

Kai Whakaora

Reclaiming Food Sovereignty

Ko te kai whakaora he hua nō te whenua

The food that heals and restores comes from the land

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He Mihi

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Executive Summary: Kai Whakaora and the Reclaiming of Food Sovereignty

As our community faces escalating challenges around food security, cultural disconnection and environmental degradation, a transformative mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) grounded response is required. This report documents and analyses kōrero from Ngāti Kahungunu kai practitioners and presents a kaupapa Māori (Māori approach) framework for rebuilding food sovereignty. Kai Whakaora calls for a reclamation of our ancestral relationships with kai (food) and a restoration of Indigenous food sovereignty. It is a pathway toward collective healing.

At the core of Kai Whakaora is the recognition of the significant link between kai, whenua (land), whakapapa (genealogy), and cultural identity. These are the foundations of Māori wellbeing and food sovereignty. This holistic understanding, which resonates deeply within Iwi (tribe) Māori, extends beyond physical nourishment to encompass spiritual wellbeing, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and environmental stewardship. The present disconnection from traditional foods and practices is reflected in the prevailing Māori health and dietary crises in Aotearoa. The Kai Whakaora model seeks to address this need.

The purpose of this work was to capture local mātauranga Māori about kai, identify pressures on those practices, and develop a practical pathway for whānau and communities to act. Inspired by the legacy of Ngāti Kahungunu in Hawke's Bay, Kai Whakaora pioneers an Indigenous food economy grounded in community self-sufficiency and cultural revitalisation. What began as a search for an existing mātauranga Māori base upon which to build a 'kete kai' (a food basket) based distribution programme of wholesome, locally-produced kai evolved into a wider aspiration to empower families to access, understand, and meaningfully participate in a circular food economy.

In 2019, backed by Te Puni Kōkiri and led by Gretta Carney of Hapī Ora, this project to scope such an affordable, high-integrity food system was initiated. Informed by Dr. Jessica Hutchings' Kai Ora framework and kaupapa Māori aligned models of community-supported agriculture, we interviewed thirty-four Ngāti Kahungunu kai practitioners across the rohe in order to document lived knowledge of maara kai and mahinga kai and to inform model development.

Extensive 'kaputi and kōrero' sessions (discussions over tea) created culturally safe spaces for tangata whenua to share experiences, aspirations and knowledge regarding traditional food practices. Themes that surfaced reflect a Ngāti Kahungunu way of life, enduring resilience, communal well-being, and evidence the preservation of tradition. These sessions provided a platform for reimagining a food system that respects and revives tīpuna (ancestor) knowledge, while addressing contemporary threats to kai Māori.

Insights from this research propelled the development of a theoretical model grounded in a holistic tangata whenua approach to local food systems. By infusing traditional Māori methodologies and the principles of national and international food sovereignty

movements, the model proposes a circular, life-giving economy that is based in a comprehensive system encompassing Māori values, language, and tikanga (Māori custom). The model includes the following sequential components that together form a stepwise pathway moving from reconnection to whenua through to cooperative practice, equitable distribution, and knowledge transfer.

1. **Hononga ki te Whenua:** Strengthening our connection to the land.
2. **Hua Parakore:** Committed to pure, uncontaminated, organic food systems.
3. **Ringatuku:** Embracing cooperative models for food production and distribution.
4. **Tohatoha ki te Tangata:** Ensuring equitable access to nutritious food.
5. **Kai Oranga:** Promoting health and wellness through quality kai.
6. **Te Whataroa:** Establishing digital and physical presence for sharing our vision.

The Kai Whakaora model provides a pathway for healing relationships between people, their food and the land, disrupted over time by colonisation and industrial food systems, and invites individuals, whānau (extended family), and communities to participate in a movement that restores traditional food practices, cultural identity and collective wellbeing for generations to come.



Introduction: The collective vision of nourishing our whānau

Disconnection from whenua and traditional kai practices has impacted the wellbeing of whānau Māori, who now carry the daily realities of limited access to nourishing kai. Yet an inherited knowledge of how to maintain health through balancing whenua, traditional practices, and collective strength still exists. Traditionally, the connection with kai and whenua within Māori communities is deeply tied to whakapapa and to the spiritual and emotional realms. As Durie (1998) asserts, “health for Māori is not merely the absence of disease but is intimately connected to the land, spirituality, and ancestral relationships” (p. 68). Similarly, Marsden and Royal (2003) and Williams (2012) describe the relationship between people and land as a sacred bond integral to identity and wellbeing. This report documents kōrero with Ngāti Kahungunu maara kai growers and mahinga kai practitioners. It identifies what knowledge remains, what pressures it, and what pathways whānau see for restoring food sovereignty. It also presents the Kai Whakaora model that emerged from this work.

Contemporary health status indicates a significant disconnection in this regard. Māori adults experience higher rates of obesity and diabetes (Ministry of Health, 2024; Ministry of Health, 2025) alongside serious food insecurity. Only 33.3% of Māori females and 37.6% of Māori males live in fully or almost food-secure households (Ministry of Health, 2019), and 35.1% of Māori households with children report that food runs out often or sometimes (Salvation Army, 2024). These high levels of food insecurity reflect disparities driven by systemic inequalities, colonisation, and the long-term impacts of land dispossession (Hutchings & Smith, 2019; Signal et al., 2018). In addition, whānau Māori are losing the skills of hunting, gathering, and growing food, while pollution of rivers and overharvesting of the seabed reduces access to fresh fish and seafood. As Panelli et al. (2009b) observe, the loss of access to traditional food sources has serious implications for Māori health and cultural identity.

Therefore, the way in which we address food production and food sovereignty in Aotearoa is crucial. Washington (2018) notes that the present food system demands transformative change by consumers, producers, retailers, and health and environmental advocates to address food insecurity and health inequity. Indigenous knowledge systems, alongside community-driven initiatives, have the potential to shape sustainable food practices for future generations and answer questions such as: How might detrimental habits be transformed? What does it look like to eat well and consciously in ways that align with cultural values? How can this transition be supported?

This research documents the scoping of Māori knowledge around kai in response to the vision of a Māori food ecosystem championing the reconnection of whānau Māori with the environment and self-sufficiency, and with whakapapa and whenua. This Kai Whakaora ecosystem sought, in the first instance, to make high-integrity kai more accessible for whānau in the heart of Ngāti Kahungunu ki Heretaunga, Hawke’s Bay with the exploration of

a simple 'kete kai'/food box programme doing 'local food for local people'. Although that large project stalled in the face of COVID and extensive Hawke's Bay flooding, the background interviews with maara kai (food garden) growers and mahinga kai (food gathering) practitioners from Ngāti Kahungunu were rich with data that deserve purposeful documentation. This is that document.

Alongside insights from local mana whenua and tangata whenua who grow, hunt, or gather kai, the Kai Whakaora project also sought to draw on the expertise of national maara kai leaders incorporating kaupapa Māori sustainable food models such as Para Kore, Hua Parakore, and Hutchings's (2015) kaupapa Māori framework. Other Indigenous and international cooperative initiatives promoting self-reliance and challenging food apartheid were drawn upon to supplement the Māori experience.

The mission of the wider Kai Whakaora therefore has been to capture the collective voice of hau kāinga (home people) in relation to food sovereignty and co-create with participants and international experience, a model that reconnects whānau Māori with traditional Māori food systems. It promotes self-sufficiency, access to nutritious, locally sourced kai, and a balance with Papatūānuku that restores wellbeing and will nourish our future generations.

Method: Kaputī and Kōrero

This project set out to interview mana whenua and tangata whenua gardeners, hunters and gatherers, and other kai practitioners of Te Matau-a-Māui (Hawke's Bay) as a qualitative, kaupapa Māori research project focused on documenting lived knowledge. With no attempt to achieve representativeness across the rohe (district), we decided as a team to interview people from our own whānau and hapū (sub-tribal group) networks. This sampling approach prioritised our relationships in our communities and a depth of kōrero based on trust and engagement based on tikanga (custom). Together, we compiled a list of thirty-four interviewees from Te Wairoa in the north to Pōrangahau in the south. They all lived therefore within the Ngāti Kahungunu tribal rohe. We acknowledge that many other knowledgeable maara kai and mahinga kai exponents in our communities were not engaged in the project.

The question line we developed was inspired by the Kai Ora framework of Dr Jessica Hutchings, a Māori food sovereignty specialist (Hutchings & Smith, 2015; Hutchings et al., 2020). Her influence guided our emphasis on key cultural values such as tūrangawaewae (a traditional home place), moemoea (dreams), rangatiratanga (chiefly autonomy), whakawhanaungatanga (creating relationships), and kaitiakitanga (environmental stewardship) that were used to create our guiding questions:

Tūrangawaewae: What are your memories of food? How does kai relate to where you come from? How has this changed?

Moemoea: Do you have moemoea in relation to kai for you and your whānau?

Rangatiratanga: What does rangatiratanga in relation to kai signify for you?

Whakawhanaungatanga: What do you and your whānau eat? If you could change anything, what would you like to eat? How is kai meaningful to you and your extended whānau?

Kaitiakitanga: What does being a kaitiaki (caretaker) in relation to kai mean to you?

These values also provided the initial analytic lens used to organise and interpret the kōrero.

Formal institutional ethics approval was not sought for this project. Instead, we followed tikanga-based ethical processes guided throughout by a Rōpu Taumata (elders group) who ensured that the project proceeded in a culturally appropriate, respectful, and nurturing manner. This approach aligns with kaupapa Māori research practice, where ethical accountability is held through relationships, tikanga, and community oversight (Smith, 1999; Hudson et al., 2010). Through a series of hui (meetings), the research team discussed how we would conduct, record and code the interviews. We adopted a ‘kaputī and kōrero’ (talking over a cup of tea) method as our engagement approach and four of the team did the interviews. All participants were fully informed about the aims of the project and the interview process. Confidentiality was discussed but participants were all comfortable to be identified. With permission, all interviews were recorded and a small koha (gift) of kai, such as Māori bread and fresh Hapī-Ora produce, was offered at the completion of each interview.

Members of the research team who did the interviews all held existing relationships with participants and this insider positioning supported culturally safe engagement and rich narrative sharing. The interviewers transcribed the interviews they had done. Two team members conducted the thematic analysis, identifying recurring patterns and points of divergence across interviews. The themes emerged organically as the data was analysed through an iterative process of listening to recorded interviews, reading of transcripts, and discussion. On the basis of the data and emerging themes we also explored how insights from our whānau might inform the development of a Māori food system. Two Kai Whakaora draft documents were prepared: a short promo about Kai Whakaora, and an excerpt of interviews document highlighting the kōrero of each research participant.

While the interviews form a substantial qualitative record, they also directly informed the emergence of a wider framework outlining the steps required to establish a new, sustainable Māori food system. This framework ultimately developed into the Kai Whakaora model for the food ecosystem we collectively aspired to build.

The project subsequently paused in the face of the COVID-19 epidemic (2020-2023) and the Hawke’s Bay flood recovery (2023-2024) associated with Cyclone Gabrielle as team members pivoted to emergency response and community support efforts. In late 2024, we asked a senior researcher from Te Kura i Awarua at Eastern Institute of Technology to review the data, examine our draft materials and support the development of a full publication. Given that Te Kura I Awarua were working on Nourishing Hawke’s Bay: He wairua tō te kai, a research project scoping food security, school lunches, and food sustainability in Hawke’s Bay, they recognised the strength of our database and the value of the Kai Whakaora model.

With renewed momentum, the project took on a new life leading to this report which represents the consolidation and synthesis of that earlier work.

Findings: The voice of Ngāti Kahungunu

This section provides a summary of the main themes that emerged from our interviews conducted in 2019 with Ngāti Kahungunu kai practitioners. The line of questioning structured around the ‘key cultural values’ of tūrangawaewae, moemoea, rangatiratanga, whakawhanaungatanga, and kaitiakitanga elicited a wide range of responses. These included recall of occasions and activities associated with kai, traditional kai practices, and observations of changes over time, including eating habits. Participants also discussed the deeper meanings of kai within family and extended community, reflections on the role of being a caretaker and knowledge sharer, and exploration of the concept of leadership and authority around kai.

These Kai Ora related values also guided the initial analysis. Themes emerging through participants’ responses to them and through the relationships between them. The findings are organised thematically rather than by question. However, each theme speaks most strongly to one or more Kai Ora values, and many kōrero sit across several values at once. This reflects the integrated nature of mātauranga Māori, where kai, whenua, health, identity, and collective responsibility are inseparable (Durie, 1998; Marsden and Royal, 2003; Hutchings and Smith, 2015).

Themes relating to connection with land, seasonal knowledge, and place are most closely aligned with tūrangawaewae and kaitiakitanga. Narratives of self-sufficiency, authority, and control over food systems reflect rangatiratanga. Accounts of sharing, collective provision, and communal labour align with whakawhanaungatanga. Aspirations for future generations, rangatahi learning, and knowledge transfer speak most directly to moemoea. Participant quotations under 30 words or so are presented inline. Longer excerpts, or shorter quotations where narrative flow or speaker voice is central, are presented as block quotations for clarity. There is some commentary around these quotes that describes, analyses and, to a point, discusses the findings.

Cultivating Connections, Cultural Resilience, and Sustaining Traditions

At the heart of the narratives was the profound relationship between kai, whenua, and cultural identity. These kōrero speak most strongly to tūrangawaewae and kaitiakitanga, highlighting how place-based knowledge, seasonal rhythms, and everyday practices anchored Ngāti Kahungunu relationships with food. Participants described kai not simply as sustenance, but as an expression of whakapapa, responsibility, and connection to Ranginui and Papatūānuku. The acknowledgement of these foundational atua reflects a Māori worldview where rangatiratanga and kaitiakitanga are inseparable from traditional food practices, including the application of maramataka to mahinga and maara kai.

Participants recalled food gathering as an embodied practice that integrated spiritual awareness, environmental observation, and collective responsibility. These recollections situate kai gathering within a worldview that recognises interdependence between people, whenua, and atua. One participant reflected on how harvesting activities were understood within a wider cosmological frame.

We collected watercress and could drink the water straight from our hands. We caught ika and īnanga when the season was right, and on those hunting and gathering adventures, we paid homage to Ranginui and Papatūānuku, we got the big picture. (E. Munro)

Rangatiratanga was frequently described not as abstract authority, but as responsibility enacted through everyday care for whenua and food production. In this framing, autonomy and leadership are inseparable from cultivation, care, and provision. M. Apatu commented,

First thing is everyone should have a garden. That's what rangatiratanga represents, particularly to kai. Looking after your whenua means you're looking after Papatūānuku. If we could evolve that in our normal day psyche, we are achieving rangatiratanga.

A. Lawrence expressed a similar sense of responsibility toward the land, stating, "it's just you are given this land, this gift. I always feel that if you don't grow anything it's criminal. If you have got this land you have got to grow stuff." This articulation reflects the understanding that rangatiratanga carries with it an obligation to care for and activate the gifts of Papatūānuku.

Traditional knowledge systems such as maramataka remained evident across the kōrero. These systems were not always formally named, but were embedded in inherited ways of observing and responding to the natural world.

Dad knew the maramataka without him knowing that he knew the maramataka. He didn't study it, it was just a normal way of thinking for them. They would plant by the moon. (N. Tomoana)

He went further saying that the potential of aligning food production with the maramataka, envisions, "a future where food is not just a product but a reflection of a comprehensive system of values, language, and tikanga."

Knowledge was grounded in close attention to tohu, including plant behaviour and seasonal cues. B. Taylor noted that his Dad would talk about the flowering cabbage trees and say, "it will be dry this year, look at them flowering too early", and the same observational logic guided decisions around harvest timing. His Dad also said "Holes in the leaves. Yeah, this big caterpillar. It's time to harvest".

These accounts illustrate how maramataka and tohu informed practical decision making within everyday whānau life.

Place-based knowledge also shaped the gathering of wild foods from land and sea. L. Pineaha said of his father, “he stops on the side of the road, and we have to walk through the farm and down the steep cliff to get to where the karengo is and pick it off the rocks”. Such practices relied on intimate familiarity with specific places and access routes that were once widely held within whānau.

Participants frequently recalled a time when self-sufficiency was normalised and supported by shared knowledge of storage and preservation practices. B. Taylor also shared,

My granny used to grow vegetables up on the slope facing East. This sunny spot they would dig the rua for storing the kūmara and taewa. The process, put the raupō down, a layer of taewa, another layer of raupō until all taewa were stored. This of course was our winter pātaka. This bounty sustained us very well indeed.

G. Bennett emphasised the same practical knowledge, noting that “food is really important and more, the preservation of food and making use of what you've got.”

Similarly, hunting and gathering were described as everyday sources of nourishment. T. Haronga said, “growing up in Te Hauke, manu was a large part of my diet. My whānau gathered kaimoana, sometimes even fighting with the seagulls”. Recollections like this highlight ingenuity and resilience within Māori food systems, as well as adaptive responses to environment and season. He added, “rangatiratanga is the Māori way”.

Kai was consistently described as having whakapapa, linking food directly to whānau histories and seasonal movement across the landscape. R. Stirling noted,

There is whakapapa in kai and whakapapa in your whānau with kai. Whānau had lands everywhere. They built kāinga in different areas so they could follow their food source, following the seasons and the maramataka.

Respect for kai extended across its entire journey, from harvest to consumption. Participants spoke of tikanga that governed use, preservation, and waste. E. Munro told us,

“You dared not waste it, because you witnessed the effort in collecting, preserving and providing that kai. You knew the value of life that was lost.”

Sustainable harvesting practices were described as expressions of restraint and care, as M. McGuire shared, “don’t whakamana the stripping of the bed of puha, but rather take the elderly plants and leave the young ones to come”.

A similar ethic was articulated in relation to kaimoana gathering. “We don’t just rip the tails off and chuck the bodies away. Eat it all or don’t eat it at all. If you want crayfish, then you have to go and do the hard yards and catch it with your hands.” (Q. Crawford)

Seed saving and propagation were also identified as expressions of rangatiratanga and self-determination.

Feed our people, teach our people how to grow our own food. Don't go buy seeds. Go collect from the old people. Keep your seeds separate. You can learn how to propagate any seed. (G. Nelson)

Collectively, these kōrero recall a time when whānau lived with a high degree of self-sufficiency. This mātauranga, embedded in practices of growing, gathering, preparing, and sharing kai, remains present and recoverable. Reclaiming these practices offers not only the restoration of traditional food systems, but also the reaffirmation of identity, responsibility, and interdependence with whenua and with one another.

Nourishing Kai Māori and the Holistic Journey Toward Hauora

Interviews revealed a sophisticated understanding of kai as integral to holistic health among Ngāti Kahungunu whānau. Participants consistently linked nutrition to physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being, emphasising the importance of kai sourced from whenua and moana. Food was described not only in nutritional terms, but as a foundation for vitality, balance, and collective wellbeing.

References to kai Māori across the kōrero were wide ranging. Kaimoana (food sourced from the ocean) were a primary mention with fish species such as tāmure (snapper), pātiki (flounder) and kahawai, and other species like koura (crayfish), īnanga, kina (sea urchin), and pāua (abalone). Kai o te whenua, food from the land were significant with kūmara (sweet potato), pūhā (sowthistle), wātakirihi (watercress), kamokamo (marrow), and taro bearing mention. Gathered forest foods included pikopiko (fern shoots), the berries of the karaka and miro trees, and poroporo berries. These foods were eaten fresh or preserved using a variety of traditional methods. These included the drying of pāua and fish, the fermenting of corn to make kānga pīrau (rotten corn) and pūhā to make toroī, the smoking of tuna (eels), and the salting of tītī (muttonbird). Introduced foods were also celebrated as kai Māori, including rēwana (leavened bread), kānga waru (grated corn), and kānga pūngārehu (maize cooked in ash), reflecting a continuity of adaptation.

The role of unprocessed kai and mahinga kai including fishing, whitebaiting, and harvesting was central to R. Tomoana's upbringing;

“We were always surrounded by food, unprocessed kai. Pretty much grew up in the kūmara pit. Going out with dad gathering, whether it be whitebait, kahawai (a species of coastal fish), or eels, we were out there doing it. Whether it was fadges of walnuts, or trailer loads of oysters, we did it. Fishing the mouth of the Mōhaka, kahawai running. Dad would whip us down there, yeah, pulling them in by hand.”

A noticeable shift towards health consciousness emphasised a return to natural kai. Participants made connections between diet, disease, and a yearning for unprocessed, sugar-free kai. H. Tomoana stated, “healthy, nutritional food, healthy body, healthy minds, healthy people, healthy outlook, happiness... is rangatiratanga in action.”

Participants also reflected on avoidable illness arising from disconnection from traditional food knowledge and education. While many whānau expressed a desire to return to traditional kai, they also acknowledged the challenges of determining which foods genuinely promote wellbeing today. M. Robin reflected;

"Modern parents face a different challenge. They must discriminate hyperbole from truth when choosing foods for themselves and their family; and to practice cunning in protecting their children from foods made of sugar, white flour, vegetable oils and products that imitate the nourishing foods of our ancestors."

The goodness of home-grown produce versus commercially available food is noted by H. Tomoana recalling that, "eating good nutritional food plays a major role in maintaining good health. Our homegrown stuff always seemed to taste better than bought stuff".

Concern was expressed about the freshness and quality of modern diets and the impact of processed foods with M. Apatu's (2019), observation that, "a lot of what we eat now is not fresh."

Despite these challenges, participants expressed confidence that rebuilding food resilience through maara kai and mahinga kai would support both cultural identity and community wellbeing, reducing reliance on external systems. N. Tiuka suggested that returning to self-provisioning could address multiple health issues at once,

"That we grow our own kai including meat, pigs, chickens... or sustainably harvest. If we revert back to that, then we'll deal with some of our health issues. Growing our kai and not having to buy."

Participants articulated a vision that included cooperative education around wholesome eating, emphasising the link between whenua and health. While modern conveniences have changed food practices, participants noted a growing desire to return to traditional kai collection, preparation and preservation methods.

One participant described how rongoā knowledge was embedded within everyday food production:

"I was brought up here in this house by my grandmother. She was always cooking. She had a big veggie garden out the back with all her rongoā. I remember if I got sick I had to pick the koromiko leaf and chew on that. She showed me all the trees that were good to have for medicine." (M. Robin)

Although rongoā Māori (traditional medicine) emerged as significant in discussions about kai and healing, this aspect requires further dedicated research beyond this initial project. Overall, the kōrero reflect a shared belief that rebuilding food resilience through maara kai and mahinga kai would support Hauora, cultural identity and community wellbeing.

Navigating Threats to Traditional Māori Kai and the Urgent Call for Environmental Action

This section brings together participant kōrero that articulate both the pressures facing Māori food systems and the urgency of environmental action required to sustain them.

The challenges posed by contemporary lifestyles, marked by busyness, economic pressures, and a departure from communal practices were frequently discussed. Participants also revealed concerns about environmental degradation and climate change, threatening traditional food systems. The stark contrast between past abundance and current scarcity was consistently highlighted, with fears that future generations may no longer access once-plentiful resources. As M. Apatu reflected;

“What I’ve experienced over time with all the abundance of food and now ... it’s slim pickings. I feel my grandkids won’t see it in years to come.”

Environmental mismanagement, including chemical sprays, overharvesting, and poor land practices, was identified as a key contributor to soil depletion, food contamination, and the decline of traditional kai sources. Degradation of waterways and coastal areas also provoked strong concern among participants. Many mourned the loss of once-thriving fishing grounds and noted the effects of increasing salinity in freshwater, as well as pollution and unsustainable harvesting.

“We’d dive during the day, go all the way down the river spearing fish, kahawai and mullet on the Ngaruroro, the Tukituki and Tūtaekurī... flounder. Eels were beautiful, nice and fat. But looking at our rivers in the last thirty years, our rivers are paru (dirty) now and it’s not very good to eat anything out of our rivers.” (T. McGuire)

Participants also described the pollution of watercress and pūhā gathering areas, the depletion of pāua stocks due to temperature changes and unsustainable harvesting, and the impact of industrial development.

We’ve seen what sprays and overworking land, or an overabundance of stock on land, can do to the rivers and the environment and climate. We have to be more environmentally aware and switched on. If we want quality food, we have to walk the talk and stop polluting our rivers and soils and depleting our soils of their natural feeders. (H. Tomoana)

Together, these accounts locate environmental degradation as both an ecological issue and a direct threat to the continuity of Māori food practices and knowledge.

Another urgent concern raised by participants related to seed sovereignty. Participants expressed alarm at the shift toward hybrid and one-season seed varieties, which has undermined the long-held practice of saving seeds from season to season. As N. Tomoana said, “now you only get seeds that last one season, so you’re made to go back and buy them.” The erosion of seed-saving knowledge was seen as a tangible loss of tino rangatiratanga in the realm of food cultivation.

These shared concerns weighed heavily on participants. Collectively, these testimonies reflect a call for heightened environmental awareness and a return to sustainable practices. These challenges require not just the adaptation of traditional cultivation methods but also collective action to preserve and restore the natural systems that have sustained Māori food practices for generations. The message was clear - adaptation must be accompanied by restoration.



Pari Kai: Communal Abundance to Individual Realities

This section explores participant reflections on the transition from collective abundance to increasingly individualised food practices.

The concept of pari kai, or abundant food, reflects an enduring Māori tradition of communal kai practices grounded in collective responsibility and generosity. This system operated within a circular, self-reliant economy where surplus food was shared freely with whānau and community, guided by the principle of tohatoha (sharing) meaning to give or distribute without expectation of return. G. Nelson recalled times when “all tangata whenua used to be growers” and “the entire region was a maara kai”.

Crops were cultivated not only for immediate family needs but also to sustain the wider hapū, with “any overflow” going to the community. A. King described seasonal community planting efforts where “everyone would go everywhere and help plant each other's gardens”. A. Lawrence reflected on this way of life, saying,

“Well, we grew our own kai. We ate our own kai. We had our own kai, and we always had plenty of kai – you name it, we had it...planting it, preparing, preparing to grow it...harvesting it and eating it. Sharing with others.”

Such abundance was matched by a strong ethic of care. As M. Tomoana explained; “if you caught a big load of fish, you would feed everyone that can’t be there, like the old people who can’t fish.” In more detail N. Tomoana recounted;

Around here, you have the Harris whānau, the Paipa(s), they were the sea people. So, every weekend they would go get kina and pāua and mussels and bring them to the marae (meeting ground) and pass them all out. We were never short of kaimoana, and our whole papakāinga (village) of Waipatu was never short of kūmara, corn or potato. That was how we got on. We only paid for meat. Other than that, we grew or hunted for our kai.

These customs were part of a wider ethic of service, reciprocity, and collective provision rather than accumulation. A. Chadwick recounted how her father, after storing the family’s harvest, would “take the excess to his whānau from Tolaga Bay... and they really appreciated that.” T. Manihera described how her uncle always gathered “enough for everybody,” distributing bags of pūhā or meat for the whānau;

Uncle still hunts and gathers and makes sure there’s always food, and ‘cos nine times out of ten, if he’s collecting pūhā or watercress, he gets enough for everybody. He drops bags off here, bags off there. Same with when he goes hunting, there’s always meat. He’ll say, ‘come and get some meat,’ and he’s always been like that.” (T. Manihera).

However, the prevalence of this practice has declined. L. Church noted that where there was once regular exchange, “Aunty has flounders, that one has spuds, and they swap”, such sharing is now rare due to time, work, and financial pressures. And highlighting this shift from self-sufficiency to dependence on money, A. Ropiha says:

We’ve gone from subsistence, having to feed ourselves, to relying on money to be able to feed ourselves. So instead of relying on our skills and the land, and taking that from season to season to season, we now rely on how we’re going to get the money so we can go to the shop to get it. When we were in Pōrangahau, you know, Paora would just go out and dive and fish and come home with the pāua and the kina and the ika (fish) and the crayfish. Yeah, but it seems so much easier just to pop down to the supermarket whenever you feel like it. But it’s what we’ve lost on the way. That’s the sad thing. We’ve lost the ability to look after ourselves and fend for ourselves.

This shift reveals the tension between modern lifestyles and the tikanga that once sustained pari kai. The transformation from communal abundance to individual provisioning, and fast food and supermarket shopping over traditional practices of cultivation and sharing are starkly noted. The allure of instant gratification contrasts with the patience required for nurturing crops. This shift, compounded by demanding schedules and busy, highly mobile lifestyles, is ironically, placed alongside a widely expressed desire to ‘return to the ūkaipō’ (place of origin) and to traditional ways of life.

While convenience and time pressures continue to challenge traditional food practices, the value of (abundance of food) and tohatoha remains a powerful touchstone for those seeking to rebuild food sovereignty through cultural knowledge and community care. It is a key driver behind the unique food economy and the restoration of Māori food sovereignty.

Nurturing Well-Being, Community and Cultural Shifts

This section foregrounds kai as a central source of wellbeing, social cohesion, and cultural continuity across whānau and generations.

Kai is emphasised as a fundamental source of well-being, community, and intergenerational connection. The communal nature of food and its central role is described as “the source of everything,” including “whānau, hapū, and iwi vitality” (N. Tomoana). The concept of kai is inseparable from the idea of papakāinga, where fire-cooked food nourishes both the people and the whenua.

The kuia (female elders) and koroua (male elders) recalled in these kōrero are crucial in our collective memory of kai traditions, recalling the significance of abundant maara kai, mahinga kai, ringa raupā (hard-working hands), and ringa wera (cooking) skills. Our tīpuna had a connection to the land and a commitment to sustainable practices, highlighting the richness of homegrown produce, locally sourced, unprocessed kai. They are acknowledged for being providers and many of these recollections position kuia and koroua as holders of practical mātauranga and as anchors of food-based wellbeing within whānau life.

Ceremonial and social uses of kai were especially significant. S. Crawford recalled large-scale events such as Hui Tau at Korongatā, which “brought together hundreds for Māori sports and cultural gatherings, with each whānau contributing food and labour in designated kitchen areas.” These practices fostered manaakitanga (hospitality and generosity), collective effort, and a shared spiritual connection through food.

The decline of such hui and communal contributions at tangihanga (funeral gathering) and other gatherings was also noted. As M. Taylor explained;

“Rising costs and reduced access to homegrown kai have constrained these traditions, symbolising a wider detachment from communal support systems. It is a departure from the wairua (spiritual sense) of what was once collective support.”

This illustrates both a practical loss and a weakening of the relational and spiritual dimensions of kai-based community life.

The essential role of kuia and koroua in maintaining kai traditions was repeatedly acknowledged. Their routines, deeply tied to the land, demonstrated self-sufficiency and sustainable living. L. Pineaha described her grandfather’s daily garden rituals, growing a wide range of vegetables and fruits;

You could set your watch to him, and he would cook our breakfast or go to the garden first, go to work, come home, back in the garden, that was his routine.

Carrying forward tīpuna knowledge around work ethic, communal, social, and ceremonial aspects of food is now done by only the few, with many disconnected. The continuity of mātauranga through generations is emphasised. These accounts highlight the transmission of practical mātauranga Māori as central to food sovereignty.

Across these narratives, kai emerges as a living connector between people, across generations, and with the whenua. Upholding food-based relationships emerges as both a cultural obligation and a pathway toward community well-being.

Our Future Through Rangatahi, Kai, and Knowledge Transfer

This section focuses on rangatahi as central to the continuity of Māori food systems and the intergenerational transmission of mātauranga Māori.

The intergenerational transmission of traditional food knowledge emerged as a critical concern. Participants expressed urgency in ensuring rangatahi (young people) are equipped with the skills and values necessary to sustain cultural food practices and environmental stewardship. As K. Kuru explained,

It's what I want my kids to know and understand. So, how to grow your own garden, just keeping Papatūānuku healthy... is important to the environment.

A consistent theme was the concern that younger generations are becoming disconnected from the earth and traditional kai practices. R. Taylor reflected on this shift, stating,

The old people taught us how to survive, how to get kai, how to grow kai, how to cook kai... taught you about different seeds and the time to grow...but I think the young ones are not interested in doing that.

Participants linked the erosion of ringawera skills and cultivation knowledge to factors including urbanisation and lifestyle shifts and reduced time spent on the whenua. Rather than criticism of rangatahi, these were insightful reflections on broader structural and social change.

Despite these concerns, innovative approaches to knowledge transmission were evident. Many participants modelled indirect, experiential learning with their tamariki and mokopuna. As M. Robin noted, “they’re just going for a walk, but they don’t know that they’re learning at the same time. You’re just ‘planting the seeds.’”

This metaphor of seed-planting was reflected in discussions on the long-term impact of early exposure to gardening, fishing, and foraging.

Several participants highlighted rangatiratanga as enacted through the active teaching of survival and food gathering skills. “My mission is to get our hapū divers boated and confident. That’s what rangatiratanga looks like to me,” said M. Apatu (2019). And R. Epps said, “passing on skills of hunting and gathering to the next generation - it’s better than going to the shops... more rewarding knowing that you got it yourself.” Here, rangatiratanga is talked about as an active responsibility rather than an abstract authority.

A concept that emerged strongly was the idea of a whānau kaitiaki, someone within each family responsible for holding and passing down traditional knowledge. M. Taylor observed: “Each family should have a caretaker. Otherwise, how are our mokos going to learn?” This role was described as critical for sustaining mātauranga and enabling future generations to inherit the wisdom of their tipuna. A. Ropiha said:

My dream is that, as I felt about kai and the land, so will my grandchildren learn and know about that as well. I chopped up a pumpkin this morning and Adam asked me what that is coming out of the pumpkin. I said it's the seeds. That's just a simple example of how kids don't know where food comes from. I want them to know and to be able to learn all that. I haven't got that many years to teach them.

Three key strategies for knowledge transmission emerged from the interviews: the integration of food education into daily activities, the designation of whānau kaitiaki to maintain and share knowledge, and the use of practical, hands-on learning experiences that connect children with the whenua. Successful transmission of traditional food knowledge requires both intentional teaching and natural integration into daily life, supported by committed kaitiaki within each whānau. Importantly, rangatahi are positioned not only as learners, but as future carriers of tikanga, mātauranga, and responsibility for kai and whenua.



Discussion: Creating Pathways Toward Food Sovereignty

The interviews with 34 Ngāti Kahungunu gardeners and collectors of traditional food in Hawke's Bay, New Zealand, revealed some recurring themes. The data records evidence of a body of existing mātauranga Māori and traditional Māori food practices in this community alongside the multiple pressures on sustainability and knowledge transmission. Interpreted through a kaupapa Māori analytic frame based on the Kai Ora values, we examine what the persistence and erosion of these values mean for Māori food sovereignty and why a deliberate pathway is now required.

For many participants, kai remained inseparable from cultural identity and place. We documented, primarily amongst older people, a solid base of traditional knowledge about maramataka, food cultivation, food gathering, fishing, diving, food preservation techniques, seed saving, sustainable harvesting, tikanga-based resource restraint, and the communal practice of sharing kai. These were described not as isolated skills, but as expressions of values that link people, whenua, and wellbeing across generations. Participants spoke of an enduring intergenerational responsibility to pass knowledge on to the next generations.

Marsden and Royal (2003) remind us, that Indigenous ecological knowledge is embedded in lived relationships with whenua and this research affirms that such relationships remain central to Māori understandings, linking kai practices to identity, belonging, and wellbeing. This aligns with wider Indigenous scholarship showing that food systems are inseparable from cultural identity, spirituality, and ancestral relationships (Kuhnlein et al., 2009; Morrison, 2011).

Alongside this persistence, participants identified significant shifts in everyday food practices. A movement away from communal food cultures toward more individualised and market based provision was widely noted. From a Kai Ora values perspective, this shift reflects an erosion of whakawhanaungatanga and rangatiratanga, as collective responsibility for kai becomes harder to sustain under contemporary economic and social pressures. Similar patterns have been observed elsewhere (Olaniyan et al., 2016).

The kōrero also evidenced the disconnection of young people and traditional food practices and the lack of active knowledge transfer methodologies. Participants described limited opportunities for rangatahi to learn through observation and participation, a pattern mirrored across Indigenous communities internationally (Robin, 2019). This weakening of intergenerational transmission directly undermines the moemoea value, as aspirations for future wellbeing cannot be realised without deliberate pathways for teaching and practice.

In addition, whānau recognised that environmental and climate pressures hinder the maintenance of their once sustainable food systems. Polluted waterways, depleted fisheries, soil degradation, climate instability, and the erosion of traditional food sources were all mentioned. These pressures challenge the ability of whānau to enact kaitiakitanga in everyday food practices, even where the knowledge and desire to do so remain strong.

Similar challenges have been documented in Ngāi Tahu contexts, where locally adapted practices of stewardship and seasonal management have been disrupted by environmental degradation (Williams, 2012).

This pattern of environmental decline also reflects what Panelli et al. (2009a) describe as the erosion of Māori place based wellbeing, where the health of people and their food gathering environments are inseparable. Taken together, these findings reveal a critical tension. Mātauranga Māori about kai remains present, valued, and actively held by knowledge keepers, yet the social, environmental, and economic conditions required to sustain it have been significantly weakened.

Global industrialised food systems have disrupted Indigenous diets and undermined local food sovereignty, while at a whānau level Māori caregivers navigate complex nutritional, economic, and cultural pressures in everyday food decisions (Trail, 2017; Glover, 2019). In Aotearoa, analyses of food apartheid reflect broader patterns of environmental injustice affecting Indigenous food systems globally (Hutchings and Smith, 2015; Whyte, 2016). International Indigenous scholarship similarly documents the impacts of processed foods, convenience culture, and the erosion of everyday food skills such as gardening, hunting, gathering, and preserving (Grey and Patel, 2015; Coté, 2016).

This research details the tension between what is being lost and what remains. But it also gives us clues as to how resilience might be mobilised. While mātauranga around kai persists, it is unevenly distributed and vulnerable and the communal practices that once ensured abundance have been weakened by economic pressures and individualised lifestyles. But these same practices are also the foundation for rebuilding a resilient, culturally grounded food system.

The kōrero of Ngāti Kahungunu echo these principles, situating kai as a potential site of cultural resurgence, environmental stewardship, and collective healing. The knowledge required to restore food sovereignty remains present within these communities but the challenges in knowledge transmission suggest that the real opportunity is in the development of a framework that might mobilise action. Indigenous pedagogical approaches to pathways for systematic knowledge transfer have been previously documented (Gutierrez, 2018).

The Kai Whakaora Model

Kai Whakaora emerges from the findings and the literature which indicate that food sovereignty fails, not because knowledge is absent, but rather it falters because the conditions that support practice, transmission, and collective action have been weakened. It is a structure that can activate what remains.

Kai Whakaora is presented as a kaupapa Māori-informed framework designed to support the renewal of Māori food sovereignty through organised practice. Grounded in the kōrero of Ngāti Kahungunu gardeners, hunters and gatherers, it responds directly to the tensions identified herein: persistence and erosion, knowledge and transmission, aspiration and constraint. This model, whilst local in origin, is entirely transferable to other Māori and Indigenous contexts where similar dynamics are present.

Kai Whakaora provides a structure that helps whānau and hapū identify where knowledge is held, where pathways have broken down, and where collective action can be strengthened. It brings together values, practices, and aspirations into a coherent system that supports learning, stewardship, and intergenerational continuity.

Kai Whakaora is organised around the Kai Ora values which are active drivers of practice. Tūrangawaewae anchors kai practices in place. Kaitiakitanga guides sustainable relationships with whenua and moana. Rangatiratanga supports collective decision making and local control. Whanaungatanga sustains relational practices and shared responsibility. Moemoea directs action toward future wellbeing.

Kai Whakaora operates as a stepwise framework that shifts the focus from documenting loss to enabling renewal. It outlines a progression from reconnection with whenua, through the valuing and production of healthy kai, to collective practice, sharing, and intergenerational transmission. In doing so, it provides a practical pathway for mobilising existing mātauranga and rebuilding everyday food practices as expressions of cultural, environmental, and collective wellbeing. Together, the steps give practical shape to the circular, life-giving food economy envisioned at the outset of this kaupapa, one which is grounded in tikanga, sustained by collective effort, and oriented toward the wellbeing of future generations.



KEY ELEMENTS OF THE KAI WHAKAORA MODEL

- 1. HONONGA KI TE WHENUA**
Strengthening our connection to the land.
- 2. HUA PARAKORE**
Committed to pure, uncontaminated, organic food systems.
- 3. RINGATUKU**
Embracing cooperative models for food production and distribution.
- 4. TOHATOHA KI TE TANGATA**
Ensuring equitable access to nutritious food.
- 5. KAI ORANGA**
Promoting health and wellness through quality kai.
- 6. TE WHATAROA**
Establishing digital and physical presence for sharing our vision.

Fig 1: The Kai Whakaora Model

Figure 1 presents the Kai Whakaora model. The model depicts a stepwise but relational pathway through which Māori food sovereignty can be renewed. While presented sequentially, the steps are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, reflecting the lived realities of kai practices rather than a linear programme.

Kai Whakaora describes the pathway that emerges when connection to whenua, integrity of production, collective labour, and equitable sharing are working together as a resilient and coherent food system. Each step is grounded in the Kai Ora values and responds to specific points of breakdown identified in the findings. The framework is designed to support action at whānau and hapū levels, while remaining adaptable to local conditions and priorities.

Hononga ki te Whenua: Strengthening connection to the land

He whenua, he kai, he oranga
(Land is the source of food and of life)

Hononga ki te Whenua establishes whenua as the foundation of kai, identity, and wellbeing. It reflects participant accounts that located food knowledge within specific places, seasonal cycles, and ancestral relationships. This step responds to disconnection caused by environmental degradation, loss of access, and changing land use. It calls whānau and hapū back into active relationships with whenua through maara kai, mahinga kai, and maramataka guided practice. In doing so, it centres tūrangawaewae and kaitiakitanga as prerequisites for food sovereignty.



Hua Parakore: Committing to pure and uncontaminated food production

Mā te ahunga o Papatūānuku, ka hua te kai
(In caring for the earth, food will thrive)

Hua Parakore focuses on the integrity of food production and the protection of mauri (life force) of that kai. It draws on participant concerns about environmental decline and the need to restore trust in kai sources. This step promotes tikanga based growing and harvesting practices that avoid contamination and extractive land use. Guided by maramataka, ecological indicators, and intergenerational knowledge, it aligns food production with Māori values and regenerative principles. Hua Parakore operationalises kaitiakitanga through everyday decisions about how food is grown and gathered.

Ringatuku: Embracing cooperative models

Ringahora, ringawera, ringaraupā, ringatuku
(Generous, skilled, hardworking and gifting hands)

Ringatuku centres collective, hands on engagement in growing, harvesting, and distributing kai. Participants described learning through shared work as central to skill retention, wellbeing, and cultural continuity. This step responds to the fragmentation of food practices within individual households and the loss of communal infrastructure. By revitalising cooperative approaches, it builds collective capacity and supports rangatahi engagement alongside kaumātua leadership. Ringatuku transforms values into coordinated action through shared responsibility and mutual support.



Tohatoha ki te Tangata: Ensuring equitable access

Mā tō rourou, mā taku rourou, ka ora te iwi

(With your basket and my basket, the people will be fed)

Tohatoha ki te Tangata focuses on the sharing of kai according to tikanga. Participants linked food distribution to manaakitanga, reciprocity, and social cohesion. This step responds to barriers created by cost, convenience, isolation, and time pressure. It revives gifting traditions and equitable distribution practices that once sustained whānau and papakāinga. Through sharing surplus kai, communities reduce food insecurity and strengthen relational wellbeing.

Kai Oranga: Healthy food as a source of life

He kai he rongoā, he rongoā he kai

(The food is the medicine, the medicine is the food)

Kai Oranga represents the everyday expression of a functioning Māori food system. It emerges when whenua connection, clean production, cooperative practice, and sharing are aligned. Participants described kai as medicine, culture, and relationship, not merely nutrition. This step bridges mātauranga Māori and contemporary nutrition science without separating health from culture. Kai Oranga restores wellbeing by reconnecting people with kai that is nourishing, culturally grounded, and sourced through whakapapa and whenua.

Te Whataroa: Establishing knowledge sharing platforms

Ka tū te iwi nā Te Whataroa a Manaia

(The people stand because of the food store(s) of Manaia)

Te Whataroa provides the structures that ensure continuity of kai knowledge over time. Participants identified gaps in opportunities for rangatahi to learn through practice and mentoring. This step responds by foregrounding deliberate mechanisms for teaching, learning, and exchange. It includes community based teaching plans, shared learning spaces, and digital platforms that support Iwi led knowledge systems. Te Whataroa a Manaia (a whata is a structure for displaying gifted foods) refers to the historical practice of mapping of kai storage across extensive Iwi territories and inside Kai Whakaora it functions as the enduring scaffold that sustains the Kai Whakaora model across generations.

Conclusion: Reclaiming Food Sovereignty

This research documents the lived knowledge and experiences of Māori growers and gatherers in Hawke's Bay and examines what is required to restore Māori food sovereignty in contemporary conditions. The kōrero shared by participants reveal both the depth of mātauranga that remains and the risks posed by weakened pathways for practice and transmission. From this foundation, the Kai Whakaora model emerged as a practical framework for reconnecting kai, whenua, health, and wellbeing.

Kai Whakaora represents more than a food sustainability initiative. It demonstrates that despite generations of disruption, the foundational relationships between kai, whenua, and Māori identity remain intact within knowledge holders. By restoring the circular relationships between people, kai, and whenua that once sustained Māori communities, the model offers a living expression of collective regeneration, translating mātauranga Māori into contemporary forms of collective action and the maintenance of cultural integrity.

The kōrero of Ngāti Kahungunu are a powerful reminder that the knowledge required to restore food sovereignty already exists within whānau and hapū. Kai Whakaora arises directly from this knowledge and offers a culturally grounded framework for strengthening relationships with kai, whenua, and one another. In doing so, it contributes not only to local aspirations but also to the global movement for Indigenous food sovereignty, affirming that the path forward lies in honouring the wisdom of our tīpuna and empowering future generations to carry it forward.

This study has limitations that require acknowledgement. The interviews and primary analysis were conducted in 2019. Subsequent events including the COVID-19 pandemic, Cyclone Gabrielle, and the escalating cost-of-living crisis have reshaped food access, environmental conditions, and community needs. Although these changes alter context, they do not diminish the relevance of the mātauranga shared and that knowledge remains grounded in whakapapa, place, and lived practice. Lastly, although this kaupapa Māori, community-led project was guided by tikanga and kaumātua, it did not undergo formal institutional ethics review. We state this here for transparency.

Ko te kai whakaora, he hua nō te whenua - the food that heals and restores comes from the land. In these words, lies both our ancestors' wisdom and our descendants' inheritance. Through Kai Whakaora, we seek to honour both by creating a legacy of health, well-being, and environmental kaitiakitanga for generations to come.

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Glossary

Aotearoa (New Zealand)

awa (river)

hākari (feast)

hapū (sub-tribal group)

hau kāinga (home people)

haukū (dew)

Heretaunga (place name)

hui (meetings)

huitau (annual gathering)

ika (fish)

Iwi / iwi(tribe)

kānga pīrau (rotten corn)

Kahungunu (eponymous ancestor)

kai (food)

kai parakore (organic food)

kai whakaora (healthy food)

kaiārahi (guide)

kaitiakitanga (environmental stewardship)

kaitohu (advisor)

kaitoi (artisan)

kairangahau (researcher)

kairangahau mana whenua (Indigenous community researchers)

kamokamo (a type of squash)

kaputī and kōrero (talking over a cup of tea)

karengo (a type of seaweed)

karakia (prayer)

karaka (karaka tree, karaka berry)

kaumātua (elder)

kaumātua Māori (elder of Māori descent)

kaupapa (subject, topic, purpose)

kaupapa Māori (Māori approach)

kete kai (a community food basket)

kina (sea urchin)

koko (whitebait)

kōrero (talk)

koura (crayfish)

kūmara (sweet potato)

kuia (elderly woman)

maara (garden)

maara kai (food garden)

mahinga kai (food gathering)

manaakitanga (hospitality and generosity)

Māori (Māori people)

moana (ocean, sea)

mana whenua (Māori with authority based on traditional land)

manu (bird)

mānuka (manuka tree)

marae (meeting ground)

maramataka (Māori lunar calendar)

matariki (star cluster)

mauri (life force)

miro (miro tree, berry)

moemoea (dreams)

mokopuna (grandchild)

Mōhaka (place name)

Ngāti (tribe, people)

oranga (life, health)

Papatūānuku (Earth Mother)

pari (abundance)

pari kai (abundance of food)

pā (fortified village)

papakāinga (village)

parakore (zero waste)

pātaka (food storehouse)

pāpaka (crab)

pātiki (flounder)
pāua (abalone)
pipi (shellfish)
pūhā (sow thistle)
pūkeko (bird species)
pūpū (shellfish, type of)
rangatira (chief)
rangatiratanga (chiefly authority)
raupō (bullrush)
reo (language)
rēwana (Māori bread)
ringahora (generous)
ringaraupā (hardworking)
ringatuku (giving hands, skilled)
ringawera (cook/cooking skills)
rohe (district)
rōpu (group)
Rōpu Taumata (elders group)
rourou (food basket)
rua (storage pit)
Tāngoio (place name)
tangi (ceremonial mourning, funeral)
taewa (potato, type of)
taha (side)
tahu (cook)
tangata whenua (local Māori people)
taumata (leader)
taro (root vegetable)
tautoko (support)
Te Matau-a-Māui (Hawke's Bay)
Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry for Māori Development)
te whare waikahu (place name)
Te Whataroa (The Platform)

tikanga (Māori custom).

tīpuna (ancestor)

tītī (muttonbird)

tohatoha (sharing)

tohunga (expert)

toheroa (shellfish)

toihi (pickled pūhā and mussels)

toroī (fermented foods)

tuna (eel)

tūrangawaewae (a traditional home place)

Uenuku (rainbow deity)

ūkaipō (place of origin)

wairua (spirit)

wenoweno (pumpkin shoots)

whakaora (to heal)

whakapapa (genealogy)

whānau (extended family)

whanaungatanga (relationships)

whakawhanaungatanga (creating relationships)

whāngai whetu (food giving stars)

wharekai (dining room)

whata (food platform)

whenua (land)

wātakirihi (watercress)



