

# He Whenua Kanorau, He Whenua Manawaroa: Diverse and Resilient Landscapes

*Te toto o te tangata, he kai; te oranga o te tangata, he whenua*

While food provides the blood in our veins; our health is drawn from the land

## Background

Extreme weather events are predicted to increase in frequency and intensity across Aotearoa New Zealand, which could lead to major impacts on land (whenua) and land uses across the country. The vulnerability of whenua Māori to such events is caused not only by climate change, but also by socio-economic inequities that stem from colonisation.

Diversified land management can enhance sociocultural, economic, and ecological resilience to climate change, and promote intergenerational priorities. However, whilst te ao Māori values align well with diversification of land use, there are multiple challenges to enacting this in practice.

This information sheet outlines how these challenges can be worked through successfully. Drawing on in-depth interviews with whenua Māori pūkenga (practitioners and experts in Māori land) from across Aotearoa New Zealand, we have identified key themes that support journeys towards more resilient and diverse land uses.

Scan the QR code or click the URL link to explore an interactive version of the kahikatea image and the meanings behind the kupu woven through it.



[landcareresearch.co.nz/haho/  
whenua-manawaroa](https://landcareresearch.co.nz/haho/whenua-manawaroa)

## ***Me uru kahikatea: let us be like the kahikatea***

We use the illustration of a thriving kahikatea tree centred within a grove to portray the processes involved in diversifying whenua Māori. Kahikatea are our tallest native trees and grow together with their roots interconnecting to provide stability and support for one another. This image therefore speaks to the importance of standing together and being interconnected for strength and unity.

Key social and cultural concepts and processes are represented by kupu (words) that are nestled within different zones in and around the kahikatea.

The soil includes concepts that are generally unseen but vital for (re)establishing the intimate relationship between whenua and tāngata whenua (people of the land) including te ao Māori, mātauranga Māori, tikanga, whakapapa, and Papatūānuku. Similarly, the fertility of soil is necessary for seeds to germinate.

The roots, which sustain plant life through nutrient and water transfer, include the unseen concepts and processes that are driven by social and cultural responsibilities (manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga, trusting relationships, kotahitanga, ahi kā, challenging regulation, disrupting systems).

The trunk includes more visible social concepts and processes (weaving knowledges, secure resourcing, empowered tāngata, effective governance).

Finally, the canopy includes visions for a thriving whenua (mana motuhake, flourishing mauri, thriving community, healing), encompassing both environmental and human well-being.



Artist:  
Rā Haweti Jennings  
(Ngāti Awa, Te Whānau-  
ā-Apanui, Whakatōhea,  
Ngāi Te Rangi, Te Arawa)

Concept	Definition	Concept	Definition
<b>Soil</b> Te ao Māori Mātauranga Māori Tikanga Whakapapa Papatūānuku	Māori worldview Traditional Māori knowledge Māori protocols Genealogy, layers Earth Mother	<b>Trunk</b> Weaving knowledges Secure resourcing Empowered tāngata Effective governance	Using science and mātauranga Infrastructure and funding Equipped and connected people Good leadership
<b>Roots</b> Manaakitanga Kaitiakitanga Kotahitanga Ahi kā Challenging regulation Disrupting systems	Generosity Stewardship Unity Continuous occupation Overcoming bureaucracy Alternative ways	<b>Canopy</b> Mana Motuhake Flourishing mauri Thriving community Healing	Self-determination Life-force Social, cultural, environmental, economical Re-connection with land

## Artistic symbolism

**Koru:** Positioned in the canopy to signify growth and new beginnings.

**Poutama:** Positioned in the sky to symbolise vision, aspiration, and moving upwards.

**Tapa toru:** Repeated maunga-shaped motifs in the soil to symbolise resilience and climbing toward a brighter future.

**Whetū:** The constellations Matariki and Mahutonga are featured, Matariki symbolising abundance and fertility, and Mahutonga serving as a guiding light toward our aspirations.

**Kahikatea grove/silhouettes:** Kahikatea grow in groves, their roots intertwined in mutual support. Their towering silhouettes also represent our tūpuna, ever-present, offering guidance and strength.

**Living elements:** Birds and insects reflect the vitality of a healthy environment. Our native species are interconnected, each playing a role in sustaining the balance and well-being of our ecosystems.



## Recommendations

Progress towards more diverse and resilient whenua Māori relies on complex social and cultural factors that must be adequately resourced. Based on these insights we make the following policy recommendations:

1. Diversification of whenua Māori comes from the ground up. Although these factors cannot be seen, it is crucial for policymakers and funders to acknowledge and make space for reconnection and healing so that te ao Māori principles, mātauranga, and tikanga can guide land-use transitions.
2. Hapū or whānau Māori seeking to transition their whenua to more diverse uses face significant challenges posed by non-Māori systems of land ownership and regulation. Policies at various scales (national/local) that guide these systems must recognise and address these challenges.
3. Funding must be flexible and stable enough to accommodate hapū needs and the time frames required for lengthy and complex land-use transitions.
4. Metrics for 'successful' diversification must acknowledge how Māori value and relate to their whenua. An overt focus on physical changes and rigid time frames can undermine resilient land-use transitions.

**Co-authors:** Susanna Finlay-Smits, Sarah Edwards, and Jade Hyslop (*Ngāti Whakaue, Tūhourangi-Wāhiao*)

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For more information contact:

**Susanna Finlay-Smits**

Finlay-SmitsS@landcareresearch.co.nz



*Image credit: Tarsh Koia (Te Aitanga a Mate, Te Whānau a Rakairoa, Ngāti Porou).*