

Responding to a changing climate through maramataka

Ahumai Limited

Mātauranga and tikanga Māori offer valuable climate solutions. Through effective sustainability practices and intergenerational knowledge of local ecology, Ahumai Limited supports uri | descendants of Taranaki Whānui o Te Upoko o Te Ika to connect with each other and care for taiao | the environment.

Ahumai Limited is a mana whenua and wāhine-led team of environmental experts who support collaborators to understand, protect and restore natural environments, focusing on the wellbeing of land, marine and freshwater systems. From using plant fibres as a growth support for giant kelp, to monitoring tuna in Kaiwharawhara awa, researching kina barrens, and advising on resource management plans, Ahumai advances kaupapa important to mana whenua and hapori Māori.

In October 2024 Ahumai were funded through the Climate and Sustainability Fund to engage a tohunga Māramataka and hold six wānanga, with the aim of creating a Māramataka mo Taranaki Whānui. This new initiative supports uri of Taranaki Whānui to strengthen observation and research skills based around principles of maramataka. Maramataka is a way of tuning into natural rhythms including the phases of the moon, position of the stars and seasonal changes to guide activities like planting, fishing, hunting and conservation.

The project connects participants to te taiao, allows them to understand how climate change impacts ecosystems, and motivates climate action to reduce those impacts.

Ahumai kaiwhakahaere Lee Rauhina-August (Taranaki nui tonu, Ngāti Te Kōhera, Te Taoū) says learning about maramataka together helps whānau connect more deeply with the unique taiao of this region.

Working with the interconnectedness of nature is a key part of Ahumai, driven by foundational values in te ao Māori and the harm that can be caused when environmental issues are treated as separate from each other. For example, kina barrens show how overfishing predators disrupts ecosystems – leading to high kina populations, high consumption of kelp forests, and reduced coastal protection from storms.

Uri attending maramataka wānanga are supported to notice connections in nature and keep records to track tohu (signs) like plants blooming and creatures migrating, to see how these are being impacted over time by climate change.

> "This has been a long-held moemoea for us. For a lot of us, the issue was following maramataka that belonged to other places... Our whakaaro is about making something fit for purpose that responds to our environment in Te Whanganui-a-Tara." *- Lee Rauhina-August, Ahumai*





Māia-te-oho Holman-Wharehoka (Taranaki, Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Whakaue), kaimanga with Ahumai, says wānanga are a chance to monitor tohu, grow understanding about what is changing, and collect data that can help to restore balance and health.

"We are building on hundreds of years of observation from our tupuna, trying to navigate how we shift and use our tohu now to fit with a very fast-changing climate." *- Māia-te-oho Holman-Wharehoka, Ahumai*

Wānanga are led by mātauranga Māori tohunga Erina Wehi-Barton (Maniapoto), with participants ranging in age from tamariki to kaumātua. Each wānanga explores a different element of maramataka – such as collecting oral histories, monitoring local streams, encouraging rangatahi leadership, and analysing data – fostering long-term climate action and boosting community resilience.

With changes caused by disruption in the climate affecting traditional tohu, the Maramataka mo Taranaki Whānau project is a chance for uri to reclaim cultural practices and apply them in their own ways.

Ahumai kaiārahi Tina Walker-Ferguson (Rongomaiwahine, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Porou, Taranaki nui tonu, Kai Tahu) says the benefits of this work are far reaching for whānau and the taiao.

"We all live in the city, and it is possible to be connected to the taiao. My hope is that whānau really own that and feel connected to each other and our natural environment." *- Tina Walker-Ferguson, Ahumai*

By centering maramataka and indigenous knowledge, we can deepen our understanding of te taiao and work toward holistic, long-term climate solutions that reflect the interconnectedness of people and the natural world.