

7.1 RAAKAU PRESERVATION TECHNIQUE UNLOCKING DORMANT KNOWLEDGE

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Ngaa mihi

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Ko Rukumoana me Kai-a-te-mata nga Marae

Ko Hamiora/Samuels te ingoa whaanau o tooku tupuna whaea

As an emerging kairangahau, and a tribal member of Waikato-Tainui, I am privileged to have had the amazing opportunity of a 2-year secondment working for both Waikato Raupatu River Trust (WRRT) and Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research. Made possible through the Vision Maatauranga Capability Fund, funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), this opportunity allowed me to work within the two worlds of maatauranga Maaori and Western science. My experience over that time has been a positive eye-opener and life changing. Working for the tribe has enabled me to engage with our tribal members, strengthen bonds with my own marae and hapuu, and learn more about the values and aspirations of Waikato-Tainui.

As a tribal member you continue to embrace your cultural values, so the learning never ends. I'm so grateful for the guidance of my friends and colleagues from WRRT. A big mihi to them for their patience and understanding, and for taking me under their wing and showing me a world that has added immensely to my life.

Nei te mihi manahau.

Nei te mihi matakukui, kia koutou te hunga kua whakatau, kua manaaki hoki i ahau mai tooku taenga ki waenga i a koutou, tae noa ki teenei waa.

Naa koutou ahau i aawhina kia marama pai ki ngaa tikanga o Waikato-Tainui, me te whakahono ano i ahau ki ooku iwi noo koonei, no reira me mihi ka tika kia koutou.

E kore te puna o te aroha e mutu i konei, aa, otira ma te Atua koutou e manaaki, e arataki i ngaa waa kaatoa.

Paimaarire.

– Ngaa mihi Yvonne



Nga kowharau o Hineiterepo

The many hiding places of Hineiterepo (the swamp maiden)

Through the Wetland Restoration Programme 2010–2016 (C09X1002), Waikato Raupatu River Trust and Manaaki Whenua worked collaboratively to be more effective in addressing repo restoration within the Waikato rohe (region). One of the priorities of the programme was to identify and explore a cultural indicator – a tohu (sign, marker) of importance to Waikato-Tainui (tribal people of the Waikato region). A tohu must be a meaningful indicator that helps in understanding the overall state of the environment, and should be developed from local knowledge, in collaboration with tangata whenua (indigenous people), to make them relevant and connected.

Previous page: Celebrations at the end of the 4-day journey of te tira hōe o Waikato, Te Puuaha o Waikato.
Photo: Waikato Raupatu River Trust

Hongi (to press noses in greeting). Photo: Waikato Raupatu River Trust

During the development of the Waikato-Tainui Environment Plan, kaumaatua (elders) from Whangamarino Wetland made the point that the lower Waikato repo (wetlands) were identified as areas of significance as our tuupuna (ancestors) would store and preserve taonga (treasures) within repo, to ensure their safety. This provided an opportunity to discuss the rāakau (timber) preservation technique with tribal members. The process taken to develop this tohu with Waikato-Tainui adapted kaupapa Maaori research methodologies (an approach underpinned by Maaori values). This chapter recounts my journey to understand tribal values and aspirations, and engage with tribal members not only as a kairangahau (researcher) but more importantly as a tribal member, and build meaningful relationships with the tribe to develop a tohu that met their aspirations for the restoration of repo.



IMPORTANCE OF REPO TO WAIKATO-TAINUI

The Waikato rohe is the ancestral lands of Waikato-Tainui, and the lower Waikato repo are areas of huge significance. Repo are a fundamental component within the whakapapa (connections) of Waikato-Tainui awa (rivers) and roto (lakes), providing significant spawning grounds and habitat for a variety of taonga species (native plants and animals of cultural significance).

The mauri (life force) of repo within the Waikato-Tainui rohe is linked to the ecological health and wellbeing of their whakapapa, such as the taonga species found in those systems. These are resources on which Waikato-Tainui relies for several cultural activities that are mutually identified as hauanga kai (food gathering sites). Any damaging impacts on the whakapapa of the repo will have corresponding effects on the mauri of repo and the ability for whaanau (families), marae (Maaori social and cultural centre), hapuu (subtribes), and iwi (tribes) of Waikato-Tainui to utilise hauanga kai to satisfy physical and metaphysical needs.

KAUPAPA MAAORI RESEARCH

One of the priorities of the Wetland Restoration Programme was to explore a tohu (cultural indicator) of importance to Waikato-Tainui with tribal members. The raakau preservation technique had been signalled by kaumaatua as an essential tohu to explore. The project relied on the kairangahau to understand tribal values and aspirations, and engage with tribal members to develop a tohu that supports repo restoration and meet the aspirations of the tribe.

Tohu – cultural indicator

A cultural indicator is a tohu (sign, marker) for tangata whenua, and needs to be a meaningful indicator that can be used to understand the overall state of the environment. Cultural indicators should be developed from localised knowledge, in collaboration with whaanau, marae, hapuu, iwi, and kaitiaki (guardians) communities to make them relevant and connected. For a detailed description of cultural indicators please refer to the Cultural Resources section: Indicators for cultural resources.



Internationally important Whangamarino Wetland. Photo: Shonagh Lindsay

Raakau Preservation Technique

For Waikato-Tainui, the lower Waikato repo are areas of huge significance. Due to the concealing nature of repo, tuupuna would store and preserve taonga in them, to ensure their safety. During the early phases of *Tai Tumu, Tai Pari, Tai Ao – Waikato-Tainui Environmental Plan* development in 2008, consultation with tribal members revealed the raakau (timber) preservation technique. Information shared by kaumaatua (elders) affiliated to Whangamarino Wetland suggested that tohunga whakairo (master carvers) placed raakau in the repo before and after carving to harden/season (treat the timber). After a length of time the raakau was lifted and tested. The kaumaatua also indicated that as the lower Waikato repo became gradually less effective for this technique the practice slowly phased out.

The most well-known taonga discovered in Aotearoa is Uenuku, Atua (God) of the rainbow. Made from New Zealand tootara, Uenuku is possibly one of the oldest wooden carvings in Aotearoa, dated approximately AD1200–1500. Found in Lake Ngaroto, Waikato, in 1906, Uenuku was very well preserved as a result of being deliberately placed in the lake. Lake Ngaroto is typical of many lakes in the Waikato, providing the acidic, anaerobic conditions in swamp water that are known for preserving organic, wooden material.

You can visit Uenuku at the Te Awamutu Museum, Waikato.

Check out the research pamphlet that was created to promote the Raakau Preservation Technique, and secure the interest of tribal members and stimulate koorero (conversations) with them about our tupuna Uenuku.

It is included in the handbook.

Images on cover:
Uenuku, the Atua (God) of the rainbow.
Photo: Uenuku 2085
Te Awamutu Museum Collection.
Rainbow cast over Lake Ngaroto. Photo:
Nardene Berry



Kaupapa Maaori Research Principles

The kaupapa Maaori research principles were the guiding processes in developing the tohu. Kaupapa Maaori research is an approach designed for kairangahau Maaori (Maaori researchers) undertaking research with Maaori. As a tribal member and kaimahi (worker) for Waikato-Tainui, it was important that I was embedded in Tainuitanga (Waikato-Tainui worldview) so that I could fully appreciate tribal values and aspirations.

Kaupapa Maaori research is based on four key working principles:

- Whakapapa: the relationships between people, communities, and landscape
- Te Reo: the Maaori worldview is embedded in the language
- Tikanga Maaori: appropriately navigate and operate within a Maaori context, and make judgements and decisions within this space
- Rangatiratanga: allows Maaori to shape their own research processes.

Based on these principles, in order to develop a tohu of relevance to Waikato-Tainui, the project relied on me as the kairangahau to engage closely with tribal members, allowing us to become intimate and better communicate with each other. Please refer to the Process of Engagement 'Kapu Tii' section: Article 2. The Ake Ake Model, for more information about cultural values and future planning from the Turner whaanau of Tuurangawaewae Marae, Ngaaruawaahia.



The return of Rangiriri Paa, Koroneihana, Tuurangawaewae Marae 2016. Photo: Koroneihana 2016

Whakapapa

The opportunity to develop a tohu that would be of some benefit to Waikato-Tainui, a tribe that I affiliate to, was quite humbling. I had grand plans of sharing my scientific knowledge, as if that would be of some value. Instead, throughout the whole process I was the one learning, not only about the kaupapa (topic) but about myself as a tribal member, every time I engaged with other tribal members, whether it be tamariki (children) and rangatahi (youth) at a tribal event, kaumaatua at a marae hui (meeting), or tribal leaders in the boardroom.

When I introduced myself at tribal hui, I did so with my whakapapa (genealogy) and pepeha (ancestral connection). My qualification as a kairangahau or scientist never seemed as important as how I was tribally connected. It was this tribal connection that gave me the permission to speak openly with tribal members, to gain their trust, and ultimately to build strong relationships. This allowed me access to maatauranga (knowledge) that many non-Māori/tribal researchers working for a research institute would not usually have.

Te Reo o Waikato-Tainui

The identity, culture, and history of Waikato-Tainui are held within Te Reo o Waikato (the language of Waikato). A major commitment for the tribe is for more than 80% of tribal members to be fluent in Te Reo o Waikato by 2050. As a kairangahau, I could see this being achieved through tribal events specific to Waikato-Tainui, such as Koroneihana (coronation of the King) and poukai (King movement gathering) – both significant kaupapa for the Kiingitanga (Māori King movement). Within these traditional events, carried out in a modern context, tribal members are able to maintain their connection both to cultural identity and to te reo unique to Waikato-Tainui.

I attended these events and they were excellent opportunities for me to fully appreciate the commitment of each generation to the Kiingitanga. Tamariki, rangatahi, paakeke (adults), kaumaatua, and the whaanau Ariki (royal family) each played a role. The transferal of maatauranga and te reo occurred simultaneously.

Kiingi Tuheitia and whaanau Ariki, Whatapaka Marae poukai 2016.
Photo: Yvonne Taura



Tikanga Maaori

Waikato-Tainui has a responsibility to protect and nurture the mauri of all living things within their tribal rohe. The exercise of kaitiakitanga (guardianship) is integral to maintaining the tribe's relationship with Te Tupuna Awa o Waikato (Waikato River the ancestral river) and with repo. The protection, health, and wellbeing of Te Tupuna Awa o Waikato is a major priority for Waikato-Tainui.

One way for tribal members to strengthen relationships with their tupuna awa through kaitiakitanga is to participate in the bi-annual Te Tira Hoe o Waikato (the paddling crew of Waikato), hosted by Waikato Raupatu River Trust (WRRT). Tribal members have the unique opportunity to participate in the 4-day, life-changing journey. During this time, we reconnected with the tupuna awa by paddling various sections from the source at Waikato-Iti to the mouth at Te Pūaha o Waikato (Port Waikato), gained maatauranga – such as the Kiingitanga, paimaarire (Christian faith), and sites of significance, and were hosted by marae, hapuu, and iwi who have a strong connection to the Kiingitanga.

As kaimahi for WRRT, my engagement with whaanau and kaumaatua who attended the tira hoe was guided by them. Our mutual respect for the kaupapa of tira hoe enabled me to learn and participate in the tikanga o Kiingitanga (cultural practices of the Kiingitanga), paimaarire, and our ancestral relationship to our tupuna awa. By paddling on the awa – touching her, smelling her; by sleeping at the marae – building relationships; by visiting sites of significance – acknowledging our tuupuna and by listening to koorero from kaumaatua – te reo o tuupuna; I was deeply immersed in the wairua (spirit) of the journey.

Over the 4 days, each participant reconnects with their ancestral relationship to Te Tupuna o Waikato, embedded in tikanga o Kiingitanga and engaged with tribal members from other marae, hapuu, and iwi. These elements provided each of us with an improved sense of cultural identity, the ability to exercise kaitiakitanga, and a renewed respect of who we are as tribal members. I am forever grateful for the experiences.

Te tira hoe o Waikato, Te Pūaha o Waikato 2015.

Photo: Waikato Raupatu River Trust



Rangatirangatanga

Te Tupuna Awa o Waikato is highly regarded as an ancestral being by Waikato-Tainui. The unity the tribe have with their tupuna awa is expressed in the Kiingitanga. For 150 years, Kiingitanga has shaped and given purpose to the lives of all of those who support it; its kaupapa unites people from many marae and iwi.

Waikato-Tainui are recognised as partners in the management of natural resources in the greater Waikato rohe and exercise mana whakahaere (rights and responsibilities). They have developed various strategies that align with the tribal vision determined in Whakatupuranga 2050 – a long-term development approach to building the capacity of Waikato-Tainui marae, hapuu, and iwi that will be a legacy for the future.

Te Ture Whaimana – the Vision and Strategy is one of those strategies that focuses on restoring and protecting the health and wellbeing of the river for future generations.

"The Vision is for a future where a healthy Waikato River sustains abundant life and prosperous communities who, in turn, are all responsible for restoring and protecting the health and wellbeing of the Waikato River, and all it embraces, for generations to come."

Te Ture Whaimana

Tooku awa koiora me oona pikonga he kura tangihia o te maataamuri

The river of life, each curve more beautiful than the last

Kiingi Taawhiao

These words form part of the Vision and are taken from the maimai aroha (lament) by Kiingi Taawhiao, the second Maaori King, in which he recorded his love and reverence for the Waikato River and the significance of the tupuna awa (ancestral river) as a taonga for all generations. These visionary words inspire the actions that will be necessary to restore the health and wellbeing of the Waikato River, including repo.

To meet the aspirations of Waikato-Tainui, it was important that I was consistently engaged with the tribe throughout the duration of the project, whether through tribal events, hui, and kaupapa, or through one-to-one interviews with select tribal members. This was to make sure that, as the kairangahau, I recognised any sensitivities while developing the tohu for them, so that what was being developed aligned with tribal aspirations.



Te Tupuna Awa o Waikato, the ancestral Waikato River. Photo: Waikato Raupatu River Trust

Tribal events such as Koroneihana and poukai are in keeping with the values of Kiingitanga. For generations, Waikato-Tainui have kept these values alive through inter-generational participation in the kaupapa. The annual Koroneihana commemorations celebrate the reign of Kiangi Tuheitia who was crowned in 2006. The celebrations take place at Tuurangawaewae Marae, the principle marae of the Kiingitanga. It is the major tribal event of the year and attracts iwi from across the motu who support the Kiingitanga. Poukai is the annual circuit during which Kiangi Tuheitia visits marae affiliated to the Kiingitanga to discuss tribal matters. This gives the people of the marae the opportunity to express their support of the movement and its leadership.

As kaimahi and a tribal member, it was important to attend these events to gain a better sense of who Waikato-Tainui are as a people. I was able to witness their strong commitment to the Kiingitanga, which was evident in the roles that each whaanau, marae, hapuu, and iwi played in hosting these events every year. My engagement was made simple as I was also a participant in the kaupapa, which allowed for koorero to occur naturally.

As a kairangahau, I felt accountability and a sense of responsibility to conduct myself in a manner that was respectful. I did this knowing, that not only my reputation was at stake but also that of my whaanau, marae, and tuupuna.

CONCLUSION

The development of the tohu – the raakau preservation technique, was identified, guided, and formulated by Waikato-Tainui, in order for the tohu to align with tribal values and aspirations. By following Whakapapa, Te Reo o Waikato-Tainui, Tikanga Maaori, Rangatiratanga – the four principles of kaupapa Maaori research – I was able to:

- position myself within the tribe as a tribal member
- appreciate Te Reo o Waikato-Tainui, by attending tribal events and hui
- participate in those initiatives that allow tribal members to reconnect their ancestral relationship with their tupuna awa and cultural identity
- conduct myself in a manner that was respectful to my own whaanau and marae

The principles were vital to understanding the values and aspirations of Waikato-Tainui from the perspective of a tribal member, which then helped me as a kairangahau to better develop a tohu that would be of benefit to the tribe.

The development of the raakau preservation technique framework is currently underway. This information will be made available in due time.

Waiata-a-ringa (action songs) at Poohara Marae, te tira hoe o Waikato 2015.
Photo: Waikato Raupatu River Trust



WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Note: If you are having problems with the hyperlinks below, try copying and pasting the web address into your browser search bar.

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Websites

Tai tumu, tai pari, tai ao – Waikato-Tainui Environmental Plan:

www.wrrt.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/EBook_FINAL_EP_Plan_sp.pdf

Uenuku, The Atua of the Rainbow – carving can be seen at the Te Awamutu Museum:

www.tamuseum.org.nz/exhibition/uenuku-a-tainiuawamutu-museum

Kaupapa Maaori Research:

www.rangahau.co.nz

Dates for Poukai:

www.waikatotainui.com/tribal-paanui

Inside look into the Kiingitanga:

www.maoritelevision.com/tv/shows/kiingitanga

Whakaptupuranga 2050:

www.waikatotainui.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/WhakatupurangaWT2050.pdf

Te Ture Whaimana – The Vision and Strategy:

www.waikatotainui.com/environmental-management-plan/c-11-the-vision-strategy-for-waikato-river

Image related credit

Uenuku 2085 Te Awamutu Museum Collection. Photo: Brian Brake, © Raymond Lau

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