

Notes from the field: A collective community food initiative in suburban Whangārei

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Introduction

Bringing a community development lens to place often begins with a study of the community, utilising demographics, observation, and a review of literature and local communications. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Stats NZ produces very useful summaries from each census. These are titled Place Summaries and give detailed demographic data about relatively small areas, and are a great resource to community development practitioners. Unless otherwise cited, all statistics in this paper are derived from the Raumanga Place Summary from the 2006, 2013 and 2018 census data. Raumanga, the focus of this community food initiative, sits astride State Highway 1 on the southern edge of Whangārei, although the outskirts of Otaika are growing, making Raumanga a more central suburb. A 1986 archaeological study (Rickard, 1986) found the area rich in sites of pre-European occupation and cultivation. Raumanga means ‘many branches’ and refers to the dozens of streams and springs in this fertile valley. Lower Raumanga was once an important swamp and river basin famous amongst local Māori as a food basket and place of recreation much favoured by children (Vallance, 1956).

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