



Hinonga Kōkiri Summary Analysis Māori in the Services Sector

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Hinonga Kōkiri summary analysis:

Māori in the services sector

This is a summary of the findings from 10 regional hui with representatives from iwi, community organisations, business, education providers, local and central government in mid-2020 and interviews with representatives from two other iwi in mid 2021. While the latter groups had more time to consider the impact of COVID-19 on their sectors their responses do not differ from those collected in the earlier tranche.

Two whakataukī resonate with the findings from these hui and interviews.

- ▶ *He aha te mea nui to ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata* – What is the most important thing in the world? It is the people, the people, the people.
- ▶ *Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi* – With your food basket and my food basket the people will thrive.

Impact of COVID-19

As Te Puni Kōkiri (2020) showed the industries most affected by COVID-19 include (amongst others) those in the service sectors such as accommodation and food services and retail in which Māori are over-represented.¹ However, what more recent statistics show is that Māori have seen the smallest increase in unemployment compared to other groups, given the “bounce back” that has occurred in these sectors (Robinson, 2021).² However, those working in the international tourism market, to which much of the Māori tourism market was geared, have been severely affected and as this short summary shows have had to hibernate and look at opportunities within the domestic market.

However, others are not convinced that the story for Māori employment is such a positive one given the divergence between those on Jobseeker Support and the demand for welfare services against the official statistics showing the decline in the Māori unemployment rate. Those on Jobseeker Support should decline as employment rises, but this is not the case. For example, in the South Island, “In 2020, the number of officially unemployed [Māori] fell by around 900 people. The number of people on the Jobseeker Support rose by nearly 2,500.”³

Job losses in regions

The hardest hit sector for Māori has been the international tourism market especially in the Rotorua region which has seen the larger organisations having to go into hibernation. This has had an impact on those working in the sector where there have been huge job losses.

I think if you take an extreme example in terms of the impact, you know, some of our businesses and I think about the Māori businesses, most of them would have had between 90 to 95 percent, the International Market, international manuhiri. The impact on Māori businesses in Rotorua has been catastrophic.

Whakarewarewa’s visitors prior to COVID were 93 percent international visitors. Of the four businesses which make up this group, only one remains open. So we only have ? two Te Puia from – Te Puia, Mitai, Tamaki and Whaka. A great number of staff have been laid off.

1 Te Puni Kōkiri. (2020). Data and analytics summary: economic impact of COVID-19 July 2020. Accessed October 11, 2021 at [Māori Employment – Impact of COVID-19, July 2020 \(tpk.govt.nz\)](#)

2 Robinson, F. (July 20, 2021). Māori employment resilient after COVID lockdowns. ANZ News. Accessed November 15, 2021 at <https://news.anz.com/new-zealand/posts/2021/07/Maori-employment-during-COVID>

3 Sense Partners (2021). Measuring Māori labour market intervention needs. Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu. Accessed November 15, 2021 at <https://teputahitanga.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Sense-Report-Two-Measuring-Ma%CC%84ori-labour-market-intervention-needs-Looking-beyond-HLFS.pdf>

Those left working in the sector are having to work across multiple roles or across different tourist venues. “You get to see the CEO delivering coffees, you see the marketing manager answering the phone, HR manager waitressing. So, I think at a real coalface level and it’s probably similar across a lot of the operators.” In terms of employing people in the futur, businesses will be interested in staff who can work across multiple roles.

... If I had someone on site that could take fantastic photos, great. That means I’m not having to outsource it to someone else. So the more well-rounded you can be. So people with Xero skills, people with Facebook, Instagram. ... people that can float across all of those different disciplines and add a hand, ... equals versatility, equals resilience.

Adaptation by businesses, iwi and whānau

While international manuhiri have dropped away, those who were working in the tourism market have had to adapt and offer the experiences that interest the domestic market.

It is sad reality that they have been so focused on storytelling to the international market that they haven’t focused on the domestic market. ... I think you’d be surprised and you’d probably back this up as to how many Kiwis have never ever stepped foot on a marae. Never ever, you know, had the opportunity to have a hangi or understand the protocols. In fact, you probably find the international market understand it better than our Kiwis?

Examples of adaptations were described at the hui. One tourism operator retrained guides to tell stories about their families rather than focus on myths and legends. Another has built stories about the carvings into their tourism offerings. Another iwi representative talked about the importance of getting the right stories out there, “As Māori we need to get better at telling our stories, especially if we want the right story to be told.” Another has hired a kaumātua to deliver full immersion tours as there has been demands for te reo from domestic tourists. And another talked about the need for correct pronunciation of te reo given that domestic tourists pick this up.

It’s particularly bad in the South Island where they are perhaps not as good at correct pronunciation of te reo. (Anecdotally.) Some businesses have found they have got more complaints about that, and are looking for more resources to develop their capability.

Opportunities to think about tourism have arisen in regions where it has not previously been considered. Here too the focus is on the domestic market which wants a more authentic Māori experience.

We’ve got [X] marae, which is a national treasure, ... Yeah. So, we haven’t really done a lot about tourism, have we? But because of COVID, we think this is probably the opportunity to start looking at how to pick that up. Yeah. ... We would like to set up a marae heritage trail.

New Zealand Māori Tourism has supported operators through the impact of COVID-19. As an organisation it has provided support and resources to help them navigate their way through, for example, alert level requirements and the vaccine rollout. It has also acted as a lobby group to government and had a considerable role to play in the funding (\$20.2 million) secured for the Strategic Tourism Assets Protection Programme that was established to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on Regional Tourism Operators (RTOs).

From a tourism perspective there is also interest in developing ecotourism. However, smaller regions are being held back by the lack of facilities and accommodation in their regions. In these smaller areas there are hints of resentment by locals in more isolated places where the increase in domestic tourism has created competition or inconvenience for the scarce resources – for example, the town with one supermarket.

While the services sector has been hard hit by COVID-19 some interviewees talked about the adaptability of whānau and the capability (transferable skills such as communication) they had to move into other roles with a desire to move back to the services sector once business is re-established.

... [they] have been quite good at redeploying themselves, they didn't require much support from the team ... It was as simple as referring them on to opportunities that sat traditionally well outside of their chosen pathway but because they have so many transferable skills they quite easily slotted into other roles.

COVID has given people more opportunity to do career changes. Government funding has been driver for a lot of our iwi members to upskill ... It's been an opportunity more than a hindrance.

Responses by iwi organisations

Collaboration is key

Central to the responses to COVID-19 by iwi has been the focus on collaboration and working from a whole of community perspective. *"If you remove the economy and go back to kai, water, looking after each other, go back to basics – everyone shone, chipped in, it was beautiful."* This has seen iwi finding out about the needs of whānau and businesses and providing solutions to support this. Examples include:

- ▶ Making contact with 400 local businesses, including SMEs, to find out the support they needed in relation to IT and training, and supporting them to think about transferring to some sort of e-commerce where this was possible
- ▶ A Post-Settlement Governance Entity (PSGE) working with an IT company to build online platforms for 99 businesses in the town so they could conduct business during lockdown and in the future and developing a recovery strategy for businesses
- ▶ Supporting businesses to apply for the wage subsidy
- ▶ Supporting whānau with kai and tamariki and rangatahi with their learning.

Getting up to speed with technology

A challenge for many has been digital technology given the limited connectivity or the newness of it in the smaller and more isolated regions. In some regions iwi organisations have had a key role during COVID-19 in supporting businesses to become more digitally prepared. This leaves these businesses, particularly the SMEs, better placed than they were prior to 2020.

Building skills to support rohe pōtae and whānau

The focus for iwi is on the people and their region rather than the skills required for particular sectors therefore this section, apart from for tourism, describes skills in a general sense rather than a sector sense.

For Māori tourism there is a need for skills related to experiences wanted by the domestic market. This includes knowledge of iwi stories, the ability to tell stories, along with te reo to do this. There is also a call for transferable skills, and practical skills that support people into and while in employment.

Of note also is the need to build the confidence of younger age groups – giving them public speaking and story-telling practice. They already have customer services skills developed at kura and on the marae but are too shy or embarrassed to use these in unfamiliar situations, *“It is whakamā, but it comes from a different place. It’s ‘I’ve never been in this position. I don’t know how to react. No one’s told me how to react’ ...”* In addition, there is a need for digital skills – these support those in work, those looking to enter work, and those in the community for whom interaction through technology is becoming a necessity in the COVID-19 environment.

How to build skills

Those at the hui and the interviewees were clear that their preference was for learning that was workplace-based or marae-based. However, there were also examples where collaboration with regional subsidiaries of Te Pūkenga was also working when these organisations worked in a partnership way and took training into businesses. Training also needs to be provided in their rohe given concerns rangatahi have about leaving their home base for learning. There is a preference for training to be face-to-face, but examples were also provided of online training that have been successful and led on to further training.⁴

Workplace-based means the opportunity to earn while learning which is important for whānau. Trades training through provider-based training was also considered to be really important. In Northland those at the hui thought the trades training programme was succeeding because of the connections to industry and collaboration with employers. They would like to see what is delivered in these programmes widen to include a broader range of roles rather than just the traditional apprenticeships.

Marae are often undervalued and under utilised as formal training spaces. Here learning happens through ‘doing’ in a comfortable, cooperative and collaborative space and rangatahi don’t realise the skills they are developing because they are not happening in the structured way of the classroom. *“Working with the auntie then there would be more trust.”* Learning in this way also incorporates a more holistic approach that better supports the learner. Along with this is the need to recognise that the skills learnt on the marae are transferable.

It’s not changing the hospitality industry into marae tikanga, and not changing marae tikanga into ‘hospitality,’ but making that connection, so people understand that what they do on the marae is a form of hospitality. Don’t change either, but build the association – change the perception. Make people understand the skills and the connections there.

⁴ There is the opportunity to learn from the delivery model of a project conducted by the Primary ITO and Ako Aotearoa, Tū te Ngana Hau – the Breath of Endeavour, where learning was taken to Māori communities on the Whanganui River who “wanted sustainable futures for their hapū” and want people to be able to live and work along the awa. See <https://educationcentral.co.nz/breath-of-endeavour-project-for-maori-along-the-whanganui-river/>

Systemic challenges for iwi

Upskilling for employment in all sectors is not as simple as the provision of training to whānau. Those at the hui and the interviews talked about wider systemic issues that impact on the ability to grow business, to train and where to train. An issue for those in the provincial regions is the lack of housing to accommodate iwi, “*There’s not enough for locals, let alone tourists.*” This is compounded where motels are used for emergency housing. To accommodate people returning home and to build new business ventures some iwi are providing their own solutions and purchasing land for housing, “*Even though it is not iwi responsibility to solve the housing crisis.*”

A second challenge for those in more remote regions is digital connectivity. This impacted on tamariki and rangatahi learning during lockdowns, impacts on the future of any online learning and on the wider ability of whānau to participate in wider life and access government services. It also impacts on businesses who have connectivity issues.

... in Northland there are a lot of areas with connectivity issues. This posed an issue for [our organisation] but also kids at school – they couldn’t access the school curriculum because there was no connectivity ... businesses had connectivity issues.

Another challenge pointed out by an interviewee was racism faced by iwi members. This is seen in workplaces and an organisation in one iwi is looking to address this through working with members to develop their resilience, but also acknowledges that work needs to be done with employers. Note this thinking aligns with comments from others about the need for cultural competence within workplaces.

Opportunities for the future

Returning to the whakatauki at the beginning of this section, putting people at the centre and taking collaborative approaches are central to iwi ways of working. This is the thinking that needs to be taken into the future along with being mindful about the content of qualifications, and where and how training and education are delivered. Responses during COVID-19 can be built from, especially in relation to tourism, but there is also opportunity to work closely with iwi and allow for self-determination and direction setting.

Māori and Pasifika should have a lot of input and we should be deciding what’s best for us!... [We’re] impatient [with others] doing it to iwi and local communities.



ServiceIQ.org.nz
Level 14, Plimmer Towers
2-6 Gilmer Terrace, Wellington 6011
PO Box 25522, Wellington 6140

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