

Te Reo o Te Taiao

Arohanui West

26 September 2024

Te Pūaha o te Ako

Session summary

In the *Te Reo o te Taiao* session we will discuss tohu (signs) that we can see and observe from the natural world. We will link these observations back to mātauranga māori and discuss how climate change compromises these indigenous knowledge systems.

Tohu o te tinana



The most basic lesson in observing tohu or signs from our natural environment is to first recognise tohu within ourselves. This links back to the fundamental whakaaro that everything is interconnected and that we, te ira tangata, are not separate from the living world, we are the living world.

I am the maunga, and the maunga is me

I am the awa and the awa is me

I am you and you are me

Te Pūaha o te Ako

Tohu o te tinana



- **I know my ikura is coming** - because I am breaking out
- **I know I'm tired** - because my eyes are lighter than usual
- **I know I didn't drink enough wai māori today** - because my glands are swollen

It seems simple but you would be surprised by how often we overlook these tohu our tinana are using to communicate to us.

Sit, feel, listen - what are 5 things you can see, feel, hear?

Your body is continuously communicating to you, kei te whakarongo koe?

You spend your entire lifetime in your tinana, learn how to speak its language.

Te Pūaha o te Ako

Observing your whānau



What are some observations you have made from your whānau or friends?

- I know my pēpi is getting sick because they're grizzly
- I know my friend is anxious because they're biting their nails

In days of old, husbands and sons knew the wāhine cycles off by heart because one of their duties was to go and collect angiangi and other resources to be used during this time.

Te Pūaha o te Ako



Now, think about your backyard and your community.

Do you know what area of your lawn is most likely to flood after heavy rain? Which trees drop the most leaves on your street? and what roads to avoid during after school traffic??

This is the knowledge you have by observing the world around you.

Te Pūaha o te Ako

It's not black magic, (it's brown magic) and common sense

Tikanga, kawa and mātauranga are often common sense, put in place to keep us safe. Our knowledge and customs are derived from our lived experience.

By living in accordance with the natural world we were able to make long-term observations and evidence-based conclusions.

Te Pūaha o te Ako

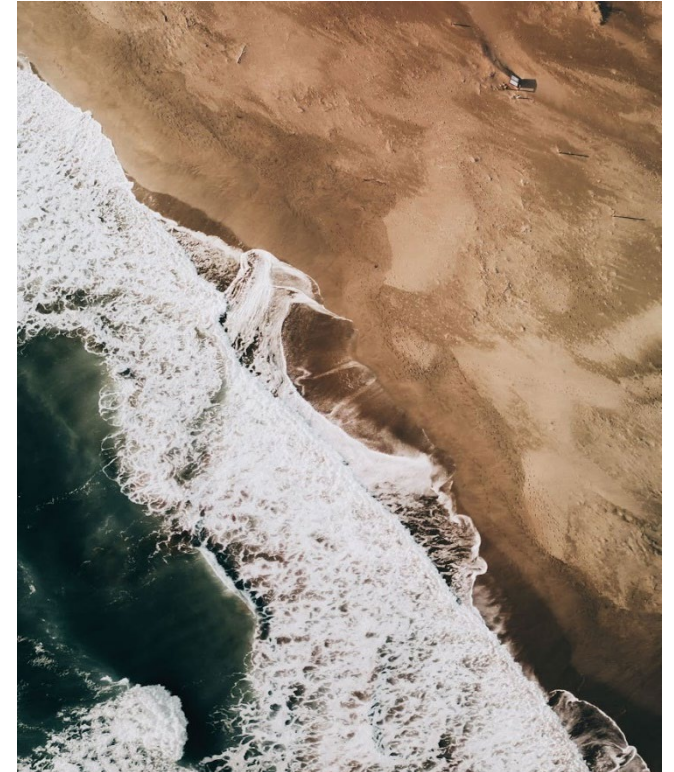
These whakaaro are shared across te ao



Richard Stoffle, an anthropologist at the University of Arizona wrote a paper in 2023 that lists various observations from Anishinaabe people belonging to three tribes in the Upper Great Lakes.

The anonymous interviews, conducted in 1998 and 2014, featured comments on a wide range of environmental changes witnessed by Anishinaabe people over the decades: **hotter summers, drier springs, mushrooms emerging at weird times of the year, or plants that don't yield as much fruit or sap as they used to.**

Colonial, capitalist systems sees our taiao as a resource which is the ultimate insult to our atua Māori and te taiao.



Te Pūaha o te Ako

Māori have always been scientists.

You don't navigate that expansive ocean on myths and legends.

You don't come here and apply a very detailed and regionally specific division of time, thrive and sync yourself into the natural rhythms of the environment here without having science.

Science is the cornerstone of those undertakings.

But because science is wrapped up in our cultural beliefs, even our spirituality, in a way we view our science have difficulties understanding the depth and richness of Indigenous Peoples knowledge base. – Professor Rangi Matamua

Te Pūaha o te Ako

Rāhui



RĀHUI

Rāhui places a tapu or restriction over a place, a resource, or people to help with regeneration, conservation, or protection.



Rāhui allowed us to live in balance with the world around us. Take only what you need, rest, replenish, so there are always more for generations to come. To me this is simple, drilled into us since we were babies. But now world overshoot day happens halfway through the year.



Te Pūaha o te Ako

Mātauranga

Stars, planting and harvesting seasons, when certain trees would flower or bear fruit allowed us to measure time. So you may not know how old you are but you know you have lived through 14 pohutukawa flowerings. Our relationship with the stars extends far beyond matariki, I listened to a kōrero from Dr Rangi Mataamua where he spoke about one of his tūpuna's notebook he has in his possession and in it is over 500 different kupu for different stars and constellations.



Te Pūaha o te Ako

We are reflections of the world around us



Te Pūaha o te Ako

Retaining our stories.



Mōteatea or māori laments are our most traditional form of song. Prior to colonisation we didn't have a written language so mōteatea, carving and tukutuku designs were ways of retaining our stories.

Te Pūaha o te Ako

Threats to mātauranga

- Not being retained or passed down,
- Undermined by western science,
- Trees flowering and food ripening at different rates because of changes in climate,
- Melting of ice caps is causing the axis to spin faster and slightly altering time (Climate change-fueled sea level rise caused the length of a day to vary between 0.3 and 1 milliseconds in the 20th century.)
- Displacing people from traditional lands (becomes harder to retain cultural practices, pūrakau, and eat from our pātaka kai when displaced,
- Mātauranga must move with the times,
- We need to plan long-term, not be limited by 3-year political cycles.

Do you have a mātauranga retention plan for your whānau?



They say it takes one generation to lose our reo and three generations to restore it.

Don't make your tamariki, mokopuna start from scratch. Write down your mātauranga, keep a log of your whakapapa. Be a good tūpuna.

Te Pūaha o te Ako

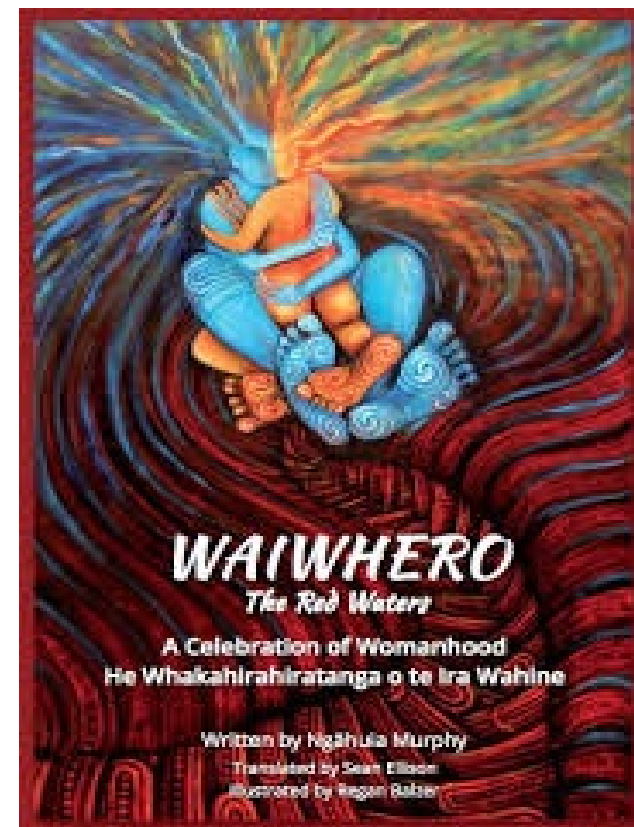
'Ka pū te ruha, ka hao te rangatahi oti
ano ngā rangatahi pātai atu ki ngā
ruha kei hea ngā ika?'

Cast the old net aside to let the new net go fishing. However, the new net must ask the old net where the fish are.

Te Pūaha o te Ako

Extra resources

- Tame Malcolm - The mātauranga of conservation, key note speaker
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vy5tCHqj7M>



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Thank you