



# **Environment, Social and Governance (ESG)**

Creating ESG Career Pathways for  
Graduates from Māori Schools (Kura)

**Dr Ihirangi Heke**

**ATUA MATUA**

A support document for the exploration of the role of Atua Matua in curriculum development,  
graduate pathways and future of ESG in the New Zealand economy



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**05**

He Timatanga - Introduction

**09**

The Future - Indigenous ESG Programmes

**13**

Atua Matua and ESG

**16**

ESG Explained

**20**

Atua Matua ESG Examples

**25**

Kaitiakitanga

**27**

PWC and ESG

**29**

Kura Graduates

**33**

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Atua Matua Framework

Appendix 2 - Atua Matua Conceptual Diagram

Appendix 3 - Atua Matua Taumata

Appendix 4 - Atua Matua Table

# CONTENTS

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Integrated Hauora Initiatives Limited would like to acknowledge the following people for their valuable contributions to this report. Ngā mihi maioha ki a koutou hika ma, mā koutou tautoko manaaki ki te ara tika o tēnā o tēnā. Whaia!

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# HE TIMATANGA



## INTRODUCTION

Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) has been receiving a lot of global attention recently as not only are businesses rushing to form their ESG strategies to avoid sales losses but whole countries are realising their obligation to global environmental sustainability through creating legislation that requires ESG alignment. Global society has seen large multinational companies brought to their knees because of unsustainable business practices that are no longer accepted by consumers. We need only look to the use of underpaid labour by the sport shoe giant, Nike, where their products were boycotted because the company did not attend to or protect the needs of its' factory workers by having essentially slave labour circumstances. Another example was the backlash against Exxon oil for the environmental disaster they caused through human error that has caused ongoing loss of market share well in excess of over two decades. In the Exxon example, damage to the environment also equated with damage to shareholder dividends, however we are now entering an age where shareholder primacy is no longer an acceptable motivation among businesses or as standard practice regardless of which country has accepted or promoted it in the past.

Likewise we are seeing global mobilisation of export and import requirements that align to ESG parameters resulting in a competitive market edge for those countries that have made ESG a legal requirement choosing to import / export to those countries that are practicing ESG. More specifically, where some countries are being slow to legislate for transparent ESG alignment, on a global scale they run the risk of decreasing national GDP due to countries being unwilling to trade. In effect, ESG has caused a significant shift away from shareholder primacy to multiple bottom line obligations that include, environmentally sustainable practices, workplace equity and governance practices that recognise obligations to a wider range of responsibilities. In fact, the global move toward ESG is witnessing the largest mobilisation of fiscal support than has been previously seen because the business sector, albeit slowly, have recognised that their fiscal gain is more closely related to the three areas of ESG than they had previously understood i.e., no planet = no profit.

Although ESG is a relatively new term in the mainstream business sector, they are not new concepts to indigenous people globally.

This is because an interdependency between humans and the environment is one that has been practiced as a collective priority by native peoples for over a millennia. For example, mostly unknown and misunderstood is the fact that upward of 50% of the national Gross Domestic Product of any country is dependent on the environment as can be seen by investment to understand aspects such as global pollination. Even bird migrations that help disperse seeds are being reviewed because the timing of their arrival is changing due to global warming which consequently is affecting when seedlings are likely to grow and for how long. Some of the environments that need to be understood more implicitly to improve sustainable practices include; the biosphere (where anything living is based), the atmosphere (anything above the planet), the hydrosphere (anything living in water) and the Lithosphere (anything living in the earths' crust e.g., soil biomes).

Not surprisingly and as possibly a knee jerk reaction to the hyper capitalist ideals of a post-Trumpian United States, even the largest capitalist society in the world is looking for alternative approaches to neo-liberal thinking that has led to the damage of the planet at a rate much faster than anyone had anticipated. This is further supported by the concept that the world is now in the epoch of the Anthropocene where for the first time in the history of the planet, a species (humans) have changed the very climate of the earth due to essentially capitalist practices. Wade Davis, the renowned Canadian anthropologist recently pointed out that the planet has progressed through a millennia of dominant cultures that included ancient Egypt through the British Empire to end in US capitalist collapse.



*The world appears to be in a transition toward no longer being ready to accept damage to the planet in order to align to a dominant consumer hegemony. Ironically, the answer or replacement to unsustainable economic practices may lie among indigenous groups that have practiced collectively sustainable processes for centuries. Furthermore, the opportunity to prepare for an inevitable demand for indigenous contribution lies within indigenous communities.*

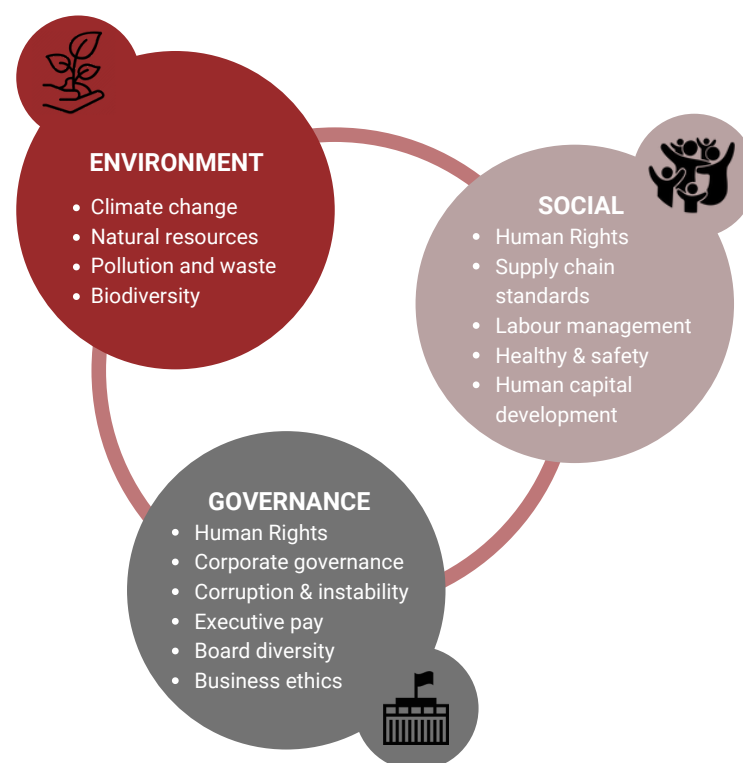


Furthermore, while only many of the largest firms seem able to build impactful statements about their contributions to sustainability, worker retention and appropriate board practices, corporate boards of small to medium businesses are left floundering with not enough profit to invest in an ESG programme but mounting consumer pressure to do so. One example has been the rise and rise of B Corp. B Corp assess companies for their contributions to ESG tenets with regular, sometimes annual, reviews to track improvements in performance. However, the trend in some countries where B Corp are represented is that whole aisles in some shopping centres are stocked with recognised B Corp products resulting in consumers preferring to only purchase from B Corp accredited lanes. The pressure this has put on the sector to align to ESG through accreditation from B Corp has made it difficult for some small and medium (SMEs) businesses to invest in ESG but with full recognition of not only the contribution to the environment but also the potential for increased sales.

It would, however, seem inevitable that the saturation of import / export goods with ESG requirements may only be a matter of time and a reflection of a change in consumer behaviour. Likewise, consumer behaviour is being deeply affected by younger generations who are concerned about receiving a planet in a dilapidated state and choosing to put pressure on older generations to take steps now so that their future might be better ensured.

In summary, we are now seeing financial institutes of a large number of countries choosing to provide business loans to companies seeking to build their ESG practices. Why this is critical information is that where loans are being provided we will quickly see the broadening of the evaluation requirements for ESG so that banks can better determine the likelihood of return on their investment.

More particularly, where companies can show that they are practicing ESG principles effectively, the higher the likelihood of their import and export capabilities and consequently improved profit margins. The cynical would say that some businesses are only engaging because they want to be 'seen' to be doing the right thing for the planet but that in reality they are losing market share. Others believe that ESG is one of many acronyms that will develop over the next several decades but that fundamentally environmental sustainability is the overarching principle regardless of the ESG acronym. Lastly, because of the recent negative reaction to consumerism, communities globally, are looking for an alternative to capitalism. This is where the pre-European collective, environmentally centred approach plays a large part. In large part it is also why more indigenous models of sustainability are attracting such large audiences.



**Diagram:** Illustrates a generic approach to ESG - Environment, Social and Governance as a concept.


*ESG means different things, but ultimately it calls on businesses to make their way of working more sustainable, equitable and inclusive of diverse perspectives. Atua Matua is a way for businesses to be inclusive of indigenous knowledge throughout their business.*

**Emi Kolawole**  
**Senior Lead Environmental Sustainability**  
**Google X**



# THE FUTURE

## INDIGENOUS ESG PROGRAMMES

Māori and indigenous peoples globally, are experiencing an unprecedented demand for their traditional ecological knowledge. As many nations come to the realisation that their practices are unsustainable, who better to turn to than those that were able to live in harmony with the environment for centuries prior to European arrival, first nations. What this means for the concept of ESG is that indigenous populations not only already have their own versions of ESG but that they have successfully practiced ESG and evaluated the process with successful outcomes i.e., they have survived despite a dominant white hegemony doing all it can to destroy it. If for no other reason, global populations cannot pursue the same capitalist model and expect a different outcome i.e., survival of the planet by using the current systems. Furthermore, the New Zealand government’s Ministry of Business, Innovation and Enterprise recently stated (June, 2021) that some of the best practitioners of ESG were Māori tribal entities suggesting a deeper understanding of Māori cultural practices may be required, but equally, the sharing of indigenous knowledge with other first nations, may also be important.

The development of the Atua Matua Framework (discussed later) is one such attempt. The Atua Matua Framework has been present in Māori schools for the last ten years and is now a dedicated intervention that will be in 70 Māori schools by the end of July 2022

The hopes and aspirations of Atua Matua is to not only improve the well-being of Māori school aged children but to develop a model of environmental sustainability that can be taught to other indigenous nations, and feasibly non-indigenous, by the graduates of these 70 schools.



The development of the Atua Matua Framework (discussed later) is one such attempt. The Atua Matua Framework has been present in Māori schools for the last ten years and is now a dedicated intervention that will be in 70 Māori schools by the end of July 2022. The hopes and aspirations of Atua Matua is to not only improve the well-being of Māori school aged children but to develop a model of environmental sustainability that can be taught to other indigenous nations, and feasibly non-indigenous, by the graduates of these 70 schools.

In fact, the last three years of training of Atua Matua in Māori schools has prepared the space for the arrival of kura graduates that will be able to fill a growing need for globally sustainable practices but more importantly, without having to change to a non-indigenous pedagogical practice in order to do so. More specifically, Māori graduates of kura have hitherto been required to change to mainstream educational philosophy upon leaving kura to align to the dominant practices of New Zealand society and especially to pursue a career. An indigenous ESG model, essentially taught through Atua Matua, will allow kura graduates a career pathway that values indigenous ways of knowing.



**Image:** *Tapuwaekura facilitators in wānanga*

Like those small and medium sized (SMEs) businesses, indigenous goods and services providers are in a similar position of being in start-up phase or burgeoning businesses with little excess profit margin to reinvest in creating a popularised and marketable appearance based around sustainable practices. However, it may be that indigenous processes may not only already have the means to engage with ESG meaningfully but also contribute to other indigenous groups and SMEs alike. Certainly in New Zealand, due to government reparations for illegally obtained land by the Crown and an exceptional rate of economic growth in the tribal sector, Māori are quickly becoming players in the national economy.

With the advent of the importance of ESG, tribal authorities are well positioned to contribute back in to the financial sector through leadership in sustainable practices, workforce recruitment and governance practices that aim to appeal and provide benefits to more than just shareholders. This can also be seen by the increasing visibility of partners within the big four accounting firms actively recruiting Māori workforce development for their organisations. Ultimately though, this means that the demand for Māori graduates that can work in the environmental sustainability space, the business and economics space, the well-being space and the education space to prepare graduates, is growing at an exponential rate of expectation. Consequently, it will also require kura to begin to realise the contribution that interventions like Atua Matua will provide for career pathways over the next several decades.



“

*Environmental Sustainability is about 'doing the do'. That means going out in to the environment and experiencing it first hand. It also means taking kura out to experience it as well. The challenging part though is determining how we can sustainably continue to stay connected.*

**Dr Wayne Ngata**  
**Director Tapuwaekura**

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## WORKFORCE DEVELOPEMENT & CAREER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS FOR KURA GRADUATES

In terms of employment history we are seeing the numbers of short term contract workers (Gig workers) outstripping those that are choosing to stay in long term corporate positions. The role of the 'Gig' worker is increasing at such a fast pace because the employment sector have been forced to allow workers to work from home and to have short term contracts due to Covid. Another reason for more 'gig' workers is that people have learnt to work from home and they have realised they not only like it but they produce more work while having an improved family life. In addition, they've realised that they can change positions without having to suffer career pathway damage because employers are having to be more flexible in understanding that the employment sector has changed. Likewise the impact of Covid has meant that employers have had to increase their level of trust in their employees to work from home and at hours that suit them which has also meant that many companies are now at the whim of their employees. Probably the biggest effect on the sector though has been the working conditions that potential employees are requesting, have shifted significantly in favour of the worker with younger less skilled workers demanding higher wages and better conditions just to sign on.



What this means to Māori education facilities, and particularly to kura, is that national Māori education initiatives such Tapuwaekura (the main Atua Matua teaching platform) are able to produce ESG trained graduates without having to change their pedagogical platform in order to do so. More specifically, kura principles closely reflect the tenets of ESG in a way that operationalises the role of taiao (environment), tāngata (people) and kawanatanga (governorship) structure. Coincidentally, the recent Healthy Active Learning (HAL) initiative has also affirmed the purposes of ESG without specifically intending to do so by funding the Tapuwaekura. This is because the HAL initiative resulted in a kura-specific version being developed that has utilised a mātauranga Māori approach to healthy active learning i.e., Atua Matua embedded Tapuwaekura teaching platform. Essentially, because the students of the kura involved with HAL have been trained in mātauranga Māori approach to well-being, all of the concepts inherent in ESG have been taught over the last several years so that the graduates that are expected to exit kura next year will have three years of equivalent ESG training and modelling. Ultimately this means that kura graduates will be able to continue to train in Māori tertiary providers such as Te Wananga o Aotearoa but, they will also be able to transition into mainstream tertiary systems and develop their ESG capacity based on what they have previously learnt in kura through mātauranga Māori because they are almost identical concepts from both i.e., Mātauranga Māori and ESG.

**Image:** Tapuwaekura facilitators with tamariki from Te Kura o Te Muriwai

# ATUA MATUA & ESG

As mentioned in the previously, ESG closely resembles the main tenets of the Atua Matua framework, a mātauranga Māori process that was initially built to improve Māori well-being. The Atua Matua framework took the body of knowledge represented as mātauranga Māori and reproduced it in bite size chunks so that students, teachers, athletes, Māori communities, even non-Māori, might better digest, retain and reproduce the content in Māori preferred patterns. Ironically what Atua Matua has become is far more than it was initially intended to be i.e., an environmental sustainability programme as well as a well-being process. What this means to kura is that the last several years of training in Atua Matua have prepared kura graduates for a transition into the university environment without having to be limited to well-being careers alone, and, without having to learn a new system of mainstream knowledge transferral. This also means that kura graduates now have the potential for a pathway that emphasises environmental sustainability, population health, business sector or education roles all from the same singular concept of mātauranga Māori.



In essence, kura graduates have been developing a clearly defined portfolio of pre-established skills that have been afforded through a Mātauranga Māori and attendance in kura in general. Atua Matua and the Tapuwaekura process have built upon kura philosophy resulting in the retention of environmentally centred concepts for well-being and sustainability. This has occurred because the Atua Matua Framework has quickly morphed into a programme that produces multiple outputs. A common catchphrase of Atua Matua is that health has nothing to do with people but rather the environment that causes it. Immediately the role of the environment component in ESG crosses over in to Atua Matua because ESG gives hierarchical importance to the environment in much the same way that Atua Matua does. In addition, the structure of Atua Matua uses a systems approach that identifies the largest level of influence down to the smallest causal connection i.e., from environment to people.

More particularly, Atua Matua starts by identifying whether the environments of rangi, wai or whenua are dominant. This is followed by establishing a close connection to the environment in question. This process is commonly called tatai whakapapa but it is much more than listing family connections. Whakapapa, in terms of Atua Matua, is also something that is practised not named i.e., an action not a practice of writing names down. This means that Atua Matua creates connections to specific environments that can then be practised as a person centred outcome of the environment after first understanding the environment that caused it i.e., the 'Social' component of ESG.



The next phase of Atua Matua is the intended metaphor provided by each environment, that is, what are we supposed to know by engaging with a particular environment. Often this is left to chance in school based well-being interventions e.g., sports or military academies, however within the Atua Matua process, the intended learning is deliberately and consciously taught. The next phase is the process that is usually the starting point within mainstream interventions i.e., physical activity and nutrition changes to improve well-being outcomes. What Atua Matua does is provide a high level rationale prior to the physical activity and nutrition component that not only provides recruitment motivation but also helps sustain effort from the community or individual. The last phase is timing. What this means is that each intervention is aligned to specific environmental cues that determine the most likely time to achieve a successful outcome based on observed interactions occurring in the environment. Some of these timing considerations are based on star systems (Matariki), seasonal suggestions (Kaupeka), monthly changes (Maramataka) and lastly, Tohutaka or 3-4 day observations obtained from weather patterns, bird movements, tree reactions to weather, insect behaviour and fish migrations and departures.

In terms of ESG, Atua Matua is an identical process. Environment is represented by Atua. Social is represented by Matua and Governance is represented by decision making based on environmental sign reading i.e., Tohutaka. Tohutaka is a process that was developed to accompany Atua Matua concepts and as an alternative to Risk Assessment Method Statements (RAMS) and Safety Action Plans (SAPs). The necessity of Tohutaka is to provide an alternative process embedded in environmental knowledge rather than in risk. The reason Tohutaka was produced was because a large number of schools were and continue to exit outdoor education programmes because of the perceived risk and because school principals and board members can be held financially culpable for serious injury or death. Therefore a different system needed to be developed that removed risk as the basis for lack of engagement with the outdoors and replaced it with the pursuit of knowledge i.e., Mātauranga Māori. Tohutaka has been a very deliberate attempt to flip the concepts of risk so that access to environment can be increased and consequently well-being improved as a result of environmental knowledge and access. This body of knowledge is not only being taught into kura with the hope of removing RAMS and SAPs but to encourage kura to enter back into the many health enhancing activities that exist in the outdoors.





*The Atua Matua framework provides a unique opportunity to draw on Māori scientific knowledge to proactively protect the environment through the core Mātauranga principles of relation, reciprocation and protection. Applied in a regulatory sense, or in environmental management, Atua Matua offers a set of actions and decisions which draw on Māori environmental knowledge to promote better health and environmental outcomes for both Māori and non-Māori.*

*For Outward Bound, the Atua Matua framework enables us to interpret the environments we teach in with a more holistic understanding, leaning on Māori perspectives of nature to more deeply connect our students with the environment and broaden their relational context with the natural world. We know that this promotes pro-environmental and socially proactive actions in our students throughout their life, and contributes to a better Aotearoa where indigenous knowledge is protected by everyone.*

**Malindi Maclean**  
**CEO Outward Bound**



# ESG EXPLAINED

Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) operate as placeholders for ESG. Some prefer to see ESG as three central pillars to which other support pillars are arranged.



## ENVIRONMENT

Under the Environment pillar we see sub pillars which act as anchor points for things like; renewable fuels, green-house gases, carbon emissions, water management, energy use and emergency preparedness. Renewable fuel research might include something like a deep dive investigation into the potential of Hydrogen over fossil fuels or the combination of hydrogen fuel with electric powered cars. Likewise, green-house gases are also receiving much attention especially in terms of low carbon emissions. In fact there are companies evolving into carbon emission exclusive specialists i.e., how to move your company to a zero carbon emission footprint. Further sub pillars include identifying ways to use energy more efficiently with LED lighting and research into making sustainable batteries that last significantly longer.

Water management also comes under the microscope, literally, to determine not only more efficient ways to utilise UV lighting to remove bacteria but also how to ensure access to clean fresh water when global demand is increasing and over population is making it harder to produce clean water. Not surprisingly recycling is also being reviewed with some countries rewarding those who seek repairs and renewal of their pre-existing consumer goods rather than complete replacement e.g., sole replacement in shoes rather than getting a new pair when the sole is worn out. As mentioned earlier, the role climate change and consequent emergency preparedness, especially with increasing rates of extreme weather, have attracted more global funding than any other environmental event previously. That's a significant statement when we consider previous world wars and industrialisation of whole countries.



**SOCIAL**

Under the Social pillar there are a number of sub pillars some of which have been garnering public profile for all of the wrong reasons i.e., gender equity, health and safety, diversity. As of today June 12 2022, Google, one of the biggest data collection companies in the world, has agreed to repay \$118 million USD in unequal pay for women workers. Likewise health and safety continue to develop following catastrophic global events where employee conditions have caused the deaths of thousands of workers. No one can forget the Union Carbide disaster in 1984 that killed 15000 workers in order that several decades later, health and safety have now become paramount considerations. With the increasing profile of LGBTV rights the demand for diversity and acceptance of difference in working environments has also changed dramatically. Basic human rights and particularly working conditions that undermine the status of human rights have all been under serious review as what was accepted in pre ESG society has now become unacceptable. Such is the drive for multiple bottom line consideration that it has become more difficult for employers to retain their employees with benefits having to be more significant for workers to sign on. Likewise, the impact that industry is having on those who live in communities where industry is at work, are now being considered i.e., what is the effect of that industry on surrounding communities. Previously, industry was not required to regularly scrutinise their effect but now companies must be able to evaluate and address their impact on local living standards for all and not for the benefit of a few business owners.

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**GOVERNANCE**

Lastly, the pillar of Governance has come under severe restructuring so that, for example, skewed board fees are no longer accepted by the industry in principle and by the consumer in practice. This one area of shareholder rights has been reviewed to allow equality across all parts of a company so that shareholders no longer hold primacy over the many other areas that are causing multiple bottom lines to be considered. The employees have rights and these are expected to be protected by boards that are both diverse and working in the interest of the employees as well as the employer. What was an acceptable business practice in order to secure increasing profit margins year on year, regardless of the impact on the environment, human resources or competitive structures within the sector, has seen a restructuring of practicing standards and ethical requirements of boards both in the private and public sector.



Much like the health sectors demands for traceable evaluation outcomes regarding the success of immunisation brought about by covid, boards are under similar requirements to show objective information that highlights transparent process so that investors, shareholders, and affected community members can see why decisions have been made rather than just for shareholder fiscal gain. Two further areas under the Governance sub pillar are; stakeholder engagement and pay for performance. For example, in the medical fraternity, people are unwilling to accept medical intervention being done 'to them' any longer, rather preferring to be informed of every step and likely outcome before agreeing to go in to the surgery room. In fact in terms of well-being performance we are seeing the demand for payment only when an agreed outcome is achieved. Ultimately, this could mean that if proposed health outcomes are not achieved the health practitioner may not be paid. Many think this approach to health would certainly improve the quality of delivery but it would also align better to ESG prerogatives that demand increased equity between provider and recipient.





*I think when people interact with Atua they start to get a deeper understanding of what's going on around them. Things are not as simple as they might seem sometimes. It's the complexity that makes it interesting. When one Atua is present it influences another and another, like a chain reaction. It's like a waterbed. When you jump at one end, something pops up on the other end. The learning process is never ending. I see a bigger appreciation of the "simple" things by people who interact with totally new Atua, because there is more understanding. It also triggers people and gives them the confidence to explore and learn. I think this is because it is presented in a format that is not static but dynamic. The stories around Atua make them stick. I'm still not a 100% sure why but wananga seem highly spiritual and sometimes even emotional for a few. It's a real journey for people who are totally new to the concept because they get to visit inspiring places in the outdoors.*

*Likewise, when it comes to systems in our environment, they can be very complex. The moment you get a deeper understanding of the complexity you start to realise. how small actions affect the environment around us. This can be positive but sometimes negative too. I think because of the personification of the elements as Atua, there seems to be more of a realisation of the need to decrease our footprint and be a positive change for the environment. Not only for the sake of the environment but for people too .*

**Gyuri Varga**  
**Ultra Endurance Athlete**



# AM EXAMPLES

## ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL & GOVERNMENT

As mentioned earlier, Atua Matua was a framework that was deliberately designed to repurpose indigenous knowledge into contemporary contexts. More specifically, Atua Matua was an attempt to take mātauranga Māori and make it contextually relevant in contemporary society. Probably Atua Matua's single biggest aspiration was to help people realise the primacy that the environment fulfilled for Māori in the past and as one of many global indigenous nations practicing their ways today. Not surprisingly, Māori still practice environmentally based intervention on a daily basis by introducing ourselves as mountains and rivers with only a passing interest in the most recent iteration of those environments, that is, the person standing in front of you. Atua Matua was initially produced as an attempt to address the health and well-being outcomes Māori were achieving, even amongst other indigenous populations let alone compared to non-Māori New Zealanders. Then, Atua Matua began to realise its' potential as a process that allowed well-being to be addressed, and, allowed other applications to be engaged via Atua Matua. What this meant was as a review of the processes of Atua Matua were undertaken it quickly became about the process that Atua Matua allowed and not the content it produced.

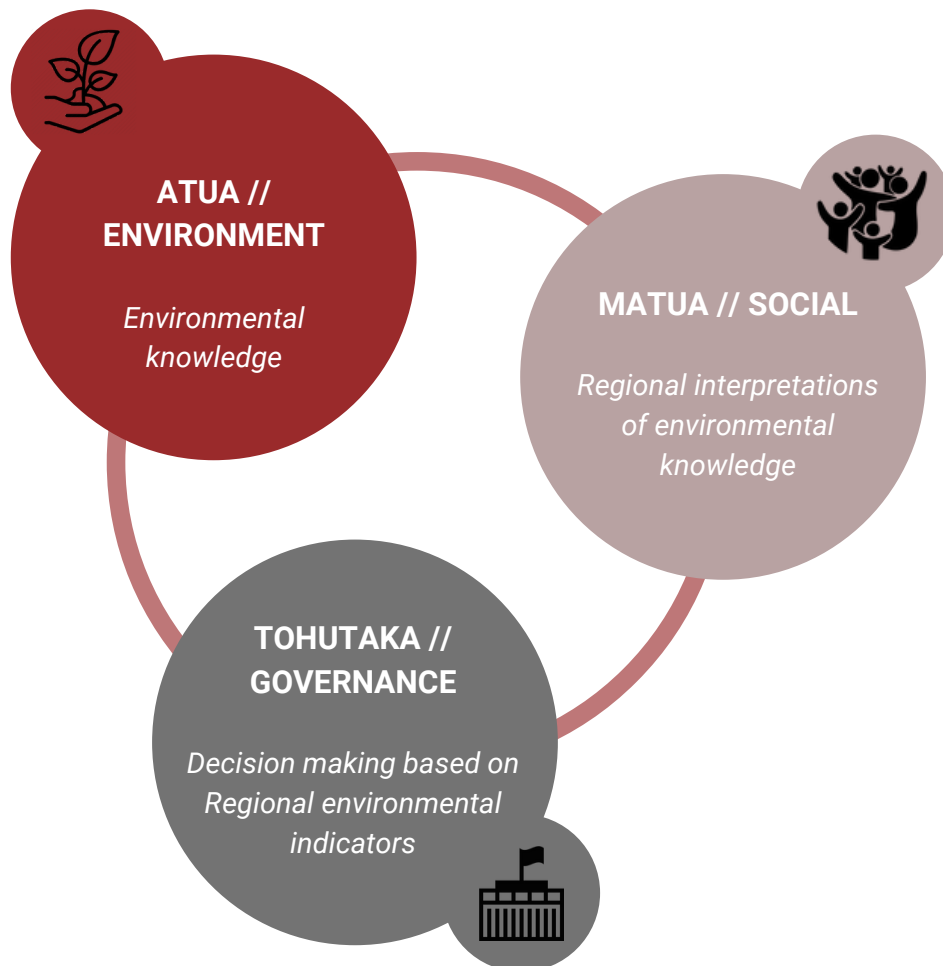


With a clear understanding of the capacity that Atua Matua thinking represented, environmental sustainability began to take precedence. It was also realised that Atua Matua closely resembled that of ESG, just as it was discovered that Atua Matua was also a pre-European model of Systems Dynamics. ESG is quickly becoming the next 'content' to be processed through an Atua Matua lens while utilising the concepts of Systems Dynamics. These next examples will show how Atua Matua provides two levels of ESG interpretation, that is, one that includes humans and one that doesn't. More particularly, Atua Matua has an ESG model that is environment centred and another that extends the process to include human reactions to the concepts obtained from the environment.



The first Atua Matua interpretation of ESG uses three levels of interpretation; Atua (Environment), Matua (Social) and Tohutaka (Governance). The dominant feature of this approach is that it is environmentally centred and not human centred. Considering a primary driver of capitalism is to make everything about humans, consumerism and showing others consumer success, moving from human centred to environment centred is a difficult step for most.

Consequently, the second version of Atua Matua ESG has an additional component that looks directly at the implications for humans. This approach is more complex in that there are twenty four sub levels with twelve that are environmentally centred and twelve that are human centred (see appendix of full Atua Matua framework). More specifically this latter version looks at the whakapapa (origin) of an environment, its' connection to other environments, the tikanga (lore) of that environment, the tohu (signs) of the environment and lastly the effect on humans.



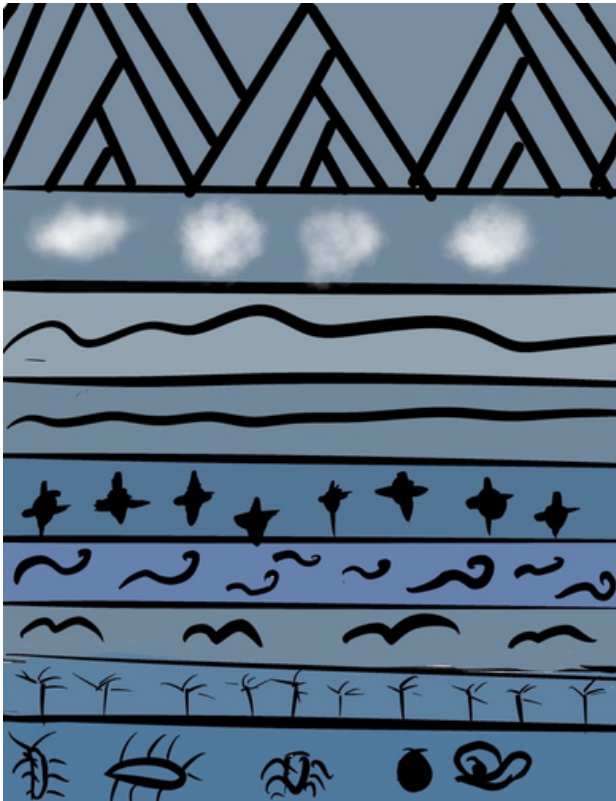
**Diagram:** Illustrates alignment between the Atua Matua framework and Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) definitions



*Atua Matua had a profound effect on me personally and professionally. Personally it changed how I undertook physical activity, being more engaged and immersed in the environment. Professionally it opened my eyes to different forms of capability building. I believe Atua Matua can change perspectives and the environment and our relationship with te taiao, building essential and diverse skills. Ultimately we get a whole extra level of meaningfulness that goes way beyond ticking a box. People want to be involved with Atua Matua because now they're engaged with the environment.*

**Andrew Leslie**  
**CEO Recreation Aotearoa**





As examples to show the overlap between Atua Matua, ESG, without human application, this version (sometimes known as an upper jaw version that discusses the esoteric), the first priority is to identify the particular Atua (environmental knowledge). This is then followed by identifying the Matua (regional interpretation) and lastly the Tohutaka (decision making process based on environmental signs) in relation to each of the ESG definitions. For example, an Atua Matua upper jaw approach to 'Energy Efficiency' would define the multiple atua of wind, rain, sun and some minerals. The matua peculiarities or regional versions of these atua would then be discussed e.g., Southerly winds near the bottom of the South Island of New Zealand vary significantly in impact relative to those in the top of the North Island. Lastly, the tohutaka would allow identification of the best times to obtain wind that can power turbin

All of the above information is gathered using an Atua Matua approach to data collection i.e., a preparation phase to seek data e.g., mountain run, ocean paddle, a reconnection to home base. This is followed by a triangulation of information that determines where it was written last (restricted to 1896 onward), who last spoke about it and what happens when the action is practiced. If the three areas align then a final phase of selecting an energy source to run the action is reviewed. This might mean physical engagement, psychological engagement or spiritual connection to a location.

Alternatively, a human-centred version or lower jaw / general version of Atua Matua would identify the relationships between a number of environments, determine the regional lore of each environment, identify the environmental signs and lastly understand the implications for people regarding each of the aforementioned concepts. For example, water management is often seen as a relationship between atua of rocks (Tuamatua) and atua of rivers (Parawhenuamea). Tuamatua provides shape, form and intent for Parawhenuamea to flow. Regional variations on the lore of rivers differ depending on the relationship e.g., in the central area of New Zealand we see large volume flow in the Waikato river but Uawa North of Gisborne uses the name 'Uawa' to define the role the river plays, i.e., the sustenance provided by the river. The signs obtained from the relationship of Tuamatua and Parawhenuamea can be a redirection of water or even the pushing up of water to form rapids. The final component is that unless you understand Tuamatua and Parawhenuamea you may drown in rapids either as a metaphor for understanding the relationship between water and rock to or as a skill development in order to swim or paddle in rapids. In essence, there are some 24 levels of interpretation provided through an a full Atua Matua schedule (see appendix).



*Ihi Heke combines outdoor experiences in nature with atua stories of nature to allow people to see our human relationship with the environments around us in a new and different way. It is a highly engaging and stimulating experience for participants. While they grapple with the physical and intellectual challenges he puts to them, the Atua Matua framework shows them the depth of traditional Māori knowledge and wisdom – and they all leave wanting to learn more.*

**Professor Boyd Swinburn**  
**School of Population Health**  
**University of Auckland**



# KAITIAKITANGA

## INSIGHTS FROM CRYSTAL PEKEPO-RATU



Dr Ihirangi Heke once explained how access to wairua pathways has been seen as the most difficult to connect to.



*Wairua informs us that we are the cause of environmental degradation, not the victims, that we must respond to the tohu (signs) accordingly, change our behaviour patterns, tap into a higher level of emotional intelligence and drastically alter our relationship with the natural world.*



The unions of our Atua Māori birthed a species that formed communities and ecosystems that fill our forests and waterways.

Their acts give both origin and explanation to the creation of the universe, setting precedents about how to conduct ourselves in the conservation and sustainability of the natural world. In the pursuit of wealth and possessions we are undermining our wellbeing and compromising our innate responsibilities and obligations as kaitiaki.

Atua Matua urges us to consider how we practise kaitiakitanga and how we build the capacity of organisations and communities to have greater environmental awareness and more importantly active engagement with these environments. Many of us in the health sector play an expressive role as kaitiaki for humankind. The Atua Matua framework however questions whether we have ever considered putting environmental knowledge before assessing the health status of a collective? Atua Matua advocates for a change in our approach. The belief is that if our relationship with the environment is a reciprocal, interdependent one, then we are likely to achieve wellbeing for the entire collective.




*Atua Matua is a kaupapa which enables the reawakening of mātauranga Māori and whakapapa from the taiao. It urges us to tune in to the ancestral knowledge systems of Ngā Atua Māori and the domains in which they reside. It compels us to connect, to care for and to nurture relationships with the many different beings within this land. Ko ēnei ngā tohu, hei tuāpapa mō te tiaki taiao. This is the foundation for effective decision making on environmental sustainability.*

**Darrio Penetito-Hemara**  
**CEO Toi Tangata**



# PWC AND ESG

## ATUA MATUA, ESG & KURA GRADUTE CAREERS

A recent book written by Condoleezza Rice and Amy Zegart, *Political Risk* (2018), looked at the role multiple bottom lines are playing in how businesses operate. Shareholder gain use to be the driver but now there are a number of considerations, of which political risk is but one. Price, Waterhouse and Cooper (PWC) are also aware of the considerable number of risks that are arising for businesses to manage. For PWC, they are suggesting to the clients that ESG is forcing the sector to consider factors that they had previously not had to engage with. These are non-financial metrics that can lead to a better understanding of not only political risks but social and environmental risks. The irony here is that previously PWC had not had to consider the role that environment and social conscience played anywhere near the level that is required now. One of the most significant drivers of this process is the global desire to reach a carbon zero outcome for businesses. Some environmental protection agencies are suggesting that executive compensation packages should only be paid out if their ESG targets are met.

Likewise, younger generations are unwilling to purchase consumer goods that are damaging to the environment, albeit, the same company may not have been unsustainable in the past but the difference is that now the consumers want proof and transparency that who they buy from are doing their best to care for the environment while decreasing their carbon footprint. Likewise the impact of Covid has been significant in mobilising the drive for change. PWC is doing much to define and assist how companies can contribute to their ESG journeys. A recent survey of executives within PWC showed that ESG is a burgeoning topic but one that is gaining momentum quickly as these same executives believe that business can provide a much needed positive and optimistic belief in the future of the planet when sustainable practices are encouraged. For some companies, they are adding consideration of taiao (environment) as a significant measure of not only their ESG maturity but an integral part of their financial success.





*Māori through tātai whakapapa (genealogy) view the environment (Te Taiao) as part of who we are. We are interdependent of each other in that we know, in order for Te Taiao to be a source of life for us te ira tangata, we must take care of it and be a sources of life for it as well. Our tikanga, traditions and customs set out our sustainability strategies, these have been handed down through the generations as kōrero tuku ioh. We must adhere to these mātauranga (knowledge) as the past informs our future. Titiro whakamuri. kōkiri whakamua.*

**Otene Hopa**  
**Manukura Business Team**  
**Price Waterhouse Cooper**



# KURA GRADUATES

## ATUA MATUA, ESG & KURA GRADUATE CAREERS

Currently, the majority of Māori graduate advisors are ill-informed regarding Māori environmental sustainability processes, ESG or the role that Atua Matua and Tapuwaekura could play. Therefore they are unable to manage, improve or monopolise on the opportunities ESG, Atua Matua or Tapuwaekura represent for graduates exiting Kura. Likewise there is a competitive advantage that exists in using a Te Ao Māori strategy learnt within kura as several New Zealand government ministries have identified Māori as sustainability leaders (MBIE, June 2021). In addition, as ESG demands for racial equity in the workplace increase, we should also see an increase in the demand for kura graduates knowledgeable in Atua Matua processes as sought after assets for any workplace nationally and internationally. Due to significant shifts in environmental policy (e.g., water control), businesses are also seeking environmental accreditation (ESG) that indicates an understanding of the issues and how their business has reacted. However, while many New Zealand businesses are seeking environmental accreditation, they are simultaneously attempting to understand a Te Ao Māori strategy and are unable to source the expertise to do either.



Therefore, Kura represent a career pathway to provide both improved ESG awareness and a Te Ao Māori strategy simultaneously. This is also because the paradigms of work life are changing and businesses are facing more dynamic and complex workforce demands e.g., five generations in the workforce and a global trend towards increasing numbers of 'gig workers'. Likewise increasingly diverse workforces mean businesses need to find new ways to collaborate and build a work culture from a distance. Kura graduates come prebuilt with the ability to collaborate as required in a kura pedagogy and a cultural expertise beyond many mainstream school graduates. Employers and especially those in the public sector, are requesting employees knowledgeable in Systems Dynamics too i.e., the ability to see macro level, multi layered causal connections. Fortunately Māori have long been systems practitioners preferring to call it whakapapa (defining connections). Like a family tree, whakapapa has similar appearances, however, whakapapa is more interested in the connection than the variable itself. Similarly, Māori propose that environmental knowledge is not due to causal links but rather due to reinforcing feedback loops that prompt further exploration. For example, community knowledge includes history and ecology (learnt regularly in a kura environment) whereas community tradition is the capability to use community knowledge (taught via Atua Matua in kura currently).

The distinction is that knowledge as a resource versus knowledge as a capability produce different outcomes. Both are needed to enact an activity or lore but ultimately Māori are more interested in the process that is initiated than the variable or content produced. This means that an Atua Matua approach to systems has taught kura graduates how to identify 'why' something is produced and not 'what' is produced. If you like, this is the drive to understand the origin of an idea and not the idea itself. A feedback loop can in fact, move in either direction but with a central driver that defines the process that is used i.e., environmental signs. What these concepts mean is that graduates from kura that have trained in Atua Matua concepts already have the skills that companies wanting to engage with ESG.

Also important, kura graduates have learnt the equivalent concepts to ESG but within a pedagogical model that is underpinned by a Māori philosophical platform i.e., mātauranga Māori and Atua Matua. Therefore, kura graduates will have the capacity to be employed as, for example, specialists in environmental science from a Māori perspective. Also kura graduates trained in Atua Matua can move between sustainability, well-being, education or business related positions with ease as Atua Matua training so closely mirrors those aspects desired by employers as ESG specialists.





*Many ancestral exemplars exist for sustainability as Māori and indigenous alike. Atua Matua is one of those models of practice that is leading the way nationally and globally. To Māori the decolonizing narratives of connection with the environment is extremely important. Equally important is the naturalisation of intergenerational mātauranga Māori as contemporary forms that can address issues like sustainability. Kia Tū Māori mai ngā pou. Mātauranga o te taiao mō te oranga o te tangata.*

**Paora Te Hurihanganui**  
**CEO Te Arawa Whanau Ora**





# APPENDICES



# AM FRAMEWORK

## ATUA MATUA WELLBEING FRAMEWORK



**Mātauranga Māori** is the key, overarching principle that allows access to knowledge from different environments e.g., high alpine, sub-alpine, mountain ranges, rivers, forests, plains, coastal shores, oceans, even urban environment.



**Whakapapa** allows a contextual relevance between a specific environment and the people from that location. More specifically whakapapa is not just a list of names but a methodology for interpreting connections between environment to environment, environment to people and people to people. For example – if we are paddling a waka in waitai (salt water) and move into waimāori (fresh water), we paddle differently because of a change in water characteristics i.e., a change in 'atua' connected to that water.



**Huahuatau** is about what we learn because of Taiao, what experiences we gain in applying knowledge of whakapapa or kōrero in a particular environment. This is referred to as dynamic capability. Dynamic capability is achieved when capacity building is converted into applied outcomes in a wide range of areas e.g., what I learn in the ocean can teach humility in a person as the ocean is the dominant feature, hydrodynamics in terms of universal physics and time management in terms of wave speed being used to measure sprinting in preparation for sport.



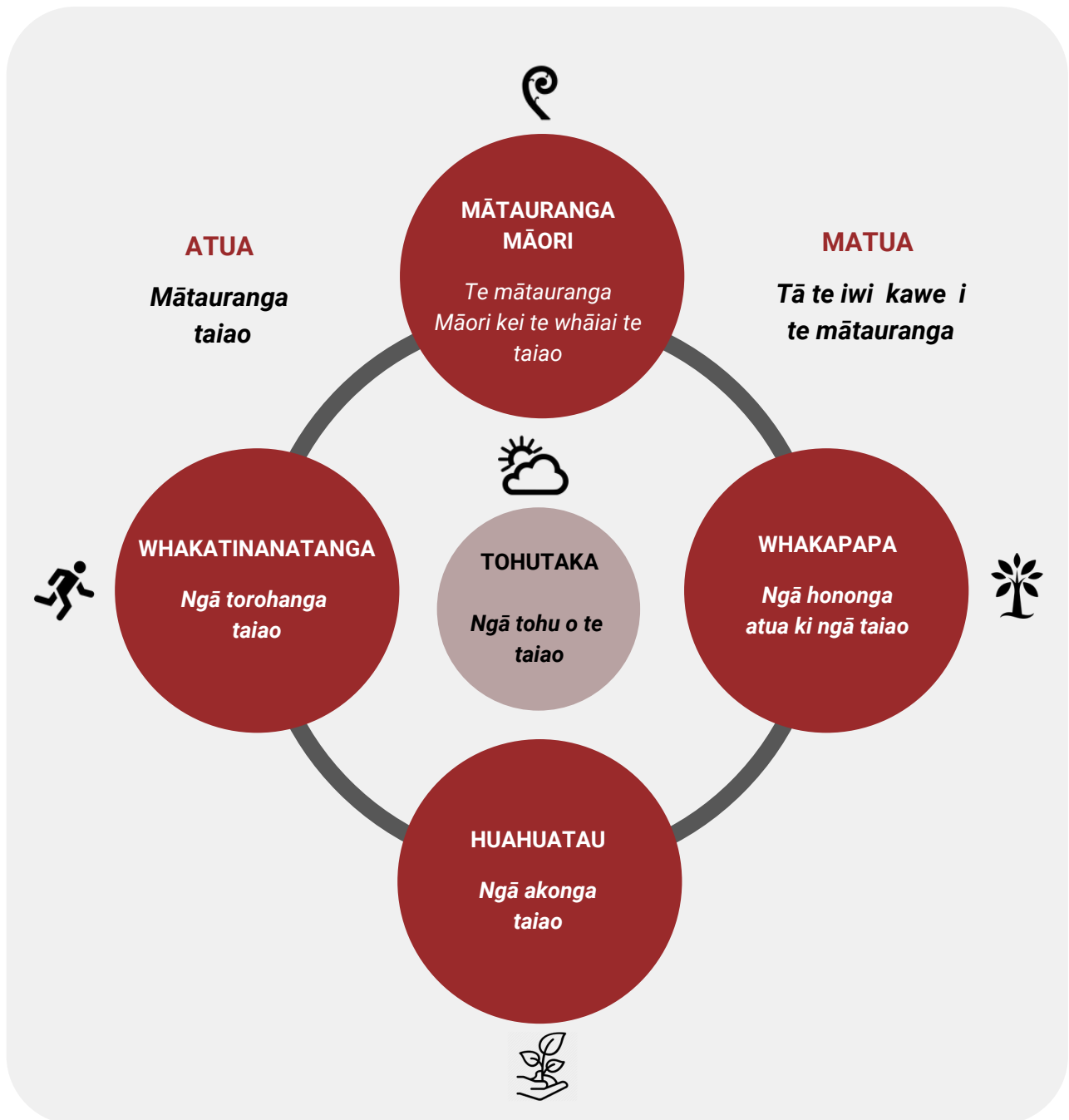
**Whakatīnanatanga** is the action phase. The intensity, the volume, and the medium through which an activity is carried out. In terms of mitigation of risk or more preferably, emphasis of potential, this domain is where the majority of action/interventions take place. Contrary to current well-being processes that start with interventions at a person-centered level, in an Atua Matua approach, person related interventions come much later.



**Ngā Tohutaka** is concerned with the timing of when the activities are conducted i.e., signs obtained from trees, fish, birds, insects and weather patterns. Out of interest this approach is being used to take groups of 8-10 individuals into different taiao over a 3-4 day period utilising waka, mountain bikes, trail running, swimming and alpine experiences to help them understand how best to engage with taiao whakapapa safely and with maximum intended outcomes.

# AM DIAGRAM

## ATUA MATUA CONCEPTUAL DIAGRAM



# AM TAUMATA

## ATUA MATUA LEVELS

The framework outlines 12 Atua - environmental philosophies and metaphors for action as well as 12 Matua - human expressions of knowledge obtained from the environment. Below outlines the hierarchical structure and various levels:

### ATUA

1. Atua celestial, oceanographic & terrestrial connections
2. Atua as personifications
3. Atua as guardians
4. Atua male forms
5. Atua female forms
6. Atua multiple forms of Tāne
7. Atua disputes as social commentaries - Ngā Pakanga Atua
8. Atua as tribal variations
9. Atua to tipua
10. Atua to kaitiaki
11. Atua form in Māui, Tāwhaki, Rata, Tiki
12. Atua expressions through a cultural lens

### MATUA

1. Matua interpretations of maramataka
2. Matua interpretations of whakatauki, haka, waiata, karakia etc
3. Matua connections to an environment
4. Matua interpretations of timeframes
5. Matua interpretations of process
6. Matua connections to tinana, wairua, hinengaro
7. Matua specialist training for a specific domain
8. Matua environmental skill acquisition
9. Matua regional specialist
10. Matua variation at a family level
11. Matua differences at a gender level
12. Matua as an individual

# AM TABLE

The table below expresses the Atua Matua Framework in two columns. **Atua** or environmental knowledge in the first left sided column and **Matua** or human expressions of knowledge obtained from the environment in the second column. The atua are only loosely related in terms of ranking based on birth hierarchy, whereas the second right handed column is concerned with applied actions that move from complex, large group numbers to single individuals.

## ATUA

1. **Atua environments.** Naming and grouping Atua (environmental representatives) that are connected to land, water and stars.
2. **Atua personifications.** Atua that represent a specific location e.g., Tangaroa, god of the sea.
3. **Atua as guardians** of a place e.g., Tāne te hokahoka, guardian of birds.
4. **Atua male forms.**
5. **Atua female forms.**
6. **Atua multiple forms of Tāne.** The many names of Tāne including his connection to his parents' separation, knowledge, and forest lore.
7. **Ngā Pakanga Atua.** The three atua battles over the separation of their parents, the pursuit of knowledge and the revenge of Tū.
8. **Atua as tribal variations.**
9. **Atua to tipua.**
10. **Atua to Kaitiaki.**
11. **Atua form in Māui.** Half atua half human demigods of Maui, Tāwhaki, Rata, Waihiora and Tiki e.g., the transition from god to human
12. **Atua expressions through a cultural lens.** Using atua concepts in evaluation and practice.

## MATUA

1. **Matua interpretations of Maramataka** (moon phases).
2. **Matua interpretations of whakatauki, haka, waiata, mōteatea and pūrakau** (performing arts).
3. **Matua connections to an environment** e.g., ocean, mountain, river or plains.
4. **Matua interpretations of timeframes.** The measurement of seasons, months and daily rotations of time using environment signs.
5. **Matua interpretations of process.** Process selection based on environmental signs e.g., training at night versus during the day.
6. **Matua connections to tinana** (physical), **hinengaro** (psychological) and **wairua** (spiritual) improvements.
7. **Matua specialist training in a specific domain** e.g., tribally centred knowledge of alpine, ocean, river or plains environments.
8. **Matua environmental skill acquisition.** Development of secondary skill for a domain e.g., free diving in an ocean domain.
9. **Matua regional specialist** e.g., Rakiura (Stewart Island) free diving expertise.
10. **Matua specific family level skills** e.g., a family that is renowned for handling big seas in a particular bay on the West Coast.
11. **Matua differences at a gender level** e.g., female free divers from the East Coast between Ruatoria and Gisborne.
12. **Matua individual skills** e.g., physical, psychological, and spiritual environmental knowledge.



**For more information**

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