

# STORYING KAITIAKITANGA

## Exploring Kaupapa Māori land and water food stories

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### Abstract

This article explores the Indigenous principle of kaitiakitanga as it relates to Māori agrifood practices. Our discussion is based on interviews with a small cross-section of Māori in the agrifood sector whose practices are informed by a long-standing appreciation of the interconnected realities of lands, food, people and waterways. We consider how the shared Kaupapa Māori principles underpinning these food practices form part of a wider Kaupapa Māori land, water and food systems approach which we call “Kai Ora”. As is evident in the stories that follow, Kaupapa Māori values are practised in diverse ways by different kaitiaki food producers. For those who participate within any level of Māori food production, this kaupapa-based approach can lead to a range of connected outcomes, such as oranga, tātai hononga, tiaki taiao and ōhanga.

### Keywords

kaitiakitanga, Kaupapa Māori, Kaupapa Māori food systems approach, Māori agrifood, Hua Parakore, Papatūānuku

### Introduction

How can the kaupapa of kaitiakitanga help facilitate shifts in the Aotearoa New Zealand agrifood sector by fostering new understandings of what it means to be sustainable and productive? This

was the research question addressed by “Storying Kaitiakitanga: A Kaupapa Māori Land and Water Food Story”, a 15-month project funded by the Our Land and Water National Science Challenge (2018–2019). This study demonstrates how

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selected Māori agrifood practices and aspirations can shape new approaches to the conceptualisation of New Zealand-based agrifood production. Kaupapa Māori-based agribusiness has a significant history to offer success stories on how to undertake business differently in the food and farming sectors (Harmsworth et al., 2015; Reid et al., 2013; Ruru, 2015; Tipa et al., 2017). These practices also highlight the challenges and barriers that limit the flourishing of whānau-, hapū- and iwi-led ways of doing, being and knowing. Yet how widely known are these Kaupapa Māori practices and constraints? And what lessons can be learnt from these initiatives that aim for a systems approach that balances cultural, social, environmental and economic outcomes? We suggest that shining a light on existing Māori agrifood traditions and innovations and their underpinning cultural values can inspire Māori communities and individuals—as well as non-Māori decision-makers in the agrifood sector—to reframe ideas about sustainability and productivity in Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas.

The stakes for developing Kaupapa Māori land and water food stories are high in light of national efforts to develop a coherent and compelling Aotearoa New Zealand food story for global markets (Massey, 2017; Pawson, 2018). Long known as an agricultural and farming nation, New Zealand promotes its agricultural products as sustainable, traceable, niche market oriented and high premium valued. Māori are increasingly important players in this food provenance story, and Māori terms such as manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga are now becoming commonplace in the national market and export vocabulary (Johnson, 2017). We argue that by understanding and incorporating holistic Māori approaches into a national story about farming, food and hospitality, we can provide inspiration for Māori whānau, hapū and iwi as well as non-Māori.

Our discussion is based on interviews with a small cross-section of Māori in the agrifood sector whose practices are informed by a long-standing appreciation of the interconnected realities of lands, food, people and waterways. The research was approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee (ResearchMaster reference number 0000026105).

Table 1 presents our cohort, organised from the least to the most commercial.

Within this project we define Māori agrifood as the commercial production of food by farmers and retailers as well as non-commercial food production and harvesting practices based on

Māori values and principles. In defining Māori agrifood in this manner, we follow a diverse Māori economies approach that premises the diversity of Māori practices in terms of scale, size and modes of production as well as the multiple forms of social and cultural capital that arise from such practices. Our Kaupapa Māori approach included engagement with 11 Māori agrifood producers and kaitiaki, including small, medium and large agrifood entities that were either commercial or non-commercial and whānau, hapū or iwi driven. The project's rōpū tikanga rangahau, which included expert advisors Garth Harmsworth and Shaun Awatere, suggested we take this approach in order to capture the range of underlying and sometimes invisible drivers that shape Māori production practices (Awatere et al., 2017; Harmsworth et al., 2009). As Indigenous scholars have argued, a diverse Māori economies approach:

provides a platform from which to counter the dominant Western narrative surrounding notions of economy, and bring to the fore forms of enterprise and practices all too often “hidden” or viewed as alternative, and therefore deemed inferior. (Amoamo et al., 2018, p. 1)

In line with this approach, one of the aims of Storying Kaitiakitanga is to join individual food stories together to form a collective understanding that shines light on, and reveals, the often hidden dimensions of the kaupapa of kaitiakitanga as it relates to food production.

### Our approach

Our research approach affirms the power of kōrero and storytelling grounded in a ki uta ki tai (“to the mountains, to the sea”) standpoint. This standpoint acknowledges the importance of understanding Kaupapa Māori land and water food stories “all the way down” to the fundamental connection and interdependencies between whakapapa, tangata, whenua and awa, and the kaitiakitanga obligations underpinning these relationships. Aligned with this approach, our fieldwork activities not only included interviews; we also worked with a graphic designer and photographer (Desna Whaanga-Schollum) to develop visual storytelling techniques throughout the project to complement the overall research findings. All interviews were transcribed and transcripts and photography returned to participants for checking. We then developed individual Kaupapa Māori food stories in the form of research summaries

TABLE 1 Our interview participants

Interviewees	Location	Activities	Kaitiakitanga stories
Mere Whaanga and Richard Allen, Taipōrutu	Te Māhia Peninsula	Kōura and ahikaa activities on whānau lands	Whanaungatanga; land healing
Hineamaru Ropati, Kiatiaki, Papatūānuku Kōkiri Marae	Mangere	Māra kai; Hua Parakore	Restoration of marginal lands; care for the dreams of kaumātua; care for community
Caleb Royal	Collectivised iwi/hapū in Ōtaki	Tuna, cattle and sheep for marae	Reclamation of marginal lands; care and reconstitution of wetlands
Manaia Cunningham, Koukourarata Marae	Port Levy, Banks Peninsula, Ngāi Tahu	Māra kai at a hapū level; restoration of hapū land to build whānau and hapū wellbeing; connection to place, food sovereignty practices and food security	Oranga of the whānau me te hapū
John Reid	Kaimahi for Ngāi Tahu	Ngāi Tahu mahika kai and perfume	Colonial trauma; land healing
Richard Jones, Chief Experiences Officer, Poutama Trust	National non-profit organisation	Supports Māori enterprises	Whanaungatanga; collectivisation; quality assurance
George Mackey, Spokesman, and Ben Mackey, Chairman, Tawapata South	Te Mahia Peninsula	Cattle and beef	Working for shareholders; predator-free aims; native plantings
Ratahi Cross, Chairman, Te Awa Huka Pak	Tauranga Moana	Collective processing of kiwifruit; farming of traditional cultivation landscapes	Kiwifruit production on traditional lands; green spaces within an intensive urbanised/ industrialised area
Eugene and Laney Hunia, Directors, Whenua Honey	East Coast (Opotiki)	Honey	Collectivises marginal Māori landowners to engage with beekeepers; care for whānau through involvement in business
Gretta Carney, Co-owner, Hapī Clean Kai Co-op	Based in Napier	Retail—Hua Parakore	Whānau-centric business with strong relationship with mana whenua; care given to others through food products; care for each other as workers/ collaborators; Hua Parakore-verified
Cathy Taite-Jaimeson, Director, Biofarm Products	Manawatū	Organic; Hua Parakore; yoghurt and milk	Low-impact dairying; biodynamic approach to lands and Hua Parakore-verified; land healing

which we have made freely available on the project website ([www.storyingkaitiakitanga.co.nz](http://www.storyingkaitiakitanga.co.nz)). We see these research summaries as kaitiaki storytelling tools that Māori agrifood producers might use to tell their Kaupapa Māori land and water food story to stakeholders and communities, as well as the wider public. The purpose of this article is to offer a synthesis of the shared kaupapa that inform these kaitiaki stories and to explore a possible food systems approach which we call “Kai Ora”.

These individual food stories feature kōrero with Māori food growers, producers and retailers, as well as those who support these activities, such as board members and professional service providers. Across their shared kōrero you will find common Kaupapa Māori principles in play, including kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga, mauri, wairua, moemoeā, whanaungatanga, tūranga and rangatiratanga. All stories embellish the interwoven relationship between tangata and whenua and how our landscapes and waterways define us as Māori. These Māori food stories share the moemoeā of participants who grow, produce or sell food in order to enhance specific landscapes and peoples. Their stories tell us, amongst other things, how kōura grown on whānau lands could become an ahikaa catalyst, how māra kai initiatives could be the pathway to greater rangatiratanga and oranga, and how building a clean kai co-op through whanaungatanga principles could mean inspiring the next generation to do things differently.

#### **Our conceptual framework: Ki uta ki tai**

“Ki uta ki tai” is a conceptual framing taken from the field of Māori resource management, where the term is used to reflect the interconnectedness and interdependencies of the natural world and tangata whenua relations (Harmsworth & Awatere, 2013). The phrase implicitly refers to the atua of mountains and seas and their function as identity markers for particular peoples in particular places. Ki uta ki tai is also used by Ngāi Tahu as a framing device to reflect their view of environmental and resource management and related planning practices (Te Waihora Co-Governance Group, n.d.). Ki uta ki tai encapsulates spiritual, physical and human elements blurring the lines prevalent in Western knowledge systems that make distinctions between the human, physical and spiritual worlds. Furthermore, it emphasises how the health and wellbeing of people is inextricably linked to the natural environment (Tipa et al., 2016).

The standpoint of ki uta ki tai reinforces our understanding that all food-growing activities

are part of a complex woven universe that is interdependent and thus related to a larger and interconnected whole (Marsden, 2003). In this approach food is not simply the outcome of the labour of people and production, where resources and ecosystems are simply there to be exploited, but rather an embedded connection to human, physical and spiritual realms.

Tau utu utu—always giving benefit to the resource by giving back what is taken—is an important part of these interlinking realms. The Māori food producer in this model becomes the mediator between the atua dimensions of natural resources such as healthy soils, ecosystems and water, and is inextricably linked to whānau and manuhiri who encounter, sense, nurture, engage and ultimately benefit from these mediating and reciprocal practices. In what follows, we discuss the shared kaupapa that can be found across the research summaries to build a bigger picture of what a Kaupapa Māori land and water food story might look like.

#### **Shared kaupapa across the research summaries**

According to the chair of independent charitable trust Poutama, Richard Jones (Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Whakauae, Ngāti Pīkiao), communicating Māori cultural values is an integral part of agrifood practices which can help businesses stand out in a very crowded and competitive sector. As Richard notes, Māori values of kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga are part of the story for Māori businesses today, but these stories need to be backed up by actions and practices: “We’re all quite good at throwing out those terms—the ‘tanga’s’ as we call them—but it’s about being able to really back it up now.” With Richard’s kōrero in mind, below we discuss how our participants express various values and principles that inform their day-to-day practices as well as how these kaupapa shape more long-term visions. The prevailing kaupapa within the kōrero gathered are kaitiakitanga, whanaungatanga, moemoeā, tūranga, mauri, wairua and rangatiratanga. When enacted, these kaupapa are forms of rongoā that hold great potential for future discussions about New Zealand agrifood practices more generally. As is evident in the stories that follow, these central values are practised in diverse ways by different kaitiaki food producers. For those who participate within any level of Māori food production, this kaupapa-based approach can lead to a range of connected outcomes, such as oranga, tātai hononga, tiaki taiao and ōhanga.

### Kaitiakitanga

A Kaupapa Māori food systems approach thinks about food production and land use holistically from the viewpoint of kaitiakitanga, first and foremost. The term kaitiakitanga has been used by many New Zealand Crown entities and organisations to define conservation and guardianship activities and responsibilities in quite focused ways. For example, the Department of Conservation makes extensive use of the guardianship dimensions of kaitiakitanga in relation to the conservation estate and biodiversity. In this study, kōrero from participants suggest that kaitiakitanga concepts should be expanded and applied across productive farming systems and commercial food production. Indeed, findings from our project show that Māori hold diverse views about kaitiakitanga that could drive transformations in land and water usage more generally. Our participants revealed kaitiakitanga as more than simply a discourse of sustainability and productivity within a limited worldview of landscape policy and planning. We argue that kaitiakitanga in a broader sense involves physical, emotional and spiritual connectedness, and a sense of being embedded in a particular place (ki uta ki tai). It is a way of life that, in senior researcher John Reid's words, "means you have a point of comparison about how you should treat people and land and water". Kaitiakitanga forces us to think in an integrated way about the practices we engage in and the flow-on effects of these practices.

Kōrero from participants help develop a deeper understanding of the meaning of kaitiakitanga. For example, Cathy Taite-Jamieson (Ngāti Tukorehe), one of the earliest proponents of organic dairy farming in Aotearoa and director of Biofarm Products, practises kaitiakitanga by being "consciously tuned in" to the woven universe of stars, moon, whenua, plants, livestock and, ultimately, the consumers who purchase her yoghurt. Food production from this viewpoint means that the yoghurt we see in supermarkets across the country (produced by a small herd of 100 cows) functions as a conduit between whenua and consumer. While conventional farmers produce raw milk at large volumes, Biofarm controls more of the supply chain to produce a premium product that upholds the brand's vision of "farming for life" in all its biodiversity. Even while Biofarm operates in a niche space enabled by large mass-produced dairy commodities, their success challenges conventional wisdom that assumes a productive unit requires volume.

We also see kaitiakitanga expressed in relation to community gardens based in urban

environments. Hineamaru Ropati (Ngāti Hine) is a trustee of Papatūānuku Kōkiri Marae, which is an urban marae located in Mangere, South Auckland. Hineamaru helps to support the dreams and aspirations of those kaumātua and kuia who established the marae in 1986. Papatūānuku Kōkiri Marae was built on lands held by the local council, who used it as a dumping ground. Over time the marae has cultivated and elevated the health of the soil to meet the standards of Hua Parakore, and Indigenous hallmark of excellence for food and product production (see Hutchings et al., 2012). People from across South Auckland now come to the marae, not only to participate in gardening on site, but also to uplift soils for their garden beds at home. Knowing the whakapapa of the soil, community members can grow kai on their own terms and at their own homes, knowing the integrity that comes from the decades of soil care and education offered by Papatūānuku Kōkiri Marae.

Kaitiakitanga also relates to commercial food producers, such as Hapī Clean Kai Co-op, who base their practices on the Hua Parakore organics system. While kōrero from some participants raised questions about what it might mean to tell a Māori food story in relation to non-Indigenous products such as sheep, beef or kiwifruit, Hapī Clean Kai Co-op draws on kaupapa as part of its business model to offer a range of chemical-free, waste-free, allergy-free and sugar-free food products. Such food products increasingly attract the attention of affluent and health conscious consumers, yet Hapī's points of difference are the kaupapa underpinning their practices. These include the kaupapa of whanaungatanga.

### Whanaungatanga

Hapī Clean Kai Co-op co-owner Gretta Carney (Te Ātihaunui-a-Paparāngi, Tūwharetoa) has developed an ethical food business that has, at its heart, the wellbeing of all involved, including Te Ao Tūroa. People who join the Hapī team are viewed as whānau who bring particular skills and strengths to form a collective whole. Beyond the everyday practices of the café, where whanaungatanga can be seen and sensed in action, Hapī also caters for significant Māori cultural events such as Te Matatini. Gretta's youthful team become the face of clean healthy kai at such events and thus act as role models for rangatahi who might consider food industry employment opportunities for themselves. Placing whanaungatanga as a kaupapa of the Hapī enterprise also brings te oranga o te whānau into play, thereby subverting



capitalist models of entrepreneurship that see workers as simply a means to increase productivity. The Māori food enterprise that is Hapī has the wellbeing of both workers and customers at the heart of its productivity paradigm.

Introduced above, Poutama Trust is a charitable organisation that supports Māori food and beverage enterprises, and helps build scale by collectivising energies and ideas across the Māori agrifood sector. As Richard Jones states:

We're like an independent self-funded charitable trust that works pretty much in the area of Māori business enablement and I say enablement in the broader sense because there's a whole lot of things we do, from investing small sums of money to bringing Māori groups together to invest large sums of money into various activities and projects. Our services cover the whole of the country plus we do a fair bit of work internationally. A lot of our work is in food and beverage because that seems to be a space, if you look from one end of the country to the other and you want to identify a common thing that Māori are doing, a lot are in food and beverage.

A strength of Poutama Trust is its capacity to stimulate and support whanaungatanga across the food and beverage sector. Richard adds:

If we can't help, and often we can't, we can refer them to other areas. But at least our biggest strength is our network, our connections and our leverage. We can open our networks and connections up for these businesses and that's basically what's happened with a lot of these collaborative groupings that we've done in food and beverage.

Whanaungatanga also plays a role in the business practices of Whenua Honey, an East Coast honey business run by Eugene and Laney Hunia, who include their children, Tea, Jett, Sol (and recent addition, Sam), in all aspects of the enterprise. Whānau is at the heart of this business and Whenua Honey's labelling features their child Sol, while their first ever honey harvest for the market was aided by daughter Jett and her school friends in exchange for a summer on the coast. While working as beekeepers, the Hunia whānau noticed how access to blocks of mānuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*) was a precious thing. They saw an opportunity to work with other Māori landowners to gain benefits from the honey industry, and they were also in a position to grow capability for beekeepers by acting as conduits to access Māori

lands. Born out of a desire to ensure that Māori landowners benefit from the honey products being produced on their whenua and a commitment to giving back to community, the Hunia whānau help foster relationships between Māori landowners and beekeepers so that the benefits flow in all directions. This connective approach expresses a more expansive form of whanaungatanga that includes Māori and non-Māori interested in enhancing the integrity of the honey business and maintaining a transparent practice. Inspiring their children to learn about and actively engage in the honey business is also a form of intergenerational knowledge transmission based on another significant kaupapa, that of moemoeā.

### Moemoeā

Kōrero from participants often turned to the dreams and aspirations of tūpuna and future generations, as the basis for current activities and practices. Hineamaru Ropati is kaitiaki of the moemoeā of earlier generations who founded Papatūānuku Kōkiri Marae. Gretta Carney aspires to providing healthy, life-enhancing kai for her customers and communities. Eugene and Laney Hunia include their children in their whānau business so that they have skills and options for the future. Moemoeā is also a crucial aspect of the vision that whānau landholder Mere Whaanga and fellow Te Māhia Peninsula resident Richard Allen have for Taipōrutu. They are exploring the possibilities of growing kōura at Taipōrutu, a vulnerable kai awa that is part of their wider vision for the whenua and whānau. Kōura is an indicator species that signals the existence of healthy waterways, and Mere and Richard believe that the cultivation of kōura can complement the wider ecosystem of Taipōrutu, which features multipurpose plantings that support bee colonies, enrich soil and help filter water. These aspirations provide the basis for the possibility of the return of whānau to this landscape to take up roles as ahikaa.

Aspects of moemoeā can also be found in the kōrero given to us by John Reid. As well as outlining the work he has done with Ngāi Tahu to develop sustainable tribal development, John drew our attention to an emerging body of Indigenous literature that acknowledges the historical and intergenerational effects of colonisation and the trauma that comes from being disconnected from ancestral lands, which are not only tūpuna and the basis of identity, but also the foundation for economic survival. The notion of land healing is a prominent aspect in this literature, and John acknowledges the interconnected realities

of land and peoples when he argues, “The healing of land and people is a simultaneous kind of process because if you are harming the land you are harming yourself as that’s what supports, feeds and connects you.” While cognisant of the interpersonal and psychological damage enacted through colonisation and the need for personal and whānau-led healings, John also sees a need to work at regional, national and global levels to recalibrate the way in which landscapes and waterways are managed. John is hopeful that iwi management plans based on kaitiaki principles are beginning to slowly shift non-Māori and governmental perspectives, and that if you talk and work in a way that is understandable to majority culture, change can happen.

### Tūranga

Central to the kaupapa highlighted in participant kōrero is the emphasis they place on having a cultural standpoint. Ratahi Cross, chair of Ngai Tukairangi Trust (the biggest Māori kiwifruit grower in the country) and chairman of Te Awanui Huka Pak (a collective of 19 Māori trusts who principally grow kiwifruit in the western Bay of Plenty) produces kiwifruit in the same footprint that his tūpuna used to cultivate kai. According to Ratahi, “If you’re going to say that you are the kaitiaki of the whenua, then you really need to honestly know the whenua.” Noting that there is sometimes a disconnect between iwi-based claims to mana whenua and actual landowners who have intimate knowledge of the whenua they are kaitiaki to, Ratahi describes the development of the region’s kiwifruit industry in the following way:

We understand what grows here . . . We have got a good understanding of the weather cycles that happen with storms [in this area]. So, we know all of that and that’s been handed down from generation to generation to generation. We know this area is a good growing area. So what happens after that is that we came together to pick a product that actually can make us a living and we picked kiwifruit.

An embedded understanding of the landscapes that make up a people is also part of the large-scale beef and sheep farm Onenui Station, located on Te Māhia Peninsula. The kaupapa of tūranga was implicit in the kōrero of George and Ben Mackey, spokesman and chairman, respectively, of Tawapata South Inc., which runs the station on behalf of approximately 2,000 shareholders. They told us how they farm a 10,000-acre block as a breeding farm, with a third of the land used

for farming and other sections protected under Ngā Whenua Rāhui kawenata agreements with some coastal lands retired from farming to allow whānau access to the sea. Ben and George, with trustee Pat O’Brien, manage the farm and have developed innovative collaborations such as a predator-free catchment programme funded by the government. They have also partnered with the aerospace company Rocket Lab, which launches rockets from a hilltop overlooking Waikawa Island. These activities ensure a diverse landscape that can be passed down to future generations, fit for purpose for the times ahead.

A focus on tūranga within a kaupapa grounds kaitiakitanga within the complexities of whaka-papa relationships that are inextricably tied to the land. Yet, as demonstrated by Gretta Carney’s kōrero, those who are taura here to the whenua they produce kai in also have the capacity to contribute to kaitiakitanga practices through their investment in Kaupapa Māori. The whanaungatanga capacities of networks such as Poutama Trust also demonstrate how expressions of kaitiakitanga are possible at national levels.

### Rangatiratanga

Rangatiratanga is closely aligned with kaitiakitanga because in order to enact this kaupapa you need decision-making rights. In the contemporary colonial present of Aotearoa, these decision-making capacities involve engagement with state-based legislation that limits the sovereign capacities of mana whenua. Yet kōrero from our participants demonstrate how the flourishing of kaitiaki values can still prevail under these conditions. For example, Caleb Royal (Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga) works on behalf of the hapū of Ōtaki, on the Kapiti Coast. He engages with the Regional Council as a mandated representative, acting as kaitiaki for whenua, repo, tuna and tangata. His sphere of work includes resource consents, development, environmental monitoring and, more recently, expressway development. Like all roading projects, the Kapiti Expressway has had environmental, social and cultural impacts on local communities. Houses have been moved, roads diverted, and ecosystems modified. Yet these developments also provide opportunities for local hapū and marae to express decision-making powers within the legislative frameworks of the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Land Transport Act 1998. As Caleb notes:

It’s a very significant area from the perspective of an iwi lens. It’s actually a really significant area in

that it's the boundary between our two iwi and we have had a few skirmishes about where the boundary sat. So, it's a good sort of indicator of where our boundaries sit now. But, because they didn't want to plant it out because it was going to be too expensive, we negotiated a licence to occupy that land. So, it's obscure, it's like little parcels of land in and around a spaghetti junction of roads. But, with that we've managed to put, I think I got twenty sheep down there and three cattle.

The expression of rangatiratanga is also central to a food-growing project led by Manaia Cunningham of Koukourarata Marae on the Banks Peninsula. Manaia (Ngāti Irakehu, Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Mutunga) leads work on the marae's market gardens which contribute to wider community aims such as employment, education, business opportunities and papakāinga. Kai such as mussels and potatoes are the distinctive contribution that this community makes to a Māori food system. According to Manaia, "Mussels and rīwai are a great start and are our natural assets that we should be feeding our visitors because that's our mana." Here Manaia's comments reflect an underlying understanding that growing kai that connects to the longer history of cultivation practices in the area is a mana-enhancing activity tied to the larger ideal of tino rangatiratanga for peoples in particular places.

Expressions of rangatiratanga at Koukourarata Marae are also evident in their approach to understanding the science behind the food production they undertake alongside the values of being organic that they uphold. Their work with the Biological Husbandry Unit at Lincoln University has enabled the hapū to explore new ways to grow organic Māori potatoes through the use of mesh cloches. As Manaia notes:

So that is fantastic and will help with our science because potatoes can get diseases such as blight. We're also organic, so we don't spray. Commercial farmers use eighteen different synthetic chemicals. So when you buy a box of potatoes, there are eighteen different varieties of chemicals on them. Not our potatoes. We put a mesh over them—so imagine seeing a hectare of this blanket. It looks awesome. And then the blanket lifts as the rīwai grows and it's awesome. One thing about Māori potatoes is that they don't have big yields. The big commercial varieties produce a kilo and a half of potatoes. Ours only give around six hundred grams—you get three big ones and heaps of baby ones.

Control of the chemical inputs that enable kai to flourish means that expectations about what a rīwai should look like, and how much a section of whenua can produce, requires a scaling back of entrenched ideas about how food in supermarkets should appear. Manaia also sees kai as a connecting agent that makes the whenua it is grown in the conduit to the bodies that consume the kai. As Manaia argues, "When you get our kai or eat our product, that kai comes from the ground that goes into your mouth. It goes inside you therefore you're part of the whenua."

Like all kaupapa, the values underpinning Koukourarata Marae's practices are all interconnected. One cannot discuss rangatiratanga without including and understanding the concepts of mana and manaakitanga. Yet strategically identifying specific kaupapa related to food growing (and consumption) can help reveal, and make more meaningful, the larger woven universe out of which Kaupapa Māori food-growing practices emerge. Kōrero from our participants suggest that these individual enterprises, actions and activities form part of a larger whole guided by kaitiakitanga as a cultural, economic and epistemological standpoint. We argue that incorporating such kaitiakitanga-based food stories into a national discussion about farming, food and hospitality can enhance our available vocabulary for understanding food systems and help ground wider discourses of sustainability that dominate discussions of how to care for natural resources and people.

### **Kai Ora: Exploring a Kaupapa Māori food systems approach**

A key finding of this project is the prevailing focus of our participants on how food growing is connected to wider aspects of social and cultural wellbeing. We understand from the diverse kōrero of our participants that a range of factors interact to form a Kaupapa Māori food system. These factors are interconnected, complex and exposed to tribal, national and global politics, and can be understood within the kaupapa of kaitiakitanga, whanaungatanga, moemoeā, tūranga and rangatiratanga. Food systems are complex, not linear, and they are populated by diverse webs of life that begin within the soil and connect to people, landscapes and waterways through the behaviours and actions taken (Chase & Grubinger, 2014).

Kaupapa Māori theory is a tool that enables Māori to comprehend and understand the world we live in, assisting in making sense of the dynamic connections between objects and actors and providing a space to articulate and organise



Kaupapa Māori goals and aspirations. Developing a Kaupapa Māori food systems approach builds on other Māori food models such as Hua Parakore (Hutchings, 2015; Hutchings et al., 2012), local experiences of understanding Māori food security and sovereignty issues in different local areas (Moeke-Pickering et al., 2015) and other Indigenous food systems and practices (Kuhnlein et al., 2013; Kurashima et al., 2019). When understood through a *ki uta ki tai* approach, food is not simply a commodity to be exchanged on a market; it is a conduit between land, waters and peoples, linked together by underlying Kaupapa Māori principles that hold the potential to heal lands, waters and peoples.

The wellbeing outcomes that flow from Kaupapa Māori land and water food practices include sophisticated land healing and regeneration practices that restore the biodiversity and mauri of whenua, ecosystems, species and soils across whole landscapes. Practices that foster cultural treasures such as *māra kai*, *kōura*, wild and cultivated food and crops, and tuna, as well as surrounding habitats, all lead to a strengthening and regeneration of wider cultural landscapes. These practices could be entrepreneurial and lead to greater self-sufficiency for *whānau*, *hapū* and *iwi* by encouraging resilient cultivation that contributes to greater food sovereignty and food security. Securing better access to nutritious and affordable foods could contribute to local transition economies that aim to develop flourishing communities beyond oil dependency (Hopkins, 2008). A focus on nutritious foods grown in healthy soil also requires good composting and waste treatment practices that enhance the flow of mauri through the web of life that is soil. Acknowledging that our day-to-day practices could enhance the health of our lands means that we can move away from an extractive approach to nature and towards understanding the reciprocal obligations that tie us to our lands and waters, in all their diversity. Practices that secure our relationship to lands, waters and peoples could be understood as expressions of greater *mana motuhake* for *whānau*, *hapū* and communities. These practices take for granted the need for collective action and collaborations across diverse sectors, rather than individualistic, profit-oriented approaches.

The Kai Ora food systems approach could lead to ongoing food choices that are culturally appropriate, healthy, affordable, nutritious and healing and that can enhance *whānau* wellbeing. Using Kaupapa Māori strategies to build ongoing relationships across a range of enterprises, at

varying scales, creates an important platform for collectivisation that has flow-on effects for businesses as well as *whānau*-led initiatives, with many downstream *whānau ora* and *hauora* benefits. Understanding food as a conduit that links lands, waters, ecosystems and peoples will enable a better understanding of how mauri is enhanced or diminished across diverse landscapes by the practices we enact. We believe Kai Ora has widespread application for changing modern-day agrifood thinking and practice. Kai Ora can be used by *kaitiaki* as a tool and be adapted by diverse Māori communities, *whānau*, *hapū* and *iwi* to further their *kaitiaki* agrifood aspirations within localised spaces.

Kai Ora provides an alternative to the economic systems approach upon which larger national and global foods systems are predicated. While there are numerous economic tools for assessing the market-based value of food systems (Chase & Grubinger, 2014), an emerging body of literature explores how one can measure or account for culturally defined or distinct cultural values, where productivity is reframed to achieve and enhance wellbeing or healing outcomes within an Indigenous food systems paradigm (Kealiikanakaoleohaililani & Giardina, 2016). The name Kai Ora emphasises a fundamental understanding that wellbeing is central to food production through its ability to nourish and connect us to the Earth and to each other. We regard Kai Ora as a “healing food systems” approach which acts as an antidote to modern universal food systems models. In Kai Ora, a Kaupapa Māori framework comprising *kaitiakitanga*, *moemoeā*, *whanaungatanga*, *tūranga* and *rangatiratanga* amplifies the connection between diverse Māori communities, food, place and practices, and helps facilitate change in modern agrifood business and practice.

### Enacting Kai Ora

The *kōrero* from all of our participants demonstrate that landscapes are multi-use and diverse and have the potential to contribute to intergenerational food security, greater forms of food sovereignty, and diverse wellbeing outcomes for peoples, lands and waters. When this approach is followed, landscapes become “*kaitiakitanga* foodscapes” or cultural landscapes reflecting a strong set of distinct and diverse cultural values outside of normal economic and production models. By reframing the way food systems and associated discourses are understood through a diverse Māori economies approach, our research brings into focus the collective actions (Amoamo et al., 2018) that can contribute to wellbeing outcomes, such as

resilience, identity, economic interdependence and an ethic of care (Gibson-Graham, 2016). The focus then becomes the dynamic interconnections within Kai Ora and not the individual components. Yet how can individuals, whānau and businesses contribute to, or enact, the Kai Ora food systems approach? We suggest that the kaupapa within this approach will help shape and make visible the implementation of a Kai Ora Māori food model. These kaupapa can act as a framing for Māori agribusiness and whānau- and hapū-based food practices in the form of self-reflective questions such as those listed below.

#### ***Kaitiakitanga***

- How can we evidence a kaitiakitanga food story through day-to-day practices and the supply chains we engage with?
- How are Māori values and relationships with Papatūānuku restored through the production of food?
- How does the whenua reflect kaitiaki values through greater biodiversity, Hua Parakore approaches and diverse land use practices?

#### ***Moemoeā***

- How do you build collective aspirations for Kaupapa Māori food production?
- How do these collective aspirations contribute to food secure futures for whānau Māori?
- What are the processes in place for revisiting these collective aspirations?

#### ***Whanaungatanga***

- Who are the key communities required to build a strong foundation for a Kaupapa Māori food systems?
- What are the mechanisms that enable Kaupapa Māori food production to stay connected and build interest within Māori communities?
- How can whanaungatanga be used to ground a food distribution and exchange system?

#### ***Tūranga***

- How are our food production practices upholding place-based Māori food production and distribution practices?
- How are cultural landscapes reflected within food production?
- How do we return to eating our cultural landscapes?

#### ***Rangatiratanga***

- How can Kaupapa Māori food production enhance diverse Māori economies?

- How are resources and power being shared?
- How do you ensure that the mana of the food system and the people within it is upheld and extended?

These questions guide and offer possible pathways for individuals, whānau and businesses to begin to each contribute to a wider Kaupapa Māori food systems model being adopted. A crucial aspect of such a model is the production of food that is grown in balance with Papatūānuku to maintain the mauri of the whenua and regenerate landscapes. A range of practices can help facilitate this action, such as kaitiakitanga practices that promote soil health and stewardship, eliminating pesticide and agrichemical use, controlling genetic modification and reducing non-natural inputs. This strongly reflects and mirrors the approach and practice already framed and used by Hua Parakore food production systems (Hutchings et al., 2012), providing another tool for this pathway and offering a beacon of hope for change for Māori food growers, retailers and consumers. While many Māori food producers have yet to embark on this approach, this is an important aspect of a Kaupapa Māori-led agrifood systems model being accepted and enacted.

If adopted widely, the Kai Ora food systems approach has potential to generate a large range of benefits and outcomes, including human health and wellbeing; sustaining the mauri of our lands and waters, ecosystems, and biodiversity; and re-creating cultural landscapes. It provides the basis to promote the balance of economic and competitive advantage with cultural, social and environmental imperatives and poses alternatives to those consumers wedded to large-scale, production-driven, monocultural food crops grown through intensive and industrialised practices and accessed via supermarkets. It also shifts our agribusiness thinking away from resource exploitation and service and towards respecting our environment and ecosystems as a whole, where we give back what we take. By enacting an ethic of kaitiakitanga, which is the grounding kaupapa for the Kai Ora model, we will achieve a greater understanding of our food-growing capacity, along with our retailing and consumption activities.

Understanding how our food systems are so intimately interconnected to the health and wellbeing of individuals, whānau, lands and water is a crucial first step. The kōrero shared by our participants offer success stories of how Māori agrifood practices have been achieved and enacted. Together, through Kaupapa Māori principles, we

offer a Kaupapa Māori food systems approach to foster new understandings of how the food we engage with daily has its own conditions of production predicated on non-Māori principles, and how there is an existing community of Māori practitioners who dream of food differently, as a conduit across lands, waters and peoples, and as a vehicle towards greater individual and community wellbeing and rangatiratanga. Our participants' kōrero all show that Kaupapa Māori values and principles can instigate change at varying levels within society. By shining a light on these local sources of wisdom and by collectivising these stories, we embellish a wonderful series of learnings and teachings for the future.

### Glossary

ahikaa	continuous occupation
atua	ancestor with continuing influence
awa	water
hapū	subtribe
hauora	health, wellbeing
Hua Parakore	Indigenous hallmark of excellence for food and product production
iwi	tribe
kai	food
kai ora	healthy food
kaimahi	staff, workforce
kaitiaki	custodian, guardian
kaitiakitanga	mutual obligations of guardianship
kaumātua	elders
Kaupapa Māori	Māori principles and approaches
kawenata	contract
ki uta ki tai	to the mountains, to the sea
kōrero	story, account
kōura	freshwater crayfish
kuia	female elder
mahika kai	food gathering
mana	prestige, status, authority, influence, integrity; honour, respect
manaakitanga	hospitality
mana motuhake	customary authority exercised by an iwi or hapū in an identified area
mana whenua	territorial rights, power from the land

manuhiri	visitors
mānuka	tea tree
māra kai	gardens
mauri	life force
moemoeā	dreams and aspirations
Ngā Whenua Rāhui	funding programme that protects the natural integrity of Māori land and preserves Māori knowledge
ōhanga	growing prosperity, economic capital
oranga	human wellbeing and health
oranga o te whānau	family wellbeing
papakāinga	collective form of Māori living
Papatūānuku	Earth mother
rangatahi	youth
rangatiratanga	self-determination, authority and control
repo	wetlands
rīwai	potatoes
rongoā	healing
rōpū tikanga rangahau	advisors and experts
tangata	people
tangata whenua	Indigenous people of the land
tātai hononga	building social capital
tau utu utu	reciprocity
taura here	urban kinship group
Te Ao Tūroa	the natural world
tiaki taiao	maintaining and enhancing natural capital
tino rangatiratanga	self-governing; having absolute independence and autonomy
tuna	eel
tūpuna	ancestors
tūranga	a place to stand
wairua	spirit
whakapapa	ancestral connections
whānau	family
whānau ora	family health
whanaungatanga	building relationships
whenua	land

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