



He toka tū moana
a rock standing firm in the sea
He toka tū moana ia!

This whakataukī refers to one who is steadfast and strong in their culture, beliefs and or position against all opposition. They are likened to the rock in the ocean that stands strong against all elements.

Briefing Paper: Establishing the Toka Tū Moana o Ngāti Kahungunu Framework for Māori Health Initiatives

Executive Summary

This briefing paper presents the Toka Tū Moana, Ngāti Kahungunu, a governance initiative designed to enhance Māori health outcomes specifically for Ngāti Kahungunu. Recognising the significant health disparities faced by Māori, this framework is rooted in principles of self-determination, cultural relevance, and community engagement. It advocates for Ngāti Kahungunu to reclaim authority over their health initiatives, ensuring that services are tailored to meet the unique needs and aspirations of the community.

The paper outlines the current state of Māori health, including alarming statistics that highlight chronic conditions and inadequate access to healthcare services. It calls for urgent action to address these disparities through a dedicated governance structure that leverages local expertise and integrates traditional knowledge with contemporary health practices.

Central to the framework is the establishment of a governance structure comprised of Māori leaders, cultural advisors, and community representatives, ensuring equitable representation and participation at all levels. Additionally, a robust funding model and strategic partnerships are proposed to secure necessary resources and enhance advocacy efforts in health policy.

This governance structure will also address key considerations such as where authority resides within Ngāti Kahungunu, the mandate of the health authority, and the development of a cohesive health strategy. By fostering strong community ties and promoting culturally significant health solutions, the Toka Tū Moana framework aims to significantly improve health outcomes and empower Ngāti Kahungunu to navigate their health destinies effectively.

Introduction

Māori communities, particularly Ngāti Kahungunu, face significant health disparities that require urgent attention and tailored solutions. Ngāti Kahungunu is one of the largest iwi in Aotearoa New Zealand, with a population of 95,751 (Census 2023) and the second-largest tribal rohe and coastline, extending from Paritū on the coast north of Wairoa, inland across the Wharerata ranges, down towards the Tararua ranges, and to Tūrakirae on the southern Wairarapa coastline.

Ngāti Kahungunu traces its origins to the Tākitimu waka and its eponymous ancestor, Kahungunu, who was born in Kaitaia, Taitokerau, and is the great-grandson of Tamatea Arikinui, the captain of the Tākitimu waka. Kahungunu travelled extensively throughout Te Ika a Māui, forming alliances through strategic marriages, and eventually settled in Te Māhia, where he married Rongomaiwahine. Over time, the descendants of Kahungunu expanded their influence.

As an iwi authority, Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated maintains an independent position to advocate for the rights, interests, and practices of Ngāti Kahungunu. This advocacy is informed by the principles of self-determination and partnership, principles central to the Matike Mai Aotearoa initiative for constitutional transformation. The mission of Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated is: “To enhance the mana and well-being of Ngāti Kahungunu.”



Te Hapuku Chief of Hawke-Bay

Ngāti Kahungunu has exercised the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of rangatiratanga in our rohe from before 1840 to the present day. The rangatiratanga of Ngāti Kahungunu does not derive from the Crown or Parliament. In 1835, Ngāti Kahungunu Chief Te Hapuku signed He Whakaputanga, declaring the independence of the United Tribes of New Zealand, asserting that sovereign power and authority in the land resided with Te Whakaminega, the Confederation of United Tribes. In December 2023, Ngāti Kahungunu held a Hui-a-iwi where the people of the iwi came together to share their concerns. An outcome of this hui was the unanimous support that the iwi reaffirms the Declaration of Kahungunu Rights and that Ngāti Kahungunu did not cede sovereignty. This assertion

of inherent sovereignty aligns with the aspirations for constitutional transformation outlined in the Matike Mai Aotearoa report.

Context: Health Disparities Among Māori

Statistics and Challenges

Māori have historically been over-represented in negative health statistics in Aotearoa (New Zealand). According to the Ministry of Health (2021):

- Māori experience higher rates of chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and respiratory illnesses.
- They are more likely to die eight years earlier than their non-Māori counterparts.
- Access to primary healthcare continues to be limited, leading to higher rates of avoidable hospitalisations.

These disparities are attributed to a combination of socio-economic factors, systemic bias within health services, and a lack of culturally appropriate care (Ministry of Health, 2021). Given the recent decisions by the coalition government to withdraw targeted health funding, there is a pressing need for solutions that empower Māori communities to take charge of their health and well-being.

Rationale for Te Toka Tū Moana

- 1. Self-Determination and Autonomy:** The concept of self-determination (*mana motuhake*) is central to Te Toka Tū Moana, allowing Ngāti Kahungunu to reclaim authority over health initiatives. The principles of Te Whakaputanga (Declaration of Independence) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) support the rights of Māori to govern their health affairs (Durie, 1998).
- 2. Culturally Relevant Solutions:** Cultural competence (*mahi tika*) is crucial for effective healthcare delivery. Toka Tū Moana o Ngāti Kahungunu aims to ensure that health services are designed with an understanding of Tikanga Māori (Māori customs) and align with community values.
- 3. Addressing Systemic Failures:** The governance framework presents a proactive response to ongoing systemic failures within the healthcare system. Recent funding cuts by the coalition government have heightened the challenges facing Māori health, emphasising the need for a governance structure that can advocate for, secure, and effectively implement necessary resources (Barber, 2024). Addressing systemic bias and neglect in the healthcare system is essential for fostering trust and engagement within Māori communities.
- 4. Leveraging Existing Expertise:** Ngāti Kahungunu is rich in expertise and local knowledge, encompassing health professionals, traditional healers (*tohunga*), and community leaders. The governance structure will harness this expertise to create effective health initiatives tailored to the community's specific needs (Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Inc., 2024). By integrating traditional knowledge with contemporary health practices, we can develop a holistic approach to wellness that respects cultural practices.
- 5. Building Relationships Over Funding:** A critical reflection on the need for funding reveals that establishing trusted relationships among *iwi*, *hapū*, and communities can be far more impactful than financial resources alone. The development of *Te Aka Whaiora and Iwi Māori Partnership Boards*, were an attempt to provide a structured framework for collaboration and shared decision-making between the government and Māori communities; however, as a government construct, these are easily undermined or in the case of *Te Aka Whaiora*, disestablished if it does not align with the politics of the day. By fostering valued relationships built on mutual respect and shared objectives, Māori can assert their needs and influence health policies that cater to their unique circumstances, facilitating change regardless of direct funding availability.
- 6. Examples of Tribal Self-Governance: Cherokee Nation:** The Cherokee Nation exemplifies successful tribal self-governance, having enhanced community control since the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975. By establishing Cherokee Nation Health Services (CNHS), they integrate traditional healing practices with contemporary healthcare, resulting in improved health outcomes. Additionally, their strong legislative advocacy for tribal

sovereignty has enabled direct negotiations with federal agencies, securing vital resources for health initiatives. This model highlights the potential for tribes, like Ngāti Kahungunu, to enhance health services through self-governance and the fusion of traditional and modern practices, while underscoring the importance of advocacy in shaping favourable health policies.

Nuka Model of Care, Alaska: Southcentral Foundation's Nuka System of Care, based in Anchorage, Alaska, is a result of a customer-driven overhaul of what was previously a bureaucratic system centrally controlled by the Indian Health Service. Alaska Native people are in control as the "customer-owners" of this health care system. The vision and mission focus on physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness and working together as a Native Community. Ngāti Kahungunu has sent several delegations to Anchorage over the past 15 years to learn about this indigenous health system.

7. **Defining Governance Location and Mandate:** The successful completion of the framework will require determining where authority sits within Ngāti Kahungunu and what mandate this governance body will have. This will involve identifying whether the leadership will be from Iwi, Hapu, Marae, or another designated entity, with input from key strategic leaders and partners.
8. **Developing a Robust Health Strategy:** A comprehensive and robust health strategy will be developed to unify all decisions under the governance of the health authority. This strategy will ensure all initiatives are aligned with the health goals of the Ngāti Kahungunu community.
9. **Robust Decision-Making Framework:** The governance structure will establish a decision-making framework that emphasises nimble rigour, allowing for quick adaptations to emerging community needs while continuing to align with Ngāti Kahungunu's Oranga aspirations.
10. **Championing Policies and Resources:** Engaging with local, regional, and national policy frameworks will be integral for the governance body to advocate for necessary resources and support health innovations effectively. This role involves not only participating in dialogue about healthcare funding and policy but also championing the unique needs of the Ngāti Kahungunu community at all governance levels.

Proposed Structure of Te Toka Tū Moana

1. Core Governance Framework

- **Māori-led Leadership:** The governance structure will consist of respected Māori leaders, ensuring representation from various sectors, including health, education, and social services. This leadership is vital in the context of growing disillusionment with government responses and policies regarding Māori health.
- **Bicultural Representation:** Inclusive leadership will encompass equal male and female representation, promoting diverse perspectives in decision-making and reflecting the collective voice of the iwi.

2. Organisational Composition

- **Lower House (Kauae Raro):** This body will include representatives from hapū, marae, and community organisations. Its focus will be to advocate for grassroots concerns and ensure that the community's health needs are communicated effectively.
 - **Upper House (Kauae Runga):** Composed of elected representatives from Māori electorates, this body will prioritise strategic decision-making and policy advocacy. By engaging with government agencies, they will work to secure funding and support for health initiatives specifically tailored for Māori.
 - **Cultural Advisors (Tāhū):** Respected elders and cultural experts will provide guidance to ensure that all initiatives honour Māori traditions and values, ensuring the framework remains culturally valid and effective.
3. **Functional Committees:** To enhance operational effectiveness, the governance structure will establish several specialised committees that focus on key areas of health and wellness:
- **Health and Wellbeing Committee:** Responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of health initiatives focused on mental health, addiction services, preventive care, and chronic illness management. This committee will work collaboratively with health professionals to ensure that services are effective and culturally relevant.
 - **Education and Training Committee:** This committee will develop training programs to enhance health literacy among Māori individuals and families. Empowering whānau (families) with knowledge about their health fosters engagement and helps them take control of their well-being.
 - **Research and Evaluation Committee:** Tasked with collecting data on health outcomes, this committee will conduct research to identify best practices and evaluate the effectiveness of health programs. They will provide evidence-based insights that guide future initiatives and document successes.
 - **Communications and Outreach Committee:** This committee will manage community engagement efforts. They will be responsible for disseminating information about health initiatives, gathering community feedback, and ensuring transparency in the decision-making process.
4. **Integration with Existing Structures:** To maximise the effectiveness of Te Toka Tū Moana, collaboration with existing Māori health organisations, local government agencies (rūnanga), and non-profit bodies will be crucial. Strategic partnerships will enhance resource sharing and create a united front for Māori health advocacy. Formal agreements with these entities will help streamline services, making them more efficient and responsive to community needs.
5. **Funding and Resource Mobilisation Through Legislative Change:** A robust funding model will be essential to sustain the initiatives led by the governance structure. To achieve this, advocacy for legislative change will be necessary. The governance structure can work to influence policies that enhance Māori health funding through the following mechanisms:

- **Iwi Contributions:** Financial support from Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi will serve as a foundational element of the funding strategy, establishing a strong base for health initiatives.
- **Partnership Funding:** Collaborating with non-profit organisations and other iwi can provide additional funding opportunities, spreading the financial responsibility across multiple sources.
- **Government Grants and Legislation:** The governance structure will advocate for government funding specific to Māori health initiatives, positioning itself as a key stakeholder in health policy discussions. Calls for legislative change can be linked to frameworks established under international indigenous rights, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which emphasises the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination and participation in decisions affecting their health and well-being.
- **Aligning with Te Tiriti o Waitangi:** Te Tiriti o Waitangi establishes a commitment between the Crown and Māori to ensure that Māori have equitable access to health services. Leveraging the principles of the Treaty—partnership, participation, and protection—will be vital in advocating for necessary legislative and funding changes that support Māori health initiatives.

6. **Monitoring and Accountability Mechanisms:** Implementing monitoring and accountability frameworks will be crucial for maintaining the trust and confidence of the Ngāti Kahungunu community. Key strategies include:

- **Regular Reporting:** The governance structure will provide updates on health initiative progress through community forums (hui), newsletters, and digital platforms, ensuring that whānau are informed and engaged.
- **Performance Metrics:** Developing clear metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives will enable the governance structure to track progress toward specific health outcomes. Metrics may include access to services, patient satisfaction, and improvements in health statistics.
- **Community Feedback Loop:** Continuous community engagement will empower whānau to express their needs and experiences. Mechanisms for sharing feedback—such as comment boxes at community centres, online surveys, and regular hui—will strengthen the governance roopu’s responsiveness to community concerns.

7. **Community Engagement and Feedback Loop:** Effective engagement with the community is essential for the success of Te Toka Tū Moana. This includes:

- **Regular Hui:** Organising community hui to discuss health initiatives, gather feedback, and strengthen relationships among community members will foster a collaborative atmosphere and encourage community buy-in.

- **Surveys and Consultations:** Conducting surveys to assess health needs, experiences, and expectations of the community will provide valuable data to adapt and refine initiatives, ensuring they remain relevant and effective. Engaging with the community in this manner promotes a sense of ownership over health outcomes.
- **Cultural Events:** Hosting cultural events that include health education components can promote awareness and understanding of health issues while celebrating Māori culture. These events can serve as important platforms for informing the community about health services and initiatives, as well as a celebration of Ngāti Kahungunu identity.

Scaling Up the Initiative: A Nationwide Approach

The Toka Tū Moana framework is not only a pioneering initiative for Ngāti Kahungunu but also holds the potential to be scaled up and implemented across Aotearoa. The call for kotahitanga from the late Kingi Tūheitia was echoed around the motu, with the gathering of iwi Māori at Tūrangawaewae, Waitangi, Omāhu and Tuahiwi. Kotahitanga emphasises unity and collective action among Māori; this governance framework can serve as a model for other iwi and Māori communities nationwide.

This scaling can be achieved through:

1. **Creating a National Network:** Establishing connections between various iwi governance structures will create a robust network of support, sharing successes, challenges, and resources, fostering a unified Māori voice advocating for health initiatives at the national level.
2. **Advocating for Policy Change:** By leveraging collective efforts and incorporating feedback from multiple iwi, a more powerful advocacy front can be created that pushes for national policies reflecting the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This united front can effectively influence government decisions impacting Māori health across the country.
3. **Culturally Embedded Education Programs:** Implementing educational initiatives across multiple iwi can increase health literacy among Māori populations throughout Aotearoa, effectively equipping communities with knowledge about health issues. This approach not only uplifts individual health outcomes but fosters a culturally cohesive community.
4. **Expanding Partnerships:** By building partnerships with local, regional, and national organisations, Māori health initiatives can receive broader support and funding, demonstrating the value of collaboration in achieving improved health outcomes.
5. **Utilising Collective Strategies:** Harnessing the collective strength of multiple iwi allows for shared resources, reduced duplication of efforts, and enhances the overall impact of health interventions.

Conclusion

The establishment of Toka Tū Moana o Ngāti Kahungunu is a vital step towards addressing health disparities faced by Māori in the Ngāti Kahungunu context. Through the implementation of a culturally relevant governance framework, the iwi can reclaim authority over their health initiatives, ensuring that services are designed to meet specific needs and aspirations.

In the face of growing disappointment with the current coalition government's approach to Māori health, Ngāti Kahungunu must assert its rights to self-governance. This governance structure, recognised as a pathway to self-determination, will empower Ngāti Kahungunu to lead their health strategies proactively, reflecting their cultural heritage while harnessing local expertise and knowledge.

By learning from successful models of tribal self-governance, such as that of the Cherokee Nation, and uniting under the call for Kotahitanga, Ngāti Kahungunu can authentically enhance their health services through self-governance, advocating for systems that combine traditional knowledge with modern health practices. This approach emphasises the dual benefits of cultural relevance and contemporary medical frameworks, making health services more effective and engaging for the community.

Through collaborative efforts, strategic advocacy for legislative change, and a diversified funding model, Ngāti Kahungunu can significantly improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of health services. As Ngāti Kahungunu embarks on this transformative journey, it is imperative to remain committed to fostering an inclusive and resilient community.

Recommendations for Moving Forward

1. Develop a Comprehensive Engagement Plan:

- Organise regular community hui every quarter to ensure ongoing dialogue and feedback among community members and leaders. Document community feedback and use it to inform decision-making processes. Engage different demographic groups within the community, including youth and elders, to ensure inclusivity in discussions.

2. Create Strong Partnerships:

- Establish formal relationships with key organisations and sectors such as local NGOs, health organisations, educational institutions, and other iwi. Collaborate on joint health initiatives and provide cultural awareness training to staff working with the Ngāti Kahungunu community to enhance the quality of service delivery.

3. Outline Specific Legislative Goals:

- Identify priority areas for legislative advocacy, such as securing specific health funding policies, addressing inequities in health access, and promoting indigenous rights legislation. This strategic focus will guide the governance structure's efforts, enabling the tracking of progress and accomplishments.

4. Secure Diverse Funding Sources:

- Actively pursue a variety of funding options from governmental sources, private entities, philanthropic organisations, and community fundraising initiatives. Consider developing a comprehensive financial plan or budget to outline how funds will be allocated and utilised, maintaining transparency with the community throughout this process.

5. Implement Rigorous Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks:

- Establish consistent assessment mechanisms with clear performance metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of health initiatives. Metrics may include access to services, patient satisfaction, and improvements in health statistics. Create and adhere to a

timeline for regular assessments and feedback loops to facilitate continuous improvement.

6. **Celebrate Culture as a Cornerstone of Health:**

- Facilitate cultural events that include health education components, such as health fairs, traditional healing workshops, or cultural festivals. These events will promote awareness of health issues while celebrating Ngāti Kahungunu identity, reinforcing the connection between culture and health within the community.

7. **Scaling Nationwide Initiatives:**

- Leverage the experiences and successes of the Toka Tū Moana framework to promote similar governance structures across other iwi. Engage in national conversations and collaborate on shared goals that reflect Kingi Tuheitia's call for Kotahitanga. Foster connections through regional conferences or online networks to share best practices and resources among iwi.

Final Thoughts

The establishment of Toka Tū Moana o Ngāti Kahungunu is not just an isolated initiative but a reflection of a broader movement toward empowering Māori to lead their health destinies. By fostering relationships based on respect, leveraging the strengths of the community, and advocating for policies that support Māori self-governance, we can create a more equitable healthcare landscape for all Māori.



Aerial view of the Toitū Te Tiriti Hikoi at Parliament 19 November 2024

As we look forward, it is crucial to remember that true change is rooted not necessarily in financial resources alone, but in building meaningful relationships and community trust. The potential for success lies in the hands of Ngāti Kahungunu and their collective action, driven by cultural identity, resilience, and the embrace of self-determination.

Through these actions and the commitment to the Toka Tū Moana framework, Ngāti Kahungunu can usher in a new era of health governance that not only addresses immediate health disparities but also lays the foundation for sustainable well-being for generations to come.

Final Summary



As we bring together the insights and frameworks discussed, the establishment of Toka Tū Moana o Ngāti Kahungunu stands as a beacon for tribal self-governance and cultural empowerment in health. The commitment to culturally relevant practices, the leveraging of local expertise, the fostering of valuable relationships within iwi and hapū, and the emphasis

on advocacy through legislative change are imperative for success.

By scaling this initiative across Aotearoa and heeding Kingi Tuheitia's call for Kotahitanga and the inaugural kauhau from Te Arikunui, Kuīni Ngā wai hono i te Pō, emphasising hauora sovereignty, we can

enhance the overall impact of health initiatives not just for Ngāti Kahungunu, but for all Māori communities. This collaborative approach will support a future where Māori health outcomes reflect our values, aspirations, and the collective strength of our communities.

Together, through Te Toka Tū Moana, we can forge a path towards a healthier and more equitable Aotearoa for all, grounded in our rich cultural heritage and a commitment to self-determination.

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