

Indigenous Planning Curriculum

Fall 2026 – IAP 2027

THE SEQUENCE

Part I	Indigenous Water and Energy Planning and Policy 11.S195 (Undergraduate) / 11.S945 (Graduate) 6 units	Fall 2026 · Cambridge
Part II	MISTI Global Classroom: Aotearoa New Zealand (limited capacity) 6 units	IAP 2027 · Aotearoa NZ

Introduction

Welcome to the Indigenous Planning curriculum for 2026-2027. Across three parts, students learn from Indigenous knowledge holders, planners, and communities who are leading the way on water, energy, and climate.

Part I, Indigenous Water and Energy Planning and Policy (Fall 2026), builds the foundations: theory, practice, and weekly meetings with Māori community representatives, alongside an introduction to Aotearoa New Zealand as an extended case study.

Part II, the MISTI Global Classroom (IAP 2027, Aotearoa New Zealand), is an optional two weeks in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland with Pūrangakura Kaupapa Māori Research Centre, contributing to the Māori-led Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora research programme.

Part III, Indigenous Environmental Planning (Spring 2027), puts that learning to work on applied community-led projects with Indigenous communities.

Each part is complete in itself and open to students of every discipline, so you can take one, two, or all three. Together they offer a grounding in reflexive, reciprocal, community-led planning practice, and the relationships we have that make it possible.

Teaching Team

INSTRUCTORS

Professor Janelle Knox-Hayes, Head of EPP, DUSP —jankh@mit.edu

Nina Lytton, Lecturer, DUSP and Spiritual Advisor to the Indigenous Community at MIT —nlytton@mit.edu

TEACHING ASSISTANT

Jacqueline Paul, Doctoral Candidate, DUSP —jackiep@mit.edu



Professor Janelle Knox-Hayes



Nina Lytton



Jacqueline Paul

Office hours

Office hours are unstructured time set aside for you. Common things to bring: an idea for your final project you want to think out loud about, a reading that did not land but might want to discuss further, uncertainty about whether your assessment is on the right track, or a question you did not want to ask in front of the class.

Nina holds office hours Thursdays 2:00 to 4:00 PM in W41-3505 from 29 October. Jacqueline is available by appointment via email.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to the team 😊

MIT Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge Indigenous Peoples as the traditional stewards of the land, and the enduring relationship that exists between them and their traditional territories. The land which MIT occupies is the traditional unceded territory and sacred lands of the Wampanoag, Nipmuc, Massachusett, and Abenaki Peoples. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced occupation of these territories, as well as the ongoing processes of colonialism and dispossession in which we and our institution are implicated. Beyond the stolen territory which we physically occupy, MIT has long profited from the sale of federal lands [granted by the Morrill Act](#), territories stolen from 82 Tribes including the Greater and Little Osage, Chippewa, and Omaha Peoples.

As we honor and respect the many diverse Indigenous peoples connected to this land from time immemorial, we seek to develop relationships, learn from and with Indigenous peoples and build a better world together.

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PART I: Indigenous Water and Energy Planning and Policy: An Introduction

COURSE NUMBERS	11.S195 / 11.S945
UNITS	6
TERM	Fall 2026 (Half Term Subject)
MEETS	Tuesdays, 2:00–5:00 PM Begins 27th October 2026
LOCATION	City Arena, W41-1306

Course Description

This under/graduate-level seminar focuses on the critical intersections between Indigenous knowledge systems, water and energy resources management, and environmental justice, in both theory and practice. The course examines Indigenous water and energy planning across a range of global contexts, from foundational theory through applied, community-led practice, and includes an introduction to Māori culture, planning practice, and protocols in Aotearoa New Zealand as an extended case study.

Students who wish to take their learning further may apply to an optional Global Classroom in Aotearoa New Zealand during IAP 2027 (Part II), but the course is complete in itself and is designed for all students, whether or not they travel.

Students are invited to bring the skills and experiences of their respective disciplines —planning, engineering, science, design, policy, and beyond—to learn from and work with Indigenous communities on applied water and energy projects. Through readings and recorded material, guest lectures, discussions, case studies, and weekly community meetings, students will understand emergent trends in the development of traditional ecological knowledge and community-led research, and will develop the reflexive practice needed to engage respectfully and reciprocally with Indigenous partners.

Reflexive Praxis and Positionality

A central thread of this course is reflexive praxis: helping students become conscious of how they bring themselves to this work. Community-led research asks researchers and practitioners to understand their own positionality —the histories, disciplines, privileges, and perspectives they carry—and how these shape their relationships with the communities they work alongside. Students will develop and revise a Positionality Statement over the term (see Course Assessments) and will practise reflexivity through

journaling and the weekly community meetings. As self awareness grows and questions emerge, students are invited to meet with Nina Lytton.

Community Meeting

Each class session includes an online meeting with Māori community representatives. The scheduled meeting (approx 60 minutes) is a space to practise protocols, build whanaungatanga (relationships) within the cohort, and practise the modes of respectful engagement students will carry into community-based work. Meeting themes for each week are listed in the course schedule.

Optional Opportunity: Part II, MISTI Global Classroom in Aotearoa New Zealand

This course connects to an optional MISTI Global Classroom in Aotearoa New Zealand, approximately 18–31 January 2027 (during MIT IAP), based in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland). Partnering with Pūrangakura Kaupapa Māori Research Centre, students will contribute to Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora (WOKO), a Māori-led research programme addressing climate impacts on waterways and ecosystems essential to kāinga (Māori homes and communities) wellbeing. Full details are outlined in Part II.

Over 14 days, participants will: be formally welcomed through a pōwhiri (a welcome ceremony); learn kaupapa Māori research methodologies; visit waterway sites facing climate impacts; work in teams alongside Māori researchers on project contributions such as literature synthesis, spatial analysis, documentation of community dialogue, and communication materials; engage with Māori planning representatives; and present their work back to the community at a closing wānanga (learning forum), honouring the kaupapa Māori principle that research outputs return to the community.

Participation in the Global Classroom is entirely optional and places are limited. Applications open in September–October; MISTI and the faculty leads will jointly select participants in the Fall semester 2026.

Participation involves a program fee, pro-rated for undergraduates based on financial need; the teaching team will provide guidance from MISTI.

Part I of the course stands on its own: all assignments, discussions, and final projects are designed for the full class, and students who do not travel lose nothing in terms of course content, credit, or assessment.

Course Goals and Objectives

- To examine how Indigenous water and energy management practices contribute to the development of self-determination and foster consciousness of autonomy of non-humans.
- To explore the modalities of traditional ecological knowledge which counter dominant narratives such as colonialism, extractivism, and capitalism.
- To introduce Indigenous planning practice across global contexts, including Māori culture, planning practice, tikanga (protocols), and the Te Tiriti o Waitangi framework in Aotearoa New Zealand as an extended case study.
- To empower students to apply the skills of their own disciplines to community-led water and energy initiatives grounded in equity, sustainability, reciprocity, and traditional ecological knowledge.

- To encourage and cultivate reflexive praxis: awareness of positionality and of how each student brings themselves to community-led research.

Course Materials

If a required reading is not available from the MIT Library or linked in the syllabus, check the course Canvas site for a PDF. Technology requirements and software access are covered under Policies and Resources at the end of this syllabus.

Recommended Texts

- Smith, L. T. (2012). Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples. Zed Books.
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. Braiding Sweetgrass. Milkweed Editions, 2013.
- Krawec, Patty, and Nick Estes. Becoming Kin. Broadleaf Books, 2022.
- Natcher, Walker R., et al. Reclaiming Indigenous Planning. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013.
- Roulière and Egerer, C. Water Lore: Practice, Place and Poetics. Taylor and Francis, 2022.
- Planning Just Futures: Edited by Marisa A. Zapata and Lisa K. Bates. (2021). Planning Theory & Practice, 22(4), 613–642. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2021.1956815>

Example Tools and Databases

- Tribal Energy Projects Database —Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs
- Complexities of the Champlain Hudson Power Express —ArcGIS StoryMaps
- BioBlitz Wampanoag Common Lands —iNaturalist
- Atlas of Weak Signals —IAAC

Student-Added Resources

TBC

Aotearoa New Zealand Reading List

This list has been provided to the class from Liliana Clarke. You can view the list in full here: [LINK](#)

Assessments

This course requires active participation in discussions, meetings, and critical reflection on the course material.

TASK	DUE	WEIGHTING
Participation	Ongoing	30%
Assessment 1: Positionality Statement	03 November 2026	10%
Assessment 2: Reflection Statement	01 December 2026	10%
Assessment 3: Project Proposal and Presentation	08 December 2026	50%

Participation

While quantity matters, this portion of the grade is based on attendance and the quality of participation across three elements: seminar discussions (be prepared to discuss the main points of the readings, ask questions, provide constructive feedback, and share critical perspectives); the weekly online community meetings with Māori community representatives.

Assessment 1: Positionality Statement

Due 03 November 2026 (Week 2), shared in class discussion

Students will draft a positionality statement early in the term and revise it as the course progresses. The statement should reflect on the student's identities, disciplinary training, and relationships to land, water, and energy systems, and on how these shape the way they will engage in community-led research with Indigenous communities, wherever that work takes place.

Format: one page, Word document or PDF.

Assessment 2: Reflection Statement

Due 01 December 2026, shared in class discussion

Building on the Positionality Statement, students will write a closing reflection on how their understanding of Indigenous water and energy planning, reflexive praxis, and their own positionality has evolved over the term. The statement should draw on the reflection questions, the weekly community meetings, and the course reading and video assignments, and should identify concrete ways the student will carry these practices into future research, professional, or community work.

Format: one page, Word document or PDF.

Assessment 3: Project Proposal and Presentation

Due 08 December 2026

Students will submit a research proposal of 15–20 pages maximum, as a Word document or PDF. Students not selected for the Global Classroom will complete Pathway A. Students selected for the MISTI Global Classroom will pursue Pathway B.

Pathway A—International Case Study. Select an Indigenous water and/or energy planning project from any global context. Drawing on the weekly community meetings and guest sessions, analyse the project's governance model, the knowledge systems it draws on, its financing and policy context, and the factors that have enabled or constrained community self-determination. Conclude by identifying what could be learned from this case for Indigenous-led planning elsewhere, including the Aotearoa context studied in this course. Prioritise community-authored and co-authored sources wherever possible.

Pathway B—Community-based Proposal. Drawing on the weekly community meetings and guest sessions, outline a research direction that could be further explored based on what you have heard. Identify a question or need raised by the community, situate it within relevant literature and course themes, and propose a respectful, community-led approach grounded in kaupapa Māori principles, including how the work would return benefit to the community.

Course Schedule and Outline

Readings marked TBC will be confirmed on Canvas at least one week before the session.

Week 1

27 Oct

Introduction to Indigenous Water and Energy Planning

Session led by Janelle Knox-Hayes and fellow instructors

Overview of the course syllabus, objectives, and expectations. Introduction to Indigenous water and energy planning in theory and practice, reflexive praxis and positionality, and the tools and databases for existing case studies to explore.

Introduction to the optional IAP Global Classroom in Aotearoa New Zealand and the application process (applications open in September–October; participation is not required for the course).

ASSIGNED READINGS

- Course syllabus

Community Project: Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora (WOKO)

Guest Speaker: Liliana Clarke (confirmed)

Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora aims to regenerate local waters and ecosystems through intergenerational, kāinga-based wai solutions. Kāinga, including marae and culturally significant sites, are traditionally located by waterways and, therefore, are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

This Māori-led research programme, hosted by Pūrangakura, an independent Kaupapa Māori Research Centre, co-creates collaborative initiatives with local Māori communities to address local climate impacts and provide place-based solutions towards a low-emissions and climate-resilient economy. The programme brings together a multi-disciplinary team across mātauranga Māori, science, public policy, engineering, economics, architecture and more, deploying a kaupapa Māori and community-based participatory research approach with eight Māori communities, centering mātauranga Māori and place-based kōrero tuku iho (oral traditions).

The research team will share this project with the class. Selected students will have the option to travel to Aotearoa New Zealand during IAP (approx. 18–31 January 2027) for the Global Classroom hosted by Pūrangakura, and materials and reflections from the programme will be shared back with the full class.

ASSIGNED READINGS

- Aho, L. T. (2018). Te Mana o te Wai: An indigenous perspective on rivers and river management. *River Research and Applications*, 35, 1615 - 1621.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/rra.3365>

SUGGESTED MATERIALS

	Watch and reflect to develop your self-awareness and appreciation for Indigenous teachings: • Hodinohson:ni Creation Story: Lessons for Life. First in the Conversations in Cultural Fluency Series narrated by Rick Hill, Sr., Tuscarora, of the Deyohahá:ge: Indigenous Knowledge Centre of Six Nations Polytechnic • (optional) Sky Woman and the Meaning of Being Human. Reflection on the Haudenosaunee Creation Story by spiritual orientation consultant Dr. Thandazani Mhlanga of The Home of Meaning. REFLECTION QUESTIONS Where do you personally feel resonance with the Skywoman story? Where does it challenge you? What does the concept of interdependent co-arising have to do with Urban Studies?
Week 2 03 Nov	Water Planning and Policy Session led by Janelle Knox-Hayes Indigenous water planning, governance, and stewardship. Water as relation rather than resource: traditional ecological knowledge of waterways, water justice, and community-based water planning. ASSIGNED READINGS • TBC Community Project: Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora (WOKO) Guest Speaker: TBC ASSIGNED READINGS • TBC SUGGESTED READINGS • Black, K. (2017). Framework and Methodology for Improved Indigenous-Led Decision-Making on Water and Wastewater Design and Management. • Muru-Lanning, M. (2012). The Key Actors of Waikato River Co-Governance. <i>AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples</i>, 8, 128 - 136. https://doi.org/10.1177/117718011200800202 • Yates, J., Harris, L. M., & Wilson, N. J. (2017). Multiple ontologies of water: Politics, conflict and implications for governance. <i>Environment and Planning D: Society and Space</i>, 35, 797 - 815. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775817700395 ADDITIONAL MATERIALS Watch and reflect to develop your self-awareness and appreciation for Indigenous teachings:

- [Hodinohson:ni Ecological Knowledge: Living with Your Mother](#). Second in the Conversations in Cultural Fluency Series narrated by [Rick Hill, Sr.](#), Tuscarora, of the [Deyohahá:ge: Indigenous Knowledge Centre of Six Nations Polytechnic](#)
- (optional) [Hodinohson:ni Food Security: Three Sisters Sustainability](#). Third in the Conversations in Cultural Fluency Series narrated by [Rick Hill, Sr.](#), Tuscarora, of the [Deyohahá:ge: Indigenous Knowledge Centre of Six Nations Polytechnic](#)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Where do you personally feel resonance with the Dish with One Spoon story? The Three Sisters story? Where do these stories challenge you?

What does radical interdependence have to do with Urban Studies?

Week 3

10 Nov

Energy Planning and Policy

Session led by Janelle Knox-Hayes

Indigenous energy planning and sovereignty: from tribal energy projects to utility-scale initiatives. Examining shifting policies within government-to-government relationships between nation states and Indigenous nations.

ASSIGNED READINGS

- TBC

Community Project: Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora (WOKO)

Guest Speaker: TBC

ASSIGNED READINGS

- TBC

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Luketina, K., & Parson, P. (2018). New Zealand's Public Participation in Geothermal Resource Development. Lecture Notes in Energy. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78286-7_13
- Parson, P., Luketina, K., & Barton, B. (2025). Geothermal energy, decarbonisation and the just transition: developments in governance and regulation. Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand, 55, 873 - 892. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03036758.2025.2455496>
- Taute, N., Morgan, T., Ingham, J., Archer, R., & Fa'au, T. (2026). Indigenous values in geothermal decision-making: A comparative analysis of governance constraints in Aotearoa New Zealand and Hawai'i. Environmental Impact Assessment Review. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eiar.2026.108569>
- Taute, N., Morgan, T., Ingham, J., Archer, R., & Fa'au, T. (2023). Cultural sustainability thresholds to measure the mauri of indigenous Māori values impacted

	by geothermal engineering projects. Environmental and Sustainability Indicators. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indic.2023.100303 • Taute, N., Morgan, K., Ingham, J., Archer, R., & Fa'au, T. (2022). Māori values in geothermal management and development. <i>AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples</i>, 18, 548 - 555. https://doi.org/10.1177/11771801221118629 ADDITIONAL MATERIALS Watch and reflect to develop your self-awareness and appreciation for Indigenous teachings: • Hodinohson:ni Governance and the Great Law of Peace. Fourth in the Conversations in Cultural Fluency Series narrated by Rick Hill, Sr., Tuscarora, of the Deyohahá:ge: Indigenous Knowledge Centre of Six Nations Polytechnic • Treaty Relations and the Hodinohson:ni Two-Row Wampum Belt: Navigating the Space In Between. Fifth in the Conversations in Cultural Fluency Series narrated by Rick Hill, Sr., Tuscarora, of the Deyohahá:ge: Indigenous Knowledge Centre of Six Nations Polytechnic REFLECTION QUESTIONS Where do you personally feel a need to heal from adverse circumstances and release negative emotions? What practices help you to return to a state of Good Mind? What light does the Two-Row Wampum Belt shed on today's challenges in government-to-government relationships between nation states and Indigenous nations?
Week 4 17 Nov	Planning and Policy Lessons from the Hawaiian Culture Session led by Nina Lytton How does the Hawaiian spirit of radical inclusivity and interdependence set the context for community planning and policy? How does the land itself guide the planning and policy via the ahupua‘a system and the natural laws? How do Hawaiian values inform community engagement across lines of difference? What is resonant with Haudinohson:ni values? With urban planning today? ASSIGNED READING and VIDEOS • Kiho‘iho‘i Kānāwai: Restoring Kānāwai for Island Stewardship, by Pualani Kanaka‘ole Kanahele, Kekuhikuhipuone Kealiikanakaoleohaililani, Huihui Kanahele-Mossman, et al. • Lessons from a thousand years of island sustainability Sam ‘Olu Gon III, PhD TEDxMaui • Ahupua‘a: Native Hawaiians Take Back Their Watersheds —reflection by permaculture instructor Andrew Millison Community Project: Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora (WOKO) Guest Speaker: TBC ASSIGNED READINGS

- TBC

SUGGESTED READINGS

- TBC

SUGGESTED MATERIALS

Watch and reflect to develop your self-awareness and appreciation for Indigenous teachings:

- Reflections on the [Haudinohson:ni Great Law of Peace and the United States Government](#), and [Clan Mothers](#) by @AliMcForever, an Irish writer, historian and independent researcher mapping how empire, finance and media still shape power today
- (optional) [The Hidden Founders of American Democracy](#) | Full Episode | Native America | PBS, 2018
- (Skim for awareness re a settler's reflection on knowing a place) [A Native Hill](#) by Wendell Berry. Source: The Hudson Review, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Winter, 1968-1969), pp. 601-634. Published by: The Hudson Review, Inc.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What are the religious, political, economic and philosophical tensions that create a good or bad mind in colonial societies with respect to Indigenous people, philosophies and traditional ecological knowledge?

What would it take to accept nature as a teacher? To live into essential relationality with the earth?

Week 5
24 Nov

Indigenous Planning Theory and Practice

Speaker: Jacqueline Paul

ASSIGNED READINGS

- Jojola, T. (1998). Indigenous planning: Clans, intertribal confederations, and the history of the all Indian Pueblo council. In L. Sandercock (Ed.), *Making the invisible visible: A multicultural planning history* (pp. 100–119). University of California Press.
- Jojola, T. (2008). Indigenous planning—An emerging context. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 17(1), 37 on–47. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26193203?seq=1>
- Jojola, T. (2013). Indigenous planning: Towards a seven generations model. In R. C. Walker, T. S. Jojola, D. C. Natcher, (Eds.). *Reclaiming Indigenous Planning* (pp. 457-272). McGillQueen's University Press.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS

- Jojola, T. (Host). (2024). PlaceKnowing with Dr. Ted Jojola [Audio podcast]. Apple Podcasts. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/placeknowing-with-dr-ted-jojola/id1740741252>
- Pohatu, Taina. (2013). Āta: Growing respectful relationships. *Āta: Journal of Psychotherapy Aotearoa New Zealand*. 17. 13-26. 10.9791/ajpanz.2013.02.

	Community Project: Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora (WOKO) Guest Speaker: TBC ASSIGNED READINGS • TBC SUGGESTED READINGS TBC
Week 6 01 Dec	Introduction to Aotearoa New Zealand and Māori Planning and Policy Speaker: Jacqueline Paul Introduction to Aotearoa New Zealand's bicultural context: Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Māori environmental governance, and the tradition of Indigenous Māori planning. ASSIGNED READINGS • TBC SUGGESTED READINGS • Thompson-Fawcett M (2023) Identity and research ethos in Indigenous-to-Indigenous planning research. <i>Front. Res. Metr. Anal.</i> 8:1118038. doi: 10.3389/frma.2023.1118038 • Matunga, H. (2000). Decolonising planning: The Treaty of Waitangi, the environment and a dual planning tradition. In P. A. Memon & H. C. Perkins (Eds.), <i>Environmental Planning and Management in New Zealand</i>. Dunmore Press. • Matunga, H. (2006). The concept of indigenous planning as a framework for social inclusion. <i>Planning Quarterly</i>, (161), 24–28. • Matunga, H. (2013). Theorizing Indigenous planning. In R. Walker, T. Jojola, & D. Natcher (Eds.), <i>Reclaiming Indigenous Planning</i> (pp. 2–32). McGill-Queen's University Press. • Matunga, H. (2017). A Revolutionary Pedagogy of/for Indigenous Planning. In L. Porter et al., <i>Planning Theory and Practice: Indigenous Planning: From Principles to Practice</i> (Vol. 18, No. 4) (pp. 639–666). https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2017.1380961 Community Project: Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora (WOKO) Guest Speaker: TBC ASSIGNED READINGS • TBC SUGGESTED READINGS

	• TBC
Week 7 08 Dec	Final Project Proposal Presentations and Discussion 15–20 minute presentations with open discussion. Pathway B preparation and logistics for travel to Aotearoa.

PART II: MISTI Global Classroom: Aotearoa New Zealand

COURSE NUMBERS

TERM	IAP 2027
UNITS	6
DATES	18–31 January 2027
LOCATION	Aotearoa New Zealand, based in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland)
PARTNER	Pūrangakura Kaupapa Māori Research Centre and Wai Ora Kāinga Ora
STATUS	Optional; places limited and by application

Course Description

This Global Classroom brings MIT students to Aotearoa New Zealand to engage with Indigenous approaches to climate resilience and community planning. Partnering with Pūrangakura Kaupapa Māori Research Centre and other local industry partners, students will contribute to Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora, a Māori-led research program addressing climate impacts on waterways and ecosystems essential to kāinga (Māori cultural community sites) wellbeing.

Kāinga, including marae (Māori cultural meeting places) and culturally significant sites, are traditionally located near waterways and face heightened vulnerability to climate change. Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora responds by co-creating place-based, community-led solutions grounded in mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge systems) and intergenerational knowledge sharing.

Over 14 days, students will work alongside Māori researchers and communities, participating in site visits to kāinga and waterways, engaging in collaborative project work, and learning kaupapa Māori research methodologies. The program culminates in a community wānanga (learning forum) where students present their contributions back to Māori researchers, community partners, and stakeholders, honouring the kaupapa Māori principle that research outputs return to the community.

This experience offers students a transformative opportunity to learn how Indigenous communities are leading climate action—not as subjects of study, but as knowledge holders and solution creators. By centering Māori perspectives on water, land, and community, students will develop new frameworks for understanding the intersection of planning, climate, and Indigenous sovereignty.

The program connects directly to Parts I and III of this sequence and advances MISTI's Climate and Sustainability priority area while fostering lasting relationships between MIT and Aotearoa's Indigenous planning community.

Learning Objectives

Students will learn kaupapa Māori research methodologies, understanding how Indigenous research frameworks differ from Western approaches and why community-led, place-based research is essential for climate justice. Through participation in Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora, students will see these methodologies in practice—not as abstract theory but as living approaches to urgent environmental challenges.

Students will develop understanding of Indigenous climate vulnerability and resilience, examining how kāinga (communities centred on marae and ancestral lands) face disproportionate climate impacts due to their relationships with waterways, while also holding knowledge systems essential for adaptation and regeneration.

Students will engage critically with the intersection of Indigenous sovereignty, environmental planning, and climate action, learning how Māori communities are asserting self-determination through place-based solutions aligned with Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations.

Students will build skills in collaborative, cross-cultural research practice, working alongside Māori researchers, community members, and international Indigenous planning scholars. This includes understanding protocols such as pōwhiri (welcoming ceremony) and whakatau (official welcome), and learning to work in ways that respect Indigenous knowledge sovereignty.

Finally, students will engage with the institutional and scholarly landscape of Indigenous planning in Aotearoa, meeting Māori researchers, planners, and community leaders working across iwi authorities, councils, and universities. This situates Aotearoa's approaches within broader conversations about Indigenous-led environmental governance and climate resilience.

Draft Itinerary

The 14-day programme, subject to change, combines cultural immersion, collaborative research, site-based learning, and engagement with Aotearoa New Zealand's planning ecosystem. Students work in three groups of five, each accompanied by an instructor and each hosted in a different rohe (tribal region).

Day 1	Arrival
Monday 18th Jan	Students arrive in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland). The day is set aside for rest following long-haul travel. Students will have time to acclimate, explore the local surroundings, optional gallery visits and nature walk on ancestral mountain.

Day 2	Orientation
Tuesday 19th Jan	The morning will cover MISTI cultural training focused on Aotearoa's cultural context, tikanga Māori (Māori customs and protocols), and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Students will be introduced to

	program goals, expectations for respectful engagement, and the Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora research program. The afternoon is spent in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) (local host to be confirmed), where students engage with whenua (land) as the ground of Māori claims to self-determination, and with a landscape whose recent history makes plain the relationship between land, sovereignty, and planning. Students are welcomed by the ahi kā (local tribal hosts) and present koha (gifts).
Day 3 Wednesday 20th Jan	Toi and Wai Students will visit the New Zealand Maritime Museum Hui Te Ananui A Tangaroa, where they encounter Tāmaki Makaurau as a place constituted by water —waka (canoe) traditions and voyaging knowledge, harbours as sites of arrival and exchange. The afternoon is spent at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki to engage with Māori and Pacific creative practice, and with the ways artists articulate relationships to land, water, and ancestry that formal planning language does not readily hold. The day closes with preparation for the pōwhiri: what will take place, the roles students will hold, the waiata (songs) they will sing, and the koha they will present.
Day 4 Thurs 21st Jan	Formal Welcome Students will be formally welcomed through a pōwhiri (formal Māori welcome ceremony) at Pūrangakura Kaupapa Māori Research Centre (location may change depending on marae availability). The pōwhiri protocol establishes the relationship between manuhiri (visitors) and tangata whenua (people of the land). Following the pōwhiri, students will meet the Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora (WOKO) research team and receive an introduction to kaupapa Māori research methodology —its principles, ethics, and distinction from extractive Western research models. Students will also be introduced to Indigenous data sovereignty as it will govern their own project outputs. Project briefs are being confirmed and groups will be finalised. The evening will be spent preparing for local travel.
Day 5 Fri 22nd Jan	Travel and Settling In Groups travel to their host rohe (regions) and are welcomed onto each host location in the form that the local host prefers. The remainder of the day is given to settling in and to a local activity (TBC based on each location) chosen by the hosts, so that students begin to know where they are before formal engagement begins.
Days 6 Sat 23rd Jan	Visiting Community Partners Students in their groups will visit selected kāinga (Māori villages and communities) and waterway sites connected to the Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora programme, observing firsthand the

	climate challenges facing Māori communities (flooding, erosion, ecosystem degradation) and the place-based solutions being developed. These visits include engagement with local community members and researchers, allowing students to hear directly from those leading climate adaptation work. Students will learn about mātauranga Māori approaches to water and land stewardship as practised in each specific rohe rather than in general. Project work develops alongside these visits, grounded in what each place is contending with.
Days 7 Sun 24th Jan	As above.
Days 8 Mon 25th Jan	As above.
Day 9 Tues 26th Jan	Poroporoaki and Return Travel Each group is farewelled by its host community through poroporoaki before departing for Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland).
Days 10 Weds 27th Jan	Wānanga Location: Vaughan Park The full cohort reconvenes at Vaughan Park for collaborative work. The first session is given to cross-group exchange, in which each group presents what it encountered in its rohe to the other two —the one point at which the cohort shares three regions' worth of field experience. Teams then work continuously on their project contributions, with a mid-point review and an explicit data sovereignty check on every output, confirming what may be shared, with whom, and who holds it afterward.
Day 11 Thurs 28th Jan	Wānanga Location: Vaughan Park As above.
Day 12 Fri 29th Jan	Presentations Location: Pūrangakura Research Office (TBC)

Students will present their work to the Pūrangakura and Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora team. Associate Māori researchers, community partners, and representatives from all three host rohe will be invited to participate.

The wānanga is designed as a reciprocal exchange where students share their analysis and reflections, while community members offer feedback. This format honours the kaupapa Māori principle that research outputs should return to the community. The day concludes with a hākari (feast).

Day 13

Reflection

Sat 30th Jan

Location: Vaughan Park

A closing whakatau (less formal welcome/farewell), group reflection on learning outcomes, and discussion of ongoing connections, including which student group will continue the work into MIT's Indigenous Environmental Planning course the following semester. Time for packing and any outstanding matters.

Day 14

Departure Day

Sunday 31st Jan

Students depart Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland).

THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAMME

Faculty lead Professor Janelle Knox-Hayes will provide instruction connecting field experiences to Indigenous Environmental Planning course content. Each group travels with an instructor throughout the rohe placement. Evening sessions may include readings, group discussions, and journaling. Students will maintain reflective journals documenting their learning and experiences.

Assessments

This course requires active participation in discussions, meetings, and critical reflection on the course material.

TASK	DUE	WEIGHTING
Active Participation	18-31 January 2027	40%
Project Memo	29 January 2027	25%
Presentation	29 January 2027	25%

TASK	DUE	WEIGHTING
Reflection	30 January 2027	10%

Assessment 1: Participation

Participation is assessed across the full fourteen days and covers presence, preparation, and conduct. This includes (but not limited to): engagement in the MISTI cultural training and orientation; observance of cultural protocol during the ceremony, the welcomes onto each host location, and the final celebration; contribution to group project work during the community placement and the gathering at Vaughan Park; and participation in evening sessions, discussions, and the closing event.

Assessment 2: Project Memo

Each group submits a memo of 2–3 pages documenting its project contribution to the Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora (WOKO) programme. The memo should state the question or need the group worked on, describe what was done (literature synthesis, spatial analysis, documentation of community dialogue, communication materials, or as agreed in the project brief), summarise what was found, and identify what remains open for the WOKO team or a future cohort to take forward.

The memo is written for the community and the research team, not for an academic audience. Write it so that a reader in the host community would recognise their own dialogue in it.

All outputs must clear the data sovereignty check confirmed during the wānanga: what may be shared, with whom, and who holds it afterward. Any material the community has not agreed to release must not be included in the memo.

Format: 2–3 pages, single-spaced, 12-point, Word document or PDF. Submitted via Canvas with all group members named.

Assessment 3: Presentation

Each group presents its project contribution to the Pūrangakura and Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora teams, associate researchers, community partners, and representatives from local host communities.

Presentations are 15–20 minutes with time for discussion. This is a reciprocal exchange, not an assessment on performance. Groups will share their analysis and reflections, and community members may respond. Groups should open by acknowledging their hosts and should be prepared to take questions and correction with humility and grace. The grade includes attentiveness during other groups' presentations and the quality of questions asked.

The same data sovereignty conditions apply to slides, images, and any material shown.

Assessment 3: Reflection

Write a closing reflection on what shifted for you over the fourteen days. Feel free to include images if appropriate. Consider how your understanding of kaupapa Māori methodology changed once you saw it practised rather than described; what the community placement taught you; where you found the protocols

difficult or unfamiliar, and what you did with that; and how your positionality has been complicated by being a visitor in this work - or just share your thoughts with us.

This must be entirely your own words. Per the course AI policy, generative AI tools are not to be used for reflections, and no community material may be entered into any AI tool.

Format: one page, Word document or PDF.

Additional Resources

TBC

Index of Māori Terms

Term	Working gloss
ahi kā	Literally ‘burning fires’; continuous occupation of land, and the people who hold that ongoing presence and authority in a place.
Aotearoa	The Indigenous Māori name for New Zealand, commonly rendered ‘land of the long white cloud.’
āta	A principle of deliberateness and care —moving slowly and attentively in how one enters into relationships and work with others.
hākari	A feast, often marking the completion of a gathering or the closing of a formal process.
hapū°	Kinship grouping, often glossed as sub-tribe; the primary unit of political and social organisation, made up of related whānau.
iwi	Extended kinship grouping descended from a common ancestor, often glossed as tribe.
kāinga	Home, village, settlement; in this programme, Māori communities and the places they are centred on, including marae and ancestral sites.
kaupapa	Purpose, topic, guiding principle; the foundation on which something is undertaken.
kaupapa Māori	A Māori philosophical and methodological framework —research and practice by Māori, with Māori, on Māori terms, in which the community holds authority over the knowledge and the benefit returns to them.
koha	A gift or offering, given as an expression of reciprocity and respect rather than as payment.
kōrero	Talk, discussion, story, account.

Term	Working gloss
kōrero toku iho	Oral traditions and knowledge handed down across generations.
mana	Authority, standing, spiritual and political power; held by people, groups, and places, and capable of being upheld or diminished by how others act.
manaakitanga ^o	Hospitality, generosity, and care for others —the obligation hosts hold toward visitors, and the respect visitors owe in return.
manuhiri	Visitors, guests; those being welcomed onto a place. This is your role for most of the programme.
marae	The communal meeting complex of a hapū or iwi, including the wharenui (meeting house) and the ātea (open ground before it); the setting for formal welcome, debate, mourning, and celebration.
Māori	The Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand.
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge —a body of knowledge and a system for creating, holding, and transmitting it, encompassing the environmental, spiritual, genealogical, and practical.
mauri	Life force or life principle present in people, places, waterways, and ecosystems; its state can be diminished or restored, which is why it functions as a measure in environmental assessment.
poroporoaki	A farewell; the formal process of taking leave of hosts and closing a relationship for the time being.
pōwhiri	Formal welcome ceremony that moves manuhiri from outside to inside, establishing the relationship between visitors and tangata whenua through a sequence of calls, speeches, waiata, koha, and hongi.
Pūrangakura	The independent Kaupapa Māori Research Centre hosting the Global Classroom and leading Wai Ora, Kāinga Ora.
rohe	Territory, district, boundaries; the area over which an iwi or hapū holds mana.
Tāmaki Makaurau	The Māori name for Auckland, often rendered “Tāmaki desired by many,” reflecting its long history as a contested and much-settled isthmus.
tangata whenua	People of the land; those who hold ancestral connection and authority in a place.
Te Mana o te Wai	The mana of the water —the principle that the health and wellbeing of a waterbody comes first, before human use, and that the relationship between people and water must be recognised in how water is governed.

Term	Working gloss
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	The Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840. Te Tiriti refers specifically to the Māori text, which the great majority of signatories signed and which differs materially from the English version —a difference at the centre of ongoing constitutional and environmental claims.
tikanga	Customs, protocols, and correct ways of doing things; derived from tika, meaning right or proper. Tikanga varies between iwi and places.
toi	Art, creative practice.
wai	Water.
Wai Ora	Healthy, life-giving water; water in a state that sustains life.
waiata	Song. Waiata support speeches during pōwhiri and other formal occasions; your group will learn at least one.
waka	Canoe or vessel, including the ocean-voyaging waka of migration traditions; also used for the confederations descended from a founding waka.
wānanga	A forum for deep learning, deliberation, and knowledge sharing; also a tertiary institution grounded in mātauranga Māori.
whakatau	A less formal welcome or speech of greeting, used where a full pōwhiri is not required.
whanaungatanga	Relationship and kinship, and the active work of building and maintaining connection —a practice, not a state.
whānau [°]	Family, extended family; also used for a group bound by a common purpose.
whenua	Land. The word also means placenta, and the two senses are not a coincidence —the connection between people and land is understood as one of birth and belonging.

[°] Does not appear in the syllabus, but you will encounter it in Aotearoa.

For a fuller reference, see Te Aka Māori Dictionary at maoridictionary.co.nz.