



Manaaki Whenua
Landcare Research

Recommendations from the Whakatipu Māhia Wānanga, 15 May 2020

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Nichola R Harcourt

Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research

Reviewed by:

Yvonne Taura
Kairangahau Māori

Grant Norbury
Researcher

Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research

Approved for release by:

Chris Jones
Portfolio Leader – Wildlife Management &
Conservation Ecology
Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research

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Summary

Project and Client

- Whakatipu Māhia – Predator Free Māhia is a collaborative project aimed at enhancing native biodiversity and building iwi and community capability. Hawke’s Bay Regional Council (HBRC) are working closely with the Rongomaiwahine Iwi Trust (RIT), the Whangawehi Catchment Management Group, and the farming community to identify their specific objectives and outcomes for the project.
- While HBRC are delivering the pest control milestones, they recognise that wider goals include education, economic and cultural considerations. They want to understand how they can better support these wider goals for RIT in this project and beyond.

Methods

- HBRC contracted Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research (MWLR), to meet with RIT and discuss their research aspirations for Te Māhia, and how they prioritise future research activities.

Results

- RIT are clear in their aspirations for Te Māhia, and decisions about what research activities to undertake are made upon weighting the relative contribution to cultural, social, economic, and environmental aspirations.
- The most immediate priority for RIT is to develop a biodiversity plan for Te Māhia. Research activities will be prioritised according to the capability and capacity of the Trust and its community, and reconnection of Rongomaiwahine descendants with their whakapapa (whenua, tūpuna, and environment) underpins all work. Projects relating to biodiversity are likely to meet key aspirations and available resources in the next 5–10 years.

Conclusions

- RIT recognise that the Whakatipu Māhia project is a key stepping-stone to building the capability and connections required to lead their own research projects. RIT have identified the development of a biodiversity plan as their immediate priority, and they have identified some high interest areas for future research.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that HBRC support the Whakatipu Mahia Charitable Trust (WMCT) and RIT in true partnership to undertake aspiration-led research as outlined in this report. Development of mana-enhancing agreements by HBRC to facilitate co-development of projects with RIT would be a useful step in this direction. It is suggested that the Manaaki Taiao Māori Research Team at MWLR could be approached to assist RIT with advice and planning for kaupapa Māori research proposal development. The Manaaki Taiao Research Team have supported whānau, hapū, and iwi to develop cultural assessment tools and resource management frameworks.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Whakatipu Māhia – Predator Free Māhia is a collaborative project aimed at enhancing native biodiversity and building iwi and community capability. The first phase of this \$4.86 million project focuses on removing possums from Te Māhia within 4 years (HBRC 2020). Initially being led by Hawke’s Bay Regional Council (HBRC) while iwi capability is developed, the plan is for local hapū and iwi to take the lead in the future. HBRC are working closely with the Rongomaiwahine Iwi Trust (RIT), and the local farming community on this project which involves:

- possum eradication
- controlling mustelids and feral cats
- research
- developing employment, capability, and engagement opportunities

Three cadets have been funded by the Whakatipu Māhia project, and work alongside the iwi to support possum eradication and more broadly, contribute to restoration goals. In addition to the specific goal of possum eradication on the peninsula, and the building of capability, there are broader ecological and social goals. HBRC recognise that the ecological and social goals for Te Māhia need to be identified and led by the iwi, and they want to understand how they can support the Whakatipu Māhia Charitable Trust (WMCT) and Rongomaiwahine research aspirations.

1.2 Objective

Undertake a wānanga with RIT, and other members of the Whakatipu Māhia project as identified by community facilitator, Lynne Dragovich, to identify their aspirations for Te Māhia, and prioritisation of research aspirations.

1.3 Study area

The Whakatipu Māhia project encompasses 14,600 hectares of farmland on Māhia Peninsula. Te Māhia (21.7km long, 11.3 km wide at its widest point, with a height of 397 m) is a peninsula that has formed from a tombolo (series of sand dunes) joining an offshore island to the mainland giving it an isolated geographical configuration (Eastern Earth Landscape Architects 2011). The peninsula is comprised of disparate topographical areas (e.g. dune systems, mudstone escarpments, rock platforms, wetlands etc), and there are several significant ecological areas. According to recent census data (Stats NZ 2018), 65% of the Māhia community identify as Māori and 24% of the community speak reo Māori. It is noted that there are two main iwi in Māhia, Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāti Rongomaiwahine.

2 Methodology

HBRC identified a community facilitator, Lynne Dragovich, to recruit the wānanga attendees from RIT, and the wider community. Before the wānanga, nominated participants received a Participant Information Sheet outlining the process and the Intellectual Property Management Plan. The facilitator confirmed that all participants had consented to the research process, and ensured the process followed the appropriate tikanga. The wānanga consisted of a semi-directed interview with the Chief Executive of RIT, Mo Rongo, RIT iwi researcher, Arna Whaanga, and Predator Control Cadet, Kaya Cooper. Pat O'Brien, the Chair of Whangawehi Catchment Management Group and WMCT trustee, was also invited but unable to attend. Due to the limitations imposed by covid-19 the interview was conducted using Zoom conferencing. The report was checked and approved by the participants before release.

3 Results

3.1 Aspirations for cultural well-being in Te Māhia

Identification of aspirations for cultural well-being was a key cornerstone of the discussion. These were:

- Re-establish mana whenua, and to celebrate and acknowledge the history of tangata whenua in Te Māhia. To reconnect those separated Rongomaiwahine descendants with their whenua (whakapapa to the whenua). Uri will be connected to the environment, their history, their marae, and each other, and know their whakapapa connections to these.
- Share mātauranga from knowledge holders with rangatahi.
- For data and knowledge generated by research projects to remain with the iwi. Protection of intellectual property: te reo, whakapapa/knowledge creation, and collections.
- Develop and implement Kaupapa Māori research that is Māhia-centric.
- Safeguard wāhi tapu, and their respected names and kōrero.
- Ensure the availability of mahinga kai to future generations.
- Develop and celebrate own branding (e.g. products).

3.2 Aspirations for social well-being in Te Māhia

Aspirations for social well-being identified by participants were:

- Develop their own locally-designed education programmes that are relevant for the Te Māhia context, and nationally recognised.
- Foster leadership opportunities.
- Encourage connections between whānau/hapū, working together (kotahitanga)
- Promote self-sufficient living.

3.3 Aspirations for environmental well-being in Te Māhia

Kaitiakitanga aspirations for environmental well-being were:

- Access the resources, build the capability and legislative ability to restore the environment, so that Rongomaiwahine is empowered to lead restoration on their own lands.
- Live healthy and sustainable intergenerational lifestyles within their own rohe.
- Increase biodiversity of taonga species in Te Māhia.
- Restore the health and integrity of the soil, and to mitigate erosion.
- Increase the sustainability of farming methods.
- Restoration of the native taonga species will enable knowledge to be reignited.
- For local government to actively recognise and consult RIT on all matters pertaining to their rohe.
- Enter true partnerships with local government and other agencies (mana motuhake).
- Complete a biodiversity plan for their rohe (remembering that this includes all aspects of the environment: moana, awa, repo, whenua, etc.).

3.4 Aspirations for economic well-being in Te Māhia

Aspirations for economic well-being (whai rawa considerations) were:

- Reassert the mana of Rongomaiwahine as an iwi in its own right.
- Build capability amongst Rongomaiwahine descendants, so that they can achieve tino rangatiratanga: create their own jobs, manage their own assets, lead research projects, and be directly contracted by the government to undertake research and services.
- Explore new sustainable opportunities for land use that increase benefits to kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga and whai rawa (te ao tūroa).
- Lead the growth of coordinated and sustainable growth for Te Māhia on an inter-generational basis.

3.5 Reflections on the current project, Whakatipu Māhia

The Whakatipu Māhia project has been a critical stepping-stone for the WMCT and RIT to begin building working relationships with crown entities in Te Mahia. Working together with the Department of Conservation (DOC) for 2 years has recently led to the formalisation of a co-management arrangement between the two entities, which means all decisions pertaining to DOC reserves on the peninsula will be made jointly (Gisborne Herald 2020).

The Whakatipu Māhia project has provided the impetus for people to reconnect with the iwi and the whenua, and enabled RIT to build good relationships with HBRC. Having a community-based co-ordinator, Lynne Dragovich, acting as a conduit to HBRC helps manage that key relationship.

At the inception of the Whakatipu Māhia project, Rongomaiwahine did not have the requisite resources or capability to lead and implement the large-scale predator control programme. Therefore, HBRC developed the research programme and it is based on standard western science principles. The project cadets follow the methods as prescribed by HBRC; however, in 2021 the programme will be led by WMCT and RIT.

The benefits of the project towards meeting environmental aspirations are clear: 'Effective predator control will provide a safe home in the future for our native species to return and flourish, a key goal for our iwi and hapū and the wider community' (M. Rongo, pers. comm., 2020).

The project enables the cadets to become familiar with both the landscape and its people, beginning to contribute to the social aspirations of fostering leadership among the iwi and community.

3.6 Prioritisation of future research activities

Applying a te ao Māori worldview to future research activities, it is important to consider the contribution of these potential activities toward meeting RIT's aspirations (cultural, social, environmental, and economic).

According to the strategic plans of the Chief Executive, Mo Rongo, the capacity and capability of RIT, and indeed the iwi, will grow in time. This will increase their ability to undertake research activities. RIT are clear they are carefully prioritising their research activities to ensure that they have the requisite capability and resources, or that they can partner to achieve this in a manner that is consistent with their aspirations for mana motuhake.

Reconnection of uri with the whenua is a key priority for RIT, and this underpins research activities. Opportunities for rangatahi to relocate back to the whenua will be preferred. Initiatives that create opportunities to stimulate new knowledge gains, as well as handing on of mātauranga from knowledge holders, and job creation will deliver on aspirations to enable manaakitanga. Provision of hui rangatahi that enable students to explore their taiao (environment, as well as health, cultural and social aspects as all are related) as part of the curriculum and adequate resourcing for the kura will be imperative.

The most immediate priority research objective for RIT is the development of a biodiversity plan for Te Māhia. The plan will support Rongomaiwahine's aspirations underpinning the Mana Whakahono ā Rohe arrangements under the RMA. The biodiversity plan will:

- be internally focussed to support and direct the kaitiaki practice of Rongomaiwahine.
- be a living document that will be modified in line with the strategic plans, policies, and objectives of RIT over time.
- be lodged with relevant local authorities and will inform and support the statutory framework.
- be developed according to a Kaupapa Māori-based planning framework. It will embody the collective values and aspiration of Rongomaiwahine, and it will require a

comprehensive collection of kōrero from as many iwi members as possible (both historical and contemporary).

- define Kaupapa Māori as unique to Te Māhia, the objectives and outcomes that relate to this, and the appropriate tikanga to ensure implementation of this plan. The plan will prioritise objectives and outcomes so that they are achievable.

The wānanga participants noted that RIT has limited capacity at present, having lost a number of key contributors recently, so the priority objective for the first 5–10 years should capitalise on the skills and momentum associated with Whakatipu Māhia, and the co-management arrangement for the DOC reserves. Natural resource management and environmental monitoring are logical extensions from the current research projects, and this focus would generate employment opportunities. These areas may include:

- *Baseline biodiversity survey.* Increasing biodiversity in Te Māhia is a key aspiration, and it will be imperative to undertake a baseline survey on the species present in each of the ecosystems. In te ao Māori, biodiversity encompasses all connections within ecosystems.
- *Mahinga kai and rongoā assessment.* Focussing on species and sites that support mahinga kai (e.g. waterways) will increase the relative contribution of the project to meeting aspirations (e.g. cultural practices, kaitiakitanga, teaching/training rangatahi). Focussing on rongoā practices would be another area of high interest for RIT.
- *Rongomaiwahine cultural assessment tool.* Development of cultural indices by Rongomaiwahine to assess the health of their natural resources is an area of high interest for RIT.
- *Climate change risk assessment.* Develop strategic relationships and discussions to address climate change risks and make smarter landscape decisions.
- *Erosion mitigation.* Address erosion sites and land uses that contribute to erosion. Cultural impact assessments, and the monitoring of erosion sites may be undertaken by the iwi. Soil stabilisation is critical to enable biodiversity gains.

Local authorities and research providers may support RIT's activities via true partnership.

4 Limitations/caveats

This report has been prepared in full consultation with the wānanga participants, and has been approved for release to HBRC by Mo Rongo as Chief Executive of RIT.

5 Conclusions

RIT recognise that the Whakatipu Māhia project is a key stepping-stone to building the capability and connections required to lead their own research projects. RIT have identified the development of a biodiversity plan as their immediate priority, and they have identified some high interest areas for future research.

6 Recommendations

It is recommended that HBRC support WMCT and RIT in true partnership to undertake aspiration-led research as outlined in this report. Development of mana-enhancing agreements by HBRC to facilitate an expansion of projects with RIT would be a useful step in this direction. It is suggested that the Manaaki Taiao Māori Research Team at MWLR could be approached to assist the Trust with advice and planning for kaupapa Māori-led research proposal development. The Manaaki Taiao Māori Research Team have supported whānau, hapū, and iwi to develop cultural assessment tools and resource management frameworks.

7 Glossary

Ngā kupu Māori (Māori words)	English meaning (in this report)
Awa	River
Hapū	Local sub-tribes that make up larger iwi groupings, at local or district geographic level
Kaitiaki	Guardian
Kaitiakitanga	Environmental guardianship, embodies a range of complex Māori environmental concepts
Kaupapa Māori	Framework, philosophy, purpose, scope, topic, sets cultural framework for discussion undertaken by Māori, with Māori, for Māori
Kōrero	Communication
Kura	School
Mahinga kai	Places where customary resources (e.g. plants, fish, food) are harvested or collected
Mana Motuhake	Separate identity, autonomy, self-determination, control over one's destiny
Manaakitanga	Reciprocal and unqualified acts of giving, caring, and hospitality
Mana enhancing agreement	An agreement that sets out how the partnership will operate, based on Māori principles
Mana whenua	Rights of self-governance, rights to authority over traditional tribal land and resources
Mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge, Māori knowledge system, belief system, wisdom
Moana	Sea, ocean, large lake

Ngā kupu Māori (Māori words)	English meaning (in this report)
Rangatahi	Youth
Repo	Wetlands
Rohe	District, area, territory, region
Rongoā	Traditional medicine, remedy
Tangata whenua	Local people, people of the land, people inextricably linked to their natural resource
Te ao Māori	Māori world, Māori world view
Te ao turoa	Sustaining resources/taonga at rate and in an acceptable condition that ensures the same options and opportunities for each generation, principle of sustainability
Tino rangatiratanga	Māori acting with authority and independence over their own affairs
Tikanga	Protocols
Tūpuna	Ancestor
Uri	Descendant
Wāhi tapu	Sacred site
Wānanga	Workshop
Whai rawa	Economic considerations
Whakapapa	Ancestral lineage, hierarchical assemblage of descendants, inter-connections

8 Acknowledgements

The willingness and openness of the participants was really appreciated, especially given the demands imposed by Covid-19, as were the significant contributions to community well-being made by RIT (Wairoa Star, 2020).

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