

SUMMER RESEARCH 2024/25

PROJECT ABSTRACT



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

PROJECT # 2

SUPERVISOR/S:	Dr Sandi Ringham
PROJECT TITLE:	Waahi Paa Taiaorau collaboration project
FIELD:	Environmental planning and geography
DIVISION/SCHOOL:	ALPSS - Te Kura Toi School of Arts
PROJECT LOCATION:	Hamilton
EXTERNAL PARTNER:	Waahi paa Taiaorau

PROJECT ABSTRACT:

Mana whenua are contributing to the way waterways are protected and preserved in Aotearoa New Zealand. Fresh water health has been declining for decades. Rivers and their catchments are flooding, coastlines are shrinking and introduced aquatic pest species are decimating taonga species (treasured bio-diversity) and the health of rivers. For example: mana whenua at Te Arawa Lakes are responding with innovative solutions such as the use of uwhi (harakeke weedmats) to control invasive lake weeds; mana whenua at Puniu River Care have and continue to preserve waterways through riparian planting. Solutions such as these are founded on traditional knowledge and relationships with the environment.

The research visits Lake Waahi, Rāhui Pookeka (Huntly) with Waahi paa Taiaorau to explore and gather both traditional and contemporary puuraakau about the lake and Ngaati Mahuta's relationship to it. Within close approximation to the Waikato River Lake Waahi is a riverine lake impacted by intensive dairy farming, the Huntly Power Station and coal mining. The lake's health is crucial to the physical, metaphysical and cultural health of all hapuu members living in their tribal lands. Power to make decisions and changes to legislation that effect the lake, however, is controlled by local government. This research is interested how maatauranga (Māori knowledge) at the hapuu level informs the ways in which mana whenua respond to fresh-water issues.

To investigate how maatauranga aa hapu shapes resource management traditional and contemporary puuraakau related to the lake will be gathered from haukainga (home people) and from a desktop search. Puuraakau about the surrounding ancestral landscape of Lake Waahi may hold valuable information about taonga species within the lake and how the health of the lake and its resources were maintained. The research explores the oral traditions associated with Lake Waahi to inform present and future strategies for protection and preservation.

The research asks three questions:

1. What innovative Indigenous water solutions are currently transforming the ways in which fresh water is valued, managed and protected?
2. What are the barriers and opportunities that influence mana whenua tino rangatiratanga in managing and protecting lakescapes?
3. What are the oral traditions, puuraakau, moteatea and/or whakatauki, that informs a Māori reading of freshwater health?

STUDENT SKILLS:

- Critical analysis
- Attention to detail
- Self and time management
- Whakawhanaungatanga
- Manaakitanga

PROJECT TASKS:

1. A review of both academic and grey literature to establish what and where iwi and hapū are contributing to freshwater management.
2. A review of governance legislation pertaining to freshwater to investigate the barriers and opportunities that effect tino rangatiratanga for Waahi Paa Taiaorau.
3. Data collection: the student will be introduced to and guided by kaumatua and kaimahi to gather pūrākau about Lake Waahi and the surrounding area.

5. Follow up, review and analyse data gathered from kaumatua and kaimahi
 6. Present results in a summary report
 7. Produce a research poster
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EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- Student's Research Poster (as per clause 6 of the [Scholarship regulations](#))
- an annotated bibliography
- A collection of puuraakau about Lake Waahi for Waahi Paa Taiaorau