

Future Search Aotearoa New Zealand case study: Ngā Puāwai o Te Oneroa-a-Tōhe 2023

Challenge and place

Te Oneroa-a-Tōhe (formerly known as Ninety Mile Beach) is a deeply spiritual and iconic coastal location of Aotearoa that is in dire need of rejuvenation. Years of human activities have taken a toll on its mauri, affecting the delicate balance of its ecosystem, and causing the shellfish toheroa, a taonga and indicator of beach health, to face severe challenges.

A three-day wānanga was held at Te Ahu venue in Kaitaia, Northland, at the peak of the maramataka on the 28-30th September 2023.



Image: Toheroa shells held as taonga. Photo credit: Jos Wheeler

Purpose

To ignite systems-change action and to restore the mauri of Te Oneroa-a-Tōhe.

Host

Te Oneroa-a-Tōhe Beach Board hosted the wānanga. This Board is a co-governance partnership with the following members: Ngāti Kuri, Te Aupouri, Te Rarawa, Ngāi Takoto, Northland Regional Council and Far North District Council.

Funding source

Twenty-two sources of funds and support enabled the successful wānanga: Te Rarawa Kaiwhare, Foundation North Aquaculture New Zealand, Centre for Social Impact, Department of Conservation, Eco Solutions, Fisheries New Zealand, GNS Science, McGregor's Garden Genius, NIWA, 9TEE MILE: Screenprint & Design, Northland Regional Council, Northland Inc, Para Kore, StonecraftNZ, Te Hiku Community Board, Te Ohu Kaimoana, Te Puni Kōkiri, Te Rarawa, The Nature Conservancy, University of Auckland, Waipuna aa rangi.

Voices of the system



Tangata whenua, rangatahi, locals, wairua tapu, landowners and users, fisheries and aquaculture, agencies, tourism stakeholders and knowledge holders (encompassing both mātauranga and Western science), brought their voices to the room.

Co-facilitated by Lisa McNab of ngā iwi e rima o Muriwhenua, o roto i Te Hiku o Te Ika and Miranda Cassidy-O’Connell, the wānanga enabled the 88 participants to dialogue and develop common ground agreements.

Special features

- Active holding of the wānanga by tangata whenua from preparation and planning through to implementation of the event. This included multiple iwi as hosts with Te Oneroa-a-Tōhe Beach Board, a tangata whenua co-facilitator, and a planning group dominated by tangata whenua.
- Kaumātua were present throughout wānanga in addition to participants of the nine voice groups, with kaumātua able to come and go as they wanted.
- Toheroa shells, weaving and plant life were displayed throughout the venue, bringing the subject of the wānanga physically into the room.
- A beach visit to Te Oneroa-a-Tōhe took place at the end of the second day.
- There was an interactive mapping activity available at breaks.

“This Future Search wānanga restored my faith in humanity that we can solve our problems.”

James Williams, NIWA

Key outcomes

A statement of commitment was agreed by all those who actively participated in the wānanga. This informs the action to be undertaken to restore the mauri of Te Oneroa-a-Tōhe. Each participant made a personal commitment to kick start the transformative change that was needed, ensuring the change in behaviour and attitude started with themselves. View the commitment document [here](#).



Image: Hilda Halkyard-Harawira writing on timeline.
Photo credit: Jos Wheeler

“The style of hui and the facilitation team helped connect a few dots - that allowed a few long overdue kōrero and understanding of different perspectives as well as drafting strategies or amicable strategic relationships going forward.”

Hilda Halkyard-Harawira, Te Rarawa

Post Future Search activities

Website: www.teoneroa-a-tohe.nz/wananga

Activator forum: www.teoneroa-a-tohe.nz/ropu

This is a password accessible site for all those active in implementing actions to restore the mauri of Te Oneroa-a-Tōhe.

A post wānanga event that was both in person and online was held on 3rd April 2024. This encouraged sharing stories of action and support for implementing the agreed common ground. Some of the early ripples include:

- Transitional funding from Foundation North secured to maintain the momentum.
- A site visit by tangata whenua and scientists identifying the streams along the beach, past and present.
- Te Oneroa-a-Tōhe project in NIWA 'Iwi Link' research initiative.

“This is genius at melding people around a common environmental cause to blow away the crossfire - just such a thrill to see it bloom again under this nurturing process. It’s magic and I do hope you can keep doing lots more of it.”

Andrew Jeffs, Auckland University



Image: Pōwhiri at Te Ahu in Kaitiāia, Birds eye view. Photo credit: Jos Wheeler