

Balancing Indigenous Self-determination and economic growth: A Whakatōhea Case Study

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The author of this presentation is Georgia McLellan, who has tribal affiliations to Whakatōhea in Ōpōtiki and Ngai Te Rangi in Tauranga. This presentation is based on some of the main ideas from her Master's thesis, where she travelled to Ōpōtiki and interviewed several members of Whakatōhea who are involved in Whakatōhea's marine economy.

Indigenous economic actors around the world such as Iwi (Tribe) Trust Boards and Indigenous owned organisations are dealing with the challenge of balancing Indigenous self-determination and economic growth. Whakatōhea, from the Eastern Bay of Plenty in New Zealand, are one Iwi that is dealing with this challenge through their open ocean green-lipped mussel farm venture. Whakatōhea's pre-colonial economy was disassembled through colonisation where they experienced a significant loss of food sovereignty. Their economy transitioned from a resource-rich diverse economy to one dominated by capitalist markets. Whakatōhea are now working to re-assemble a contemporary economy centred on their recently established mussel farm venture.

The Whakatōhea Māori Trust Board have invested in a space for a mussel farm in the Whakatōhea rohe moana (territorial sea space). They have also invested in a mussel farm business called Whakatōhea Mussels Ōpōtiki Limited which operates in the marine farm space. Whakatōhea Mussels Ōpōtiki Limited is currently shifting towards producing value-add mussel products such as mussel powder and mussel oil for sale through capitalist markets, at a time when hapū and whānau are looking to kaimoana (seafood) to restore food sovereignty and self-determination through customary forms of economy.

This presentation titled *Balancing Indigenous Self-determination and economic growth: A Whakatōhea Case Study* explores the making of this emerging mussel farm economy and points to some of the challenges involved in creating economic growth and Māori self-determination. The Whakatōhea Māori Trust Board faces the difficult task of trying to find a balance between their financial, environmental, social and cultural responsibilities while trying to spur Iwi development. There is demand among some Whakatōhea Iwi members for Whakatōhea Māori Trust Board to be more involved in diverse economic practices and, thus a different form of Iwi development that focuses on improving self-determination for the people of Whakatōhea rather than profit maximisation and Iwi economic development. This presentation argues for the potential of diverse economic initiatives such as Iwi run food gathering and growing initiatives and environmental management

initiatives to reclaim and foster Indigenous self-determination in modern-day Indigenous economies. This Whakatōhea case study highlights some important considerations for other Indigenous communities seeking economic growth and self-determination.

Biography of presenting author

Georgia McLellan

Georgia identifies as a pākehā Māori woman who whakapapas back to Whakatōhea and Ngai Te Rangī. Georgia is a social science researcher who is interested in Māori economies, Māori self-determination and food geographies. She completed her master's degree on Māori economies and Māori food sovereignty at the University of Auckland in 2019 and is about to start a Doctoral thesis at the University of Auckland supervised by Dr. Emma Sharp and Dr. Nicolas Lewis. Through her Doctoral thesis Georgia intends to explore how novel Māori food economies are being made.