

# Mātauranga Māori

Mātauranga Māori is an important part of Healthy Rivers: Plan for Change/Wai Ora: He Rautaki Whakapaipai. This infosheet outlines:

- what Mātauranga Māori is
- its importance to the project
- how it has been incorporated.

## What it is

Mātauranga Māori has been defined as:

*... the knowledge, comprehension or understanding of everything tangible or intangible [such as spiritual and metaphysical values] that exists across the universe from a Māori perspective.*

*It takes many forms including te reo (Māori language), taonga tuku iho (treasure handed down) and mātauranga (traditional environmental knowledge) and knowledge of cultural practises, such as rongoa (healing and medicines) and mahinga kai (hunting, fishing and cultivation of food).*

More specifically for Waikato and Waipa River iwi, Mātauranga Māori includes:

*The historical and spiritual association that iwi have with the river, the range of activities undertaken, the different relationships with the river, the dependence of these activities and relationships on the state of water quality and the health of aquatic ecosystems, and the changes that have been observed over the centuries<sup>2</sup>.*

Mātauranga Māori is holistic, dynamic and a continually evolving knowledge system involving generational observations and experiences. Due to subtle differences between iwi or hapū there is no single Māori worldview. However there are shared genealogical connections and relationships with the natural world<sup>3</sup>. Individually and collectively the five River iwi (Tūwharetoa, Te Arawa, Raukawa, Waikato-Tainui and Maniapoto) have an enduring and special relationship with fresh water that includes the tributaries and catchments of the Waikato and Waipa rivers.

Like all knowledge based systems, Mātauranga continually develops and adapts to the ever changing modern world. While the underlying values and principles that underpin Mātauranga are constant, new ideas, concepts and technologies can be applied to build the knowledge base and assist Māori to adhere to the fundamental principle of kaitiakitanga. Mātauranga can adapt to western scientific techniques and practices, as long as it is consistent with the underlying values and principles, and can help to shape and validate the outputs of western science.

Dual use of scientific approaches and culturally based indicators can provide a wealth of knowledge to better understand the health and wellbeing of freshwater bodies. Māori indicators require an in depth Māori understanding and knowledge of particular environments and of Māori values, interests, and aspirations. In assessing the health of a waterway this can include the presence of 'te paru i te wai' (dirty water), the look of the river and its surrounds (physical and natural character); the flow of water (speed and quantity), and the sound, touch and smell of the water<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> NIWA 2010. Waikato River Independent Scoping Study. Wellington: NIWA.

<sup>2</sup> NIWA 2010. Waikato River Independent Scoping Study: Raukawa, Te Waananga o Aotearoa. Wellington: NIWA.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry for the Environment 2010. Māori values supplement: A supplement for the making good decisions workbook. Wellington, Ministry for the Environment.

<sup>4</sup> RG Young GR Harmsworth, D Walker & T James. 2008. Linkages between cultural and scientific indicators of river and stream health.

[http://icm.landcareresearch.co.nz/knowledgebase/publications/public/Cultural\\_indicators\\_report2.pdf](http://icm.landcareresearch.co.nz/knowledgebase/publications/public/Cultural_indicators_report2.pdf)

## Importance of Mātauranga Māori for Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora

*The Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River/Te Ture Whaimana oTe Awa o*, the primary direction setting document for the restoration and protection of the Waikato and Waipa Rivers, requires Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora to use Mātauranga Māori alongside western scientific methods. This is in line with River iwi expectations.

Incorporating Mātauranga allows for a holistic worldview approach to be used in a way that is complementary to western science and assists to achieve the project's objectives. More importantly, using Mātauranga Māori will help to achieve the *Vision and Strategy*, where the Waikato and Waipa Rivers are restored and protected so they are safe to swim in and safe to take kai from.

## Incorporating Mātauranga Māori into Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora

Significant effort has been made to incorporate Mātauranga Māori into Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora, including a literature review of Mātauranga Māori values, knowledge and views around the Waikato and Waipa Rivers, lakes and streams, Collaborative Stakeholder Group (CSG) input and workshops with iwi representatives, pūkenga (experts) and relevant practitioners.

The aim is to develop understandings and appropriate application of Mātauranga Māori that can be used to shape and influence decision making and determine the best way to measure and monitor progress to achieving outcomes. Mātauranga Māori will articulate and include both physical and non-physical values (such as mahinga kai species, swimmability, sense of place, identity and relationships, and wai tapu) and the positive and negative influencers of these values. While the Mātauranga Māori will be holistic in its approach, the relevance of the four key contaminants (nitrogen, phosphorus, *E. coli* and sediment) and their relative influence on these values will be described in the narratives.

A key reference developed for use in the project is the Mātauranga Māori report which articulates relationships and interdependencies of swimming in rivers, the taking of mahinga kai species and special characteristics of rivers from a River iwi perspective. It also identifies factors affecting food gathering, swimming and special characteristics on the Waikato and Waipa Rivers and their tributaries from a River iwi perspective, as well as gaps in information.

In particular, Mātauranga Māori has been used to develop the following parts of the project:

- Values and uses for the Waikato and Waipa rivers – use of conceptual frameworks and principles to guide decision making and policy development
- Policy selection criteria – inclusion of Vision and Strategy, iwi outcomes and principles to focus attention on the four contaminants
- Attributes and attribute bands/limits – specific measures and targets to measure the direction of progress on reducing levels of the four contaminants
- Integrated assessment tool – specific indicators from the Mātauranga Māori report will be used as part of the wider assessment of relative impacts on social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes from the various scenarios.

## Further information

River iwi have developed iwi environmental management plans that outline their own Mātauranga Māori for waterways within their tribal areas. These plans are an important source of Mātauranga Māori for Healthy Rivers Wai/Ora, and can be accessed on the River iwi websites.

Maniapoto Māori Trust Board	maniapoto.iwi.nz
Raukawa Charitable Trust Board	rauikawa.org.nz
Te Arawa River Iwi Trust	tarit.co.nz
Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board	tuwharetoa.co.nz
Waikato Raupatu River Trust	wrrt.co.nz

## More information



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PLAN FOR CHANGE

Maniapoto Māori Trust Board  
Raukawa Charitable Trust  
Te Arawa River Iwi Trust

Wai Ora

HE RAUTAKI WHAKAPAIPAI

Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board  
Waikato Raupatu River Trust  
Waikato Regional Council