



**Tūao Aotearoa**  
Volunteering New Zealand

# **The Contributions of Tūao Māori: Principles of collective responsibility and self-determination**

**Volunteering New Zealand mahi aroha findings report  
2022**

**Arataki. Hāpai. Whakamana | Lead. Advocate. Recognise.**

# Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to add to the knowledge of tūao Māori.

Volunteering New Zealand researches the State of Volunteering in Aotearoa New Zealand and produces a report biannually. Māori volunteers were identified as a significant voice missing from many previous reports. Therefore, Volunteering New Zealand wanted to prioritise hearing their views. Research from Māori volunteers included focus groups and survey data research conducted in 2021-22.

Volunteering New Zealand engaged researcher Bryony Rangimāria Moses who synthesized this research and added desk-based research and her own analysis to provide a comprehensive report. This was peer reviewed by Jordan Green (Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau ā Apanui) who provided some excellent feedback and challenged Volunteering New Zealand to consider the significance of the findings for volunteer-involving organisations and its own work. These are noted as recommendations at the end of this summary.

## Introduction

Māori are amongst the highest likely to volunteer, with their participation rates being significantly higher than other ethnic groups, especially in relation to their smaller population size. Importantly, unpaid work performed by Māori is uniquely coded in cultural ideas of reciprocity, cultural identity, and intrinsic responsibilities.

The essence of tūao Māori contributions is ingrained in the concept of mahi aroha. Mahi aroha is performed out of aroha, manaakitanga, and a sense of duty to whānau (family), whanaungatanga (kinship relations) and wider networks of iwi and hapu. Mahi aroha is fixed within a Māori world view and sense of identity; it revolves around the obligations to maintain the mana of Māori culture in accordance with tikanga and represents a responsibility to fulfil cultural obligations which ensure the wellbeing of the collective.<sup>1</sup>

Group membership and cultural identity for tūao Māori is experienced on different levels. There is not a homogenous lived experience by which Māori interact and experience their cultural identity or traditions. However, regardless of the level of cultural engagement for tūao Māori, many are motivated by whakapapa and collective duty.

## Rangatiratanga and mana motuhake

Rangatiratanga and mana motuhake are concepts at the heart of mahi aroha. Tino rangatiratanga can mean the right to self-government or nurturing togetherness, and mana motuhake can mean self-determination through collective support.

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<sup>1</sup> Pam Oliver, Lauri Porima, Tania Wolfram, Dr. Catherine Love. (2007). Mahi Aroha: Māori perspectives on volunteering and cultural obligations. Pages ii, 11. The Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector

In the context of mahi aroha, these values translate as the ability for Māori to collectively mobilize their communities and weave their values into western systems. Upholding the taonga of tikanga, te reo, te ao and mātauranga Māori enables a collective based approach to volunteering and should be recognised as a significant feat in Māori self-determination and cultural expression.

## Historical contexts

Māori volunteering and the concept of mahi aroha has historically been utilised as way for Māori to assert their cultural traditions, and to form a separate institutional identity. Flax-root efforts helped bring this to fruition, by transforming western institutions into distinctively Māori ones. Establishments such as committees and councils were adopted and re-interpreted within Māori world views and values. These budding voluntary associations would also help to invigorate Māori culture, adjust to urbanisation, and to affirm collective self-determination. We delve into some of the most momentous volunteer efforts which paved the way for how Māori self-sufficiently organised themselves to reinstate cultural identity, and contribute to the benefit of the collective. These include the Māori parliamentary committee, the Māori war effort organisation, the Māori women's welfare league and Māori wātene (Māori wardens).

The mobilisation of these volunteer groups granted Māori the opportunity to assert their world views into traditionally western institutions, and to lead on their own terms for a cause which aided the wider society. Importantly, these associations have affected the way Māori approach and perceive their voluntary work today. Despite the very different social context of contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand society, many of the values are retained – especially maintaining Māori identity, whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, kaupapa and Māori recognition.

## Focus group themes

During November 2021, two focus group discussions were undertaken to understand the perspectives and motivations of Māori volunteers. These open discussions centred on their motivations for volunteering, deterrents, service and impact, improvement on positive impact, improving recognition and empowerment, valuing and utilising te reo Māori in tauwiwi (non-Māori) spaces, volunteering on Māori terms, and the effects of Covid-19 on themselves and their community. We have identified four main themes from these discussions; and also acknowledge the impact of Covid-19 on tūao Māori.

### Theme 1: Whanaungatanga, mana and manaakitanga

Respondents expressed that volunteering serves as a channel to enhance whānau and whanaungatanga relations. Working with whānau and invigorating those connections also made their mahi more enjoyable and meaningful. Volunteers said much of their mahi allowed them to attend ceremonial events such as marae visits or tangihanga and engage with tikanga.

Respondents hoped their passion for helping whānau would influence the next generations, encouraging tamariki to join in the mahi and understand the importance of mahi aroha. Giving respect to tīpuna and recognising how these values have been passed down is a significant

motivation for volunteering. Many said that there is a sense of mana in retaining these values and upholding them.

Manaakitanga, to uplift and nurture others, is as an important motivation for mahi aroha. Many wished to ease the adversities of others which they have experienced themselves, and that working cooperatively reduces the burden of demanding work.

While many of the participants' passion to help and nurture others remained strong, some acknowledged that there were limitations in terms of how much they could give. Protecting and nurturing their wellbeing before undertaking mahi meant they were able to give to others more.

Fostering and empowering others was also demonstrated by uplifting and encouraging team members. This was seen as an important motivation and fulfilment in their mahi aroha.

## **Theme 2: Taha Māori: Māori identity and an intrinsic sense of duty**

For tūao Māori, volunteering is an opportunity for them to participate, appreciate and reinvigorate their views into their mahi aroha and the wider volunteer sector.

Respondents approached volunteering from a Māori perspective, encompassing the essence of te ao Māori. It is deeply embedded in how they navigate their mahi and the delivery of their kaupapa. Many respondents noted that as Māori, they were raised to be involved in helping whānau, and added that they would extend this towards the outside community.

Regarding tauwi (non-Māori) organisations or members, respondents said they felt more comfortable with those that incorporated the principles of te ao Māori into their mahi. When Māori know that their tauwi counterparts are respectful and open towards Māori culture, then they feel like they can be themselves and do not feel the need to diminish their cultural identity.

Many Māori respondents expressed their struggles with the obligations of different volunteer spaces – a Māori sphere and a tauwi one. Maintaining their Māori identity and choosing to not suppress their heritage to fit a tauwi organisation remained a challenge.

Many respondents expressed a strong desire for a Māori perspective to be seen as a meaningful contribution rather than a formal requirement. Participants felt a sense of unease with tauwi organisations persistently putting all the responsibility of overseeing Māori-based mahi on their shoulders – they sometimes felt it was ingenuine, and a means of ticking a tokenistic diversity box. They felt that sometimes their opinions were only considered because it gave the organisation credibility as a bicultural organisation, but when an organisation makes authentic and genuine efforts to uplift Māori culture and support their kaupapa, they are very appreciative.

## **Theme 3: Meaningful kaupapa initiatives**

Creating meaningful kaupapa initiatives enabled participants to share knowledge with the community. Their kaupapa could reach organisations, schools and whānau, and result in

valuable, meaningful outcomes. Many participants enjoyed the impact of empowering whānau and seeing them being able to drive themselves.

Having an agreed upon kaupapa, which all members of the group could contribute their knowledge and input, served to strengthen connections and their mahi successes. Volunteering with a kaupapa which aligned with their beliefs and the cause they are working towards, was important for most participants.

Participants could lend their expertise and unique skill set; this included taking part in decision-making processes, funding pitches, and launching subsequent kaupapa initiatives.

#### **Theme 4: Tūao Māori recognition**

The concept of recognition and reciprocity encompasses diverse meanings for Māori volunteers. Some participants stated they made efforts to consciously express or incorporate ways of giving recognition and acknowledgement in the design, structuring and fruition of their mahi. This could be done in small yet meaningful ways – such as koha, e.g., small donations, petrol, supermarket vouchers and supplying kai. These smaller, and yet more meaningful forms of recognition were appreciated. Valuing volunteers did not necessarily entail monetary reimbursement, but instead could be communicated through awahi (to embrace or support).

The way they wish to be acknowledged and shown reciprocity diverges from mainstream forms of recognition. A few expressed that reward-based recognition was correlated with the idea of being whakahīhī (prideful or conceited) and that this was not necessarily compatible with how Māori like to be acknowledged.

Award-based recognition was seen to be a shallow means of acknowledgement which disregarded the cooperative efforts of all parties involved in the mahi. However, participants could see the offer of an award as an acknowledgement of a collective achievement – one which uplifts their kaupapa and the mana of the collective within the sector.

#### **Theme 5: Covid-19: Disruption of tikanga and outreach**

While the Covid-19 pandemic has been acknowledged as a wide-spread event of disruption in the world's social, communal, and work environments, it has had a complex cultural and social effect on Māori. The basis of mahi aroha and initiating kaupapa is best performed through in-person hui, collective kōrero, sharing kai, performing tikanga and maintaining connections. This disruption to taonga customs and social connection left many volunteers struggling to navigate and adapt to this changing environment.

#### **State of Volunteering survey: themes and analysis**

The 2022 State of Volunteering survey produced valuable quantitative data and free-text responses surrounding the experiences of Māori respondent's social impact, outreach, and

general feedback. The survey also revealed responses on the topics of social connection protocol, leadership, service delivery, contribution, and resource management.

Our analysis recognises that while some responses partially alluded to Māori cultural values, the findings are more generalised than what we have observed in the focus groups. This could be because the questions were aimed at universal experiences in the sector, with more inclination towards general feedback and experiences rather than specific cultural views and values.

## **Conclusion**

The research findings presented in this report highlight the immense contributions tūao Māori have historically and contemporarily contributed to the volunteer sector. The incorporation of Māori cultural values, consciously utilised or not, demonstrate the endurance of Māori culture and the ability for Māori to drive their mahi.

It should be acknowledged that Māori customs and values are not static and have always evolved with their social context. Tūao Māori have long since persisted in navigating institutions which prioritise Western knowledge bases and standards. Yet they have been seen to rise to the challenge and innovate new ways of doing things according to cultural obligations and a shared purpose. Tūao Māori are critical to the preservation of collective wellbeing and should be recognised as a taonga to Aotearoa New Zealand's volunteer sector.

## **Recommendations for organisations**

The voices and experiences of tūao Māori surfaced in this report suggest some very clear recommendations for community organisations engaging with both tūao Māori, and non-tūao Māori.

Organisations could consider these perspectives and incorporate into their practices:

1. Incorporating principles of te ao Māori into how you work, including values, purpose, and audience.
  - a. Do your values reflect values important within Te Ao Māori?
  - b. Are your decision making and planning processes taking a longer-term, sustainable view?
2. Whanaungatanga: creating meaningful relationships as you work, connect and volunteer should be an engrained part of how we engage with volunteers.
3. Manaakitanga: to uplift and nurture others is an important manifestation of mahi aroha. Manaakitanga of people and volunteers is as important as manaakitanga of service users of organisations.

4. Meaningful kaupapa: creating a shared place to stand, shared understanding and an opportunity for all to grow and learn. Connection to the kaupapa creates greater meaning and experiences for tūao Māori.
5. Recognition and reciprocity: reward-based recognition diverges from understandings of recognition and reciprocity within te ao Māori. A good starting point is to review your recognition activities from a collectivist lens, and to also base this on your relationships, and connections.

Many of these findings and recommendations have been surfaced within the wider *State of Volunteering Report 2022*.

## **Next steps for Volunteering New Zealand Tūao Aotearoa**

### **Volunteering New Zealand commits to:**

1. Share learnings externally with community organisations, and particularly other sector umbrella and peak bodies who are doing or promoting community research: e.g. Hui E!, and Community Research Aotearoa.
2. We will share recommendations with our member organisations.
3. Being guided by our Kaitiaki and Ohu Tikanga in the design of future research products.
4. Continue to advocate for more and better recognition by decision makers, policy makers and the wider public about the diverse ways that people contribute to their communities
5. Advocating for support for tūao Māori in all the ways they contribute to Aotearoa's cultural identity and social capital.
6. Advocating for a more consistent approach to evaluation of volunteering as it relates to progress in wellbeing outcomes. Other data about unpaid work, non-profit institutions, mahi aroha and Māori wellbeing frameworks, and formal and informal volunteering need to be collected and incorporated into evaluations.