

“Our people need training”

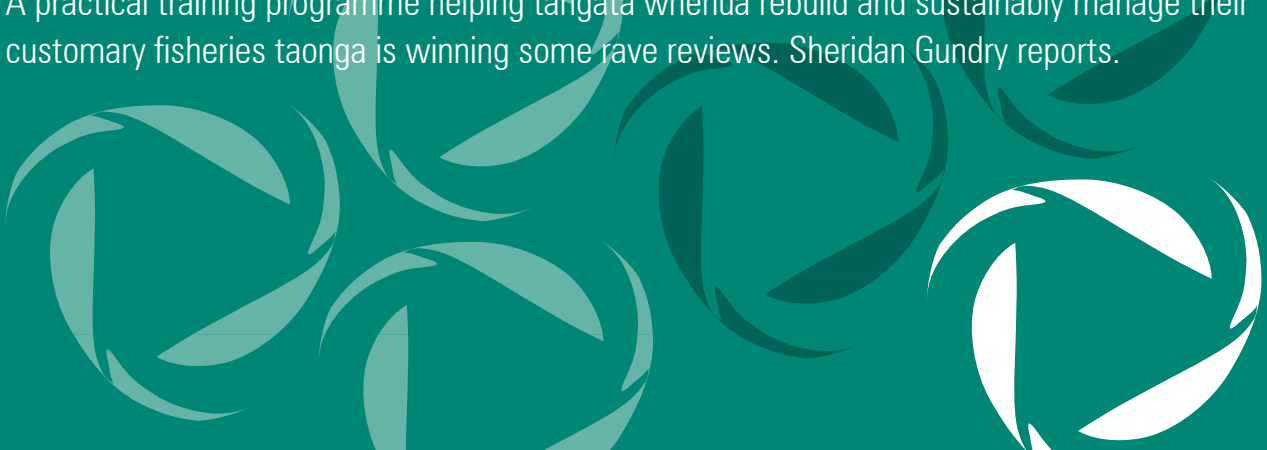


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Embracing Kaitiakitanga

– customary fisheries management

A practical training programme helping tangata whenua rebuild and sustainably manage their customary fisheries taonga is winning some rave reviews. Sheridan Gundry reports.



Tahi Rangiawha didn't want to give up his precious weekend for a training course. He wanted to chill out with his partner Elizabeth and their two children after a hard week's work at Horotiu's AFFCO plant. Besides, he wasn't long out of four hard years of study.

But the 29-year-old takes his role as chairman of the Motakotako Marae committee seriously. When asked to support his kaitiaki (guardians) in the first workshop of a new training programme for customary fisheries management, called Kaitiakitanga, he couldn't refuse.

The experience turned out to be an epiphany of sorts.

Tahi graduated earlier this year from Waikato University with a double degree in Maori and public policy. But, unsure of which direction to take, he kept on with his computer admin job at the freezing works to support his family.

The first Kaitiakitanga workshop at Okapu Marae, one of five marae overlooking the Aotea Harbour, changed all that. Tahi now has a career in the seafood industry firmly in his sights and plans to return to uni next year to get the qualifications he needs to help open the right hatches. He's already thinking about what to base his thesis on.

The programme – a SITO initiative, delivered by Ian Ruru – is aimed at helping tangata whenua rebuild and sustainably manage their customary fisheries taonga (treasures). It is hosted by a variety of marae and involves

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a number of workshops with field work scheduled for October and November, and follow-up study in between. By the end of the programme, participants will have developed their own customary fishing management plan, completed fresh water and marine surveys of significant species and gained the National Certificate in Seafood Maori (Customary Fishing Management) NZQA Level 4.

Fifteen people from in and around the Aotea Harbour area took part in the first workshop with more expected for subsequent ones.



John Mahara (left) and Terewai Awhitu recording water survey data from local stream.



Practicing what they preach – Ben Chisnall (left), Ronni Symon, and Jane Goodman with Ian and Bill (front) surveying and assessing customary eel stocks throughout the Waipaoa River catchment.

Tahi says the first workshop opened his eyes to the industry and the benefits that could accrue to his marae and Tainui people.

“It was just awesome. I was totally caught up in it and now I want to be a kaitiaki, get on the Aotea Moana Kaitiaki Group ... and get a qualification.

“The presentation was easy to follow, practical and inspiring. The water testing and habitat assessment was relevant and helps with the RMA process. I really enjoyed the history of the QMA and the computer mapping programme through which you can accurately map food areas of the harbour. And I loved all the acronyms. We were firing them at each other during the breaks.

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The Aotea Harbour was gazetted under the Kaimoana Regulations in 2001 with 10 appointed kaitiaki from Nga Hapu o Aotea. The participants from within and around the Aotea Harbour area are the first to get the whole training package which balances theory, regulations and compliance, research and surveys.

Ian Ruru, from Maumahara Consultancy, customised the programme after extensive trials with tangata whenua from around the country.

“As an indigenous fisheries science provider, Maumahara specialises in educating our clients in what we do,” Ian says. “Delivering this programme is a natural extension of our services and follows our philosophy to empower kaitiaki through education.”

He thinks they've hit upon an ideal mix of unit standards for the qualification which fall into three main areas.

“First, we look at the development of the seafood industry and its economic benefits, the reasons why the Quota Management System was introduced and the key pieces of fisheries legislation and their implications for stakeholders. Secondly, we focus on compliance with customary fisheries legislation, developing best practice policies and applying tools to ensure sustainability of fish stocks. The third area is the practical scientific component in which we introduce participants to the fundamentals of survey designs, fish biology and environmental impacts. Participants begin collecting their own data on aquatic life and habitats. The importance of food chains and life cycles are stressed with the key message being – no habitat means no fish.”

All this is encapsulated in a fisheries management plan developed by and for Nga Hapu o Aotea Moana and fine-tuned to their significant species

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– Victor Goldsmith, SITO Maori sector manager

– tuna (eels) and patiki (flounder). MFish appoints Pou Hononga (relationship managers) and Pou Takawaenga (liaison managers) to work with kaitiaki to develop management plans for their areas.

Bill Ruru, Ian’s father, brings an added dimension to the training. As a SITO-registered assessor himself, Bill played a key role as a trustee and fisheries kaitiaki for Gisborne iwi Te Aitanga a Mahaki – one of the first iwi in the country to become a Mandated Iwi Organisation under the Maori Fisheries Act 2004.

Bill says the programme embraces the key principles of kaitiakitanga, kotahitanga (unity of purpose), manaakitanga (respect and hospitality of others) and whanaungatanga (social collectiveness). He was overwhelmed by the hospitality and friendliness of the marae people during his first visit to the area.

As fisheries scientists, Ian and Bill show how research tools can assist customary fisheries management through the example of their current survey of eel stocks in the Waipaoa River catchment near Gisborne.

“It often surprises people that we can catch, measure and release 1000 eels in a week using nets without bait. Eels are territorial and by not using bait it is easier to compare catch results between different surveys.”

Like Tahi Rangiawha, other course participants are also positive.

It’s not the qualification itself that motivates Aotea Moana Kaitiaki Group chair and Ngati Maniapoto iwi social worker Lynnette Stafford. She places greater importance on gaining knowledge to make the best management decisions for their fisheries.

“We kaitiaki take our role seriously. We want to make sure our decisions are good and informed. The only way for that to happen was to have training around management for customary fisheries.

“We all gained information from the workshops. Some kaitiaki are happy with the stocks they have in their areas but any information that helps increase those stocks is always useful.

“Those with big declines in the tuna or eel resources now understand that environmental factors, like the lack of vegetation along stream beds, make a contribution to the decline of stock numbers. There might just be one vital ingredient missing which has an effect on how many tuna are there.”

By the end of the weekend, participants raised various reasons for declining fish stocks, including farming practices, the effects of topdressing, subdivisions, lack of shade cover, sheep and cattle having access to streams. Okapu Marae is believed to be looking at replanting native flora along the stream to improve the environment for eels.

“The only way we can test the impact of vegetation is to plant more and measure the difference in fish stocks. We don’t want to lose the momentum. We keep notes on the learning so we can add to our business plan of what we want to see happen with the harbour now, in 12 months and in five years.”

SITO Maori sector manager Victor Goldsmith, who is taking part in the course, says the kaupapa is “our people need training”.

“We need to invest in human capital. The more people with qualifications, the better. This programme will help kaitiaki manage their customary fishing activities. Customary fishing is regarded by Maori as the tuakana (elder) of all fishing practices.”

The programme is practically-based with participants receiving reference material and educational resources. It is not full of theory. The kaitiaki did not want it to be solely in a classroom environment. Part of the training includes an understanding of the Quota Management System. As iwi receive fisheries assets from Te Ohu Kaimoana which comprise quota, those that manage customary fishing need to understand they are also part of a bigger



Kaitiaki and rangatahi assessing the health of a local stream.

picture. The decisions made at a whanau/hapu level may have an impact at an iwi level. This training stimulates the thinking.

Victor is pleased with the start made and, as the programme at Aotea Moana progresses, looks forward to seeing how the various components of the customary fisheries management plan fit together. SITO developed the qualification in conjunction with Maori customary fishing experts to provide flexibility and choice to the people.

"A lot of knowledge, including modern science, was extracted and put into the unit standards. It's been a big ask for working people to give up their weekends for this training."

Victor plans to continue working with the Aotea Moana kaitiaki to develop any individual or group training requested such as administration skills or computer literacy.

"SITO can facilitate training and bring in providers to deliver the services but we need to work out how best to manage that going forward. Both SITO and MFish have the resources, but we need to be strategic and develop outcomes that are mutually beneficial and relevant to those that manage their customary and traditional fisheries."

An important aspect of the training is that the tikanga of the area is retained.

"As we go through training we are mindful of the variations that exist with various iwi and hapu. That integrity will not be compromised. The management plan developed will be left with Aotea Moana kaitiaki. It will not be widely available."

"SITO believes that if we get some good runs on the board, the kumara vine will start working and others at whanau and hapu level will undertake

the training. If it does take off, I expect the demand to be significant."

With about 250 kaitiaki formally gazetted there will be plenty of room for growth.

And if Tahi Rangiawha's enthusiasm is anything to go by, the seafood industry can look forward to some bright new lights coming through.

For more information on the National Certificate in Seafood Maori (Customary Fishing) qualifications, please phone Victor Goldsmith, SITO Maori sector manager, 04 801 4680, 027 293 2326 or email goldsmithv@seafood.co.nz.



Large female longfin eel (tuna). Her enlarged blue eyes is a signal that she is preparing to migrate to the tropics to spawn.

Asset allocation on track

They're over half-way there with several years left in the five-year game plan.

By the end of September, Te Ohu Kaimoana – the Maori Fisheries Trust – had approved 35 of 57 iwi organisations as Mandated Iwi Organisations. At least another four could be approved by year's end.

Each of the 35 MIOs has been allocated its population-based assets comprising 75 percent of deepwater fish quota, cash and Aotearoa Fisheries Ltd income shares, at an approximate value of \$354.7 million. When coastline agreements with neighbouring iwi are complete, the MIOs will be eligible to receive the 'agreement' assets – shares in harbour and/or inshore fish quota and the remaining 25 percent of deepwater quota.

Te Ohu Kaimoana aims to see all 57 iwi identified as eligible to receive Maori commercial fisheries settlement assets adequately certified and in receipt of their assets by the end of 2009.

A key role to date has been helping to improve the capability and capacity of iwi, providing tools and templates for MIO and asset holding company constitutional docu-

ments, and quota share agreements.

Now Te Ohu Kaimoana is working to provide the skills and resources MIOs may need to deal with in their new roles and responsibilities as quota owners.

Darrin Apanui – Te Ohu Kaimoana manager of human resources and capability development – says the first of a number of planned initiatives in asset development was held in early October in Wellington. The Te Ohu Kaimoana fisheries management workshop brought together 50 participants, representing about 70 percent of MIOs, asset holding companies and recognised iwi organisations. The aim was to provide the participants with information on quota and fisheries management, policy and wider fisheries issues to better inform their decision making processes.

"The workshop coincided with the October ACE round. It included technical aspects of quota, understanding compliance costs or levies – and the impact of what getting it wrong means for a new fishing company."

Subjects covered included post-allocation fisheries management and asset devel-

opment, ACE rounds and transfers, harvesting conditions, quota swaps, and developing fisheries for deepwater crabs and surf clams. The Maori Purposes Bill (which includes amendments to parts of the Maori Fisheries Act) and foreign charter vessels were also discussed.

"We'll seek more information from MIOs and asset holding companies (AHC) over the coming months so we can produce further programmes and information resources for 2007."

He says new quota owners will face many demands from government agencies, the industry and their own iwi members.

"We want to work alongside these owners to provide information in a timely and useful fashion. We'll also keep in regular contact through email, the Te Ohu Kaimoana website and other communications tools."

"The challenges of allocation will be different for each MIO and AHC. As these entities start to govern and manage their fisheries, Te Ohu will be available to support and assist in skill enhancement and knowledge acquisition wherever possible."