The Traditional Māori Practice of Mirimiri. How it is practiced today.

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Kei runga te mirimiri, kei raro te rahurahu
Above is the message, while below it is turbulent with troubles

Rongoa Māori

Background: Mirimiri is a physical therapy used in traditional Rongoa Māori healing. It works on the physical and emotional body and is considered a sacred contract between the tipuna of the practitioner and those of the person being worked on (1,3). Traditional Māori mirimiri works deeply on spiritual layers to balance the vibration of the body, remove energy and achieve healing. In traditional Māori society, knowledge was highly valued and seen as vital for the social, political and spiritual livelihood of a whanau, hapu and iwi. The mana was dependent on the way knowledge was protected, developed and practiced. Knowledge was passed on through the process of education through exposure or ako (2,3).

Participants: Face to face interviews were used with open questions allowing the story to be told. Two Ngai Tahu Māori Healers, over the age of 16 were happy to share their mirimiri journey.

Purpose: The aim of this study was to learn how traditional mirimiri is practiced today.

Questions: Is the mirimiri being practiced traditional or is it massage? How important is culture to mirimiri? Is there a history of mirimiri in the South Island?

"It’s about the intention, so if the intention is with aroha, sweet" H1

"I was lucky enough that two people who passed away, gave me their hands. So I feel as if I have to continue it, even though I try to get out of it" H1

"I just think I am an ordinary person being amongst theses great tohunga H1

"All those that connect you with another human is mahi wairua, so when you’re working close, within their ahua, of course you are going to pick up their stuff" H1

"It was not a physical hands on, it’s a miri of traditions & bringing our tipuna & our mokopuna together for the future” H1

"It was passed on from taua and poua’s side, they were both healers and their parents were healers”H2

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The practice today of Traditional Mirimiri

Key elements:

- Wairuatanga – spirituality
- Rongoa – healing, medicinal
- Haerenga - journey
- Ako – to learn and teach
- Different worlds – Western/ Māori
- Healing tools – hands, stones
- Culture – values and beliefs
- History – trails of tipuna
- Manaakitanga – giving and caring

Conclusion: Mirimiri is the physical therapy that is practiced in rongoa Māori.

Reflections: In everyone’s life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. Thank you to all the people who have rekindled my spirit and given me the courage to continue on this journey. ‘He aha te mea nui? Te tangata, te tangata, tangata.’