

# PUBLIC ASPIRATIONS FOR A DECOLONISED CITY

## Food security and “re-storytelling”

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### Abstract

In 2017, the Imagining Decolonised Cities (IDC) competition sought submissions for the public’s visions of a decolonised Porirua. The IDC competition was an opportunity for Ngāti Toa Rangatira to solicit utopic ideas for their city post-settlement. This article presents an analysis of the 40 entries, exploring how participants understand decolonisation enacted in an urban setting. We identified two overarching themes from the submissions that can be linked to wider theories of decolonisation, particularly Cornthassel’s (2008) theory of sustainable self-determination. The first theme identified was food security, demonstrated through participant designs of community gardens, seafood harvesting stations, and larger food transportation systems. The second theme identified was “re-storytelling”, a centring of Māori identities and stories. While these efforts alone will not result in the decolonisation of Porirua, they represent tangible initiatives at the flax roots level that provide space for Māori to be Māori, and a point from which communities can drive larger decolonising initiatives.

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### Keywords

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#### Introduction

In 2017, members of Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington joined with members of the iwi Ngāti Toa Rangatira (Ngāti Toa) to devise the Imagining Decolonised Cities (IDC) competition. The competition asked members of the public to submit their vision of what a decolonised city could look like. The selected location for the competition was Porirua, a city within Ngāti Toa's tribal jurisdiction. In 2012, Ngāti Toa reached an agreement with the New Zealand Government after 20 years of negotiating a compensation package for repeated breaches of te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi (1840). The competition was an opportunity for Ngāti Toa to conceptualise what their city could look like post-settlement. Participants entered submissions into one of three categories: Under 18s, General and Professional. They could submit through whichever medium they preferred and were encouraged to be utopic in their visions. Forty submissions were received overall and the IDC judging panel decided on winners later in 2017.

This article identifies two key themes that came out of the submissions and links them to wider theories of decolonisation, particularly Corntassel's (2008) theory of sustainable self-determination. The first theme, food security, was demonstrated through participant designs of community gardens, seafood harvesting stations and larger food transportation systems. We argue that although community food security projects are not grand or glamorous efforts of decolonisation, they regenerate the transmission of ancestral knowledge and promote culturally appropriate sites of food cultivation and consumption. These alone are methods of sustaining self-determination at a place-based and community level. The second theme, "re-storytelling", emerged from submissions proposing a change to how iwi stories and names are represented in the Porirua landscape. Again, changing the representation of names and history do not constitute a complete decolonisation project, but it does centre Māori identities and stories in urban spaces that have historically excluded Māori. The implementation of the small-scale changes can establish long-term practices that challenge colonial dominance in cities and promote iwi identities within their urban territories.

#### Ngāti Toa experiences of colonisation

The colonisation of Aotearoa New Zealand by the British Crown dispossessed Māori from their lands, language and culture to establish settlements for Pākehā. The document making Pākehā settlement official, te Tiriti o Waitangi, affirmed Māori sovereignty and a reciprocal partnership between Māori leaders and the Crown. This document was signed by most Māori chiefs and ensured that Māori retained tino rangatiratanga over Aotearoa and that British settlers could lawfully reside in their country. Te Tiriti o Waitangi was largely ignored by the Crown in favour of the English version of the document, the Treaty of Waitangi. The terminology used in the English text was substantially different to its Māori counterpart. The Treaty of Waitangi asserted that Māori ceded absolute sovereignty to the Crown, which thus legitimised the colonisation of New Zealand. The differences between the texts were not sufficiently communicated to the chiefs, and the Waitangi Tribunal (2014) has determined that Māori did not knowingly cede sovereignty to Britain in February 1840 (p. 527). Ngāti Toa's experience of colonisation involved targeted persecution by the Crown and private land acquirers operating as the New Zealand Company. The iwi had opposed colonial land acquisition since 1839, and two iwi leaders, Te Rauparaha and Te Rangihaeata, had been involved in several violent disputes between Crown troops and settlers. In 1846, the Crown illegally detained Te Rauparaha, and Te Rangihaeata narrowly avoided arrest by escaping to a neighbouring district. In 1847, the colonial governor, George Grey, strategised an acquisition over part of Ngāti Toa's territory in the greater Wellington region. Grey (1847) argued it was "necessary to secure the town of Wellington and its vicinity from future hostile attacks and aggressions from evil-disposed natives" (p. 201). Younger Ngāti Toa chiefs, wishing to have Te Rauparaha freed from captivity, sold the Porirua district to the Crown in exchange for his release (Office of Treaty Settlements, 2012). The following century saw further Crown alienation of Ngāti Toa land and by the 21st century Ngāti Toa were left "virtually landless" (Office of Treaty Settlements, 2012, p. 1). The large-scale urban development of Porirua has caused extreme environmental degradation and a further fracturing of Ngāti Toa's collective identity. Their river, Te Awarua o Porirua, has become so polluted by waste that the

iwi can no longer harvest food for their community. This has restricted the iwi's ability to exercise their manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga.

### Defining decolonisation

The term “decolonisation” has accumulated several meanings and principles. Historically, the term has been associated with the dissolution of imperial empires and increased autonomy of newly independent states (Jansen et al., 2017). In this theory, states subject to “exogenous colonialism”—where the priority for the empire is the extraction and appropriation of Indigenous land and resources, but not necessarily colonial settlement—decolonise by physically expelling colonial powers from Indigenous land and delegitimising imperial political structures (Veracini, 2017, p. 3). In settler-colonised countries such as New Zealand where “the colonizer comes to stay”, the process for, and the objective of, decolonisation is not necessarily so clear (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 7). The dispossession of Māori from their land and culture functioned concurrently with the entrenchment of Pākehā political and social systems, which affirmed the perception of settler sovereignty and Pākehā notions of “belonging” in Aotearoa (Higgins & Terruhn, 2021; Veracini, 2015). One hundred and eighty years on from the signing of te Tiriti o Waitangi, Pākehā identity is now something unique, though not Indigenous, to Aotearoa (Mercier, 2020). The decolonising objective in Aotearoa, we have argued elsewhere, does not necessitate the physical removal of Pākehā from Māori land but does require “a commitment to making cohabitation work” (Mercier, 2020, p. 41) and “cohabitation that enables Māori to live as Māori” (Kiddle et al., 2023, p. 147).

The IDC project was developed as an inquiry into what decolonisation in established urban environments would mean. New Zealand cities have historically been conceptualised as non-Māori spaces, which raises issues for iwi such as Ngāti Toa, whose jurisdiction extends over urban areas (Kiddle, 2018).

### Competition

The IDC project came about through relationships between the authors and conversations about forward-looking and hopeful approaches to decolonisation and Ngāti Toa's post-settlement future. Through a series of meetings and conversations, Ngāti Toa selected two sites for the competition: the northern part of Te Awarua o Porirua and its shoreline, and a papakāinga site owned by a Ngāti Toa family, the Parai family. We posed a definition

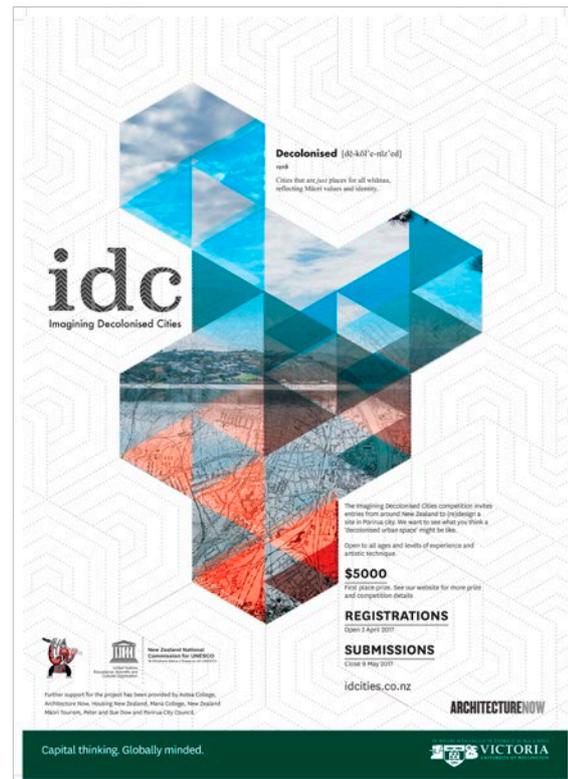


FIGURE 1 IDC poster

of “decolonised” that matched the context of the competition: “Cities that are equitable places for *all* whānau, reflecting Māori values and identity” (IDC, n.d.). This definition was our attempt at widely accessible wording that drew on notions of justice and placed Māori ways of being at the heart. We originally wrote that decolonised cities are “just” places for whānau, but the idea of justice was somewhat lost, and “equitable” was a more accessible idea for many people (see Figure 1, overleaf).

We also provided a series of questions that participants should seek to answer in their submissions:

- What does a decolonised city look and feel like?
- How can our urban landscapes and built environments acknowledge local iwi identities?
- How can our urban landscapes and built environments work to alleviate social problems and promote “just” places for all whānau (families)?
- How can our urban landscapes and built environments encourage places where Māori, Pākehā and all cultural groups feel “at home”, feel that they can thrive and can make the

**TABLE 1** Stated cultural/national heritage of entrants

Cultural/national heritage	No. of entrants
Māori	29
Pākehā	9
New Zealand European	8
Cook Island	2
Chinese	4
Pacific	2
European	7
African	1
Indian	1
Asian	3
Middle Eastern	1
Sāmoan	4
Dutch	1
Hong Kong	1
Argentinian	1
Singapore	1
Mix	1
New Zealand	2
Not sure	1
Not specified	6
Total responses	85
Total people responding	75

**TABLE 2** Stated iwi affiliations of entrants

Iwi connections	No. of entrants
Ngāpuhi	5
Ngāti Awanuiarangi	2
Ngāi Tūhoe	1
Te Whānau-ā-Apanui	2
Ngāti Tūwharetoa	2
Kai Tahu	2
Ngāti Porou	3
Ngāti Ruanui	1
Ngāti Kahungunu	1
Ngāti Ranginui	1
Te Arawa	1
Ngāti Whakatōhea	1
Ngāti Raukawa	1
Muaūpoko	1
Ngāi Tamanuhiri	1
Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai	1
Ngāti Toa Rangatira	3
Ngāti Maniapoto	1
Total responses	30
Total people responding	22

choices that they want in relation to their living environments?

- How would you like this place to look and feel 50 years from now? (IDC, n.d., p. 4)

These questions incorporate the acknowledgement of iwi identity, the enactment of social justice, and a sense of cultural belonging into the IDC definition of “decolonised”. IDC encouraged participants to be utopic in their visions and not restricted by the potential barriers of current society (IDC, n.d.; we have explored the complexities of utopian approaches in Kiddle et al., 2023). The brief also provided a list of things desired by the iwi for each site. The priorities for Te Awarua o Porirua (paraphrased) were:

- improved access to kai collection
- functioning and protected flora and fauna sites that reflect Ngāti Toa’s responsibilities as kaitiaki

- improved access to recreational activities, including activities for cultural practices
- a sense of connectedness that reflects a Ngāti Toa identity within the harbour and connecting waterways.

The priorities listed for the papakāinga site (again paraphrased) were:

- It should be a future-thinking design that instils a sense of legacy for the Parai family.
- It should be a space that children can enjoy and spend time with family.
- Development should be sustainable and have little environmental impact on the land.
- The area should be safe from dangerous vehicles, earthquakes and other natural hazards.
- All buildings should have a view of the harbour.

The prizes to be won in the IDC competition

**TABLE 3** Submission formats and numbers of each submission from each of the three entry categories

Format of submission	Number of submissions in this format		
	Under 18s	General	Professional
Essay/Written proposal	8	3	0
Poetry	0	2	0
Creative writing	1	0	0
Illustration	3	1	0
Design plan	2	4	11
Waiata (song)	1	1	1
Video	0	1	1
TOTAL ENTRIES	15	12	13

included a first prize of \$5,000 cash, which was ultimately augmented to \$9,000 and split across the winning entries in each category. Other prizes included a trip to Kāpiti Island, a Wharewaka Café voucher and a box of Whittaker's chocolate. The substantial cash prize may have incentivised professionals to enter the competition. As evident in Table 3, there was a relatively even spread of teams entered in each category, with 15 Under 18s, 13 Professionals and 12 General entries.

An exhibition of entries, a symposium and a prizegiving were hosted at Takapūwāhia Marae on 13 May 2017. The judging panel consisted of academics, architects, a youth representative, a contemporary Māori artist, a Porirua City councillor and two leaders from Ngāti Toa.

Along with their entry, the 75 participants that comprised the 40 teams were invited to fill out a form and provide biographical information about their cultural or national heritage and iwi connections. Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate how each team member defined themselves.

Twenty-nine of the 75 participants identified as Māori and 22 specified one or more iwi affiliations. Twenty-six identified as Pākehā, New Zealand European, European or just New Zealander. There were slightly more Māori entrants than Pākehā/New Zealand European. Pacific and other European heritages were represented, and a small number of international entrants took part. Six did not declare a nationality.

The competition brief encouraged proposals in any medium participants saw fit. Table 3 demonstrates the varying formats proposals were submitted in.

### Theme identification

Each submission was examined for potential themes. Keywords and ideas were entered into one of three spreadsheets: Under 18s, General or Professional. The initial data were then compiled into one large spreadsheet that included 97 themes overall. The process was then repeated, adding themes that had been missed in the first analysis and merging overlapping themes together. For example, the categories of "Pouwhenua" and "Whakairo" were merged into the "Art/Monuments" category, which allowed for a more flexible interpretation. The second combined spreadsheet listed 31 themes. Categories with fewer than 10 recordings were then removed, leaving 16 potential avenues for analysis. With a more concise list, the interconnection between themes grew clearer. Submissions proposing sustainable infrastructure also tended to engage with kaitiakitanga in their design rationale, suggestions to install walking tracks were often paired with suggestions to establish pouwhenua or other forms of Māori carving, and representations of iwi identity commonly accompanied proposals for mahinga kai.

Interestingly, "tino rangatiratanga" was mentioned only once in the 40 submissions and te Tiriti o Waitangi was not mentioned at all. Māori words and concepts were mentioned consistently, particularly the term "kaitiakitanga". Yet, the explicit presence of te reo Māori was only noted twice, with both instances in the Under 18 category. While each submission was individual in its content, it was clear that participants had used the IDC brief as a foundation. Sustainable environmental practice, recreational activities, and the presence of Ngāti Toa identity in the built environment were

well reflected in submissions, demonstrating the impact of the brief on participants' design choices.

### Noting problematic ideas

The competition rules clearly stated that prejudiced ideas were not welcome, and the nature of the competition would suggest that those who participated did not harbour openly racist or harmful perspectives. However, some submissions contained potentially problematic ideas. These featured mainly in the Under 18 and General categories.

Some submissions in the Under 18 category proposed a decolonised city where general Māori culture was “brought back” to Porirua. While colonisation has persistently attempted to deny Māori a presence in urban spaces, equating decolonisation with the return of Māori culture implies that Māori culture does not exist in Porirua now. This implication, though likely unintentional, contributes to the idea that urban areas are not Māori areas (Kiddle, 2018). The assumed absence of Māori in cities erases iwi whose jurisdiction includes urban spaces and the 85% of Māori who live in urban areas (Kiddle, 2018). The notion of “bringing back” Māori culture in the submissions was often paired with conceptions of a “traditional” Māori culture involving Māori art and activities such as weaving, gardening and fishing. The revitalisation of ancestral customs is a crucial aspect of the decolonising process (Chi'XapKaïd, 2005; Corntassel, 2008), yet some submissions proposed a fixed idea of what Māori culture is and is not. This static perception attributes a sense of authenticity to the “historical” Māori and inauthenticity to Māori who do not fit the “traditional” model of Māori culture (Andersen & Hokowhitu, 2007, p. 45). It also puts Māori and Western cultures in opposition: “traditional” versus “modern” and, at a blunter level, “primitive” versus “enlightened” (Hokowhitu, 2008, p. 116). The presence of these ideas in the submissions suggests a need for more comprehensive education around the nuances of decolonisation. Though tools to decolonise are accessible, the necessary knowledge for utilising such tools in an effective and liberating way perhaps requires better communication.

Some submissions proposed their vision of an ideal, but not necessarily decolonised, Porirua. The competition encouraged people to engage in hopeful and utopic ideas that went beyond the status quo. This may have allowed for too much interpretation as some submissions did not envision a Ngāti Toa presence whatsoever. In the Under 18s

category, a participant proposed a pollution-less Porirua but did not include iwi representation. A submission in the General category proposed a communal camping ground with shared facilities and a thriving community culture. The single connection made between this submission and decolonisation was describing how this form of living held parallels with “a pre-European way of life”. Reversing the effects of pollution and building communities are noble pursuits and can be deployed in a decolonising project: however, transforming the environment is not equal to decolonising the environment (Pihama, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Such well-intentioned but appropriative perspectives are the subject of Tuck and Yang's (2012) article “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor”, where they argue that the settler adoption of decolonising language and theory furthers Western notions of justice but does little to repatriate Indigenous land or enable Indigenous self-determination. This again suggests a need for further education around core principles of decolonisation. It also demonstrates how decolonising projects, which intend to centre Indigenous people and Indigenous justice, can be redirected to serve Western aims.

Overall, most submissions critically engaged with methods of pursuing a decolonised Porirua and, notably, problematic ideas were in the minority. However, there is a real risk of decolonising rhetoric being adopted without a truly decolonised outcome in mind. It is therefore useful to identify these notions at the “imagining” stage of decolonisation so the material methods of decolonising can be restructured to maintain Indigenous self-determination and repatriate Indigenous land.

### Themes

The themes discussed in the following sections can be grouped within Corntassel's (2008) theory of “sustainable self-determination”. Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel (2008) argues that contemporary approaches to Indigenous rights are limited within a state-regulated framework, where rights are individualised and the interconnected issues facing Indigenous peoples are not properly recognised. This in turn dismisses “the environment, community health/wellbeing, natural resources, sustainability and the transmission of cultural practices to future generations as critical, interlocking features of an indigenous self-determination process” (Corntassel, 2008, p. 116). Sustainable self-determination by comparison incorporates all of the listed aspects in a manner that provides long-term, interconnected modes of



**Figure 2** Part of a professional entry, Te Ringa

wellbeing that can be transmitted through generations (Corntassel, 2008). It focuses on community resurgence, where the transmission of “everyday” cultural knowledge such as Indigenous food cultivation or language learning develops long-term skills required to achieve an intergenerationally sustained level of self-determination. This theory has been used to analyse the themes of food security and re-storytelling present in the submissions as they have the potential to embed modes of self-determination that are not dependent on the state. The proposals affirm *mana whenua* governance, place-based knowledge and the transmission of ancestral practice as key features of a decolonised Porirua.

### **Food security**

Of the 40 total submissions, 17 proposed an improvement to community food security. Community food security can be understood as access to “a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice” (Hamm & Bellows, 2003, p. 37). Several submissions proposed community gardens (see Figure 2). Reflecting a Māori worldview, the proposed gardens were designed to serve multiple, interconnected purposes: showing *manaaki* through the supply of *kai*, providing a platform for place-based learning and encouraging *whanaungatanga*. Others proposed reserved sites for seafood harvesting, which could also serve as sites of communal water-based transport. Several submissions emphasised the need for appropriate *tikanga* during food cultivation, such as reliance on the *maramataka* and *karakia* to ensure a successful harvest. In a specifically Māori context, McKerchar et al. (2015) suggest that food security is central to several cultural concepts and practices in the Māori world:

- The ability to provide food reflects one’s *mana* (authority/control over individual and community wellbeing) and expresses *manaakitanga* (reciprocity of kindness, respect and humanity)
- Cultivating and collecting food can strengthen one’s connection and responsibility to the environment
- Place-based food cultivation can reinforce one’s *whakapapa* (genealogical ties) to place and affirm cultural identity and belonging. (p. 6)

Large-scale land loss shattered Māori food security. Traditional sites of cultivation and consumption were cleared for Pākehā development; increased Pākehā agricultural practice resulted in the pollution of waterways; and remaining food sites, and new foods such as wheat and potato, were introduced to better suit the Pākehā diet and economy (McKerchar et al., 2015). Dispossession from land and cultural forms of knowledge through legislation such as the Native Schools Act 1858, the Native Reserves Act 1864 and the Tohunga Suppression Act 1907 indirectly created structural food insecurity for Māori by reducing Māori wealth and access to culturally appropriate sources of food and food knowledge (Moeke-Pickering et al., 2015). This has had an intergenerational effect, with contemporary Māori households experiencing food insecurity at a rate disproportionate to the size of the overall Māori population (Ministry of Health, 2019). Food insecurity can contribute to higher levels of stress, poor physical health and severe mental health issues (Moeke-Pickering et al., 2015). Porirua has higher rates of childhood obesity than the rest of New Zealand, with significant disparities for Māori (Porirua City Council, 2020). In the lower socio-economic neighbourhoods of Porirua, with higher Pacific and Māori populations, healthy food options are

less accessible and more expensive (Woodham, 2009). The climate crisis is further amplifying food insecurity, as settler colonial methods of mass food production and transportation are largely unsustainable (Waziyatawin, 2012). It therefore makes sense, both within the theory of sustainable self-determination and in wider decolonising aims, that food security is a priority for decolonising urban spaces.

The submissions that proposed food security systems also aligned with existing Māori food security and food sovereignty systems. Hua Parakore is a verification and validation system for food cultivated using tikanga Māori (Hutchings et al., 2012). It was designed by Te Waka Kai Ora, the National Māori Organics Authority of Aotearoa. Hua Parakore is designed to mitigate the combined crises of climate change, peak oil extraction and food insecurity that impact Māori in specific ways. As explained by Hutchings et al. (2012, pp. 136–141), Hua Parakore is informed by six principles, which we summarise below:

- Whakapapa (the natural connections between deities, the land, the product that is produced from the land and the producers): understanding landscape and human genealogies is fundamental to understanding food cultivation.
  - Wairua (spiritual health): protecting the wairua of food producers also protects the health and purity of the food produced.
  - Mana (the autonomy, security and self-determination of Māori tribal collectives as expressed through mahinga kai): strengthening communities through food production enhances the mana of the producers and recipients.
  - Māramatanga (observance and understanding of environmental processes): food production that is informed by māramatanga and follows the maramataka refines and enhances food quality.
  - Te Ao Tūroa (natural order of the world): maintaining and respecting the natural order of the world maintains the quality of food produced.
  - Mauri (essence of life): protecting the health dimensions of food ensures the food and those that consume it are also healthy.
- (See Hutchings et al., 2012, pp. 136–141)

Hua Parakore is one example of how spaces can be decolonised to promote Indigenous food security. Some IDC submissions envisioned a

reality founded on some of the principles that have been activated in the Hua Parakore model. For example, in talking about their winning entry in the Under 18 category, Paige Scruton-Nepe Apatu from the Māori-immersion school Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Ngā Mokopuna envisioned harakeke grown for weaving revival, rongōā Māori to heal whānau and food gardens: “The take o te māra kai hei whakakotahi i te iwi rā [The gardens are to unify the people]” (New Zealand National Commission [UNESCO], 2017). Another entry by Jemma Rose Hovelmeier described replanting seagrass to stabilise sediments in the harbour, allowing other plants to flourish in saltmarshes and up the land. In time, this would see native bush restored in Porirua: “I imagine that the shore is accessible to all through tracks weaving through established native bush and intervals of open space where boats and waka can be launched, people can sit and share kai and games can be played” (New Zealand National Commission [UNESCO], 2017). This kind of integrated approach to environmental and human health reflects a vision for improved food security.

If implemented, the above designs could decolonise by enabling better access to physical and mental health choices for consumers, transmitting ancestral knowledge through food cultivation, re-establishing community and cultural identity, affirming the authority of mana whenua, and sustaining land for future generations. These small, often unglamorous pursuits can contribute to a sustainable form of self-determination that ensures intergenerational autonomy and wellbeing.

There are, of course, limitations to this vision. The ability to grow healthy food, provide it to the community and maintain sites of cultivation requires land and, at least initially, financial support. The suggestion to start a garden may also be criticised as doing little to solve the immediate problem of hunger and lack of resources (Graham & Jackson, 2017). Though Ngāti Toa have received some land and money through Treaty settlements, this form of redress is not equal to the magnitude of what was taken through colonisation. Margaret Mutu (2019) writes that Treaty settlements have delivered, on average, less than 1% of what was taken. This presents a decolonising predicament: sustainable self-determination requires non-state methods of maintaining food security, but food security requires land and money, two things that were confiscated from many Ngāti Toa members through the processes of colonisation. Corn tassell (2012) does account for this seemingly immense task of decolonisation: “Change of this magnitude

tends to happen in small increments, one warrior at a time” (p. 98). Corntassel and Bryce (2012) suggest that sustainable decolonisation begins with small groups making small changes, which will develop into larger-scale community regeneration. Therefore, if there is one community garden in Porirua, grown by the maramataka and free of mauri-damaging pollutants, the people who work there and eat its produce are further on the path to decolonisation than they were before. It is through small acts such as this, Corntassel (2012) argues, that Indigenous ancestors and future descendants “will recognize us as Indigenous to this land. And this is how our homelands will recognize us as being Indigenous to that place” (p. 99).

### **Re-storytelling**

A second dominant theme that arose from the submissions was visions of alternative civic narratives. Sixteen submissions overall proposed a form of storytelling, or re-storytelling, as a process required for decolonising Porirua. Some suggested reclaiming Ngāti Toa place and tūpuna names to demonstrate their authority and the significance of their ancestors. A group in the Under 18s category proposed Porirua have its original name restored: Pari-rua. Other suggestions, such as naming buildings and landmarks after significant chiefs of Ngāti Toa also spoke to the re-storytelling theme. Other participants proposed the centring of Ngāti Toa stories and histories in the civic landscape. A submission in the Under 18 category suggested creating walkways around the city with pouwhenua to communicate the history of Ngāti Toa. Each pouwhenua would have an accompanying QR code with information that walkers could scan and read. They rationalised this suggestion by drawing on Ngāti Toa’s history as a migrating iwi, and argued that their proposal would encourage recreation, learning and a recentring of Ngāti Toa identity. A Professional submission proposed something similar through “storyboxes”: storage units that hold historical iwi information and provide Wi-Fi and charging points to users. The storyboxes would be positioned around the city, again promoting recreation and activity. Within the theme of re-storytelling, reclaiming and renaming Māori land, and challenging colonial erasure were two dominant subthemes.

Renaming and reclaiming are common methods of decolonising. In Aotearoa, renaming landmarks and Crown-owned reserves is a regular feature of Treaty settlements, designed to acknowledge the association of iwi with sites of significance (New Zealand Geographic Board, 2018). There

have recently been several petitions demanding different forms of renaming: changing the name of the country from “New Zealand” to “Aotearoa New Zealand” (New Zealand Parliament, 2020a), reinstating Māori placenames across the country (New Zealand Parliament, 2020b) and, at a more specific level, changing street names that bear the names of colonisers (Hynes, 2020). Placenames as an act of socio-spatial control was an efficient mechanism for colonial powers to denote conquered territory (Rose-Redwood et al., 2010). Renaming places, therefore, challenges the assumed colonial dominance of the landscape.

In a Māori context, placenames can be a portal to iwi history (Davis et al., 1990). In the manner of oral tradition, the stories of placenames were remembered and carefully passed down to following generations (Davis et al., 1990). Māori placenames can indicate the location of resource bases, historical conflicts and areas where earlier iwi had settled or migrated through (Davis et al., 1990). Similar to Māori systems of food security, Māori placenames can reinstate a sense of cultural identity and genealogical connection to land (Berg & Kearns, 1996). When citing one’s pepeha, it is common practice to reference the names of the landscape features one descends from. Connection to land via naming can also be demonstrated through the following whakataukī:

Nōku te whenua, e mōhio ana au ki ana kōrero  
*It is my land, I know what it says* (Davis et al., 1990, p. 8; Flaws & Meredith, 2007, p. 59)

This form of knowledge is not accessible to everyone. Davis et al. (1990) suggest that learning the narratives behind Māori names requires consultation with kaumātua and an understanding of local iwi history. Transmitting iwi history through the instrument of naming was restricted with the imposition of non-Māori placenames on Māori land. The transmission of ancestral knowledge is a crucial facet of sustainable self-determination (Corntassel, 2008). Renaming Porirua and landmarks within it could affirm the significance of placenames in the transmission of cultural knowledge. It could also regenerate the authoritative role of Māori leaders and elders in landscape narratives. Furthermore, names that reflect the mana whenua, as opposed to colonisers, affirm the authority of iwi within their tribal jurisdictions.

Promoting iwi histories in an urban environment challenges colonial erasure. Again drawing from Kiddle (2018), urban spaces have historically excluded Māori from their design and

representation despite the long-term presence of iwi in most areas of Aotearoa. In the era of Treaty settlements, iwi have been afforded statutory acknowledgements that recognise their associations with particular sites or resources. However, this does not cover the centrality of iwi stories in the landscape.

The transmission of cultural stories is an important part of Māori culture (Lee, 2005). Pūrākau, one form of Māori storytelling, have been utilised as research methods (Lee, 2009), rehabilitation approaches for incarcerated women (Appleyard, 2018) and mediums of psychological therapy in clinical settings (Cherrington, 2002). Matunga (2013) suggests that the reclamation of Indigenous spatial planning involves designing space to “reflect a local Indigenous community history, reality, and experience” (p. 6). The implementation of a Ngāti Toa storybox or pouwhenua with a QR code could be a stepping stone towards adequate reflections of iwi life and history in the built environment. Particularly so when iwi histories are presented through forms of Māori art or walkways that replicate iwi migrations, as they embed stories into the landscape through various media. Corntassel (2012) suggests that “our stories need to be re-told and acted upon as part of our process of remembering and maintaining balance within our communities. . . . It is the stories that sustain us and ensure our continuity as peoples” (p. 89) As a pedagogical form, interactive and accessible iwi histories can reach Māori who do not have access to, or are disconnected from, the stories of their ancestors (Lee, 2005).

Again, there are limitations. Reclaiming Māori placenames and increasing the presence of iwi stories in the landscape does not necessarily accompany the return of Indigenous land and lifestyle. There is also a chance of appropriation of Māori names and stories to serve non-decolonising means. Recently, there has been criticism of the New Zealand Government for its use of Māori language, that the adoption of Māori names for government departments and policies is a deliberate tactic to progress unpopular policies affecting Māori (Smale, 2020). The introduction of Māori history into the New Zealand secondary school curriculum has been largely welcomed, but there has been hesitation around its representation, with Aroha Harris (2019) cautioning against Māori history being “relegat[ed] to a subset of New Zealand history, a spray tan to brown-up the past”. These considerations should be taken into account when planning a decolonised urban environment, and returning Māori names and

stories to the landscape cannot be the endpoint for decolonisation. However, the monocultural and monolingual administration of the landscape does require reformation. Similarly to the presence of one community garden, the singular presence of an iwi name or an iwi history challenges colonial attempts at Indigenous erasure and provides a point from which to grow decolonisation. Efforts like this, although small, create space for Māori ways of living, and for Māori to live as Māori (Ross, 2020).

## Conclusion

This article has analysed the submissions to the 2017 IDC competition. Though some submissions reflected problematic understandings of Māori culture, a large number proposed improvements to community food security and “re-storytelling” to centre Ngāti Toa. Many of the ideas related to food security were reflected in the food verification and validation system Hua Parakore, a Māori food sovereignty initiative that seeks to decolonise diets in the face of health-related and environmental adversity. The ideas presented in these submissions denoted practical and community-based approaches to sustaining Māori self-determination in the long term. Re-storytelling was envisioned primarily in two subthemes. First, returning Māori placenames has the potential to restore iwi narratives in the landscape. As names are one facet of oral tradition, they can transmit cultural knowledge and stories to their inhabitants, ensuring their presence in the future. Second, promoting iwi histories through multimedia structures can reflect the centrality of iwi in their jurisdictions and challenge the colonial erasure of Indigenous stories. By implementing place-based changes to the built environment, and thus human reactions within it, a sustained level of self-determination can be realised. These efforts will not by themselves bring about the decolonisation of Porirua, but at a ground level they seek to make foundational and positive change in a manner that aligns with larger decolonising aims.

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**Glossary**

Aotearoa	Māori name for New Zealand
harakeke	New Zealand flax, <i>Phormium tenax</i>
iwi	tribe
kai	food
kaitiaki	guardian
kaitiakitanga	guardianship; cultural and financial guardianship; accountability
karakia	ritual chant/prayer
kaumātua	elders
mahinga kai	garden, food-gathering place
mana	prestige, status, authority, influence, integrity; honour, respect
manaaki	to care for, be generous
manaakitanga	generous hospitality
mana whenua	the right of an iwi to manage a particular area of land
Māori	Indigenous peoples of New Zealand
marae	communal courtyard
maramataka	Māori lunar calendar
māramatanga	clarity and understanding
mauri	life essence, life force, energy, life principle
Ngāti Toa Rangatira	iwi based in the southern North Island and the northern South Island of New Zealand with connections to Waikato-Tainui iwi
Pākehā	New Zealanders of European descent
papakāinga	a home base built on communal Māori land
pepeha	tribal motto
Porirua	a city within Ngāti Toa's tribal jurisdiction in the Wellington region of the North Island of Aotearoa
pouwhenua	carved wooden post used as a boundary marker or indicating ownership or jurisdiction
pūrākau	stories, narrative
rongoā Māori	traditional Māori medicine
te reo Māori	the Māori language
tikanga	custom

tino rangatiratanga	absolute chieftainship
tūpuna	ancestors
waiata	song
wairua	spirit; spiritual
waka	canoe
whakairo	Māori traditional art of carving
whakapapa	genealogy
whakataukī	proverb
whānau	family
whanaungatanga	familial connection

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