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# Hei Whenua Ora:

Hapū and iwi approaches for reinstating  
valued ecosystems within cultural landscape

Susan Margaret Smith

2007

# Hei Whenua Ora:

**Hapū and iwi approaches for reinstating  
valued ecosystems within cultural landscape**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Māori Studies,  
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## ABSTRACT

The thesis focussed on whānau and hapū and how as a Māori community, they came together to exercise kaitiakitanga (active guardianship) over their fragmented ecosystems within agricultural and cultural landscapes. The research centred on key areas within an ancestral coastline remaining predominately in tribal tenure, between the Waiwiri Stream and Waikawa River in the south-west coastal region of Horowhenua, North Island. The region was once an extensive coastal forest, a series of dune lakes, lagoons and dune wetlands within a larger tribal region under the guardianship of hapū Ngāti Te Rangitāwhia, Te Mateawa, Ngāti Manu and Ngāti Kapumanawawhiti ki Kuku who affiliate to the iwi, Ngāti Tūkorehe.

The research investigated intricate and complex environmental problems, assessed the extent of ecological decline in particular areas, and considered how well kaitiaki (as caretakers of the natural environment and their cultural landscapes) were dealing with the impact of fragmented systems with associated effects on their human condition. The methodological considerations aimed to achieve ecological and cultural restoration goals in a whole-of-person, whole-of-system context. What emerged from the action research process (grounded in a kaupapa and tikanga Māori epistemology of knowledge development supported by cross-indigenous perspective and international standards for ecological and human wellbeing) suggests that the restoration of fragmented ecological systems is interdependently related to the healing of a community, and reconnection with their natural and cultural landscape.

Certain aspects of collaborative scientific endeavour documented water engineering activities that accelerated ecosystem decline. Such approaches to knowledge development also collated hydrological data on water quality and assessed remaining indigenous biodiversity for the extent of decline in the region. Narratives of place, within a braided cultural landscape concept underpinned a knowing of place and peoples' place within it as informed by both resident Māori and non-Māori recollections of encounter and change within lands and peoples. The visual and documentary component as complimentary research methods or catalysts for action, also detailed the projects. The combined expertise, knowledge and methods supported the commitment this thesis has, as a locally generated, iwi and hapū led research and practically orientated endeavour. It drew heavily on Māori concepts, local experiences and aspirations for environmental rehabilitation, with key case studies for rivers, coastlines, wetlands, with strategies for interrelated archaeological areas

of significance. The approaches articulated new ways of doing things for remaining natural areas within a revered Māori cultural landscape.

The thesis determined that iwi and hapū with long standing relationships with their natural environment are able to determine and effect significant ecological improvements, where sustainability of both the environment and people, can be enhanced. This is achieved through planned actions, shared vision, co-intelligence and co-management strategies. Active kaitiakitanga can therefore compliment developments while recognising economic and cultural imperatives – all for the sake of future tribal generations and the wider community.

# HE MIHI

. Te ngākau pūaroa ki ngā ōhākī  
'E kore koe e ngaro- te kākano i ruia mai i Rangiātea  
Puritia! Puritia! Puritia!

E ngā atua Māori, mō ōu whakaaro whānui mā a tātou, tēnā koutou.

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā iwi o te motu, tēnā koutou.

E ngā matāwaka, whītiki! Whītiki! Whītiki!

Te hunga ora ki te hunga ora, te hunga mate ki te hunga mate.

E kui mā, e koro mā a Tūkorehe ki a koutou kua ū mai nei ki tēnei mahi nui, ki te atawhai,  
ki te manaaki i ngā taonga i tukua mai e ngā tūpuna o te takiwā nei a Kuku, tēnā koutou.

E whaea mā, e matua mā, e ngā whānaunga katoa, e hoa mā, e kohikohi ana, e mahi tonu  
ana me te kaupapa nui mō Te Taiao.

E tāku hoa rangatira a Richard... Kei whea i ngā kupu mā tou manaakitanga? Ka nui te  
aroha ki a koe, tāku hoa rangatira.

Ko te tūmanako kia whakawhānuitia i ōu mātou tirohanga i roto i te whakatakotoranga  
kaupapa nei.

Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

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