



Climate  
Change  
Tai Tokerau  
Northland Trust



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

New Zealand National  
Commission for UNESCO  
*Te Kōmihana Matua o Aotearoa mō UNESCO*



Reconnecting  
Northland



# RESEARCH PROJECT – MANGAKAHIA TAPERE:

## Assessing the regenerative land use and education needs of the community

### Focus Groups and Facilitator Interviews Report

November 30th Milestone



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# Introduction

Our project started back in 2020, but soon ran into delays caused by the COVID lockdown and the restrictions that continued in various forms up to 2022. The New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO enabled us to continue the project with a February 2023 revised end date.

We interviewed a variety of land-use users in the Mangakahia Tapere (catchment). The COVID19 pandemic, lockdowns and waves of virus variants created significant ongoing challenges and the project leaders adapted accordingly, evolving to focus mainly on the Māori community in the Pakotai / Parakao community centring on Te Aroha Marae. Part design and part serendipity, the lead researcher is also the chair of the Te Aroha Marae.



*Figure 1: Maungakahia road. Image credit: Google Maps*

As the project progressed new partners emerged including the Climate Change Taitokerau Northland Trust and Pā to Plate. The project happened to coincide with the return of the old school near Parakāo after a long running Waitangi Tribunal hearing and the project has helped to seed the emergence of a community garden on this site. This has afforded the opportunity to coincide with the “learning modules” detailed in the original project design. Basically, the community are building a garden, concomitant with which the Tāpere research team ran monthly hui and modules, from which, the focus groups enabled us to glean insights into the type of learning needed and the mode of learning that best suits the community.



## Module descriptions and reflections

### Pā to Plate



Figure 2: Promotional flyer for a Pā to Plate event

### Module overview

The Community Facilitation was led by Te Reo Hau, Chairman of Te Aroha Marae in Mangakahia. He coordinated all the hui and workshops, developed the communications and pānui (notices), organised kai and venues. It was he who identified the opportunity to tie the Tāpere project in with the return of the Parakao School, by hosting the modules and building the mara (garden) at this location.

While the sessions with Pā to Plate were not planned as modules, they were an important part of developing the kaupapa. Paul Voigt, the Tai Tokerau Co-ordinator for Pā to Plate came to two sessions to introduce the [Pā to Plate](#) kaupapa. This also served to connect the Parakao Mara to other Pā to Plate communities.

Paul talked about the other locations in Te Taitokerau that have Pā to Plate mara and outlined the programme's kaupapa. Kai grown by Pā to Plate mara is available for the whānau of those growing, for giving away, and for sale. He is very interested in the large capacity of cool storage available at the marae with its potential to be a processing hub for the Pā to Plate network.



Figure 3: Promotional flyer for a third Pā to Plate event

## Reflection

The Pā to Plate network is another way to rebuild connections between marae. An associated kai sovereignty research project has surfaced stories of how Māori communities shared kai, especially for community events. People travelling from other hapū or iwi would bring kai their kaingā was renown for. Pa to Plate is well established in Te Tai Tōkerau, with considerable experience in developing marae based community gardening initiatives. They have provided us with valuable advice and guidance in this process and opened up to the community in Mangakahia the extent of the marae based food production renaissance that is unfolding in the north. Starting with a hui at the school, pitching the idea of the community garden, attended by Paul Voigt, from [Pa to Plate](#), a marae based food production project which had its genesis in Science Challenge project led by Professor Merata Kawharu, University of Otago

The hui was attended by about 12 locals and the garden concept was met with enthusiasm. Garden beds were ploughed in the adjacent paddock with volunteered time and equipment from local farmer Eden Vuletich, from Pakotai. Vegetable seedlings and shelter belt plants were donated by members of the community and one of six potential garden beds was planted with sheltering borders. The first true module was on composting by local horticulturist and gardener from Pakotai in Mangakahia, Toni Ambler.

## Compost and Propagation Modules - overview

The composting module covered the critical importance of the soil microbiome and the contribution compost makes to this through organic, aerobic decomposition, how compost is made in theory and why it works. We then went outside and made compost together from pre-prepared materials supplied by the module facilitator and contributions from participants. We also planted in two raised test-beds, one with compost and one without. Then we made a worm farm in a bath donated by the community.





Figure 4: Promotional flyer for the composting workshop



Figure 5: Workshop attendees planting out the first mara

Toni Ambler ran another superb workshop, this time on grafting and propagation, this included how to grow from seeds, cuttings and grafting, with examples of grafts made in Mangakahia, to demonstrate to the class the outcome. There was an opportunity for participants to do some grafting and to take planted cuttings and grafted plants home for their garden. We went outside and examined the results of the two raised test-beds, one with compost and one without, with astoundingly better performance where compost was extant.

These modules were documented by local videographer Jay Diamond (ex Māori television) who lives in the Mangakahia tāpere only a few kilometres up the road in Pakotai, resulting in a 10 minute documentary for YouTube, to accompany the Learning Framework report. This is the early embargoed draft, please do not distribute <https://youtu.be/JTFpmFwDNZ4>.





Figure 6: Promotional flyer for the propagation workshop



Figure 7: Toni Ambler delivering the propagation workshop

Te Reo Hau hosted both these modules providing mihi and kai for all and explaining the context of the project.



## Pest control



Figure 8: Promotional material for a pest control workshop

### Module overview

This was a practical session focussed on common local pests, rats and possums. A white Trapinator was installed and demonstrated. This possum trap is installed off the ground so that kiwi won't be injured by them. The rat trap is set in a small box manufactured by the Whāngarei Men's shed. Baits used were peanut butter for possums and chocolate for the rats. Sources of free equipment were also discussed.



Figure 9: Peter Bruce-Iri installing a possum trap



## Reflection

The pest that is the most immediate problem is rabbits. Discussion about rabbit control surfaced options of shooting, poisoning and building netted structures to exclude them.

## Maramataka

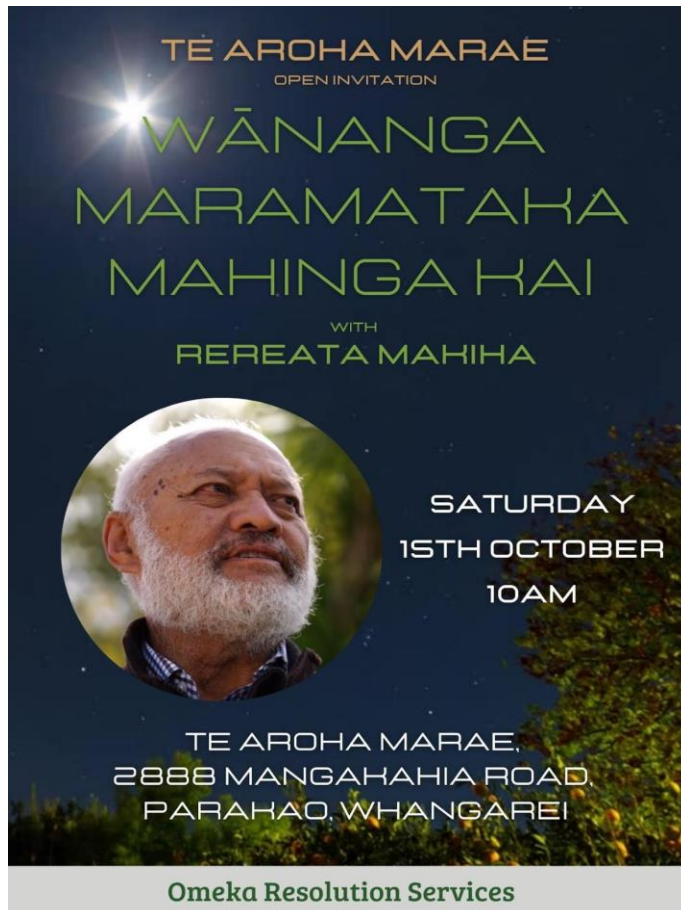


Figure 10: Promotional flyer for the Maramataka wānanga

## Module overview

Rereata Makiha is a Tohunga Taiao and was one of the surviving participants of traditional wānanga where learning was primarily auditory, and often conducted in the dark. He is the 2022 Senior New Zealander of the Year. He was prominent nationally in the establishment of the inaugural Matariki Holiday.

After a whakatau, Rereata presented to a audience of about 30 on the Maramatak and nga kaupeka (seasons). During this presentation he reached out to the community and promised to visit when his community's mara harvests their kai. Videos of the presentation are in production.



*Figure 11: Rereata Makiha at Te Aroha Marae*



*Figure 12: Rerata Makiha in a mara. Image credit: Pā to Plate*

## Reflection

Rereata spoke of how the traditional food system based on the kainga has diminished significantly. His observation is that it would take two generations to restore a localised food systems. His work in the mara included educational work with tamariki and taitamariki are great examples of both land-use regeneration and kaingā/community regeneration. Rereata participates actively in a project based at Waima, also in Te Tai Tōkerau. During his presentation he offered to come back to Te Aroha at harvest time and bring some of his people for kai and kōrero.



## Reflection from the facilitators

*The interviewees urged that the modules be run by locals, for locals; can that work at scale?*

Yes the talent is always there if you look for it and the effectiveness of using locals is obvious because the people facilitating modules are already respected and known in the community. It pulls people in, they bring their networks and they have respect. They will do what they can out of duty, but they have families to raise and jobs to do, so this needs to be resourced.

**Te Reo Hau** (community facilitator)

*The interviewees urged that the modules be run by locals, for locals; can that work at scale?*

Local talent is as a general rule procurable in any community, but time is a factor, rural people are busy, so facilitation needs to be resourced.

**Toni Amber** (compost and propagation module facilitator)

*What did you learn undertaking this facilitation?*

If I did this again, without COVID, I would hold a big hui at the start to frame up the exercise and make sure the community has a better understanding of the project and its aims.

**Te Reo Hau** (community facilitator)

Modules need to be regular, scheduled in advanced and widely publicised.

Effective communication will look different across communities – but word of mouth is extremely important. So you need to identify the core people in the community who are going to put the word out and get the ball rolling. Those who already organise other stuff for example and take on responsibility.

The persona of the facilitator bring different cohorts of the community depending on what they have to offer and their networks. For example, Toni's garden is renowned and she brought family people who want to grow a garden. Rereata Makiha is a renowned expert in maramataka and he brought in an older generation of kaumātua. Understanding these dynamics can be powerful in the formation of a learning framework.

The project has the greatest agency if the learning framework is occurring within a bigger pūrakau (narrative), this ties it to a bigger benefit for the community, one with a greater, well known context. In this case it was Parakao School, which had recently been returned to the iwi as part of a Waitangi Tribunal settlement. Now a local kaumātua Barney is taking leadership and leading the garden project there. The reality is that there are always such moments or issues in a community that can be identified and the learning is that an educational framework can be contextualised within this and thus carried forward in that bigger current.

Whakawhanaungatanga is critical. Without whakawhanaungatanga one cannot experience the essence of whanau or Te Ao Māori concepts of manaaki and aroha. All of these concepts are relevant to a Te Ao Māori view and a Māori pedagogy. These concepts are touched on in Durie's Te Whare Tapa Wha model. Insofar as the social pou of the model (Te Whare Tapa Wha) learning needs to enable whanau interaction for this pou to be realised.

*What did you learn undertaking this facilitation?*

I learnt a lot preparing the workshops, there was a strong element of self development for me. I identified the networking opportunity that occurs and can be leveraged.

If the modules could happen across a fuller range of the cycles that gardening involves, then the composting could have been taught in parallel with those cycles, which would be much more effective. Even though after looking at the theory inside, we then went out and made compost near the garden, it was still somewhat removed from the development of a garden as it really is.

Community based learning needs to facilitate people bringing their ideas and knowledge and having input into the module...more minds create more learning. Everyone has and everyone gains knowledge. People need to be enabled to trial their ideas within the community project and see these flourish or to learn from them. This increases investment in the learning and in the project.

The learning environment needs to be responsive to the demands of modern rural life; family, earning a living, significant local events both, social and environmental. The experience needs to be encouraging.

**Toni Amber** (compost and propagation module facilitator)

## **Mangakahia Tāpere Project Focus Group**

### **The process**

The day began with a whakatau followed by morning tea. Rereata Makiha spoke and responded to questions for about two hours. We had determined to run the focus group immediately after the presentation.

Te Reo Hau led the focus group. Te Reo gave a verbal description of the project and stressed that focus group participation was voluntary, contributions would be anonymous, and people could choose not to contribute. Te Reo displayed four questions on screen, including for the last 10 minutes of Rereata's question and answer session. The questions are below with responses summarised.

### **Question One**

First, a very brief precis of what Regenerative Land-use (particularly food production) is -

Are you interested in participating in the development of a Regenerative Plan or a shared vision of kaitiakitanga o te whenua; guardianship of the land for the Mangakāhia tapere and if so, what skills or opportunities would be useful? Eg – facilitated hui, funding application workshops.

### **Question one responses**



*Participants were generally eager for further wānanga. One noted the erosion of traditional knowledge and the declining numbers of those recalling the days when kai production was abundant. A participants wanted to support ways to help people survive and thrive. It was noted that the local hapū had land that was leased to a farmer – land that could be used for growing kai. A critical mass is needed for the mara project to succeed.*

## **Question Two**

We have had workshops on composting, predator trapping, propagation and Maramataka. What other skills do you need in relation to Regenerative Land-use and food production?

### ***Question two responses***

*The consensus was for practical skills development. The preference was for practical skills.*

*Participants suggested propagating kumara and food storage as also useful topics.*

## **Question Three**

The workshops were run in the Mangakahia rohe by Te Tai Tōkerāu people. Was the balance of practical and theoretical right? Do you like “hands-on” learning or a balance?

Was the location useful? If further training was available, how would this be best delivered to fit with your work and lifestyle; where, when and in what form?

### ***Question three responses***

*The clear preference was for practical skills. When any science was delivered it must be led by relevant practice. It was deemed also important to include kōrero tuku iho and mātauranga Māori.*

## **Question Four**

The workshops were informal. Is accumulating credits toward a qualification of any interest or value? Or is the application of the learning where the value lies?

### ***Question four responses***

*Qualifications were not valued. Only one participant expressed a need for formal learning around*

## **Conclusion**

Despite the delays imposed by the COVID 19 pandemic response, a lot has been achieved with the fortuitous coincidence of the return of the old Parakao School to the hapū. The establishment of a mara is born out of a desire for kai sovereignty and to reinvigorate almost forgotten traditions of kainga-based mara.

Just as important as the regeneration of land-use practices is the regeneration of communities, especially rural communities.

## Key learnings around the research questions are;

- Hold an event or hui to introduce the learning modules or framework, at the start
- Effective communication will look different across communities – but word of mouth is extremely important
- Modules need to be regular, scheduled in advanced and widely publicised
- Whakawhanaungatanga or community connectedness is important, build on this
- Adequate expertise is almost always available within the community, this adds to the community network and builds community ownership
- The project has the greatest agency if the learning framework is occurring within a bigger pūrakau (narrative), this ties it to a bigger benefit or relevance for the community, one with a greater, well known context
- Modules, or learning, needs to fit in with the cycles of the community; events, seasons, etc
- The learning environment needs to be responsive to the demands of modern rural life; family, earning a living, significant local events both, social and environmental. The experience needs to be encouraging
- Formal qualifications hold little interest



## Appendix one: Reconnecting Northland Visioning Process

Two visioning sessions were held with members of the Mangakāhia community in May (Porotī) and July (Pakōtai) 2021. The purpose of the hui were as follows:

Create a shared, big picture vision with the community for the community of Mangakāhia / Whatitiri and its surrounding areas

The Vision on the next page for 2121 was born out of these two hui:

The key discussion points that came from the hui regarding focus areas for next step in both hui included:

- The need to build awareness
- Working together for community strength and prosperity
- Everything is connected, people, land, water – build affinity with the land
- Start with the headwaters, and the land use pressures
- Build relationships with forestry owners, to invest back into the communities
- Selves within ourselves – build within us the foundations for change
- Kaitiakitanga, a lived reality
- He wai ora – water is life. We fish here, we swim here, we live here.
- Education is a core component.
- To strive for excellence (including the creation of a 'Centre for Excellence').



Figure 13: Mangakāhia Vision 2121

Following this RN commissioned a stocktake of active and emerging initiatives across the Mangakāhia catchment. This work was completed by Te Reo Hau and identified 24 initiatives across the catchment spanning the following themes: housing, native riparian wetland planting, nursery, tuna migration restoration, regenerative farming, food production, health and wellbeing.

Based on these pieces of work, a draft Connectivity Plan has been drafted the purpose of which is:

*Purpose*

*We commit to restoring the health and wellbeing of the maunga, awa and whenua of the Mangakāhia me Wairua, our People and our Communities, by supporting existing and emerging initiatives to give effect to tātai, aroha, and mahitahi.*

The draft Mangakāhia Plan was endorsed by the Takiwā representative on Tuesday 15th November. The next steps are to identify priority activities that can be supported to contribute to the goals of the plan and move towards the vision.

Note the whole process and momentum has been significantly disrupted by Covid and all of this work has been supported by funding from Reconnecting Northland and the Waimā Waitai, Waiora Partnership. Also, please ensure that the info in this report is retained for the purposes of reporting and is not passed on to third parties.