had introduced Jake to Wiremu and me, he led us through to the clinic room. Jake apologized at the outset for his attire but seemed unselfconscious about it and said somewhat ruefully that he was still feeling the effects of a hangover from farewelling his friend.

Jake had met Willie on two occasions over the previous week and I had the impression they had hit it off pretty well. I also gathered that any motivation he had to attend was centred on his curiosity about Wiremu and an eagerness to find out what he might have to say or do.

Willie commenced this meeting by summarising some of the matters that they had discussed at their previous sessions. He introduced Jake to us as a young man with considerable talent as a dancer and singer and he was attending a local performing arts college. His recent crisis had blown up during the course of a day in which he had been contemplating withdrawing from the programme in favour of a new career opportunity. When he had texted his father about this proposal, his father was clearly unimpressed with it and the exchange of texts over

¹ The cloak of protection of the ancestors

the following few hours became increasingly heated. By the end of the day Jake had become incensed with his father's attitude and after several drinks began to feel even more enraged and despairing. In the height of this turmoil, he had thrown his cellphone across the room and broken it. Then, having had insult added to his injury, on the spur of the moment he seized a knife from the kitchen of his flat and cut himself across his forearm. Immediately his flatmate intervened and removed the knife from him. When his mother learned about this incident the next day, she had insisted that Jake be referred for an assessment at our Maori CAFS service.

By the time Willie first met with him a day or so later, Jake regretted cutting himself and insisted that he had no intention whatsoever of ending his life. He said that he had plenty of hopes for the future and as far as he was concerned "The good always outweighs the bad". He maintained that the alcohol had adversely affected his judgement and exaggerated his exasperation over his father's negative response to his plan to withdraw from his course.

Willie satisfied himself that Jake didn't have significant symptoms of major depression. However, during his routine enquiry about possible psychotic symptoms, Jake casually commented that he frequently heard voices. Sometimes they would offer him advice about what he was about to do. For example, he recalled counsel like 'Think about it' and 'Don't be an idiot', which he viewed as cautioning him about an unwise course of action. Sometimes he would hear a number of voices all together and he couldn't always untangle one from the other. The voices would sometimes converse in Māori and at those times he could understand very little of it. The voices sometimes seemed to come from outside his head but Jake was unclear where they might be coming from. Interestingly, he had been having similar experiences for such a long time that he couldn't even remember when they had begun. However he suspected it was probably in his early primary school years. He was often curious about the voices but untroubled by them. He had assumed for some time now that they were some kind of spiritual experience.

Because these experiences had been present for such a long time, weren't associated with other psychotic symptoms and didn't appear to trouble Jake, Willie was fairly confident they didn't indicate the presence of a psychotic illness. But they were quite prominent and he was keen for us to review them in light of Jake's recent episode of cutting himself.

During this first part of the interview, Wiremu interacted briefly with Jake but then remained mostly silent. He had indicated to me prior to the session that he was wanting to get a feel for the situation and asked me to interview Jake as was my custom. After forty minutes Wiremu and Willie excused themselves as they had a prior commitment to which they had to attend. Wiremu asked Jake if it would be possible to visit him at his home the following week and Jake readily agreed. After they left, I continued to ask Jake about his life and experiences.

After a few minutes Jake sat back into his chair and assumed a more relaxed posture. When I asked him if he'd heard any voices recently he said that there had been quite a few during the hui (meeting) with Wiremu but he couldn't really understand what they were saying. However, all the noise had ceased when Wiremu left the room. He said that he felt calmer

now as it seemed to him that there was a lot happening in the room when Wiremu was present. He also spoke about sensations of itchiness that suggested to him that ‘spiritual stuff’ was going on.

I was curious about his experience of Wiremu. In addition I was struck by how self-assured he seemed to be about his view that voices in the past were likely to be spiritual in nature. I began to ask him in detail about other spiritual experiences he could recall.

Jake began to talk about a wide range of similar experiences over almost the entire course of his life. The first incident he related happened at an age before he had any recall which he had heard about second hand. By this time his parents were no longer living together. He became severely ill after two days of flu-like symptoms and when his mother sought a medical assessment at the after-hours medical centre, he was rushed to hospital by ambulance. After admission to the paediatric ward his condition continued to deteriorate. To his mother's horror he became so pale and floppy that he was considered to be near death. While Heather maintained her overnight vigil next to Jake's bed she fell asleep briefly in the early hours of the morning. Shortly afterwards, she awoke due to the presence of what felt like the weight of a body on top of her. However there was no-one else in the room that she could see. She was unafraid but just aware that she was not alone. When Heather confided this experience to Jake's paternal aunt the next day she proposed that it was very likely to have been a protective visit from Jake's paternal grandmother who had died when Jake's father was a young boy, a year after he himself had contracted meningitis. Jake's aunty believed that Jake's grandmother would have visited Jake and Heather to support them. She had also felt Jake's grandmother's presence that night but was uncertain as to why until Heather had phoned her the next day and shared her experience. Fortunately Jake was successfully diagnosed with meningitis after a lumbar puncture the following day, and following appropriate antibiotic treatment made a full recovery.

While Jake's mother was Pakeha, his father was Māori. When Jake was four years old, his mother and paternal grandfather had taken him up to visit his father's turangawaewae or family land in the far north to learn about his whakapapa. When they visited the urupa (burial ground) on the hill behind the marae, Jake had become very excited and began running helter skelter amongst the gravestones. When Heather finally caught up to him he was 'throat singing', a sad keening song, in Māori using words that he could not have known as they were archaic Māori, not at all like the songs he learned in Kohanga Reo. The grave he had seemingly searched out was that of his paternal grandmother's father. His mother tried to pick him up and console him, but he resisted her and clung to the grave side, digging his fingers into the soil, until he had finished this strange and eerie song. Afterwards he clambered up into his mother's arms and seemed more peaceful.

As he matured, Jake recalled that he had always been considered tall for his age and stood out for this reason because he was taller than most of his whanau members. His paternal great grandfather had also been tall and was described as having a similar appearance to Jake although darker in his complexion.

During his primary school years, Jake had been known for his sparky ideas and if one of these ideas gripped his imagination then he would pursue it vigorously at the earliest possible moment without regard for potential danger or pitfalls. In fact his tendency to follow his impulses and some difficulties attending in class in his early years had led one paediatrician to suggest he had a form of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. However Jake had no time for this notion and had not persisted with any medication regime. Never the less it did seem that the cautionary advice from the voices counselling Jake had spared him from any number of sticky situations over the years.

Jake spoke of times throughout his childhood when he could become enraged to such an extent that it felt like "I'd been seized by it like lockjaw!" At these moments Jake reported seeing red in his peripheral visual field and would become so enraged that he might break things or lash out at adults he perceived as thwarting his endeavours. This had been especially so in his younger years but in more recent times Jake considered that he had more ability to manage those times safely.

A member of his father's whānau whom Jake had confided in told him that the voices could be ancestors. In particular, it was suggested that Jake's paternal grandmother and great grandfather were keeping a close eye on his progress and were very likely the source of the voices of caution he would hear from time to time. This idea was a source of comfort to Jake and enhanced his sense of belonging to his father's whānau, despite long absences between seeing his father. At times he would experience these voices as loving and supportive which confirmed for him the kinship connection he felt as a consequence of these voices.

He recalled another incident that stood out in his mind. He had visited a church in his local city and while there had begun to feel quite tense and agitated. That night he had a dream in which he saw his Māori grandfather as an adversary in battle against his Pakeha grandfather. When he woke from this dream, he felt shocked and upset. He later found out that the church he had visited had been built on the site of previous conflict over 150 years before between local Māori and colonists.

Aside from this, he talked of knowing things that he couldn't know through normal means of communication. For example, he would suddenly feel grief stricken along with a foreboding that someone close to him had died. Frequently his intuition was later confirmed. Sometimes he could recall seeing something or feeling something like a spiritual presence in the room. When I asked him more about these kind of experiences, he found them very difficult to put words to. However such experiences felt very familiar to him and although they puzzled him at times they were not unpleasant.

Allister

As Jake spoke, I (Allister) was thinking about possible psychiatric explanations for his unusual experiences. His voices could have been a psychotic symptom, namely auditory

hallucinations. However he didn't seem at all bothered by them, in fact quite the opposite as he described them as loving and supportive at times. The time frame of their onset back to his early childhood also counted against a psychosis hypothesis as he was so young at the time and the voices were not accompanied by other psychotic symptoms such as disorganized thinking or false beliefs, such as delusions. They certainly didn't seem to have had a disabling effect on his life. Instead, in light of Jake's view that the voices were a spiritual experience I was curious to hear Wiremu's perspective on this question.

Towards the end of the session Jake and I discussed the role alcohol was playing in his life and we reviewed a number of situations in which drinking alcohol had led to circumstances that he later regretted. Jake seemed to reflect on these moments quite openly but was not wanting to make any changes to his drinking habits at this point. Having confirmed Willie's view that Jake had no further intent to harm himself, Jake and I agreed that we would meet Wiremu at his flat the following week.

Further meeting

The next week when Wiremu and I arrived at Jake's flat, he was waiting to meet us in the driveway. He led us past a pile of building supplies for the next door property and as a consequence we entered his house through a sliding door directly into the living area. He invited Wiremu and me to sit on the couch opposite the door by which we had entered and he took the easy chair just inside the door. To our left was a door that led to bedrooms in the flat. The winter sun was shining into the room from behind Jake. His guitar was propped up next to him.

After we had exchanged greetings and Jake had welcomed us, Wiremu enquired who Jake was living with and not too long after made a reference to some spiritual entities in the room with us. I was nonplussed that Jake confirmed Wiremu's observation and then proceeded to point out where in the room he could sense these three entities. He pointed to a corner of the room that was to the left of where Wiremu and I were sitting. Wiremu then confirmed the location of this entity and started to speak about his concern that this entity might be related to the mother of Jake's flatmate who was also living in the house. He urged Jake to take care of himself around this person. Wiremu then referred to two kaitiaki (guardian spirits) that he could sense next to Jake and Jake corroborated that he was aware of their presence and had a fair idea which of his deceased ancestors they were.

At this point Wiremu asked Jake if he would consider singing us one of his songs. Jake had no hesitation in agreeing to this request. He picked up his guitar with alacrity and launched into a rousing rendition of his latest composition. I was immediately struck by his obvious technical skill on the acoustic guitar and his passionate vocal performance. In a moment he was totally immersed in the music. When he had finished, it took little encouragement to persuade him to share another of his songs. This one conjured up a more soulful atmosphere. When he finally reluctantly put his guitar down, Wiremu and I took the opportunity to marvel at his accomplished performance and Wiremu enquired about his plans for recording his compositions. Wiremu then commented that Jake had been in a relationship with an older

woman and again urged caution, encouraging Jake to take care of himself when it came to affairs of the heart. He also warned him that cannabis and other substances would be very dangerous for him due to his spiritual awareness and openness. Wiremu then offered to finish our session with a karakia and Jake accepted that. We then bade Jake farewell and I arranged another time to meet with him.

Wiremu on the session at Jake's flat

The first time I met Jake at our agency, there were different things going on around him. The tūpuna (ancestors) who were with us both were interacting and so of course it could sound noisy to him.

Today, when we went to see him at his flat, it was different. This time there was a flurry of activity but not a lot of noise. As we sat there in the living room of his flat I could feel three distinct entities in the room. And Jake could feel them as well. When I mentioned them, he pointed to where they were in the room. The one that I saw out to my left was a female presence and I asked him who else was staying in the house. And he said that his mate's mother had come to stay. And I wanted to say to him, "Don't get involved in any stuff she might pour out". Sometimes people can have emotional stuff, that they hold in their puku (stomach) and it's as if they spew it out onto the carpet. And I was thinking it could splash on him. If this were to happen he could easily be infected by the germs in it. And I mean spiritual germs rather than biological ones! I very strongly felt that she had issues there that were not very good. There were things going on for her. I was wondering, "Why is she looking for a home? Why is she homeless?" I deduced that there were background things for his flatmate's mother. I could totally feel that and I started getting a headache too. It started just gripping my head. This female presence seemed to me to be related to the wahine (woman) who was staying in the whare (house). So it wasn't really about him. But it could have an effect on him if he wasn't careful.

There were two other entities there as well. There was an older woman, a kuia (female elder), close to the left of him. When I mentioned her he acknowledged her as his Nanny. There was a male presence on his right as well who was very laid back and quiet. And what reassured me about Jake was safe given what was going on was the kuia on his left and the koroua (male elder) on his right side. He was comfortable with their presence. So that is the appropriate side for female and male to be - tane kaha and wahine iti. It was as if they were making a korowai (protective cloak) around him. They were quiet and dignified. But this other female presence to my left hand side was flitting around in an unsettling way. However I noticed that it seemed to be keeping its distance from the kuia who was on the left side of him and the koroua on his right side. The kuia would move a little and then return to his side while that entity seemed to be trying to find a gap in their defence but was clearly unable to do so. In terms of protecting Jake, it wasn't aggressive, just a natural protection, like covering Jake in a korowai.

Given this cloak of protection, I felt somewhat reassured about Jake's wellbeing. I didn't think he was going to need a whole lot of help around the wairua stuff. However, there was a 'but'. If he got into a close relationship, whether it be with a male or female and then there was a split, I had this feeling a break up could be a very painful thing for him that might hurt his heart. That was the main concern I had for Jake. And as a consequence, I'd be worried that he might get tanked up and accidentally harm himself. I worried that drugs and alcohol under those circumstances could be very dangerous for him. It's just a feeling I was getting that he would find it difficult to handle that sort of upheaval. I don't know why, but that's the sort of feeling I was getting coming from the kuia and the koroua. I was sure that was why they were keeping a close eye over him.

Near the end of our session today something interesting happened. Jake made a comment about his mother warning him about getting into sexual relationships too early, and he said something very dismissive about his Mum's concern. Just as he said that I suddenly saw very clearly a woman. This woman, although a young adult, was definitely older than him. So I said, "Not the older woman I hope!", and he laughed and said "Yeah she was 21". I'm not sure why I was shown this, but perhaps it served to build a bit of rapport with him. When he acknowledged that she was 21, I knew that I'd got through to him. And it wasn't too long after that he said, "Oh, I wouldn't mind seeing you again."

Later in our session he also spoke about getting a feeling about something that is going on for someone and using that information to play a trick on them. That is an experience that I know about. Because he has that capacity to know stuff that he shouldn't know, he's tempted to use that knowledge to play with their heads. But it's not in a malicious way. Those tricks can feel beautiful, because the others are mystified by what's going on. But sometimes people don't realize that games like that can have serious consequences. So I'm very careful about the privacy of others these days and wouldn't use my knowledge mischievously or maliciously. I have come to learn this through trial and error for me and I'm sure Jake will do the same in time.

After our second meeting with Jake, Allister asked me about Jake's difficulties putting words to his experiences of the wairua. Allister might ask him something like: "Was it was like a voice that you were hearing?", and he would say "No, that's not quite it". And it seemed that for Jake, it was more that he sensed something was there rather than seeing it. He described it as if he was feeling something there with a part of his brain.

This difficulty expressing wairua in words is very familiar to me. In regards to sensing wairua it often seems to me that I can hear things with my vision or see things with my hearing or taste things with my eyes. In our language there is a saying: "Kei te rongo au te kakara o te kai!" Literally this means, "I can hear the fragrance of the food!" Or someone might say, even, "Kei te rongo au te reka o te kai!", which means, "I can hear the sweet taste of the food". From my perspective, all the senses are connected. Everything is interconnected.

I would also like to comment on this question of what is the nature of the voices that Jake was sensing. Of course from a western psychiatric point of view if someone is hearing a voice the first thing to be considered is, "Could this be a psychotic experience? So in these situations I'm observing matters very closely. And with Jake I was honing in on him very carefully. It's a fine line to discern what is spiritual and what is not. There are obvious similarities. It's hard for me to reach any sort of conclusion unless I can hear the voice myself. So I won't make a call if I have any doubts at all. If I do make a call, I'm confident about what it is that I'm picking up. And during our meeting with Jake it became clear to me that he was having spiritual experiences and that he was perceiving the same entities in the room at the same time that I was. This convinced me that the voices that he could hear were likely to be spiritual in origin rather than psychotic.

Sometimes in terms of psychiatry you may be asked if you can hear things. Those of us from Tonga, Samoa, or other parts of the Pacific and especially Māori, can hear things through different senses, for example through touch, through smell, taste and hearing. So I would say as a Māori, "Yes I do hear things", and so perhaps I risk being misdiagnosed for that reason. This is one reason why it is important to me that these stories can be told.

Kaitiaki

Tiaki means to protect. Kai means that they are in the process of the action or the doing. So someone who is a kaitiaki can be compared to a mentor. They are watching over someone. They are a guardian for that person. For example, angels are kaitiaki, they're guardians. In Aotearoa iwi are usually kaitiaki for the moana (sea), awa (rivers) and whenua (land) in their local area. Government conservation, agriculture and fisheries departments are kaitiaki. Spiritual kaitiaki offer the same kind of protection. Often they come from the same whakapapa line, but not always. I've known people to have kaitiaki who were not their ancestors. Perhaps it was someone who had a special interest or concern for you who may have assumed the role of a kaitiaki. If you are someone who cares for injured animals, then you could attract a kaitiaki who has acted similarly during their lifetime on earth and now becomes available to you as your kaitiaki.

Frequently however kaitiaki are from the same whanau. In fact families often have certain kaitiaki who help and may warn particular family members in times of danger. I believe this to be the case for Jake. I have several kaitiaki myself.

Later on when I was a teenager and young adult, I can recall many times when I would get premonitions or warnings when disaster was about to strike. For example, when I was about seventeen, I was driving back from Mahia in a Standard Ten, an old English car from the 1950's. It's brakes were very poor. That day the car was packed with people and loaded up with gear and I was pulling the caravan behind it. We had just reached the top of a very steep and narrow winding road and just as we started to pick up some speed on the other side, someone shouted: "William!" I jammed on the brakes. As we shuddered slowly to a halt, I shouted angrily, "What? Are you telling me how to drive?" But no one else had heard it. At

that moment, a huge articulated truck came around the corner and bore down on us. If I hadn't slammed the brakes on when I did, I'm certain we all would have been killed as there is no way that truck could have avoided us on such a narrow stretch of road. Either we would have gone over the side or it would have ploughed right into us. After several of these kind of incidents where I narrowly avoided death as a result of hearing this same female voice calling "William!" I consulted my Nanny about this. No one that I knew ever referred to me as William. I was always known as Wiremu. But my Nanny said that my adopted mother Nancy, who was her daughter, was the only one who ever called me William. She died aged nineteen when I was one year old. After that I was brought up by my Nanny and I thought that she was my Mum. So I came to understand that I had a kaitiaki and I was told that she was my adopted mother Nancy. After some years I came to trust that voice and to be alert to these kind of warnings.

So kaitiaki may warn you in times of danger but sometimes they make people who don't know about them and their purposes fearful. It's not unusual for young people to experience this without having sufficient understanding. The lucky ones will have pākeke or elders who can guide them and explain that their tūpuna are coming back to try to ward off the consequences of some of the trouble that lies just ahead of them. In Te Ao Māori (the Māori world), kaitiaki are commonly accepted (Moon, 2003; Benton et al, 2013). Certainly this knowledge has been around my whanau for generations and we still live by that.

Jake looks back

I remember that day meeting with Wiremu and Allister in my flat, even though it was over two years ago. I was sitting on the blue couch and I recall Wiremu talking about other people being there with us. I could feel them there as well. There was one that was at my right side, and one that was on my left side, and another one away from me off to my right. The two people close to me are often there. I've been told by my aunty that they are ancestors. One is my great grandfather on my Dad's side who I was told looked rather like me. I've also been told that his wife, my great grandmother is also here. After I got meningitis when I was young, I believe that my Nanny, my Dad's mother, decided to watch over me more closely. I've been told that she is also around me sometimes and I can feel her there. That makes sense to me because my Dad was one of 13 kids and he got meningitis when he was very small and his brother also contracted meningitis and was severely disabled after that. It was around that time that my grandmother died suddenly. And because she wasn't able to protect her children from the meningitis, I believe that's why she came to me when meningitis was about to destroy us again. Often in my life I've heard their voices talking to me. Many times they have said something reassuring and they back each other up. Other times they'll tell me what's right and what's wrong. For example they might say, "Don't have that extra drink". I know that it's for my own good even if I feel irritated at the time.

Hearing Wiremu describing these same people being there and knowing I could feel them there too, I remember feeling quite content with myself. To hear this coming from someone who is quite spiritual really backed up what I was experiencing. It made me feel less crazy. Trying to accept spirituality isn't easy. People try to find a medical reason. I don't think I'm

crazy but sometimes I doubt myself. Sitting there with Wiremu, I just remember feeling really calm. Perhaps what helped me was that he was giving me time to understand, or maybe it was that he really did understand what I was talking about.

Later in our meeting Wiremu mentioned that I had a relationship with an older woman. He was right about that. Also when I read his comments in this chapter today, about me being vulnerable to a relationship break up, he was exactly right about that. Not long after I saw him that time, a girl who I had been very close with for a long time, who I considered to be my soul-mate and who was overseas at the time, told me she was with someone else. It pretty much destroyed my life. I stayed in my room for two weeks solid, drinking and smoking. Finally my flatmate brought round most of my friends and insisted that I come out of my room. This is exactly what Wiremu had predicted. This is why hearing this just now buzzed me out so much, because what he said about me was really true. I've had two serious relationships since then and I got very emotional in both situations when they broke up.

I was interested in what Wiremu said about how perceiving spiritual things is not exactly feeling, and not seeing or hearing but perhaps a mixture of those experiences. I can quite often feel people's emotions. In fact that's probably one of the strongest spiritual experiences I have. When I'm talking to friends, and being there in the conversation, sometimes it's as if I can 'hear' their upset, even though they're not expressing it openly. I can literally hear crying, when they might not be letting on that they are sad or upset or when they are trying to cover it up. But I can hear that feeling that they are having. Or at other times I can feel that strong emotion in the room, like anger. Other times I can hear what they are saying behind the words. I may experience this in sound as little grunts, or little angry sounds. These are some of the different ways I know the feelings that others aren't expressing directly to me.

Every human being is spiritual. Some of us have developed it more, just as Wiremu said. The Samoans, Tongans and other Pacific people have and of course we as Maori have. But I know that Pakeha people also have this. However for many people it is hard to accept the spiritual. With the physical world, the real things are more obvious. Like this phone is real, or that drink can is real. But some people might say that the extra people in this room around us aren't real. However I know that's not true because they are just as real as you and me. And being with someone like Wiremu really helps me because he is able to confirm these experiences. They are there. You can't grab them. You can't talk to them the way you and I are talking. But they are real alright.

Allister on meeting Jake again after two years

As Jake had not been suffering from a significant mental health problem at the time we first met, and he didn't need further assistance from a mental health service he was soon discharged. When I contacted Jake two years later I explained to him about our proposal to write about those first meetings with Wiremu. Jake was enthusiastic about this idea and wanted to meet up. I could tell that he was particularly keen to see Wiremu again. We arranged to pick him up in the central city and he took us to a local youth centre where we caught up on his news. Just as before, I was struck by his exuberance and energy. He was

bursting with ideas, experiences and music. At our invitation he grabbed a guitar lying against a wall and his performance of his own songs was just as passionate and even more skilfully crafted than two years before. Although we were not meeting in a clinical setting, Jake was very open about how things had been going for him. When I enquired about his recent experiences, I was able to satisfy myself that from a psychiatric point of view, while he continued to have the same experiences of voices, visions and feelings from time to time, he had no other symptoms that indicated a major psychotic disorder. However I was concerned about what he said about his recent heavy alcohol and drug use and the effects this could have on his wellbeing.

Wiremu on meeting Jake again after two years

I enjoyed meeting Jake again but I have to say I was concerned because I could feel that he has been using drugs that could be very harmful for him. And as we were sitting in the room with him, I was aware of a few entities there. There was a woman who clearly showed herself to me. She was sitting in a chair just to the right of where Jake was sitting. It was obvious to me that she was very distinguished. She was dressed in elegant clothes, including a black blouse, with white trim. Her hair was long and carefully tied back like a ponytail, but perhaps more sophisticated than a ponytail. She felt to me like a very lovely woman. She was just quietly observing Jake and what was going on. She wasn't making any facial expressions or anything like that but rather was just sitting there. She had olive skin, but it wasn't apparent to me if she was Māori or pakeha. Usually I have an inkling as to why they are there, but this time I couldn't tell why. She appeared to be just sitting as if to say, "I am here". I was sure that she was like a kaitiaki for Jake, and she'd probably been there with him over a period of years. It was interesting to me that she was sitting on his right as usually the women are on the left of a person. Sometimes that can mean that they are connected to the male line. However that's how it was.

Later when I met up with Jake on his own, I spoke to him about his talent and how to look after that. He has great talent as a singer and songwriter. However I was appealing to this talent as a way to engage him in thinking about his drug use. Drinking so much alcohol and using drugs in the way he does is very dangerous for him, and even more so because of his spiritual gift. And there is a related danger for him. His musical gifts could lead to him being led into trouble by his pride, his ego. We all have this ego and it can easily trip us up. My ego can make me believe that this gift I have is really me, and that I am such a great person! So in feeling puffed up like this I can end up saying things to others that put them down or dismiss them, and there lies the danger. Such actions can come back on me in a worldly way or in a spiritual way. If I'm not careful to tame my ego, to keep control over it, I can lose what I have in terms of a gift, whether that be a spiritual or even a musical gift. I could get ill, perhaps dangerously ill, or someone in my family could get ill. In Jake's case, if his ego runs away with him, then he could easily hurt someone else's feelings without intending to, or put others down, or cause them to feel jealous of him. And if this happened then the unseen in others could take offense, and he could be in for a rough ride. It's alright to feel confident but very important not to be cocky. It's essential to remain humble in order to take care of ourselves spiritually.

Jake reflects again

Today I have enjoyed hearing Wiremu and Allister's reflections from our last contact about 18 months ago. Wiremu's predictions about the problems I could fall into with alcohol and drugs and then later his concerns about my drug use were spot on. When we last met, that was a time when I was indulging in a lot of drugs that I probably shouldn't have done. It's now a year since I cut down my drug use quite drastically. Recently I turned 21 and one of the big wake up calls for me was having my little kaitiaki (guardians) talk to me. My brother and sister, who are flesh and blood kaitiaki. My brother told me, "I love hanging out with you, except when you are on drugs". He was 17 at the time. I would like to think of myself as a good influence for my brother and sister. But they were telling me that the good influence came from the sober Jake, not the wasted Jake. I've grown up my whole life trying to decipher what's real and what's not real. For me being real is a big thing. I began to realise that my brother, seeing me drunk, was beginning to think that my claims that I cared for him, were fake and not real. That inspired a massive change in my outlook.

I'm still experiencing a lot of spiritual things every day. But the advice that I used to enjoy getting is much less so now. It's as if they feel they can let me go now to make my own decisions. The kaitiaki are giving me more space. That's a bit scary and a bit sad for me sometimes. There were times in the past when I used to love to be alone so that I could talk with them. For example when I was say thirteen or fourteen, I would be alone and I would put a thought out there, and I might get seven or eight responses. I loved it having a sixty year old point of view coming at me. Some of the responses were strong, some not. Some were heart felt, some not. That's how I would decipher who they were. The sad thing is now, they are still there, but all I hear is "you know", and "carry on" which is encouraging I guess, but I used to really appreciate the detailed advice. The fact is I do know that they will always be there but perhaps they are letting me know that I have the strength to stand on my own now. Maybe I don't need the korowai (cloak of protection) in the same way or maybe it's still there but less obvious.

Often now, when I have these spiritual experiences it almost seems as if it's not for me. It seems to be for others. That's what I thought was cool about what Wiremu said about helping others. I can also relate to what Wiremu said about being careful about ego. In the past the voices would say things like, "Calm down, that's your ego, shut up!" Now they don't. Perhaps they have a sense that I'm starting to have more awareness of that.

I still frequently notice positive and negative spiritual things around people or in different places. Some places I will avoid because of that. But there is something else that has changed for me. I have become more accepting of those negative spiritual things. Instead of just ignoring them, sometimes I will try to be accepting of them. For example, I might notice one and say to myself, "Oh well, you are coming here, but this isn't anywhere you can stop, so just keep going!" I think that every spirit, even the cold ones, even the bad ones, need to be healed. They all have something to learn.

Chapter 7

Restoring Mana

Introducing Mana: Allister's perspective

Mana was 16 years old at the time she was referred to our Pacific Child, Adolescent and Family Service. Mercy, our Samoan family therapist met Mana and her mother Rangī first but then arranged for them to see my colleague, a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, for an urgent assessment in my absence.

Immediately upon my return Mercy and I met with Mana and Rangī. Mana's sporting attire and physicality prompted my first impression that she was no stranger to athletic pursuits. And it took no time at all for me to realise she was undoubtedly a young person with a mind of her own, unafraid of declaring her lucid opinions. By contrast her sombre expression and the look of melancholy in her eyes led me to suspect that this sadness had been haunting her for some time. It was not until the very end of our session that I had a brief glimpse of Mana's open and engaging smile.

Prior to our meeting, Mercy had explained to me that Mana's father was Samoan, and her mother Rangī was Māori. When Mana was in her early primary school years they had separated under very acrimonious circumstances. From the age of seven Mana had lived with her custodial father with fortnightly visits with her mother, until four months prior to our meeting. Mercy then briefed me about the outcome of the previous week's interview, explaining that my psychiatric colleague had concluded that Mana had symptoms of depression that had been going on for at least six months. Based on the impact that this depression was having on her life, and her degree of despair and suicidal thoughts, she had offered Mana and her mother the option of a trial of an antidepressant treatment called Fluoxetine. After hearing the explanation about depression and participating in a discussion about the pros and cons of medication, Mana, with her mother's support had decided to proceed with that treatment option.

Once we began our meeting with Mana and Rangī, Mana explained that matters had been increasingly strained in her relationship with her father. This had come to a head one night with a major argument. Mana was so incensed following this that she immediately resolved to move out of his home. Her mother invited her to live with her that and Mana accepted straight away.

Her mother Rangi said that she had been gradually more concerned about Mana's unpredictable moods over the previous weeks, and observed that she might seem "really happy, playful and talkative" at one moment and then all of a sudden she would be "in a real mood". Mana explained that she was often putting on a brave face and when that became impossible to sustain, her extreme irritation would show itself. She found it difficult to focus at school, and she felt drained of energy all the time.

Mana confided that she had always been very close to her only brother Arthur who was six years her elder. She extolled how he had always been there for her when she was a young girl, shepherding her through very difficult times. However in recent months, she had felt increasingly distant from him but was unable to put her finger on why that would be so. Despite now living in the same household, she was concerned that he was unable to comprehend her dark moods and unpredictable angry outbursts. He would take issue with her withdrawal into her bedroom. He had taken to lecturing her about joining in at family meals at the same time as increasingly she found she couldn't bear to face people. Over the previous six months, no matter how hard anyone tried to jolly her along and no matter how hard she tried to placate them, as she said, "I can't keep my happy face on". Everyone's efforts to cheer her up were fruitless and this as much as anything else began to trouble her. She began to reproach herself for her crankiness towards her boyfriend Fa'alogo, whom her mother described as particularly tolerant and well wishing. As time went on she was feeling increasingly worthless and finding a way out of her predicament seemed beyond hope.

When Mercy and I met with Mana on her own, she disclosed that in the recent weeks and months she had been "drowning in bad memories" from the past. She then spoke of the sexual abuse by a family friend that she had experienced many years before, and times when she had felt caught between her mother and father during their most conflicted times. She insisted we keep the abuse to ourselves as she believed her mother was unaware of it. She was convinced if she was told this, it could result in a tumult of emotion against her father and right now she knew she couldn't face that.

Mana told us of unrelenting nightmares in which she would witness the dying of her loved ones. Consequently, she stayed awake as long as she could to avoid such disturbing intrusions. Mana then began to recount a particularly disturbing dream that she had experienced repeatedly over many years. She told of seeing a man in this dream who would tell her, "If you give me a part of you, I will give you anything you want." He would then reach out and touch her heart and she would feel terribly cold inside, "a feeling of nothingness". Although she never recalled giving him anything, she had a gnawing suspicion that, "He had stolen a part of my soul". Lying awake at night she would be plagued by the disturbing thought that she had given her soul away, stating that, "It feels like my soul is written off". She had little doubt that she had brought this state of affairs upon herself, "because of the selfish choices I've made". When I asked her to say a little more about these "selfish choices", quite unlike her, she was unable to come up with even one exemplar. Still the feelings of emptiness that she associated with the dreams had steadily worsened recently.

When I wondered out loud whether Mana thought there might be some kind of link between such disturbing dreams and her past experiences of abuse, she asserted that there was more to it than just the abuse.

I was struck by Mana's vivid linguistic description of her disturbing dreams and especially the way she talked about the impact on her soul. The spiritual tone to her words made me wonder whether she may have had other spiritual experiences of this sort that might be relevant to her current predicament. When I asked her a little more about this, she hesitated as if considering the advisability of speaking them out loud whereas up until then she hadn't been one to hang back. Then she began to speak.

Mana said that she was familiar with the kind of experiences that I was asking about. She made her point by giving me an exemplar from her relationship with her brother Arthur. She said that not only did she feel close to him emotionally over the years, but she had also had the experience of foretelling when he was either upset about something or having a difficult day even if she was not in his presence. By now all sense of hesitation was gone and Mercy and I were listening intently. Mana said that in the past she had other experiences such as an apprehension that there was some kind of "bad spiritual presence" nearby that was "not comforting". She had sometimes seen things like "black shadows" and intuited that "Someone was walking behind me". She was quite unequivocal that she had had times when she could see things that other people couldn't see and this had made her wonder if she had a mental health problem. This was particularly so around the ages of eleven and twelve. She described one occasion when she saw a "blur" going past outside and she turned to her aunty beside her in the laundry who confirmed that she had seen it as well.

Mana said that she was reluctant to tell her mother about this as she was concerned this would unduly alarm her. Previously when she had told her father about these matters, she later overheard him and her stepmother discussing it. They wondered if it was a "ghost" she had seen but her father was adamant that they were not to discuss this with her as she was too young to understand this realm. However, Mana was well aware that on her Samoan side there were quite a number of people in her aiga (family) who were said to have similar experiences and on her Maori side she knew of an aunty and uncle who were also familiar with such phenomena. As we prepared to invite Rangī to rejoin us, I checked with Mana whether she would consider sharing what she had revealed about her spiritual experiences with her mother.

Upon her mother's return I asked Mana if she could explain to Rangī about some of the experiences that she had described to Mercy and me. As Mana began to recount a number of these experiences her mother listened with rapt attention. When she had finished Rangī admitted that she had no idea that Mana had been having experiences such as these. She then spoke of her own aunty who had told her that such occurrences were well known in their whanau. As we pondered together the question of whether these happenings might be relevant to Mana's current predicament, I asked Mana and Rangī whether they would be interested in consulting with a Māori colleague who might be able to help us shed light on this. When I talked about Wiremu and described his personal style and expertise in this area,

both Mana and Rangi said that they were keen to proceed with a consultation. I agreed to contact Wiremu and check his availability to meet with the family. In the meantime, Mana said she would continue with her Fluoxetine treatment and Mercy arranged to see her at school the following week to check on her progress and discuss individual therapeutic work.

Rangi immediately confirmed our evening appointment when I rang two weeks later to offer them a time with Wiremu. Given the significance of Arthur in her life, I suggested that they consider inviting him along and she agreed to talk to him about it.

Session with Wiremu

When I met with Wiremu just prior to the appointment, I told him Mana's name and that we had concerns that she had been experiencing depression. I mentioned that Mana had described a number of past experiences that sounded spiritual in nature and the family had agreed to meet him in the hope that he might be able to shed light on the nature of those experiences. I made him aware that her mother would accompany her and her elder brother had also been invited. Wiremu's first response was that he was feeling quite sure that she had experienced some kind of sexual abuse in her life. He believed that may be important. I confirmed to Wiremu that his assertion had already been verified by Mana, but that she had asked that this not be discussed with her other family members as they were not yet aware of that matter.

It was early evening when the whanau arrived for their appointment. Mana had just returned from a rugby game on the other side of town and I was pleased to see that Mana and her mother Rangi had been joined by Arthur. I welcomed them in our reception area and introduced myself to Arthur. After offering them all a hot drink, I invited them to come through to our fono (meeting) room.

Wiremu was already seated in the fono room with a steaming cup of hot black tea. As the family settled themselves into their seats Wiremu greeted them and smiled warmly. He first checked with the family to see if they would agree to us starting our meeting with a prayer, and then asked if I might start our hui (meeting) with a karakia. Following this and a round of introductions, Wiremu sought to reassure the family about his role as a cultural therapist and the confidentiality of any information they shared with us. Mana had explained to me at the last appointment that she thought Arthur had little idea about what she had been going through and she would appreciate him knowing more so that he could more appropriately support her. Accordingly I asked Mana if she would like me to summarise some of our recent conversation, so that Arthur and Wiremu might hear more about the difficulties that she had been facing.

Mana seemed grateful for my suggestion and nodded her agreement. I began to briefly recount my understanding of the distress and despair that had been mounting in Mana's life over the previous few months. I referred to a few of the troubles that had been contributing to her distress, including the impasse that she felt in her relationship with her father. I talked about her relationship with Arthur and how she had previously felt that he was always there for her and had protected her. But now Mana felt it was very hard for Arthur to understand

where she was up to. I wondered out loud if it might be hard for him to grasp the effect that the depression was having on her life given that he hadn't heard about it directly from Mana. I then spoke about my meeting with Rangi and Mana two weeks before in which Mana had spoken for the first time about some unusual experiences in her life. These experiences had led Mana to doubt her own mental wellbeing. Yet the quality of these experiences, as she described them, had led me to wonder if they might be spiritual in nature. I explained to Arthur that this was our reason for meeting with Wiremu.

It was at this point that Wiremu gently interrupted me:

Wiremu: I hope you don't mind me making a comment. As you were speaking Allister, I began to pick up some anxiety or else it could be that someone in the whanau has a bit of a heart problem. I'm picking it up sitting here. I noticed it especially when it came to the talk about your Dad, Mana. Rangi, are you guys still together?

Rangi: No.

Wiremu: The only reason I raise this is that if we have unresolved issues about our past relationships, our own unfinished business can transfer onto the next generation. Unless we deal with it ourselves, it tends to flow down. Unless you find some closure to the mamae or pain that you have been through yourself, your own children can be affected. Many times a battle between the parents can bring the young ones in, the ones we hold most dear. Other times the origin of it may be four or more generations back. Because there was no resolution back then, it may flow down the generations. And so the sins of the forefathers may be visited upon the children.

And so there are a number of ways that children can be affected by this. We have an expression, taukumekume which refers to the pulling apart which may happen to children in this kind of situation.

I definitely have felt some stuff with you (looking at Rangi) that has not yet been resolved that might help Mana. So, right or wrong, I thought I would put that out there.

There was a pause in the conversation as Rangi took a moment to digest the implications of what Wiremu was raising. She then said that she had a problem with high blood pressure and she wondered if that was part of what Wiremu was referring to. Mana then spoke up:

Mana: Its true. My mum doesn't like my Dad.

Allister: Rangi, perhaps what Wiremu is raising in some ways may not feel fair to you. Wiremu is kind of suggesting it's still worth healing that unresolved stuff about her Dad, for yourself, in order to free things up a bit for Mana. Is that what you're saying Wiremu?

Wiremu: Yes.

Allister: Even though it may not feel fair, because you suffered as well. Does that make sense?

Rangi: Yep, it does makes sense. Because it's just like she is being pulled between us. I do get that.

Wiremu: There is some other stuff I picked up before I came to meet you. I'm hoping it will be ok if we can meet with you on your own Mana, before we finish today.

After Mana indicated her agreement, there was a pause in the conversation and I invited Mana to speak a little about some of the experiences that had begun four years before. I suggested that this could help Wiremu understand something about the nature of her experiences. Mana glanced over at Wiremu, inhaled deeply and then began to speak in a very hushed voice:

Mana: I remember it starting back when I was eleven years old. At that time, I was feeling quite low in my mood. I started to notice things. My brother had always been around to protect me, but some time before that he had started College. So I would be walking to school on my own. As I walked I remember a distinct feeling that someone was there behind me. It was not a good feeling. I'd start walking faster and I would hear footsteps at the back of my head. I would try to turn around to look behind me, but it felt like I was prevented from turning. So I couldn't look behind me. But I could feel the footsteps walking faster behind me. I would then start running for no reason. And it felt like the footsteps would just keep on following me, drawing closer even though I sped up. At one point, I felt something go through me. It was a chilling feeling and it didn't feel at all good inside. I was so terrified I just turned to the side of the road and vomited.

As Mana spoke Rangi and Arthur appeared transfixed, as if staring at someone they suddenly realised they hardly knew.

I was having really strange dreams as well. I would have the same dream, over and over again. In this dream, I would see a man, and he would come and talk to me. The dream often appeared to be in different places, but each time it would be the same man. He would tell me, "You can ask me for anything. I will give you anything you want. You just say it". I would respond, "Oh, what do you mean?" And he would repeat, "Just ask me for anything. I will give it to you, but in return..." and at that point he would reach out and touch my heart. And his touch felt terribly cold. Then he would tell me, "In return you will have to give me a part of you". I just kept on having this dream over and over again. I don't ever remember asking for anything. But I started to feel quite empty inside. It was as if he had taken something from me.

I started to see things around our house as well. I was outside with my step mum, and I saw something go past and I turned around to her and asked, "Did you see that?" She said, "Oh, see what?" I said, "Did you see that thing just float past?" And she said, "Yes I did". I said: "What was that?" She replied, "I don't know". I went

inside, and I just freaked out and I said to my Dad, "Oh my God, I think I just saw a ghost outside".

I went to bed that night, and then my Dad, turned around to my step mother and asked her, "What did you say to Mana?" She said, "I told her I saw it too". He became angry and said to her, "Don't say that to my daughter. You're freaking her out. She's just a kid, you can't tell her those sort of things, you know, she's just a kid, she doesn't understand." Her response was, "Well I'm not going to lie to her, because what she saw, I saw it as well."

Wiremu: Do you still experience that sort of stuff?

Mana: Not so much. I just kind of try to shut it out. But I often have dreams about people dying.

Wiremu: So while it's not as heavy as it used to be when you were younger, you still have dreams of people dying.

Allister: Can you say what your thoughts are about those dreams. Because I understood one of the scary things was that you were worried these things were going to come true.

Mana: I once had a dream and I saw my Aunty sick in bed. And later she passed away suddenly from cancer.

Wiremu: And you had seen that?

Mana: Yeah. I often have dreams about people close to me dying, and it makes me feel really uneasy, that I know the way they are going to die. I find this very hard. It's not exactly a conversation starter if you know what I mean. I just have to keep it inside of me. These are things I can't talk to anyone about.

Wiremu: So have you ever shared that stuff with people in your whanau?

Mana: Not anyone. Not until I came to see Allister and talked about it.

At this point Wiremu enquired from Mana as to whether the dreams ever coincided with the onset of her low moods. He then asked about matekite experiences (spiritual awareness) or "visions or dreams" in the whānau (family). Rangi mentioned an incident after the death of her father when her sister had an experience of their father still being present. Mana responded by commenting that members of her father's family were familiar with those kind of experiences. After this Wiremu began to offer his thoughts about Mana's predicament.

Wiremu: There are two things I think could be relevant here. One is something that has come down the generations. Perhaps somebody took something that belonged to somebody else years ago, and it was never replaced or there was no restoration or reconciliation. And it could be from your Mum's side or your Dad's side. And so if this has been passed down then this thing could come and hammer somebody in the

family now. The second thing is that, because your aunty has had that experience and because your dad's family have had experiences like that, sometimes it happens that there is one person in the whānau who has been picked out of the generations to feel that stuff. Most of the time they don't understand what the heck is going on. If there is an entity that is not so good then you can have all sorts of experiences that can be scary. If you have come to the attention of things that we can't see, that go bump in the night, what happens is that, because they understand that there is somebody who actually is open to feeling, seeing, hearing, dreaming things, sometimes they come in and start pouring their rubbish down.

I also think that sometimes your low mood is not only from that. But there can also be a door open where stuff can come through and it's hard for Mana to be selective about what she is experiencing. But I will say more about that later. But right now, I'm getting pretty excited. I can feel something there and I can't wait to put my hand around its neck and pull it out- sorry if that sounds strange! (laughter)

Having offered his initial explanation for Mana's situation as a combination of an intergenerational matter and her degree of spiritual attunement, Wiremu goes on to hint at the possible role that her previous sexual abuse experiences may have had in making her more vulnerable to a negative spiritual entity. He then indicates that he has detected such an entity and that he is intending to deal with it. However before he does so, Wiremu is keen to help the whanau develop a foundation of understanding that will assist them in supporting Mana and each other in the months ahead.

Wiremu: You got any questions? (looking at Mana, Rangi and Arthur)

Rangi: Are you saying that it's like a bad spirit that's she's channelled, that's channelled into her..?

Wiremu: Thank you. Those are some of the words I was trying to find. I'm sorry, I live on the side of a mountain, and I'm not flash with words. (laughter) Sometimes all the rubbish from the whanau gets heaped upon a person in the family because they are open to that spiritual side. Just listening to her she is very open. And, if Mana can learn to shut that door and say "Get out, no more!" then she can learn to be selective about what she hears or sees.

Because, culturally, many people from indigenous cultures around the world are open to stuff like what Mana is going through. It could come from her Māori side or from her Samoa side, it doesn't make a difference. What she is experiencing could come from a number of things. Right now, what I am saying is that this thing is gone! And in order to stop it coming back, then it's important to learn how to control it. It's about giving you the mana, and equipping you with the tools to deal with it. Does that make sense to you Mana?

When Mana doesn't respond initially to his question, Wiremu seeks further clarification from the whanau to see if they've understood his explanation. He checks with Arthur if he is following what he has been saying:

Wiremu: I know sometimes I tend to not make sense and yet I know exactly that I'm trying to say. It's just that it doesn't come out the way I mean.

Arthur: I'm not sure. I'm just trying to find the words.

Wiremu: It's ok. What I'm trying to say is that Mana, you could be a channel for both sides of your family. What's happened is that there is this evil or bad entity or spirit that is trying to control you.

Arthur: Is it like taking advantage of the opening?

Wiremu: Yes, that's a good way of putting it. It's able to heap its rubbish and dump it on Mana because she is open to it. And because she is actually a channel for the whanau it may not be so simple to just close off that doorway. I also need to say that sometimes, when these things start getting discovered, they tend to play up. They can cause people to not even want to be in here, or listen to this, or they could cause all sorts of trouble. But there is nothing surer, than that before you walk out of here tonight, we can properly deal with what is going on with you.

I had noticed that Mana had been largely silent in the last minutes of the conversation and I was curious about how she was finding it. I wondered if Wiremu's allusions to unseen bad influences might be unsettling for Mana. Yet I also knew that Wiremu was often trying to empower young people by putting potentially spooky things in plain and simple terms.

Allister: Mana, it probably matters quite a bit for you to understand what Wiremu is saying.

Wiremu: Thank you

Allister: Because, the ideas around what he is saying could be a lot more scary than what he really means, so is this freaking you out slightly? Or does it make sense?

Mana: No, it makes sense. Wiremu is telling me that I can beat this thing if I can find the mana to kind of control myself..

Wiremu: Take control. Yeah!

Wiremu goes on to speak about mana (spiritual authority) and defines that for the family. He then talks about the dilemma of being the one in the family who is tuned in to spiritual experiences.

Wiremu: If you are that channel, then it's important that you learn how to be in control of that. Sometimes we can't choose who we are or what we become. From family to family, there is always somebody that's picked to look after the whanau

(family). It's not really something that is your choice. It just happens. But like I said, at a certain time in your life, perhaps when you are vulnerable for certain reasons, there are things that may choose to come and heap their rubbish down and it could come from either side of the family. But I have this really good feeling about you that you have got what it takes and you'll be able to kick it's butt once you learn how. Does that make sense?

Mana (looking directly at Wiremu): Yes.

Wiremu: Good.

At this point I asked Wiremu to say some more about how this all relates to depression. He responded to this by alluding once more to the sexual abuse that he had sensed that Mana had experienced:

Wiremu: Can I just talk about my culture at the moment. Even though I might have Samoans or Tongans in my family, I'm not an expert on Samoan culture. But in Te Ao Māori, if we lose something through a tapu (something sacred or forbidden) being broken, then that could be a cause of depression. Tapu is the sacredness of a person's whole being. If somehow that tapu has been transgressed or broken, then that has to be put right. If you want to get someone right, you fix their wairua, you fix that spiritual part of the person and everything else will fall into line. Sometimes we can be robbed of that, and it leaves us open. It's as if the doorway has been left open and anything can just pour in. So what we do is we try and close that back up again, by restoring that mana or that authority to take control of what you hear, what you think, what you see.

Allister: Normally, you talk about mauri as well.

Wiremu: Yeah, people often explain mauri as about life force. That's one explanation for that word. But mauri is also about relationships. That could be our relationship with our creator or our relationship with our whanau. That's our mauri. Our whanau become our life force. So Mana's mauri includes your support for her. So you can help keep her strong. It includes the creator's relationship with her. All that is sacred. And out of that sacredness of her relationship with the creator, she has the mana to have dominion over everything that walks, creeps, crawls, flies. She will have the mana to take control of her circumstances.

(Turning to Mana) As you restore your mana you will be able to select what you think, what you hear, what you see.

Allister: Would that apply to dreams as well?

Wiremu: Yep, that applies to dreams as well. Because when we get rid of that thing which is bugging you, then your dreams will come back to normal. And it will help your depression. Something like this, that's in control and you're not in control of can cause that kind of raruraru or depression, by the way it keeps banging away at you.

Wiremu's comments about the importance of the family relationships reminded me of a comment that Mana had made some moments before about how she viewed her relationships with her mother and brother. This link reminded me of what my Samoan colleagues refer to as a very important relationship in fa'a Samoa (Samoan world view).

Allister: Can I just make a comment, I was thinking about your relationship, Mana and Arthur. Mana, you just said that your mum and your brother are a part of you. That is really interesting to me. Because that's not a Pakeha or Palagi(European) concept at all. It could be a Māori concept. But it's certainly a strongly Samoan concept and there is a name which you both might be familiar with. The name for the relationship between brother and sister in the Samoan culture is 'feagaiga' – are you familiar with that?

Feagaiga means it's like a sacred covenant. I'm obviously Palagi, so this is bit of an outside view, but my understanding is that's the name given to the relationship between brother and sister in the Samoan culture and it later on got taken by the Christian Missionaries to mean something else. I understand that the brother and sister relationship is the most sacred relationship in the Samoan Culture. I'm just raising this because there is something about the way that you guys are connected which fits with that for me, and the way Mana has told me you have looked after your sister over the years. Does this make any sense?

Mana: (looking up to meet my eyes) Yeah.

Arthur: Yes.(Nodding)

While Wiremu responds to a further question of mine about mauri, Mana makes a sudden exclamation:

Mana: I'm cold!

As I turn to look at her, I immediately see that she is looking very uncomfortable. Her shoulders are hunched and the colour has drained out of her cheeks. She is clasping her hands together and looks like her teeth might begin chattering at any moment.

Wiremu: Are you alright?

Mana: I've gone very pale, I can't feel my fingers very well, they're cold!

Wiremu: I wish I was pale! Since I arrived back down here, everyone has been saying "Gee you're black!" (laughter) I tell them it's the sun up in Gisborne. I was actually quite fair before I left here and went back to Gisborne, so they were all calling me black today when I went to visit. We are going to deal with that soon Mana, because I noticed what was happening. Like I said, sometimes these things know that their time is nearly up, so they start doing things. They try to create a situation or change the mood.

Mana: I feel very uneasy!

Allister: Is it the same cold feeling that you sometimes used to get?

Mana: It's kind of...like an angry feeling, yeah.

Wiremu moves his chair a little closer to where Mana is sitting.

Wiremu: Can I just feel your hand? Whoa! That is cold! (Pause) Hopefully it starts warming up shortly.

Despite Mana's acute discomfort, Wiremu is still intent on strengthening the understanding and cohesion, and therefore the mana of her whanau, before directly addressing the spiritual entity that he is sure is causing her discomfort.

Wiremu: Is there any more kōrero? We all know one another now, we can korero. It's not an appointment type thing, it's a whanau type thing, we are able to say what we feel and think.

Arthur: Could this bad thing that might be around Mana be strengthened by her remembering her past?

Wiremu: Yeah, you're on to it.

Arthur: So when she thinks more and more about the bad things that have happened in the past, it starts opening more. Is that what you're saying?

Wiremu: You've got it. What job did you say you do? (laughing)

Arthur: So it is fuelled a lot from her past. Stuff that has happened, stuff that she has seen and heard. (pause) I know that Mana has been in the middle of a lot of stuff between Mum and Dad. And she feels torn; she wants to be on both sides.

Wiremu: That's easy to pick that up.

Arthur: Yeah so, there are the memories, and then being caught in that conflict and things like that are all adding up for her over time, like a chain of events, that grind her down. And then this thing takes advantage of her. I just thought I would check that I was on the right path.

Wiremu: That's exactly it, torn emotions, torn loyalties. Yeah.

Arthur: I can see now that I've had no idea what Mana has been going through. This is why I am here, because I want to know and understand. The last thing I want to do is hurt my sister, but I'm afraid I may have been contributing to it. Sometimes, I've been pretty angry towards her. I wonder if I've been fuelling those things that she is going through as well. One reason that I want to clarify things is because I know some of what it's been like for her because I went through some of that too, which is why I can relate to it. Does that make any sense?

Wiremu: Sure.

Allister: Mana, did you want to respond to Arthur? Because what he is basically asking is, what could he do at this moment to help you?

Mana: I'm really sorry I didn't hear any of it.

Allister: It's ok.

Arthur: It's ok.

Allister: Am I right Arthur that one of your questions is- 'What can I do that might help Mana given that everything is connected?'

Arthur (turning to look directly at his sister): I'll paint a picture for you, Mana. You come home every day and I'm always trying to get everyone close together so we have more family time at home, eating at the table sort of thing. I didn't understand until now why sometimes you just go to bed because you feel tired. Oh my gosh, here I am pushing you, giving you shit all the time, telling you "come and eat at the table", and you go, "I'm way too tired". You know Mana, I didn't know what you were going through!

By this time tears are running down Arthur's cheeks. Mana has turned towards him. She remains hunched over, hugging her own shoulders as if trying to warm herself against the chill that I can't feel. It's not clear from looking at her how much of Arthur's words she has taken in. Never the less, she looks into his eyes and responds to her brother:

Mana: (whispering) I love you.

Arthur: I know you do.

By this time they both have tears streaming down their faces.

Allister: We have plenty of tissues here.

Arthur: Sometimes, I feel like I'm this big strong fella, and that you should be like me. But I didn't know what was going wrong, what was going on in your head. I just didn't know what was happening, I'm sorry. I just want to know what is happening so I can help. So we can all help.

Mana: I love you, and I know you can love me. It's ok.

Arthur: I'm sorry.

Allister: It's important to have a tangi from time to time. That's really important stuff you said Arthur.

Wiremu: It really is, because that's that life line, that life force that we talked about. What I see before me, shows me the kaha (strength) of your family. As you said Arthur, your misunderstanding could sometimes be an opportunity for that thing to get inside because you misunderstand the reason why. But the more you fellas come

together as a whānau, the harder it is for that thing to stick around. Your discussing it and declaring your love has just gone and made it so that we put another nail in that little thing that I can see sitting just slightly behind Mana. Putting a little nail in the blinkin' thing... and helping you get ready to kick it out. Ka pai. That's really neat!

By this time Arthur had pulled his chair over to be closer to his sister. Mana was still hunched over but she was looking intently at Arthur at times and there was a renewed sense of sibling intimacy between them. At this point Wiremu began to describe a process by which the family might be able to address unresolved current or intergenerational matters which he named as whakawetewete (see Wiremu's description for George in chapter 3). He re-emphasised that anything useful that he might be able to contribute was really not coming from him but was from his source, "our creator".

At this point, Allister asked if it would still be necessary to have the individual time with Mana. Wiremu initially responded that it might not be required, but Mana requested that we go ahead and see her on her own. Rangi and Arthur were in support of this and I showed them out to our reception area and offered them another hot drink.

On my return, as I closed the door, Mana was already talking to Wiremu.

Mana: I still feel something cold....

Wiremu: It's going to go, it going to go alright. You're too important. I looked at you when I first saw you tonight and it was clear to me that you have got a gift. It's something that we don't always choose, but you know, it's just about gaining more understanding and about learning to be more in control. I would like you to have a think about finding some way over time to release all the things that people have done to hurt you, and even times when you've done things to hurt others. Putting some of them down on paper can be a start. Some things are very hard to forgive. Especially what you've been through. But spiritually, if it can be forgiven and released, then you will be able to see big giant steps forward.

When Allister talked to me this afternoon and told me I was meeting you, straight away I felt that something that happened to you when you were quite young was important. When I spoke to Allister about that he said that you had already told him about that, but it would be better for us to talk with you alone.

I picked up that it was someone quite close who did this to you. I think that some of your depression may relate to this. As I said before, tapu is about the sacredness of who you are. When a young person is abused, that is a breach of tapu. When that happens to you, you really don't have any say in that. That mana has been taken away from you. So we need to restore that mana to you.

Allister: Wiremu is always really clear that you are in the driver's seat and I have the same philosophy about that. It's really important that you are in charge, and that relates especially when it comes to something like abuse, so I wouldn't expect you to talk about any of it if you didn't want to. But if there's something that you want to ask

Wiremu about or anything that you want to say to him, you're welcome to. I know you often have a clear mind about certain things, eh?

Mana: Yes

Wiremu: I try not to smile too much because I've got heaps of teeth that are not there! (laughter) (Turning to Allister) She's laughing and showing all her teeth! (laughter) (to Mana) Show off! (laughter all round) Sorry! (laughing)

Want to kōrero about it?

Mana: I don't really know what there is to say. Um....What you said about my mana being stripped from me. I used to feel that God didn't love me, like why would he do this to one of his children? But, I know it wasn't God that did that to me. It was someone close to our whanau that did it. I guess that's what hurt the most.

Wiremu: Yeah.

Mana: Your whānau is meant to be the ones who....

Wiremu: Protect.

Mana: Excuse my crying..

Wiremu: No, don't be sorry.

Allister: We've got heaps of tissues.

Mana: Sometimes I feel like it's changed me. Because I feel like I have to keep this wall up all the time. It's quite hard for me to open up to people. Coming to see Allister, I realised that it was enough. It's starting to affect who I am as a person. So, it's time for me to just open up about it.

Wiremu: Choice.

Mana: Yeah.

Wiremu: Because I think that for us it's not about who it was. It's about how you feel.

Mana: Mmm.

Wiremu: And you being able to express that. If you can begin to do that, it starts to cut away the thing that hinders you and keeps you in that depressed place. Because you're bringing it out in the open. And they say that the voice has a spirit of its own. When you talk about something and bring it out into the open it can be judged. Believe you me, God did not intend for that to happen, but he has given us free will to choose whether we do things. So whoever it was chose to do it, took your right away from you to say 'Yes' or 'no'.

And so an important part of your healing is about restoring that, so that you are in a position to go back and say well actually “I don’t want to feel this way”. “I don’t want to be dreaming like this”. And so that’s what I mean about restoring to you the tapu, and the mana. They are yours by right. So the fact that you are able to express it, get it out, that’s part of that healing. Even being able to write it down. And at some point we would do what we need to do to release it spiritually. To give it away so it’s no longer your burden to carry. Does that make sense?

Mana: Yes

Allister: Anything else you want to ask Wiremu about Mana?

Mana: I’ve got this real sharp pain. It’s like going through my head. And my shoulder.

Wiremu: Pain? You know that thing I said about when something has to leave. It starts to cause problems. It’s gonna go! Because it’s going to have to leave shortly, it will do all it can to hang in there. Right now, it’s trying to hide. So it does all sorts of things. I think this one in particular has a quite a bit to do with your abuse. That is why it’s able to keep going bang, bang, bang, bang, to such an extent. You see if Arthur hadn’t come on board he would be still thinking, “Look at that, why can’t you come to the table, not being sociable...trying to rip the family apart!”. And for him too it was a release to be able to say, “I love you, and I’m sorry that I didn’t understand”. That’s another nail in that thing!

(Wiremu reaches for Mana’s hands and holds them.)

They’re warming up. Honestly, Allister, if you had felt her hands before they were frozen, as if they had just come out of the fridge. They are starting to warm up for some reason. A lot warmer than before. Oh! I’ve got black hands compared to yours! (laughing).

Mana: My hands are normally brown, they’ve just gone pale all of a sudden.

Wiremu: It’s because they were frozen cold. Would you be ok if I karakia (pray) for you now?

After Mana agrees, Wiremu holds Mana’s hands and starts to karakia for her. Following his karakia Wiremu gently enquires about Mana’s experience of meeting with him.

Wiremu: How are you feeling about the process? Strange? I mean you don’t think I’m too strange?

Mana: No!

Wiremu: That’s good! (Wiremu laughing). I want to be able to one day see you playing rugby on the TV and I’ll say, “I know her!” (Mana laughing)

Wiremu: Are you pretty serious about your rugby?

Mana: Yeah, well, aunty used to play rep rugby for her region, so ...

Wiremu: Oh really? Awesome!

After he had completed this, Wiremu suggested that I invite Rangi and Arthur back into the room and then proceeded to ask their permission to do further karakia. Following Wiremu's karakia for the family, the session was over.

Progress after the session

I had arranged with Mana and her mother for a follow up meeting three weeks after the session with Wiremu. However Mana had rung to cancel that appointment, but left a message with Mercy that things were going well. When we did meet up, it was six weeks since the session. There was a lightness to her countenance that was immediately obvious to me. There was a warmth and ease in her exchanges with her mother and Mana spoke in a relaxed manner about feeling closer to Arthur in recent weeks. When I invited her to reflect on the session with Wiremu, she recalled it as "not easy" for her but ultimately helpful. She reported that her mood had been definitely better since that evening and she had no more thoughts of ending her life. Her old motivation and energy had returned and she was focusing better at school. Mana said her sleep was much better than it had been for a long time and significantly there had been no return of the disturbing dreams that had previously been so troubling for her.

As her psychiatrist, I was mindful that her session with Wiremu had been about four weeks after she had commenced taking antidepressant tablets and this is a common time for such treatment to help young people feel quite a lot of relief from their symptoms of depression. When I enquired about the medication, Mana casually explained that she had stopped taking the tablets after seeing Wiremu as she had decided that she needed to tackle this herself. While her renewed feeling of wellbeing had been sustained throughout the six weeks since stopping the tablets, I speculated that the medication may have had a beneficial effect for her, as well as the session with Wiremu. Therefore, I suggested that we could monitor things together to make sure that her good progress continued.

Over the following year I continued to meet with Mana from time to time. During this time she asked to meet up again with Mercy and they had a number of sessions focusing on her respective relationships with her parents and addressing her experience of being caught in the middle between the two. Later in the year, while Mana's overall sense of wellbeing continued, she reflected on times in which she would become very angry and even enraged with peers who were bullying others. With her forthright style, she would feel compelled to intervene and sometimes this would lead to confrontations at College. We discussed this in the light of her courage, preparedness to speak out for what she believed in, and well-developed sense of justice. I raised with her the possibility that her previous experiences could have a role in this. Perhaps witnessing conflict between her parents many years before or her experiences of sexual abuse could be contributing to the vehemence of her responses.

In reflecting on this, Mana considered that was possible. However on balance, she didn't think that her past abuse experiences were interfering with her relationship with Fa'alogo, or her life in other ways. She felt pleased that she had been able to discuss those experiences with her partner and immediate family. As such, she decided that she wanted to get on with her life at the current time without going back to address those matters specifically in therapy. She felt confident that should the need arise at some later point then she would be willing to find a therapist that she could trust to address that with.

By eighteen months after the session with Wiremu, Mana had resolved a number of things in her relationship with her father and decided to move back in with him. She had graduated from College, was attending a Polytech course which she was enjoying, and her relationship with Fa'alogo was continuing to thrive. As we had previously talked about discharge from our service, I phoned her a couple of months later to discuss this. However she asked if we could meet up.

At this point, Mana said that she was getting on fine with her father, and was happy with her progress in her course. However a number of things were happening at home which she would like to consult Wiremu about as she was concerned there may be a spiritual problem there. Within a couple of weeks we both met with Wiremu. At this point we turn to Wiremu for his reflections on the original session, almost two years before, and then this further involvement with Mana, her father and stepmother.

Wiremu

First session with Mana, Rangi and Arthur

One of the important things for me in that first session I had with Mana and her whanau was the reconciliation that she had with her mother, and especially with her brother Arthur. She always had a strong bond with him. Of course both Mana and Arthur have their Maori side and their Samoan side. Now I don't consider myself to be an expert, and especially not when it comes to Samoan culture. However, I expect spiritual matters have been important for both sides of their family. And because Arthur hadn't been on board with what was happening for her, it may have been enough to cause a gap, a negative space, where these negative spiritual entities can get a foothold. But when they were able to reconcile, it reinforced Mana's ability to push those things away. Their wairua was already connected beforehand, but the misunderstanding between them during that time, may have widened that gap which these negative things could squeeze through. However, coming together in that reconciliation is like a protection for Mana and for the whānau.

Any problems in the family can affect the wairua (spirit) of the whole whānau. We are all interconnected and wairua is not constrained by time and distance. So if something is affecting my whanau member hundreds of miles away, I may feel it. Straight away I will get on my phone to my whānau to find out what's happening. And that's not just me. Lots of us have that experience.

In a similar way I picked up that Mana had experienced sexual abuse before Allister told me about it. Allister may not have even mentioned her name, but somehow the intention of talking about her was enough. And so I was given a perception at that moment that related to her wairua. In this case it was a thing of the heart. A guilt and pain thing. I don't know why she would feel guilty, but I did feel that. I expect that's a common response even though it's not their fault. It's like I can feel something resonating or vibrating in my chest. Sometimes it's elsewhere. As soon as I feel that, I'm confident about what it means. It's not something I ask for. It just happens. The wairua is very reliable like that. So if I can discern that, it's obvious that the sexual abuse has affected her wairua. It's affected her heart.

Of course these kind of experiences affect the whole person. This kind of abuse is a violation, a betrayal. It's a breach of tapu (something sacred or forbidden). Her mana (spiritual authority) has been stripped away, when her personal authority, her ability to say "no" was taken away. Almost always relationships are damaged in the wake of that. So her mauri (life force) is affected by the damage to those relationships. Most young people will feel isolated and unable to trust adults or others around them. Mana talked about feeling like God didn't love her anymore. So that's also affecting her mauri. All these aspects are interconnected with wairua (spirituality). Even though Mana tried not to tell anyone for so long, she can't keep it just in her hinengaro (mind). Depression is not just a hinengaro thing. It comes out in tension in her body, so the tinana (physical body) side is affected, and she gets grumpy and snaps at her Mum, so the relational side is affected. The wairua is naturally interconnected with all these three. If even one of these quadrants is out of plum, then it affects all four. They go together.

For me, the wairua side is the basis for all the others. It's the foundation. So, any healing has to start with the wairua. And that applies to depression. With Mana, we can make sense of her depression easily when we know what she has experienced. Depression comes from hopelessness. If you've been robbed of your mana, and awful things are happening to you that you can't stop, it's obvious that you could become depressed. What's might not be obvious for some people is what's going on in the wairua side.

When I talk about tuku iho, I'm talking about things flowing down the generations. Good and bad. In Mana's case, when I detected that negative spiritual thing with her, I was immediately wondering how long it had been there. For some young people like George in chapter 3, I think that entity had only latched on to him some months before. For others like Tangi, in chapter 8, it had clearly been around for years, and may have come down the family line. For Mana, it was possible that it was a recent thing. But I think it is much more likely that it had been around the family for a long time. From what she said, there was evidence it had already been around her for some years. Often these things have been in families for generations. I would say that if they have been around, then even before we were born they will have known we were coming. They know what makes us tick. What sets us off. Even before the abuse, this thing could have been around Mana. But it may not have affected her because her mana was strong. Or the wairua of the family would have protected her. Then, as I said before, the sexual abuse that Mana experienced would have damaged that wairua and her mana and made her more vulnerable to this thing.

As I said in the session, her spiritual awareness could also make her more vulnerable to it at the time, due to her openness. And if these things know that someone is going to be a help to someone else along the line, then they will try very hard to hinder that. But ultimately her awareness can protect her. It gives her the ability to address the spiritual entity, by being aware of it, recognising it's nature, and saying, "I know who you are and I can stop you right here!" So by empowering Mana and the whanau to deal with it and understand it, we can protect the next generation.

Once I had detected the negative spiritual entity in the room with us, I had no doubt that I would be able to deal with it. It's a confidence I have in my source. I've learnt that if something has been shown to me then it has been shown for a reason and it can be healed. I'm not saying that arrogantly. I'm saying that with confidence. Because it's not me that addresses it. It's not me that does the healing. It's my source.

Once I had detected that thing, it was of no consequence to me. I have no respect for things like that. Before addressing it I wanted Arthur and Rangi to be on board so that they could understand more about what had been going on for Mana. By building their understanding and faith, by giving them the tools and knowledge to deal with it, I knew that they could gain that authority over it, and we would thereby strengthen the mana of the whole whanau. My hope was that they would be less afraid of it. I also wanted to empower Mana to know that she wasn't crazy. Then they would be all in a stronger position to deal with it.

Looking back to that session, there are a few matters that I would like to comment on. Later in the session Mana began to feel very cold. It was quite uncomfortable for her. I have no doubt that chill was from the negative spiritual thing that was with her. These things can present in different ways. For Tangi in chapter 8, she also felt cold when that negative entity that was with her was trying to make its presence felt, when it was trying to intimidate her. It was the same with Mana. But it's not always like that. Sometimes people can become suddenly cold and clammy, just as well as they could be hot, burny and uncomfortable.

When Mana showed me how cold her hands were, I held her hands and could feel how cold they were. I did that to reassure her that it was ok, to build that confidence in her. At those times I often make light of the situation. Some people might wonder why I would do that when it looks like a very serious situation. I wanted to keep her light-spirited about it while at the same time showing that thing that I'm not afraid of it and it is of no consequence.

The key moment for me was when Mana professed her aroha for Arthur, and he did likewise. There was a shift at that point. That negative thing was not based on love and it definitely didn't like that. As far as I'm concerned love overcomes. It has power over these kinds of things. This kind of aroha is the essence of healing.

Later on in her own account, Mana talks about her body aching all over the day after our session. That doesn't surprise me, although it doesn't always happen. People have different ways of reacting to what has happened. I know some who have cried for days afterwards. Some people have had pain in different places. Some people have experienced flu like symptoms. The way I think of it is that when that thing departs, it leaves a void. Its ugliness is

still clinging on; the particles of it are still around briefly. It's angry about being kicked out, so perhaps it tries to do some damage on the way out. I would think that in parting it had to endure a lot more pain than that, so what you are picking up is the residue of that. We all work through it in different ways.

When you look at Mana now she is thriving. There is no doubt in my mind that that thing may still be around her, but that's of no consequence, because she's stronger, it can't do anything. Mana knows what she wants and knows where she is going. She knows what she can do in her life.

Meeting with Mana 22 months later

Today, Mana was talking about hearing sounds at home at night, like the pitter patter of footsteps above the ceiling, as well as knocking sounds on the wall or a sound like birds flying into the window, and when she investigated the sounds there was no credible explanation.

She said that she could distinctly feel a negative entity as if someone was there around her house. She could feel where in the room this presence was and at times it had a dark colour that she could perceive. It felt to me like there were some unresolved intergenerational issues, probably from her father's side, that needed addressing. Her experiences suggested to me that there definitely was something spiritual that needed to be attended to, and I speculated that it could be something in the house that was unresolved from previous occupants, or something on the land that was still present relating to some past conflict, possibly many years before. It was also possible that it could be something that meeting her father could help me understand better.

Mana mentioned that her father had some unusual experiences going back some years, for example waking in the night, and trying to alert his partner but finding that he was unable to move or call out. This experience sounded to me quite a lot like it could be a spiritual experience and so I offered to meet with Mana, and her father Paul at their home in order to investigate these matters further.

Meeting at home

When we arrived at Mana's residence, I saw that the house was quite a modern building and I didn't think it was likely to have much in the way of rats or mice living there. Nor did I pick up any feeling of blood having been spilt on the land through conflict.

When we sat down and had a cup of tea upstairs with the whanau I requested Allister to start us with a karakia and then we all introduced ourselves. During the kōrero Paul spoke about his strange experiences at night when he would wake and be unable to call out or move. For many years he had been sure that this was some kind of spiritual experience. He said that he had spiritual experiences during his life and his parents had been very spiritual and had sometimes been asked to do spiritual healing work. One day they had been requested to see a Cook Island girl who was eight years old who was very unwell in hospital and her family believed she was possessed. Paul had accompanied his parents to this meeting. She later died

and Paul had a strong feeling after that time that she was there spiritually in their home. Paul also said that in the previous house that they lived in three years ago, there was also quite a bit of spiritual stuff going on, which sometimes would be disturbing. Therefore he was grateful for any assistance with either managing or resolving this. Mana's stepmother shared his wish for some sort of spiritual resolution.

My impression was that the house itself wasn't the source of a significant spiritual problem. So I spoke to Paul and explained that as he was the head of the house, I would be encouraging him to continue with his strategy of insisting that any bad spiritual stuff should vacate the house. I then checked if everyone was ok with me doing a karakia to bless the house and occupants and as everyone agreed it was ok, I went ahead with this.

At the end I asked if the family could let Allister know about progress.

Mana looks back

It's now two years since I first met Wiremu but I can still remember that evening really clearly. I remember back then that the spiritual things I was experiencing put a lot of weight on me. I was confused at times about what was reality and what was my imagination. That got me overanalysing things. Sometimes I thought I was going a bit insane, hearing things and seeing things. I definitely felt like there was something wrong with me because I believed I was the only one who could see and hear those things.

Before that meeting, I was excited to meet Wiremu. I had this idea that perhaps he would be my quick fix for whatever was going on. I was hoping that he would be able to do something to help me figure out the spiritual experiences I was having. I trusted what Allister told me about him.

But when we got there and joined Wiremu in the room, to my surprise, I began to feel really uncomfortable. Even though I could feel this warm aura from him, strangely it was as if there was something inside me that seemed to get me really agitated. I knew it was a safe environment. I knew I should feel comfortable around him, but hearing him talk I just started feeling angry for no reason. I couldn't figure out why. Something inside of me didn't want to let go. Thinking back now the best way I can make sense of it is that it was almost as if there was something there that felt threatened by Wiremu.

The more he would speak to me the tighter my body would get. Later I noticed that my hands were freezing. It felt like my whole body was shutting down, much like how hypothermia might feel. I couldn't really focus on what he was telling me and felt I wanted to leave. It wasn't anything he was doing or saying. There was something in me that just didn't want to be there.

By the time he did his karakia, as well as feeling very cold, I felt like something was gripping on to me tighter and tighter. It felt as if there were hands around my neck choking me. It was covering my ears, trying to stop me from listening. I knew that the talk with Wiremu was going to help me, but I had to keep repeating this to myself. Listening to his voice made me

feel sick inside. I felt as if I had an octopus with all its tentacles really tightly wrapped around me.

When Wiremu did the karakia, I struggled to hear him and focus on what was going on. I felt I had earmuffs on blocking his voice with this eerie white noise sound. Sometime during his karakia, I suddenly began to feel this awful pulling feeling as if someone had just yanked off this octopus that had been wrapped around my head.

Once he had finished, I was relieved. But by the next day I felt the pain one might expect if some of my bones were broken. It was as if a cast had just been removed and your first step forward is very painful and uncomfortable. It was almost as if I had been assaulted but when I thought about it, I had been fine after my rugby game. I've had plenty of experiences of being hurt in a game, but this wasn't like getting tackled or the pain sustained after falling over; this was aching all over my body.

My body was so sore the following day, my mother had to stay home with me. I went to sleep about 10 o'clock that night and woke the next day after 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I hadn't slept soundly for months. I tried to get up the next day and I couldn't move. The next few days I just slept and slept. Suddenly I realised, "Yes I can sleep!"

During that session Wiremu restored my mana in a way which gave me more confidence. He enabled me to feel like I could trust in myself. I realised that the only person who was going to get rid of these things or that had strength over myself, was me! Wiremu made me aware that if I was going to get better, I was the only person who could make that happen.

When he talked about mana, it made sense to me from my upbringing. I had learned about mana from my Mum and Dad and from my schooling. At the time, I didn't have much belief in myself even though I was a strong minded person. Now I can see that believing in yourself is one of the strongest things that you can do as a human being. He also helped me begin to hope that things were starting to get better already.

After meeting Wiremu I thought that if a few words of his can make a whole lot of things better and different in my life, then think about all the things I can do for myself! During that whole session, Wiremu didn't say much at all. He did explain a few things and helped my understanding. However, those few things he did say helped me begin to believe that I can do this myself.

One aspect of that was that I decided to stop my antidepressant tablets. Even though Allister suggested I keep taking them, I felt I didn't need them any longer. After that session with Wiremu I decided that if anyone is going to make me better, I need to do it myself. Not these drugs. It made me think of those endorphins that Allister talked about. When you go for a run and it gets those endorphins moving through your brain. After seeing Wiremu and thinking about what he said about reclaiming my mana, I realised that I wanted to pull myself out of that depression myself. I have nothing against medication and I think it can be very important for some people, but for me at that time, I just decided I needed to do it my way. That was part of me taking charge of my life.

The session with Wiremu really helped my depression. Even though talking with Allister and Mercy had helped me reflect on things, when I first met Wiremu, it was like the curtains in my room were still closed, even though it was a sunny day. After meeting Wiremu I felt like those curtains were wide open and I could see sun again. Something definitely had shifted. I felt like a massive rock which had been blocking the flow of the water had shifted, and now all the water could just flow again.

I could trust that Wiremu had experience in these spiritual sorts of things. That made me feel in myself that I was not crazy. That was so important to me. I had been starting to think to myself, “Oh my God I’m mental”, “I’m going crazy”, “these things aren’t actually real”, “they’re not actually happening to me”. I’m the kind of person that, if someone believes in me and if I believe in myself, that’s all I will ever need. A lot of it was reassurance that, “Yep this is happening to you”. It was a relief to me that he was able to detect something there. I thought, “Yes! Someone believes me and they can tell it’s there too! I’m not going crazy!”

A lot of Wiremu’s comments were not directed towards me. They were directed somewhere else, at something else. When he was talking to me, sometimes I could tell that he wasn’t looking at me. He seemed to be looking past me, at something just to the side of me, or behind me.

I could definitely feel something about his presence that told me he was tuned in to spiritual things and what was going on for me. He seemed intrigued. He was interested. From the first moment I walked in I could just tell. I’m really attuned to feeling the aura of a person. People who are tuned in spiritually give off a different vibe to other people. I can tell someone who believes me from someone that doesn’t. I can tell when I meet people if they are a good person or not. Sometimes I can recognise someone who has bad intentions just from how they feel to me and I’m pretty vocal about those things. So in meeting Wiremu for the first time, I could tell that he was a good person and that he knew about spiritual things, and he was detecting something around me that I also felt was there.

Wiremu’s karakia (prayer) made a difference. I felt that a massive burden had been lifted off me. I felt different immediately; I felt light and relieved. When I vent about things I feel better but for me this was different. It was as if a whole lot of things had been lifted off my chest. I felt like jelly. I felt really relaxed and sort of wobbly but as I said before, by the next day I was aching all over.

By the end of the session I felt I knew Wiremu, as if I was in the presence of a comfortable family member. His presence was so warm which put me at ease. I felt really safe by the end compared to how I felt at the beginning. Afterwards I felt so relieved that I had decided to meet Wiremu.

Rangi

I enjoyed meeting Wiremu. He had a certain way about him that made me feel at ease. He would say things that would lighten the atmosphere when it was starting to get a bit intense. However there were some things he brought out that really shocked me. I knew Mana had

been depressed by I had no idea that those spiritual things were happening for her. Even though I know quite a few people who are in tune spiritually, and I would often go to my uncle about those matters, I was really surprised when Wiremu explained what was happening. I could tell he is really in tune with wairua, and it was good to meet someone who could help Mana get through that.

One thing I was really happy about was seeing my two children talking again. Once we left the session with Wiremu, we sat in our car in our driveway at home for over an hour and we all talked. It felt like a break through. There were tears and we all shared things that we hadn't been able to talk to each other about for a very long time.

Mana: Feelings about places

Recently I asked Wiremu whether he would be able to come to our house and bless it. When he agreed I asked my Dad and he and my stepmother were both in favour of that. Some people might be surprised that certain places can be affected by spiritual things and it might be important to take care of that. However, I can often feel things about places I visit which may or may not be comfortable. Even standing outside places. For example, when I first came to Health Pasifika, it is quite near to a hospital and to me some of that didn't feel good. When I was walking near certain parts of the hospital the air felt thick, it was eerie, as if some bad things had happened there. I've experienced going to a couple of my friends' houses, and it's the same feeling. The thickness of the air. To me it feels yuck. It feels gross. There will be nothing wrong with their house when you look at it, but to me it feels sticky; it feels like that feeling of walking through cobwebs and you just want to wipe them off you. Sometimes I feel something has latched on, and when I go outside I just want to shrug it off. Yuck! So sometimes I don't want to go into certain buildings because of those feelings.

House Blessing: Paul comments- one year later

Since Wiremu visited our home, and after the house blessing he carried out, our home seems a lot more at peace. It seems quiet. Prior to that visit, I would get those strange sensations of waking up and feeling utterly helpless and unable to alert my wife and they would happen at least twice a month. They have been with me as long as I can remember, at least going back to my childhood. During my life I have been aware of spiritual things on many occasions. My parents are also pretty in tune with that side of things and I guess that was passed down to me.

Immediately after Wiremu's visit and over the year since then, those experiences ceased altogether. In fact, up until 2 weeks ago, it is the first time in my life I can remember being free of that experience. Then two weeks ago I was woken in the middle of the night again. However, this time the experience was totally different to the past experiences where I would feel helpless. This time I greeted whatever this presence was with open arms. I had no fear. I knew that whatever this presence was, I was the person in charge. I was in control. I knew that whatever it was, it could not harm me or my family. And as quickly as it came, it dissipated.

I believe that Wiremu's visit made the difference. It felt to me that a person with authority had come into the house. And whatever was in the house was afraid that there was something there that was above it. There was now no place for that presence, whatever it was. It was no longer welcome.

House Blessing: Mana comments

It's now five months since Wiremu visited our house and a number of things changed after that. After he came, the things I used to see around the house settled down a lot. They seemed to disappear for a while but they didn't go away completely. Recently I have noticed that they can still come around. However when they come, I feel as if I'm in Harry Potter, with his cloak of invisibility. I believe they can't see me or they can't attach themselves to me like they did before. To me, they are just like blobs, wandering mindlessly through our house and then heading on their way.

Wiremu's visit was helpful in different ways. I'm sure his karakia had an immediate positive effect. But more importantly, Wiremu showed me that I can be the one to stop these things going in. Now I realise that there are still spiritual things walking through my house, coming and going but it is up to me whether I pay attention or not. To me, if you don't believe in them, then they are not there. It's like there is a door inside yourself and it's up to you whether that door is open, or that door is closed. If you feel like there is something around you, then close the door. That way they can't get in. But if you are feeling they are there, and you leave yourself open, that's when they can invite themselves in. They say, "Well, she's letting me stay so I will stay!" I'm not saying Wiremu's visit stopped anything spiritual from coming to our house. They still do come but I now feel more empowered to say "Get out", if they are not welcome.

After Wiremu visited the house, strangely, I found my cat! My cat had died and my Dad had left the ashes somewhere, and we couldn't find them. Shortly after Wiremu's visit, I found them. The pitter patter sound, which I believe was my cat, has gone ever since I found his ashes in the garage.

One last word about Wiremu- you shouldn't meet with Wiremu just because it might be 'interesting' as there definitely will be some consequences. You need to go in there with the idea that this is going to change a lot of things for you. That this will affect your life in a really positive way. I couldn't have prepared myself for the things that came afterwards. Bringing Wiremu into my house definitely would have angered spiritual things lingering around. It would have made them really agitated because they see him as a threat and after Wiremu has gone he's not going to be there to protect you all the time, so you need to be fully prepared that there are consequences for bringing him into your life. These spiritual things know that I and my Dad can personally handle this, but I'm worrying my little sister may be vulnerable to these unseen negative things because my family are all attuned to these sort of things.

For the people that are experiencing spiritual things, my advice would be caution. From what I've learned since meeting Wiremu, I would say that it is better not to try to figure out who

they are. If you feel that something is lingering around you, by trying to figure out who it is or what it is, you are acknowledging that thing. It's much better not to. Don't give it that power. Reinforce that you are the one in control. That you are the living thing. These things are not living. You can't reach out and touch them. The reality is that you have power over them and the only way they can take some control is if you let them.

With a lot of the things I experience, some people might think I have schizophrenia. The voices I hear, the things I see and feel. So we need to think these through and try to understand if it might be a mental health problem or not. It's helpful to see someone who could help you distinguish between them. Having kept it to myself for so many years, my advice to another young person who is experiencing similar things would be, "Don't go through these things alone. It's much harder on your own. Reach out to others around you who may be able to help"