



Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi
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Korongata and Mangaroa Marae Unite to Restore the Mauri of the Awa

The health of our waterways has become a shared kaupapa for two marae in Bridge Pa, Hastings. Korongata Marae and Mangaroa Marae have strengthened their commitment to working together to restore, protect and enhance the mauri of their awa for generations to come.

Supported by Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated's Taiao Directorate, this week these marae hosted a two-day wānanga that brought together hapū, neighbouring marae, environmental specialists, scientists and local landowners to build on more than five years of stream monitoring undertaken across one of Heretaunga's spring-fed waterways – The Paritua Karewarewa.

The wānanga combined the knowledge of mātauranga Māori with western science to better understand why the waterway is experiencing reduced flows and prolonged dry periods, while identifying practical, long-term solutions for its restoration.

Day One, held at Mangaroa Marae, focused on collecting data. Participants visited several monitoring sites where they collected field data and observed the unique characteristics of each section of the stream. The practical fieldwork provided an opportunity to understand water flows, field conditions and the challenges associated with long-term environmental monitoring.

Day Two, hosted by Korongata Marae, focused on analysing and interpreting the monitoring data collected over the past five years. Scientific findings were presented alongside the lived experiences of whānau and hapū, many of whom have witnessed the gradual decline of the waterway over several decades.

"For generations our people have watched this awa and understood its rhythms. What this monitoring has done is validate those observations with scientific evidence. When mātauranga Māori and western science walk together, we gain a much deeper understanding of what our waterways need." – Robert Turner – Mangaroa Marae, Awa Kaitiaki.

The monitoring confirmed that while water flow increases through some upper reaches, significant losses occur further downstream as water seeps into the ground. Researchers also identified changes in water quality where water from another source enters the stream, demonstrating that the health of an awa cannot be measured by water quantity alone.

Conductivity, dissolved oxygen, temperature, pH and water clarity all influence the health and character of freshwater ecosystems and will become increasingly important in future environmental management.

"We've often measured success by how much water is flowing through a stream. This work reminds us that the quality of that water is just as important. Healthy waterways require us to understand the whole ecosystem, not just the volume of water." says Robert.

Participants agreed the monitoring provides an important body of evidence that will support future environmental planning, groundwater allocation discussions and restoration projects throughout the catchment.

Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated acknowledged the extraordinary contribution of Robert Turner and his whānau, whose dedication to monitoring the waterway over many years has created an invaluable record of change.

"Robert and his whānau have quietly dedicated years of their lives to monitoring this awa. Their commitment has created an invaluable record that will benefit not only our hapū today, but generations yet to come." – Duayne Davies, Korongata Marae Trustee.

Marae representatives also recognised the leadership of Director of Taiao Ngaio Tiuka and Taiao Marine Scientist & Senior Analyst, Shade Smith, whose technical expertise and commitment to working alongside marae and hapū have strengthened the relationship between mātauranga Māori and western science.

Looking ahead, both Marae plan to establish a hapū water monitoring station, creating opportunities for whānau and rangatahi to become actively involved in monitoring the health of their waterways while contributing valuable long-term environmental data.

The wānanga also reinforced that restoring the awa extends well beyond monitoring. Wetland restoration, riparian planting, protecting refuge habitats for tuna and native fish, restoring leaking sections of the stream, and revisiting earlier restoration plans will all be essential parts of the long-term vision.

Participants agreed that these aspirations can only be achieved through genuine partnerships between hapū, marae, iwi, landowners and environmental agencies.

"The solutions must come from the people who know this whenua best. Hapū leadership is essential. Scientists and iwi specialists bring valuable expertise, but the long-term guardianship of these waterways belongs with our whānau and our marae." – Ngaio Tiuka.

Throughout the two-day wānanga, one message remained constant, 'protecting the wai is about protecting the future'.

"This isn't simply about restoring a stream. It's about restoring the mauri of a taonga that has sustained our people for generations and ensuring our mokopuna inherit healthy waterways that continue to provide life." – Daniel Marsh, Taiao Kaitiaki – Korongata Marae.

Korongata Marae and Mangaroa Marae are now inviting neighbouring marae throughout the catchment to join the kaupapa, recognising that the health of the awa is a shared responsibility that reaches beyond individual boundaries.

As restoration efforts continue, Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated remains committed to supporting hapū-led environmental initiatives that combine robust scientific evidence with the wisdom of mātauranga Māori.

"Our tūpuna never separated people from the environment. They understood that if the wai was healthy, our people would be healthy too. This kaupapa is about restoring that balance. By bringing together hapū, marae, scientists and future kaitiaki, we are creating a pathway that will restore the mauri of our awa for generations to come. Mehemea ka ora te wai, ka ora anō hoki te tangata" – Bayden Barber, Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Inc. Chairman.

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Ngāti Kahungunu Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated is a Mandated Iwi Organisation/Authority. Ngāti Kahungunu is the third largest iwi. Geographically the tribe has the second longest coastline in the country from Paritū in the North to Turakirae in the South. Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated maintains an independent position to provide research, advice and advocate for the interests, rights, values, beliefs and practices of Ngāti Kahungunu alongside our whānau and hapū. Our mission is to enhance the mana and well-being of Ngāti Kahungunu.

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