

Maramataka and Me

**Matariki whetū heri kai,
Matariki, the bringer of food.**



Story sovereignty - A series storytelling the reclamation of our tipuna knowledge, maramataka, and the different ways we are using maramataka to enable change.

By Ranui Maxwell

As we celebrate the rise of Matariki, it is a time to honour those who have passed, reflect on the lessons of the past year, and set intentions for the year ahead.

Depending on where you draw your knowledge from maramataka is just one name given to the practice and knowledge system which is the lunar calendar, environmental calendar or timekeeping system. There are over 40 versions practiced across Aotearoa and many more practiced around the world by other Indigenous cultures.

This knowledge system has stood the test of time, from when Māori used this knowledge system when they traversed the great sea to arrive on the shores of Aotearoa to the modern-day resurgence. Maramataka is rooted in the interconnectedness of our relationship with the natural environment and with ourselves.

For Healthy Families East Cape we have an explicit focus on ensuring that our kaupapa are embedded with mātauranga māori evidencing these practices and frameworks as health prevention solutions. Maramataka has been applied across our kaupapa and acts as a bind between our areas of activation. We have applied in our communication strategies, in tune with marama phases to leverage the best time our audience might better engage with our content.

“I recognise the advantages of using maramataka to schedule when and how we circulate and publish content. It enables our audiences to engage on multiple levels, depending on the lunar phase” says Ranui Maxwell, Communication Manager.

This series of stories seeks to evidence how maramataka can be used as a predictor of health management. To highlight how people apply maramataka in their everyday lives to address their health and well-being. How Maramataka has the power to transform and strengthen our health system from a place of intervention to prevention and wellness.

Secondly, to reclaim Indigenous narratives that shine the light on systems that have sustained our culture and will continue to when a whole system approach is applied. Trinity Thompson-Browne of Ngāti Kahungunu and Mauāpoko, Māori poet and photographer said it best when referring to the reclamation of our stories and narratives,

“The fibres of our bodies are made of whenua-land, placenta. I think that then, the fibres of our minds are stories – pūrakau. Pū o te rākau, the pith of the tree, where the nutrients are pulled through from the roots to sustain it. And just as tree roots are like the landscapes of our lungs, we exist as living stories”.

“Embracing maramataka has opened numerous avenues for us to explore, innovate, and address current health, social, and environmental challenges. Connecting with passionate maramataka practitioners, scientists, and knowledgeable practitioners like Rereata Makiha and Professor Rangī Matamua has been incredibly enriching. Each day brings new insights that we are able to share, contributing to the advancement of maramataka for all Māori. I firmly believe that maramataka is a shared heritage, beneficial not only to Māori but to everyone and our taiao (natural environment). It is a privilege to play a small role in its revitalisation today” says Jade Kameta, Rautaki Māori.

We must also acknowledge that over the last few years, there has been a resurgence in the uptake and mātauranga available about Maramataka. This can be attributed to the mahi by many of our practitioners and experts throughout the motu. There are social media pages and platforms dedicated to sharing maramataka, and businesses like Tuhi Stationery (insert website) supports the knowledge sharing and practical application of maramataka. Many practitioners travel the motu and the world sharing this knowledge system.

Healthy Families East Cape has been supporting and enabling a range of activities to leverage maramataka. Rautaki Māori, Jade Kameta, has dedicated much of the last eight years working within the Healthy Families movement to practice Maramataka, and build the capacity and capability of our people and regions in their practice of it as well the practice of maramataka.

From being a founding member of Te Pataka Kōrero o Te Arawa and contribution to the revival of maramataka in Te Arawa, Jade continues to draw on his expertise and knowledge to share in different spaces throughout the East Cape.



Tuhi Stationery products: www.tuhi.co.nz

The Healthy Families movement has played a pivotal role in this resurgence with many of our Healthy Families sites leveraging the mātauranga of their regions. Communities are identifying quickly that maramataka holds mātauranga that is being rediscovered as a health prevention solution, and supports the collective health and well-being aspirations of our people.

The impact of this resurgence and uptake has led to a massive system change and policy shift, including the introduction of the first indigenous public holiday in a colonised country. Acknowledging the importance of Matariki brings Māori concepts, ideas and mātauranga to the forefront. Allocating resources and funding to acknowledge and share mātauranga around Matariki also shifts the narrative in a positive direction.

“Matariki speaks to the best parts of who we are. I think it’s a significant turning point in who we are as a nation”, says Professor Rangī Mataamua

Western science is increasingly confirming what indigenous traditions have long understood and applied. Health and well-being cannot be effectively addressed in isolation. Our detachment from the natural environment, or taiao, has led to numerous preventable chronic illnesses and diseases. Indigenous practices also synchronise our circadian rhythms with the taiao and continue to demonstrate holistic benefits.

Through rediscovering and revitalising our Indigenous knowledge and the tools passed down by our tīpuna, we are beginning to address longstanding issues within the health system. The maramataka offers a pathway to reconnect with our whakapapa (ancestry), traditional knowledge, and the taiao (natural environment).

Healthy Families East Cape is looking forward to sharing more stories of impact in the coming months. These stories will evidence further the benefits of maramataka as a health prevention solution.

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He oranga whānau

