

# UNLOCKING COLLECTIVE WISDOM

Shared learning with Te Taiao Collectives Network

## COMING TOGETHER TO EXPAND RESTORATION POSSIBILITIES

Restoration collectives hold significant promise for upscaling restoration efforts and improving environmental and social outcomes across the motu, but they typically operate in relative isolation. We established a shared learning network of 15 diverse collectives from across Aotearoa New Zealand to provide a space for collective leaders to connect and learn from one another to support their local restoration work. Members dubbed it 'Te Taiao Collectives Network'.

The network met through a co-design hui, five online and one in-person wānanga over 18 months. Wānanga were designed to create an empowering space for collective leaders to build relationships, share experiences and lessons they have learned, and ask questions or seek resources to support their collective. Our researchers supported the network while investigating the knowledge sharing and benefits of connecting taiao leaders, using surveys, observation, and interviews.

## BENEFITS OF A NATIONAL NETWORK OF ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS

Members observed that this one-of-a-kind national network was valuable for connecting, learning from each other, amplifying their own restoration efforts and avoiding 'reinventing the wheel.' They also identified opportunities to work together on shared problems.



### AT A GLANCE

Across Aotearoa New Zealand, collectives of community groups, iwi, hapū, councils, and others are joining forces to protect and restore nature. These organisations are achieving great results at local scales, but what more could they achieve by connecting to share their knowledge and experience?



# TE TAIAO COLLECTIVES NETWORK IMPACT

**Fostered Social Connectivity**  
among leaders working in similar organisations and contexts

**Created a Network of Connections**  
that leaders can reach out to with questions or ideas

**Helped Validate Existing Approaches & Tools**  
that the collectives are using

**Generated Ideas & Resources**  
to share with collectives, partners and others

**Created Space**  
to identify shared challenges in restoration and learn from the approaches, innovations and experiences of others

**Expanded & Deepened**  
leaders' knowledge of a diverse range of restoration topics

**Prompted Reflection**  
on the practices within each collective

**Provided Inspiration & Support**  
for leaders who often work in isolation

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR SHARED LEARNING NETWORKS

**The network was highly successful, with strong engagement and enthusiasm to continue networking beyond the pilot. Our study highlighted some key considerations for a successful network:**

### Knowledge sharing:

- Collectives are most interested in learning from other collective leaders, whose practical experience and knowledge of community-based restoration is most relevant to their work;
- 'Solutions' developed in one place will always need to be adapted for other contexts;
- Knowledge sharing should include a mix of high-level strategies that are of broad interest, and more detailed insights relevant to those undertaking specific activities (e.g. monitoring);
- Creating information resources (e.g. summaries, recorded presentations) is important for enabling knowledge sharing beyond the network.

### Network membership:

- Network diversity is valuable, as are opportunities for organisations with similar goals, ways of working, and contexts (e.g. catchment collectives) to connect and learn from one another;
- Large networks need to include smaller subgroups (up to 15 people) that enable trust and understanding to be built through repeated interactions;
- Sharing contact information enables leaders to connect directly on specific topics.

### Meeting format:

- In-person meetings are extremely valuable for relationship building and knowledge sharing;
- A designated topic and speakers help to keep knowledge sharing focussed and relevant;
- A mix of formal presentations and small group informal or interactive discussions provides breadth and depth;
- Clear guidelines and facilitation help to keep meetings inclusive, focussed and on time;
- A paid coordinator/facilitator is necessary to sustain and expand the network.

## WHAT NEXT

Our research team are seeking long term support for the Te Taiao Collectives Network to allow their excellent mahi to continue. We will also be publishing full research findings on the BioHeritage National Science Challenge website – please share with your organisation to sustain the momentum!

### Research team

The pilot project was co-led by Raven Cretney (research consultant) and Kiely McFarlane (Cawthron Institute) and was supported by Joanne Clapcott (Cawthron Institute) and Danielle Shanahan (Zealandia Ecosanctuary). We are very grateful to the representatives of the 15 restoration collectives involved in this study.

