

ROGERS-KOROHEKE, Marara (Nga Puhi, Te Arawa)

Marara Rogers-Koroheke is the manager of Hauora Hokianga's Department of Community Development. Marara whakapapa's to Nga Puhi and Te Arawa.. Marara has recently returned to the Hokianga from Auckland where she spent 25 years in health management. Marara is a key researcher in the Health Research Council-funded 'Te Riu o Hokianga: environmental health through Maori community development'. Before this project she worked on the joint Hauora Hokianga, Whirinaki Māori Committee and ESR research project "Learning from the stories of Ngā Puna Wai o Hokianga". Marara is presenting a paper with Hone Taimona.

TAIMONA, Hone (Nga Puhi)

Hone Taimona has worked extensively in community development and is a staff member of the newly formed Community Development Unit at Hauora Hokianga. Hone whakapapa's to Nga Puhi. Hone was employed by Hauora Hokianga in 2000 as a kaiwhakakokiri in the Ministry of Health sponsored "Ngā Puna Wai o Hokianga" pilot. Hone is a key researcher in the Health Research Council-funded 'Te Riu o Hokianga: environmental health through Maori community development' and was also a researcher in the joint Hauora Hokianga, Whirinaki Māori Committee and ESR research project "Learning from the stories of Ngā Puna Wai o Hokianga". Hone is presenting a paper with Marara Rogers-Koroheke.

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Te Riu O Hokianga: Environmental Health Through Māori Community Development

Onsite wastewater treatment and disposal (septic tanks) is a significant public health problem for rural communities, especially tangata whenua. Untreated or poorly-treated wastewater discharge can contaminate drinking water, mahinga kai and hopua kaukau (stream bathing areas), food resources, soil and the tapu of both land and water. The contamination restricts the ability of tangata whenua to implement tikanga practices, therefore these limitations diminish the mana manaaki, mana tuku iho and mana kaitiaki that tangata whenua hold.

Māori are at higher risk of sickness from failing septic tanks than the general population, as they are more likely than non-Māori to live in rural areas with septic tanks. Moreover, low socio-economic status and poor housing makes Māori, especially tamariki and kaumatua / kuia, not only at increased risk of catching such diseases, but likely to have more serious resulting health problems.

From its close relationship with local iwi runanga, marae and hapu groups in the Hokianga, the newly formed Community Development Unit at Hauora Hokianga, identified high rates of failing septic tanks in local marae and homes as a significant environmental health issue. Community discussions supported using the successful community development model of 'Ngā Puna Wai o Hokianga' (Safe Drinking-Water in Hokianga) to address the problem.

At the end of 2004 Hauora Hokianga along with ESR, Auckland University and Tipa and Associates began a Health Research Council funded project to improve marae onsite wastewater treatment and disposal systems in the Hokianga using community development principles and methods. Te Riu o Hokianga is a three-year participatory action research project aimed at supporting the marae communities in navigating Government institutions and finding their own solutions. A kaupapa Māori approach will be employed so that local knowledge and innovations can come to the fore. Current solutions to failing onsite wastewater systems often encourage 'victim blaming' by placing the burden of responsibility on individuals, and fail to take into account the regulatory and institutional barriers Māori communities and hapu face when trying to address failing onsite systems. Therefore the initial phase of the research has focused on developing a holistic understanding of onsite wastewater treatment and disposal problems.

This paper (a) examines some of the significant cultural, regulatory, institutional, and community factors that contribute towards onsite wastewater treatment and disposal problems at marae in the Hokianga, in particular highlighting how these factors have in effect suppressed the application of indigenous knowledge to problems; and (b) describes the process that the research team and participating hapu intend to use over the next three years to work with central and local government agencies to develop and trial kaupapa Māori solutions to address the systemic reasons for failing onsite wastewater treatment and disposal.