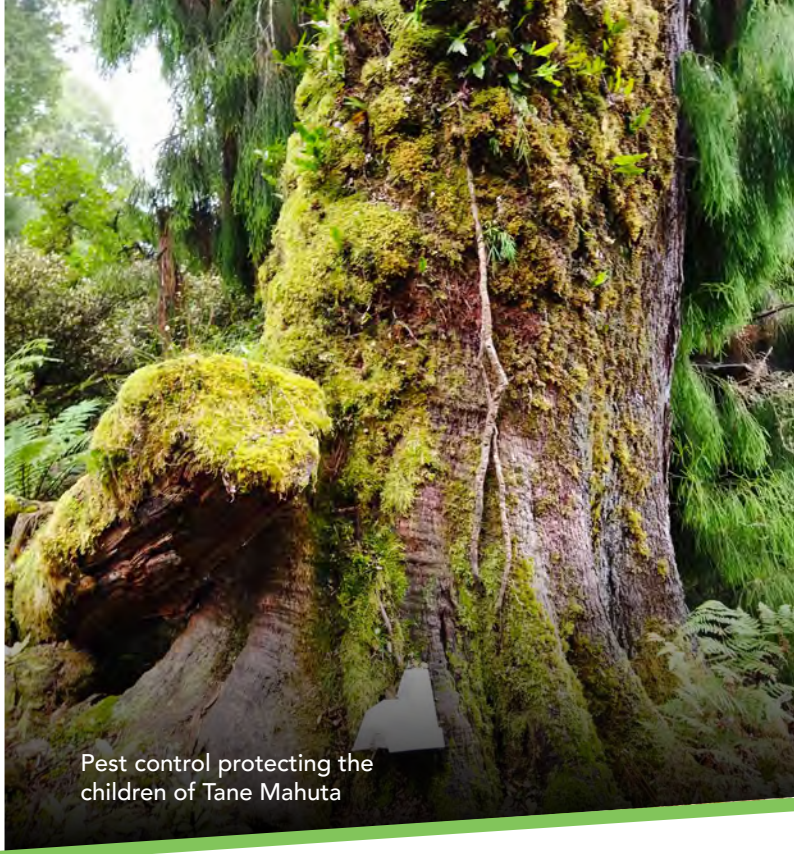


One of the ancient forest being restored in Jobs for Nature



Pest control protecting the children of Tane Mahuta

Jobs for Nature evaluation

Social Impact Thematic Case Study

Jobs for Nature (J4N) is a \$1.2 billion programme that manages funding across multiple government agencies to benefit the environment, people, and the regions. It is part of the COVID-19 recovery package. J4N funds projects focused on providing employment and delivering environmental outputs.

Year 2 of the J4N evaluation generated findings around three thematic-based case studies, in addition to a Te Ao Māori evaluation. This report covers the case study on social impact.

Six J4N projects which had a direct focus on creating social impact were selected for this case study. In reality, all of the J4N projects included in Year 2 of the evaluation delivered some degree of social impact.

What do we mean by social impact?

We define social impact as the effect of an action or inaction, an activity, project, programme or policy on people and communities.¹ Social impact measurements include understanding:

- how many people and communities benefit?
- who benefits?
- how do they benefit?

Social impact projects in this case study were selected because they applied for funding under the following categories.

- recreation enhancement
- historical and cultural heritage restoration
- skills and training
- employment
- capability development

The J4N projects in this case study include projects working with estuaries and lakes, a mainland island sanctuary, and the restoration of Māori land blocks.

¹ <https://www.goodfinance.org.uk/latest/post/what-social-impact-and-how-do-i-measure-it>



Jobs for Nature Kaimahi riparian planting at Ahuriri Estuary



Jobs for Nature team looking at the health of the water in the estuary.

Recreation enhancement – Te Taiwhenua o Te Whanganui a Orotū

The J4N project Te Taiwhenua o Te Whanganui a Orotū applied for funding under several categories including recreation enhancement. The project was delivered by a mana whenua organisation.

Pandora Pond is an area of the lower Te Whanganui-a-Orotū (Ahuriri Estuary) in the Hawke’s Bay. This was previously dredged for other purposes but is now commonly used for recreational swimming, sailing instruction, and other water-based recreation (waka, kayaks, and windsurfing) and competition. The Pandora Pond lies downstream of multiple stormwater and run-off discharges, and important wetlands. At times there are warnings that the water quality may not be suitable for recreational activities.

Ahuriri Estuary is a tidal river mouth, where the mouth of the freshwater channel connects to a shallow lagoon. Approximately 60% of the estuary drains at low tide, exposing mud, coarse sand, and shingle intertidal habitats.

Classified as a nationally significant Wildlife Refuge, Ahuriri Estuary supports a diverse array of flora and fauna in a variety of habitats including

conservation wetlands, terrestrial wildlife, and native fish spawning areas. Twenty-nine species of fish use the estuary during their life cycle. Wetlands on the border of the estuary provide an important wading and breeding area for migrant bird species including the royal spoonbill and white heron.

Aspiration of kaitiakitanga

This J4N project supports the kaitiakitanga aspirations of the iwi, reconnecting people to employment and the environment.

“I think the initiative is a great initiative. You know, providing jobs to restore the taiao and get out in the environment and it’s good kaupapa. Absolutely. I can’t fault, the initiative...I think it’s more so the sustainability.... Three years sounds like a lot, but when you are just starting a taiao, three years goes, it goes just like that” Project Manager

The estuary has wildlife habitat, which is impacted by various industries, farmland, stormwater and drainage water from homes, shops, workplaces, industries and roads. Changes in water quality caused by landcover change and land use has impacted on the natural resources of the estuary that supported mahinga kai or the procurement of kai. Tikanga around kai gathering has been impacted, and there is a loss of traditional knowledge about the life cycles of fauna and flora of the estuary as the ecology changes in response to pollution.

"This was the storehouse. So this is where people came to eat. And there was abundance."

Project Manager

The J4N project has upskilled people about working in the taiao and taught them cultural values about the landscape. For example, we accompanied the team on a site visit to work completed on a wāhi tapu (sacred site) where a tupuna (ancestor) was buried. The project team have been granted access to the wāhi tapu by DOC and are replanting trees at the site which was previously covered in blackberry.

Reconnecting people to place

The project supports multiple aspects of Māori health and wellbeing, such as through access to restoring the grave of an ancestor, re-learning about rongoā, and creating a site where kura children can visit. The Project Manager identified the benefits of the programme to people's mental health:

"A lot of our youth need work. Need to connect. Need to get outdoors. That mental wellness space is massive too. So this sort of supports that as well." Project Manager

The project has worked with MSD to employ and provide training and support to kaimahi. Equipment is needed such as outdoor clothing and training. The Project Manager identified this as tough work dealing with blackberry.

Will the benefits last?

The Project Manager recognised that sustainability was always going to be a challenge. The reluctance of private and Crown (Pāmu – Landcorp Farming Limited) landowners adjacent to the river to allow the team to fence off and plant areas of the waterway was a significant factor affecting the sustainability of environmental outcomes. The regional council and DOC had not been able to provide the support that the project needed to build its capacity and to enable access to land.

There was no transition plan in place for staff, although the Project Manager will transition back to another workstream in the Taiwhenua.

"Unless we get contracts, whether it's through government or through someone else, or we transition into commercial there is going to be no job...it's looking grim [regarding sustainability]." Project Manager

Taiao unit

There was a desire to create a taiao unit in the Taiwhenua to tackle some of the big environmental issues that impact on the estuary that were beyond the scope of the J4N project. These issues included problems with the infrastructure feeding into the estuary that require councils to clean up the storm water, farmer buy-in around sedimentation and nutrient management, and encouraging vineyards to stop taking up water from streams. A Taiao unit would leverage the capacity that has been developed through J4N to respond to issues such as the RMA, the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM), and other environmental policies and regulations.

Lessons learned

Several lessons and areas for improvement were identified. Firstly, building taiao knowledge, and a service and the know-how to deliver it, takes time.

"It is not like it has just been sprung on us about sustainability, a year ago all the project managers discussed sustainability.... DOC told us there is no funding, got us to all discuss sustainability.... We set this up with no taiao knowledge...if you are still a new business, 3 years you're just [learning]... it is a lot clearer now what we are going to do, how are we going to do it. We are just hitting our straps now." Project Manager

Secondly, the Project Manager identified a need for more guidance at the application stage of the J4N projects, and for support, advice and training during project implementation. This would have helped to strengthen the application, establish realistic outcomes, and ensure there were sufficient resources for training and support. The project had underestimated how much fencing and planting was required and overestimated how much track maintenance was required.

One of the unforeseen benefits of the J4N project was the establishment of a team that could be deployed to support areas and communities impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle. Under iwi leadership, the J4N team were deployed to areas most in need. The Iwi team helped support the clean-up of Hawkes Bay community for two months. They still help out other Jobs for Nature projects impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle, the community were still rebuilding and recovering from the event in some of the rural areas of Hawkes Bay.



Peter Eden is proud of the work completed under Jobs for Nature

Historical and cultural heritage restoration – Te Matai Jobs for Nature

Te Matai is a mountain named after the Rangatira Matai Ahinau who navigated the Ahimanawa range that joins two tribes, Ngāti Kurapoto / Tuwharetoa and Ngāti Kahungunu.

Te Matai and its 9000 acres of untouched native bush is now accessible for manuhiri (visitors) to experience the original Aotearoa New Zealand. The land lies between the Mohaka and Ripia rivers which were an abundant source of food for the local people. The area is administered by Ahu Whenua Trust and is situated approximately 80 kms north-west of Napier.

The J4N project involves track cutting and pest control, including control of mustelids and rats, deer and possums as well as pest plant management, on Te Matai whenua consisting of 3399 hectares of native bush. J4N provided an opportunity to restore whenua of significant cultural value, to provide employment and training, and to provide opportunities for nature tourism on the block.

Employment and social outcomes

Nature tourism was negatively impacted by COVID-19 and the project considered the J4N programme a lifesaver. The project has employed its own people who whakapapa to the whenua. They have upskilled people about working in the taiao and taught them cultural values about the landscape and how they whakapapa to the land and other iwi in the region. They are now in a good place to offer nature tourism.

"J4N helped through COVID as we had no people coming to our region. It provided meaningful employment for our young people. Our next generation has come through. J4N has placed us in a good place for business with our nature tourism aspirations. It has accelerated progress, in a time when we might have floundered with the impact of COVID on this region." Project Manager

The J4N project team has people who are skilled and technically competent in bushcraft on board to support the training of rangatahi. Through employing young people, the project has helped them stay meaningfully engaged in their iwi landscape, and taught them how to care for and restore the environment.

I like to think the tracks I am cutting will be used by my children's children. It's like that when we do our work. I love the tracks we cut, they are beautiful." Rangatahi

The Project Manager identified kaimahi as young Māori leaders now, who might have otherwise been picked up by gangs. Young people reported having more skills, knowledge, capability and incentive to effectively improve their environment because of the project, and expressed a sense of pride in what they did.

"The benefit is long term...it gives them a sense of belonging, and puts them in a good place and gives them some skills...that's what putting young people in the field does...before they get in trouble." Project Manager

The project would like to work more with schools, and believed the site would be a good place to work for young people who needed discipline and routine, and a second chance. For example, it was identified as a good site for army training for the Limited Services Volunteer (LSV) programme.



At night you can hear the birds. The bush takes you in at Te Matai.

Civil defence capacity


The project created a responsive conservation team and their skills and capacity were valuable during Cyclone Gabrielle. Kaimahi used chainsaw skills and other practical work skills learnt through the project to help clear roads and debris.

Will the benefits last?

There have been efforts to attract additional funding and resourcing, including offers to regional councils to undertake kiwi and bat surveys. Fundamentally, the results of the project are expected to continue after the end of the J4N programme because they whakapapa to the land and own it.

Lessons learned

Te Matai brought in expert technical support to help them achieve the J4N project outcomes, and experienced whānau to support the rangatahi. This experience was important in successfully delivering this J4N project.



Jobs for Nature project restored
Maungatautari Ecosanctuary

Skills and training – Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust

J4N funding helped this sanctuary continue to protect the plant and animal species living on Maungatautari in the Waikato. The ancient eco-system has been recognised as a reserve since 1912 and nearly 90 years later the community came together to establish the Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust (MEIT) to restore and protect the environment.

In 2002, a predator-proof fence build got underway and by 2004 all mammals were eradicated from the initial two enclosures. By 2006 the entire mountain, roughly 3400 hectares, was eradicated of mammals, except for mice, and translocation programmes were underway.

The trees are old, and the bird life is flourishing, the sanctuary is home to some of the rare kākāpō, hihi, North Island kākā, kiwi, takahē, tītipounamu and tīeke, as well as tui, and pīwaiwaka. COVID-19 impacted nature tourism to the sanctuary and the absence of visitors provided an opportunity to repair an ageing fence and restore maintenance tracks.

J4N kaimahi helped to manage the introduction of new kākāpō into the ecosanctuary. These birds were described as full of mischief and a bit of a handful, attempting to construct ladders out of branches to breach the sanctuary.

“It’s kind of like four teenage boys, you know, with no females around and they’re like, ‘Oh, what’s this cool fence thing? Oh, what if I can beat that? You know, what’s that boundary? What if we just push past that boundary?’” Project Manager

The Jobs in Nature rangers have been invaluable when helping with the vegetation trimming, which is part of their track maintenance, but also using their telemetry skills and bird handling skills to go find them outside the fence.

Upskilling and training

The J4N project helped expand monitoring and surveillance and repairs to the predator-proof fence at Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari and employ and train four full-time cadet rangers.

We interviewed two of the cadets and the Project Manager. Both cadets had conservation knowledge coming into the J4N project. One had completed a conservation course and the other had a degree in Zoology. One cadet has whakapapa to a local marae.

“I had a lot of theoretical skills but I had no bush skills when I started this, and now I feel comfortable there [in the bush].” Rangatahi

The cadets had received extensive training, including in 4WD and quad bike skills, chainsaw use, Growsafe certification in agrichemical use, pest control, bird handling and bush and survival skills. They had also learnt skills in plumbing and mechanics. They described the benefits to them as being more confident and well-rounded human beings, able to construct things and teach people. They laughed as they recalled not knowing how to use a drill properly and now they could build a fence, problem solve in the bush, and maintain and repair things. Culturally, the cadets have connected to the local marae, and have learnt through noho about the names of flora, fauna, and the places they work in. It was described as a bombardment of learning.

"You learn something every single day, like without fail here. If not multiple things. Constant learning things, yeah." Rangatahi

Some of the highlights the cadets described were helping translocate 160 kiwi and helping support kākāpō population of the mainland. They were proud of the fence maintenance, and they are hoping it will last another 20 years.

Exceeding milestones

The upgrades to the predator-proof fence included the use of new technology and materials that resulted in a 'next generation' fence. COVID caused some challenges in sourcing building materials and parts, but DOC had been flexible. In addition to an upgrade on the fence, the tracks are now better for monitoring species and for pest control. The project reported that it had exceeded its milestones in this respect.

"When you're looking for a kiwi, you often use those tracks, and if they're overgrown, it's very hard and so, you know, we don't just collect kiwi, but we also do monitor for hihi, tītipounamu and kākāpō...so having good internal monitoring tracks allows you know, ease of access."

Project Manager

Civil defence capacity

When Cyclone Gabrielle hit, the J4N team were able to help Civil Defence and put into practice the skills they had attained in, for example, chainsaw use and four-wheel driving. One kaimahi was looking to join search and rescue as a result of this experience.

"We actually put a team together of a lot of us...and went to Wairakei cause they had huge amounts of fence go down. So we went and rebuilt their fence for them." Rangatahi

The next generation of conservation leaders

Through building enthusiasm for environmental work, the project is helping to build the next generation of conservation leaders, consistent with aims of DOC's Biodiversity Strategy Te Mana o te Taiao. It is doing this because people see the difference they are making and enjoy the teamwork and problem solving. They have achieved a 100% survival rate for kiwi (compared to 5% in the wild), and enjoy the connection with the local marae, the tikanga, the waiata and the way the maunga improved the wellbeing of the people who work there.

"I know for [Kaimahi 1] and [Kaimahi 2] they love making a difference. You know, that's something that [Kaimahi] said to me a few times that she feels like she's making a difference." Project Manager

Three years later the kaimahi find themselves training others and are confident in applying for further conservation work across New Zealand in positions that require team leadership.

The Project Manager described their organisation's commitment to deliberately upskill their kaimahi, and training occurred alongside experienced rangers. They learnt a variety of skills and gained a breadth of experience in conservation work.

"And I think it's given them such a breadth of experience as well. And that was one of the beauties of the programme is it wasn't just, you know, cuts and tracks to maintain the fence. It was pest management, species, infrastructure, a whole range. And so, you know, they could actually go and apply for a range of different jobs." Project Manager

The only downside reported for this type of work was the pay rates.

Will the benefits last?

Sustainability of the project's results was reportedly an issue, especially as funding for community organisations had become scarce. The project had also experienced high turnover of the CEO, with three over the lifetime of the project. The General Manager had not yet secured funding to keep staff and they were all looking for jobs, although there was not a lot of paid conservation work available locally.

Lessons learned

The project recognised the need for reporting, but stated that they had experienced a high burden of reporting in the first 18 months with changing requirements and it was considered overly complicated. Reporting requirements had since settled.



Employment – Mauri Tu Mauri Ora (Te Arawa Lakes Trust)

Building iwi capacity and using Mātauranga Māori

Mauri Tu Mauri Ora started as a LINZ-funded J4N project. This then led to a larger DOC-funded J4N project which encompassed six iwi-led landscape scale restoration projects, involving wetlands, pest eradication, beehive placement, community initiatives, and water monitoring.

The project focused on developing the capability of their iwi team. They wanted to train and upskill their people to deliver all the services required to maintain their lakes, including scientific monitoring, licensing, biosecurity management, weed and pest control, planting and restoration. They taught people how to dive and do lake monitoring. People were trained to have a boat license, and now operate across the lake on all activities to maintain lake health, including killing lake weeds, monitoring the health of native species, and educating schools and the public.

Under the LINZ J4N contract, the iwi Lake Trust was able to recruit weavers, who were impacted by the loss of tourism in Rotorua, to help develop an innovative weed mat for the lake. This led to further substantial J4N funding from DOC.

Will the benefits last?

The benefits to the community are skilled employment, the retention and expansion of Mātauranga Māori, and leading innovation in science. There are flow-on benefits to the local economy as workers are receiving wages which they spend locally.

The project has worked with the regional and local councils, delivering services that are cost effective and of high quality. Both councils recognised the value of maintaining their contracts for the lakes with the J4N iwi project team because of the professionalism of the delivered services. This provides some assurance that the benefits of the project will be ongoing.

“The iwi started with just two of us. Through J4N we now have 17 full time and 35 part time staff. These are staff numbers we will maintain with the contracts we have picked up for monitoring and maintenance.”

Operational Manager



Whānau reconnect and restore their lands



Some of the healthiest plantings we had seen on the J4N project. Well established and watered natives were thriving

Employment – Restoration of the Ngāti Tahu-Ngāti Whaoa Rohe

Whānau reconnect and restore their lands

Ngāti Tahu-Ngāti Whaoa have a close connection to the Waikato River:

This J4N project has enabled people to be on their lands, where they were rediscovering old mara kai sites and taonga tuku iho, such as the use of kokowai, red earth and sharks’ oil, that was used to paint houses. Ways of preserving and trading food were also being rediscovered and reestablished, such as duck preserved in its own fat and stored in a gourd.

Whānau had reconnected to whenua and during our visit we observed that plantings were very healthy and thriving. The J4N project team brought in ecologists to guide what they were doing, and plants were irrigated, properly fed and maintained. Wilding control had been undertaken, along with removal of pest weeds such as blackberry and gorse. The whānau had fenced off some of the public conservation estate and tidied up some of the reserves that neighboured their property. The hapū had reconnected back to lands and the history of those places.

Ngāti Tahu-Ngāti Whaoa also have a historical, cultural and contemporary association with geothermal resources. This resource was used for cooking, bathing and healing. Large kāinga and cultivations were often established around these taonga. The Geothermal Energy Act 1953 impacted Ngāti Tahu-Ngāti Whaoa, who lost control of and access to many of their geothermal taonga. The J4N project enabled them to bring people who whakapapa to the whenua back to those lands, including the geothermal fields within their traditional rohe around Rotokawa (Tauhara North).²

Collaborating locally

The iwi also identified the importance of aligning their work to the goals of the Pest Free 2050 strategy, the Living Standards Framework, and the He Ara Waiora framework. This includes partnering with others to achieve environmental outcomes. An energy company was impressed with the restoration work undertaken by the J4N project team, and had hired the land trust to undertake maintenance on the company’s site. Work for the energy company was ongoing.

“Before contractors were hired by the energy company, the place was overgrown with weeds and blackberry. J4N enabled us to teach our own people how to do the maintenance works.... Our kaumātua love visiting the site now.”

Project Manager

They have also collaborated with the tourism industry, ensuring businesses could survive the impact of COVID-19 and helping to retain people in communities across Rotorua. The project provided immediate employment relief for two tourism business. It kept people employed in the project until they could go back to tourism work.

“We hired the local maintenance crew from [tourism business] and the jet boat crew from [tourism business]. It helped keep them employed when things slowed down.”

The project also worked collaboratively with the regional and local council, and with DOC.

² <https://www.tahu-whaoa.iwi.nz/waahi-tapu-geothermal>



Waikanae Estuary Jobs for Nature Office – deck built by the J4N team



Trainer James with his mentor Dan

Capability Development – Waikanae Waterways Restoration

The Waikanae Waterways Restoration project is a Ngā Awa project that takes a whole of catchment approach. The project contributed to capability development for many people.

Employment and training activities

The project has had a significant number of employment starts and a focus on capability building. Of the 77 employment FTEs achieved by early 2024, 51 have gained NCEA level qualifications in environmental management. The project manager is confident that the contracted 92.7 FTEs will be exceeded.

Project staff spoke about the need for disciplined project management and a laser like focus on these outcomes.

“We focus on employment. We take unemployed people and put them through a 12-week course and produce results.” General Manager

The community of landowners have had the J4N project support them in land use planning, fencing, and planting. The Nursery Manager reported teaching the community about seed collection, growing and planting. The trainer spoke about training kaimahi in land use management and planning.

Onsite we were shown the tangible work that has been achieved. An office had been built and a plant nursery. The office is solar powered and has a deck extending to the estuary. It is a tangible asset that the community will continue to have once J4N is completed.

“They built the deck; they built the nursery and the sheds they worked in...they learn through having to figure it out” General Manager

Iwi capacity developed through nature-based employment

Prior to this project, the iwi identified that they had limited capability to undertake a J4N project but that they wanted to build their taiao capacity. They therefore partnered with local and regional councils and DOC, as well as a local environmental NGO, and built their taiao capacity through J4N.

The iwi management plan informed the heart of the project, which implemented iwi key kaupapa of Whakapapa, Wairua, Mana, Māramatanga, Te Ao Tūroa, and Mauri. This included working with the maramataka.

"It connects all the dots, the maramataka with planting. The maramataka has been used since day one, every course we do we go through the six principles. I hold those close to me, it all connects." Trainer

The project has a Tiriti partnership-based model at the centre of its governance that also impacts on project values, priorities and outcomes. Iwi values frame the project, providing the philosophical infrastructure which guides J4N activities.

"The iwi values are holistic and completely guide the project from intake through to services delivered." Project Manager

Sixty per cent of all employee and trainee referrals to the project have come from the iwi, and all graduates of the project training programme are trained in a range of environmental skills that provide the iwi a nature team equipped to fence, plant, undertake pest control, build, harvest and grow. The project trainees were also trained to develop land use plans and work with their neighbouring farming community.

Growing leaders

The quality of training and support to grow leadership has been a key achievement of the project. We interviewed staff who were graduates of the 12-week training courses run earlier in the project. They now support J4N kaimahi with learning about nature restoration. The Trainer came in as part of the iwi intake and had always wanted to know about environmental restoration. He now runs the training programme.

"[J4N Project] staff are highly sought after. Some work for local councils now, others have taken up environmental employment, others have gone on to environmental degrees." General Manager

The Nursery Manager had no knowledge of plants when he arrived at the J4N project. He came because he saw a presentation at MSD about the work opportunities.

"I didn't know a single plant when I arrived. I now can name 40 plants. I never knew a single plant before [J4N project] and I was brought up on a farm." Nursery Manager

Whakapapa – reconnection of people to lands and waterways

The J4N project aligns with DOC's Ngā Awa River restoration programme and its Te Mana o te Taiao strategy, as well as the local Iwi Strategy for tangata whenua to reconnect with their lands and waters, and restore the taiao as kaitiaki of the Iwi.

The work impacts the families of project staff. The Trainer loved connecting back to his iwi and described bringing his mother and aunties back to their marae. He had tears in his eyes when he spoke about the return of his whānau to the iwi: *"I brought my mum and aunties back to the marae because of the programme. They hadn't been in contact with this side of their iwi whakapapa."*

The Nursery Manager reflected on how his children loved being in the bush collecting seeds with him: *"It's intergenerational – my kids love going to the bush with me and ask about the plants."*

Will the benefits last?

The General Manager was confident that the benefits would last beyond the J4N programme. They had deliberately invested in building nature conservation skills. The General Manager said it was the duty of good project management and leadership to prioritise capability building over new assets, as this will support ongoing benefits. For example, we were shown the second-hand van used for transporting Kaimahi, the solar batteries they had built frames for, the nursery and sheds they had constructed using recycled materials.

There was also evidence that employment and training was leading to further work opportunities.

"Some work for local councils now, others have taken up environmental employment, others have gone on to environmental degrees." General Manager

Lessons learned

This project focused funds on employment outcomes and avoided capital purchases such as new trucks and buildings. Focusing on capability building activities resulting in well trained staff, some of whom took up employment opportunities in environmental restoration with other organisations.

The most transformative part of the project was basing the work on the Iwi Management Plan which ensure iwi aspirations informed every aspect of the J4N work programme. The Tiriti-based partnership model brought together communities to deliver a comprehensive J4N project with successful outcomes.