

# The Building of Māori Community Connections to Places through Environmental Activism



Environmental degradation in Aotearoa is often attributed to a wide-spread disconnection between Māori communities and the land[4]. People's bonds to places play a major role in motivating them to protect them and modern day kaitiaki are actively getting people involved in projects and reconnecting Māori communities to the whenua[1].

Information from academic literature and existing environmental projects has led to the development of The Hurihanga Model which describes the process that communities and individuals go through when they build these connections to places and are enriched by these experiences. The model is a tool that could be used to increasing the capacity of projects to build these connections, maximising the outcomes for the environment and the people involved.

The cyclic nature of the forwards moving wave demonstrates how becoming involved in a project often increases their enthusiasm for environmental protection and willingness to invest their time and energy into it. Community life and traditions of tangata whenua which were originally built around life in balance with the environment are now being revitalised, shifting to being centred around community-focused restoration of the environment.



Passionate and dedicated leaders gather momentum around projects and push them forwards. Unique and strong Māori leadership styles are like an onshore wind, battling against obstacles and increasing the size and force of the wave which reflects the size and force projects and their outcomes [2][3].

**ACCELERATING FACTORS**

2.

Factors and experiences that build an emotional affinity to a place.

Subthemes:

- Sociocultural
  - 2.1 Place names and histories of personal relevance
  - 2.2 A sense of home can create a sense of connection with Papatūānuku
  - 2.3 Inclusive community networks
  - 2.4 Personal involvement in working towards aspirations shared by community members
- Biophysical
  - 2.5 An ecological understanding of the environment
  - 2.6 A reliance on the resources of the places
  - 2.7 Enjoyment of the place for recreational purposes
  - 2.8 Having a perception of there being shared traits between the environment and the people

3.

Whakapapa: links to tūpuna and tuhanga.

Subthemes:

- 3.1 Knowledge passed through families is valuable
- 3.2 Māori obligations to respect and care for parents are reflected in relationships with Papatūānuku and Ranginui
- 3.3 Intergenerational links are formed by people carrying out their daily lives and traditions in the same places

4. PEAK

Desire to fulfil the role of kaitiaki

- 4.1 The act of kaitiakitanga is enriching
- 4.2 Kaitiakitanga protects other traditions as places are settings in which culture is formed and lived out
- 4.3 A collective sense of responsibility to environmental protection
- 4.4 There are culture measures and observations that show environmental degradation



Tangata whenua value the mauri of the land and get mana from it.

Subthemes:

- I.1 Protection enhances mana of tangata whenua
- I.2 Environmental health affects the hauora of the local community
- I.3 The value is spiritual and cultural (not economic)
- I.4 Loss of mana over land is a big part of continued colonial suppression

6. RETREAT

Project outcomes reinforce community identity as tangata whenua

Subthemes:

- 6.1 It is the land that formed Māori culture and lifestyles as they moved away from 'East Polynesian' ways of living to Aotearoa-rooted lives.
- 6.2 Māori connections to land have been deliberately undermined and destroyed by colonisers as they understood these to be a foundation for strong connected communities
- 6.3 Living with the land in non-destructive ways is described as innate to Māori people
- 6.4 Environmental damage is a cultural offense
- 6.5 Manaakitanga can be impacted by environmental damage
- 6.6 Environmental damage can make it unsafe to consume and share mahinga kai
- 6.7 Communal ownership over land supports connections within communities
- 6.8 Kaitiakitanga offers opportunities to live out tikanga in the modern day

5. IMPACT

Action from communities

Subthemes:

Stories, beliefs and language

- 5.1 The sharing of stories, language and histories give meaning to land
- 5.2 Many cultural and spiritual beliefs lived out manage resource use and environmental damage
- 5.3 The ways in which places are talked about impact the ways that others see and interpret them

Education

- 5.4 Raises awareness about the importance of environmental protection
- 5.5 Helps people learn about ways in which they can mitigate the ways in which they are impacting the environment negatively
- 5.6 Helps people develop an understanding of different ways in which they can view and interact with environmental issues (eg. Cultural, political, scientific, geographic)

Hands-on

- 5.8 Developing skills to carry out restorative practical work
- 5.9 Carrying out challenging tasks together strengthens connections to each other
- 5.10 Can allow involvement from large numbers of people

Political (local, regional, national, international)

- 5.11 Taking action to bring Māori values around land ownership and use into regional and national policy
- 5.12 Land is a major art of Māori resistance movements and activism against colonial suppression

- 5.13 Engagement of Māori values around resource consent and control in regional and national policy

- 5.14 Systems that help iwi bring Māori worldviews into politics

- 5.15 Action can bridge the gap between communities and governing bodies

- 5.16 Action can create links to other projects and networks that are rooted in similar values

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