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# **THE POLITICS OF IWI VOICE**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**in**

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## Abstract

This doctorate thesis *The Politics of Iwi Voice* focuses on the struggle of a modern, urban iwi authority to secure political recognition from other iwi and the Crown as it attempts to assert an independent iwi voice, and exercise mana and tino rangatiratanga. The responses of the local iwi/Maori community, the Crown, and others to the re-emergence of the new iwi entity are critically examined.

The thesis demonstrates how a small iwi group resists attempts to assimilate into a broader coalition of iwi, hapu, whanau and marae interests, preferring instead to maintain and develop its own distinctive identity. It uses the iwi Ngati Tama to exemplify the diaspora of an iwi, and shows how iwi identity and fortunes are buffeted by both iwi and urban contestations as well as changing political directions. The study suggests that a Ngati Tama future away from its homeland will depend primarily on the development of pragmatic adaptive and innovative strategies, and a fervent resolve to retain a distinctive identity, while participating in a dynamic and often oppressive environment.

This thesis concludes that to maintain a distinctive iwi presence its members should have the right to decide who best represents them. An iwi is considered an appropriate vehicle to represent its members and manage its interests. In order to survive in a constantly changing environment, an iwi must be dynamic, flexible, relevant, and meet the needs of its membership. Further, its leadership should be focused on negotiating relationships in good faith - including third party interventions - and seeking pathways that will advance its interests into the future.

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A shared vision is a pathway forward.

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