



## **Iwi Research and Development – Nga Tahuhu o te Taiao Te Mauri o Te Ukaipo Summary of Findings: Teaching and Learning**

In 2007 a number of Te Rarawa people contributed to the Te Mauri o Te Ukaipo research project under the banner of Ngā Tāhuhu o Te Taiao. This paper is one of several that summarises the key findings of the Mauri research and may be read in conjunction with other Iwi Research and Development summaries that will be produced throughout 2008.

Te Mauri o Te Ukaipo is researching the intersections between the environment and Te Rarawa views of wellbeing. The focus of this summary is 'teaching and learning'. A central theme drawn from the Mauri interviews concerns the ways that Te Rarawa people learn about their environment – typically in practical and informal ways.

In the interviews, people talked about learning by watching and experiencing, and teaching by role-modelling. Te Rarawa environmental knowledge is viewed as something shared in the course of whanau and community activities. Learned practices are so embedded that they were often couched in terms of 'common sense' or things that everybody knows. Whanau and hapu knowledge is also identified as central to marae and their communities, and in need of support to ensure its long-term viability.

### **Watching, Listening and Practical Experience**

There is a wealth of knowledge amongst Te Rarawa people about the environment: fishing, hunting, gardening and generally living off the land and sea. This knowledge has been passed from generation to generation often through watching and listening to other family members. One interview contributor learned by:

*..just watching my elders and my brothers. Just watching what they do and listening to what they say.*

Watching and listening extended to learning from practical experience:

*You got scratched by a thorn, you tasted something in the bush that you shouldn't be eating you knew about it and you learnt from your practical experience. If you ate something in the bush that you couldn't identify and went home and got a big swelling and then your parents would start doing their due diligence on you: where have you been in the last 24 hours? What did you touch? Where did you go? What did you eat? Then you start to learn all that stuff.'*

### **Chore or choice?**

Most people related their key learning experiences to childhood, so gathering kaimoana as a child could seem like a 'chore'.

*Initially I hated it because it was a chore. Getting pipi we had to sit and get pipi and it was a chore. Because you know when you're a kid filling a bucket looks like a bin. When you have to fill up a bucket of pipi it's like it takes forever when you're five, six years old. It's just so painful to see the pipi rise in the bucket: so when is this thing going to go fill another inch?*

But gathering kaimoana doesn't remain a chore:

*You just get so bored but as you grow older you become more independent and you realise that you can do these things when and when you have to, when and how you want to. Then it becomes fun I think. When you grow older and you realise what the options of wearing dive suits and all the rest of it. It comes into play.*

### **Learning from peers**

Besides family members, people also learned from their peers:

*Flounders it was my favourite was the flounders. We used to take spears to catch the flounders and wait till the tide went out. When the tide was out you'd have little ponds of water where you could just spear the flounders and we were taught all those skills by my Auntie's children, by the [family name] boys because they lived there and they showed us how to do it'.*

### **Tuning in to the environment**

The interviews reveal that people learned a range of very detailed tikanga and practices associated with fishing. Many of these practices are associated with learning to respect the environment:

*When we went fishing and you see the fish and you don't point your finger you gotta go like that. [bend your finger]. But if you point your finger, oh you get told off. Because the fish will go away. There were different things I can't put it in word.*

*.. if we were rock coddling and some of the fish were too little we'd put them back in the sea of course. Then I think that's just basic knowledge. If you've got enough put the little ones back.*

Learning from experience resulted in people being in tune with the environment, which is a great asset when gathering kai:

*We used to go down to the beach and you could see [the fish] feeding on the water. You could tell cause they eat the plankton and you could sort of see the ripple in the sea you can tell the difference. . That there was fish there and then somebody would charge home and say, Oh there's some fish down by the creek.*

*We knew which rocks [had] the good fat [kutai]... the other ones weren't as fat this week. Then the toheroa we just go down and just get them'.*

The kind of experiential learning discussed here is not restricted to the past. For a number of Te Rarawa families, teaching their children to engage with the environment remains a priority, as seen in this example from the interviews:

*My oldest boy he just comes netting with me on a good tide, on a calm tide. Like I won't take him out on a rough tide. He is 10 and he'll anchor the net for me. He'll go fishing with me with a rod he can throw his own rod out. He's been fishing since he was about 7 I think might even be before then...Yeah they're keen to get in there.*

This kind of approach is in keeping with people's aspirations for Te Rarawa natural environment, which are fundamentally about restoring and preserving the environment, and the learning and practices that attach to it, for future generations. This aspiration will ensure that for ever more Te Rarawa children can enjoy even the simplest things like 'being able to catch a fish'.