RAUTAKI TIAKI TAONGA O TAHAAROA 2026
Tahaaroa Taonga Care Strategy 2026

For Archaeological Discovery and Cultural Response in Tahaaroa

1. Purpose
This strategy sets out a practical, marae-led process for bringing tikanga Maaori, maatauranga Maaori, whakapapa and local knowledge into archaeological discovery and response in Tahaaroa. It supports the Archaeological Authority and Archaeological Management Plan (AMP), while recognising that statutory responsibilities remain with the relevant authorities and professionals.

2. Historical context and marae leadership
Tangata whenua have worked alongside mining operators at Tahaaroa since sand extraction began in 1972. Kaumaatua and local leaders have helped guide responses to discoveries, including kooiwi tangata and taonga. This strategy records and supports that practice; it does not replace tikanga or mana whenua authority.
Aaruka and Te Kooraha Marae provide the marae-led basis for this process, reflecting their mana whenua and mana tangata responsibilities in Tahaaroa. The marae in the immediate area are directly affected by mining activity and the discovery of archaeological or culturally significant material.
Te Ruunanga o Ngaati Mahuta ki te Hauaauru supports this process and has contributed to discussions and waananga informing this approach.

3. Nominations and coordination
Aaruka and Te Kooraha Marae will lead the process for identifying and nominating appropriate kaumaatua, tohunga and/or cultural experts. Collectively, nominees should bring relevant tikanga, maatauranga Maaori, whakapapa, local history and cultural knowledge, and be willing to protect sensitive information.
The marae-led process will appoint two coordinators as the main contacts for the mine site. They will be the Chairs of the two marae or their elected representatives, as confirmed through the marae-led process. Coordinators will:

- receive and relay notifications of discoveries and requests for cultural advice;
- contact nominated cultural experts and coordinate hui, site visits and responses;
- record notifications, advice, agreed actions, decisions referred to the marae and follow-up; and
- protect confidential information and share records only with authorised people.

Coordinators do not replace the authority of the marae or mana whenua. Matters requiring a wider decision must be referred back through the appropriate marae-led process.

4. Roles and responsibilities

- **Mine site managers and contractors:** ensure workers understand and follow this process; stop work in the affected area if a potential discovery is made; protect the location; and promptly notify the site lead and coordinators.
- **Marae-appointed cultural experts:** advise on tikanga, cultural significance and appropriate responses, contribute local knowledge where appropriate, and guide cultural care in accordance with marae direction.
- **Project archaeologist and relevant authorities:** carry out professional and statutory duties, including required assessments, notifications and recording. Their role does not replace tikanga Maaori or mana whenua authority.
- **Coordinators:** connect the mine site with marae-appointed experts, support timely communication, maintain records and report back to the marae as agreed.

5. Discovery response, recording and staff training

If kooiwi tangata, taonga or other potentially significant material is found, work must stop in the immediate area, the location must be protected, and the discovery reported immediately to the mine site lead and coordinators. Police, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga and other authorities must be notified where required by law or circumstance. Work must not resume in the affected area until relevant requirements have been met, and appropriate direction has been obtained.

Each discovery must be recorded, including its date and location, the notifications made, advice received, actions taken and any follow-up. Records must be maintained and securely stored, including historical information, with access limited to authorised people and sensitive information protected.

The mining operation does not gain ownership of kooiwi tangata or taonga by discovering them and has no authority to use them for another purpose. Their care, custody, return and any decisions about use must follow applicable legal requirements and the direction of the appropriate mana whenua process.

Cultural responses will be guided by the relevant marae and mana whenua representatives, taking account of the discovery and its circumstances. Archaeological recording must follow applicable professional standards and legal requirements.

Mine site managers and relevant staff must receive induction and refresher training from cultural experts nominated through the marae-led process. Training should cover the local cultural landscape, tikanga, contacts, immediate discovery steps, confidentiality and restrictions on work in an affected area. Refresh training when staff or site arrangements change and at agreed intervals.

6. Reporting to the marae

The mine site and coordinators will report to Aaruka and Te Kooraha Marae every three or six months, as agreed through the marae-led process. Reports should cover cultural incidents and discoveries, their locations and dates where appropriate, actions taken and follow-up, and anticipated mining direction or areas of activity. Sensitive information must be handled in accordance with tikanga and agreed access conditions.

7. Confidentiality, resourcing and review

Maatauranga Maaori, whakapapa and information about waahi tapu, waahi tuupuna or other sensitive places must be protected. Information supplied for one purpose must not automatically be copied, published or used for another. Any sharing must follow tikanga and the conditions set by the relevant marae or mana whenua representatives.

To support consistency, Aaruka and Te Kooraha Marae should agree in advance on a common basis for fees and expenses for marae-appointed cultural work. The scope and arrangements for each piece of work must then be confirmed with the relevant people before it begins. This strategy does not itself create a contract, debt or ongoing commitment, or require either marae or any nominated person to participate in a mine site process.

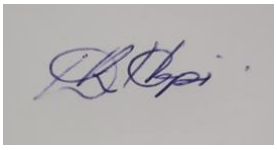
The coordinators will maintain the current version of this strategy and a record of agreed actions. Records, including historical information, must be stored securely and managed in accordance with agreed access and confidentiality requirements. The marae-led process should review the strategy when needed, including if the Archaeological Authority, AMP, mining areas or site arrangements change. Nothing in this strategy transfers or limits mana whenua authority, tikanga authority, or ownership of maatauranga Maaori and cultural information.

This Rautaki Tiaki Taonga o Tahaaroa 2026 has been developed collaboratively by the Chairpersons of Aaruka Marae and Te Kooraha Marae, on behalf of their respective marae, to provide a marae-led approach to archaeological discovery and cultural response in Tahaaroa. The process has also been supported by Te Ruunanga o Ngaati Mahuta ki te Hauaauru.

Endorsed by:

Chairperson – Aaruka Marae

Name: Delwyn Rangiaroha Hepi

Signature: 

Date: 30/10/2026

Chairperson – Te Kooraha Marae

Name: Taituwha King

Signature: 

Date: 30/10/2026