

Project Summary Te Morehu Whenua: Moutoa Island Restoration Project

Moutoa Island

Situated at Rānana on the Whanganui River, Moutoa Island holds significant cultural value as a Māori reservation, wāhi tapu, and historic site for our hapū and Te Āti Haunui-a-Pāpārangī iwi. The land trustees of Moutoa Island also govern Rānana Marae and other lands of Rānana and Ngārākauwhakarāra, and Moutoa is characterised by its shingle terrain hosting a mix of native and exotic flora.

Research Pātai

The main query driving the Moutoa Island Restoration Project's endeavours was centred around the adaptability of Tupua Te Kawa and He Toi Taiao frameworks in addressing the uncertainties arising from climate extremes and their effects on Moutoa Island. These frameworks held significance in understanding the impacts of climate variations on this culturally significant wāhi tapu.

Tupua Te Kawa: The values inherent in Te Awa Tupua framework underscores the essential relationship between the Whanganui River, its tributaries, and the people. Discussions within the group revolved around the importance of water and earth in maintaining Moutoa Island's sanctity, connectivity between the taonga, the Island, and its inhabitants, and the communal responsibility in ensuring the well-being of Moutoa and the Awa.

He Toi Taiao: Derived from the aspirations framework of Ngāti Ruaka, He Toi Taiao focuses on environmental well-being themes, outcomes, and indicators pertinent to the hapū. Through the project, additional indicators were proposed and adopted, particularly emphasising on areas such as the health of the Whanganui River, sustainable land management, protection of sites of significance, food sustainability, and resilience of the community against environmental threats.

The application and analysis of Tupua Te Kawa and He Toi Taiao frameworks with regard to Moutoa Island showcased their adaptability in addressing the challenges posed by climate extremes. The subsequent project milestones included research wānanga, oral history collections, collaboration with external repositories, engagement with environmental experts to gather data on climate change, and the practical application of learnings in activities such as native plant cultivation, traditional harvesting practices, and environmental health surveys.

Milestones

- **Milestone 1:** Involved conducting research through 24 wānanga sessions. These sessions included engaging with oral stories from kuia and koroheke, learning about Moutoa Island, using technology for documentation, practising cultural traditions, discussing climate change and pollution impact, and participating in traditional mahinga kai activities.
- **Milestone 2:** Focused on analysing oral recordings of interviews with kuia and koroheke to extract themes related to Moutoa Island, such as mahinga kai, recreation, wāhi tapu, and the impact of colonisation and climate change.
- **Milestone 3:** Involved gathering historical artifacts and information from different institutions and organisations related to Moutoa Island and the Battle of Moutoa.

- Milestone 4: Included collaborating with scientists and environmental experts to collect data on climate change, risks, and management strategies for Moutoa Island. Plans were made to replace exotic trees with native species and utilise drones for data collection.
- Milestone 5: Saw the application of research learnings by planting native seeds, preparing for adverse weather conditions, learning traditional practices, revitalising fishing techniques, and focusing on conservation efforts.
- Milestone 6: Included creating a hapū map of Moutoa Island, cataloguing collected artifacts and experiences, and developing an interactive map governed by Ngāti Ruaka hapū.
- Milestone 7: Involved reporting on wānanga highlights monthly to the hapū and quarterly to Te Kōmata o Te Tonga, showcasing research findings at various hui, conferences, and symposia, and involvement in leadership programmes and community events for knowledge sharing.

Moving forward, we intend to continue our mahi beyond the project timeline, focusing on initiatives like launching an interactive hapū map for Moutoa Island, enhancing our understanding of the hapū maramataka, promoting native plant growth, contributing to a written history of the island, and actively participating in hapū activities to ensure ongoing tiakitanga.

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