

THE DEEP
SOUTHTe Kōmata o
Te Tonga

Eating with my Tuupuna Summary

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The [Eating With my Tuupuna](#) project explores the deep cultural significance of hauanga kai (food gathering sites) and mahinga kai (food gathering practices) for Waikato-Tainui poukai marae. These traditional food resources and practices are fundamental to tribal identity and have sustained generations, with the health of hauanga kai reflecting the health of the iwi themselves.

The project examines key poukai species – traditional foods served at important tribal gatherings. This includes exploring the rich mātauranga (traditional knowledge) embedded in the Māori names, harvesting locations, techniques, preparation methods, and cultural practices associated with these species. For example, there are over 100 Māori names for freshwater tuna (eels) alone, demonstrating the depth of traditional ecological knowledge.

However, the ability of marae and whānau to access, protect and utilize their hauanga kai has been severely impacted by historical injustices and environmental degradation. Land confiscation, restrictive legislation, land use changes, and pollution of waterways have all taken a major toll on traditional food resources and practices. These effects continue to be felt acutely today.

The Waikato River Settlement marked a turning point, with the Crown apologizing for past wrongs and committing to restore the health of the Waikato River. This was underpinned by Te Ture Whaimana (the Vision and Strategy for the river) and key settlement principles. However, full implementation of the settlement's intent in regional and local policy has been slow.

While the Resource Management Act 1991 promised greater recognition of Māori interests and values, hauanga kai species, resources and sites remain under threat. Integration across multiple agencies and statutes remains challenging. The now repealed resource management reforms promised greater recognition of iwi plans and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. However, recent repeals to the legislation fails to carry any of this forward.

Recent reporting on the future of local government calls for a culture shift in how councils engage with Māori. Recommendations focus on embedding a Treaty-based approach, tikanga, te ao Māori values, co-governance, and building Māori and council capacity.

In this context, the Eating With my Tuupuna project aims to revitalize traditional food gathering knowledge and practices (and share it by way of a cookbook), while also informing policy to better protect these taonga (treasures) for future generations. By exploring the deep connections between culture, food, and environment, the project seeks to support climate resilience and cultural wellbeing for Waikato-Tainui whānau.

Changing with our climate

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