

"KIA WHAKARONGO AKE AU KI TE RURU E KARANGA ANA... PŌ PŌ KEO KEO"

I HEAR THE RURU CALLING... PŌ PŌ KEO KEO

TE RURU
SYSTEMS CHANGE
FRAMEWORK

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WHAKAUAE
Research for Māori Health and Development

This booklet serves as a brief visual aid that simplifies our article on system change and is the fourth iteration of our evolving systems change framework. You can find the link to the article at the bottom of the page. Systems thinking is a way of looking at the world in which both natural and human-made systems are interconnected. Indigenous cultures have long-held views that emphasise the interdependence of all living things as holistic systems. The systems change approach, which takes into account the interconnected nature of the world's economic, social, and ecological systems, finds common ground with this inclusive holistic worldview.

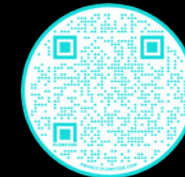
Te Ruru: The Whakauae systems change framework integrates the tenets of systems change methodology within tribally based principles and aspirations to create 'Te Ruru'. Te Ruru has been purposefully adapted and iterated to represent not just the visible system(s) that Māori communities occupy but also the 'unseen' within Indigenous and colonial histories. Using systems change from an intentional Indigenous paradigm is thereby an act of decolonisation—a direct act against the systems currently blocking Indigenous flourishing. The transformational power of Te Ruru lies in its ability to bring to the surface the seen and unseen, thereby supporting Māori to take the helm to lead systemic change via the Indigenous translation of inclusive health research.

Te Ruru is a practical extension of the TUI framework: Translation Uptake and Impact of Research Findings. These journal articles can be accessed by scanning the QR code or searching for the citations below:

TE RURU
ARTICLE

Johnson, T., Allport, T., & Boulton, A. (2024).
Te Ruru: Co-creating an Indigenous systems
change framework. *Journal of Awareness-
Based Systems Change*, 4(1), 49-75.

Allport, T., Johnson, T., & Bennett-Huxtable, M. (2023).
Traversing Indigenous communication landscapes:
Translation, uptake and impact of Māori research.
*Ethical Space: The International Journal of
Communication Ethics*, 20 (No 2/3), 119-136.



TUI
ARTICLE

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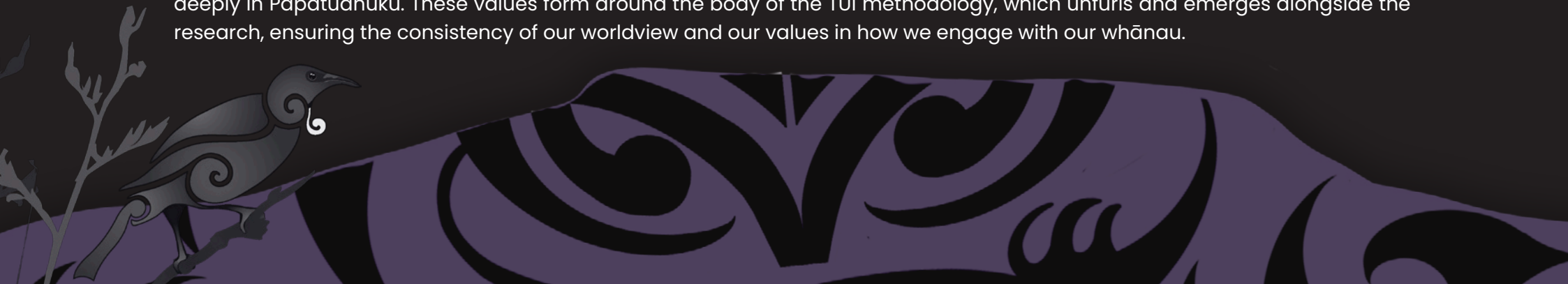
WHAKAUAE
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PART ONE: A MICRO LENS ON SYSTEMS CHANGE

Ngā karu - The eyes: The eyes represent the lens looking out from our Indigenous life world. Te Ruru (morepork) has sharp eyesight and hearing. A model of efficiency, Te Ruru hunts at night, taking a whole of systems view to what is happening on the land below. With their perceptive eyes, Te Ruru masters the ever-changing complexities of systems at the micro, meso, and macro levels. With a sharp eye for opportunities, Te Ruru skilfully directs strategic research activities for optimal outcomes.

Te Ngutu—The beak: While our values are constant, the ways in which we engage with the metaphysical and material worlds change as the knowledge, or research gathered, is translated. Te ngutu translates the research actions for different audiences between Indigenous and other realms. This is represented by the beak of Te Ruru, who calls “pō, pō, keo, keo.” The beak calls the team together, assigning roles and clarifying the mission. As a messenger between realms, Te Ruru engages with the visible and invisible energies (environment, human, spiritual, ancestral), both the seen and unseen systems. With its spiritual significance as a connector between the human and more-than-human realms, Te Ruru holds the power to protect, warn, and advise. The beak of Te Ruru represents the translation of our research findings—the myriad transformations and paths that messages must follow, as well as the varying shapes they must take, in order to inspire a groundswell of action and mobilise our stakeholders and partners to join us in effecting change.

TUI methodology: In the puku of Te Ruru are the tikanga of Whakauae, seen here as the spiral at the centre of Te Ruru, firmly fixed in the depths of tangible research practice and spirituality of Whakauae team members. The TUI methodology (explained in the article referenced on the first page of this booklet) is iterative, responsive, and adapts to the needs of our people, but the values of Whakauae remain fixed. In the systems change diagram, the values of Whakauae represent how we are led in our Kaupapa Māori research through the enduring foundation of our kawa, which were bestowed upon us by Ngāti Hauiti, rooted deeply in Papatūānuku. These values form around the body of the TUI methodology, which unfurls and emerges alongside the research, ensuring the consistency of our worldview and our values in how we engage with our whānau.



MICRO

LENS VIEW

Ngā Karu – the eyes

The eyes scan with their perceptive karu, mastering the ever-changing complexities of systems at the micro, meso, and macro levels. With a sharp eye for opportunities, Te Ruru skilfully directs strategic research activities for optimal outcomes.

Te Ngutu – the beak

The beak calls the team together assigning roles and clarifying the mission. Te ngutu o Te Ruru alerts us to the research actions we must take for different audiences between Indigenous and other realms, both the seen and unseen systems.

TUI – methodology

The TUI methodology unfurls from its embedded place in the puku (the belly) of the research process. TUI emerges and evolves in tandem with the core tikanga (values) of Whakauae that define 'how we work—how we do Kaupapa Māori research'.

TE RURU
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FRAMEWORK

Haunora Tangata
Manaaki Tangata
Mātauranga
Rangatiratanga
Ngākau Tapatahi Aurere

PART TWO: A MESO LENS ON SYSTEMS CHANGE

Ngā Pākau - The wings: The powerful wings of Te Ruru propel stakeholders and the six conditions for systems change into efficient collaborative action. Because of its short, wide wings, Te Ruru is highly tuned and tightly calibrated, able to manoeuvre through the varied landscapes and forests of systemic conditions. Its flying feathers have serrated or comb-like edges that decrease air turbulence over the wing and allow the bird to fly silently. The wings of Te Ruru illustrate how we are able to create systems change by strategically re-aligning the six conditions of systems change (below).

Maikuku - The claws: The claws or feet of Te Ruru stretch outward to represent what our Kaupapa Māori research does on the ground. Our collective power in movement building and reshaping with knowledge brokers, participants, and system levers takes a highly coordinated approach to unlocking and applying Māori expertise in complex contemporary environments. This gives us an opportunity to tutū - to play, test. Not only do we carry the voice of our whānau with care, as part of our core work in systems change, we disrupt the status quo and rebuild and restore systems, led by our whānau needs.



MESO

LENS VIEW

Ngā Pākau – the wings

The powerful wings of Te Rūru propel stakeholders and the six conditions for systems change into efficient collaborative action. The wings are highly tuned and tightly calibrated, able to manoeuvre through the varied landscapes and forests of systemic conditions which include Policies · Practices · Resource Flows · Relationships and Connections · Power Dynamics · Mental Models (or Mindsets).

Maikuku – the claws

The claws of Te Rūru represent the clawing and seizing of opportunities for movement building. The hunting of opportunities involves the extraction of predators which disrupts and reshapes the forest floor (systems), ultimately healing the ecosystem.



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PART THREE – A MACRO LENS ON SYSTEMS CHANGE

New mātauranga: In tune with our environments, we are able to orient our aspirations and new narratives within the stars and expand our new mātauranga optimistically outwards. For our solutions to take root and flourish, the system needs deliberate calibration to effect meaningful and sustainable change. The calibration aims to change the status quo by modifying a specific system's structure or function through deliberate interventions. By modifying the fundamental components and enabling processes that cause the system to function in a specific manner, systems change seeks to achieve long-term transformation. For new mātauranga to flourish, part of this process involves looking inwards to the micro and meso worlds where trauma has often been overlooked and neglected, requiring healing, a process we coin 'haumanutanga' (restoration).

Ngāngara (the things that hold us back): Te Ruru is a nocturnal hunter who preys on insects, small animals, and birds, including introduced species. In fact, Te Ruru is one of the few native species that has adapted well to the introduction of species (mice, stoats) that it preys on, cleaning the forest floor of these pests. The 'ngāngara' in the claws of Te Ruru symbolise the trauma, barriers, and doubts that prevent us from truly flourishing. Depicted here as taniwha (spirit) or ngāngara (dragons/insects), this imagery reminds us that there are internal, personal battles that, as colonised peoples, we must contend with and overcome—victimhood, self-sabotage, trauma, jealousy, frustration. Born from colonial trauma (disconnection from land, language, culture, and family) and survival tactics, this third section is often the 'unseen' or as yet unspoken step in systems change. Even with the system stakeholders' help, additional support and space in the process is required for Māori to remedy habits, patterns, and behaviours that constrict the flourishing of long-term change. While we rebuild, reshape, and coordinate systems change, concurrently we must heal, take space, and restore hauora in this wider realm to ensure the changing systems can be sustained and Māori are resourced with the capacities and capabilities required to lead that change.



MACRO

LENS VIEW

New mātauranga

With the micro and meso levels coordinated, a macro perspective grants a holistic view of the system, and we can set ambitious aspirations within the stars. This inclusive approach, expanding knowledge outward with our whānau, forms the foundation for transformative systems change, fostering optimism and shared narratives.

Ngāngara

Ngāngara are the hidden insects beneath the surface—the unseen obstacles to intergenerational sustainable change. Urgent action and healing are essential for addressing issues such as pain, structural racism, cultural alienation, land displacement, disconnection, and trauma.

Without this healing, the sustainability and flourishing of the new mātauranga within the macro perspective are at risk.

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