

Sustainability in Te Reo Māori: Central Concepts

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This is one Pakeha person's attempt to handle Māori kupu with care and share these with others: a little from my basket, a little from your basket; nāku te rourou, nāu te rourou. Let's grow in confidence in using Te Reo.

Te Reo works from core building blocks and adds layers of meaning. Two that are central to our relationship with the natural world are **ao** and **ora**.

Ao - the world

Ao mārama – the world of light

Taiao – the natural world

Ora – life

Hauora – wellbeing

Aroha – love (*'aro-hA!* breath of life)

Tehei mauri ora!

Papatūānuku (Papa) – Earth mother

Ranginui (Rangi) – Sky father

whenua – land ... and also placenta

awa – river

moana – ocean

maunga – mountain

roto – lake

ngahere - forest

Mauri-ora – life-force

“All animate and other forms of life such as plants and trees owe their continued existence and health to mauri. When the mauri is strong, fauna and flora flourish. When it is depleted and weak those forms of life become sickly and weak.”¹

Whakapapa – genealogy

“Everything in the universe, inanimate and animate, has its own whakapapa, and all things are ultimately linked via the gods to Rangi and Papa. There is no distinction or break in this cosmogony, in the whakapapa between supernatural and natural. Both are part of a unified whole. The bond this creates between humans and the rest of the physical world is both immutable and unseverable.”²

Tiaki – to care

Kaitiaki – caretaker, guardian (*may be human or non-human*)

Kaitiakitanga – stewardship, conservation

“*Tiaki* means ‘to guard’ but also can mean, ‘to keep, to preserve, to conserve, to foster, to protect, to shelter, to keep watch over’ (Marsden, 2003). *Kai* signifies the agent of the act, so a *kaitiaki* is understood to mean, ‘a guardian, keeper, preserver, conservator ... protector’. The suffix *tanga* ‘transforms the term to mean guardianship, preservation, conservation, fostering, protecting [and] sheltering’.”³

It is different than the western understand of ‘resource management’.

“A Maori conservation ethic is based on a kin-centric world view, i.e., in which humans and nature are not separate entities but related parts of a unified whole.”⁴

¹ Chanel Phillips, “Mahinga kai - He tāngata. Mahinga kaitiaki - He mauri.” Thesis, Master of Physical Education, University of Otago (2015), 53.

² Mere Roberts, Waerete Norman, Nganeko Minhinnick, Del Wihongi and Carmen Kirkwood, “Kaitiakitanga: Maori perspectives on conservation.” *Pacific Conservation Biology*, vol.2, no.1 (1995): 7–20, 10.

³ Phillips, 73.

⁴ Roberts, 16.

