



Climate change  
and you

## MODULE 3

# TE AO MĀORI AND CLIMATE CHANGE

For SMEs looking to achieve long-term sustainability through climate adaptation planning, it's important to understand how climate change is perceived by te ao Māori (the Māori worldview). This module introduces key principles and values that are held by many Māori, including those in business or self-employment.

### Te Tironga Māori – a cultural vantage point

Māori, like other indigenous cultures, have a rich history of adapting to environmental changes. Recognising these traditions is essential in the context of climate adaptation planning.

There are also some aspects of climate change that could affect Māori differently, whether through connections to land and taiao or the types of work in which Māori lead or are employed within, such as primary industries or construction. Some of these risks are explored more fully in [He huringa ā huarangi he huringa ao: a changing climate, a changing world](#).

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### Mātauranga Māori – traditional Māori knowledge

Mātauranga Māori offers valuable insights into understanding and responding to climate change. This knowledge has been passed down through generations and includes observations of environmental changes and patterns.

Historically, Māori have observed and recorded natural signs that indicate changes in the environment. These signs are seen in the behaviours of plants, animals and weather patterns. For example, the timing of certain bird migrations or the flowering of specific plants has long been used to predict seasonal changes. These observations align with contemporary scientific findings, providing a holistic understanding of climate change.

Mātauranga often emphasises the interconnectedness of all living things and the importance of caring for all that occupy the environment. For example, sustainability of resources is central to Māori values and principles and will likely guide Māori-owned businesses. When it comes to business longevity, the protection and preservation of te taiao (the natural environment) is prioritised over short-term gain.

### What we could learn from te ao Māori

**Ko te amorangi ki mua, ko te hāpai ō  
ki mua**

#### The leader at the front and the workers behind the scenes

This whakataukī recognises the importance of planning and preparation. Specific reference is made to the need to have the 'behind the scenes' in order, for the front to go well. Business values often reflect your own personal and cultural values. The business values that your SME adopts will help determine the direction that is taken, how decisions are prioritised and what may be considered appropriate and important.



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## Mātāpono (Principles)

| Principle                                                                                  | Consideration                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Taurite</b><br>(balance)                                                                | Maintaining balance in all our transactions as SME owners is important. Ensuring that our business practices are taking into account how we may impact the environment is a key consideration. Balance can also refer to ensuring that your business plans and the associated decisions that you make are in balance with regard to achieving a sustainable supply of services, product and/or clientele.                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Utu</b><br>(reciprocity, payment and repayment)                                         | The extent to which your business 'gives back' to the environment and the communities you serve through your business endeavours are key considerations. Reciprocity as a value acknowledges that we have a responsibility to ensure that our environment is kept healthy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Whanaungatanga</b><br>(relationships and the act of establishing relationships)         | This principle acknowledges that the relationships we as a business owners form with whānau, family, community members and customers is critical to business success. In terms of adaptation, the capacity of your own business network to access support, information, skills, future networks and capability is pivotal to business success measures.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Manaakitanga</b><br>(the act of generosity, care, support or hospitality)               | In line with international trends, the capacity for your business to build forms of care for others (including the environment) into your practises is often considered by the marketplace. For example, the use of environmentally friendly products, opting for packaging that is biodegradable, adopting energy saving mechanisms, sponsoring and supporting environmental activities, shifting goods in ways that reduces your businesses carbon footprint, reducing the amount of flying that you do, and promoting options that support carbon reduction all demonstrate an attempt to reduce environmental impact. |
| <b>Whakapapa</b><br>(genealogy, connections)                                               | This concept refers to genealogical connections. For Māori, these un-broken genealogical links with te taiao begin with origin stories of Ranginui (Sky Father) and Papatūānuku (Mother Earth). For business owners, your business will also have a genealogy that is interconnected to the market and to the network of customers and business support you have secured. Ensuring that your whakapapa connections are strengthened and always kept 'warm' is central to your success as a SME.                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Mauri</b><br>(essence of life, the essential quality and vitality of a being or entity) | Mauri is the impression we leave behind as a result of our interactions and intentions. Mauri (our life essence) influences all of those we make contact with, giving others an impression of us as owners, our staff and more generally our business. Consider how you would like your mauri described by others so that you are able to be its best representative.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Mana</b><br>(authority, prestige, influence, status)                                    | The health of our respective and collective mana is cumulative in nature. Through the business timeline we are either enhancing and/or detracting both our personal and business mana. When our personal and business mana is intact and in a healthy state this tends to be reflected in our business transactions. Equally, when one's mana is in a healthy state, this too is reflected outwardly. Climate adaptation planning alongside other business plans assists us in ensuring that our personal and business mana is reflected positively in all our dealings.                                                  |

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These Māori principles illustrate the importance of the environment as related to business practises. They can be used as a template to reflect on climate adaptation planning, and the role your own SME plays more broadly.

This approach is aligned with a global trend whereby sustainable environmental and socially responsible business practises are not only more intentionally adopted and applied, but also used to attract customers. When you create a climate adaptation plan, you have the opportunity to reassess how your business values align with sustainable business practices and mātāpono.

## Find out more

| I want more information on ...                                                                          | Resource                                                                                  | Pages |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| How Māori (nationwide) will be affected by a changing climate                                           | <a href="#">He huringa ā huarangi he huringa ao: a changing climate, a changing world</a> | All   |
| How Māori businesses in Tāmaki Makaurau will be affected by a changing climate                          | <a href="#">Tāmaki Makaurau Economic Climate Change Risk Assessment</a>                   | All   |
| How New Zealand's first national adaptation plan will help Māori adapt to the effects of climate change | <a href="#">Climate action for Māori: The national adaptation plan</a>                    | All   |



# References

Manaaki Whenua (2021). He huringa ā huarangi he huringa ao: a changing climate, a changing world:  
[landcareresearch.co.nz/assets/researchpubs/He-huringa-ahuarangi-he-huringa-ao-a-changing-climate-a-changing-world.pdf](https://landcareresearch.co.nz/assets/researchpubs/He-huringa-ahuarangi-he-huringa-ao-a-changing-climate-a-changing-world.pdf)

Ministry for Environment (2021). A Guide to Local Climate Change Risk Assessments:  
[environment.govt.nz/publications/a-guide-to-local-climate-change-risk-assessments](https://environment.govt.nz/publications/a-guide-to-local-climate-change-risk-assessments)

Ministry for the Environment (2022). Climate action for Māori: The national adaptation plan:  
[environment.govt.nz/publications/climate-action-for-maori-the-national-adaptation-plan](https://environment.govt.nz/publications/climate-action-for-maori-the-national-adaptation-plan)

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[knowledgeauckland.org.nz/publications/tamaki-makaurau-economic-climate-change-risk-assessment](https://knowledgeauckland.org.nz/publications/tamaki-makaurau-economic-climate-change-risk-assessment)