

Manihiki Report

This report presents key findings from work conducted in **Manihiki, Cook Islands**. It outlines the activities undertaken, major observations, challenges encountered, and recommendations for follow-up actions. The findings aim to inform management decision-making and future planning.

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Purpose of the assignment / visit to Manihiki: As it is more difficult for our office (CCCI) to reach the Pa Enua Tonga (Northern Group), we thought it beneficial to make use of this family trip up north, to conduct some research during personal free time.



(Raukotaha)

The objectives of the work undertaken in Manihiki were to:

- a) **Coral Bleaching** - Identify areas of coral bleaching
- b) **Coastal Erosion** - Observe if there are any areas of the coast that have eroded away and talk to land owners of the areas if possible.
- c) **Rauara** - Is there still a lot of rauara on the island? Are the women still practicing the art of rauara weaving?
- d) **Vairakau Maori** - Talk to the mamas and papas if they have any experience or knowledge on vairakau Maori, used before and still practicing or no longer being practiced.



(Tapuaekaha)

Approach:

1. **Meetings held** - One meeting was held alongside Raymond, with the Island council to inform them of the projects and the work that we would be doing while on the Island.
2. **Data collection method** - Observations, informal interviews, informal general conversations.

Key Findings:

a) Coral bleaching

Site visited: Tapuaekaha

Method: Observation

Area observed: Reef and surrounding lagoon

Findings: Lots of new baby coral heads growing out on the reef, but also a lot of bleaching around the area, in the lagoon between Tapuaekaha and Raukotaha, as well as on the reef.

Other areas such as Paerangi and Murihiti were observed but I was not able to find any noticeable coral bleaching.

b) Coastal erosion

Site visited: Tauhunu Village

Method: Observation, informal general conversations

Area observed: Tauhunu coast

Findings: Some of the kaoa (coral that has grown and accumulated above the water) in the lagoon (e.g. Amoko) has been completely eroded and is now just roroka (coral submerged under water) while others have had only partial sections eroded according to Raymond.

Coastal areas around Tauhunu village remain mostly the same as they were 10 years ago according to members of the community.

Through personal observation, there were no areas of erosion I was able to see on Tauhunu coast.

c) Rauara

Site visited: Tauhunu Village, Tapuaekaha, Murihiti

Method: Observation, informal general conversation

Area observed: Tauhunu Village, Tapuaekaha, Murihiti

Findings: Rarofara (rauara) plants were found in all observed areas but not as many as expected. A lot of the observed plants were juvenile ara (pandanus) trees.

Not as many mamas use it anymore, they mostly make their crafts out of rito or rito titiri, according to members of the community.

d) Traditional Medicine

Method: Informal Interview

Interviewee: Haumata Tepania

Findings:



Remedy Name	Ailment	Ingredients	Part Used	Preparation
Vai Ta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruises • Broken bones 	Mangaro Coconut	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puru • Juice 	Pound the puru and mix with the juice and drink
Vairakau Kea	Kea	<p>(Can be prepared 2 different ways)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. - Papaka (crab) - Tauhunu Tree - Fano Tree 2. Fara (pandanus) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. - Whole crab - Tauhunu oil - Fano oil 2. Roots 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clean and crush the crab and cook with Tahunu or Fano oil - can eat everything 2. Pound and chew
Vairakau Maire	Sores	Maire (fern)		
Vairakau Mariri	Celulitus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nenu (noni) • Sunlight liquid soap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roots • Liquid 	
Vairakau hakaheke	Laxative	<p>(Can be prepared 3 different ways)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ni nita (pawpaw) 2. Nikau (coconut tree leaves) 3. Mokokoko Kurakura (Specific type of young coconut) 		
Vairakau vera	Burns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tauhunu tree • Coconut tree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flower buds • Coconut flesh 	<p>Make roro (pure coconut cream), mix with tauhunu flower buds.</p> <p>The patient must lie on heated banana or noni leaves.</p> <p>Concoction is applied with chicken feathers.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fefe (e'e, boils) • Taupo 	Nenu (noni)	Leaves	Heat over fire, and place on the area
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twisted ankles 	Po'ue (specifically the one	Leaves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pound and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflammation • Broken bones 	with the round leaves)		<p>mix with water. Submerge area of concern.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make into a poultice and place on the area, wrap with bandages.
	Tu pito	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lau ti • Katiriera (castor oil) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaves • Oil 	<p>Heat the leaves over fire and pound. Warm up oil, apply both to the pito (belly button) and rub clockwise.</p> <p>Once you start rubbing clockwise, you cannot rub counterclockwise.</p> <p>Apply for three days.</p>



(naunau kura (left), and the naunau matie (right), used in making akari naunau, similar to akari pi)

Challenges and Constraints:

One of the primary challenges encountered during the research process was that the fieldwork was conducted alongside a family visit, during which activities were scheduled on a daily basis. As a result, observations were largely limited to locations and situations that aligned with the planned activities for each day.

Additionally, the initial weeks of the visit were primarily dedicated to preparations for the Unveiling and Wedding events, which significantly reduced the amount of time available for independent research until after these events had concluded.

Furthermore, limited familiarity with the island and local community required reliance on a family member for transportation and introductions to key individuals. This dependency constrained the ability to conduct research independently.



(Murihiti)

Conclusion:

Many of the plants used in traditional medicine remain resilient and abundant, particularly staple species such as the coconut tree and noni tree. Community members shared accounts of successful outcomes resulting from the use of these traditional practices.

More comprehensive and in-depth research across all relevant areas is recommended. Proper planning, along with the use of appropriate equipment, would support more effective and reliable data collection.

Personal reflections from this trip highlight areas for personal development. In particular, to strengthen networking and engagement skills, as I find initiating conversations with unfamiliar people challenging. Nevertheless, undertaking this research was highly beneficial to my learning and enhanced personal understanding of climate impacts through both direct observation and meaningful engagement with the local community.