



Adaptation by Mana Whenua:

**Initiatives, challenges, and
working with councils**

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Challenges


THE DEEP SOUTH

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Te Tonga



Centre for Sustainability
Kā Rakahau o Te Ao Tūroa





This is an interim report summarising some of the experiences of mana whenua organisations as they work to respond to climate adaptation challenges, as shared with the Innovations for Climate Adaptation research team.

At a glance – key points:

- Climate adaptation requires new initiatives by both mana whenua and councils.
- Mana whenua seek rangatiratanga/self-determination in how they respond to climate change, and for this to be supported by councils.
- Māori communities are already being impacted by climate change in a variety of ways, and this will continue to worsen over time.
- Marae/hapū are where climate change impacts are directly felt, and where responses need to be founded. Iwi also have a key role in adaptation responses at the wider collective level. Sometimes responses are led or coordinated through iwi consultancies or post-settlement governance agencies. There needs to be clarity over these different roles.
- Mana whenua at all scales are already taking a wide range of actions to rebuild the resilience of their communities and environments, including engaging with their own people, developing climate response plans, establishing local food resources and restoring the health of forests and waterways.
- Mana whenua seek rangatiratanga so that they can undertake more extensive actions to respond to climate change (and other challenges). This includes recognition of their mana by councils and gaining decision-making powers as guaranteed by Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- There are many different examples of relationships between councils and mana whenua; some are more empowering for mana whenua than others.
- Other challenges for mana whenua in responding to climate change include leadership, capacity, capability and resourcing.



Building and strengthening relationships with Crown agencies and working towards power sharing and partnership agreements is important for us. This can be a slow progress but has potential to provide big wins in the long run. Working within an iwi collective can provide more traction when at council tables. Through the Iwi o Taranaki Collective, we have a stronger voice on issues that apply to all iwi.

Jude Cornelius, Pou Taiao, Te Kaahui o Rauru



There's an importance to building a relationship with the council because you know, without having a relationship there or being at the table [you're not] able to negotiate the possibilities of getting new land and what not. There's that other half of us that are like, well we already know what happens when we go and sit at the table with them. We get nothing.

Hone Winder-Murray, Chair, Rereatukahia Marae Komiti



If you're going to say you have a Treaty partnership then live up to it [...] We want to lead or have our rangatiratanga acknowledged and be part of the regional leadership, so if its not there then its not a partnership.

Lyn Carter, Kati Huirapa ki Puketeraki

Innovations for Climate Adaptation is a research project funded by the Deep South National Science Challenge. We are exploring the many initiatives being undertaken by councils and mana whenua to adapt to climate change.

This summary report draws from kōrero and interviews with our Māori research partners in Otago, Taranaki and Bay of Plenty, and staff at regional and district/city councils in those areas. The mana whenua we have spoken with occupy a variety of roles including as members of iwi, hapū, rūnaka and/or marae committees, and as staff members of a post-settlement governance entity and an iwi consultancy.

The production of the report was a collaborative effort involving members of Rereatukahia Marae Komiti, Ngāi Tamawhariua o Katikati; Maketu Iwi Collective; Te Kaahui o Rauru, Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi; Kati Huirapa ki Puketeraki and Aukaha, Ngāi Tahu, along with members of the Innovations for Climate Adaptation team Janet Stephenson, Merata Kawharu, Sophie Bond and Gradon Diprose. Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou for sharing your experiences, and for your reviews of and input into this report.

Contents:

PAGE

4

Impacts

PAGE

5

Initiatives

PAGE

8

Challenges

PAGE

9

Relationships
with councils



Impacts

Climate change impacts experienced so far include:

- Heavy rain causing flooding and erosion affecting lands, waters, housing, marae, urupa
- Damage to roads and other infrastructure
- Loss of water quality in rivers and streams
- Severe water shortages during droughts
- Maara kai and mahinga kai impacted by droughts and/or severe storms



Most of our 12 Ngaa Rauru Marae are located near their awa, and many have already suffered impacts and taken action because of climate change related events. Some have had to retreat their whare because of flooding and erosion, one has installed a stop bank recently, and others are looking into similar action. One Hapuu, Ngaa Ariki have been through the process of relocating their whare both historically and more recently. After suffering the impacts of major floods in 2004, the whaanau and Hapuu made the decision and massive effort to move their Whare, Ngaa Paiaka from the bank of Moumahaki uphill away from further flooding risk. All of these are examples of whaanau, hapuu and marae led action, it takes a lot of effort from committed people who are on the ground facing the impacts.

Macy Duxfield, Wai Maaori Policy, Te Kaahui o Rauru

Climate change impacts predicted/anticipated in the near future

- Increasing severity of floods and droughts
- Water security issues in some locations
- Impacts on species and biodiversity in forests, wetlands, waterways
- Impacts on livelihoods and jobs (e.g. in farming, forestry etc)
- Need to adopt new land uses (e.g. different crops) more suited to a changing climate
- Kāinga/housing becoming unliveable due to sea level rise and flooding
- More marae and urupa under threat
- Some are considering if they will need to relocate marae, urupa and kāinga



A lot of our whanau live along the river in low lying areas and the housing is substandard. They're entirely off grid. There's only one way in and one way out and in the event that there was to be a serious catastrophic event, our people are all stuck. ... In the event we needed to move, where can we move to because we've got nowhere to move to.

Hone Winder-Murray, Chair, Rereatukahi Marae Komiti

Initiatives

Development of climate strategies and plans:

All Māori research partners are developing or have developed climate strategies and/or plans. All have worked with their own community members to identify recent experiences of climate change impacts, mātauranga, and priorities for the future.

[Te Rūnanga o Ngai Tahu](#) developed their climate strategy in 2018, [Ngaa Rauru Kiiitahi](#) in 2021 and [Maketu Iwi Collective](#) in 2022. Rereatukahia Marae Komiti is in the process of developing a kāinga plan for their hapū Ngāi Tamawhariua.

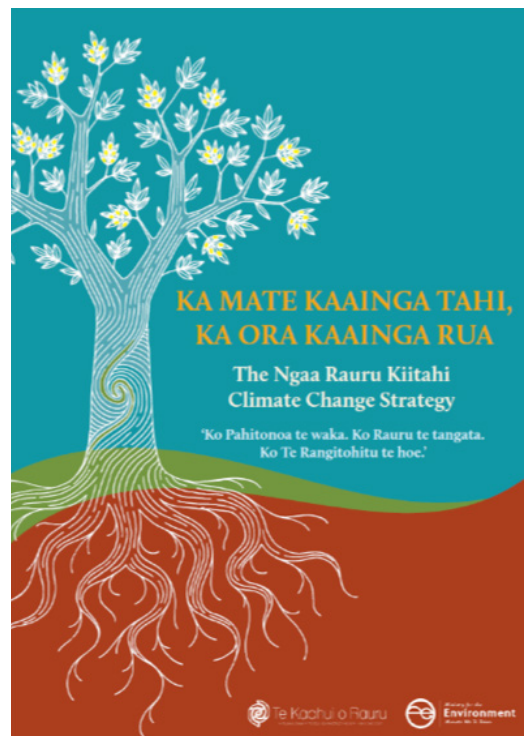
Developing climate strategies and plans can take a lot of time and resources. Ngaa Rauru Kiiitahi's climate strategy was developed in partnership with the Ministry for the Environment. The Maketu plan was supported by Bay of Plenty Regional Council. The mahi of Rereatukahia is supported in part by two research programmes: [Project Kāinga](#) and [Innovations for Climate Adaptation](#).



Te Rūnanga o Ngai Tahu's strategy team went around each of the Rūnaka finding out what people knew about climate change, what impacts they thought would be priorities in their area, for each of the 18 rūnaka areas. And then from that came the Ngāi Tahu climate strategy.

Lyn Carter, Kati Huirapa ki Puketeraki

Climate change strategies and plans (right, from top): Ngaa Rauru Kiiitahi; Maketu Iwi Collective; Te Rūnanga o Ngai Tahu.



Each climate strategy or plan is unique, but they share some characteristics including

- Seeing climate change as an opportunity as well as a threat
- A collective response for the whole iwi/hapū
- Focusing on enhancing oranga tangata me oranga whenua (e.g. improving biodiversity, water quality, food security, housing quality and hauroa)
- Centring on core principles such as rangatiratanga, restoration of mauri/mouri, kōtahitanga, whānaungatanga, mātauranga, māramatanga, manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga
- Some talk about 'climate response' rather than talking separately about reducing emissions and adapting to climate impacts.



There was a deliberate effort to centre the Ngaa Rauru Kaitahi climate strategy around our own narrative in the hope that this would make it engaging for uri. I think the strategy is comprehensive in all of the issues and possible solutions it covers, many of which cross over into the various branches of Te Kaahui o Rauru, not just the Taiao team. The next step would be to support marae/hapuu centric plans or strategies, hopefully the TKoR strategy is helpful in mapping these based on those issues which are more pressing at place.

Macy Duxfield, Wai Maaori Policy, Te Kaahui o Rauru

Engaging with their own hapū/iwi/rūnaka members on climate responses

- Collating local observations of climate change
- Hui to engage their own people on understanding climate change, sharing information, upskilling, planning for the future
- Using social media to inform and engage hau kāinga and those who live away
- Designing and carrying out surveys with their own people



I found today [at the kāinga hui] that there was a lot of people whose eyes were widened and they're the very people who, six months ago were saying to me, it's not going to happen in my lifetime. I've seen a transition from them and now they're like seriously, they're seriously interested in being a part of it. [...]

It makes it easier to digest information when it comes from your own and so it's important to arm our people with all the tools they need so that they can go and filter it down into their people cos that's when it's more acceptable, when it comes from like my Mum or my Nan.

Hone Winder-Murray, Chair, Rereatukahi Marae Komiti

Redeveloping maara kai including vegetable gardens and fruit trees



And we've also established a maara kai down on one piece of land on the waterfront, and on that we're growing foods and fruit, fruit trees. We've got a number of fruit trees in there, berries, big garden, and we've also allowed camping for whānau at Christmastime or over the summer period, so they can come and work then they can take part in working in the gardens or they can just come on holiday and reconnect with the rūnaka.

Lyn Carter, Kati Huirapa ki Puketeraki

Restoring the health and vitality of te taiao

To the extent that they can, mana whenua are taking direct action to build up the health and resilience of the natural world. This includes replanting river margins, pest management in forests, re-establishing wetlands and monitoring freshwater quality.



Koro Potonga Neilson always says – Hoki whenua mai ki te iwi, hoki iwi mai ki te whenua hei oranga. For me that gives a clear direction on how we will restore te taiao.

Macy Duxfield, Wai Maaori Policy, Te Kaahui o Rauru

Building capacity and capability amongst their own people:

- training young people, finding skills present within iwi members, developing leadership skills, employing people with relevant skills



Good relationships with other agencies is key to building capability and capacity. It's a very busy and multi-faceted space so we need a broad range of skills and expertise. The Ministry for the Environment's Te Mana o Te Wai fund, DoC's Kaimahi for Nature, Te Wai Maaori Trust have been really key in us being able to build capacity within our tari and our uri. So we are now able to span across policy, freshwater and other monitoring, governance, pest control, GIS mapping, consents, internships and waananga. But of course, we need to continue to grow to be more effective in all these spaces.

Jude Cornelius, Pou Taiao, Te Kaahui o Rauru

Sourcing funding (usually from government or councils) to help with climate response such as:

- commissioning reports from NIWA and engineers on future climate impacts
- development of climate strategies
- employing people with needed skills or to upskill their own people



We've got funding from regional council and a trust to do a mapping project with the projections over the next hundred years of what sea level rise is projected to do under the various scenarios.

Community liaison officer, Ngai Tamawhariua ki Katikati



Challenges

Mana whenua are already dealing with many issues such as community wellbeing, cost of living, maintaining cultural knowledge and practices, environmental degradation, making submissions on reform processes, responding to consultation requests and reviewing resource consents. Climate change is an additional stressor on top of this. Challenges include:

- Accessing resourcing for climate change adaptation work
- Leadership, e.g. the leadership skills for day-to-day running of a marae are different to the leadership skills in helping the community negotiate climate change
- Building capacity and capability within the iwi/hapū to address climate challenges, including engaging hapū members who live away



Our climate strategy identifies many areas in which capacity and capability is needed to respond to challenges and harness opportunities brought by climate change. A range of skills are needed at the Iwi level as well as across hapuu marae.

Macy Duxfield, Wai Maaori Policy, Te Kaahui o Rauru

- Some communities are facing major risks from flooding or sea level rise so are having to consider whether they may need to move marae, urupa and/or kāinga. This is extremely challenging especially given the enduring connections to the whenua, and for some relocation may not be an option.



It comes back to our values as Māori in that whole whenua kaupapa. Its like, why am I going to leave my whenua when my pito is buried in here? My whai mokopuna, their placentas are buried in here. That's my connection to this place [...] No one really wants to hear that your whenua's not going to be here in 50, 80 100 years.

Hone Winder-Murray, Chair, Rereatukahia Marae Komiti

- For those who are considering relocation, challenges include not necessarily having land to relocate to, and the costs involved.



Building awareness amongst our hapuu and uri of the immediate and long-term impacts of climate change is a challenge, as is socialising potential solutions. Our marae and hapuu representatives have so much on their plates and the information that is available is not suitable for very busy people who don't necessarily specialise in that area.

Jude Cornelius, Pou Taiao, Te Kaahui o Rauru

Relationships with councils

Relationships between mana whenua and councils can be broad-ranging (e.g. relating to all decisions of council) or may be quite specific (e.g. input into resource consents). Climate adaptation is a relatively new shared concern for both mana whenua and councils, and reinforces the importance of basing relationships on Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Taking a collaborative approach which empowers mana whenua is emphasised by the National Adaptation Plan 2022 which says:

“Upholding the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi is a central aspect of the Government’s long-term adaptation strategy. The Government will develop adaptation responses in partnership with Māori – including elevating te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori in the adaptation process – and empower Māori in planning for Māori, by Māori” (p13).

What’s driving mana whenua to work with councils?

- Rangatiratanga (mana): Gaining decision-making powers as guaranteed by Te Tiriti so that they can take desired actions to respond to climate change (and other issues). To establish recognition of their mana by councils, and to engage with councils at a mana-to-mana level
- Kaitiakitanga: implementing their enduring responsibilities the environment
- Oranga: Being able to rebuild the strength and health of communities and places in a holistic way, build resilience of their own communities to future challenges.

Iwi/hapū can’t do all of this on their own; they need to be at the decision-making table.



When you look at a lot of our values, a lot of the other members of our communities have the same or similar values anyway in the context of wanting what is best for the environment and the ecosystems living within.

Lyn Carter, Kati Huirapa ki Puketeraki

What’s driving councils to work with mana whenua in general?

- It is often driven by specific legislative imperatives, e.g. Te Mana o Te Wai or Resource Management Act.
- Sometimes Treaty settlements lay out specific requirements about council/iwi relationships.
- Some councils have a strategic commitment to Te Tiriti (or they might refer to the Treaty of Waitangi or Treaty Principles) which underpins their interest in developing relationships.
- Some relationships are because an iwi/hapū has persistently approached a council to develop a working relationship.



Climate change is too big of a challenge for councils to do it all by themselves.

A council perspective: Staff member, Bay of Plenty Regional Council

Examples of council-mana whenua relationships:

- Well defined formal partnership arrangements and clear roles established via a Memorandum of Understanding or similar.
- Mana-to-mana relationships, e.g. where executives from a rūnanga and a council meet formally and regularly.
- Voting positions for mana whenua on council committees.
- Advisory roles for mana whenua on council committees.



For this three year period of elected members we have two iwi representatives on our strategy and planning committee and so they have the same voting rights and status as everybody else on that committee. It's a committee of the whole so that's all 12 councillors plus the two iwi representatives, and that's because strategy and planning is obviously where all the policy matters get decided and also things like climate change adaptation ... So that's been a way that our council has formally involved iwi in decision making on climate change adaptation as well as broader policy planning type issues, and that seems to have gone very well.

A council perspective: Staff member, Otago Regional Council

Examples of operational arrangements:

- Maori commissioners appointed to Resource Management Act hearings
- Senior Māori staff members in strategic roles
- Mana whenua members 'hot-desking' within a council department on a regular basis to improve information flows and skills development on both sides
- Particular staff members who are receptive to mana whenua concerns
- Councils reaching out to iwi/hapū/rūnaka for input into councils' own strategic plans, resource consents, and water management decisions
- Collaborations between iwi/hapū, councils, agencies (e.g. Waka Kotahi) and sometimes researchers to protect impacted places or plan for adaptation

Examples of adaptation-related resourcing and capacity building:

- Council-commissioned report on climate change risks to Māori
- Council funding that has helped iwi/hapū to obtain localised climate impact reports
- Council or DOC directly funding biodiversity work by mana whenua
- Councils funding positions within Māori organisations where staff are delivering information or decisions to support council's processes (e.g. input into resource consent processes)
- Funding and capacity assistance with developing adaptation plans/strategies.



Now we've got funding from regional council and Bay Trust to do a mapping project with the projections over the next hundred years of what sea level rise is projected to do under the various [climate change scenarios] ... What is going to happen to the land that the communal buildings and the current housing is sitting on?

Community liaison officer, Ngai Tamawhariua ki Katikati

Challenges for mana whenua in developing relationships with councils:

- Relationships with councils are Treaty-based. It can be very hard for hapū or iwi that don't yet have Treaty settlements or a clear framework or MOU on which to base a relationship.
- Some hapū are not recognised by councils
- The disruptive effect of the 3 yearly election focus of councils, with councillors coming and going, and policies changing
- Some individual councillors oppose the idea - are not ready or willing
- Councils not being proactive in developing relationships: iwi/hapū have to make the first move and put in a lot of energy



A lot of the councillors are never there long enough to form a serious relationship to ensure that they fully understand where it is Māori are coming from. Whereas iwi are always going to be there.

Lyn Carter, Kati Huirapa ki Puketeraki

- Some iwi or hapū have to engage with multiple regional and district/city councils.
- Some councils have to engage with multiple iwi/hapū.
- Co-governance seems too challenging an idea for many councils.
- Limited capacity either within iwi/hapū and/or councils to properly address iwi/hapū climate needs and interests



We've got our elected members that sit on particular committees, plus representatives from each district, plus representatives from iwi and we've now got our one Māori seat as well. Yeah, so there's already part of a construct, but I wouldn't say it's co-governance. It's just representation.

A council perspective: Staff member, Taranaki Regional Council



I guess the difference is that we've got that sense of kaitiakitanga, we're just there to look after it to pass on. Its not ours, we don't own it, it's the next generation and the ten, twenty generations coming that we're doing this for.

Lyn Carter, Kati Huirapa ki Puketeraki

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