

# Analysis of the maori culture and traditions in whale rider

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Every culture has its own traditions and many of the times these traditions are broken when new generations are born. In the film Whale Rider depicts a culture in transition. The Maori, the native Polynesian people of New Zealand, are looking for a male descendant of Paikea the brave leader who escaped death on the back of a whale to lead them and restore the traditions. Koro Pai's grandfather has been waiting for the first born of the new generation who would be chief. Unfortunately the tradition was broken when Pai's twin brother passes away. What Koro does not understand is that Pai is the leader they have been waiting for.

The people from Maori have been waiting for so long that they have lost hope and flight of people. The culture has also become unhealthy for example, when Pai comes home and notices that the women playing cards at the dinner table have been smoking. Pai states, " Maori women have got to stop smoking, we have to protect our childbearing's." This quote helps to show how the women do not care about their health and just smoke. Another example of how the culture is unhealthy is when Pai goes to her uncle Rawiri's house to ask if he can teach her taiaha, the uncle is just lying down being lazy with his wife smoking. By the uncle being lazy he has gained weight and is not slim like before.

The families of Maori have also become ruptured for example, when Hemi goes up to present his father only stays for a little while to watch him then leaves with his friends. By Hemi's father leaving so soon Hemi feels upset because he really wanted to show his father what he has learned about his culture. Another example is how Pai's father leaves Pai with Koro while he's

in Germany pursuing his career as an artist. Pai's father leaves her because he doesn't believe that there is such thing as a leader and shows that he does not want any part of the culture.

Koro insist for a male because he's stuck in this tradition that does not exist anymore. Koro's high standards make him look stubborn and that is why he pushes Pai away from him. For example, in the beginning when Koro goes to see the baby boy and tells Nanny to take Pai away from where he is. Nanny insists on making him acknowledge his granddaughter and hands Pai to him to carry her. He explains to Nanny that his son can have another child. This shows how Koro does not want anything to do with Pai. Another reason why Koro pushes her away is because he believes that everything went wrong when she was born. Although Koro thinks everything will never be the same he is wrong. He doesn't see that Pai is the leader that the people of Maori have been waiting for.

Pai shows the strengths of a leader through out the whole video but her grandfather does not notice it. In one of the scenes Koro and Pai are talking about a speech Pai has to do for school. Which will talk about where she comes from. Koro explains to her about her ancestors and he uses a rope to demonstrate how the strings from the rope represent her ancestors. While the grandfather is explaining about the ancestors, he's trying to start the engine but the rope breaks. When Koro tries to look for another rope, Pai ties the rope together and starts the engine. This shows how she has leadership, since the rope represents the ancestors and by her grandfather breaking the rope shows how the culture has been broken apart. When Pai ties the rope

together this shows, how she is a leader she's willing to put the pieces together and fix the culture that has lost hope.

Towards the ending of the film Koro notices numerous whales are beached near the home. The entire village try's to drag them back into the water but, where unsuccessful. Koro sees it as a sign of failure and gets upset when Pai is touching the largest whale because he feels she has done enough damage. Since the largest whale traditionally belongs to the legendary Paikea. Pai climbs onto the back of the whale and makes it re-enter the ocean. The whale leads the rest of the whales back into the sea, while this is happening Nanny gives Koro the whale tooth, which Pai had gotten. After Pai is hospitalized Koro realizes that Pai is the leader that they have been waiting for and asks for her forgiveness. In the end everyone from the village is celebrating her status as a leader, and working together, the waka is finished and is taken into the sea. Pai states, " My name is Paikea Apirana, and I come from a long line of chiefs stretching all the way back to the whale rider. I'm not a prophet, but I know that our people will keep going forward, all together, with all of our strength." This helps to show that although the tradition was broken when she was born she is willing to be the new change and be the leader Maori has been waiting for.