ABSTRACT
This paper describes the information seeking behaviour of Māori secondary school students between 16-18 years of age when they searching for information about their whakapapa (genealogy). Rather than considering this form of information behaviour in the context of leisure time activity, the study positions itself as an important cultural expression of personal and collective identity. Like other studies involving youth, the research demonstrates the importance of inter-personal information seeking, particularly in Māori cultural settings.

Keywords
Māori; Indigenous Information Seeking; Genealogy

INTRODUCTION
The searching for genealogical information has been categorised as a hobbies based information seeking pastime by several authors (Yakel, 2004; Bishop, 2005; Fulton, 2005; 2009a; 2009b Hartel, 2005; Case, 2012, Darby and Clough, 2013). As an activity it has a vast range of national and international networks and has led to the development of a commercial industry focused on assisting genealogists to locate information and records about their ancestors and to share this with others researching the same family connections. For Māori and other indigenous peoples, genealogical information is more than a hobby based activity, as it is a key factor in how an indigenous person legitimizes their identity and establishes their eligibility as a member of their tribe. This information also provides an ancestral pathway back to the interaction between humans and their creators, as represented in the epistemological frameworks that define the way in which indigenous peoples view the world. This study investigates the role that genealogy has in a Māori view of the world and the genealogical information seeking behaviours of Māori secondary school students between sixteen to eighteen years of age.

MĀORI
Māori are the indigenous peoples of New Zealand, having migrated from Eastern Polynesia approximately 900 years ago. Māori translates as ‘normal’ and was the name adopted by Māori after having first making contact with Western explorers in the eighteenth century. In 2013, the Māori population numbered 598,605 or 14.9% of New Zealand’s overall population (Statistics NZ, 2013). It is estimated that the number of Māori will increase significantly over the next decade, with projections forecasting that Māori will make up 17% of the population by 2021 (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). This increase is mainly expected due to higher fertility rates, but another contributor is the increased number of New Zealanders tracing their Māori ancestry to demonstrate their eligibility to be fully registered members of their tribe and therefore eligible to be beneficiaries of the settlement agreements between their tribe and the New Zealand Government. These agreements are to redress breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi by successive governments. This Treaty was signed in 1840 between the British Crown and Māori chiefs.

WHAKAPAPA
The Māori word for genealogy is whakapapa. The meaning of whakapapa is ‘the layering of one thing upon another’ and in a Māori worldview it provides the structure for explaining how relationships between, individuals, whānau (extended families), hapū (sub-tribal group) and iwi (tribe) are structured. This includes an explanation for the relationship between human kind, the gods and environment. Barlow (1991) explains that “everything has a whakapapa: birds, fish, animals, trees; soil, rocks and mountains”. Te Maire Tau (2001) defines whakapapa in a similar manner by describing whakapapa as the ‘paradigm of the Māori world view. Time, space, emotions, plants and animals are all understood by way of whakapapa’ and through this link he explains that whakapapa provides a ‘metaphysical framework to place oneself within the
world” as “individuals within iwi are able to link themselves to flora, fauna, minerals and celestial elements by whakapapa”.

As a form of organization whakapapa has a hierarchical structure with some kinship lines more superior to others within iwi, due to their more direct line of descent from the eponymous ancestor and is tuakana (senior) to others less well connected who are teina (junior).

Whakapapa was also a useful political tool and intermarriage between senior lineages was a common tactic used to cement relationships between hapū or iwi. These relationships were developed for a number of reasons such as reciprocal trading of rare resources or delicacies, alliances for war, peace gestures or arrangements for seasonal movements of iwi.

An individual’s whakapapa allows them to claim their place in the world and legitimizes their membership of a hapū and iwi. An individual does not have only one descent line, as they are derived from a maternal and paternal line, which may see an individual affiliate to different hapū and iwi through both lines. However in modern times, intermarriage between Māori and other ethnic groups may see an individual Māori only whakapapa through one parent only and the diversity of their whakapapa to different lines will be dependent on the lineage of that particular parent. Within this context, the genealogical descent from any non-Māori ancestors will still be considered to be included in an individual’s whakapapa chart, as this is part of their identity.

The form of the information being sought or exchanged is highly personal in nature, as whakapapa defines how an individual is connected and legitimizes their identity and position within their hapū and iwi. This in itself is an acknowledgement of their desire and willingness to be identified as being of Māori descent. Unlike others who seek information of a genealogical nature who are collecting and recording information for family history purposes, Māori students are more likely to use information in practical and cultural settings, particularly in their pepeha. The main exception to this is when it is used to prove their eligibility for scholarships from educational trusts or hapū/iwi funding sources.

LITERATURE

There is very little published literature on seeking information about whakapapa. Most sources (Puttock, (1981), Royal, (1992); Bromell, (2001); Joyce, (2008)) are research guides aimed at those wishing to search for their family history rather than an analysis of the research behavior of these people. The most notable exception to this is Tamaira (2007) who investigated the information seeking needs of whakapapa researchers. She found that like other genealogists, they are high users of public libraries and the resources available there. Her research revealed that the most popular information sources were other people encountered at the library, most notably librarians, volunteers from genealogy societies, and other whakapapa and genealogy researchers. More general research on the information seeking behaviors of Māori is also quite scarce, with most studies (Szekely, 1997; Auckland City Libraries, 1995, 2001; Peters, 2006), focusing specifically on Māori use of library services. Studies by Lilley (2008, 2012, 2013, 2014) have considered the information behaviour of Māori youth, demonstrating similar results to other youth information seeking research studies (Agosto and Hughes-Hassall, (2005, 2006), Meyers, Fisher & Marcoux, (2009), Todd and Edwards (2004), Julien, (1999) Shenton and Dixon (2003)), in that Māori youth engage primarily in inter-personal information seeking, typically with close friends or whānau (extended family members).

METHODOLOGY

The research question that this study focuses on is, what are the sources that Māori students use when seeking information about their whakapapa? Two other questions were also used as focal points for guiding the research.

These were:

What barriers are encountered in seeking this information?

What influence does the cultural context have on information seeking success?

The research for this project was conducted over an eighteen month period and involved participation by Māori students aged sixteen to eighteen. These students were drawn from four different publically funded secondary schools. These schools were selected on the basis of their student profiles, with all four having substantial numbers of Māori students. Two of these schools were single sex (one for males and the other for females) and pre-dominantly Māori focused (more than 95% of the students identified as Māori), and two were co-educational schools where 30% of the student population were Māori. The two Māori focused schools were located in rural settings, as was one of the co-educational schools. The other school is situated in an urban center.

Data gathering

Data was gathered using a mixed method approach. With the assistance of each school, eligible students were identified and invited to complete a questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire was to obtain some ‘big picture’ data about what information sources Māori students use when seeking information and how useful they find these resources. All students that participated in the questionnaire phase of the research were also invited to volunteer to be a focus group participant.
Participants

Each school involved in the study was asked to retrieve data from their student management systems, which allowed them to identify all students who ethnically identified as Māori and were sixteen years of age and over. In total there were 190 eligible participants across the four schools. Of these 139 completed the questionnaires, which were distributed at hui (meetings) with those who were identified as eligible. It should be noted that not all 190 potential participants were present at the hui, due to absence from school or other engagements at the times these meetings took place. In addition to the questionnaire, each student at the hui was provided with a focus group expression of interest form, which was collected separately from the questionnaire to protect the anonymity of the questionnaire respondents.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 24 different questions and was designed to examine the sources used by the students to locate information. The questionnaire was comprised of the following parts:

Part one—resources used for career information seeking
Part two—resources used for completing homework tasks
Part three—resources used for finding whakapapa information
Part four—resources used for finding information about tikanga Māori
Part five—focused on the information barriers that students had encountered when seeking information
Part six—collected personal information about each student and their parents

The information collected relating to homework tasks and finding information about careers and tikanga Māori (customs) are not reported on in this paper, but do make a significant contribution to the author’s doctoral dissertation.

Focus groups

There were 61 expressions of interest to take part in the focus groups but only 45 students actually participated across the four schools. The reasons for the non-participation of the other sixteen included absence from school and other commitments (detention, sports practice and attending an assessment), and three of the students had left school in the time between the questionnaire being administered and the meeting of the focus groups. In total, six focus group sessions were held, with the numbers of participants in each group varying as illustrated in Table 1. The focus groups were facilitated by the author and were audio-recorded. Also present was a research assistant who took notes, particularly when the facilitator used the whiteboard to record answers. Each school provided a room where the focus groups were held. At two schools (the co-educational schools) this was a classroom and at the other two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Participant Numbers</th>
<th>School Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Girls’ school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Girls’ school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5 (all girls)</td>
<td>Co-educational school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Boys’ school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9 (5 boys, 4 girls)</td>
<td>Co-educational school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>8 (3 boys, 5 girls)</td>
<td>Co-educational school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1- Focus Group Participants

The focus group questions were centered on identifying what information networks and resources participants accessed; the information barriers they encountered, and determining whether there were any perceived differences between seeking information in a Māori-centered environment or a Western cultural context.

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

The questionnaires asked the participants three specific questions relating to whakapapa, what information sources they accessed when searching for information about their whakapapa and to rate how useful these resources were on a likert scale of 1 (not useful) to 5 (very useful); what iwi did they affiliate with; and how many generations of their whakapapa were they able to identify.

An analysis of results revealed that the students identified their most useful sources were mothers, other whānau, fathers, elders and internet sites (see table two). These results are not surprising as parents would be expected to know who their own parents, grandparents and (possibly great-grandparents) were. The same information is likely to also be held by other whānau members, who in this case might include informants such as siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. It is also likely that elders associated with their whānau and/or hapū would also possess a strong knowledge of the kinship structure of the whānau.

Of the 139 participants, 13 did not state an iwi affiliation; however it is unclear from the results whether this is because they don’t know these connections or whether they just skipped this question. However the most recent New Zealand census results (Statistics NZ, 2013) reveal that 110,928 or one in six Māori did not identify with an iwi or did not state an iwi affiliation. This is similar to earlier censuses. One of the reasons for this lack of knowledge is the mass urbanization of Māori that took place in the 1950s and 1960s that caused some to lose their connections to their iwi based in rural parts of New Zealand.

When asked to identify their knowledge of their own whakapapa, there were only fifteen respondents out of the
139 who were unable to identify a grandparent on either their maternal (n=124) or paternal lineage (n=116). The respondents’ knowledge of their ancestry at the great-grandparent level dropped significantly on both sides (maternal, n=69 and paternal, n=60) and dropped further when identifying great-great grandparents (maternal=33 and paternal=26). Remarkably, there were questionnaire participants who claimed to be able to state at least one of the lineages in their whakapapa as far back as five generations beyond their own, (maternal=16 and paternal=13).

**FOCUS GROUP RESULTS**

A broad range of information seeking behaviors was discussed in the focus group sessions, including how these varied depending on the context and nature of information (social, academic or cultural) being sought or exchanged. The discussions also focused on the types of barriers the participants experienced in the process of seeking information and whether the difficulties identified were more obvious in some contexts than others.

Not surprisingly, the conversations in the sessions that related to whakapapa were largely related to cultural information seeking issues and discussed in the context of whānau, hui (formal meetings), tangihanga (customary funeral practice) and marae (traditional meeting places). The participants’ responses reinforced the results from the questionnaire that identified inter-personal information sources as those that were the most helpful and the most frequently accessed. The responses acknowledged the critical role that parents and other whānau members have as their principal information sources of Māori knowledge and more specifically about whakapapa. Outside these familial connections, the other important sources of this type of information are tribal elders.

When asked about the role that print and internet sources have, there was some limited acknowledgement that these could at times be useful, particularly books that had been published on tribal histories which typically have copies of whakapapa of important lineages in them. A small number of respondents also noted that they had accessed similar information on the internet and that members of their whānau had used genealogy sources on the internet to find information particularly about non-Māori ancestors in their whānau.

In response to questions about where and when they were seeking this information, the respondents provided several examples. One of the more common responses related to when they had needed this information for a pepeha (traditional saying), that needed to be prepared for school. Pepeha provide others with an indication of an individual’s tribal origins and who they trace their ancestral links through. The other place that this type of information is exchanged is in cultural settings of a formal and informal nature, normally a marae or a community facility where a hui was being held. The nature of this information seeking varied from the deliberate to serendipitous, with the latter being due to them being present when this information was being shared by those gathered in one of the areas of the marae precinct. When probed for further information about where these areas were, the participants across the focus groups identified several different sites within a marae precinct where they were undertaking cultural and/or social activities and where information was shared, exchanged or incorporated into ceremonial protocols associated with pōwhiri (formal welcomes) or tangihanga. These places included, the waharoa (gate), marae-ātea (forecourt), whare-kai (dining facilities), kihini (kitchen), wharenumi (meeting house), mahau (veranda/porch), kauta (cook shed), wahi-paipa (smokers place), and rahoroi (bathrooms). In all these places those who were present were completing or participating in an activity that contributes to the efficient running of the marae. When probed further about whether there was any differences in how information was shared in these places, a distinction was made between the type of information that was obtained from the ceremonial activities, social interactions and what was gained in places where functional tasks, such as food preparation and cleaning were being undertaken. Probed for specific occurrences of how whakapapa was discussed in these places resulted in a number of examples being provided. For instance, a focus group member mentioned that when they were gathering at the waharoa, waiting to be welcomed, “small talk will be going on amongst those gathered as they work out who’s who and this is when you find out how you’re related to different people”. Similarly, another participant mentioned the wealth of information they were able to attain through following the interaction of kai kōrero (male orators) and kai karanga (female callers) in the formal proceedings of the pōwhiri, she cited particularly how these involved the exchange of information and acknowledgements of relationships between the tangata whenua (hosts) and manuhiri (visitors). The orators would often use their speech to acknowledge prominent ancestors of both groups and would do this by reciting their whakapapa and identifying how it relates to the other party. Other information about these relationships could be picked up from others sitting close to them, who are feeding information to the speakers, so they are sure to include this in their acknowledgements. In terms of the type of information being shared or exchanged in social interactions, examples were provided of the discussions and whakawhanaungatanga (networking) that takes place in the whare-kai, where the visitors are hosted for a snack or meal after the formal welcome. The informal nature of this activity led to the exchange of information that is related to discovering links between individuals, their whānau and others. Through these discussions it is not
uncommon for whakapapa to be shared in an attempt to identify these connections. Examples of the information that is shared in the functional areas of the marae indicate that these are more conversational or instructional in style. During a hui or a tangihanga, there is considerable pressure on the kitchen to provide sustenance to all those attending or participating in the formal proceedings. Normally under the watchful and experienced eye of kuia (female elder), those in the kitchen receive instructions relating to the preparation and quantity of meals required. Those who work in the kitchen are often joined by willing volunteers from the visitors and it is in these situations where information, including details about whakapapa connections is typically exchanged.

Another purpose of the focus group sessions was to identify any barriers that were encountered when seeking whakapapa related information. The responses indicated the existence of three major barriers identified, these were language, isolation and inter-personal skills. In terms of language barriers, several respondents indicated that it was not always easy to follow or understand what was being said when they were in cultural situations where only te reo Māori (Māori language) was being spoken. This was less of a barrier for the students who were fluent Māori speakers. The isolation factor was referred to more so by those in the focus groups held at the co-educational schools, but was also mentioned at one session held at the single sex girls’ school. The reasons for this sense of isolation included, students living away from their tribe’s traditional area; not having easy access to elders and other members of their whānau who had this information and living with a sole parent that is not Māori who was unable to provide them with the information they needed. In terms of barriers associated with social interaction skills, these primarily related to respondents stating their reluctance or fear of approaching others, particularly elders for information. When asked to elaborate, the students stated, they didn’t want to show others their lack of knowledge, or, they weren’t sure who to ask, or what to ask them. A few of the students also admitted that were whakamā (shy) of asking kaumātua (male elder), as they were really important and they didn’t want to disturb them.

DISCUSSION
Like many other studies involving youth (Hsia,1987; Fisher, Marcoux, Miller, Sanchez, & Cunningham, 2004; Agosto & Hughes-Hassell, 2005), this research confirms that the preferred method of information seeking is through interpersonal interaction with individuals. The focus group discussions revealed that the reason for a high dependency on interpersonal information sources was the perception by the students that they were more likely to get richer information from other individuals from their whānau, hapū, iwi or marae than they would be able to get from printed or electronic sources.

The data collected through the questionnaire and focus groups demonstrated that there were three critical influences on the students and whether they actively participated in the information exchanges involving whakapapa. These three factors were whānau, marae and self-identification as Māori. Not all of the participants in the questionnaire and focus group phases were as well grounded in all three of these areas, and indeed there were participants who were very weak in their knowledge and participation in all three of the factors.

Each factor in its own right could be considered to be extremely complex, and even those participants who were involved in all three areas would have varying degrees of competency or engagement. Although they were all enrolled as senior students at their schools, it would appear from the results that those students from the pre-dominantly Māori schools were more likely to have a higher degree of cultural identity than those at the co-educational schools. This may indicate that there was stronger motivation for these students to seek this information due to the expectations of not only the school but also their fellow students, particularly those who were members of the same hapū or iwi who would expect them to uphold or enhance the mana (status) of their hapū / iwi.

Those students who had a strong link to a marae were able to witness and learn from not only the cultural experiences they were exposed to, but also the everyday life events in the different components that constitute a marae complex. The marae is a diverse place that brings together Māori and other peoples together and as such provides limitless opportunities for these people to converse and exchange information. Although there are set protocols in place, the encounters can be relatively informal in some areas of the marae. As youths the role they play in the formal aspects of the rituals that occur on the marae tends to be relatively limited, with their main duty being to support those who are charged with enhancing and maintaining the mana of the marae (or their whānau if they are visiting). As such, they are passive actors and the conversations, speeches and actions they bear witness to can be seen as learning experiences and an opportunity to develop their own knowledge bases. The type of knowledge they are exposed to will depend on where they are and who is there. Some of this information is practical in nature, especially in the kitchen and out at the hangi pit. Other information shared or exchanged can be seen as ego or mana enhancing. This may include information relating to whakapapa or historical feats or events, and those who are present or are active participants are consequently exposed to new information about the marae and its facilities, or their relationship with others. These educational sessions will not necessarily be planned but will occur where there is an active group of participants and willing conversationalists. Not everyone will participate, but there is an active information exchange network occurring nonetheless, as
some of the more active ‘information carriers’ move from group to group, passing information from one to the other.

Due to the size of some marae and the many different gathering points within, it is more appropriate to identify them not as a single information ground as defined by Fisher (2005), but as one place that provides the opportunity for several information grounds to occur simultaneously, thus creating a dynamic, evolving information world.

A key aspect of any information exchange in a marae or other Māori cultural setting is whakawhanaungātanga (making connections). The notion that links between whānau, hapū and iwi can and should be established is a vital dimension of the social networking framework that is a cornerstone of Māori society and culture. It is therefore normally a common interest between all those who are present and is inextricably linked to identity. Through the interactions that take place in these settings, revelations about family links and sharing whakapapa knowledge is a regular outcome of the discussions that occur at such occasions. The concept of whakawhanaungātanga is in keeping with the philosophical groundings of Māori epistemological thought, where all living organisms, including humans share common ancestral origins from the union of Ranginui (sky father) and Papatūānuku (earth mother) thus making the prospects of finding a common link between individuals quite possible.

**Importance of this study and future research opportunities**

Albeit, a small scale project, the qualitative phase of the study has provided an insight to the importance that whakapapa has in the lives of Māori teens. Although the results cannot or should not be generalized, the findings are transferable to similar groupings of Māori youth. The study does reveal that those teens that are more steeped in Māori cultural knowledge and greater fluency in te reo Māori have more options available to them when seeking information in a Māori focused context and this confidence also assists them when seeking information in other contexts, as has been shown in other studies by the author, (Lilley, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2014). Developing this sense of confidence in others, who lack these cultural and language skills should conceivably assist them in feeling more assured when seeking information in Māori contexts.

This study emanated from the author’s doctoral research (Lilley, 2011) and for now completes his work on investigating the information behaviors of Māori teens. The next phase of research will focus on identifying whether these behaviors are the same or different amongst Māori in older age-groups.

**CONCLUSION**

This paper has focused on how Māori secondary school students aged 16–18 years seek information about their whakapapa. In doing so it has addressed a gap in the information seeking literature. The principal contribution of this research is to show that Māori youth place a heavy emphasis on seeking information about their whakapapa connections and identity from other people, particularly from tribal elders, parents, grandparents, and other knowledgeable members of their whānau. Although whakapapa information can be obtained at any time from their whānau members, this research also identified Māori specific settings and gatherings as ideal places to locate individuals who have knowledge that they are willing to share with those who are seeking it. This research has also demonstrated that in the process of seeking this information, students encountered barriers that impeded their efforts. These barriers were the result of students being unable to converse in te reo Māori, thus not comprehending much of the oral information that they are exposed to in Māori cultural settings; being isolated from other whānau members and/or tribal regions and a lack of self-confidence to ask for information from other people, particularly those that are not well known to them.

Unlike other genealogically focused information seeking studies, which have been categorized as leisure information seeking, the desire to identify whakapapa is more linked with legitimizing one’s Māori identity and as such this includes strong cultural and spiritual elements. By knowing their whakapapa, an individual will have a better understanding of where they fit in a Māori world. Failure to understand or know whakapapa can seriously disadvantage an individual as it effectively disenfranchises them from the benefits of belonging to a hapū and iwi, as well as connections to land and other assets. In a cultural sense, a lack of knowledge about your whakapapa can lead to a loss of mana, and severely limit wider participation in Māori social and cultural activities. As the proportion of New Zealanders with Māori ancestry is projected to grow over the next 40 years, it is critical for the future social and cultural cohesion of Māori society that these barriers are overcome and that the inter-generational flow of this knowledge can continue to take place.

**REFERENCES**


