

Affirming Connections and Growing Kaitiakitanga for Healthy Ngahere

Grace Ormond, Rongomaiwahine

March 2024

Introduction

Funding was received from Ngā Rākau Taketake (administered by the New Zealand's Biological Heritage NSC) to recognise and support the cultural systems and people that underpin a uniquely Māori designed and driven approach to combating *Phytophthora agathidicida* impacts on kauri. Specifically, this funding enabled the coming together of two peoples and their experts – the taha tua-moana (Rongomaiwahine – Te Mahia Peninsula and peoples of the domain of Tangaroa, Māori deity of the sea) and the taha tua-whenua (Ngāti Hine – peoples of the realm of Tane, Māori deity of the forests, Northland). Further, it supported intergenerational knowledge transfer – critical in a contemporary environment where our environmental Mātauranga is being lost. This visit took place on the 11th to the 14th March 2024.

Aims

1. Gifting of taonga essential for continuing the Rongoā treatment process.
2. Mutual sharing of respective cultural knowledges (mahinga kai, Māori practices relating to the collection and use of natural resources; kōrero tuku iho/pūrākau (cultural narratives).
3. Whakapakari i ngā hononga whakapapa (sharing and strengthening cultural ties to the whenua and moana and to each other); and
4. Intergenerational education and cross-hapū/iwi exchange.

Results and Outcomes

The following section is structured around key questions were posed to Grace Ormond (Project Co-Lead) regarding the visit to Ngāti Hine.

What did your group get up to while you were away?

Preparation

It started off with, obviously, the stranding with Pōwhiro, Pōwhiro Hauhake. And for me personally, I hadn't been involved in many whale strandings for quite a number of years, because they were just getting buried, and I didn't want to be involved in that. Because we have quite a large number of tīpua coming through for whatever reason, and they all have a reason, we want to unravel that reason. And one of the ways that we do that is through karakia, through observation, and also through past experiences.



Figure 1. The sperm whale that stranded at Te Mahia and was subsequently named Pōwhiro Hauhaki and from whom the spermaceti, wax and blubber that was gifted to Ngāti Hine originated from (Photo credit Grace Ormond).



Figure 2. Processing of the wax and oil that was sourced from Pōwhiro Hauhaki (Photo credit Grace Ormond).

And so, for us, it was about having, giving the utmost respect that we could for all the tīpua that strand at Te Mahia. And it just happened that at Pōwhiro, Pōwhiro is, that whale was named after

Pōwhiro. That was Pōwhiro Cracknell who was actually my mentor for history around here too. When I had heard it was the name, I jumped in. I said, that's it, that's it.

Everybody [at home] was in support of our trip. We all slept at Te Ruruku Pā in order to come together. That's where it started, and then we loaded up at 2 o'clock in the morning, and then we were on our way. And when I say loaded up, I mean loaded up the buckets of spermaceti, the buckets of blubber, the buckets of wax, and also a stranded Mediterranean striped dolphin that stranded on the 6th February that we had in the freezer and a pygmy sperm that stranded three weeks after that we had in the freezer. So because Auckland was our mid-way stopping point, we thought we'd, you know, get to it, since it's a whale kaupapa, you know, trying to kill 12 birds with the one stone. And we had those tipua on with us as well, and it just felt so right, you know, and the kaupapa all aligned.

Cetacean Pathology Unit, Massey Campus, Auckland

So we go to Massey University and they drop them off for a wānanga there later on, which by the way we have just completed. So we've learned how to do a post-mortem and understood the post-mortem aspects with Antonio from the Canary Islands and Atlantic, he's the tohunga there, and it was amazing, very amazing. While at Massey University we were shown around the labs which was good because we could see what their labs were like and learn about health and safety and things like that. Then we had a pōhiri with Ngāti Whātua. And we had a wānanga with the Massey University leader there in the pathology unit to introduce to the tamariki about who they were and our way forward.



Figure 3. Visit to the Massey cetacean labs (Photo credit Grace Ormond).

So that's one of the outcomes, I suppose, of that is that wānanga has happened through this delivery as on our way up to Ngāti Hine, and we were able to stay at the Sir Peter Blake's Recreation Centre with Ewan and them right on the beach. There's a marine reserve there. We took all our kids' dive gear and they got to go and connect with the moana because they're very moana people, and they spent about three, four hours around there learning about what's a marine reserve.

The idea of that was to show them what our tipuna would have seen when they were divers. As you know, there's all sorts of issues going on in Mahia, and our kids are actually, you know, it's not as

good as it used to be like when we were kids. And so for them to see that, we're like, okay, so here's Mahia. This is where Mahia is at, and this is where these reserves are at. This is what it used to look like. There's the aim. But not with a marine reserve, you know, just to build it back so they could visually see it. So we are grateful to be able to do that at our rest stop there.

Te Hāwera-a-Maki (Goat Island)

Then we left there in the morning and went up to Te Hāwera-a-Maki – Goat Island to show them another reserve and how they [Ngāti Manuhiri] look after there, how their kaumātua look after their area there.

Moerewa Marae & Te Aho Mauriora o Tanenuiarangi

I remember the kids' first words in my van when we arrived at the marae, and they were the same words in the other van and the other truck, too. And they're like, far...this is big. And some of them are like, oh, it looks like a marae, you know, because a lot of our ones back at Mahia don't have carvings and are quite run down. So it was good for them to see. And plus we had been through a whole lot of flooding, too, so it was quite like, wow, you know, for the kids to see that.

And yeah, we made comment anywhere they got out, and just straight away we were blessed. So that connection of whenua, taiao, was definitely with us through the whole time. And then when we finally got to meet the people, the whānau of [Moerewa, Ngāti Hine] through the pōhiri, it was just instant connection.



Figure 4. The handing over of the taonga from Rongomaiwahine to Ngāti Hine (Photo credit Grace Ormond).

Another outcome of the time with Ngāti Hine was seeing all of their kaitiaki mahi. The Tamariki were buzzing out. Ironically the iwi at home are actively involved in kaitiakitanga all around us, yet none of them have actually shown our kids anything of what they do. And so it was really neat and inspiring

for them to actually be a part of, knowing what they're doing up here in Ngāti Hine and what the kids are going to get up to there in the future.

Uncle Tohe even said that they're going to be able to run programs with the kids up there, with the oil from Mahia and things like that. So that was really cool for the Tamariki to hear that. They were like, "ah, that'll be mean". So the tamariki really thought that was really cool because they thought that it was, like, very tamariki orientated, too, and their whakaaro about mokopuna. And it made them feel really good about what they were doing. That's reassuring. And then they showed us about how to make up the pani, how to make up the, how they do apply the rongoa, how to make it up, and also that it's not just about those oils and that. It's about, you know, the vibrations [ihirangaranga] and karakia and all that, which is really cool because it really aligned with the mahi that we're doing back here with the tamariki. So it was like, "hey, they're doing it, too, but with a tree and a whale."

So they could really, you know, those things that they were talking about was really supporting and reinforcing what we're trying to learn back here, what we're trying to teach them back here as well. So that was really cool. And also, as adults, we took back some gems as well. For example, there were few things we thought that we could sharpen up on as well in terms of taiao mahi, too. We don't work with possums and that, but iwi and that does.



Figure 5. Ngāti Hine kaitiaki explaining their mammalian pest control mahi to the group and different taonga including a pūkāea made from the rib bone (Photo credit Grace Ormond).

There were also other things that the kids can do. They were quite interested in the ribs and that being like a pūkāea. A pūkāea is made out of totara. Well, they call it ihi rangaranga, that one in particular, from out of the rib bone. The kids were very fascinated on that, so they're quite keen to analyse the ribs. And perhaps that might be another trip up or when Ngāti Hine come down, because they said they are, they could show us how they made it. Like it's the same design as a pūkāea, but maybe actually having somebody show the kids how to do it, we would just need to prepare some ribs.



Figure 6. Tamariki were presented with tohu signifying their participation in the visit and a photo taken at Ruapekapeka pā site (Photo credit Grace Ormond).



Figure 6. Tamariki seeing how the Rongoa is prepared (Photo credit Grace Ormond).

Time with Ngāti Wai

And that was cool kōrero too because there was a few things happening with Ngāti Wai that meant we could split the group up, and so some were around the pit, and then some were being shown around on what they do with the horokaka and picking up rubbish, so that was really, really cool too. And then we had lunch, and then we left from there, and we went back to the office.

Do you think that the goals of the trip were met, ie., gifting of the taonga, observing how the oil is utilised and the Rongoa process, seeing their kaitiaki mahi, sharing stories and whakapapa)?

Absolutely. We got so much out of the trip. Everybody at home was in support of the visit to Ngāti Hine. So yes, this was a wonderful and awesome trip away. It was mind-blowing, you know. Really, at the end of the day it started with a question to you [Grace's questions to Jamie] do you know anything about how we [at Rongomaiwahine] can help with the kauri? Because we've got a resource here [stranded whales], and there's a resource up there (kauri) that we know is in trouble.

Initially though there were a few questions in amongst the whānau, like why Ngāti Hine. But when we got up there, you know, it was all explained. Like, Ngāti Hine are the ones that carry that kaupapa and help everybody around them.

And it just so fitted. Like, I knew that Ngāti Hine was the one, you know, whakapapa-wise and history-wise [two wahine Ariki-Tapairu as the Iwi eponymous ancestors; both iwi went to court to be recognised by the Crown as Iwi in their own right]. And we didn't know that they were the ones that were involved and that were the kaitiaki of that kaupapa. But without us knowing, none of us knew until we got back to Mahia, when I was able to send the post that the kids had done, and one of the koroua [Pāpā Pua Taumata] here in Mahia [who was following our media posts] said he noticed Matua Tohe, and he said, that man was down here, years ago to ask for the spermaceti – 20 or so years ago, because I said to Pāpā Pua, when was that? He goes, oh, it was when Auntie Pauline was here. So a few of them met up with Pāpā Pua and some locals, and they were like, yeah, yeah, we'll go, we'll go to the hui, and we'll ask. Anyway, they were declined at that time. And I asked Pāpā Pua, why? And he says, oh, they didn't have a good reason why. And he said, probably because they were still burying them. You know, they didn't know how to get out of the DoC management of whales at that time. Anyway...I said to Pāpā Pua "well we took some spermaceti up to them", and he just cried. He said, wow, we've been waiting for this for so long, and even more important that our tamariki actually took it up and led the whole thing.

So, you know, I don't know how long Uncle Tohe's been waiting for oil from down here, from the kids, but it's finally happened, and it was a huge relief. And, yeah, so there's a few people still alive that were around then, and Pāpā Pua rang them up and told them the oil was being delivered.

Back Home

When the tamariki got back to school their school was like, wow, where did you go? You know, you heard all that. And they were like, oh, we went to Ngāti Hine. And they were like, where's that? And they were they like? So they got a call and I think some of them stood up in assembly, in their morning assembly and did a presentation back to the kura.

Were there any key learning from the Exchange?

The Wānanga Process

What a cool wānanga. We do wānanga, and we go out and do stuff, but the Tamariki don't come back that interested or that inspired and that knowledgeable, so about the delivery and how they delivered it through wānanga style and Ngāti Hine style was very effective for us and very effective for our tamariki. Awesome. And, because we can go away and to other wānanga and go, come back and go, hmm, what did we learn? You know, so it must have been at the right pace and repetitive enough for us to remember, and so that's really important too because that means that Ngāti Hine are really effective at communication. Yes.

Because I said you could talk in any language, but if your audience doesn't understand what you're talking about because you haven't shown them or you haven't connected with them and that, it becomes a waste of time. And so every minute of there, I can see in the tamariki and ourselves, and the adults have learned heaps and also come back and been able to reflect positively and share that Ngāti Hine are the ones that do this. And that's another thing. I just heard the kids the other day down at the Waka Festival [Te Hau Kōmaru National Waka Hourua Festival, Golden Bay] talking about kauri this and kauri that to these kaumoana. Oh, we know about this and that, and you've got to go to Ngāti Hine to learn all this, you know. If you want to know the know, you've got to go to Ngāti Hine, you know.

Ownership of knowledge

So it was really cool how they were able to take comfortable ownership of what they went through and then be able to be like a messenger, a proud messenger for Ngāti Hine because that's how comfortable the people made them feel to uplift them and give them enough confidence to say, yep, that's what you do and that's where you go to learn and you'll come back with heaps of knowledge. You'll come back with heaps of knowledge, but you've got to apply it or you've wasted your time. So you've got to know this because you're on the waka with kauri, they were going.

The manaakitanga of Ngāti Hine

What was also really neat was that when we have wānanga for the kids I encourage the kids to lead, the kids to do and all that. And Tohe and them allowed them to do that too. So that was really cool that they were allowed to go off with the pū and go through the bush and come back out, you know, come around the kauri. They actually really made them feel like a part of the process, a part of the tikanga, a part of the ceremony. So that's really important.

And what was also amazing was how Ngāti Hine really was a beautiful korowai for us. There's a lot of, you know, we felt, and even the kids talked about it, but I remember the adults talking about it too. Like, "far.., they really looked after us, like, right to the end, right through the process." Everywhere we went, you know, they were right there by us to make sure, like, it was really neat, like having a real kaitiaki around us. And we were not left, you know, to do whatever. Or, you know, it was really, really comforting. Like, we don't get that here, you know... we're not used to that. And so it was so beautiful, like, in every way, not just in the korowai, but they were actually really always looking out for us, and I could see that. You know, they were always looking out to make sure that our kids were safe, our kids were doing something, our kids were, you know, being looked after, our kids were being talked to, and us were being looked after and always looking out for us. So very, very, very tūturu kaitiaki, and we didn't have to worry about a thing.

Are there any ongoing activities or aspirations for future involvement with Ngāti Hine?

And so there's a few things in that. And one of them is that when Ngāti Hine does come down to visit, the kura wants to be invited to come and acknowledge Ngāti Hine being their kaitiaki at the time.

The other one was if we've got any wānanga up at Massey and we've given New Zealanders notice that they're welcome to come and come or pick, you know, like you said, maybe Ngāti Wai, to come to the post-mortems or the necropsies and carry it up and learn that stuff. A trip for Ngāti Hine or trips down to here. We're hoping, you know, in the warmer seasons because they might get cold... you know, around about October-ish when the kinas are fat, you know. All the important things.

And yeah, all those beautiful things. So, yeah, we're just preparing for that slowly, you know, in the background with stuff now to make sure that, oh, and also the tamariki have prepared, they'll go through karakia with these resources for Ngāti Hine. So there's a, we have karakia for two days here through the huamata [Ringatū planting and harvesting rites].

Is there any preference too like of other whales, have they tried other oils from other whales that could be of benefit because we can, we are rendering a lot of the other whales. Do they want to try, if it works with pygmy sperms because they're very similar, that we have an abundant resource of. So now that we're knowing much more, we've got a connection with Ngāti Hine, how else can we help and what else could they utilise? Could they utilise the bone of a pygmy sperm whale so that bone doesn't go to waste? Because honestly, there was 21 pygmy sperm strandings last year and so there's probably going to be about the same amount if they needed more bone or was it just sperm, just the big sperms.

So those questions will come, we'll need to ask them and see and then when they come back down, then the idea is to bring one of those trailers down and if we can load it up with stuff they can take with resources, they can take it back and trial. Yeah, well, and that's the beauty of this exchange, right? There's so many potential options to further progress the mahi whilst recognising that the taonga, the paraoa [Sperm whale] is limited in some respects and the disease [PA] is widespread. So if there are other ways to look at whether there are, as you say, other effective methods you could use, utilising other similar resources or could be different ones.

Also the kids were very fascinated by the pūkāea which could be another trip up or when Ngati Hine come down, because they said they are, they could show us how they made it. Like it's the same design as a pūkāea, but maybe actually having somebody show the kids how to do it, we would just need to prepare some ribs.

Budget Spend

Expenses

Transport:

Rental vehicles (1 × 11-seater van plus trailer) for 5 days
Fuel

\$3,000.00

Accommodation (10 people, 3 × kaiako/tutors/parents 7 × rangatahi/tauirā):

1 night in Auckland (drive up from Mahia), 2 nights at Moerewa, Ōtiria marae, 1 night in Auckland (travel back to Mahia)

\$7,500.00

Meals:

(Dinner, breakfast and lunch) × 4

\$1,500.00

Concluding Remarks

It is evident that this funding has produced multiple outcomes over and above those listed in the project aims. Furthermore, there is clear evidence demonstrating that deep intergenerational learning has occurred through deliberative wānanga and experiential learning experiences – all conducted within and guided by tikanga and kawa Māori frameworks and philosophies. This has left a significant positive impact on tamariki and adult participants alike, especially in reinforcing the importance and role of their cultural identity, history and knowledge. Further, it has planted a seed that will very likely blossom into future collaboration and strengthening of relationships moving into the future.



Figure 7. Karakia at the spot where Pōwhiro was buried acknowledging the visit to Ngāti Hine and the safe return home to Te Mahia (Photo credit Grace Ormond).

Acknowledgements

The project leads would like to thank New Zealand's Biological Heritage NSC for supporting this project. He iti te mokoroa, nāna i kati te kahikatea – with this humble funding this project has achieved a range of significant outcomes. We would also like to acknowledge the administrative assistance provided by Te Tira Whakamātaki to allow us to successfully complete this project and we would like to thank Ngāti Wai for supporting this kaupapa. Finally, but by no means least he mihi mutunga kore tēnei ki te hau kaenga o Moerewa marae, Ngā Tirairaka o Ngāti Hine Trust me Ngāti Hine whānui mō te kaha o to manaaki kua uhia iho mai ki runga ki a mātou, ngā uri o Rongomaiwahine. Our heartfelt thanks and appreciation goes out to the people of Moerewa marae, kaimahi of Ngā Tirairaka o Ngāti Hine for their incredible hospitality that has made this kaupapa so successful – memories that will live on in our hearts and minds.