

## CURRICULUM ACTIVITY: Years 7-8 Environmental Guardianship

Ākonga plan and lead a school-wide sustainability project, such as a native planting or water conservation campaign. They research environmental issues, set goals, and evaluate outcomes. Kaitiakitanga is demonstrated through leadership, problem-solving, and long-term care for the environment.

**Tikanga Practices: Kaitiakitanga is portrayed as:**

- **Rangatiratanga (Leadership and Initiative):** Ākonga take leadership roles in planning sustainability projects, guiding peers with confidence, responsibility, and respect for collective decision-making processes.
- **Kotahitanga (Unity and Collaboration):** Ākonga collaborate across classes and with community members, combining ideas and skills to achieve shared sustainability goals that strengthen relationships and outcomes.
- **Kaitiakitanga (Guardianship and Action):** Ākonga design, implement, and evaluate environmental projects that protect local ecosystems, demonstrating ongoing guardianship through care, reflection, and practical problem-solving.

**Kaiko: Questions for Reflection**

1. How do you empower ākonga to lead sustainability initiatives that reflect responsibility, cultural awareness, and environmental care?
2. How do you encourage collaboration between ākonga, kaiko and community partners to achieve meaningful, shared environmental outcomes?
3. How do you support ākonga to connect long-term environmental action with cultural values of guardianship and intergenerational responsibility?



### NGĀ WHAKATAUKĪ PROVERBS

Whakatō para, whāngai i te whenua.

When we feed the earth with what we share,  
Papatūānuku blossoms everywhere.

Tiakina te wai, ko te wai te ora

Protect the water, for water is life.

Whāngai i ngā manu,  
whāngai i te taiao.

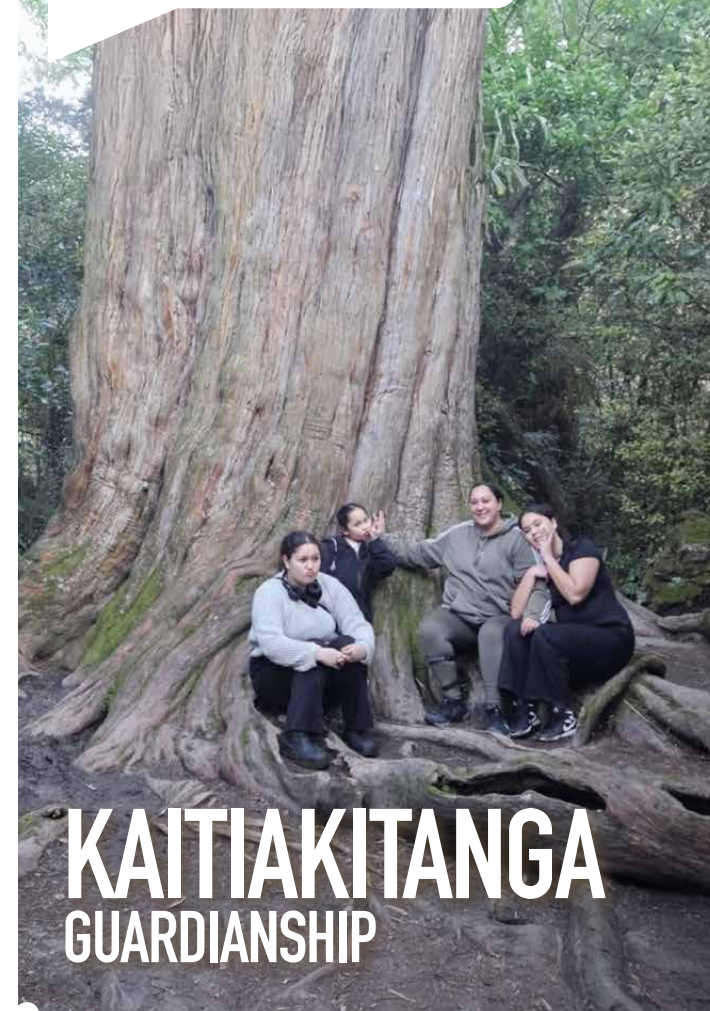
When we feed the birds, the whole  
environment thrives



Scan for  
pronunciation  
support

## Ngā Taonga Whakaako Tikanga Māori – Theory and Practice

Primary Education Contexts



## KAITIAKITANGA GUARDIANSHIP

UC  
UNIVERSITY OF  
CANTERBURY

Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke  
Child Well-being  
Research Institute

Ako  
AOTEAROA

Authors: Ngaroma M. Williams, Tracy Dayman, Lana R. Williams, 2025.





# KAITIAKITANGA

## GUARDIANSHIP

**Kaitiakitanga** is a concept that refers to guardianship, especially over the natural world. It involves caring for the land, water, animals, and all living things with respect, responsibility, and long-term thinking.

In a primary context, kaitiakitanga helps tamariki build a connection to nature, learn to care for their environment, and understand their role in protecting it. Through activities like gardening, recycling, and observing natural cycles, children develop values of respect, care, and sustainability. Teaching kaitiakitanga supports wellbeing, cultural identity, and a sense of belonging, while nurturing future guardians of the earth. It aligns closely with Te Whāriki's holistic principles.



Scan to find out more about these resources



### CURRICULUM ACTIVITY: Years 1-3

#### Environmental Guardianship

Tamariki care for classroom plants or a small garden, learning responsibility for living things. They collect and sort recyclables during daily routines. Kaitiakitanga is enacted as students understand the importance of looking after their immediate environment.

**Tikanga Practices: Kaitiakitanga is about demonstrating:**

- **Manaakitanga (Care and Respect):** Tamariki show care by gently tending to plants and creatures, learning that kindness and respect help all living things flourish.
- **Whanaungatanga (Relationships and Connection):** Tamariki work together to care for their garden and recycling area, building friendships through shared responsibility and teamwork.
- **Kaitiakitanga (Guardianship and Responsibility):** Tamariki act as guardians of their environment, taking turns watering, weeding, and keeping the class space clean and healthy.

**Kaiako: Questions for Reflection**

1. How do you model and nurture daily acts of care that show respect for people, plants, and living environments?
2. In what ways can you foster collective responsibility and teamwork through environmental care and shared classroom routines?
3. How do you guide tamariki to see themselves as guardians who protect and sustain their learning environment?

### CURRICULUM ACTIVITY: Years 4-6

#### Environmental Guardianship

Tamariki participate in composting, recycling, and energy-saving initiatives around the school. They discuss how these actions protect natural resources and why stewardship is important. Kaitiakitanga is expressed as students develop responsibility for both the school and wider community environments.

**Tikanga Practices: Kaitiakitanga is evident here as:**

- **Manaakitanga (Care and Respect):** Tamariki take turns maintaining compost bins and recycling stations, showing care and respect for shared spaces and living systems within their school.
- **Whanaungatanga (Collective Responsibility):** Tamariki work together to track energy use, encouraging peers and whānau to reduce waste and protect natural resources through shared responsibility.
- **Kaitiakitanga (Guardianship and Action):** Tamariki lead eco-projects such as litter-free lunches and garden composting, demonstrating guardianship through thoughtful, sustainable choices benefiting their community environment.

**Kaiako: Questions for Reflection**

1. How do you model everyday practices that show respect for resources and foster care for your collective learning environment?
2. In what ways do you encourage collaboration and shared responsibility so tamariki experience environmental care as a collective action?
3. How do you guide tamariki to see their composting and recycling efforts as acts of long-term guardianship and environmental leadership?

