

*Te Kāhui Rau Wānanga: Te Rewarewa Pā
overlooking Lake Rotomanu
Photo:*

Te Kāhui Rau

Community – Healing – Regeneration

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An important Taranaki-based research and regeneration project is about healing trauma from the past, tapping into the expertise of now and creating positive change for future generations.

Te Kāhui Rau aims to restore the mana and mauri (life force) of whenua papatupu and hapū connection to ancestral lands, say two descendants of Ngāti Tāwhirikura hapū (*Te Ātiawa iwi*).

Project lead Glen Skipper and project manager Bry Kopu are using their skills and passion for community-led development to revitalise Te Taiao. “We are creating a local mana-whenua response to address key issues at the intersection of climate change, culture and community,” says Bry.

In 2022, the project was selected as one of three national pilots being funded by the National Science Challenge of Our Land and Water – Toitū te Whenua, Toiora te Wai. “The goal in Taranaki is to provide place-based research to evidence how communities can make enduring changes in land use and management to revitalise Te Taiao,” she says. In its first year, the project also received support from Toi Foundation to activate Te Rewarewa tōpū kai



*Te Kāhui Rau Project Leads:
Bry Kopu and Glen Skipper*

(food resilience) and community engagement.

“It is more than a project, it is a movement; it signals our commitment to creating positive change for future generations through the revitalisation of Te Taiao,” says Glen.

Te Kāhui Rau - He Kāhui Mano – describes a collective effort to strengthen our ties with each other and the environment, fostering a stronger sense of connection and responsibility around Taranaki Maunga.

Te Taiao encompasses everything that is “growing and flowing” in our physical, metaphysical, temporal (past-present-future), and cultural spheres). Te Taiao is a universal, local, and personal phenomenon. From a

Māori worldview, Te Taiao manifests itself through whakapapa, people, landscape, plants, or animals.

Whenua Papatupu – can be described as “ancestral lands- the place where hapū was nurtured”.

“Many aspects of the project have been percolating for decades, but the timing is now right where our hapū values align with local and global priorities for change.”

Both Bry and Glen are vision-led and believe partnerships are the foundation for change. This is why this kaupapa began with a series of wānanga that became a “think-tank” of ideas and eventual catalyst for future “on-whenua” responses beginning for us at Te Rewarewa Pā, Waiwhakaiho in New Plymouth. “It’s all about decolonising our thoughts and replacing them with new ideas and new possibilities,” says Glen.

“The exciting part of Te Kāhui Rau is it’s both a research and regeneration project that taps into expert knowledge and practice. We have an amazing opportunity to build on mātauranga Māori (indigenous wisdom), the sciences and lived experience to inform planning and practice in real time,” says Bry.



Te Moeone Community Garden produces a wide variety of heritage and nutrient-dense food for whānau



“We’re connecting to amazing local and national scholars, research projects, initiatives and other movements that really align to our hapū values and aspirations and to te ao Māori.

“To be effective, multiple solutions are needed. Healing our relationships and regenerative thinking are keys to wider community resilience.”

The project centres on hapū ancestral land, bought by NPDC from the Crown. This enabled the establishment of a ground-breaking partnership with Ngāti Tāwhirikura, signed on June 6, 2007. The Te Rewarewa agreement, the first of its kind in New Zealand, meant the hapū could formally establish a variety of cultural and income-generating activities, as well as provide for the protection of a significant pā.

The first joint project was the building of the iconic Te Rewarewa Bridge in 2010, which extended the Coastal Walkway and connecting communities for the benefit of everyone.

From 1863, about 1.2 million acres (485,622 hectares) of land was confiscated from iwi right around Taranaki Maunga.

When the redress began through Treaty of Waitangi settlements, Glen believes the Treaty Claim process triggered significant on-going trauma for Māori. That led him to help create a healing framework for hapū. “We were able to design a model that allowed us to explore healing in different spaces, such as a māra (garden).”

For over a decade, the community garden space, Te Moeone, at Katere Marae, Waiwhakaihō, has provided a safe place for connection and healing. “Most people see it as a community māra producing nutrient-dense kai, but it’s actually a trauma healing space. Connecting and healing our people to whenua and to one another, is a key priority for us, and this project.”

Alongside Bry and Glen, who have extensive experience working in indigenous governance, business and leadership, plus whānau and hapū development, is a solid team.

They are, mātauranga Māori lead Te Raumahora Hema (Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Tama, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngā Puhī), administration lead Sonya Cole, research lead Professor Leonie Pihama (Te Ātiawa, Ngā Māhanga ā Tairi,

Waikato) and research support from Ken Taiapa, PhD (Ngāti Porou/Te Whānau ā Apanui/Rongowhakaata).

The project team members believe the research programme will reignite a connection for whānau to their whenua and Te Taiao.

“We want people to utilise mātauranga Māori and modern science to plant seeds and nurture growth that will benefit generations to come,”

Bry says.

Looking ahead, Glen and Bry say Te Kāhui Rau is a catalyst for many opportunities, always remaining grounded in the strong values of Tāwhirikura hapūtanga: Mana Motuhake, Tiakitanga, Rangatiratanga, Tūturutanga.

For more information on Te Kāhui Rau & other strategic projects please visit: www.rautapatu.nz

Image Right: Taputapu maara, traditional garden tools



Image Far Right: This ‘Ketu’ is used for light cultivation work, such as loosening soil, weeding, and the various tasks associated with growing kumara within the maara.



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