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Restoring the Mauri of Coastal Dune Lake Ecosystems:

The case study of Lake Waiorongomai, Ōtaki

Aotearoa / New Zealand

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Restoring the Mauri of Coastal Dune Lake Ecosystems:
The case study of Lake Waiorongomai, Ōtaki,
Aotearoa / New Zealand

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Resource and Environmental Planning,
at Massey University, Palmerston North,
Aotearoa / New Zealand

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September 2018

Abstract

This doctoral thesis documents and analyses a six-year, hapū-led, iwi-and community-supported, kaupapa-Māori-based (Māori-cultural-values-based) project that resulted in the transformative change of a dune lake ecosystem (which included people i.e., a whānau Māori ecosystem).

Lake Waiorongomai, just north of Ōtaki, is a culturally-significant ancestral landscape and wāhi tapu (sacred site) for local whānau (extended families), hapū (sub-tribes) and iwi (tribes). The mana (prestige), mauri (life force) and ecological wellbeing of this wāhi tapu was diminished as a result of forest clearance, hydrological modification of the lake catchment, and the effects of pastoral farming activities. Attempts over the last three decades to bring Māori land owners and hapū members together to re-instate the mana and mauri of the dune lake ecosystem met with limited success. This thesis documents and seeks to better understand: (i) the conditions that gave rise to a successful restoration project; and (ii) the factors that empowered this hapū-led project.

The study shows that conditions that contributed to a successful project involved: (i) collective land owner, local hapū and iwi support; (ii) a kaupapa Māori approach; (iii) project activities guided by the expression of rangatiratanga (sovereignty) and the contributions of a kaitiaki team who were appointed by hapū members; and (iv) the engagement of a kaupapa Māori researcher to support the hapū initiative and their revitalisation aspirations.

Transformative change in this case study was change that had positive effects on physical, cultural, social, psychological and spiritual wellbeing. In the Lake Waiorongomai restoration project, the outcomes that had positive effects for the whānau

Māori ecosystem include, but are not limited to: (i) fencing the lake with a 50m riparian margin; (ii) fencing the Waiorongomai Stream with a 10m riparian margin; (iii) community involvement in planting more than 3000 native plants, translocating over 1000 harakeke (swamp flax), and trapping over 100 pests (including stoats and ferrets); and (iv) reconnection of whānau and hapū members to the lake, through regular wānanga and ongoing restoration activities such as winter planting days. The habitat within the lake and surrounding wetlands provided opportunities to observe amongst other things threatened species such as the tiny button daisy, raoriki (swamp buttercup), fennel-leaved pond weed, matuku (bittern), kotuku ngutupapa (royal spoonbill), kotuku (white heron), parera (grey ducks), weweia (dab chicks) and pūweto (spotless crane). The improvement in the wellbeing of two species, inanga (whitebait) and watercress, over the course of the study is of particular note, since these species hold customary value for whānau and hapū.

A central focus of this research is the relationship that ecological wellbeing and whānau, hapū, iwi wellbeing are inextricably linked. In summary, this hapū-led, community supported project took initial, confident steps in reclaiming, reframing and re-instating the mana and mauri of this whānau Māori ecosystem.

This thesis argues that transformative changes were generated by empowering factors that were closely linked with: (i) the creation of a project space that allowed the free expression of kaupapa and tikanga (customs) in a socially and culturally mediated journey; (ii) whānau and hapū members' expressions of kaupapa and tikanga that enhanced the success of this project; (iii) contributions of iwi members, councils and the wider community; (iv) the sharing and developing of mātauranga (knowledge) including through the involvement of learning institutes (e.g. whare wānanga, kura kaupapa, kōhanga reo and university students); and (v) a synthesis of Māori and

Western restoration and research methods (including ecological monitoring). These empowering factors assisted in affirming to local hapū members that their expressions of kaupapa and tikanga were crucial in generating initial lake ecosystem wellbeing improvements including the enhancement of mauri.

Two key lessons can be drawn from the role of these various factors in transformative change. First, no individual contribution was enough to ensure the success of the restoration. However, when a safe kaupapa and tikanga space was created for the inclusion of all contributors, the total effect was more than the sum of the individual parts (i.e., a synergistic outcome resulted). Second, the results indicate that it is highly unlikely that a Western methodological approach on its own would have been as successful in achieving a project outcome of this kind. A comparison of the key characteristics of kaupapa Māori and action research showed that a kaupapa Māori research methodology was the most appropriate for this case study. As such, this thesis may enhance current action research theory and method by showing how it could be responsive to cultural values, knowledge, customs and language in a real-world, wicked problem context of this kind.

In documenting and exploring the various conditions and factors that made this restoration project possible, this thesis provides environmental planners and policy makers a real-world window into how transformative and progressive community-ecosystem outcomes can be achieved in a Māori cultural context through the use of a kaupapa Māori approach.

Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral thesis to the whānau, hapū and iwi of

Lake Waiorongomai.

Ngā mihi

I would like to acknowledge all the many individuals and organisations that supported me, my doctoral research and the Lake Waiorongomai restoration project. Ko te mea tuatahi, he mihi atu ki ngā atua, ōku tūpuna, ngā kaitiaki hōki. You provided me with protection and guidance. Secondly, a special mention to my immediate whānau who I looked to for inspiration: children (Āwhina and Kiinui); my mum (Eila); and cousin/colleague Moira Poutama for all their love and support throughout this doctoral endeavour.

I appreciated the essential guidance and wisdom of the kaitiaki team (Te Waari Carkeek, Rupene Waaka, Caleb Royal, Rolly Raureti and Libby Hakaraia), supervisors (Professor Murray Patterson, Associate Professor Huhana Smith and Associate Professor Russell Death) and mentors (Tim Park, Rob Cross, Michael Urlich and Richard Anderson). A special thanks to whānau members Ariana Te Aomarere, Nellie Carkeek, Nick Albert and Anthony Cole who also provided vital guidance at times throughout this research journey.

A special mention to Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki, Lake Waiorongomai 10 Trust and Waiorongomai 1A Trust trustees for their endorsement and ongoing support. An acknowledgement of financial assistance that I received from the Tainui Doctoral Scholarships and Raukawa Education Grants, Work and Income Ōtaki office, as well as employment by Taiao Raukawa Environmental Research Unit. Thanks to dear friends Derrylea Hardy and Maraea Hunia for their assistance during this doctoral journey.

Abbreviations

DoC	Department of Conservation
GWRC	Greater Wellington Regional Council
KCDC	Kāpiti Coast District Council
LWRP	Lake Waiorongomai Restoration Project
MBIE	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
MTM	Manaaki Taha Moana
NHoO	Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki
NLC OMB	Native Land Court Otaki Minute Book
Taiao Raukawa	Te Reo a Taiao Raukawa Environmental Research Unit
Te Rito	Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Rito
Whakatupuranga Rua Mano	Te Kura-ā-Iwi o Whakatupuranga Rua Mano

Glossary

Atua	God/s, deities
Aotearoa	New Zealand
Harakeke	Flax plant (<i>Phormium tenax</i>)
Hapū	Sub-tribe, clan
Hikoi	Walk
Hīnaki	Eel trap
Hui	Meeting, gather
Io	Supreme god/deity
Io Matua Kore	Io-the-parentless-one, one of the names for the supreme deity, Io
Iwi	Tribe, nation
Kaiako	Teacher
Kaimoana	Food of the sea
Kaitiaki	Guardian, caretaker
Kaitiakitanga	Guardianship, stewardship
Kanohi ki te kanohi	Face to face
Kapowai	Dragon fly
Karakia	Prayer/s
Kaumātua	Elder/s
Kaupapa	Values, strategy, purpose
Kaupapa tuku iho	Values passed down from our ancestors
Kawa	Protocol
Kawenata	Covenant
Kete	Bag, basket
Koha	Gift
Kōrero	Speak, narrative
Kotahitanga	Unity, togetherness, collective action
Koura	Freshwater crayfish

Kuia	Female elder
Kura	School
Kura kaupapa	Māori medium schools
Mahinga kai	Cultivation, food gather place
Mahi	Work, job, labour
Mana	Prestige, integrity, charisma
Mana whenua	Trusteeship of land
Manaakitanga	Hospitality, generosity
Marae	Meeting place, building of tribe/sub-tribe, village
Mātauranga	Knowledge, information, education
Māori	Ordinary, native people of New Zealand
Mauri	Life force
Mihi	Acknowledge, thank
Mihimihi	Introductory speech
Moana	Sea
Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki	The sub-tribes of Ōtaki
Ngahere	Forest
Pā	Village, occupation site
Papatūānuku	Earth mother
Papakāinga	Original home, home base
Pākehā	Non-Māori, European
Pūtaiao	Science
Pūkenga	Scholars
Pūkengatanga	Teaching, learning, educating
Rahui	No take, quarantine
Rangatira	Chief, leader/s, of high rank
Rangatiratanga	Sovereignty
Ranginui	Sky father
Rohe	Territory

Rohe moana	Coastal area	
Tainui	Ancestral canoe of Waikato	
Tamariki	Children	
Tangata whenua	People of the land, indigenous people	
Tapu	Sacred	
Taonga	Treasure	
Te Aro-nui	The realm perceived by human senses	
Te Ao Māori	Māori worldview	
Te Ao Marama	The natural world	
Te Ao Tua-ātea	The spiritual realm of Io Matua Kore	
Te kete aronui	The basket of life's knowledge	
Te kete tuatea	The basket of ancestral knowledge	
Te kete tuauri	The basket of sacred knowledge	
Te reo Māori	The Māori language	
Te whānau ā Ranginui rāua ko Papatūānuku	father and earth mother	The extended family of sky
Tikanga	Custom, practice, protocol	
Tino rangatiratanga	Absolute sovereignty	
Tohunga	Priest, spiritual expert	
Tohu	Sign	
Tono	To request, bid	
Tua-uri	The realm of mauri	
Tuna	Eel	
Tūpuna	Ancestor/s	
Ūkaipōtanga	To return home/source	
Wāhi tapu	Sacred site	
Wairua	Spirit, soul	
Wairuatanga	Spirituality	
Waka	Canoe	

Wananga	Learning, workshop, seminar
Whakanoa	Free from sacredness, to make ordinary
Whakapapa	Genealogy
Whakatauki	Proverb
Whakatupu mātauranga	Knowledge development
Whānau	Family, extended family
Whānaunga	Relation
Whanaungatanga	Kin ship, family relationships
Whare wānanga	Place of higher learning, university
Whenua	Ground, country, placenta

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