Ngā Pātai o te Tāmitanga: Six Questions for Tracing the Whakapapa of Colonisation

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Whakapapa of Colonisation Series — Restoration

Abstract

This paper extends a reflective framework first developed for tracing the whakapapa of poverty into a wider lens: the whakapapa of colonisation. It is the final document in this series. It proposes six questions: what did colonisation teach you to *do*, to *hide*, to *carry*, to *become*, to *want*, and what could colonisation *not take*, however hard it tried? Read through Te Poutama Ora (TPO), a nine-dimensional kaupapa Māori wellness framework, the questions trace colonisation as a teacher whose lessons pass through whakapapa: compliance in the body, concealment of reo and practice, inherited distress without a name, a self shaped to pass, and desire set to a colonial measure. The paper sets out how the questions were developed from the poverty set, the historical instruments behind each, and how the questions function within TPO's healing architecture. It makes four arguments. First, poverty is one lesson inside colonisation's wider curriculum, so the poverty questions sit within this set as one way in. Second, the final question must turn. Where the poverty set asks what one would *not give back*, the colonisation set asks what *survived*, because colonisation is not owed gratitude. Third, read together, the two sets reach all nine dimensions of TPO, and give the person's own voice to the patterns that Te Whakapapa o ngā Mate, the intergenerational dysfunction matrix, maps from the practitioner's side. Fourth, colonisation also taught through silence. The history of land loss by statute was withheld, so its outcomes were read as the natural order, and this second layer of the questions belongs in kaiārahi-held healing work rather than self-directed reflection. The paper closes with guidance for practice, attention to cultural and emotional safety, and a proposed approach to evaluation.

Keywords: whakapapa; colonisation; historical trauma; Colonisation PTSD; whakamā; three exiles; Whakapapa Dilemma; survivance; kaupapa Māori; Te Poutama Ora

1. Introduction

The six questions of poverty began with a simple turn: asking not what poverty *is*, but what it *taught* (I'Anson, 2026f). Once that turn was made, a further question followed. Who sets the lessons?

In Aotearoa, Māori poverty is the downstream effect of colonisation: land taken, an economic base destroyed, communities scattered by urban migration. Poverty was one of colonisation's classrooms, but not the only one. The same curriculum was taught through schooling, law, religion and work. It reached whānau who were never poor as well as those who were, and it reached them in places poverty did not: in the mouth, in the healing practices of a grandmother, in the faith a family held, in what a child was taught to call success.

This paper widens the lens. It keeps the structure of the poverty questions and asks them of colonisation directly. It sets out what each question surfaces, the historical instruments that taught each lesson, and where each open within TPO. It then considers what changes when the teacher is named: how the poverty questions sit inside the larger set, why the final question cannot stay the same, and how the questions relate to the clinical tools the Whakapapa of Colonisation series has already developed. It closes the discussion with the lesson colonisation taught by withholding its own history.

The paper is the twelfth in the Whakapapa of Colonisation series and is the companion to *Ngā Pātai o te Rawakore: Six Questions for Tracing the Whakapapa of Poverty* (I'Anson, 2026f). Its contribution is a practice tool that lets a person trace colonisation through their own life in their own words, and a framework for holding that tracing within a healing process rather than leaving it at disclosure.

2. Positioning the work

2.1 Colonisation as curriculum

Colonisation in Aotearoa operated through institutions that taught as well as governed. The Native Schools Act 1867 made English the language of instruction, and the Native Schools system was explicitly framed as a civilising mission. In practice it discouraged, and often punished, te reo Māori in the classroom (Simon & Smith, 2001; Walker, 1990). Children who were strapped for speaking their language learned not only that the

language was forbidden but that being visibly Māori carried pain. Many did not pass the language on, to protect their own children from what they had endured.

The Tohunga Suppression Act 1907 made it an offence to practise as a tohunga and was repealed only in 1962. For more than half a century it drove traditional healing and knowledge practice underground. For whānau whose healing lineages were active at the time, the Act severed the context in which those gifts were held and transmitted (I'Anson, 2026a). Land alienation and the urban migration of the mid-twentieth century dispersed communities from their marae. Policy deliberately scattered Māori families into Pākehā neighbourhoods, one to a street, so that they would be absorbed rather than form communities of their own (Walker, 1990; Belich, 1996; I'Anson, 2026a).

Each of these taught Māori something about who they were permitted to be. Together they form a curriculum: a set of lessons, taught consistently through multiple institutions, about language, knowledge, belonging and worth.

The curriculum also had a hidden half. In a few short years, a sequence of statutes made the transfer of Māori land lawful. The Native Lands Act 1862 set up a system to investigate customary title, and the Native Lands Act 1865 established the Native Land Court, which converted customary title into individual title that could be sold. The New Zealand Settlements Act 1863 authorised confiscation in proclaimed districts, and the Public Works Lands Act 1864 allowed land to be taken for public works. Purchase, confiscation and title conversion were different routes to the same loss. What followed was silence. For generations this history was not taught in schools; Aotearoa New Zealand's histories became a required part of the national curriculum only in 2022 (Ministry of Education, 2022). Children grew up inside the outcome without the account of how it was produced. The first lesson was taught out loud. The second was taught through silence.

2.2 Historical trauma and Colonisation PTSD

Historical trauma theory describes cumulative wounding transmitted across generations from collective trauma (Brave Heart, 2003). Pihama et al. (2014) argue that in Aotearoa this must be read through whakapapa and the specific mechanisms of colonisation here. Reid, Taylor-Moore and Varona (2014) set out a social-structural model linking colonial dispossession to present-day Māori health disparities. Epigenetic research

suggests that stress responses can be carried biologically into the next generation (Yehuda & Lehrner, 2018).

The Whakapapa of Colonisation series names one clinical expression of this as *Colonisation PTSD*: the inherited patterning of shame, disconnection and dysregulation that presents across many client presentations in Aotearoa, often without the person identifying colonisation as its source (I'Anson, 2026a). The series offers the metaphor of poison ivy for its mechanism. The plant grows unseen, and the rash appears long after contact, on surfaces the person never knew they touched. The urushiol of colonisation is whakamā, the contraction of the self in the presence of a perceived superior authority. Once installed, it spreads through whānau systems and is carried forward as though it were personal.

2.3 The colonised self

Fanon (1952/2008) described the psychological cost of a colonised person learning to see themselves through the coloniser's eyes. Smith (2021) shows how colonial knowledge systems positioned Indigenous peoples as objects of study rather than authorities over their own lives. Duran (2006) names the resulting injury the *soul wound*: a deep spiritual harm that is often experienced not as a wound but as an absence of language, of whakapapa knowledge and of the felt sense of belonging.

The series develops this in Aotearoa through the *three exiles*: the colonisation exile, cut off from reo, tikanga and marae; the double exile of the "Brown Pākehā", not Pākehā enough in one world and not Māori enough in the other; and the exile of the displaced, turned away by one's own after urban migration severed marae connection (I'Anson, 2026a, 2026d). These accounts inform the fourth question, on what colonisation taught people to become.

2.4 The colonisation of desire and faith

Colonisation shaped not only what people did and hid, but what they wanted. *The Whakapapa of Desire* argues that desire has a lineage, and that much of it has been colonised: shaped by external standards of success, adequacy and belonging rather than by authentic need (I'Anson, 2026c). Colonisation also reached faith. *Religious Trauma as Wairua Assault* names the Whakapapa Dilemma: the experience of a Māori Christian who feels unable to claim the faith legitimately, because their whakapapa does

not trace to the Abrahamic covenant and because Christianity arrived through colonial mechanism rather than as invitation (I'Anson, 2026e). These accounts inform the fifth question.

2.5 Survivance

The final question draws on a different body of thought. Vizenor (2008) coined *survivance* to describe the active presence of Indigenous peoples: not mere survival, but continuance, resistance and renewal. Smith (2021) places survivance alongside the painful archive of colonisation as part of the same story. In Aotearoa, the revitalisation of te reo Māori, the return of the Maramataka to daily life, and the re-emergence of healing practices that went underground are expressions of the same thing. The sixth question asks a person to locate that continuance in their own whakapapa.

2.6 Te Poutama Ora

Durie's (1998) Te Whare Tapa Whā established Māori wellbeing as multidimensional. TPO extends this lineage to nine dimensions: five core dimensions (Whakapapa, Tinana, Tuakiri, Wairua, Hinengaro), three bridge dimensions (Matihiko, Pūtea, Kai) and an apex (Auaha), with Tuakiri at the centre as the Poutokomanawa. The Whakapapa of Colonisation series maps colonial patterns of distress across all nine in Te Whakapapa o ngā Mate (I'Anson, 2026a). Each question in this paper opens a doorway into one or more of those dimensions.

3. Methodology

3.1 Kaupapa Māori and autoethnography

The work is grounded in kaupapa Māori research (Smith, 2021) and autoethnography (Ellis et al., 2011). It builds on two bodies of the author's prior writing: the Whakapapa of Poverty testimony, from which the original questions emerged, and the Whakapapa of Colonisation series, which maps colonial mechanisms of distress through TPO.

3.2 Development of the questions

The questions were developed by keeping the structure of the poverty set and changing the teacher. Each question was then tested against the mechanisms already named in the series: compliance through schooling, the suppression of reo and healing practice, interrupted transmission, the three exiles, and the whakapapa of desire. Where a

question could not hold the colonial frame without distortion, it was reworded. Only the final question needed that change, for the reasons set out in Section 5.3.

The questions were then answered from the author's own whakapapa, as the poverty questions had been. The answers were read for two things: the specific lesson in each life, and the historical instrument through which that lesson was taught. The questions were rendered in three forms, this academic paper, a first-person blog, and a TPO reflective tool, consistent with the series' commitment to returning knowledge to the people it is about.

3.3 Reflexivity and ethics

Colonisation is a collective history. Writing about it from one whakapapa carries a particular responsibility: to speak for one's own line without presuming to speak for iwi, hapū or other whānau, whose experience of colonisation differed. The author writes as a wāhine of Ngāti Porou and Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga descent raised at a distance from her marae, in what she calls the in-between generation that did not grow up speaking te reo (I'Anson, 2026d). That position shapes which lessons were most visible. Whānau material is drawn on as pattern rather than as identifiable story, and the people within it are held as having passed on what they were given.

4. The six questions

4.1 What did colonisation teach you to do?

This question surfaces compliance held in the body: speaking English at school, sitting still, doing as one was told, keeping busy and keeping one's head down. A busy Māori was a good Māori. It includes being measured and sorted by systems that called the sorting merit, and learning to believe the measure (I'Anson, 2026g).

The instrument here is schooling, and beyond it the institutional world of work. The lesson was not only a set of behaviours but a stance: make yourself acceptable, and you will be safe. Its legacy can be seen in people who still behave to be acceptable even when no one is watching, and in the body's readiness to keep working long past the point of health.

The doorways are Taha Tinana, the body trained for labour and compliance, and Taha Kai, where colonisation also taught what to eat, as traditional food systems were dismantled and replaced (I'Anson, 2026h).

4.2 What did colonisation teach you to hide?

This question surfaces concealment: of te reo, of tikanga, of the healing practice carried on in secret after the Tohunga Suppression Act. For the author, the reo was not given; the adults around her had learned it was safer not to pass it on. Her grandmother carried gifts from the Rangīūia healing lineage and had to practise them in secret, because the law had made them something to hide (I'Anson, 2026g).

Concealment was a survival strategy. Over time it came to feel like a personal flaw. The person who could not speak their language, did not know their whakapapa or did not feel at home on their marae experienced this as their own inadequacy rather than as something done to their whānau. This is whakamā working as the series describes it: a structural wound turned into private shame, and then hidden too (I'Anson, 2026a).

There is a second side to this question. Colonisation taught Māori to hide, and it also hid things from them. The history that would have explained the loss of land, language and standing was withheld, so the loss was lived as simply the way things were. Section 5.6 takes up this second lesson.

The doorway is Taha Hinengaro, and whakamā as a colonial mechanism.

4.3 What did colonisation teach you to carry?

This question surfaces distress inherited without a name: feelings that seem older than the person, a tightness that was not theirs to begin with, and gaps where knowledge should have been passed on. What could not be transmitted was not transmitted, and what was transmitted included the fear. *You pass on what you know* (I'Anson, 2026a, 2026g).

The instrument is the whole of the curriculum, carried forward through parenting, silence and the body. The clinical form of what is carried is Colonisation PTSD. The question gives the person a way to name it from the inside: to ask what they feel that seems older than them, what was not passed down, what was passed down instead, and what they are carrying for their tūpuna that they could set down.

The doorway is Taha Whakapapa.

4.4 What did colonisation teach you to become?

This question surfaces the self shaped to pass. For the author, this was the “Brown Pākehā”: forty-one years in corporate rooms, fluent enough to succeed, never fully received (I’Anson, 2026d). Not Pākehā enough in one world, not Māori enough in the other, and at times turned away by her own, because the line back to the marae had been cut before she was born.

The question maps directly onto the three exiles. It asks who a person had to become to be accepted, where they are not enough in each world, and where they have been turned away by their own. It is often the question that brings the deepest grief, because it touches the self that was performed for so long that it came to feel like the self.

The doorway is Taha Tuakiri, the central Pou of TPO.

4.5 What did colonisation teach you to want?

This question surfaces desire set to a colonial measure: a career, a house, a respectability, a faith on someone else’s terms, all as proof of belonging. For the author, it included a faith that arrived through the coloniser’s door rather than as an invitation, and a longing to belong so strong that she forgot to ask *to belong to what?* (I’Anson, 2026g).

The question connects to the whakapapa of desire, and to the Whakapapa Dilemma, where faith arrived through colonial mechanism (I’Anson, 2026c, 2026e). It also reaches into the bridge dimensions, where colonised desire shows up in daily life: in what is bought to signal worth, in what is eaten because it is cheap and fast, and in the validation sought online. Its most searching prompt is the simplest: *what did you want before you were taught what to want?*

The doorways are Taha Pūtea and Taha Wairua, with Taha Kai and Taha Matihiko as the places where colonised desire is lived most visibly.

4.6 What could colonisation not take, however hard it tried?

This question surfaces what survived. For the author: whakapapa, still present in her; the Maramataka, still turning; the healing line that went underground with her

grandmother and came back up; the reo, coming back into her mouth and her children's (I'Anson, 2026g).

This is survivance in a single life (Vizenor, 2008). The question asks what of a person's whakapapa survived in them, what knowledge, practice or gift came through despite everything, and what they are reclaiming now. It closes by asking who they will pass it to, turning reclamation into transmission.

The doorway is Taha Auaha, the apex of TPO and the instrument of the return, together with Taha Wairua, where what survived is often held.

5. Discussion

5.1 Poverty inside colonisation

The two sets share a structure, and each poverty question names a lesson the colonisation question holds in wider form.

Question	Poverty taught	Colonisation taught
To do	Making do, mending, working past exhaustion	Compliance, English, being sorted
To hide	The lunch, the shoes, the address	The reo, the practices, the healing ways
To carry	Parents' fear, younger siblings	Tūpuna distress, interrupted transmission
To become	Someone who could get through	The Brown Pākehā, the three exiles
To want	Two of everything, the wound in abundance	Belonging by a colonial measure
The close	What I would not give back	What colonisation could not take

The poverty set is therefore one way into the colonisation set, suited to whānau who carry colonisation as material deprivation. Many people recognise poverty in their lives before they recognise colonisation in it, and the poverty questions can lead to the wider ones. Others, who were never poor, will recognise themselves only in the colonisation set. Kaiārahi can begin with whichever set the person recognises and move toward the other.

5.2 The two sets across the nine dimensions

Read on their own, the colonisation questions open most clearly into seven of TPO's nine dimensions. Read together with the poverty set, and with the bridge-dimension work now in view, the two sets reach all nine.

Question	Movement	Poverty doorways	Colonisation doorways
To do	Behaviour	Tinana, Kai, Pūtea	Tinana, Kai
To hide	Shame	Hinengaro	Hinengaro
To carry	Transmission	Whakapapa	Whakapapa
To become	Identity	Tuakiri	Tuakiri
To want	Desire	Pūtea, Kai	Pūtea, Wairua, Kai, Matihiko
The close	Reclamation	Auaha	Auaha, Wairua

The shared movement matters as much as the doorways. Both sets move from behaviour, through shame and transmission, toward identity at the centre, and then through desire to the apex, where Taha Auaha carries the return.

5.3 Why the final question turns

In the poverty set, the close asks what one would not give back. That question honours what was learned *within and despite* hardship: ingenuity, the intolerance of waste, knowing what enough means. It can stand, because what is reclaimed belongs to the person and their whānau rather than to the conditions.

Asked of colonisation, the same wording would imply a debt of gratitude to the coloniser, as if what was learned under colonisation were its gift. It was not. The question was therefore turned to ask what colonisation *could not take*. The reclamation remains, but it now belongs entirely to whakapapa. This is the difference between survival and survivance. The person is not thanking the conditions for what they learned. They are naming what persisted against those conditions and continues now.

5.4 The questions and Te Whakapapa o ngā Mate

The Whakapapa of Colonisation series developed Te Whakapapa o ngā Mate as a kaiārahi recognition tool: a matrix of intergenerational dysfunction patterns traceable to Colonisation PTSD across the nine dimensions (I'Anson, 2026a). The matrix is seen from the practitioner's side. It names patterns such as cultural amnesia, the double exile, inherited diet culture, scarcity mindset and suppressed creativity, so that kaiārahi can recognise them.

The six questions offer the same territory from the person's side, in their own words. Where the matrix names *whakapapa disconnection*, the person answers *what was not passed down to you*. Where the matrix names *imposter syndrome* and *overachievement as survival*, the person answers *who did you become to be accepted*. Used together, the two tools let practitioner and whaiora meet on the same ground from opposite directions.

5.5 The questions within TPO's healing architecture

Within TPO, the questions function as a recognition tool. They correspond to Te Tūāhuatanga, the first phase of the four-phase healing model, and to Step 1, Te Ohorere, the awakening. Their purpose is to locate the colonial wound before the loosening work of Te Ngāhau Kiri (Dimensional Autophagy) begins (I'Anson, 2026b).

Two later parts of that architecture connect closely to the questions. Where a pattern named by the questions proves resistant, an inherited stronghold that a person recognises and still returns to, Te Wetekina, the loosing, offers the protocol for dismantling it. And the final prompt of the sixth question, *who will you pass it to?* connects to Te Tuku, the forward declaration, in which healing is not only received but declared forward to the next generation. In the language of the series, the work of this generation is to be the first in a lineage that received something more than the wound, and that therefore has something more to transmit forward: an ancestor in the making (I'Anson, 2026a).

5.6 The second lesson: taught through silence

The six questions ask what colonisation taught. Their wording assumes the lesson was delivered: that something was done, and a person learned from it. But some of colonisation's most lasting lessons were taught by what was never said. The first lesson was taught out loud, in the classroom, the courtroom and the church. The second was taught through silence.

The author's own testimony shows how this works. As a child in Kaiti, travelling into town toward the wharf, she passed the freezing works and, on the other side of the road, an urupā. She remembers thinking it a strange place for a graveyard. Decades later, through Mahi Wairua training, she learned that the freezing works site had once been a marae. The land had been taken by the council, the people moved off, a road

put through, and one side given over to industry. The urupā was all that remained, perhaps because even then it was not comfortable to put a road over the dead. The evidence had been in plain sight the whole time. What was missing was the story. This is the poison ivy at work: the contact unseen, the rash read as one's own nature.

The same silence shaped how poverty was read. Growing up poor, the author believed, as many whānau did, that this was how Māori were meant to be, and that Pākehā prosperity was the model of success. Learning as an adult that much of that prosperity rested on land transferred by statute did not only add grief. It exposed a second, inherited belief that had been carried as truth. This is whakamā at its deepest: not only shame turned inward, but an account of the world in which the dispossessed are taught to read their dispossession as their nature (I'Anson, 2026f).

This points to a second layer of the questions. Where the six questions ask what colonisation taught, the second layer asks what it hid: *what history were you never taught? What did you believe because of what was hidden? What was the truth underneath? What was never yours to carry? What is yours to grieve? What do you keep as taonga?* Its central movement is return. The deceit, the shame and the belief that did not begin with the person are given back to their authors. What is the person's own, the grief of the child who went without, is grieved. The knowledge is kept for those who come after.

The second layer is not easily held. Discovering hidden history can land at the depth of trauma even in people who are educated, resourced and familiar with that history in the abstract, and it often surfaces faster in group kōrero than in private study. Anger is the natural first response to discovered deceit. A person cannot be asked to hold both truths, the loss and the success that came after it, until the loss has been metabolised; asked too early, the success is made to cancel the loss. For these reasons the six questions sit in the Te Ara Iwa Teaching Tool, while the second layer, The Hidden Lesson, is held within Te Ngāhau Kiri as an entry in the Dimensional Autophagy map and worked with a kaiārahi alongside (I'Anson, 2026i). The six questions close with a threshold: where they have stirred something that asks to go deeper, the second layer continues there.

6. Use in practice

6.1 Choosing a way in

The questions are offered for counselling, supervision and group work with whānau carrying colonisation, and for practitioners' own reflective work. They can be used alone or alongside the poverty set. A person who carries colonisation as poverty may find the poverty questions the easier way in; a person who was not poor, or who has already done that work, may begin here.

6.2 Pace, form and setting

The questions are taken slowly, one per sitting. The questions on hiding and carrying should be given room. Answers may come through kōrero, writing, drawing, whakapapa research or a visit to a place. The questions can be used in self-directed reflection, in groups, and in facilitated one-to-one work, with a person always deciding how much of their answer to share and with whom. Every session ends at question six, so that the person leaves holding what survived.

6.3 Safety

These questions can open grief, anger and ancestral pain, and they can surface experiences of racism that are still current. Grounding before leaving matters: wai, breath, a hand on something solid, karakia where it is right for the person. If distress stays high, the kaiārahi should slow down, pause the questions and bring in further support. Some answers belong with a counsellor or clinician, not only in a group. The questions are reflective prompts, not an assessment tool or a diagnostic instrument. Questions that open onto hidden history, including the second layer described in Section 5.6, should be offered with a kaiārahi present and aftercare planned.

6.4 Cultural safety

The questions are written from and for Māori and other colonised peoples. Kaiārahi using them must work within cultural safety: an understanding that the practitioner's own position and power shape what the person can safely say (Ramsden, 2002). Non-Māori kaiārahi should not use the questions to extract disclosure and should be ready to hold answers that implicate the systems they themselves belong to.

7. Limitations and further research

The questions extend a framework developed from one whakapapa and have not yet been trialled formally in practice. Colonisation was experienced differently across iwi, regions and generations, and the questions will need testing against that diversity. A rangatahi raised in the reo revival, for example, may answer *what did colonisation teach you to hide?* very differently from someone of the author's generation, and may have more to say in answer to the sixth question.

Further work could take several forms. A practice-based evaluation could gather accounts from whānau and kaiārahi using the questions, examining which questions open most readily and what people describe as having changed. A comparative study could examine how the poverty and colonisation sets are used together, and in which order. Adaptation for other Indigenous and colonised peoples, including Pacific communities in Aotearoa, would require co-design with those communities. Any such work should be held to kaupapa Māori principles, with communities as partners and authorities over their own knowledge.

Two questions remain open within the framework. The first is how the questions can be used collectively, by whānau, hapū or marae, rather than only by individuals. The second is whether a companion set is needed for those on the other side of the history: questions that ask what colonisation taught the coloniser, and what it would take to set that down.

8. Conclusion

Colonisation taught. It taught the body to comply, the mouth to go quiet, the self to pass and the heart to want by another's measure, and it passed those lessons down through whakapapa. It taught them through schools, laws, churches and workplaces, and it taught them to whānau who were poor and to whānau who were not.

It also taught through what it withheld. The history of land taken by statute was not told, and the children who grew up inside its outcome learned to read that outcome as their nature. The first lesson was taught out loud. The second was taught through silence. Naming what was hidden returns the story to its rightful owners.

Asking what it taught moves the lesson from the person to the teacher. Asking what it could not take moves the person from survival into survivance, and asking who they will

pass it to moves reclamation into the next generation. Between those movements is the work of healing.

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