Methodology

The study utilized collaborative Māori centered research protocols (Bishop & Glynn, 1999) to create a research whānau (family group) and ensure the research was conducted in culturally appropriate and responsive ways. The research whānau consisted of:

- Six rangatahi (Eric Matthews, Ngawaiata Hau, Tuhoi Henry, RJ Edwards, Kahrangi Mackey and Dan Te Rupe) associated with the Kelston Deaf Education Centre;
- Māori Deaf community members (Patrick Thompson, Michael Wi, Stephanie Awheto, and Marjorie Rako);
- Māori Resource Teachers of the Deaf (Helen Jacob, Clint Green);
- Associate Professor Susan Faircloth (North Carolina State University); and
- Dr Anne Hynds, Senior Lecturer (Victoria University of Wellington (VUW)).

Dr Joanna Kidman and Dr Kirsten Smiler (VUW) also reviewed aspects of this study to ensure appropriate research and cultural processes were developed and adhered to. Whakawhanaungatanga (developing respectful relationships) enabled us to complete this study and organize this exhibit. We developed our research relationships through kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) interactions, pōwhiri (formal welcome), noho marae (learning experiences) and training hui (meetings).

This study was reviewed and approved by the ethics committees of Victoria University of Wellington and of North Carolina State University.

The process of gathering information

Our rangatahi were trained in the use of digital cameras by Nga Puhi photographer, Adrian Heke. Photovoice methods were the main source of data collection, a process in which rangatahi worked with the wider research whānau to take photos in response to a series of research questions. Our rangatahi selected their photos to form this exhibit and developed accompanying narratives to explain why their images were important to them.

As part of this photovoice process our young people sought written consent of people they took photos of. It was also essential for rangatahi to seek the appropriate permission of community elders if they wanted to take photos of important cultural icons within their communities or schools (such as their tribal marae). Stephanie Awheto, a trilingual interpreter fluent in New Zealand Sign Language, te reo Māori and English, was an essential member of our research whānau and our research discussions.

Rangatahi met with the research whānau several times to discuss, write and/or sign about their photos. Finally, their selected photos and accompanying narratives are part of this travelling photo exhibit.
These two photos represent my name, Kahurangi, and my love for my culture. In the first photo I am performing at a National Hui [meeting] for Māori Deaf people. I lost my hearing when I was 2. It was my grandmother who discovered that, when I was nearly hit by a car. My grandmother taught me te reo Māori and she is the key to my heart. I am oral and I can sign NZSL. I was quite confused and mixed up at school when I was younger. It was hard in school because there wasn’t a lot of support.
In this second photo you can see someone in the background, reflecting on a painting from the past that is displayed on the wall of Kelston Deaf Education Centre. She is also Māori and a Deaf woman. It is important for us to have role models. Can you see my hand signs? Do you know what that means?

This photo represents the past and the future. In the past, Māori Deaf people were not recognised and respected as they are today.

Kahurangi Mackey
This is a photo that represents my pride in who I am. That I am proud to be Māori and proud to be Deaf. This photo shows my tā moko on my arm (my father’s friend designed it for me). This tā moko is connected to my whānau [family] and Māori culture. It represents a stingray. Stingrays are important in Māori culture because they are fighters, they never give up. When they are caught on a hook they struggle and fight to stay alive. My tā moko protects me when I am away from my whānau and reminds me of my connection to them. Never give up who you are! I was born Deaf but I didn’t learn my pepeha (introduction, linking one’s whakapapa [lineage] to ones’ iwi [tribe] and hapu [sub-tribe]) until I worked with Micheal Wi who is a Māori Deaf man at Kelston Deaf Education Centre. I would really like to learn more about kapa haka [cultural dance] and carving, and in the future I would like to teach such skills to young people.

Dan Te Rupe
I’m proud to be Māori Deaf

I’m 17 years old, currently pregnant with my first child who is not due until August 2013. [In this photo], I am 5 months pregnant and [the photo] is taken at Lynwood [Cottage]. I used to be in the hostel. This whole experience is going to be a life changer now that I am a mum to be. My dream for my baby is to be able to be fluent in te reo/NZSL [New Zealand Sign Language] and in Cook Island Māori because that is his dad’s side. I am strongly involved in the Deaf Community. I also share my life in Māori with whānau [family] and friends. I am NZSL signer [fluent]. This photo reflects my goals of studying early childhood particularly now [that] I am going to be a mum! I have developed stronger connections to my whānau and friends… I need their support now that I am going to be a mummy. It’s going to be lots of hard work and a new challenge being a mum.

R.J. Edwards
Kia ora [greetings], my name is Ngawaiata. I was born with normal hearing but I lost my hearing when I was about 4 ½ months old. I grew up being oral and some of my whānau [family] spoke te reo at home. It was hard at school because I couldn’t access what was happening. I came to Kelston Village when I was 11. It was hard at first because I missed my family. But the staff encouraged me and I made friends over time.

In this photo you can see my soft toy. It’s when things happen, I’m feeling grumpy- it calms me down. I keep it in my bedroom. It helps me keep calm. Plus, I love the color purple. [We] can’t talk, but we can communicate on another level.

This photo also represents my aspirations for the future. I would also like to be an early childhood teacher as I enjoy working with and teaching young children.

Communication and the Colour Purple
This is a photo of my nana. Her name is Nana Rangi. She is my mum’s mum. I called her Mum. I spent a lot of time with her. She raised me in the Coromandel near Mahei Beach. Then we moved to Panmure in Auckland. She helped to teach me English. My memories of her are very important.

Ngawaiata Hau
Kia ora [greetings]. My name is Eric. These are photographs and taonga [treasured things] that have been given to me to look after. They reflect my whakapapa [my lineage], my family. I took this photograph because of the importance of whānau [family], culture and identity. I am related to Dame Whina Cooper. You can see her photograph. She was a very famous, staunch Māori leader, who fought for the rights of Māori. I would also like to work for Māori Deaf people to bring about change. That change is having greater access to Māori language on the marae [meeting house/place]. We need more Māori interpreters fluent in te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL). It is important that we have access to what is happening on our tribal marae. Whether the event is a tangi [funeral] or an important hui [meeting], Māori Deaf people and children have to have access to those events so we can participate, understand and contribute. That is our right. At the moment we have only a few Māori interpreters across Aotearoa who are fluent in NZSL and te reo Māori. My dream would be to have more Māori Deaf youth events, like the National Hui [meeting] for Māori Deaf and to have greater access for Māori Deaf children and young adults who are isolated and don’t know about these important events.
A strong connection

My second photo is a favourite place for me. It is the marae at Unitec [Institute of Technology] and the name of the marae is Te Noho Kotahitanga (a place for everyone).

I feel a strong connection to this marae. I took this picture while I was studying at Unitec. Every morning and afternoon I would make sure that I got to spend time there as it is a marae [meeting house] for all people. I am studying at the moment, to help me gain qualifications, to help me pursue my dream. This marae is a safe place for me. I really like the way this marae sits low on the ground and is connected to the earth. On the outside it looks like a very traditional marae, but it has very new and modern carvings and weavings. It is like it is interlocked or interconnected to the past and the future. If I could dream a future marae it would look like this. It is a place where all children and people can come, and that is reflected in the marae’s name.

Eric Matthews
My name is Tuhoi. I chose this photo because it reflects my love of learning and graphic design. I was born Deaf and there is deafness in my whānau [family]. I received my first introduction to Māori culture in a kura [school] up north. But, at that stage I didn’t have many people who communicated with me at school.

I didn’t think that my father was proud of me until after he passed away. Then, I learned my dad had told others he was very proud of me because I studied hard at school. I was quite shy when I first moved to KDEC [Kelston Deaf Education Centre], but I learned more about NZSL [New Zealand Sign Language] and Deaf pride so I became more confident.
This photo shows who I am. I feel really right to be Māori and Deaf. It doesn’t matter if I am half or whatever. I am still Māori Deaf. I am Deaf and hearing impaired, but I use New Zealand Sign Language to communicate with Deaf people - using hand shapes, expression and body language. I also can communicate with hearing people as well, but I prefer Deaf culture.

Tuhoi Henry
This research project was born out of our desire to better understand the educational experiences of Māori Deaf and hearing impaired youth; however, after meeting and talking with these young people, we realized that to truly understand who these youth are as culturally located individuals – as Māori and culturally Deaf, oral, hearing impaired – we needed to allow the students to step beyond the confines of the school, to photograph, dialogue, write and sign about their experiences within te ao Māori (the Māori world) and the Deaf and hearing worlds beyond the school house. The importance of going beyond the traditional school walls was demonstrated to us by these rangatahi as they began to take more and more ownership for this project.

Our initial interpretation of rangatahi photographs has revealed the bounded nature of their identities, Māori, Deaf and as young people (Smiler, forthcoming), the importance of whānau (family) and whakawhanaungatanga (developing respectful relationships), place-based connections and their access to both cultures and languages as crucial to their well-being. Finally, rangatahi have reminded us about their ambitions and aspirations for the future. We wish to acknowledge RJ, Kahurangi, Ngawaiata, Tuhoi, Dan and Eric.

Our experience in this project has also revealed issues of capacity building and sustainability in the education of these young people, as the numbers of Māori Deaf educators is extremely low, coupled with the lack of trilingual (te reo Māori, New Zealand Sign Language, and English) interpreters across New Zealand. We hope results from this study will result in further work and commitment to addressing these issues across Aotearoa (New Zealand).

Susan Faircloth
Anne Hynds
Helen Jacob
Clint Green
Patrick Thompson