

# National **SCIENCE** Challenges

## SUSTAINABLE SEAS

Ko ngā moana  
whakauka

## RESEARCH ROUND-UP

# Hui-te-ana-nui: Understanding kaitiakitanga in our marine environment



## Project leader

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## Duration

July 2016 – July 2017

## Full report

Access the full 155-page report at [sustainableseaschallenge.co.nz](http://sustainableseaschallenge.co.nz), search 'kaitiakitanga'

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### About the Sustainable Seas National Science Challenge

Our aim is for New Zealand to have healthy marine ecosystems providing value for every New Zealander. Our research is producing knowledge and tools for decision-makers to apply an ecosystem-based approach to managing marine resources. Ecosystem-based management (EBM) is holistic and inclusive. It encourages sustainable resource management to keep New Zealand's marine ecosystems healthy and support a blue economy. EBM also balances social, cultural and environmental values and aspirations for the marine environment.



## Te take

## The issue

Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) is a complex system of experiential knowledge that comprises intergenerational beliefs, values and practices that contribute to the sustainable management of the marine environment.

The ethic and practice of kaitiakitanga, or spiritual and physical guardianship, is one expression of mātauranga Māori that Māori continue to observe and draw upon to sustain their reciprocal relationship with the environment.

However, there is no single repository or index of mātauranga and kaitiakitanga relating to the marine environment from archival and written sources, and much of this knowledge has been diminished and lost over time.

The inaccessibility of mātauranga relating to marine environments makes it difficult for iwi, hapū, whānau, resource assessors

and managers, and others with an interest in marine ecosystems, to be fully informed when making decisions. This deprives Aotearoa of benefiting from the valuable contribution of relevant knowledge established over thousands of years.

Understanding, developing and retaining mātauranga and kaitiakitanga specific to the marine environment is a vital component of ecosystem-based management (EBM) for Aotearoa. For example, it is crucial for developing spiritual, cultural, social, environmental and economic practices, indicators and metrics that are relevant to our Aotearoa context.

**Ko te moana  
Ehara rawa i te wai kau  
No Tangaroa ke tena marae  
He maha ona e hua e ora ai  
nga manu o te rangi  
te iwi ki te whenua**

**The sea is not any water  
It is the marae of Tangaroa  
It yields life for many things  
the birds in the sky  
the people upon the land**

*(shared by Te Ahukaramu Royal 1989)*



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# Tātou rangahau

# Our research

We used Kaupapa Māori and critical discourse analysis to examine mātauranga associated with the marine environment by researching archives and reviewing key texts.

We reviewed literature personal diaries, Waitangi Tribunal papers, reports, frameworks and legislation that relate to Māori perspectives of the marine environment.

We also collated and examined historical examples of marine kaitiakitanga that highlight the depth of mātauranga and the expression of Māori connection to the marine environment.

We identified and analysed the context and practice of kaitiakitanga through many sources (see Box 1).

Using this information as a basis we then undertook a discursive analysis looking at:

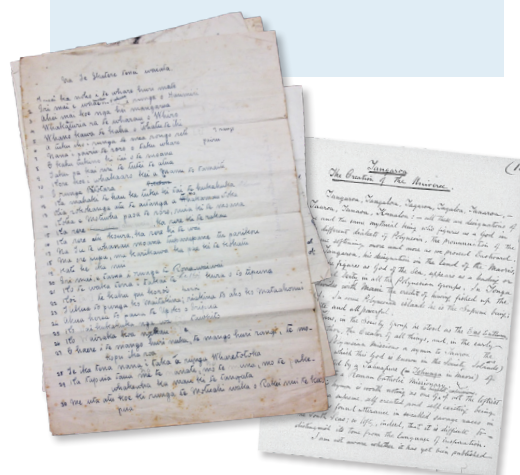
- Creation narratives
- Human and non-human forms of kaitiakitanga
- The influence of whakapapa, whanaungatanga and kinship
- Spiritual beliefs and values
- Taonga
- Mana and rangatiratanga
- Ownership, control and user-rights
- Obligation, custodianship, guardianship, trustee and stewardship
- Sustainable management, conservation and protection
- Traditional methods of management

This was a Māori-led project, with a Māori research team and advisory group. This was critical given the project's focus on mātauranga and kaitiakitanga in the marine environment, and because the kaupapa is highly relevant and important for all New Zealanders.

## BOX 1. Sources

We reviewed 35 archival sources, including nine Waitangi Tribunal reports. Each source contained a number of papers, books and/or other material.

- Tikanga (customs and protocols)
- Karakia (incantations)
- Whakapapa (genealogies)
- Mōteatea (chants)
- Pūrākau (ancestral stories and narratives)
- Waiata (songs)
- Whakatauākī and whakatauākī (proverbs)
- Maramataka (lunar calendar and heavenly bodies)
- Kupu (relevant words)
- Waka voyaging traditions
- Kaitiaki and kaitiakitanga (guardianship)
- Pēpeha (tribal sayings)



## Ngā whakataunga

## Findings

Our research highlights and provides important context to the unbroken connection between Māori and the marine environment from time immemorial.

Results acknowledge that the marine environment is a taonga, and must be viewed in relationship to the organising principles of whakapapa, whanaungatanga and kinship, and mediated through understandings of mātauranga and kaitiakitanga. For example, we examined various pūrākau and branches of karakia that explore the multiple layers of connection since creation.

In addition, the texts reinforce that kaitiakitanga is not spatially limited. We reviewed several recorded whakapapa that include different species, both marine and terrestrial, that can be traced back to common ancestry.

The findings improve our understanding of the mātauranga of the marine environment as expressed through features of Māori oral tradition. This information provides valuable insights into the past whilst offering understandings of mātauranga which can be used now and in the future for kaitiakitanga and improved management

of our marine environment. For instance, the Waitangi Tribunal in their 2011 report on Wai262 noted that mātauranga encompasses not only what is known, but also how it is known. In other words, the way of perceiving and understanding the world, and the values or systems of thought that underpin those perceptions.

Our findings also recognise two key features or elements of kaitiakitanga – the metaphysical and the practical. These elements are vital and critically linked, and provide insight to how the connection between Māori and the environment is fundamental to the hauora (wellbeing) of people and the environment. For example, Māori Marsden (2003) notes that our universe is a series of ongoing processes and experiences, of connecting ourselves in the physical world with that of the spiritual and “penetrating into states of mind for some kind of evaluation and understanding” which is something karakia engages you with.



## Ngā whakataunga

## Findings

We identified that by establishing relationships with atua (gods/spiritual guardians) through karakia, throughout these activities it is to humble oneself to the atua and acknowledge their mana (authority/prestige) in that realm or pursuit.

Ultimately our research was guided by the kaupapa Māori principles of tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) and taonga tuku iho (cultural aspiration). Using this lens and based on the information we analysed, a critical finding acknowledges that to benefit from the contribution of mātauranga Māori to our improved management of the marine environment, Māori need to be at the core of deciding their own future and to decision making at all levels.

This research also highlights the need for the development of a system and framework that protects and safeguards mātauranga and kaitiakitanga of the marine environment, and enables the advancement and contribution consistent with Māori aspirations. The need to protect and safeguard mātauranga and kaitiakitanga is

explicitly mentioned in Waitangi Tribunal papers, and the United Nations recognised in 2009 that the right to self-determination of indigenous peoples is crucial to positive health and well-being outcomes.

Our findings are based on specific sources of information and provide a foundation for further review and analysis as each rohe (area), iwi (tribe), hapū (subtribe), hapori (community) and whānau (family) will have their own mātauranga connected to the marine environment. This research clarifies that Māori are a critical component if we are to develop an EBM approach that is meaningful and effective in an Aotearoa context.

These findings are informing other Sustainable Seas projects, improving understanding of the context, importance and depth of mātauranga Māori and kaitiakitanga associated with the marine environment. This research provides a foundation for other projects across Sustainable Seas as it progresses toward the development and trial of an EBM approach for Aotearoa.

## Ngā paenga

## Benefits

Of particular importance, our research and initial findings provide the beginning of further discussions and examinations of how these and other texts and knowledge can be drawn upon in order to preserve the physical and spiritual elements of the marine environment now and in the future.

We hope that our full report (available at [sustainableseaschallenge.co.nz](http://sustainableseaschallenge.co.nz)) will be useful to iwi, hapū, hapori and whānau in the pursuit of their own knowledge

retention, management and transmission to future generations.

We also anticipate the information will be useful to decision makers of all kinds and at all levels. However, we caution the use of quotes or analysis out of context, without respect for those ancestors who provided it, and in isolation of reference to existing tangata whenua (tangata moana) sources and authorities.

*Ngā Moana Whakauka - Sustainable Seas National Science Challenge* is committed to the appropriate protection, management and use of mātauranga Māori within its research, outputs and outcomes. This is expressed through the respect and integrity of our researchers, both Māori and non-Māori, and in our approach to ethics and the management of intellectual property. Where mātauranga Māori is sourced from historical repositories, we recognise the obligation to take all reasonable steps to ensure its protection and safeguard for future generations. We also acknowledge the findings of the Waitangi Tribunal in relation to *Ko Aotearoa tēnei: A report into claims concerning New Zealand law and policy affecting Māori culture and identity* and are committed to working with Māori researchers and communities to refine our approach.



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