

## **Te Tai Tokerau Climate Change Action Conference – Whangarei**

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### **Mauri-Whenua-Ora: kin-connecting local land, water and food-scapes**

Mauri-Whenua-Ora (MWO) is a research programme that explores land and waterway regenerative development in Tai Tokerau. In particular, MWO is interested in the Bay of Islands region, collectively known as the Waitangi Catchment. The flagship project of MWO is *Pā to Plate*. It is a pilot that seeks to gauge the enthusiasm and readiness of Tai Tokerau landowners, producers and consumers to engage with models of energy redistribution. It considers a reorientation of tribal energy-scapes away from linear economic models of wholesale food supply to ‘the market’ (consumers) and toward its innovative redistribution to whenua (lands and waterways) and kin communities (tangata), both at home and living away. *Pā to Plate* aligns to the primary role of pā (papakāinga) as central hubs which captured endemic and introduced carriers of energy (carbohydrates, proteins) from land, water and associated resources, and redistributed it to wider descendants along lines of kinship (rights and responsibilities). In this respect, *Pā to Plate* is similar to some international community projects with indigenous peoples around the world. It is about connecting *mauri* (life carrying energy) of ancestral soils (*whenua*) and waterways (*wai*) with genealogical descendants (*tangata*). It is also about exploring sustainable energy-production (value chains, security and sovereignty) or well-being (*ora*).

*Pā to Plate* is contextualised by wider discussion on food sovereignty, economic pressures in primary industries and environmental stressors on soils and waterways. It encourages new and innovative approaches to land and water use: more accurately accounting and integrating the very real challenge of rapid climate change already being experienced. In recent years, the Tai Tokerau climate has experienced extreme weather occurrences such as intense short-term rainfall, flooding and extended droughts. These new climatic realities are having profound effects on soil mobility, nutrient runoff and waterway sedimentation, directly threatening the current primary production status quo (dairy, sheep, beef, forestry, horticulture).

*Pā to Plate* emphasises a return to ‘crops for purpose’ to regain ecological balance and thrive in a changing climatic context. It is interested in investigating what crops may cope well with the increased severity of climatic events, and which may also foster soil resilience. In refocussing on local production and consumption, *Pā to Plate* may also contribute to larger issues of reducing food carbon miles which are high when exporting produce from distant locations. *Pā to Plate* also has a longer term goal of building the customary resource supply side of the value chain including the reintroduction of heirloom carbohydrate and protein species once endemic to the Waitangi lands and waterways catchment (botanicals, root and seed crops, vertebrates and invertebrates). For example, re-establishment of tuna species will require a restorative audit and overhaul of all aspects of the current catchment system to support such an aspiration. This singular issue is a significant challenge when the mauri of major waterways such as the Waitangi River have drastically changed in recent years and directly impacted wellbeing of animals, plants and people. *Pā to Plate* is an opportunity to reset a nation’s lands and water systems from a Māori (hapū) values perspective. It may appear ambitious, but the crisis at hand equally requires drastic response. *Pā to Plate* is a whole catchment (lands and water) approach designed to begin an overdue conversation between Treaty partners that addresses redistribution of energy in the face of today’s accelerating climatic, environmental, social, cultural and economic issues.

## **Biographies**

### **Merata Kawharu (presentation co-author)**

Merata Kawharu (Ngāti Whatua, Ngāpuhi) is Professor of Research at the University of Otago. Merata's research activities have over-arching themes of Māori leadership and tribal entrepreneurship, Te Reo, marae connectivity, community development and education. Merata is currently a primary investigator of the research project Mauri Whenua Ora (funded by the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment) which explores Māori land utilisation, Tai Tokerau community food sovereignty and shared-iwi aspirations. Merata also currently serves on the NZ Geographic Board and has held other governance and committee roles, nationally and locally. Beyond consultancies with the United Nations and UNESCO, Merata has also provided local expert assistance including to Treaty claimants nationwide.

### **Paul Tapsell (presenter and co-author)**

Professor Tapsell is a graduate of the University of Auckland (MA - Social Anthropology) and University of Oxford (DPhil - Museum Ethnography) and has had a career working within both the Museum community and academia. He was Tumuaki/Director Māori of Tamaki Paenga Hira/Auckland Museum from 2000-2008, and was appointed as a Professor of Māori Studies in 2009 when he joined the University of Otago in Dunedin. Paul Tapsell (Ngāti Whakaue, Ngati Raukawa) is currently a senior research fellow at the Centre of Sustainability at the University of Otago. Paul is also a co-founder of the web-database Māorimaps.com and is now the Chair of its governing board Te Potiki National Trust. Paul's research interests include contemporary Māori identity, cultural heritage & museums, taonga trajectories, Māori values within governance policy frameworks, Indigenous entrepreneurial leadership, marae and genealogical mapping of tribal landscapes.

### **Hirini Tane**

Hirini Tane (Ngāti Rāhiri, Ngāti Kawa) is PhD student from the Oromahoe in the Bay of Islands, studying at the University of Otago, Dunedin as an Otago University doctoral scholar. His academic background is in archaeology, anthropology and Māori studies. The general theme of his research interests is understanding something of the relationship between people, land and water. His PhD research asks, what will his marae-community (papakāinga) look like in 100 years? It explores notions of Māori land tenure, trusteeship, whakapapa and cross-generational development. Hirini is also a senior researcher for the geo-spatial website [www.maorimaps.com](http://www.maorimaps.com).