

Tēnā koutou katoa.

Ko Titirangi te maunga, Ko Waiau te awa, Ko Ngai Tamaterangi, Ngati Hinewaiatarua me Ngati Whaita nga hapū, Ngati Kahungunu, Nga Rauru, me Ngati Raukawa nga iwi. Ko Mere Waipaopao te Tipuna

We hear it on protest signs, in climate reports, from activists and scientists: there is No Planet B.

But **Indigenous peoples already survived the end of the world.**

We didn't imagine dystopias—we inherited them. The loss of land, language, and law. The burning of forests and whare. The ripping of mokopuna from their whakapapa.

Our world has ended. More than once.

But we are still here. And more importantly—**we are dreaming.**

HE AHA TĒNEI MEA?

The direction of time and space, through kawa and tikanga exists as a deep current in our whenua, culture and whakapapa



**WĀHEKE? FUTURE?
RANGATIRATANGA**

“Incorporating time travel, alternate realities, and multiverses is a hallmark of Native storytelling... Time flows together like currents in a navigable stream.”

— Grace Dillon (2016)

In te ao Māori, the future isn't a distant horizon—it's part of us.

We carry it in our bones, in our dreams, in the whenua beneath our feet.

Makere Stewart-Harawira says: *"It is impossible to conceive of the present and future as separate from the past."*

In other words: time spirals. Time folds. Our ancestors walk behind us. Our descendants walk before us.

This is the foundation of **rangatiratanga**.

The right to determine who we are, where we come from, and where we are going—on our terms.

And this right to dream—to plan for our futures—has been systemically and systematically denied.

Colonisation didn't just take our land. It took our *imagination*.

Leah Manaema Avene says:

"fuck the system" is only half a prayer. ..You have to articulate the 'what' you want to build in its place. Because if you don't know what you are moving towards, as this process starts, it is utterly terrifying, and we often can only act from urgency

and reactivity as we are watching the world fall apart around us.

On returning from WW2 the Reverend Māori Marsden recounts:

“One of the elders who had of course heard of the atom bomb asked me to explain the difference between the atom bomb and an explosive bomb. I took the word ‘hihiri’ which in Māoridom means ‘pure energy’. Here I recalled Einstein’s concept of the real world behind the natural world as being comprised of ‘rhythmical patterns of pure energy’ and said to him this was essentially the same concept. He then exclaimed, “Do you mean to tell me that the Pākehā scientists have managed to rend the fabric (kahu) of the universe?” I said “Yes.”...“But do they know how to sew (tuitui) it back together again?” [and Māori replies] “No.”

By describing the universe as a fabric, Māori and the kaumatua tap into mātāuranga Māori to explain the nature of the world: everything is interconnected and interdependent. “Within Māori ontological and cosmological paradigms it is impossible to conceive of the present and the future as separate and distinct from the past.”

— Makere Stewart-Harawira (2005)



The rights of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination, cultural revitalisation, and decision-making authority are enshrined in both international and national instruments—most notably the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007), *He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirenī* (1835), and *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (1840). In Aotearoa, the implementation of these instruments remains uneven, often centralised in state policy rather than grounded in whānau-level practice. The Whānau Rangatiratanga Project (WRP) offers a powerful counter-model by building capacity at the grassroots to realise Indigenous rights and restore tino rangatiratanga from the ground up. This whānau-led approach aligns with Indigenous systems thinking, which prioritises relationality, reciprocity, and intergenerational wellbeing (Durie, 1998; Royal, 2009). It differs markedly from Western models of social development that are often siloed, deficit-focused, or bureaucratically driven (Smith, 2012). The **Whānau Rangatiratanga Project** is revolutionary.

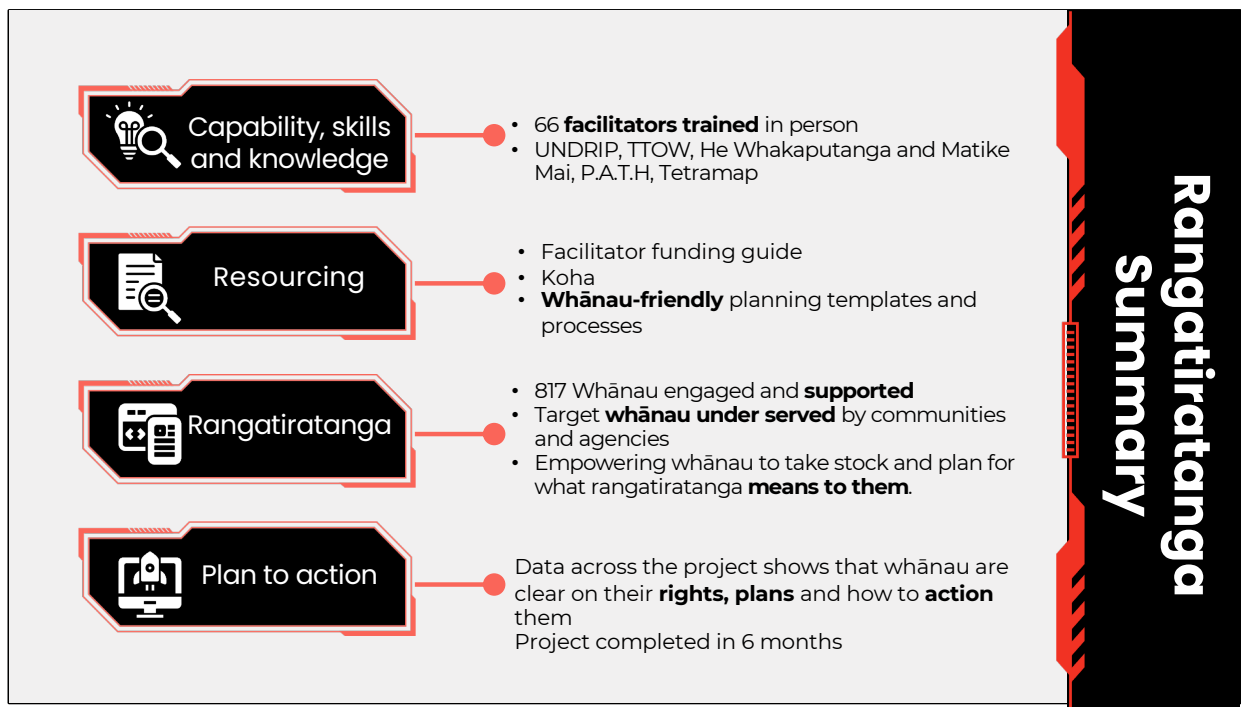


In 2022/23, Pou Tikanga secured funding from Te Puni Kōkiri to support 500 whānau, hapū, iwi, and Māori organisations to develop self-determined rangatiratanga plans (Ngāti Kahu & Pou Tikanga, 2023). The project emerged in response to the stalled government National Plan of Action on UNDRIP and reflected a shift toward Indigenous-led implementation. By mid-2023, over 820 plans had been completed, exceeding targets and indicating widespread whānau engagement and desire for transformation.

The project's goal—*Whāia te iti kahurangi: all whānau will achieve their potential*—was enacted through locally trained facilitators who supported whānau to articulate goals, resources, and action pathways grounded in whakapapa, mātauranga Māori, and rights-based frameworks.

The WRP exemplifies what *Moewaka Barnes and McCreanor (2019)* describe as Indigenous futures thinking—reclaiming the right to imagine and enact collective, culturally grounded futures. The initiative did not seek permission from the state to implement Indigenous rights—it enacted them.

Such projects illustrate how constitutional transformation may occur in practice before it is recognised in law. As *Matike Mai Aotearoa (2016)* asserts, a Tiriti-based future will emerge from relational, place-based, and tikanga-informed models of governance. The WRP offers a prototype of such a future.



The WRP trained 66 facilitators across 15 regions, creating a skilled network of Māori community developers. Facilitators also gained confidence and transferable skills, with some still applying the tools across a range of development projects.

the **Whānau Rangatiratanga Project** is revolutionary.

In just six months, over 800 whānau created their own plans for their future—grounded in their whakapapa, rights, and aspirations.

Not with bureaucratic forms or top-down strategies—but through tools like PATH and Tetramap, infused with Te Tiriti, UNDRIP, and He Whakaputanga.

Whānau were supported to dream—about papakāinga, māra kai, hauora, reo, whenua.

They asked:

What does rangatiratanga look like *for us*?

How do we bring that to life?

What does a future for our mokopuna *feel* like?

And they didn't just ask—they answered. With action.

Rights and goals?



Whānau Plan Rights Focus N=778

Identity, culture and environmental revitalisation	85.3%
Tino Rangatiratanga/Mana motuhake	65.3%
Equality and non-discrimination	45.3%
Lands resources and territories	42.7%
Te Tiriti/UNDRIP	38.7%
Participation in government/kawanatanga	26.7%

Now here's where Indigenous systems thinking matters.

Unlike mainstream models that reduce problems to pieces, our knowledge holds the **whole**.

Relational. Intergenerational. Holistic. Embedded in whakapapa.

Mātauranga Māori reminds us:

We are not separate from nature—we are part of it.

Wellbeing is not individual—it is collective.

Sustainability is not measured in quarterly outcomes—but in *generations*.

Indigenous systems thinking teaches that **if the future isn't built in, the system will collapse**.

And here's the thing: the system *is* collapsing.

So what are we building in its place?

- WHENUA goals: native trees and plants for the whenua, to buy fruit and nut trees to become self-sufficient, materials for chicken coop, growing tunnels, orchard, box garden, soil and plants for māra kai for whānau the community and

people in need

- TIKANGA AND REO Goals: whakapapa journey, whānau whenua, significant sites, Rauemi - books and pens and crafts, Reo resources and wānanga costs for whānau and tamariki, mana wāhine day including rongoa and mirimiri, koha for kaumatua, research, resources and transport to be able to share karakia and waiata to often forgotten communities.
- WHĀNAU Goals: Koha to TAUTOKO others, (re)connecting with my tamariki
- PAPAKAINGA goals: Housing deposit, labour and materials repair and tiny builds
- HAUORA Goals – creating a gym, nutrition plans, business and personal, representing Aotearoa
- WHAI RAWA: establishing/growing business, Licenses, vehicle purchase and repairs
- MOKOPUNA Goals: tamariki activities - kōhanga, kura, study, sport

INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES FOR OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE

- Relationality Over Reductionism
- *Holistic and Intergenerational*
- Embedded in Whakapapa and Whanaungatanga
- *Balance and Reciprocity*
- Decentralised and Place-Based

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Futures logic is rooted in our whenua, whakapapa, humanity, collective restoration and continuity...it is a sovereign logic. **Indigenous Futurisms as Ethical Praxis** Whyte (2018) highlights Indigenous science fiction as an ethical practice of imagining the world otherwise. Protagonists are often those historically denied agency—women, youth, non-humans. These stories are not escapism but acts of resistance and responsibility. They call us to be “good ancestors,” as Robin Kimmerer (2013) advocates, by centring care, reciprocity, and sustainability in our decisions.

From memory and history to orient, design, govern, and regenerate
Indigenous systems thinking - Māori Marsden

Relationality Over Reductionism

Indigenous systems thinking centres relationships—between people, land, ancestors, and the spiritual realm—unlike Western

models that often isolate parts of a system.

Holistic and Intergenerational

It considers long-term impacts across generations (mokopuna decisions), not just short-term outputs or economic metrics.

Embedded in Whakapapa and Whanaungatanga

Systems are understood through genealogical and kinship ties, enabling decision-making rooted in identity, belonging, and collective accountability.

Balance and Reciprocity

Emphasises equilibrium between human and non-human worlds, highlighting responsibilities as much as rights.

Decentralised and Place-Based

Authority and insight reside within whānau, hapū, and iwi who best understand their own ecosystems and needs. This resists imposed, top-down solutions.

The Whānau Rangatiratanga Project provides compelling evidence that whānau, when supported, can and will plan for their futures in ways that honour their whakapapa and rights. This work must be continued and expanded for Indigenous systems and fututres thinking as a foundation for public policy design.



MATIKEMAI
A O T E A R O A

RECLAIMING THE RIGHT TO DREAM

SOVEREIGNTY OF IMAGINATION

WHĀNAU-CENTRED INNOVATIONS

GROUNDING IN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

CONSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

INDIGENOUS FUTURES THINKING

If the future of people isn't built in, the system will **COLLAPSE**

Long-term thinking and action matter

Sustainability is measured in generations , for all of us

It is not hard to see why historic and contemporary persons and institutions who participate in settler colonialism are not different from a zombie apocalypse. Like in dystopian science fiction, our ancestors would have seen us living in a situation in which the conditions of our individual and collective agency are almost entirely curtailed. But our ancestors and future generations are rooting for us to find those secret sources of agency that will allow us to empower protagonists that can help us survive the dystopia or post-apocalypse.

RECLAIMING THE RIGHT TO DREAM

Indigenous futures begin by affirming the right of whānau to envision their OWN FUTURES—FREE FROM COLONISATION, MARGINALISATION, OR DEFICIT FRAMING.

SOVEREIGNTY OF IMAGINATION

FUTURISM IS A TOOL OF LIBERATION—DESIGNING FUTURES WHERE Collective and INDIGENOUS VALUES, Leadership, land, values, LANGUAGES, THRIVE ON OUR OWN TERMS.

WHĀNAU-CENTRED INNOVATIONS

FUTURES ARE CO-CREATED BY WHĀNAU, NOT IMPOSED BY THE STATE or Agencies. PLANNING TOOLS LIKE PATH EMPOWER TRANSFORMATION FROM THE whānau OUT and up

GROUNDING IN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

MĀTAURANGA MĀORI OFFERS DEEP INSIGHT INTO SUSTAINABLE FUTURES, CLIMATE RESILIENCE, COLLECTIVE WELLBEING, AND ADAPTIVE GOVERNANCE or stewardship.

CONSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

INDIGENOUS FUTURES ARE NOT JUST ABOUT INCLUSION BUT ABOUT REIMAGINING Kaitiakitanga, Leadership, LAW, AND POWER STRUCTURES—TE TIRITI AND UNDRIP AS FOUNDATIONS.

We are building **Indigenous futures**.

Futures where we reclaim our right to dream.

Where sovereignty of imagination is as important as sovereignty of land.

As Kyle Whyte writes, Indigenous science fiction is not fantasy—it's memory,

prophecy, and survival.

Our stories centre those too often erased: wāhine, rangatahi, non-human kin.

These futures are not waiting in the wings. They are already here.

A rangatahi wānanga mapping te ao marama with AI tools in te reo Māori.

A grandmother planting native seeds for mokopuna not yet born.

A whānau reclaiming whenua to build housing for three generations.

This is not fiction.

This is **rere atu, rere mai**—the motion of Indigenous resurgence.

HE WERO

How do we overcome the Zombie Apocalypse?

How can we repair the fabric of the Universe?

What is your Yearning?

How do we become good ancestors?

How can **you** enact this across your own sphere of influence? Future makers or takers?

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When we engage in dialogic narratives through counterfactual space, we can connect ourselves to the errors and successes of our ancestors and work to change how we do things today so as to learn and to pass on to future generations. We are always in dystopian and aspiration dialogue with our ancestors. Indigenous science fiction becomes a space to imagine not only survival but agency, regeneration, and flourishing. Our work is to transform the levers of colonial power that maintain anti-Indigenous oppression.

And so I ask:

How do we overcome the zombie apocalypse of extraction, exploitation, and burnout?

How do we repair the fraying threads of the universe—the climate, whānau, the whenua?

What is your yearning?

Your deepest calling to act, to protect, to imagine?

Robin Kimmerer reminds us: the question is not only *what kind of ancestors did we have?*

But also: *What kind of ancestor will we be?*

Will we be future **takers**—consuming what we can, while we can?

Or future **makers**—planting trees we may never sit beneath?