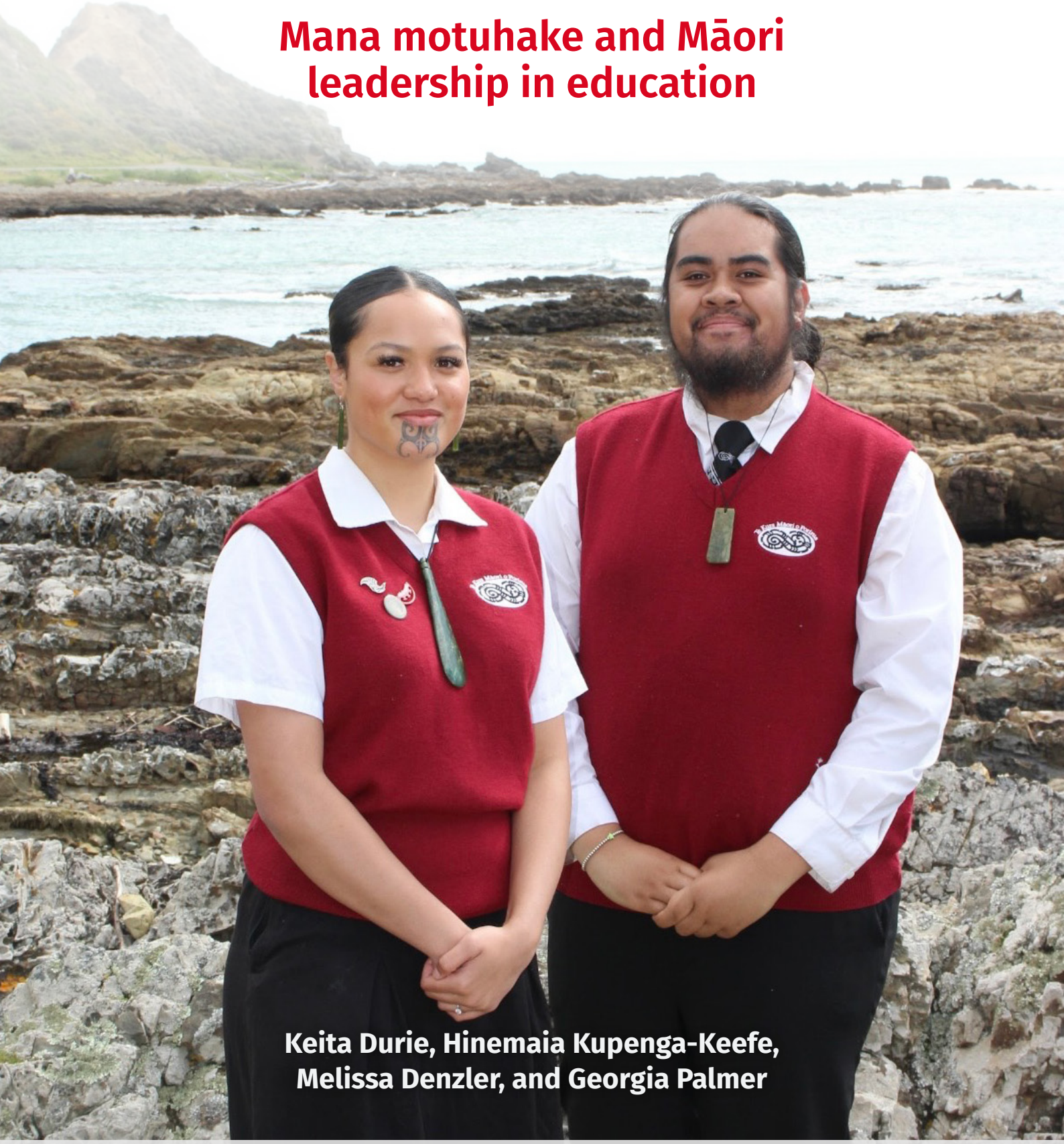
Te Kura Tūtahi

Mana motuhake and Māori leadership in education



Keita Durie, Hinemaia Kupenga-Keefe, Melissa Denzler, and Georgia Palmer

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Keita Durie, Hinemaia Kupenga-Keefe, Melissa Denzler, and Georgia Palmer

2025

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He mihi
Acknowledgements

E kore e mutu te rere o kupu whakamiha ki ngā kura i whai wāhi mai ki tēnei kaupapa rangahau—Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae, TIPENE, Kia Aroha Campus, me Te Kura Māori o Porirua.

We would like to acknowledge all kura involved in this kaupapa. Although one withdrew later, we acknowledge and appreciate their initial contribution and support.

Ka rere tonu ngā mihi ki ngā Pou Māori i whai wāhi mai—ngā tumuaki, kaiako, ākonga, ākonga o mua, me ngā whānau—ki te tuku kōrero, mōhiotanga, me te kōrero mō ngā wheako.

We also acknowledge our critical friends—Arihia Stirling for her kaupapa Māori guidance and Maia Hetaraka for her support in using pūkōrero as a research method.

Hei whakakapi, ka tau ngā mihi ki runga ki te kaitautoko o te kaupapa, Rachel Bolstad, our project sponsor for her continued support of this mahi.

Whakamārama o te taitara

Te Kura Tūtahi refers to the strength of leadership in kaupapa Māori education settings, where kura stand independently in their values, tikanga, and aspirations. The word kura carries a dual meaning as both a place of learning and to something precious, a taonga, reflecting the treasured role these kura hold within their communities. Te Kura Tūtahi acknowledges the strength of these kura to determine their own direction, uphold their tikanga, and maintain their rangatiratanga in education.

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He kupu mō ngā kairangahau
About the authors

Keita Durie (Ngāti Kauwhata, Rangitāne, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāi Te Rangi)

Keita is a kairangahau Māori in Te Wāhanga, NZCER's kaupapa Māori research unit. She is a graduate of kaupapa Māori education and a registered primary kaiako, with teaching experience across Māori-medium and bilingual settings, working within both Te Marautanga o Aotearoa and the New Zealand Curriculum.

Keita is currently pursuing a PhD focused on MANUKURA, a kaupapa Māori education setting. Her research explores the conditions that support ākonga to grow as rangatira mō āpōpō. Her work centres on strengthening Māori leadership in education by understanding the structures, values, and practices that shape and sustain rangatiratanga within learning environments.

She contributes to a range of national kaupapa Māori research and evaluation projects. Her recent publications focus on Māori education, equity, climate education, and culturally sustaining approaches. Keita is passionate about nurturing Māori leadership that is grounded in whakapapa, tikanga, and mātauranga Māori, ensuring it flourishes across generations.

Hinemaia Kupenga-Keefe (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Pāhauwera)

I tipu ake a Hinemaia i te rohe o Te Tairāwhiti ki te akau o Tokomaru. I mua i tana taenga mai ki NZCER he kaiako ia ki te Kōhanga Reo, kua whai wheako hoki ia hei kaiwhakahaere Kōhanga Reo. I a ia i te Kōhanga i tutuki ia tana tohu paerua i roto i te Mātauranga Māori, i mua i tērā i riro i a ia tana tohu paetahi i roto i te reo Māori me te Mātauranga Māori.

Hinemaia is a kairangahau Māori in Te Wāhanga at NZCER. Growing up in te Tairāwhiti and coming through kura kaupapa and kura ā iwi, she hopes to support tamariki mokopuna, ākonga and whānau Māori in education through kaupapa Māori research.

Hinemaia believes this rangahau is important for te iwi Māori, especially those who are kaiako, whānau, and even ākonga as it will encourage more to become leaders, or support future leaders.

E whakatipu ana mātou i ngā rangatira o āpōpō, hei kai tēnei mā rātou.

Melissa Denzler (Ngāti Maniapoto, Te Rarawa)

He Kaitohu Mātauranga me he Kairangahau Māori a Melissa. Born in Te Whanganui-a-Tara and raised in the Hutt Valley, Melissa's ūkaipō is Te Koura marae near Ongarue, between Taumarunui and Te Kuiti.

Melissa is committed to redressing inequities for Māori, which stems from the educational experiences of her whānau as Māori and her 25+ years in education, including roles as kaiako, dean, and senior leader across three diverse English-medium secondary schools.

Melissa joined NZCER as Education Advisor in 2023. She has recently completed a Master of Indigenous Studies at Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka, researching kaiako Māori in education and intersectionality. She remains dedicated to honouring the articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, mana ōrite mō te mātauranga Māori, and culturally sustaining equitable practices.

Georgia Palmer (Ngāi Te Rangi, Ngāti Pikiao, Te Arawa, Ngāti Awa)

Georgia grew up in Kirikiriroa and Pukehina, with roots all over the Bay of Plenty. Before joining NZCER, Georgia completed a bachelor's degree in history and Māori and Indigenous studies and a master's degree in history, followed by a summer Internship with Ngā Pae o te Maramatanga. Her research focuses on incorporating mātauranga Māori in the education system.

Georgia is a Kairanghau Māori for Te Wāhanga at NZCER. Her main purpose is to ensure a safe and supported environment for tamariki in the Aotearoa New Zealand schooling system. In her role, she upholds mana Māori motuhake through applying kaupapa Māori methodologies and providing a platform for Māori voices.

This rangahau aims to understand and support Pou Māori in our communities, encouraging more Māori in becoming leaders. This is an important kaupapa to Georgia, as she believes it supports Māori to becoming the leaders we were born to be, whether that be within schools, hāpori, or within whānau, hapū, and iwi. The outcomes of this rangahau will influence Māori to embrace their rangatiratanga.

He whakarāpopoto
Executive summary

This rangahau explores how mana motuhake is lived, learned, and led within kaupapa Māori education. Drawing on kōrero with Pou Māori across four kura—Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae, TIPENE, Kia Aroha Campus, and Te Kura Māori o Porirua—the rangahau reveals diverse, yet interconnected, perspectives of Māori leadership in action.

Through pūkōrero with tumuaki, ākonga, graduates, kaiako, and whānau, the findings show that leadership in kaupapa Māori education is collective, relational, and grounded in values such as whanaungatanga, aroha, and whakapapa. The rangahau highlights how each kura enacts and nurtures mana motuhake through language revitalisation, intergenerational commitment, centring identity, and upholding Māori ways of being and doing.

Each case study demonstrates the role kura play in growing confident, capable Pou Māori, leaders who are well connected to their iwi, hapū, and whānau, and who are supported to lead in both te ao Māori and te ao whānui.

Key findings include:

- Leadership is relational and collective—grown through service, example, and shared responsibility.
- Leadership is lived—shown through everyday acts, roles, and contributions.
- Mana motuhake is foundational—demonstrated through te reo, tikanga, expectations, and autonomy over learning.
- Whānau are active partners—often across generations, with many returning to kura as kaiako or mentors.
- Success is defined by Māori and for Māori—where identity and achievement aren't separate concepts, but are deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

Kaupapa Māori education nurtures mana motuhake by providing the conditions to grow leadership in ways that are deliberate and connected to te ao Māori. These kura are places of learning, they are "kāinga rua", whare wānanga, and "sites of transformation". By reclaiming, restoring, and reimagining mana motuhake on Māori terms, they are living expressions of tino rangatiratanga.

1. He kupu whakataki
Introduction

Te Kura Tūtahi |Mana motuhake and leadership in education is a kaupapa Māori research project led by Te Wāhanga, Rangahau Mātauranga o Aotearoa—New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). The project aims to support Pou Māori (leaders) in kaupapa Māori education settings to realise their leadership aspirations.

This rangahau builds on the findings of *Me aro ki te hā o Hine-ahu-one—Wāhine Māori in Leadership* (Durie et al., 2023) commissioned by the PPTA. That study highlighted the critical roles of wāhine Māori in their kura and revealed disparities between their experiences in English-medium and kaupapa Māori secondary settings. In English-medium schools, wāhine Māori often shouldered multiple responsibilities alone, whereas in kaupapa Māori settings, leadership role and support systems were more equitably shared. These findings signalled the need for further exploration of leadership practices within kaupapa Māori education settings.

This rangahau focuses solely on kaupapa Māori education settings to explore how mana motuhake (self-determining leadership) and leadership aspirations are nurtured within these spaces. The report highlights best leadership practices by drawing on the lived experiences of Pou Māori—leaders identified by their kura as carrying its kaupapa. These leaders include ākonga (students), whānau, graduates, kaiako, school leadership, and kaumātua (elders). By capturing these insights, this rangahau aims to strengthen and sustain leadership pathways, ensuring the continued development of future Pou Māori.

Ngā pātai | Research questions

This study aims to answer the primary research question: *How is mana motuhake realised in kaupapa Māori education settings?* To address this, we also explore several sub-questions:

1. How is mana motuhake defined and understood by Pou Māori?
2. How can mana motuhake be effectively realised within these educational contexts?
3. What conditions (practices and principles) nurture Pou Māori?
4. What opportunities or challenges do Pou Māori experience?

Whakatakotoranga | Report structure

Section 2 outlines our methodology.

Section 3 provides a brief scan of the literature, setting the foundation for the case study findings that follow in section 4.

Section 4 – Findings: Presents case studies of Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae, TIPENE, Kia Aroha Campus, and Te Kura Māori o Porirua

Section 5 addresses the research pātai, drawing on the findings and literature.

Section 6 concludes the report with key recommendations and suggested next steps.

2. He rangahau kaupapa Māori
Methodology

This rangahau is grounded in kaupapa Māori methodology, a framework that prioritises Māori aspirations, knowledge, and values. It is research by Māori, with Māori, and for Māori (Pihama, 2010; G. H. Smith, 2003; L. T. Smith, 1999) ensuring tikanga, relationships, and mana motuhake remain central. More than just data collection, it is a process of whakawhanaungatanga (relationship-building) based on respect, collaboration, and cultural integrity (Hetaraka, 2023).

The foundational work of scholars such as Graham Hingangaroa Smith (2003), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Leonie Pihama (2010), and others informs this methodology. Their scholarship and research actively challenge dominant Western paradigms, reaffirm Māori ways of knowing, and support transformational change.

Key mātāpono guide this approach, including:

- **Aroha ki te tangata**: Show respect for people.
- **Kanohi kitea**: Be present and engage face-to-face.
- **Titiro, whakarongo, kōrero**: Observe, listen, and then speak.
- **Manaaki i te tangata**: Be generous, sharing and hosting with care.
- **Kia tūpato**: Act with caution and mindfulness.
- **Kaua e takahi i te mana o te tangata**: Never trample on the mana of others.
- **Kaua e mahaki**: Avoid flaunting knowledge or expertise.
- **Mā te Māori**: Ensure the research benefits Māori.
- **Kia ngākau pono, kia mākohakoha, kia manawanui**: Act with integrity, openness, and perseverance (L. T. Smith, 1999, 2021).

Drawing on these principles, our team worked through mātāpono relevant to the kaupapa of this rangahau in terms of mana motuhake and leadership in kaupapa Māori education settings.

Ngā mātāpono o te rangahau | Guiding research principles:

- **Whakapono**—a strong belief and trust in Māori systems, processes, and perspectives. As kairangahau, we honour participants and their whakapapa, upholding tikanga, and grounding our mahi in Māori beliefs and worldviews.
- **Ringa raupā**—embracing the concept of “he tangata ringa raupā” in our engagement with Pou Māori across Māori communities, drawing on Graham Smith (2024).
- **Hūmarie**—acting with humility, care, and respect in all interactions.
- **Whakawhiti kōrero**—creating a safe space for participants to share their stories. authentically, honoring their mana without imposing rigid Western interview structures.
- **Taonga tuku iho**—recognising and valuing the mātauranga shared as taonga to be upheld and protected.

Te huarahi kohi kōrero | Pathways for gathering kōrero

This rangahau explores leadership and mana motuhake in kaupapa Māori education, focusing on how kura Māori grow strong, confident pou (leaders). Through whakawhiti kōrero (a conversation and/or semi-structured interview) with past and present ākonga, whānau, kaiako and tumuaki, we explore the values, challenges, and successes of Māori leadership in education.

To ensure Māori perspectives shaped the research, we worked with Arihia Stirling as a critical friend. Arihia is a respected leader in kaupapa Māori education, known for her long-standing role as tumuaki of Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae and her national influence in Māori-medium and kaupapa Māori education.

Interview questions were shared with each kura in advance, allowing them to tailor the approach to their own priorities and mana motuhake.

Te whakairo i te rangahau | Research design for transformation

This rangahau uses a multiple case study design, drawing from a range of kaupapa Māori education settings, including Kura Kaupapa Māori, Kura ā Iwi, Kura Motuhake, and Māori boarding schools.

Case studies allow for an in-depth understanding of Māori leadership in real-world contexts (Yin, 2017), highlighting how mana motuhake is practised across different kura. The research explores leadership structures, teaching approaches, and community engagement to understand how kura prepare and nurture Pou Māori to lead with confidence and a strong sense of identity.

Te kōwhiringa o ngā kura | *Selecting kura through whanaungatanga*

The selection of kura was guided by whanaungatanga, drawing on existing relationships and connections within kaupapa Māori education. Kura were intentionally selected to represent diversity across different types of schooling models, aiming to include representation from the various categories of kaupapa Māori education settings (i.e. Kura Kaupapa Māori, Kura ā-Iwi, Kura Motuhake, Kura Hourua, and Māori boarding schools).

Kura were invited to participate based on their demonstrated commitment to Māori leadership and willingness to contribute their stories to this rangahau. The selection process deliberately aimed to include at least one example from each of the main types of kura to ensure the research captured a broad range of Māori leadership contexts. Participation was voluntary.

As this rangahau takes a strengths-based approach to highlighting best practice in Māori leadership, all kura were given the option of being named. Each kura chose to be identified, reflecting their confidence in their kaupapa and willingness to contribute to a broader understanding of effective kaupapa Māori leadership. The kura involved in this rangahau are listed in Table1.

TABLE 1: **Kura involved in this rangahau**

	Kura	Type	Years	Location
1	Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae	Kura ā-Iwi	1–13	Mangere, Tāmaki Makaurau
2	TIPENE—St Stephen's School	Charter school, Māori boarding school	9–13	Bombay, Tāmaki Makaurau
3	Kia Aroha Campus	Kura motuhake (Special character)	1–13	Ōtara, Tāmaki Makaurau
4	Te Kura Māori o Porirua	Kura ā-Iwi	1–13	Porirua, Te Whanganui-ā-Tara

Ko wai ngā Pou Māori | *Identifying leadership within kura*

Each kura identified Pou Māori—key individuals who uphold and carry the values of their kaupapa Māori setting. The term Pou Māori is used in this rangahau to reflect leadership that is based on responsibility and service rather than formal titles. Pou Māori included ākonga, whānau, kaiako, tumuaki, and graduates, representing a broad view of leadership within kura Māori.

Leadership in this context is relational and collective rather than hierarchical. Pou Māori are those who actively contribute to the strength and sustainability of their kura and communities. Their insights provide a real-world perspective on what effective Māori leadership looks like in practice. All Pou Māori were given the option to be named in this rangahau. All participants were provided with written and oral information about the research and consented to their involvement.

Whakawhiti kōrero took place during Term 3, 2024 and Term 1, 2025. Whakawhiti kōrero were guided by a set of semi-structured questions, and participants had the option to speak in Māori, English, or both. With their permission, whakawhiti kōrero were recorded and fully transcribed.

Each participant received a copy of their transcript to review and amend, along with a voucher or NZCER book as a koha. Kura and participants were later invited to review sections of the draft report containing their kōrero, to ensure accuracy and intent were preserved. A final copy of the report was shared with all participants.

Te tātari o ngā kōrero | Analysing kōrero through a Māori lens

The data gathered through whakawhiti kōrero were analysed using a kaupapa Māori lens, ensuring each kura maintained its own mana motuhake and voice in the process. Each kura navigated a mix of pūrākau and pūkōrero approaches in a way that reflected its distinct context, allowing for a deeper and more layered understanding of the experiences shared (Hetaraka, 2024; Lee-Morgan, 2009).

Pūrākau refers to traditional Māori narratives and stories that contain cultural knowledge, while pūkōrero, as defined by Maia Hetaraka (2024), combines "'pū' being the original source, 'kōrero' discussion." (p. 18). These culturally grounded methods honour the stories of Māori in an authentic way. Some analyses followed a "whakapapa" pūkōrero approach, recognising whakapapa as more than genealogy—it is a framework for structuring knowledge, relationships, and experiences (Graham, 2009; Te Rito, 2007). As Taani (2022) explains, whakapapa serves as a methodological tool that allows researchers to "look to the past in order to forge the future" (p. 118).

Te mana o te kōrero | Māori data sovereignty in practice

Te mana o te kōrero acknowledges the authority and integrity of Māori knowledge and its rightful protection.

This project actively applied the principles of Mana Raraunga—Māori Data Sovereignty (Te Mana Raraunga, 2018), with a commitment to upholding rangatiratanga by ensuring kura and Pou Māori retained ownership over their own data in meaningful and practical ways.

As part of this commitment, all participants were offered the opportunity to receive and review their transcripts, maintaining autonomy over their kōrero. This commitment extended to the kura level, with each kura invited to receive and hold the transcripts of their Pou Māori. Most participants chose to receive their kōrero, and all agreed to share it with their kura.

This process reflected our understanding that knowledge is taonga, and that returning kōrero to kura helps safeguard their ability to protect and guide their own narratives in alignment with their tikanga and aspirations (Te Mana Raraunga, 2018).

Ngā hononga, ngā herenga *| Upholding whanaungatanga in research practice*

Ngā hononga, ngā herenga recognises the ethical relationships and responsibilities that underpin Māori research.

Our approach also upheld the principle of whanaungatanga, recognising the relationships, responsibilities, and obligations that exist within the Māori education sector. From the outset, we engaged with Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori and Ngā Kura ā-Iwi o Aotearoa to share our intentions and seek their support for this rangahau. We also offered our tautoko for their own research aspirations where possible.

To build trust and uphold these principles, we approached each kura through whanaungatanga and existing relationships in the sector. We met kanohi ki te kanohi, offered koha and kai, and ensured informed consent was obtained from all participants.

He kōrero tuku iho, he mana motuhake *| Autonomy and the right to withhold or shar**e***

He kōrero tuku iho, he mana motuhake reinforces the principle that mātauranga shared is taonga, and that tino rangatiratanga must be respected.

Importantly, each kura was given full autonomy over their data, including the decision about whether their kōrero would be included in the final report. One kura, after sharing in-depth and valuable kōrero tuku iho with our team, later chose to withdraw. We acknowledge the importance of kura being able to retain and protect their mātauranga for their own uri (descendants). As part of our commitment to Mana Raraunga, we honoured this position and remained deeply grateful for the opportunity to meet with them and hear their kōrero. We also acknowledge we are working in the wider context of the ongoing mamae many whānau, hapū, and iwi carry from extractive and harmful past research practices. We support the assertion of mana motuhake—the belief that research about Māori, and especially kura kaupapa Māori education, should be led by Māori, for Māori.

3. Māori leadership: Exploring the literature to lay the foundation

This section draws on existing rangahau on Māori leadership as a foundation on which we can build further knowledge. It helps contextualise the insights shared by kura and Pou Māori, ensuring that their experiences add to, extend, and deepen our understanding of leadership within kaupapa Māori education settings. Key themes include the importance of Māori values, the relational and collective nature of leadership, the contributions of wāhine Māori leaders, and the ways Māori leadership interfaces with broader education systems.

Indigenous leadership and Māori perspectives

Leadership studies have historically been influenced by Eurocentric traditions, with less attention paid to culturally specific Indigenous approaches. Māori leadership draws on intergenerational knowledge, spiritual values, and collective responsibilities that are situated within whānau, hapū, and iwi structures. These features differ from the individual-centred and hierarchical approaches commonly found in "mainstream"[1] leadership models. Indigenous leadership practices globally, including those of Māori, are increasingly acknowledged in research literature for their focus on community, interdependence, and holistic wellbeing (UNESCO, 2024).

Māori leadership also reflects broader Indigenous aspirations for mana motuhake and the maintenance of knowledge systems grounded in te ao Māori. Frameworks such as Tū Rangatira outline culturally grounded leadership principles that guide practice in education settings (Ministry of Education, 2010).

The importance of Māori values in leadership

Māori leadership practices are underpinned by values that prioritise relational and collective wellbeing. Haar et al. (2019) provide an overview of leadership literature in Aotearoa, identifying the ongoing influence of Western frameworks while noting increased recognition of Māori values such as manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, and whakaiti. These are described as central to what Haar et al. term as "relational wealth" and are applicable in both Māori and mainstream settings (p. 623).

Tikanga Māori establishes behavioural expectations that contribute to inclusive and community-focused leadership. As Haar et al. (2019) explain, "leadership practices grounded in tikanga Māori provide essential behavioural guidelines" (p. 623). For example, manaakitanga emphasises care and reciprocity, demonstrating a leadership style that prioritises people. Similarly, hūmārie is considered "a cornerstone of leadership sustenance", as it strengthens mana and supports thoughtful leadership (Ruru et al., 2017, p. 10).

1 "Mainstream" is used deliberately and critically. Milne (2013) describes it as "a paternalistic euphemism for an education system which normalises practices that damage Māori and Pasifika learners" (p. 4). It highlights the dominance of Western norms in education and leadership.

In addition to Māori approaches, a number of Western leadership frameworks—such as servant leadership, compassionate leadership, quiet leadership—also prioritise values such as humility, care, and collaboration (Wylie et al., 2020). While these approaches share some philosophical alignment to Māori leadership, they remain less central in mainstream leadership discourse and institutional practice.

Tū Rangatira describes seven interrelated roles of educational leadership—such as He Kaitiaki (guardian) and He Kanohi Matara (visionary)—which are embedded in values such aroha, tiaki, āwhina, and mana-enhancing practices (Ministry of Education, 2010, pp 12–14). These roles emphasise leadership as service to others and are grounded in the cultural, spiritual, and social dimensions of te ao Māori.

Leadership within Māori contexts is generally described as relational and collective rather than individual or authority-based. Mana, for example, is not self-declared but bestowed by the community. This aligns with broader understandings of leadership that centre interdependence and shared responsibility.

Leadership as relational and collective

Māori leadership aligns with the collective values of te ao Māori. Māori leadership is described as being based on relationships, shared responsibilities, and interconnectedness across generations. The term “rangatira”, derived from “ranga-tira” (to weave a group together), reflects the role of leaders in maintaining cohesion and unity within communities (Whaanga, 2012). Leadership is also understood as stewardship that bridges past, present, and future generations (Haar et al., 2019).

The concept of kaitiakitanga is central to this approach. It reinforces the view that leadership involves responsibilities beyond human relationships to include the protection of land, waterways, and natural resources (Bolstad & Durie, 2024; Ministry of Education, 2010; UNESCO, 2024).

Mead (2003) explains that traditional leadership roles were often determined by whakapapa, tribal alliances, and spiritual attributes such as mana and tapu. These elements remain significant today, although modern Māori leaders must also navigate political and institutional systems. The ability to uphold traditional values while engaging with contemporary governance structures is seen as a significant aspect of Māori leadership.

Collective responsibility is particularly important in the leadership practices of wāhine Māori. Ruru et al. (2017) describe how wāhine Māori engage in “building relationships, maintaining mana, and staying connected to whānau.” (p. 9). This relational approach to leadership ensures that decision-making is inclusive and reflects the aspirations of the wider community. Leadership is not about holding power over others but about enabling others and ensuring that responsibilities are shared (Durie et al., 2023).

Challenges of Māori leadership in Western contexts

Māori leaders often experience tensions when working within systems that prioritise Western leadership models or institutions that operate on values such as individualism, competition, and rigid hierarchy. Katene (2010) and Mead (2006) discuss the cultural tensions Māori leaders face as they balance traditional values alongside contemporary expectations. These challenges often require Māori leaders to rely on their cultural principles while also adapting to a “globalised environment” (Katene, 2010, p. 11).

Institutional barriers, including cultural taxation and systemic racism, can further shape leadership experiences. Cultural taxation refers to the additional burden placed on Māori leaders, who are often expected to fulfil both their professional roles and broader cultural responsibilities such as mentoring, advocacy, and representation on diversity committees. Durie et al. (2023) highlight the negative impact of these barriers on kaiako Māori, particularly wāhine Māori in leadership positions. The pressure to manage these competing demands can lead to burnout and reduced opportunities for career advancement. Addressing these challenges requires ongoing research and systemic reforms to ensure that Indigenous leadership is recognised and supported.

The UNESCO GEM Report (2024) notes similar challenges globally. It reports that many school leaders lack access to structured training and that fewer than two-thirds of countries use open and competitive recruitment processes. These factors can limit pathways to leadership, especially for underrepresented grounds such as Indigenous educators and women.

"Me aro ki te hā o Hine-ahu-one"[2]—Wāhine Māori in leadership

The leadership practices of wāhine Māori contribute significantly to collective and culturally responsive leadership in education. These approaches often draw on spiritual, cultural, and intergenerational knowledge. Ruru et al. (2017) identify "humility, aroha (compassion), and manaakitanga" as foundational to wāhine Māori leadership (p. 10), enabling leaders to support others while sustaining their own wellbeing and cultural integrity.

Durie et al. (2023) highlight the importance of studying wāhine Māori leadership within kaupapa Māori settings, where traditional values interact with modern educational environments. This offers a valuable perspective on bicultural and community-based leadership and its contribution to Māori development. Wāhine Māori leaders are recognised as knowledge holders, advocates for Indigenous rights, and central to building resilience and cohesion in communities.

Gaps in the literature

Despite increasing rangahau on Māori leadership, several gaps remain. Haar et al. (2019) and Katene (2010) identify a need for more research led by Māori scholars that centres Indigenous leadership values and perspectives. Durie et al. (2023) note that there is limited research on the historical and lived experiences of wāhine Māori leaders.

Additionally, further research is needed to explore how Māori leadership practices are evolving in response to contemporary challenges such as digital transformation, climate change, globalisation, and changes in educational policy and governance (UNESCO, 2024).

Summary

The literature highlights key features of Māori leadership, including the integration of Māori values, relational and collective leadership, and the specific contributions of wāhine Māori leaders. It also points to the systemic challenges faced in navigating Western-dominated leadership structures and the need for leadership development that acknowledges and supports Indigenous worldviews. The next sections of this report present the findings from four case study kura, illustrating how these leadership principles were enacted in practice and identifying opportunities to support the continued development of Māori leadership in Kaupapa Māori education.

2 Me aro koe ki te hā o Hineahuone - Te Aka Māori Dictionary

4. He kitenga
Findings

In this section, we present the findings from four case study kura using pūkōrero—the voices and experiences of those within each kura (Hetaraka, 2024)—to illustrate their impact and the conditions that nurture mana motuhake. The kura we visited—Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae, TIPENE - St Stephen's School, Kia Aroha Campus, and Te Kura Māori o Porirua—demonstrate different expressions of kaupapa Māori education, each supporting the wellbeing and success of their ākonga in ways grounded in te ao Māori.

To understand these kura and their contributions, we engaged with Pou Māori—leaders who were identified by each kura as carrying its kaupapa. They included ākonga, whānau, graduates, leadership, kaiako, and kaumātua. Through their pūkōrero, we highlight the impact of these kura, the challenges they navigate, and the practices that strengthen their communities.

Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae

Ko Puketaapapa, ko Te Ara Puueru ngaa maunga

Ko Te Maanukanuka oo Hoturoa te moana

Ko Puukaki, ko Makaurau, ko Te Puea ngaa marae

Ko Te Waiohua, ko Te Akitai, ko Te Ahiwaru ngaa hapuu

Ko Waikato te iwi.

Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae (Ngā Tapuwae) is a kura ā-iwi in Māngere, Tāmaki Makaurau. Established in 1996, the kura is guided by the values of te ao Māori, with a strong Waikato iwi connection. The kura upholds the whakataukī, *"Inā te mahi he rangatira"* reflecting its dedication to nurturing leadership, rangatiratanga, and excellence among its ākonga.

Ngā Tapuwae provides full immersion Māori language education from Tau 0 to Tau 13, centred on te reo and tikanga Māori. Most ākonga whakapapa to Māori and Pacific communities, with many whānau maintaining intergenerational ties spanning four generations over 50 years, reflecting their shared commitment to the kaupapa of the kura and vision for Māori education.

Hītori o Ngā Tapuwae[3]

Ngā Tapuwae carries a rich history, with its name holding great significance to the surrounding area. Māngere No. 2 Secondary School was its original name as they sought out a better name for the college. After careful deliberations, Ngā Tapuwae was given to the first community college in Aotearoa. The name Ngā Tapuwae was chosen, traditionally used for the Pūkaki Lagoons—Ngā Tapuwae o Mataoho. These lagoons mark the footsteps of Mataoho, the Māori deity of volcanoes. Another meaning, Ngā Tapuwae o Ngā Tīpuna (footsteps of the ancestors), acknowledges the gathering of the old people on the lands on which the college/kura sits.

3 https://www.ngatapuwae.school.nz/history

In the declaration of the government under the New Zealand Settlement Act on 10 July 1863, the Crown confiscated all the land at Ihumātao and surrounding lands of Māngere. According to kōrero from kaumātua Eru Thompson and Maurice Wilson, the elders vacated homes and came to the land that the kura is now built on at Ngā Tapuwae to wait on their whānau to gather what they could carry, and travel on over the Mangatāwhiri waters to head to Waikato under the instructions of the Government of the time. Many of these kaumātua (who fled to Waikato) "uri" are students at the kura today.

A significant landmark of that time is the tōtara tree that stands at the Ngā Tapuwae community centre grounds. These buildings were paid for by huge fundraising efforts of the Māori community in the 1970s. Despite attempts to remove this beloved landmark for community development, the tree remains, a testament to its tapu status and a taonga for the community.

> [As a teenager], I recall watching them try to 'fell' the tree and the tractor raising up and tipping over on to itself side, contractors tried again then got scared to touch it. (Arihia Stirling)

The visual identity of Ngā Tapuwae reflects its kaupapa. The original monogram by Hone Pirihi, the first art teacher of Ngā Tapuwae College, represents a stairway to knowledge and success. Three huia feathers symbolise leadership, kinship, and prosperity, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These elements were later enhanced with Ngā Niho Taniwha patterns associated with mana whenua and Tainui, plus four-toed footprints from the original Ngā Tapuwae College.

> In te ao Māori, five toe footprints represent the living, and four toe prints represent our people in spirit—hence Ngā Tapuwae o ngā Tīpuna. (Arihia Stirling)

The journey of Ngā Tapuwae included significant transitions. In 1996, Ngā Tapuwae College, Māngere Intermediate, and Southern Cross Primary merged to form Southern Cross Campus. In 1995, Te Kura o Ngā Tapuwae began transitioning toward independence. In 2010, it officially gained independent school status, opening as a wharekura on 3 February, marking its commitment to Māori educational excellence through te reo and tikanga Māori.

Today, Ngā Tapuwae is a proud member of the Ngā Kura ā-Iwi collective, maintaining its Waikato identity while supported by Te Waiōhua, Te Akitai, and Te Ahiwaru. It remains a community cornerstone, with whānau committed to providing the best education for their mokopuna.

Ngā Pou o Ngā Tapuwae | Participants

In Term 3, 2024, we conducted nine whakawhiti kōrero with 16 Pou Māori, including four group kōrero and five individual kōrero (Table 2).

TABLE 2: **Pou Māori**

	Pou Māori (participants)	**Tūranga**
1	Arihia Stirling *(Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Ngāti Porou, Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Whātua)* Harley Mariu *(Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Tūwharetoa)* Olivia Chapman *(Te Au Pōuri, Ngāti Raukawa)*	Tumuaki, hikuroa Tumuaki tuarua, hikuroa Tumuaki tuatoru, hikuroa
2	Tātai o te rangi Reedy *(Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Ngāti Porou, Te Aitanga a Māhaki)*	Hikuroa (graduate)
3	Hauāuru Rae *(Ngāpuhi, Waikato)*	Hikuroa (graduate)
4	Horiana Cassidy-Brown *(Ngāti Porou, Te Uri o Hau, Ngāti Whātua ki Kaipara, Te Whenua Moemoeā)*	Hikuroa (graduate)
5	Aria Mahuika *(Ngāti Porou)* Kingston Pihema *(Waikato, Ngāpuhi, Te Arawa)* Taihaere Maika *(Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Maniapoto, Te Arawa, Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Whātua)*	Ākonga
6	Stevie Mason *(Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Pūkekō, Ngāti Tarāwhai, Kāi Tahu)* Theresa Horomia *(Ngāti Porou, Ngāpuhi)* Mariam Bahar *(Tangata tiriti nō Sri Lanka)*	Kaiako, hikuroa Kaiako, hikuroa Kaiako
7	Jacky Maangi *(Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Waikato, Ngāi Tahu)*	Whānau, hikuroa
8	Lauren Pompey *(Waikato, Ngāti Hako)* Tepara Koti *(Waikato, Ngāti Maniapoto)*	Whānau, hikuroa Whānau, hikuroa
9	Tuatea Chapman *(Te Awa Tupua)*	Whānau

Ngā pūkōrero

These pūkōrero share the lived experiences of the Pou Māori interviewed—including hikuroa (graduates), whānau, kaiako, ākonga, and leadership—who speak to the influence of Ngā Tapuwae in their lives and how it shapes the future "uri o Mataoho" (descendants of Mataoho).

The analysis followed a "whakapapa" pūkōrero approach, recognising whakapapa not just as genealogy, but as a framework for structuring knowledge, relationships, and lived experience (Graham, 2009; Te Rito, 2007). The whakapapa method unfolds kōrero in layers, beginning with a foundational pūkōrero that sets the context, followed by pūkōrero that deepen and expand the narrative. A thematic analysis was woven throughout each pūkōrero, drawing out recurring patterns and insights. This approach acknowledges the interconnected relationships, histories, and perspectives embedded in the kōrero. As Taani (2022) explains, whakapapa serves as a methodological tool that allows kairangahau to "hoki whakamuri, kia anga whakamua—look to the past in order to forge the future." (p. 119).

Pūkōrero: A legacy of mana motuhake and resilience

A history of struggle and strength

Ngā Tapuwae was born from the need for a safe space where Māori identity, language, and culture were celebrated. Harley Mariu (tumuaki tuarua, hikuroa) reflected on the sacrifices made by those who came before:

> We were the kids that experienced the racism for our fight, but we weren't the teachers or the adults that had the big fight. That was Mā Stirling, Nanny Pani, and Papa Te Kepa … I think in giving back, it's really giving back, making their fight worth it.

Arihia Stirling, Harley Mariu, Te Kepa Stirling

A pivotal moment occurred in the mid 1990s, when ākonga and kaiako Māori faced overt discrimination. Arihia Stirling (tumuaki, hikuroa) recalled an incident at a whole-school prize giving, where Māori students were publicly told by the then chairperson of Southern Cross Campus that their language was not needed, and there was a big roar of support from the non-Māori students (900 students) for the chairperson's statement:

> She said, 'You do not need your language. You need to learn English because that's what you're here for'.

Arihia recalled:

> I looked at my students and my mother [Pani Stirling], who was HOD Māori at the time, and said 'we need to leave, this is not safe'. One of our parents stood and went to the front of the assembly to distract the audience and challenged the chairperson for her comments and received booing and disrespectful remarks. The principal and senior management team of the time didn't want to challenge the comments, so we knew it was no longer safe to sit within those walls. I got to my feet and said to my students, 'e tū! Hoki atu ki te marae'.

The hostility escalated to physical violence, as ākonga and kaiako left the gym:

> We knew we had to get out of there. We went to the marae. We locked ourselves in and they came around the marae … smashed up the outside of our buildings, all our things … it was so painful … the kids were crying … it was sad. Teachers wanted to cry but we couldn't. (Arihia Stirling)

This moment became the catalyst for establishing a school where Māori could learn and thrive without fear. As Arihia affirmed:

> If there's nothing else, we all learn, we are going to be safe being Māori in our own school... we just wanted our own mana motuhake and our own Māori department.

Harley added, "you risked your life coming to school".

Lauren Pompey (whānau, hikuroa) reflected on her time at the kura during the turbulent early years, describing the reality of being an ākonga in a system that wasn't built for Māori:

> We were having to fight every week here at school, and it just engendered a sense of 'You don't like me because I'm Māori. You don't like what I do because I'm Māori. Therefore, I'm going to show you' ... Mana motuhake, in a sense, was bred for me back then, and that I literally fought for my own mana motuhaketanga in te ao Māori and tikanga.

She recalled how racism extended into classrooms, with teachers refusing to engage with ākonga Māori:

> We had teachers in mainstream that were absolutely against us, refused to teach us, would just sit us in the back of the class, not engage with us at all. We would ask questions that wouldn't be answered.

Building identity and excellence through mana motuhake

Ngā Tapuwae is founded on the principle of mana motuhake—the right of Māori to self-determination in education. Arihia recalled the high standards that existed from the beginning:

> We had the best results back then, because we're doing what Mum [Pani Stirling] and Dad [Te Kepa Stirling] taught us to do ... keeping the same values of manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga.

Lauren reinforced that even in the face of adversity, Ngā Tapuwae students achieved the highest results:

> The Māori students in Ngā Tapuwae College at the time were the most successful ... we do what we've always done, and what I think is a true example of mana motuhake and true Māori leadership, we just worked hard, and we do what we do best, and we just do us. We do the Ngā Tapuwae way. We live and breathe it, and we show people how successful we are through our actual success.

Harley emphasised that Ngā Tapuwae continues to set high expectations academically for ākonga, removing an achieved NCEA standard to push them toward excellence:

> We only give them excellence [exemplars]. So, there's only one level.

This unapologetic approach is central to their philosophy:

> We don't apologise for the stance we take in our mana motuhake. This is our home, but we're okay to share. (Harley Mariu)

Leadership grounded in whanaungatanga and aroha

Leadership at Ngā Tapuwae is a collective responsibility, extending beyond formal titles to include all who contribute to the kaupapa. From senior ākonga mentoring younger students to kaiako strengthening leadership within their classrooms, leadership is homegrown and grounded in kaupapa Māori. Olivia Chapman (tumuaki tuatoru, hikuroa) highlighted how former ākonga return, ensuring that leadership remains connected to its values:

> We know what works and we know what doesn't work for our kids, and the beauty about Harley and I being a part of all of those transitions is, OK, cool, we can take a bit of everything and mould it together.

Arihia reinforced this approach, explaining how they develop their own leaders:

> We train our own workforce too. What that does, it keeps our little cocoon, knowing our culture. We don't have to teach these values to someone else because they come in with the value system in check,

Harley acknowledged historical ties between Māori and Pasifika communities, despite the tensions that existed in the past:

> In all of that animosity, there were still those relationships with our P.I. [Pacific Island] whānau that we held on to. And they held on to us.

Arihia emphasised their direct relationship with ākonga:

> The six hours that they are here should be a joyful experience but also should be an experience that we teach them values and standards.

Future aspirations: Strengthening the legacy of Ngā Tapuwae

The aspirations for Ngā Tapuwae are clear: continue challenging academic systems while ensuring Māori education remains a space of excellence and self-determination.

Harley urged the kura to continue innovating:

> Keep challenging the academic boundaries … have the initiative to give things a go, and just keep doing what we're doing … Be brave. Keep going. Challenge things you need to challenge.

Olivia reinforced their commitment to alternative education pathways that work for Māori:

> It's about challenging our kids and providing alternatives. It's an alternative education system for our kids. But we also ensure that they understand the process of NCEA examination.

Arihia emphasised the importance of shared leadership, ensuring that power is distributed:

> If you want kids to succeed, you've got to get a nature of letting go. That traditional system of leadership is dead and gone. When you devolve the power, we [as leaders] meet once a week and just check in.

Carrying the legacy forward

The struggles of the past have not been forgotten, they continue to shape how Ngā Tapuwae prepares its ākonga for the world. Taihaere Maika (ākonga) reflected on the evolution of the kura:

> When we were there [at the old location], it was just Ngā Tapuwae. When we moved here, it was Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae. And we had our own sense of belief, and we felt safe.

Ngā Tapuwae is a testament to the resilience of those who refused to let systemic barriers define their futures. The fight for Māori education is ongoing, but this kura stands as proof that resistance leads to transformation. As Arihia concluded:

> This is how you stick to your own mana motuhake. You stick to being you. You have the right to be who you are.

Pūkōrero: Mana Motuhake—Unapologetically Māori

A space to stand proudly as Māori

For many, Ngā Tapuwae is a haven where Māori identity is celebrated. Lauren Pompey (whānau, hikuroa) recalled:

> My first year here was 1993 … this was a space where we were seen, heard, and valued as Māori in a way that we weren't elsewhere.

Theresa Horomia (kaiako, hikuroa) spoke about how these values endure beyond kura:

> You do feel like you're very appreciative of what you're learning … and coming back, you feel like, yes, I do really appreciate everything that we've learned here.

For hikuroa, their time at Ngā Tapuwae reinforced that their identity is a strength. Tātai o Te Rangi Reedy (hikuroa), now working as a lawyer, reflected:

> At kura, you don't realise that your identity, your culture is a superpower … But really, when you step back and you're out in the open … it distinguishes me.

Hauāuru Rae (hikuroa) shared how his appreciation deepened over time:

> Each year since [I left], there's something that I appreciate that I hadn't appreciated before… Knowledge or a skill that I received from the kura has helped me.

For ākonga, being surrounded by proud Māori leaders builds identity. Kingston Pihema (ākonga) highlighted how normalising te reo Māori strengthens it:

> When you see people being proud to be Māori, it encourages you to be the same. Pride in oneself, lead by example. When we are around our teina, we make sure that we speak Māori, so it grows, and they grow up always hearing it, always speaking.

Aria Mahuika (ākonga) reflected on the impact:

> Growing up in your traditions and your culture, being proud of it, being encouraged to bring it with you everywhere.

Mana motuhake in action: A kura built on struggle and strength

Ngā Tapuwae exists because of the fight to establish a place where Māori could learn in an environment that reflected their identity and values. Hauāuru Rae (hikuroa) described how the kura embodies mana motuhake and kotahitanga:

> With a lot of the major kaupapa Māori events, I'm reminded of how the kura is an example of those values. It was the realisation of a dream … an example of rangatiratanga, of mana motuhake in action.

Horiana Cassidy-Brown (hikuroa) credited Ngā Tapuwae for providing a strong foundation:

> The values of mana motuhake, whanaungatanga, kaitiakitanga, these are all things that I've learnt through the kura. They have been instrumental in shaping both my personal and professional life.

For Stevie Mason (kaiako), the kura also plays a crucial role for pan-tribal Māori:

> Being pan-tribal Māori, it's quite hard to find your space as a Māori, but I know here that we grow our students to know who they are, where they come from, and also their Ngā Tapuwaetanga.

Mariam Bahar (kaiako) spoke about the responsibility to protect and uphold tikanga:

> It just comes down to … being very aware and educating yourself about what the tikanga is and making sure you preserve it within the students.

Hauāuru reflected on how the kura responded to challenges with a tikanga-based approach:

> If there were ever a time where the teachers felt that we would be unsafe, they'd bring all of the kura students together, onto the marae and into the whare wānanga. We would just sit together and wānanga, take a tikanga-based approach to having a kōrero about the issues.

Carrying Māori identity beyond the kura

The impact of Ngā Tapuwae continues to shape the lives of its hikuroa as they move through the world, carrying their Māoritanga into professional and personal spaces. Hauāuru Rae (hikuroa) reflected on the ongoing journey of his whānau with te ao Māori: "It's not out of not wanting to know—it's born out of a lack of access to opportunities to learn." He credited Ngā Tapuwae with enabling him to support his whānau and navigate both worlds:

> Just understanding how to walk in two worlds … I hadn't appreciated until recently how it actually comes with ease.

For ākonga, carrying their identity into the world means honouring those who have come before them. Taihaere Maika (ākonga) spoke about the leadership of his koro, Te Kepa Stirling (his great grandfather), whose legacy shaped the values of the kura:

> He set a big example for our school—to be who you are but don't be a fat head about it.

Aria reinforced this, describing Te Kepa's presence at pōwhiri:

> Everybody's eager to hear what he has to say … he always reminds us of where we came from, what our journey is and what our goal is as Māori as a collective.

For Jacky Maangi (whānau, hikuroa), Ngā Tapuwae reinforced the importance of standing strong in her identity and passing that strength to future generations:

> Mana motuhake is about owning everything we do, standing strong in our identity, and ensuring our kids carry that with them beyond the kura.

Representing the kura and upholding collective mana

Hikuroa of Ngā Tapuwae carry responsibility to uphold the mana of the kura and of their people. Lauren Pompey (whānau, hikuroa) described how high expectations were instilled:

> They had high expectations of us, and because I felt like they loved us, they cared about us, they wanted what was best for us. I'm going to move heaven and hell to meet those expectations.

However, the expectations go beyond academics—it is about nurturing the whole person. Lauren noted:

> It's not just about the academic success, it is about them as a holistic being … everyone here has the same vested interests that I do, and my want for my own child is also what I want for every child.

For Hauāuru Rae (hikuroa), mana motuhake focuses on the collective uplift:

> In thinking about mana motuhake, it's not of the individual. Success is really, ultimately about what we can achieve for our people.

Aria Mahuika (ākonga) spoke about how this responsibility is passed down:

> When you're raised in a kura like this, you don't just think about yourself, you think about how your actions affect the ones coming after you.

Tuatea Chapman (whānau) reinforced this importance in urban settings:

> In a suburban area like Tāmaki Makaurau, where the cultures and ethnicities are quite diverse, it's even more crucial for our tamariki to hold on to that mana Māori motuhaketanga.

At Ngā Tapuwae, mana motuhake is not just a concept, it is a way of life, the foundation upon which ākonga stand, the legacy they carry, and the future they shape.

Arihia Stirling and Te Kepa Stirling

Pūkōrero: Whānau, community, and collective strength

Ngā Tapuwae is more than a kura—it is a whānau. Its strength lies in the commitment of its people: kaiako, ākonga, and generations of whānau who remain connected to the kura.

Whānau-centered education, "the Ngā Tapuwae way" (Lauren Pompey—whānau, hikuroa)

Ngā Tapuwae understands that education is a collective responsibility. Lauren Pompey (whānau, hikuroa) reflected on her time at Ngā Tapuwae in the early years and the conditions that supported educational success at that time:

> From my perspective, as a 13-14-year-old young girl, I felt loved. I felt respected. I felt like the adults standing in front of me, that were talking to me, truly had my best interests at heart, and they could relate to me.

Lauren further explained the kura as a way of life:

> This is a whole lifestyle. It's a well-oiled machine and coming in, you're in boots and all... You've got to come, mum, dad, nan, everybody come to whānau hui. Come to the activities we do, the sports. So not just curriculum driven, but it's everything ... the Ngā Tapuwae way.

For kaiako, this means treating every ākonga as their own. Stevie Mason (kaiako) emphasised:

> This is more than a job. These are our kids. We need to treat them like our own kids and make sure no one falls through the cracks ... It's just a really, really big whānau environment and I feel that that grows our leadership within ourselves as kaiako.

Ākonga feel this difference. Kingston Pihema (ākonga) described the kura as "whakawhanaungatanga", adding that its small size makes it feel like "just whānau". Taihaere Maika (ākonga) agreed:

> You know your teachers care about you. That's what I love about this school. Sometimes, [in a bigger mainstream school], you're just a number. Here, you're family.

Aria Mahuika (ākonga) added:

> Our teachers support us so much that it's quite ridiculous. It's cool. It's ridiculously cool. They literally care about you, like you're their child.

This culture of care ensures that no one is left behind. Taihaere explained:

> There's no one that misses out. They make sure every student here has everything they need; it's like everyone's your mum .... And if you need help, Mā Stirling always says, 'there should never be a reason why you can't do anything'.

Beyond academic success, the kura prioritises creating an environment where ākonga feel safe in their identity. This connection extends beyond the classroom. Tuatea Chapman (whānau) described the kura as a space where everyone is engaged and invested:

> Its strength comes from whānau, comes from communal style living where everyone's involved, everyone's engaged, everyone's supporting one another. It's a real homely feel here.

The cycle of giving back

A true testament to the success of the kura is the number of former ākonga who return as kaiako, kaiāwhina, mentors, or whānau support. Leadership at Ngā Tapuwae is about coming back to uplift the next generation. Stevie Mason (kaiako, hikuroa) highlighted this cycle:

> Most of our kaiako are ex-students. I think that's probably a big success of kura kaupapa across the motu … They know their style of teaching; they know the core values of their kura … We've grown our own to go out and teach.

This culture of giving back extends beyond the classroom. Tuatea Chapman (whānau) described his involvement with the kura as a kaitiaki, kaiāwhina, sports coach, and parent helper at events:

> We're always here trying to get involved as much as we can, just because we know how beneficial it is being a part of this kura for our whānau.

Stevie added that this support extends across generations, with parents continuing to support the kura.

Theresa Horomia (kaiako, hikuroa) reflected on what draws people back:

> That is a lot of the reason why we end up coming back to just give back, especially back to Arihia for what she's done for all of us … upholding all of our Ngā Tapuwaetanga.

Taonga tuku iho: Intergenerational learning and leadership—"We are the ahi kā, and Ngā Tapuwae is our marae" (Lauren Pompey—whānau, hikuroa)

Ngā Tapuwae is built on intergenerational learning—where knowledge, values, and traditions are passed down to prepare each generation to lead. The physical spaces of the kura also embody this legacy. Stevie Mason (kaiako) shared:

> Every little room that you go into is named after someone that's somehow [given] tautoko our [to] our school … that's how we recognise them.

These names remind ākonga of those who dedicated themselves to the kura:

> It's important for our kids to learn these names too … because they're the people who gave their [dedicated their] lives to our kura (Stevie Mason, kaiako).

Lauren Pompey (whānau, hikuroa) described the kura as more than a school—it is a home and way of life:

> The reality for lots of us is we grew up here. This is our life. This is a huge chunk of our lives … It's kind of like being in a very rural setting where … life revolved around the marae … We are the ahi kā, and Ngā Tapuwae is our marae.

This tuakana–teina[4] model is reinforced in kura traditions where ākonga learn by participating alongside older peers. Values of aroha, manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga, and whanaungatanga are practised daily. Kingston Pihema (ākonga) explained how this shaped his understanding of leadership:

> We don't have to be told to lead, it just happens. You see the older ones doing it, and then when it's your turn, you do the same.

4 https://tereomaori.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-guidelines/Teaching-and-learning-te-reo-Maori/Aspects-of-planning/The-concept-of-a-tuakana-teina-relationship

Ngā Tapuwae ensures that every ākonga walks forward knowing they are never alone. The strength of the kura comes from its people and the unbreakable connections of whānau and community.

Pūkōrero: Leadership—"Be someone that your tūpuna and mokopuna would be proud of" (Hauāuru Rae, hikuroa).

At Ngā Tapuwae, leadership is about raising those around you. The kura has cultivated a leadership style grounded in manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, and collective strength, where the expectation is not just to lead but to uplift. Leadership is demonstrated through service, nurtured through example, and carried forward by every ākonga who walks through its doors.

Leadership through service—"A korowai of aroha" (Horiana Cassidy-Brown, hikuroa)

Leadership at Ngā Tapuwae is woven in everyday kura life, where ākonga learn that true leadership comes from serving others. Aria Mahuika (ākonga) shared the words of Mā Stirling that have shaped her aspirations:

> Mā Stirling always told us, 'You want to give back to your people. Just you know, when you leave school, when you go into studying, give back to your people … help out your community to help it grow.'

Horiana Cassidy-Brown (hikuroa) reflected on the impact of the leadership of the kura:

> The Stirling whānau have saved the kura community. They've fought the hard fight, they've fought so much struggle, and they've always provided ākonga with as many opportunities as they can … It's just a korowai of aroha.

Kingston Pihema (ākonga) explained how kaiako embody this philosophy:

> You look at our kaiako, they don't lead by telling, they lead by doing. And we follow that example. That's mana motuhake there.

Leadership at Ngā Tapuwae is also about legacy. Kingston described it as:

> A lot of our ex-students, they had a really good aura of leadership where to this day they are still talked about, like the effect they had on everyone around them … that's their legacy.

Succession planning and building leaders for the future

Leadership at Ngā Tapuwae is nurtured from an early age. Theresa Horomia (kaiako) explained how they provide opportunities to grow leadership in the junior classrooms:

> We have haepapa, so they do their own individual duties, but we also have a tohu for our amorangi. They're kind of our kaitiaki, our leaders of the day.

This hands-on approach allows leadership to develop naturally. Kingston (ākonga) shared his perspective:

> I wouldn't say I look up at my leaders. I kind of look to my side, because the leaders that I feel are leaders are my brothers and sisters around me … they are humble, hardworking, intelligent but they're also fun too.

The kura sees leadership as a lifelong responsibility. Many Hikuroa return as kaiako, mentors, or whānau supporters, continuing the cycle of leadership. Taihaere Maika (ākonga) reflected on the enduring influence of Te Kepa Stirling:

> Him and my kui. Those two are the two leaders that I will never forget … All his ex-students told me … he teaches you commitment, how to be strong, how to stay on your feet when stuff gets hard.

Arihia Stirling (tumuaki) has fostered collective leadership, transitioning from a strict, hands-on approach to one that distributes leadership across the kura. As she steps away from her principalship, she has built a strong leadership team, ensuring the kura is resilient and adaptable. Stevie Mason (kaiako) described the importance of this shift:

> She makes sure that we all know how to run the school if one of us isn't there.

Lauren Pompey (whānau, hikuroa) further emphasised how shared leadership strengthens the kura:

> We all work so cohesively together, and the saying 'many hands make light work' is tried and true here ... because there's lots of us, and everyone kicks in and adds value when we work in our strength-based areas, it's just normal.

The high expectations that define the kura extend to leadership as well. Mariam Bahar (kaiako) shared the standard, "I don't want to hear it unless it's a 'Stirling' job." This benchmark challenges individuals to push beyond their limits, shaping leaders who are invested in the legacy of Ngā Tapuwae.

Leadership grounded in tikanga Māori—"Unapologetically Māori" (Hauāuru Rae, hikuroa)

At Ngā Tapuwae, leadership is distinctly Māori. It is not about individual success but about uplifting the whole community. Hauāuru Rae (hikuroa) captured this philosophy:

> Unapologetically Māori ... there's something to say about accountability to our people ... who we are is really part of our hapū, our iwi ... Success is really ultimately about what we can achieve for our people.

Arihia's leadership embodies this approach. Theresa Horomia (kaiako) described:

> She's got a big heart for each and every one of us, whether it be students, kaiako, whānau, especially for our community.

During the Auckland floods, she immediately responded, "Yep, what can we do to help?" ensuring the kura supported the community, with ākonga beautifying kaumātua home and delivering kai.

Tātai o Te Rangi Reedy (hikuroa) acknowledged the challenges Arihia faced:

> I know how difficult of a challenge it was to get Ngā Tapuwae to the position that it's in now ... She had committed herself to a kaupapa and saw it through.

Horiana Cassidy-Brown (hikuroa) described Arihia as **"**taikaha**"**: "She's just straight up, straight up the guts, and if you don't like it, then let her know." Horiana also highlighted the strong presence of mana wahine at the kura:

> Because we've had a strong female leader in Mā Stirling ... the women can just do it, eh? We're the movers and shakers.

Theresa (kaiako) summed up Arihia's leadership simply:

> Big heart. That's my big word for her, big heart.

This collective approach ensures that every ākonga, kaiako, and whānau member is empowered to contribute, not just within the kura but in the wider world. As Hauāuru put it:

> Be someone that your tūpuna and mokopuna would be proud of.

Pūkōrero: Education as a tool of empowerment—"We are given 'Māori tools'" (Aria Mahuika, ākonga)

At Ngā Tapuwae, education embodies empowerment, transformation, and self-determination. The kura ensures ākonga leave with academic success and a strong sense of identity, preparing them to walk confidently in both te ao Māori and te ao Pākehā.

Affirming success: The power of daily kupu

From the earliest stages of their learning journey, tamariki recite daily affirmations:

> He mātauranga ahau—I am intelligent
>
> E tika ana kia tino mātauranga ahau—I deserve knowledge
>
> He momoho ahau—I am successful

This whakataukī serves as both a declaration and a challenge. Aria Mahuika (ākonga) reflected on its impact:

> It helps boost you a bit … looking back at where you started and then throughout the years, as you progress on with your growth, it's just like you can see your success.

Taihaere Maika (ākonga) added:

> You start realising the value of it is really good and believing it.

These affirmations are tradition at Ngā Tapuwae. Harley Mariu (tumuaki tuarua) emphasised that ākonga are taught to see education as their right:

> That's what they've learnt here, is that we're always telling them, no, it is your right to know the answers to these questions. It is their [the teachers] responsibility to make sure you understand.

In an education system where Māori have historically been marginalised, these kupu challenge negative stereotypes. Aria Mahuika (ākonga) described how Ngā Tapuwae equips ākonga with "Māori tools" to succeed anywhere:

> One thing that helps us is that we were given Māori tools, and we know how to use those… being resourceful, being confident, being able to ask for help … even if we're at a disadvantage, we always have tools that we can use anywhere.

Education as a pathway to tino rangatiratanga

For many ākonga, Ngā Tapuwae teaches that education serves their people. Tātai o Te Rangi Reedy (hikuroa) spoke about the challenge of adjusting to a Western education system and how he initially struggled with seeing the value in his own knowledge:

> One of the things that I struggled with when I first started [university] was turning my mind to this Western kind of education system … My mind kind of went to, 'I can't actually apply my own knowledge. I have to kind of draw on these theories in academic scholarly research'.

Over time, he realised that his lived experience, tikanga, and whānau knowledge enhanced his academic journey:

> The tools that I've learnt through kura Māori, and I mean tikanga really … have enhanced my own experience in a professional journey.

Theresa Horomia (kaiako) emphasised the vision of the kura:

> The kōrero of our kura, 'Inā te mahi, he rangatira' … something that we all try and encourage our kids to be like, doing the right things, being their own right, kind of their own self. Rangatiratanga.

Kingston Pihema (ākonga) reflected:

> A little boy from Māngere can be an architect, a doctor, whatever he wants, because we've been shown that success is possible for us. That's what this kura gives us.

Aria Mahuika (ākonga) plans to use her education to create pathways for Māori in all fields:

> I'm going into environmental law. I want to make that more popular for Māori … and create more of a community for it in Māori and for rangatahi … because you know, land is a very precious thing to our culture.

High expectations and excellence—"Do a 'Stirling' job" (Mariam Bahar, kaiako)

Ngā Tapuwae instils standards of excellence. Tepara Koti (whānau, hikuroa) reflected on the teachings of Nanny Pani:

> She had this way of making you want to do your mahi for her. She made you accountable daily … because we knew she's going to call you out, but in a good way.

This mindset has always been part of the kura: "It's always been there. It's new to everybody else, but it's very normal to us, and we carry on those expectations right through" (Tepara Koti, whānau, hikuroa).

Lauren Pompey (whānau, hikuroa) recalled Māori educationalists who "had an expectation that we could do better than we were and what everyone else thought our value was."

Mariam Bahar (kaiako) explained how the kura ensures success beyond academics:

> The whakaaro is to have the best of both worlds. Not only NCEA, but in real-world skills. We make sure they leave here with qualifications, vocational opportunities, and a clear pathway.

Culturally grounded learning

Ngā Tapuwae embeds te ao Māori in every aspect of its teaching. Horiana Cassidy-Brown (hikuroa) appreciated how the kura acknowledges diverse iwi backgrounds:

> The kura have the ability to be able to celebrate all iwi, Ngāpuhitanga, Te Arawatanga, or Ngāti Poroutanga.

Aria Mahuika (ākonga) shared how learning under Pāpā Te Kepa Stirling prepared her to contribute at the marae:

> Going back home, chuck us up on the marae to do anything. It's like, 'yep, got it, know it'.

Ākonga also noted how kaiako make subjects relevant:

> They tend to teach it in our interests. (Kingston Pihema, ākonga)
>
> It's not something we're just trying to do, get out of the way, it's something we're learning, and it's made relevant to what we're into. (Aria Mahuika, ākonga)

Tuatea Chapman (whānau) described how the curriculum integrates mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge systems), including maramataka:

> They use the maramataka and whakaaro Māori with the energies … during winter times … it is a time to slow down … They know during summertime that the energies are high.

Theresa Horomia (kaiako) summarised the approach of the kura to mana motuhake in teaching:

> [It's about] understanding the uniqueness of each kid that we've got, each individual ākonga that we've got … trying to really build up that kind of Māoritanga within each ākonga that we've got and how we can help them succeed in their own selves.

Pūkōrero: Te reo Māori and tikanga—a living legacy

Ngā Tapuwae ensures te reo Māori and tikanga are taonga that are preserved, actively lived and strengthened. Language and culture are central to the identity of the kura, shaping every aspect of learning, leadership, and daily life.

Te reo Māori as the heartbeat of Ngā Tapuwae

At Ngā Tapuwae, te reo Māori is not an academic subject, it is a way of being. Hauāuru Rae (hikuroa) reflected on how growing up in this environment gave him confidence in te reo Māori—something he only fully appreciated later in life:

> Everything about tikanga and about te reo, for example, was just normal. I have realised, in recent years, how I took that for granted.

This immersion nurtures fluency and instils pride, ensuring that ākonga leave with a strong sense of ownership over their language. However, the journey to revitalisation is ongoing. Many ākonga come from homes where te reo is not spoken, making Ngā Tapuwae a critical space where they can reclaim their reo as a right, not a privilege.

Tikanga Māori as a foundation for learning and leadership

Language and culture are inseparable at Ngā Tapuwae. Tepara Koti (whānau) described the kura as an urban marae:

> This is their marae here ... this wharekai is where they can learn those tikanga, those kawa. Our wharenui ... that's their first and foremost place to learn whaikōrero, karanga.

Lauren Pompey (whānau) emphasised that tikanga extends into everyday values:

> Are they kind? Are they courteous? Are they respectful? Do they know manaaki?

Tātai o Te Rangi Reedy (hikuroa) shared how, from a young age, ākonga were given real responsibilities:

> When we were 5 at the kura, we were taught how to whaikōrero and karanga ... you were kind of raised like a marae kid ... I learned from the kura how to work in a marae in the front and in the back.

For leadership development, ākonga took on active roles in cultural traditions. As Tātai o Te Rangi (hikuroa) explained:

> Things like, you go to Manu Kōrero with immaculate uniform. This is how you behave. These are our standards.

Ākonga also learned leadership through tangihanga and kapa haka, understanding, "What was our position whenever a tangi or kaupapa had come to the kura? What was our role?" (Tātai o te Rangi Reedy, hikuroa).

Hauāuru Rae (hikuroa) reflected on how these teachings instilled responsibility for how Māori are perceived:

> We learnt to carry ourselves really well, and we knew that if we don't, that impacts the way other Māori are seen.

He described a deep awareness of how personal actions can shape perceptions, explaining that when faced with challenges or bias, he carries himself with a "kura-made grace," seeing these moments as opportunities to set a higher standard:

> It's about holding myself to a higher standard and letting everyone know that 'as Māori, we operate to a higher standard.'

He kupu whakakapi | Summary

Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae is a kura shaped by the vision of those who established it and sustained by whānau, kaiako, ākonga, and graduates who continue to uphold its kaupapa. These pūkōrero reflect a shared purpose and a strong commitment to mana motuhake in education.

Throughout the kōrero, Pou Māori spoke to the importance of creating a space where Māori identity, language, and tikanga are lived every day. Ākonga are supported not just to achieve academically, but to carry with them a sense of who they are and where they come from. The kura holds high expectations and creates the conditions for ākonga to meet them, supported by aroha, guidance, and collective responsibility.

Leadership at Ngā Tapuwae is grown through example and through everyday roles. This includes ākonga leading karakia to tuakana supporting teina, and kaiako returning as graduates to pass on what they've learned. Whānau are actively involved, and many have long-standing ties to the kura across multiple generations.

Ngā Tapuwae is described as a kāinga, a place where learning and relationships are woven together. The stories shared reflect a kura that is firmly grounded in its kaupapa, clear in its purpose, and focused on preparing each generation to contribute to the collective strength of their people.

TIPENE

Titiro matatau ki te rangi

Guided by the whakataukī, "titiro matatau ki te rangi", TIPENE[5] has a long reputation for shaping influential Māori leaders. Driven by Māori boys' success, TIPENE is an exception to the challenges young Māori boys often faced in mainstream education. Since its early establishment, the school focused on addressing systemic educational inequities for Māori. The school closed in 2000, but reopened in 2025 with a continued this focus on Māori success and achievement.

TIPENE was founded in 1844 and is the oldest school in Aotearoa New Zealand. Unlike other kura in this rangahau, TIPENE was not yet operational at the time of our fieldwork, which limited our ability to kōrero with current ākonga, whānau, or kaiako. However, we were privileged to kōrero with three TIPENE Old Boys: one now a co-tumuaki, another a former tumuaki and current board chairperson, and the third a board member.

These kōrero provided insights from the perspective of former ākonga who once served as Pou Māori within the school and now hold leadership roles guiding its future. Each participant shared their deep ties to TIPENE and their aspirations for its reopening.

TIPENE leadership

Co-tumuaki, Nathan Durie (Ngāti Kauwhata, Rangitāne, Ngāti Raukawa) and Yvette McCausland-Durie (Ngāti Awa, Ngāpuhi) bring a strong history in transforming Māori education. The couple previously founded MANUKURA in 2005, a special character school dedicated to Māori educational success.

Te hītori o TIPENE[6]

TIPENE is a Māori boys' boarding school for Tau 9 to Tau 13. Established in 1844 in Taurarua (Parnell, Auckland), it relocated to the Bombay Hills in 1933. Operating for more than 151 years, the school closed in 2000 when the trust board and church decided closure was "in the best interests of Māori education to ensure the school could renew and retain its status as a taonga for Māori" (TIPENE, n.d., para 2).

After nearly 25 years, TIPENE reopened in Term 1, 2025 as a charter school under the leadership of Nathan Durie and Yvette McCausland-Durie. During the time of closure, the school's spirit was kept alive by the alumni and supporters of TIPENE or otherwise commonly known as the "TIPENE Old Boys", who have predominantly stayed well-connected through Te Rauhītanga o te mano o TIPENE St Stephen's School Old Boys Association.[7]

Ngā mātāpono o TIPENE

TIPENE integrates tikanga Māori values into their curriculum, nurturing the talents and development of young Māori men while prioritising te reo Māori as the school's primary language. The school acknowledges the importance of whakapapa and tūrangawaewae, empowering ākonga to give back and serve their whānau, hapū, and iwi.

5 TIPENE is written in capitals to emphasise the strength inherent in the word itself, and ensure it stands out boldly, just as it encourages tauira to do
6 https://tipene.co.nz/our-history/
7 https://tipene.co.nz/old-boys/

TIPENE upholds these values through a culture framework that supports a dynamic and responsive education model tailored for Māori boys:

- Leadership: whakamana young Māori men in their roles within whānau, community, and country.
- Connection & competence: Strengthening tikanga and te reo Māori to enable meaningful contributions to iwi, hapū, and social development.
- Preparedness: equipping ākonga for tertiary and vocational pathways through academic and the attainment of the necessary prerequisites.
- Confidence: instilling dignity and humility so graduates stand tall as leaders in Aotearoa.

Te Rauhītanga o te mano o TIPENE | The St Stephen's Old Boys Association

The TIPENE Old Boys is a Charitable Society established by alumni to support the school and its wider community. The association has also been a key driver in advancing the educational aspirations of the schools' community, including the Old Boys and supporters. The website states,

> As a Charitable Society, the activities of the Association are focused on charitable endeavours that are relevant to the objectives of the Association, and which contribute to the public good.

Even during TIPENE's closure, the association played an integral role in maintaining the mana of the school. Their website states:

> The activities of the Association are focused on charitable endeavours that are relevant to the objectives of the association, and which contribute to the public good.

Ngā Pou o TIPENE | Participants

In Term 3, 2024, we spoke to three key Pou Māori at TIPENE, each with a deep personal history and strong connection to the school (see Table 3). Each whakawhiti kōrero was conducted individually:

TABLE 3: **Pou Māori o TIPENE**

	Pou Māori (participants)	**Tūranga**
1	Nathan Matawhā Durie *(Ngāti Kauwhata, Rangitāne, Ngāti Raukawa)*	Co-tumuaki TIPENE old boy
2	Te Ururoa Flavell *(Ngāti Rangiwewehi, Ngāti Ngararanui, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Te Ata, Ngāpuhi)*	Board Chairperson TIPENE old boy
3	Te Kani Kingi *(Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Pūkeko)*	Old Boys association TIPENE old boy

Ngā pūkōrero e toru mō TIPENE

This section presents the whakawhiti kōrero with three Pou o TIPENE. We used the pūkōrero method to share each participant's story individually. After discussing our kaupapa with Maia, we decided that pūkōrero best suited the kōrero of TIPENE.

Each Pou has a deep, longstanding connection to the school. To honour their perspectives and lived experiences, we have drawn primarily on direct quotes from their kōrero.

This section includes three key pūkōrero:

1. Te pūkōrero o Nathan Matawhā Durie
2. Te pūkōrero o Te Ururoa Flavell
3. Te pūkōrero o Te Kani Kingi.

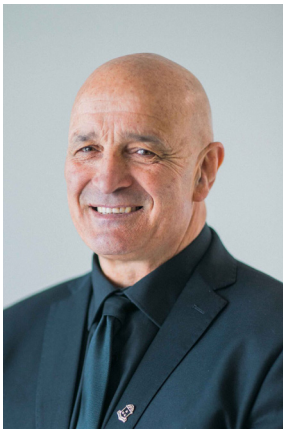
Te pūkōrero o Nathan Matawhā Durie (Ngāti Kauwhata, Rangitāne, Ngāti Raukawa)— Co-tumuaki, TIPENE old boy

Te hononga: Optimism and opportunity

Nathan's journey with TIPENE began as a student. After graduating, he returned as a kaiako and rugby coach, remaining involved for several years. Besides his love for the school, he shared mixed feelings:

> I loved it and hated it all at once, I loved the potential of this place. I thought there was some real opportunity, but I didn't feel at the time it was being received well enough. This was reflective of the times probably and reflective of what I thought was a really innovative tumuaki in terms of Te Ururoa who was being challenged by things called 'tradition' and things of the school that had been around for a long time, since 1844, and they weren't ready for change. So, I left.

Years later, Nathan and Yvette were invited to return as co-tumuaki. This time, Nathan brought with him a renewed sense of optimism—that the re-established school would embrace change and innovation for Māori and Pasifika boys, particularly through the "infusion and inclusion of kaupapa Māori".



Nathan Durie

Considering why he was repeatedly asked to return, Nathan felt it may have been because he was "keen to challenge systems and have a look at alternative ways of doing things". He also joked that his success with rugby teams might have helped.

Te whakapuaretanga: Aspirations for the new TIPENE

Nathan and Yvette worked closely with the board to reopen the school, alongside fellow old boy, former principal, and now board chair, Te Ururoa Flavell. Nathan acknowledged Te Ururoa's leadership as pivotal:

> He brings a wealth of experience from a political perspective, from an education perspective, and from a kaupapa Māori perspective, as well as his aroha for this kura.

Nathan hoped TIPENE would remain relevant for Māori boys. He believed the focus needed to shift from trying to "fix the problems of our kids" to instead, recognising and backing their potential:

> Many of them will have already been beaten up in the system … how do you reinvigorate that?

He saw strength in the fact that many students would come from kura Māori, saying:

> They come a lot more confident, at least in terms of: 'it's okay to be Māori. It's not something to be ashamed of'.

He envisioned a kura that fostered leadership through service and connection to whakapapa, guided by tikanga and kawa:

> In terms of the leadership modelling, just allow [the students] to see their Māori-ness as being able to be inclusive … tikanga allows for that … it's a sign of confidence that we don't feel threatened by it, therefore we can include it, and if you think of the signing of a treaty, it was based on those principles, this ability to be inclusive, to recognise the rawa.

Ngā wero: Educational transformation and sustainability

Nathan acknowledged the broader challenges for Māori-led schools. Since Teachers' College, he'd understood the need for transformation:

> I can remember my father saying to me, 'You know we don't need more teachers in this country. We need people who change education. We don't need people who perpetuate the norm'.

He emphasised sustainability as a key issue. Many Māori educational movements—such as kōhanga reo, kura kaupapa, and wānanga—had started with aroha and fundraising. The challenge was not starting them, but sustaining them:

> When [kōhanga reo] had no money, they had massive liberty to exemplify that thing of mana motuhake.

He questioned whether schools like TIPENE were seen as genuinely Māori-led or as Pākehā institutions with a Māori aesthetic. For him, what mattered was offering choices:

> There are a lot more people going to Kura Kaupapa now. But in actual fact, the vast majority of Māori people still go down the mainstream line. So, how do you look after that group in a way that's going to meet what they might perceive as needs as well, and I think, therefore, the answer for me is that we just need lots of choices, and people get the right to choose, the opportunity to choose, and if we can be a good choice, then we've added to that.

Nathan remained committed to challenging a system that often failed Māori boys:

> There's seemingly a greater appetite for the traditional schools, particularly the boys' schools, in this country. But if you look at the results of those schools for Māori boys, actually, they're horrible. Some of the boys' high schools in this country now are some of the lowest-performing schools in the country, and if you put the Māori lens across that, they are right at the bottom. So, in terms of where education is and what it's doing in this country, I think it's still designed to do that.

He went on to reflect that improving outcomes isn't about producing "thousands of academics" but ensuring Māori boys were well-equipped to lead transformative change:

> If we're going to change justice, if we're going to change health, if we're going to change education, then we need people from those different parts of our communities that are going to ensure that they provide a different lens for how we look at those spaces to engage change.

His commitment to change was also shaped by personal experience. He reflected on the racism he encountered during his early education, contrasting that with the sense of safety and belonging he found at TIPENE:

> Even though I didn't think the schooling was great, at least you weren't beaten up just because you were Māori ...

He also recalled a pivotal year in Standard 4, when he had a teacher who genuinely connected with students through sport and seemed to care, taking time out in the mornings and lunchtimes to play with them. Despite being a soccer fanatic, Nathan explained that teacher even took the boys to rugby. That year, Nathan's spelling jumped from Level 0 to the highest level, "Dictionary". For him, it was a clear reminder: teachers have the power to influence.

While TIPENE comes with its challenges, Nathan saw the Anglican church as one of the school's strengths. He acknowledged the Church as part of the schools' whakapapa and believed its presence supports, rather than undermines, Māori aspirations. He explained that the land was gifted by the Church, not to "Christianise" or "Anglicise" the students, but to support them to grow as a people.

Te mana motuhaketanga o te kura hou: Centring tikanga and te ao Māori

Mana motuhaketanga at TIPENE looked like shifting away from Western models of schooling toward a Māori-led, student-centred approach. This included:

- adapting timetables to align with maramataka or tangihanga, rather than rigid schedules
- removing the traditional prefect system to broaden leadership opportunities for all ākonga
- including all staff as part of the leadership team.

Ultimately, Nathan hoped to reshape education for Māori boys by centring tikanga and kawa:

> There's quantifiable evidence across this country for the last decades and longer where Māori are the best at delivering for Māori. Just give us the opportunity and the resources to do it, and if we make a hash of it, well, at least it's our mess. We're not the products of somebody else's system.

Te pūkōrero o Te Ururoa Flavell (Ngāti Rangiwewehi, Ngāti Ngararanui, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Te Ata, Ngāpuhi)—Board chairperson, TIPENE old boy

Te Ururoa grew up in Rotorua and served as Head Boy at both his primary and intermediate schools. When is mother made the decision to send him to TIPENE, it was his mother's widows benefit and scholarships that assisted her to pay the fees. It was this sort of sacrifice made by many parents and whānau that signalled a belief in the value of education, especially that offered by TIPENE.

At TIPENE, his leadership potential was further nurtured. He noticed many other students from rural communities, such as Te Teko, Ruatoria, Te Kaha, and Dargaville, were also recognised for their leadership. Te Ururoa stood out among his peers and, in his final year, served as Head Boy, Captain of the First XV, and leader of the kapa haka.

Te Ururoa Flavell

Te pā harakeke o te mana motuhaketanga: TIPENE's influence on leadership

From the beginning, Te Ururoa quickly noticed that leadership was closely tied to a strong "legacy element" at the school:

> All around us every day we were surrounded by photos of those who had been there before us. You're always conscious of trying to match, if not better, their achievements. You look on the wall, you see images dating back in time including the names of those who went to serve in times of war. You would look at the leadership of the school such as prefects as well as rugby teams that went through unbeaten in their time. As I say, every day you were inspired by those people and their legacy—indeed those of your own vintage because they were around you every day when you had a meal, in our hall/chapel or when they visited having left kura. It was just a legacy of leadership all the way through.

That legacy deeply influenced him, and he hoped the new school could recreate the same environment that showcased and nurtured leadership.

The TIPENE Old Boys

The TIPENE Old Boys network helped carry the school's legacy. Te Ururoa believed his leadership continued to grow after school because of the old boys who encouraged him to speak on behalf of their reanga. Many were part of the Auckland University Māori Club and pushed him to step into roles, especially with mihimihi:

> The respect for old boys older than you remains.

At gatherings, it was evident that old boys who had held leadership roles would step forward to lead:

> This was evident at the tangi for Kingi Tuheitia Paki, an old boy of the school. The matters of who would speak, lead waiata, haka, and seating was sorted by the older cohort (the tuākana).

He spoke of many old boys who had gone on to lead within iwi, business, and politics. He suggested that much of that willingness to step up into leadership positions was because of how students at TIPENE saw those who led them, or the leadership experience gained at school. He hoped the new school would create similar opportunities:

> The more opportunities you give people to enter those leadership roles, the more you become comfortable in it.

Te whakapono me te hāhi: Spirituality and religion

Before attending TIPENE, Te Ururoa had little experience with religion. The religious element at the school became a natural part of life, especially karakia:

> Karakia at Māori gathering is an accepted part of te ao Māori.

Early in his teaching career, he followed what he had learned at school, until he encountered Māori leaders who shared alternative views of spirituality, particularly through karakia Māori. He acknowledged the diversity of Māori spirituality expression:

> Spirituality comes in many forms, Anglicanism being one, Catholicism being another. There are a number of boys now who have grown up with Ringatū, Ratana, Pai Mārire or karakia tawhito. Spiritualism allows for people to express it differently but the main kaupapa should be that there is karakia.

He and Nathan often said:

> 'Don't talk about religion, talk about spirituality', because we inherently have that element with us as Māori no matter what. It's just a different form.

He appreciated how clergy were blending religion and spirituality:

> It works … and it's not one or the other.

Reflecting on kura kaupapa Māori students coming to the new TIPENE, he said:

> The boys from kura kaupapa accepted Anglicanism, but understood they had their own worldview. They will hold fast on their own wairuatanga and not be shy about it.

As chairperson, Te Ururoa was aware of the need to balance various expectations. He shared that most whānau want their boys to "understand and feel their wairuatanga." As leaders, their role is to find a balance—something Te Ururoa acknowledged would take time.

Te angitūtanga: Ambition and success

Te Ururoa believed the school's success lay in a formula inspired by Te Whare Tapa Whā model (Durie, 1985):

> It's a bulletproof model that will nurture their students to become leaders in their own right.

He explained that it included an education facility where Māori live and learn together. He believed "there's an element of spirituality because it is a part of who we are." This formula also includes an element of physical wellbeing by playing sport and understanding the connection of good kai to performance for example. He says, "just living together marae style and being shoulder to shoulder" at school has been and will continue to be a critical factor. Te Ururoa says that academic success is critical, and the "successes come off the back of all of these elements coming together".

Additionally, Te Ururoa believed that having the staff living onsite, alongside parents/caregivers dedicated to the success of their young men is another element to fostering success within TIPENE. These staff must be dedicated to the full package because TIPENE will be all-consuming, demanding time and commitment to these tauira. The tauira need to know that they have kaiako who care about them and will work hard to have them achieve at their potential. And that team of kaiako will be led by strong, visionary, hardworking, dedicated tumuaki who are not shy to try innovative means to get the best out of and for the tauira.

Te Ururoa felt the Charter School model offered opportunities to try approaches that would be difficult within the mainstream system. While the 24/7 model presents significant challenges and demands, he believed that if built in the right way, it could have a meaningful impact on the education of the young Māori men.

Te Ururoa thought the combination of Nathan and Yvette as tumuaki would highlight good role-modelling for the ākonga stating that they both offer something different to TIPENE, but together as a package and as partners, they are exceptional leaders.

Along the lines of legacy and generational leadership, Te Ururoa's aspirations for the school's success aligned with Nathan's in hoping to foster leaders within their communities. He stated that the schools' job was to "ensure that any of those ākonga that come into our care will be safe, will be cared for, will be loved, will achieve all they want, and for them and their whānau, that they contribute back to their own marae, to their own whānau, and that they're good people, that they look after their tamariki, they look after their wahine, or partners … and that they contribute back to our people."

Te Ururoa hoped they could teach their students to be leaders, "not only on marae and in te ao Māori, but also in te ao Pākehā." He noted that this is needed for the next generations, to fill the voids of needing successful Māori leaders in both worlds which entails "going back to your own people, knowing your own people."

Mā Māori, mō Māori: Māori to deliver their mātauranga, their way

When asked for his advice for fostering mana motuhake within kura for ākonga Māori, Te Ururoa said:

> Just give them the opportunities because usually what happens in te ao Māori if you give our people an opportunity to take, they will do it with both hands … Whenever we have a crisis, our people always come to the fore and lead, through Māori Wardens or Whānau Ora navigators or people of that nature. Wherever there's catastrophe, our people lead and we're just natural leaders. And we do not always lead at the front, like our ringa wera, our cooks. Those aunties, those nannies in the dining room. They wouldn't class themselves as leaders, but you know when you've got to go and do the fried bread, you know? You know when you've got to go out and set the tables.

For the future, Te Ururoa hoped that kura Māori will be able to deliver mātauranga their own way, and "by Māori, for Māori." He explained, "we have recipes through St Stephen's, Kura Kaupapa Māori, Kura ā Iwi, Wharekura, that is all about focusing on us as people, Māori people, and if you start at that point, then we're in a good place, that's where we need to be."

Te pūkōrero o Te Kani Kingi (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Pūkeko)—Old Boys Association, TIPENE old boy

Te Kani Kingi's connection to TIPENE began with his grandfather who attended TIPENE in the 1930s. Although Te Kani initially began his secondary education at a state school, where he was often threatened with being "sent away" to TIPENE if he didn't clean up his act, he eventually did attend,

completing his final 2 years there. Nathan had once been his dormitory supervisor. While studying at university, Te Kani returned to TIPENE as Dorm Master and later completed a master's dissertation focused on the school.

He remained closely connected to the kura through the TIPENE Old Boys Association and supported long-term efforts to reopen the school:

> I've even got a letter that I sent to the deputy principal in 2000 that he kept, offering my support, anything I could do to help reopen the school. If I knew it would have taken that long, I probably would have tapped out because it's been a long journey, really long, but we're there.

Te Kani Kingi

Te whakareretanga: Legacy and intergenerational leadership

Te Kani credited TIPENE with shaping his early leadership. Compared to his previous mainstream school, he believed that the shift to TIPENE had a "profound impact" on him, particularly in terms of "academic and intellectual development". He noted that being surrounded by "success amongst Māori boys" made a significant difference, and he remembered staff who genuinely cared for the students and maintained strong relationships with whānau.

However, the transition wasn't without its challenges. Coming from a small rural community where he was raised by his grandparents, he initially found it difficult adjusting to life in a dorm and classrooms filled with 30 other boys from all over the country. He also recalled being surprised by the academic competitiveness among his peers:

> They studied. I'd never seen that before. They were concerned about exams, and all of them are still really good friends.

Like Te Ururoa, Te Kani reflected on the inspiration he had drawn from the TIPENE Old Boys who returned to speak about their careers as doctors, lawyers, and architects.

> Observing other Māori boys in leadership positions was hugely inspiring, as well as the history of the school … The long history of leaders, which I think can only sort of inspire you, and the network is incredibly strong, probably stronger than any other school I'm aware of, especially given the fact that the school's been closed for 25 years … I just received a text this morning from an old boy who's in his 80s, wanting to catch up. He was a friend, and simply through the school.

Later, he saw that legacy continue through his own son, who began attending TIPENE in 2025. His son was already benefitting from the strong networks and support of old boys in influential leadership roles.

Tiakina ngā ākonga: "Nurture them culturally, academically, in sporting and also spiritually"

Reflecting on the re-opened T[PENE under Nathan and Yvette's leadership, Te Kani said the school had become what he wished it had been when he was a student:

> I think it's probably the key message: nurture them culturally, academically, in sporting, and also spiritually, and I don't think you'll get that at many other schools.

With his background in hauora and Māori mental wellbeing, Te Kani was particularly vocal about the need to support young Māori boys in education:

> I was looking at the New Zealand suicide prevention strategy. Nowhere does it mention Māori or men. You know what the suicide stats are for Māori men? They're five times as high. Do you think someone would raise that as being an issue? Well, they don't. I think that's a tragedy, and likewise a tragedy that

> there's been no sort of attention given to the fact that the educational outcomes for Māori boys, they're just horrific.

He viewed TIPENE as a space of care and transformation, and praised the quality of the staff:

> I think [Nathan and Yvette] have done a great job in terms of attracting good staff—staff that ticked all the boxes … Staff that had the capability but also care about the boys. That's fundamentally important.

A leadership strategy: Removing barriers to access and fostering potential

As part of their leadership strategy, Te Kani and the board actively worked to reduce financial barriers so that more Māori boys could attend TIPENE:

> I think we're going to make the most impact by affording the opportunity to [attend] TIPENE… There're significant numbers of examples of Māori men now that are in positions of influence that only attended that school because they'd been 'scholar-shipped'. People like Shane Jones, Hone Harawira and others. So, I think there's an opportunity there, in terms of strategies for leadership.
>
> What I'm more concerned about are those young Māori boys that we all know of, that we all see, 'this kid's got massive potential'.

Ultimately, Te Kani believed that kaupapa Māori education must be grounded in belief in our own people:

> We've all got potential, whatever that potential is.

Kōrero whakakapi

While deeply grounded in kaupapa Māori principles and led by prominent Pou Māori, TIPENE's status as Aotearoa's oldest Māori boys' school, with enduring ties to the church, provided a uniquely layered context for this rangahau.

Legacy emerged as a powerful theme throughout the kōrero. Each Pou reflected on their journey from being ākonga to loyal Old Boys, to now holding leadership roles within the re-opened kura. They each acknowledged that the seed of their leadership were planted at TIPENE, and that their inspiration came from many generations of Old Boys who had gone before them.

A shared commitment to creating a nurturing and aspirational environment for young Māori boys was also clear. Drawing from their own lived experiences as ākonga, each Pou emphasised the importance of truly caring for ākonga and their whānau—culturally, academically, spiritually, and socially.

Both Nathan and Te Kani drew comparisons between their experiences in mainstream education and at TIPENE, noting the significant impact the kura had on their success and leadership aspirations. For them, TIPENE was not just a school, it was a place that shaped identity, affirmed potential, and connected them to a wider legacy of Māori leadership.

Our team felt it was important to highlight TIPENE's story in this kaupapa rangahau because of their ability to develop strong Māori leaders and their prevalent aspirations for young Māori boys to be ambitious and achieve academically, as well as in other areas of their life. By prioritising academic excellence through kaupapa Māori principles, theses Pou Māori aim to challenge negative statistics around Māori boys› education and wellbeing.

Kia Aroha Campus

"Developing warrior scholars"[8]

Te horopaki | Context

Located in Ōtara, Kia Aroha Campus stands on foundations built by whānau, community, and educators who dared to imagine something different—a kura grounded in identity, in justice, and in aroha for the people it serves. This is a place with whakapapa, a legacy that continues to shape its vision, values, and everyday practice.

Guided by the critical, culturally sustaining work of Dr Ann Milne (2013), Kia Aroha doesn't just talk about change, it lives it. The philosophy here is embedded in every relationship, every decision, and every learning journey.

Te hītori o Kia Aroha | The journey

The story of Kia Aroha began in 1980 as Ōtara East Intermediate. It became Clover Park Intermediate in 1981, and later one of the first middle schools in Aotearoa in 1995. A turning point came in 1986, with the establishment of Te Whānau o Tupuranga, a Taha Māori unit with a kaupapa Māori education pathway.

By 1988, Tupuranga had grown into a full Māori bilingual unit, and in 2006 it stepped into its own identity as a stand-alone kura for Years 7–13, while still sharing space and leadership with Clover Park Middle School. The name Tupuranga continues to hold significance—many of the school's kaimahi still refer to the kura this way.

In 2011, those two schools formally merged to form Kia Aroha College, creating two distinct pathways:

1. Te Whānau o Tupuranga—the Māori education centre
2. Fanau Pasifika—a centre for Samoan, Tongan, and Cook Islands education

The vision didn't stop there. By 2021, Kia Aroha had grown into a full composite kura (Years 1–13), adding a Māori immersion primary in 2023 and a Pasifika Lea Faka Tongan immersion unit in 2024. It is now a true whānau-based, kaupapa-driven learning environment, from kura tuatahi to kura tuarua.

Ngā kaupapa motuhake o Kia Aroha | What grounds the kura

Everything at Kia Aroha is grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi and in the unapologetic pursuit of mana motuhake, equity, and cultural strength. Māori and Pacific knowledge, identity, and worldview are the foundation. Education is understood as a vehicle for reclaiming identity, restoring dignity, and growing future leaders who know where they come from—and why it matters. Ākonga are nurtured to:

- understand the historical and ongoing realities that shape their lives
- stand proudly in their whakapapa
- succeed—not despite their cultural identity, but because of it.

Ngā kaupapa matua | Warrior scholars and graduate profiles[9]

Two key kaupapa bring this philosophy to life—warrior scholars and the graduate profiles. These are living, breathing expressions of what Kia Aroha stands for. They remind us that success is not just

8 https://www.kiaaroha.school.nz/
9 https://www.kiaaroha.school.nz/graduate-profiles

about grades or credits—it is about knowing who you are, standing firm in that, and contributing to something bigger than yourself.

Warrior scholars

Developed by Dr Ann Milne, this kaupapa describes ākonga as warrior scholars, young people who carry their culture with pride and use it as a source of strength. They know their whakapapa, they think critically, they challenge injustice, and they lead with heart. A warrior scholar knows where they stand—and why it matters.

Graduate profiles

The graduate profiles at Kia Aroha don't just describe success, they define it. These profiles are a map that lay out what it means to grow as Māori, as Samoan, as Tongan—with cultural confidence, academic excellence, critical thinking, and community leadership all woven together. It's not about leaving culture at the door to succeed; it's about taking it with you into every space you enter.

Ngā Pou o Kia Aroha Campus | Who we spoke with

In Term 3 2024, whakawhiti kōrero were held with 18 Pou Māori—the people who lead, live, and breathe the kaupapa (Table 4). These included group kōrero and one individual kōrero across five hui.

TABLE 4: **Ngā Pou Māori o Kia Aroha**

	Pou Māori (participants)	**Tūranga**
1.	Haley Milne *(Tahu Pōtiki, Tūhawaiki o motu Pohue)*	Pouwhenua (tumuaki) Ākonga o mua (former student)
2.	Judith Riki *(Te Aupōuri, Ngāi Tamanuhiri ki te Rāwhiti)* Allison Ripia *(Ngāpuhi)*	Pouhiwa (associate principal) Pouhiwa (associate principal)
3.	Koha Milne *(Tahu Pōtiki, Tūhawaiki o motu Pohue, Ngāpuhi)* Brady Pota *(Te Arawa)* Wikitoria Ripia *(Ngāpuhi)*	Kaiako Ākonga o mua
4.	Christian Kaumoana *(Ngāti Maniapoto)* Korinthia Ryder *(Te Arawa, Ngāpuhi)* Roimata Waahi-Koperu *(Te Rarawa, Te Aupōuri)* Junior Koperu *(Ngāti Maniapoto)*	Ākonga o mua
5.	Eight current ākonga	Ākonga (group kōrero)

The voices that follow are grounded in these kōrero—rich in lived experience, held in whanaungatanga, and centred on kaupapa.

Ngā pūkōrero

The following findings are presented through a series of pūkōrero—narrative profiles that elevate the voices of those who shape, lead, and live the kaupapa of Kia Aroha. These include, kaiako, Pouhiwa, ākonga o mua, and the Pouwhenua, each offering a perspective grounded in lived experience.

Rather than isolating themes into categories, this approach honours the interconnectedness of the people, roles, and relationships within the kura. Each pūkōrero weaves together stories of leadership, identity, belonging, and transformation—presenting a layered understanding of how Kia Aroha sustains and grows mana motuhake across generations.

He pūkōrero o Haley Milne—Te Pouwhenua o Kia Aroha

Haley Milne is more than the principal—she is the Pouwhenua of the kaupapa. Her role is woven into every part of the identity and operation of the kura. With intergenerational ties and a commitment to kaupapa Māori, she leads with an unwavering focus on sustaining and evolving a 30-year legacy:

> I'm the champion, the carrier of this kaupapa that's taken 30 years to develop … I can't bring myself to let it go backwards.

Her leadership comes with responsibility that goes far beyond school administration. She carries a role that is educational, cultural, and relational all at once:

> It's the chairperson of the marae committee, the CEO, the babysitter, the parent, the grandparent—all, 24/7.

Te haerenga | The journey

Haley didn't initially aspire to work at Kia Aroha. She entered the space reluctantly, unsure of where she fit. But as she stepped through team leader and associate principal roles, she began to recognise her calling.

When her mother—the founding principal, Dr Ann Milne—became ill, Haley returned home instinctively:

> She didn't ask me to come home, but I knew. I just came home.

Eventually, she found herself in the acting principal role, overwhelmed but determined:

> I had no idea what I was doing. I was ringing Mum six times a day—and that was a good day.

When it came time to apply for the permanent position, she made the decision with full awareness of the stakes:

> This place has a mana, kōrero, whakapapa to it, and I'm going to grow it the way we want to grow it, but it had to be someone from within the kaupapa itself.

Ngā piki me ngā heke | The highs and lows

Haley is transparent about the emotional toll of leadership:

> I think that being a principal is a lonely job because you're always upsetting people.

As a kaiako, she was part of a team—planning and problem-solving together. But as Pouwhenua, the final responsibility falls on her shoulders. She carries all the information others may not see—including financial risk, legal obligations, and long-term strategic outcomes—and must make decisions that balance kaupapa with compliance.

One decision came during preparations for Te Matatini, when 80% of the Tupuranga staff expressed interest in competing, attending, or supporting kapa. Wanting to enable their participation without disrupting learning, Haley proposed starting the school year early to offset time away:

> So then, I made a call that we'd start on the 20th of January, and come Matatini week we'd be away, and there we go. We've made up our days, and it's all good.

But the Ministry rejected the plan, re-enforcing the official pay start dates. Staff would not be paid for work before 27 January, meaning those new to the kura would effectively be working unpaid:

> Some staff were pissed off about that. Other staff were like, 'Oh yeah, all good. It is what it is' … Some said, 'Now that I know that option A couldn't happen … we can move into what option B looks like.'

Rather than avoid the conflict, Haley faced it head-on, not only with staff, but with the Ministry:

> Are you telling me I'm the only school in the country that's raised a Matatini issue? Why then would you be surprised that Māori schools don't ask you? Because it's not a safe environment to ask.

She didn't accept a simple 'no', she advocated for culturally relevant alternatives, because the system wasn't built to account for kaupapa like this:

> If you knew a Māori at all, 'No' was just a bigger challenge than a decision.

This example is not an outlier. It reflects Haley's leadership approach: proactive, relational, and unafraid to confront systemic barriers

> I look into options that are alternatives, and I challenge people, and I give the Ministry a hard time.

Te tangata | The people—"You don't just go to work and clock out. This is a lifestyle. This is whakapapa. And that's the whole point."

Haley's advocacy also extends to the human impact of political decisions. When government cuts affected their lunch programme, she was forced to reduce the roles of the kuia who staffed the kitchen, women who had become part of the fabric of the kura:

> They're not just three old ladies. They're whānau.

Relationships are central to Haley's leadership. Many of her staff were once her students:

> Actually, every single one of those people that you've spoken to today, I taught. Whether they're 30 or 18—they're all mine.

This continuity has built a space where identity, belonging, and legacy are lived values. Kia Aroha operates like a marae, a whānau-based space where people are raised in kaupapa:

> We had a tangi here. We've had births here. This place is whakapapa. It's personal.

And with that personal connection comes responsibility:

> You are always willing to sacrifice for your whakapapa. Basically, if your marae says you've got to do such and such, that obligation is not just a responsibility, it's a, 'I'm obliged to do it this way', and sometimes, as I say, sometimes that's the most pressure, but sometimes it's the whole reason why I do it.

Ngā mātāpono | The principles—"We are indigenising"

Haley is clear that Kia Aroha is not a mainstream school. It is driven by a distinctive Māori worldview, and that's something she defends without compromise:

> We've started now also being absolutely comfortable about saying that maybe our kaupapa is not your kaupapa, and that's okay.

She likens it to a faith-based school, if someone doesn't believe in the kaupapa, they're not expected to stay:

> If you go to a faith-based school, you can't say five minutes down the track, 'Me and the god guy aren't friends anymore, so we don't want to do the god stuff.'

She challenges dominant views of success, especially the emphasis on academic results over values and wellbeing:

> A colonised measure of success is the bigger your school is, the better you are. I don't give a rat's about how many kids I've got, other than, I want to know that 100% of them have got our kaupapa.
>
> This is what success looks like when it's narrow, and the NCEA game is that whole game. It's a narrow measure of success, and I don't agree that success can only look like one thing.

Instead, she promotes a broader, more values-aligned view of success:

> Success should be just being bloody good at whatever it is that you choose to do. If you're going to be a parent, be a good one … If you're going to be a cleaner, love it. Do what makes you happy. Do what brings you joy. Do something that speaks to your heart and be bloody good at it … There's not a parent that loves their child less because they can't read, but I would have given my kid a bit of a wise up if she didn't know how to be respectful.

Her perspective on decolonisation is equally clear and critical:

> That's what happens in my brain when we spend a lot of time, not decolonising, because that still puts the power with the coloniser, but we are indigenising and we're not 're-indigenising' because we're just indigenous.

Te anga whakamua | Looking ahead

Haley is already preparing for succession by training a team of future leaders:

> My theory is that if I start teaching people now and move them into leadership positions, then actually, they'll be ready.

Each of these future leaders is learning about property, budgeting, staffing, and curriculum, the areas she didn't initially understand herself.

She remains focused on long-term, intergenerational outcomes, including visions for a kōhanga, a whare tāpere, and even papakāinga:

> If I don't start talking about it now, it'll never happen.

Her message to future leaders is clear:

> Don't be me. Be you. But be firm in your values. Be the rock in the river.

He pūkōrero o Alison Ripia rāua ko Judith Riki—Ngā Pouhiwa o Kia Aroha

Alison Ripia and Judith Riki are long-serving Pouhiwa at Kia Aroha, providing consistent leadership grounded in kaupapa Māori. Their work has helped sustain a kura shaped by tikanga, whanaungatanga, and a strong commitment to ākonga and whānau.

With decades of combined experience, they have supported the growth of a learning environment where culture, language, and identity are central. Even though the kura is now known as Kia Aroha Campus, many still refer to it as Tupuranga—a name that continues to carry the weight of its whakapapa and kaupapa. For them, Kia Aroha is more than a school:

> We've always known that this place isn't just a school, it's whānau. It doesn't finish at 3 o'clock. (Judith)
>
> One of the things I say to the staff is, if we think about a river and the water that runs through the river, our kaupapa has to be like rocks, a stake in the ground, because otherwise, who knows? (Alison)

Te haerenga | The journey to leadership

Alison began teaching at the kura in 1999, when it was still Clover Park Middle School—one of the first in Aotearoa to adopt the middle school model. She started as a beginning teacher and became team

leader of Tupuranga in 2001. In 2005, Alison, Judith, and Haley were appointed Pouhiwa, establishing a leadership structure grounded in kaupapa Māori and collective responsibility:

> When I arrived here … It was big learning for me. Our computers were all Macintosh … I think six Macintosh computers for about 100 tamariki. (Alison)

Judith, a former tauira, returned to the kura in 2005. Her connection to the kaupapa ran deep, and her return marked the beginning of a long and steady contribution as a cultural and pedagogical anchor. Reflecting on that moment she says:

> Waimarie au kei konei tonu ahau.

Their leadership was shaped and supported by the guidance of Dr Ann Milne, whose work in critical, culturally sustaining pedagogy was foundational to Kia Aroha's development:

> Mōhio kōrua i tupu mai tēnei āhuatanga Kia Aroha i te wā i kōnei a Dr Ann Milne. Tērā mahi āna e pā ana ki te rangahau. (Judith)

Judith later completed a doctorate exploring intergenerational leadership of wāhine from Te Aupōuri, weaving ancestral mātauranga with educational practice:

> E rerekē hoki ngā hāhī o ia kaikōrero, me i tupu mai tētahi o rātou i te ao o tētahi o mātou tūpuna ko Te Mutukapa. (Judith)

He pou rangahau | Research-informed practice

Judith and Alison ground their work in kaupapa Māori theory and ongoing self-review. Their approach is shaped by research and adapted to their context of Kia Aroha:

> One thing with this place—we review stuff to death to suit how we are going. (Alison)

They draw from thinkers such as Mason Durie, Graham Smith, and Ann Milne, and maintain a clear commitment to evidence-based practice:

> Everything about the way we teach and learn our young people is based on solid research. We don't just pick it out of the sky. (Alison)

One programme Alison helped lead was grounded in Mason Durie's thinking in terms of reframing student potential:

> Moving our tamariki from unrealised potential to unlimited potential, following the ideas, the concept from Mason Durie. (Alison)

Their practice actively resists deficit thinking and exclusion:

> We've never streamed here in the way that other schools have streamed our tamariki, because we know it doesn't work. (Alison)

> We look at how we can change behaviour, not exclude the child. (Judith)

Success is seen not only in academic terms but in long-term, transformational learning:

> We believe in the whole continuum of learning. I have no doubt, in fact, I absolutely know that what we give our kids here is a good foundation for learning new things and learning it differently … and they know that knowledge is power. (Alison)

Mana motuhake | Self-determination in practice

Judith and Alison view mana motuhake as central to leadership at Kia Aroha. For Judith, it is grounded in whakapapa and collective responsibility:

> Mana motuhake ki ahau, he mea i waenga i tō mātou kaupapa rangatira. Ko te tino rangatira, te ara tino rangatira tērā. Ki te āwhina i ētahi atu, me arotahi ki a koe anō kia ora mai koe, kia whakaaro, ānei a tātou tamariki. He tāonga nō ngā matua tūpuna.

For Alison, it is also expressed through everyday acts of agency and transformation:

> It's the ability to transform thinking, and people, and our kids … For lots of our young people, coming to school is mana motuhake—every day. It's revolutionary.

Their leadership style is collective, flexible, and distributed:

> Leadership is massive, and it's ever-changing, and it's everybody. Everybody has a role to play … Haley is secure enough to be able to share that power of principalship. That's mana motuhake too. (Alison)

Role's shift depending on need, and leadership is defined by contribution rather than title:

> Haley would have told you that we've had four tangi at our school … and Alison, as a leader, what I see is she's always gravitated to the whare kai. Ki ahau nei, he mahi tērā as a leader. Whereas I always get told I've got to go and do the karanga and stay in the whare … That whole concept of leadership is interchangeable for us. (Judith)

> Ko tāku mahi, ko te mea e māuiuitia ana ngā māhita i roto i a Tukutuku. Kua haere atu au hei kairīwhi, hei whakahōhā āini i ngā māhita i Tukutuku. E tautoko mārika ana ahau. (Judith)

Te whānau | Legacy and intergenerational return

Their leadership is grounded in generational connection. Many current staff are former tauira—what Judith calls the "Young Elders":

> They're back … and you can see the aroha in the mahi. (Judith)

> You can't take the whānau o Tupuranga and plant it anywhere else, because it's grown here first. We grew it here, and for our tamariki, our community, and our whānau. (Alison)

Alison reflects proudly on their return:

> We're teaching the children of our ex-students … The things they do are just like their parents used to do when they were in Year 7. (Alison)

> Haley has literally grown our teachers. (Alison)

Ngā wero me ngā wawata | Challenges and aspirations

They are honest about the challenges of the mahi—from staff shortages to the demands of kaupapa-led leadership:

> Any given day … there's seven teachers short. But the kaupapa always survives. (Alison)

Judith reflects on the learning curve of managing property and budgets:

> Ka tino hī rawerawe tōku mātanga te whakaaro—oh gosh, more money for us in our budget… he rawe ki ahau. (Judith)

At the same time, they are focused on the future. Alison hopes to develop teacher training in-house to better serve the community:

> I believe that we can best serve our community by teaching our teachers.

> We may not fit everybody, and we've always said that too. If we don't fit you, if we're not good for you, then you go and find a place where it is good for you.

Judith reinforces the importance of everyday practice in sustaining reo and kaupapa:

> Ko tāku, what advice would you give Māori leaders at your kura? Ko tāku i roto ia Tupuranga, kia kaha ki te kōrero i te reo i ngā wā katoa, nē? Ahakoa ētahi kei te ako rātou, i wareware ahau ki te kōrero, wareware hoki a Whaea Alison ki te kōrero kia kōrua.
>
> We came to the realisation, ko mātou anake e mahi pēnei ana … Engari ki a mātou, me haere tonu ngā mahi i muri mai i ēra haora.

Alison adds: "There's no status quo here … everyone's moving all the time."

Te mātauranga | Teaching and curriculum

The curriculum at Kia Aroha is shaped by the lived context and community values. Teaching is collective, inclusive, and relational from the outset:

> We don't withdraw kids … he rerekē hoki tērā akoranga ki wētahi o ngā kaiako … We don't put our kids in boxes. (Judith)

Alison adds, "Everyone's going to get an award because that's how beautiful they are."

Te whāinga | Looking forward

Looking ahead, both Pouhiwa envision growth that starts with whānau and continues through teacher development. Alison is focused on preparing future educators:

> I want to look at starting a teacher training programme [in Tupuranga] … I believe that we can best serve our community by teaching our teachers. (Alison)

Judith is exploring kōhanga reo, recognising the needs of staff and whānau:

> I think one of the areas we've been talking about is having Kōhanga Reo … our staff bring their tamariki to school ia rā. There are no bounds.

But what anchors all of this is their clarity about identity and direction:

> We've always said, we don't want to be a kura and we don't want to be mainstream. We are who we are. That's mana motuhake. (Alison)

He pūkōrero o ngā kaiako o Tupuranga—Carrying the kaupapa forward

At Kia Aroha, still well-known by many of its kaiako and alumni as Tupuranga, teaching is more than a profession. It is an act of continuation. The kaupapa that began in 1986 with the founding of Te Whānau o Tupuranga has grown across generations and continues to shape how kaiako lead, teach, and nurture identity today.

As former ākonga themselves, many of the current kaiako were raised within the philosophy of the kura and now uphold that same vision for the next generation:

> We kind of have taken up that mantle and now have become those idols for the students that are here today. (Brady Pota)
>
> This kaupapa is 30-plus years strong. You can't just relinquish this; you've got to uphold it. (Wikitoria Ripia)

Although the name of the kura has evolved, from Clover Park to Tupuranga to Kia Aroha Campus, the essence of the kaupapa has remained the same:

> The kaupapa has never changed. It's just the ingoa that's changed, really. (Koha Milne)

Te whānau o Tupuranga: More than a school

For the kaiako at Tupuranga, the kura is not just a workplace, it is a kāinga-rua (second home), a marae, and a space where community, identity and whakapapa are reclaimed:

> We've had kids throughout all of the years do not know their pepeha. To this day, these kids that you talk to, they might be 20 plus, and you say, 'What marae do you come from?' They say, 'Kia Aroha. That's my marae.' (Brady Pota)

Many ākonga arrive unsure of where they come from. Through sustained relational learning, they begin to connect with their tūrangawaewae:

> Most of our kids just have no idea ... the only iwi they know is Ngāpuhi. Then you sit with them, go through their name, their whānau, and they're like, 'Actually, you're from Te Tai Rāwhiti.' And they're like, 'Where's that?' (Koha Milne)

This rediscovery of identity often occurs over years of being immersed in kaupapa Māori, tikanga, and whakapapa:

> Even kids who've only been here one year can now stand and do pepeha, whaikōrero, and not because they were told to, but because they absorbed it. (Brady Pota)

Leadership that reflects the whānau

Leadership is embedded early in the lives of ākonga at Tupuranga. Kaiako recall leading classes and events as rangatahi. That same philosophy now guides their approach to growing leaders today:

> Tupuranga's good at raising leaders, but they're not expected to be the same leader. You don't have to be the one out the front. You can be the ones leading at the back, and we encourage that. (Koha Milne)

> Some tamariki can't talk in front of a whole waka, but they can tell the person next to them to whakarongo. That in itself is leadership. (Wikitoria Ripia)

Leadership here is not based on titles or positions, it's defined by action, responsibility, and contribution to kaupapa. For some, that looks like quiet strength:

> I don't drive; I'll happily push the vehicle ... That's my type of leadership. (Brady Pota)

Others lead by relationship, memory, and service:

> Your kaiako isn't just your kaiako. They end up becoming your auntie, your uncle... and for some of us that don't have mama or papa, they become those figures. (Brady Pota)

Identity and mana motuhake—"You're Māori, and that's enough. Everything else is a bonus." (Wikitoria Ripia)

The kura is clear in its affirmation of Māori identity. Here, being Māori is framed as a strength:

> Being Māori is like a superpower. Like, you're Māori, and that in itself is mana motuhake ... the trials and tribulations that got you here make you mana worthy. (Wikitoria Ripia)

This framing shifts students' self-perception, especially in a context like Ōtara, often unfairly stigmatised in public narratives:

> We've found the rautaki, but it's kind of just naturally happened. For us, it was being proud of being from Ōtara ... being from South Auckland. (Koha Milne)

> Ōtara is where you live. You're from Ōtara. Ōtara›s cool, mean talent comes from Ōtara. Just natural, amazing talent. (Wikitoria Ripia)

Breaking barriers to learning

Kaiako and leadership alike work to remove systemic obstacles that prevent ākonga from engaging with kura life:

> One thing Whaea Haley has really made and consciously done … she has taken away every single goal barrier that cannot get a child to kura. She has transport, buses, vans … there are lunches. (Wikitoria Ripia)

> It's been right down to, she's given whānau internet and devices to get your kids on to internet … We have kai packs that go home. There's everything and any barrier you can think of, it's probably been [thought of]. (Koha Milne)

Teaching as whānau work

The teaching model at Tupuranga rejects siloed, subject-based approaches. Integration and adaptability are essential, as are deep, personal relationships:

> We don't teach one subject. Even as high school teachers, we teach everything… Even if I suck at math, I still have to teach it. (Koha Milne)

> Curriculum integration is massive here at Kia Aroha, at Tupuranga. (Wikitoria Ripia)

Kaiako roles stretch far beyond 9-to-3 classroom duties:

> Our jobs don't just end at 3 o'clock. I've got kids messaging me at 10pm about random things… It's the whānau environment. There's no switch that turns that off. (Koha Milne)

Te anga whakamua | Looking ahead

The aspirations of these kaiako are grounded in both vision and whakapapa. Many see the natural next step as expanding Kia Aroha's reach further into kōhanga reo and tertiary education:

> Tertiary, kōhanga reo, those are the next two steps … and the kaupapa's still going to be the same. (Koha Milne)

> We totally can. Our Pouhiwa could teach teachers how to teach. (Wikitoria Ripia)

Even after years away, former ākonga who return often remark how little has changed, not in terms of buildings, but in the culture of care, respect, and kaupapa:

> Everyone that has ever come to Tupuranga … if you come back, nothing's changed. The only thing that has changed is you. (Koha Milne)

He pūkōrero o ngā ākonga o mua—Carrying the legacy forward

At Kia Aroha, still remembered by many as Tupuranga, education was never just about academic achievement. For graduates, the kura was a place of transformation. A space to grow, reconnect, and understand what it means to be Māori, to be proud, and to lead with purpose.

Leadership wasn't given, it was lived. It was passed down by example, nurtured by kaiako who saw potential and gave space for growth:

> It was the people before me, the way I stepped into that role, and the teachers who gave us mana to lead. (Christian Kaumoana)

In this environment, ākonga became tuakana, stepping into responsibility with the support of those before them.

He tūrangawaewae | A place to belong

For many, arriving at Kia Aroha meant stepping into a world where their culture was central. It was celebrated. It was alive:

> Here I learned what Māori looked like and sounded like. (Roimata Waahi-Koperu)

Coming from a school where Māori identity was rarely acknowledged, the shift was powerful, not just about learning language or tikanga but about discovering a new sense of self:

> It taught me how to not only get along with my culture but with others … it's not just our culture; it's about all of our cultures as one kura. (Korinthia Ryder)

> We learnt pretty much all cultures. It was cool. We had an assembly every day to learn Tongan, to learn Samoan and then to do Māori. (Korinthia Ryder)

Some didn't connect to the kaupapa right away. Their journey back to their Māoritanga came later, with the realisation of what had been lost:

> I came for the sports. I didn't push myself into Māoritanga. (Junior Koperu)

And yet, even after leaving, the pull of the kura, of the whānau, remained:

> There was always something missing. That's why I came back. (Junior Koperu)

Now, as a kaiāwhina, Junior offers something he once needed: presence, trust, and connection:

> They might not talk to the teachers, but they talk to me. And that means something. (Junior Koperu)

Ngā wā o mua | Remembering our time

The kura is remembered not only for what it taught, but for how it felt—as a whānau, a home, a place where values were lived out daily:

> I was here when Kia Aroha was Kia Aroha College, and we had Nanny Ann [Milne] as our principal then and it was just so lovely to have her as a principal because she set the standard on what is right, what's not right. (Korinthia Ryder)

> Our seniors were … we were just the babies of all of our younger seniors just following along. (Korinthia Ryder)

Even the everyday moments helped form a deep sense of connection and community:

> We used to go down to the shops and chip in for fish and chips all together … and we'd go home at 4 o'clock. You don't see any kid out there by 3.10pm. It's empty. They're gone. (Junior Koperu)

Hei whakatipu | Growing our own

Leadership at Kia Aroha has never had one look. For some, it was speaking on the pae. For others, it was picking up the rubbish after lunch, stepping into kapa haka, or simply showing up and making space for someone else.

For Junior, leadership meant restoring the sense of connection and energy he remembered from his own time as a tauira. He encouraged ākonga to re-engage with the kura as a living, active space—one filled with movement, laughter, and whanaungatanga.

His style is hands-on and relational. He knows that sometimes leadership is just being the person ākonga feel safe with, someone who shows up without judgement:

> A good leader will actually sit down and talk to you, whereas a stink leader will just walk away and leave you with the problem. (Junior Koperu)

As graduates return to the kura as kaiako and kaiāwhina, they carry with them the lessons they once received, not to replicate the past, but to keep the kaupapa alive in ways that meet the realities of now:

> The goal in my whānau is having my babies here and them coming out of this kura speaking fluent te reo Māori, and them teaching me that also. (Korinthia Ryder)
>
> For me, I think my aspiration is for the same for my girls, to be confident in speaking te reo. (Roimata Waahi-Koperu)

Te anga whakamua | Looking ahead

For many ākonga o mua, the lessons of Kia Aroha become guiding values, in whānau, mahi, and community.

Some carry the kaupapa into their own homes, raising tamariki fluent in te reo Māori. Others return as kaiako, kaiāwhina, mentors and pou for the next generation.

The message to today's rangatahi is simple but powerful:

> Be better than the ones before you. (Ākonga)
>
> If there's an opportunity, take it. (Ākonga)

Because every opportunity taken, every step forward, and every act of leadership, big or small, carries the kaupapa further.

He whakarāpopoto | Summary

Across every pūkōrero, it is clear that Kia Aroha is not just a kura, it is a kaupapa carried by its people. From the Pouwhenua, Pouhiwa and kaiako to ākonga o mua and ākonga, each voice reflects a sense of responsibility, pride, and connection. Leadership here is not about position, but about contribution. Identity is lived, remembered, and reclaimed.

This is a kura where whakapapa matters. Where cleaning the wharekai holds as much mana as sitting on the pae.

The kaupapa has never been static. It is sustained through action, grounded in aroha, and passed down from generation to generation. As ākonga, kaimahi, and community continue to return, grow, and lead, they show what it truly means to carry the legacy of Kia Aroha forward.

Te Kura Māori o Porirua

Te tīmatanga

Ko te kūrae o Whitireia, te rehu paripari o Porirua, Ko Te Waewae-Kāpiti-o-Tara-rāua-ko-Rangitāne, Ko te Mana o Kupe, mai Miria te Kakara ki Whitireia, whakawhiti i te Moana o Raukawa ki Whakatū, ki Wairau te kurupe o Ngāti Toa Rangatira.

Nei mātou te itinga o Te Kura Māori o Porirua e hāpai nei i te whakaaro:

> He kura te tangata - *"The people are the treasure"*
>
> *"Ka oho te wairua, ka mataara te tinana, he aroha ki te aroha, ka kā te rama"*[1].

Te whare kōrero | The kura today

Te Kura Māori o Porirua is a kura ā-iwi grounded in mana, tikanga, and the educational aspirations of Ngāti Toa Rangatira. It operates under the Designated Special Character Schools model (section 156 of the Education and Training Act 2020), which allows it to deliver a kaupapa grounded in te ao Māori, while remaining part of the state schooling system.

Across Aotearoa, every kura ā-iwi has its own whare wānanga—a unique house of knowledge that reflects the worldview, values, and whakapapa of its people. This section explores the whare wānanga of Te Kura Māori o Porirua by elevating the voices of its Pou Māori—those who uphold and sustain the kaupapa, including tumuaki, kaiako, whānau, ākonga, and raukura (graduates).

He hītori | History

Te Kura Māori o Porirua was established in 2001 in Waitangirua under the guidance and mana of Ngāti Toa Rangatira. It began as a full Māori immersion kura for Years 1–8, with just 75 ākonga. In 2004, it expanded to include Year 9 and continued to grow until it offered education through to Year 13. In 2008, the kura became part of Ngā Kura ā-Iwi o Aotearoa, solidifying its place as a kura ā-iwi dedicated to iwi-led education.

Today, the kura serves approximately 311 ākonga from Year 1 to Year 13, and has become a central cultural and educational foundation for its community, one that nurtures tamariki and whānau through a kaupapa Māori lens led by the people, for the people.

He kura te tangata | A whakataukī with purpose

In 2004, during a kura charter review, Evan Hippolite (Board of Trustees) approached Te Ahukaramu Charles Royal to help develop a whakataukī that reflected the ngako—the essence - of the kura. Following kōrero with Ngāti Toa representatives, the whakataukī 'He Kura te Tangata'[10] was adopted.

This whakataukī draws from a letter by Tāmati Ranapiri (Ngāti Raukawa) to ethnographer Elsdon Best. He referenced Whareaia, the son of Kiripuai, a kuia of Ngāti Koata of Ngāti Toa Rangatira:

> Owing to the existence and life work of Kiripuai's son, the people are alive and prospering ... this proverb refers to the excellent leader, one who cares for his/her people and administers their affairs with skill. One is able to see the people prosper under the leadership of this chief ... the people prosper through his/her leadership and administration.[11]

10 https://www.kura-porirua.school.nz/263/easy_pages/156-te-whakatauki-school-motto
11 From a letter by Tāmati Ranapiri to Elsdon Best, Alexander Turnbull Library, MS Paper 1187-127.

Ngā pou o te kura | The pillars of the kura

The kura is structured around four pou, each aligned with the progression of the tamaiti:

- Pou Tuarongo—Years 1–2
- Pou Tokomanawa—Years 3–5
- Pou Mua—Years 6–8
- Pou Kaiāwhā—Years 9–13 (Wharekura)

Each pou is housed in a block named after a native tree, symbolising the growth and development of the tamaiti under Māori principles and values.

Tai Te Wa Sio Allan-Moetaua (Te Ati Haunui a Pāpārangi, Ngai Tai, Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Porou)

Ahuriri Teepa (Ngāpuhi, Te Ati Haunui a Pāpārangi, Ngāti Kahungungu, Tūhoe)

Ngā Pou Māori | Voices of the kura

In Term 1, 2025, whakawhiti kōrero were held with seven Pou Māori—including tumuaki, kaiako, whānau, and ākonga—across five individual and group kōrero. These are some of the people who carry the kaupapa forward and keep the ahikā burning.

TABLE 5 **Ngā Pou Maōri of Te Kura Māori o Porirua**

	Pou Māori (participants)	**Tūranga**
1	Evelyn Wharehinga *(Ngāti Porou)* Te Rua Huihui Hiroti *(Te Arawa, Te Atiawa, Ngāti Apa, Te Atihaunui a Pāpārangi, Rereahu, Ngāti Mahuta)*	Tumuaki Matarua, Co-principal Kaiako, Raukura (graduate)
2	Kataraina Taepa-Matakatea *(Te Arawa, Te Atiawa, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa)*	Tumuaki Matarua, Co-Principal
3	Juanita Teepa *(Tūhoe, Ngāpuhi)*	Kaiako, Whānau member
4	Te Ata Arthur *(Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Waikato)*	Kaiako, Raukura (graduate)
5	Ahuriri Teepa *(Ngāpuhi, Te Ati Haunui a Pāpārangi, Ngāti Kahungunu, Tūhoe)* Tai Te Wa Sio Allan-Moetaua *(Te Ati Haunui a Pāpārangi, Ngai Tai, Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Porou)*	Ākonga

He kōrero mō te hātepe | Contextual note on translation and ethics

These pūkōrero were first written in te reo Māori, the language used throughout the whakawhiti kōrero with Pou Māori. We then used AI tools (ChatGPT) to support the translation into English, followed by careful rewording to ensure the wairua of the kōrero remained intact. In line with Te Mana Raraunga (2018), we upheld tikanga and applied ethical guidelines from Mā Te Rae—Māori Evaluation Association (2025) to protect the integrity of Māori data and honour the mana of each speaker.

Ngā pūkōrero

The waiata, “E taku kura e”—composed by Tayler Cassidy and Jacob Wilkins Hodges—weaves together the key themes that emerge from the kōrero with the Pou Māori of Te Kura Māori o Porirua. Each verse reflects a key voice within the kura and acts as a guide to the pūkōrero that follow:

- Poutuārongo introduces the tumuaki and their leadership.
- Poutokomanawa speaks to the energy and identity of raukura who return as kaiako.
- Te Puawaitanga o ngā whakaaro highlights the growth of ākonga as rangatira in their own right.
- E taku manu raukura reflects the role of whānau in nurturing tamariki into te ao mārama.

Together, the waiata and pūkōrero affirm the kaupapa: “He kura te tangata”—by us, for us, our way.

E Taku Kura e - *nā Tayler Cassidy rāua ko Jacob Wilkins Hodges*

Ka tū ki te Poutuārongo, te miha o te kura

Ko te aroha, ko te hari me te koa

Tōku katoa

Ka tipu, ka wake noa

Ki Poutokomanawa

He ngatahi, he whitawhita, he hianga

Tōku ahurei

Te Puawaitanga o ngā whakaaro

Kia tūhura tōku tuakiritanga

Ka hao te rangatahi

Kia hura ki te iwi

Kia kura te tangata

E taku manu raukura

Kia whera ōu ringaringa

Kia ngāwari

Kia mārohi

Te putanga ki te whai ao

Ki te ao mārama

Pūkōrero: Ngā tumuaki matarua - Evelyn & Kataraina

Ka tū ki te Poutuārongo, te miha o te kura

Ko te aroha, ko te hari me te koa

Tōku katoa

Tūāpapa | Foundation

Evelyn Wharehinga and Kataraina Taepa-Matakatea, once kaiako, now serve as Tumuaki Matarua of Te Kura Māori o Porirua. Evelyn leads the kura tuatahi (Tau 1–8), while Kataraina leads the wharekura (Tau 9–13). Both have been integral to the kura since its early days:

> Ko au tētahi o ngā tainatora o te kura, i konei au i ngā tau 24 kua taha ake. (Evelyn)
>
> Ko ia [Evelyn] taku kaiako i au i te kura tuarua, koia taku neigbour, nō reira koia taku tuakana. Kāore he taupā i konā mō te taha whakapono tētahi ki tētahi. (Kataraina)

After 10 months with no applicants for the tumuaki position, the Board invited Evelyn and Kataraina to formally step in. Their acceptance was driven not by ambition, but by responsibility to their people:

> I whakaae māua kia noho … kāore i te paku hiahia i taua tūranga, heoi i te rongo i te mokemoke a o tātou nei kaimahi. (Kataraina)

Both continued teaching. Evelyn engaged tamariki in pāngarau using sports, baking, and real-life contexts:

> Ka ngana kia whai i ngā pūmanawa o ngā tamariki. (Evelyn)

Kataraina created Te Whare Pora, an NCEA-aligned framework based on the practices of kuia, to ground tauira in mātauranga and mana motuhake:

> I taku hokinga mai, i whakatūria taua Whare Pora e ai ki ngā hiahia o NCEA. (Kataraina)

Their leadership goes far beyond the job description. Evelyn noted:

> Ko au i ētahi wā kei runga i te tuanui e whakatika ana i tētahi mea, i te māra.

Ngā tairo a kupe | Wearing many pōtae

In the face of a national kaiako shortage, these tumuaki continue to fill the gaps. They acknowledge the intense workload an emotional weight that comes with deep commitment:

> Ko te kura taku kāinga tahi … te nuinga o ngā hāora ka whakapau kaha nō taku aroha ki te kaupapa. (Evelyn)
>
> I te taenga mai o aku teina, ngā kaiako tēina, kī atu au … waihō ngā mahi kura. (Kataraina)

Kataraina implemented strategies to protect kaiako wellbeing, such as scheduled breaks, professional wānanga, and active reflection on purpose:

> Ka tere pau te hau … nā reira ahau e kī ana kua tae te wā māku kia whakaora anō i taku whare kātahi ka hoki.

Evelyn also reflected on the intense demands of their roles and the need to create sustainable pathways:

> We've got to be sustainable, and we can't be waiting for anybody else to fill the gaps.

Mā te kura, mō te kura, e ai ki te kura | By us, for us, our way

Leadership at Te Kura Māori o Porirua is strongly tied to whānau, whenua, and identity:

> Mā Te Kura Māori o Porirua, mō Te Kura Māori o Porirua, e ai ki Te Kura Māori o Porirua. (Evelyn)

Evelyn stressed that the kura must reflect its community:

> Ngā āhuatanga ka kuhu ki roto i te kura me tika mō ā tātou tamariki, mō ā tātou taiohi, ā tātou whānau whānui.

Kataraina added:

> Ko tētahi mea nui mō ngā tamariki noho taone, me matua mōhio koe, ko wai koe, nō hea koe. (Kataraina)

Kataraina also affirmed that identity is the foundation of mana motuhake:

> Ko te tuakiri me te tuāpapatanga o te tangata, me ana akoranga i a ia e tipu ai.

Te anamata | Looking after the ahikā

Their vision for the future is one of collective responsibility, manaakitanga, and relevance:

> Ka whakahāngai, ka whakakarite i te kura ki tō marae … me tangata whenua ki ngā āhuatanga katoa o te kura kia tiaki i te ahikā. (Evelyn)

Evelyn expands on this by reinforcing the idea that all who belong to the kura carry the responsibility of kaitiakitanga:

> Ina ka haramai koe ki te kura hei manuhiri kei te manaaki mātou i a koe, heoi ki te noho ki te kura, ka whai tūnga hei akonga, hei kaimahi, ko koe tētahi tangata whenua. Nō reira, me tangata whenua ki ngā āhuatanga katoa o te kura kia tiaki i te ahikā, pērā i runga i to marae. (Evelyn)

This framing positions everyone in the kura—whether kaimahi or ākonga—as a kaitiaki, with an active role in sustaining the mauri of the kaupapa:

> Me rongo te takitini i ngā hua. (Kataraina)
>
> He mea nui kia whakarongo hoki ki a tātou nei tamariki. (Kataraina)

They also focused on nurturing future leaders from within:

> Ka tīmata rātou hei kaiāwhina. (Evelyn)

He kupu whakakapi

Evelyn and Kataraina embody he kura te tangata. Their leadership is responsive and reciprocal. They live the kaupapa they uphold, raise the next generation of kaiako and leaders from within, and continually adapt to meet the needs of their tamariki and whānau.

Their kōrero is a powerful reminder: leadership in a kura ā-iwi isn't about hierarchy, it's about whakapapa, aroha, and service.

Pūkōrero: Ngā raukura, ngā kaiako

> Ka tipu, ka wake noa
>
> Ki Poutokomanawa

Tūāpapa | From raukura to kaiako

Te Rua Hiroti and Te Ata Arthur are raukura of Te Kura Māori o Porirua who have returned as kaiako, continuing the intergenerational cycle of leadership.

For Te Rua, the pathway to teaching began early:

> Ko aku whaea, aku tauira, koina te take i kaha pokea au ki te mahi. Koina noa te tauira i mōhio au.

Her inspiration came from her kaiako—Whaea Sophie Tukukino, Whaea Evelyn Wharehinga, Whaea Sharon Cassidy, Whaea Kataraina Matakatea-Taepa, and Matua Haami Doyle—who modelled the standard she aspired to:

> I reira hoki aku 'role models' e whakatauira ana ngā taumata, aku paearu māka—kaua e heke.

While studying at Waikato, Te Rua returned every break to work at kura—as kaiāwhina, event organiser, and eventually relief kaiako—building experience before becoming a kaiako.

Similarly, Te Ata didn't originally intend to be a kaiako. Her journey began in early childhood education, but observing her own whānau entering kura ignited a desire to tautoko their growth:

> Knowing they were coming here, that then I could further develop them.

Looking back, she saw her own kaiako as the blueprint:

> A lot of them were good role models … it's my goal to be like them or similar to them.

Returning as a kaiako didn't feel like pressure—it felt like coming home.

Tuakiritanga | Teaching identity through mana motuhake

At the heart of their teaching is nurturing mana motuhake—a tamaiti who is confident, grounded, and able to stand strong in their identity:

> Ko tā mātou he whakaako i ngā momo akoranga e taea ana te tamaiti te tū rangatira i roto i a ia anō. (Te Rua)

> I would hope that they know who they are … even if it's knowing their pepeha. (Te Ata)

For Te Rua, identity includes seeing one's iwi reflected in learning:

> E kite ai tona Ngāti Poroutanga, e kite ai i tana Ngāpuhitanga … ahakoa kei raro mātou i a Ngāti Toa. (Te Rua)

While the mātāpono underpin their teaching, Te Rua explains these values are not formally taught—they are lived:

> Kua whakatō kē ēnā akoranga i roto i a mātou, ehara i te mea me kī atu 'ka pai he whai wāhitanga tērā'. (Te Rua)

> [They go] hand in hand within everything that you do. (Te Ata)

Ngā tairo a kupe | Wearing the many pōtae

As raukura, both now understand the unspoken expectation to carry many roles—kaiako, event organiser, caretake, cultural guide:

> Ko au tētahi ka kaha kī atu, māku e mahi hei painga mō ngā tamariki. (Te Rua)

> We love our kids, and we love our kaupapa, so we just spend a lot of time trying to facilitate it all … so then you end up doing too much. (Te Ata)

Te Rua admits this intensity came from modelling what she saw growing up. But she also recognises the toll:

> Kua kite au kei te kaha hemo haere taku hauora … kāore au pīrangi kia pēnā mō taku irāmutu kei Porirua nei.

To manage this, she has learned to set boundaries:

> Ko te whakarite, te kī atu 'kāo'—kei te pai ka waiho mō āpōpō.

Te Ata agrees that burnout isn't from being Māori—it's from having to create everything:

> We have to kind of just facilitate it ourselves … you're doing how many hours after kura using your own funds.

She sees the solution in resourcing and professional development:

> Having more support in resource making and PLD targeted to te ao Māori or teaching in te reo Māori … that would be great.

Te anamata | Return to the kaupapa

For these raukura, the future is in nurturing the next wave—ākonga and whānau alike:

> Ko te whakapono ka ū mai ngā mātua koina te mea nui kia pai ai ngā tamariki ki te whai i ēnei momo huarahi me tae mai ngā mātua. (Te Rua)

Te Ata echoes this, particularly for urban iwi:

> We can probably strengthen it within our iwi, by just having more of our whānau be more involved in their te ao Māori. (Te Ata)

Their message to ākonga is one of belief:

> I think it's probably just believing in themselves and then maybe following through with whatever ara they wanna go through—and then trying to be the best at what they are doing. (Te Ata)

Te Rua affirms everything must return to the kaupapa:

> Kei taua huarahi, taua āhuatanga o mō te kura Māori o Porirua, mā te kura Māori o Porirua, e ai ki te kura Māori o Porirua.

Pūkorero: Ngā ākonga—Ahuriri rāua ko Tai Te Wā

Te Puawaitanga o ngā whakaaro

Kia tūhura tōku tuakiritanga

Ka hao te rangatahi

Tūāpapa | Hei tuakana, me tū hei tauira

As senior ākonga, Tai Te Wa Allan-Moetaua and Ahuriri Te Tana are living examples of he kura te tangata. They represent the blossoming of the kaupapa, shaped by the kura and now shaping others:

> I a mātou e pakeke ake ana ka kite mātou i ngā raukura e hoki mai ana hei kaiako ki ngā teina, ki ngā wharekura, e whakakikī ana i ērā kōawa. (Tai Te Wa)

> Ko taku māmā, koia tētahi o oku kaiako, tētahi o ngā kaiārahi nui ki ahau I roto I te ao Māori, I te ao reo. Ka tīmata i a ia. (Ahuriri)

Both acknowledge the pivotal role of kaiako and whānau in nurturing them to become role models for their peers:

> Ko rātou ngā matua o te kura … e whakaako ana I runga I te hari me te koa. Koia taku aronga nui—te Manaaki a te kaiako i a mātou taiohu kia puta ai te kura. (Ahuriri)

As tuakana, they feel the weight and responsibility of leadership:

> Hei tuakana, me tū hei tauira. (Ahuriri)

> Ahakoa te reanga e mōhio ana au pēhea te ārahi, pēhea te kōrero ki a rātou, pēhea te awhina i a rātou mehemea e tangi ana, e pouri ana. (Tai Te Wa)

He kura te tangata | Rangatiratanga in practice

At Te Kura Māori o Porirua, leadership is not just taught—it is lived. Ākonga are immersed in leadership practices from an early age, especially through daily rituals and tuakana-teina responsibilities:

> Ia Rāmere, he wā whānau, nā reira mā te wharekura e whakahaere i ngā teina—i ētahi kēmu, i ētahi tā pikitia—kia whakakotahi ai te tuakana me te teina. (Tai Te Wā)

Karakia is a central platform for leadership:

> Ia Rāhina, ka tīmata mai ngā whānau. Ka haere tonu te whakahaere karakia mā ngā Poutuārongo, Poutokomanawa, Poumua, tae atu ki te Wharekura i te Rāmere. (Tai Te Wā)

To celebrate tauira of the week, wharekura perform haka, pao, or waiata for the kaiako—a performance that becomes an act of service and pride:

> Ko tō mātou huarahi, mā mātou ake e tuhi ngā pao. Ka noho tahi ki a Whaea Juanita, ka tuhi—hei whakanui i ō mātou teina. (Ahuriri)

Leadership is also about expressing individuality:

> Ko te mana motuhake he rangatiratanga whai aho—te āhei ki te tū motuhake, ki te whakatau i āu ake tikanga, me te whai i tō ake huarahi nā te mōhio ki tō tuakiritanga. (Ahuriri)

Ngā tairo a kupe | Haepapa me te wero

These tuakana carry significant responsibilities—and the pressure to always be examples of te ara tika:

> Koia taku wero, ko ngā tauira—ko mātou ngā tuakana o te kura, ngā Tau 13, me whakaatungia i te ara tika. (Ahuriri)

One of the biggest challenges is sustaining te reo Māori:

> Ahakoa he kura Māori tēnei e rongo tonu ana i te reo Pākehā huri noa i te kura. Koirā te tino wero—ko te reo Māori te tino kaiārahi o te kura. (Tai Te Wā)

And yet, they know the change begins with them:

> Ka timata mai i te wharekura—mehemea mai i te wharekura ka whai atu ngā teina. Koirā te wero ko te reo Māori. (Tai Te Wā)

They also see the importance of strengthening the mātāpono of the kura:

> Whakawhanaungatanga, whai wāhitanga, rangatiratanga, kaitiakitanga—mā ēnei mātāpono e whāngai i te wairua, ka tipu ngā ākonga whai mana. (Ahuriri)

Anamata | Mai i te kōpū ki te ao

As their time at kura draws to a close, both ākonga shared aspirations shaped by their upbringing in the kaupapa:

> Ko tōku whāinga—kia tū hei kanohi mō tōku māmā, i te mea kāore ia i whakanui i te kura nā te mea i hapū ia ki ahau … Kia tū hei kaiārahi mō tōku whānau, mō tōku kura anō hoki. (Tai Te Wa)

> Ko taku tuahine te tuatahi i roto i taku whānau ki te whai i tēnei ara. Ko au te tuarua. He nui ngā aronga mai i ētahi ki ahau kia tū hei kaiako. (Ahuriri)

They both understand that their kura has left the gate open for them:

> Kua tūwhera ngā kēti kia hoki mai 'always'. (Ahuriri)

They hope future generations of tamariki begin this journey earlier:

> Kaua e waiho mō te kōhanga, arā ka waiho mō ērā tau katoa tae noa kia pakeke ake rātou kia whai i tō rātou ao Māori. Timata mai i te wā e noho ana ki te kōpu, i te wā ka puta mai, i te wā ka haere ki te kōhanga, ka haramai ki te kura Māori ki te kura kaupapa aha atu ranei, te wānanga. (Tai Te Wa)

Finally, they urge us all to foster inclusive spaces where everyone can flourish:

> Me whakaae ki ngā momo whakaaro rerekē, me te tuku wāhi kia kōrero, ka puta te kaha o ia ākonga … Ka kaha ake te tangata ina mōhio kāore ia e whakakāhoretia mō tōna rereketanga. (Ahuriri)

Pūkorero: He whānau, he kaiako

> E taku manu raukura
>
> Kia whera ōu ringaringa

Tūāpapa | A kura for our whānau

Juanita Teepa is both a kaiako and a whānau member of Te Kura Māori o Porirua. Her relationship with the kura spans over 22 years—beginning in 2008 when her first tamaiti enrolled, and she joined as a kaiāwhina. For her whānau, there was never any question about where their tamariki would attend:

> I'm a raukura myself so I grew up in kura Māori and as far as I'm concerned there was no other choice for my kids.

Her whānau's connection to the kura runs deep. Her partner is the kura's kaitiaki, her mātāmua is a kaiako, and other whānau have also been drawn into mahi—some 'accidentally', some 'shoulder-tapped', all committed:

> The kura is home, it's safe, it's our community, it's our jam.

Juanita began teaching in Poutokomanawa (Tau 3–5) and now teaches in the wharekura. Her own journey from Te Wharekura o Ruatoki to Pōneke, and into kura Māori as a māmā and kaiako, informs her understanding of mana Motuhake and what it means to raise tamariki grounded in identity—even far from home.

Ngā tairo a kupe | Nurturing identity in a pan-tribal kura

For Juanita, one of the most significant challenges as both a māmā and kaiako is supporting her tamariki to build a strong sense of identity while learning outside of their own rohe and iwi context:

> There's sort of an un-talked about barrier for my own tamariki … they feel it when they're with their cousins back home. They're the city kids.

Te Kura Māori o Porirua, which sits within the rohe of Ngāti Toa, has a ngā hau e whā character, with ākonga from a wide range of iwi. This diversity is a strength but also brings unique challenges. Juanita reflects on the care required to honour all iwi represented in the kura:

> You can't focus on just your Kahungunu tamaiti stories … what about your Ngāti Porou tamaiti? What about your Ngāti Toa tamaiti?

To ensure tamariki can access their own iwi-specific knowledge and language, Juanita and other iwi staff established informal lunchtime wānanga. These spaces, while not formally resourced, allowed ākonga to connect with their own whakapapa, kōrero tuku iho, and reo ā-iwi.

Juanita acknowledges that kura ā-iwi based within their own tribal rohe may have the advantage of being able to immerse tamariki in their own dialect, kawa, and tikanga daily. However, she also values the inclusive and affirming environment of her kura:

> They're very Tūhoe, they're very Ngāti Porou, they're very Ngāti Kahungunu, I love that. Our kura supports that for all our tamariki.

At the same time, she recognises the importance of her tamariki being able to access their Tūhoe reo ā-iwi, which they receive from their grandfather:

> He can't kōrero Pākehā. My tamariki were lucky to get that reo, he reo māmā, he reo tohutohu.

He kura te tangata | Leadership at home and in the kura

The kura's mātāpono mirror the values of her whānau. Leadership for Juanita is not about being out front, it's about supporting others and leading by example:

> Ko koe te hāpai ō, and if you get dragged to the front, ana, mahia tō mahi, kātahi ka hoki atu ki te horoi rīhi.

She and her partner have raised their tamariki with these whakaaro. Each child is treated as an individual, allowed to develop leadership without pressure or comparison:

> Be there for them without judgement. That's been one of our biggest values.

They've worked hard to ensure each child can express who they are, whether quiet leaders like Ahuriri or spirited individualists like their youngest. One whānau member recalled their child saying:

> "Mum, they keep saying, 'Why don't you be more like your sister?' and I said, 'Why would I want to be like her when I can just be me?'"

Te anamata | Growing with the kura

Over the years, Juanita has witnessed the kura at its strongest and weakest. Through it all, her tamariki, and many others, have remained shielded from adult worries, held in a safe and affirming space:

> We've watched the kura grow … and at the end of the day, all our babies are still happy.

Her final reflection honours both whānau and kura:

> I'd like to say it all came from me and Pete, but I know, without a doubt, our kura and the amazing kaiako and beautiful tamariki have had a huge impact.

Hei whakarāpopoto

For these Pou Māori, Te Kura Māori o Porirua is more than a kura, it is a kāinga. For some, this kaupapa raised them; for others, it raised their tamariki. It is a place where whakapapa, identity, and community come together, and where whānau, kaiako, and ākonga grow together.

A clear theme throughout these pūkōrero is that ākonga are at the centre of everything. Whether spoken by tumuaki, raukura, whānau, or the ākonga themselves, the kaupapa remains the same: to uplift tamariki so they can stand confidently in their world. This is particularly important for those who live away from their haukāinga—where identity, connection, and belonging are not assumed, but nurtured.

Leadership at Te Kura Māori o Porirua is not limited to formal roles. It begins in the everyday, through karakia, tuakana-teina relationships, and the responsibility of caring for others. Whether leading karakia or composing pao to celebrate their peers, ākonga are given real opportunities to express mana motuhake and embody the kura's mātāpono.

Here, leadership is not about being at the front. It's about knowing who you are. By embedding these values into daily practice, the kura is growing rangatira who can lead from confidently in the classroom, within the whānau, and out in the world.

5. Ngā kōrero motuhake
Discussion: Realising mana motuhake

This section brings together kōrero across the case study kura to address the main pātai of this rangahau: *How is mana motuhake realised in kaupapa Māori education settings?* It looks at how mana motuhake is understood and lived, what conditions support its realisation, and the opportunities and challenges experienced by those who carry this responsibility.

He aha te mana motuhake? | Understanding mana motuhake

For Pou Māori, mana motuhake is something lived and carried every day. It is about standing strong in who we are as Māori, making decisions grounded in whakapapa, tikanga, and collective responsibility. Pou Māori described mana motuhake as the ability to lead in ways that reflect Māori ways of being, to uplift others, and to honour those who have paved the way. It is a form of leadership that is grounded in service, shaped by whānau, and committed to the long-term wellbeing of hapū and iwi.

Rather than being defined by hierarchy or position, leadership was seen as relational and intergenerational. It is passed on, not imposed. Many Pou Māori spoke of growing into leadership by watching and walking alongside those who came before—learning through doing, giving back, and staying accountable to their people. Mana motuhake is not something you claim, it is something you demonstrate through your actions, your relationships, and your commitment to the kaupapa.

Te whakatinanatanga o te mana motuhake | How mana motuhake is realised

Across the kura, mana motuhake is realised through practices that centre Māori values in every aspect of learning and leadership. These kura are spaces where te reo Māori, tikanga, and mātauranga Māori are foundational. They create environments where ākonga are proud of who they are and where they come from, where whānau are active partners, and where leadership is seen in everyday acts of aroha, manaaki, and shared responsibility.

Leadership in these kura is collective, it sits within whānau, kaiako, tumuaki, and ākonga. Examples across the rangahau showed that leadership can be grown when the whole community is engaged and when everyone shares responsibility for the kaupapa. This was reflected in the many examples of graduates returning to teach, support, and guide the next generation—demonstrating that mana motuhake and the kaupapa continues well beyond the kura gates.

Success in these settings is understood in terms that are both cultural and academic. High expectations are set not just to achieve credits, but to ensure that every ākonga leaves with the dispositions, knowledge, and confidence to contribute to their whānau, hapū, and iwi. These kura make space for ākonga to walk confidently in te ao Māori and te ao whānui.

Ngā tikanga me ngā āhuatanga e whakatipu ai i te Pou Māori | Conditions that grow Pou Māori

The growth of Pou Māori is supported by environments where whakapapa and whanaungatanga are honoured, where leadership is shaped through relationships, and where tikanga and kawa guide practice. Kura that nurture mana motuhake do so through commitment to collective care, intergenerational learning, and a belief in the potential of every person to lead.

A common theme across the kura was the role of encouragement and belief from others in shaping leadership journeys. Many Pou Māori spoke of being nudged or called into leadership before they felt fully ready, with others recognising their potential before they saw it themselves. This encouragement often came from mentors, kaumātua, or tuakana who provided the vision and support needed to step into demanding roles.

In some cases, the challenge of stepping into the shoes of a respected leader brought a deep sense of responsibility. Yet this process of intentional succession planning, where the next generation is guided and prepared to lead, was seen as a strength. Leadership in these spaces is both aspirational and practical, grounded in trust, aroha, and long-term vision.

The return of ākonga o mua and graduates as kaiako, tuakana, or whānau leaders was another strong theme. This cycle of returning and contributing affirms the strength of kaupapa Māori education in sustaining leadership across generations. These kura grow leaders from within, through deliberate practices of mentoring, shared responsibility, and a culture of service.

Values-based leadership is another key condition. Leadership grounded in aroha, service, hūmārie, and kaitiakitanga creates a culture where everyone feels a sense of belonging and responsibility. These values are lived daily, woven into the way kaiako teach, how ākonga support one another, and how whānau engage with the kura.

Some kura are also exploring alternative leadership models, such as co-principalship, to distribute responsibilities and strengthen relational approaches. In others, kaumātua guidance, iwi involvement, and regular wānanga are central to help strengthen leadership practices.

Ngā wero me ngā huarahi anganui | Challenges and future directions

Even with these strengths, Pou Māori face real challenges. Many operate within systems that are not designed with kaupapa Māori at the centre. Many Pou Māori carry heavy responsibilities—balancing their roles as educators, leaders, cultural anchors, and advocates for their people. The burden of cultural taxation, ongoing racism, and under-resourcing were raised as issues that limit what can be sustained within kura and across the wider system.

At times, Pou Māori described needing to prioritise the kaupapa of the kura ahead of their own whānau wellbeing. Others spoke to the strain of wearing many hats—kaiako, coach, kaitiaki, fundraiser, and whānau liaison—often within a single day. These challenges are not new, but they remain pressing.

Yet within these realities, there is also determination. Pou Māori are shaping pathways that reflect their own values and vision. They are leading transformational change by staying grounded in their whakapapa, supporting each other, and holding fast to the belief that Māori leadership must be defined by Māori. They are reclaiming space in the wider landscape of education—on their own terms.

6. Hei whakakapi
Conclusion

Mana motuhake lives in the hearts, minds, and actions of Pou Māori across these kura. It is realised through kura that centre Māori ways of being, grow leaders through whakapapa and whanaungatanga, and uphold to the collective strength of their whānau and kura hapori. The kura nurture leadership that is relational, intergenerational, and grounded in collective values. They are more than places of learning, they are places of transformation, where rangatiratanga is nurtured, and carried forward across generations.

This rangahau affirms that when leadership is grounded in kaupapa Māori, it strengthens not only the kura but the wider communities they serve. It shows that leadership is not limited to formal roles like tumuaki or kaiako. Mana motuhake is also expressed through the everyday actions of ākonga, whānau, graduates, and kaumātua, across diverse roles and ages. It is sustained through intergenerational mentoring, values-based practice, and a deliberate commitment to growing leaders from within. These kura are sites of resistance and reclamation, where Māori futures are imagined and being lived daily. The pūkōrero shared through this rangahau show how mana motuhake is sustained in present, while also shaping what Māori leadership can look like in the future.

Looking ahead, possible areas for further research include the need to better understand how intersectional identities shape Māori leadership. Exploring how intersecting factors such as gender, iwi connection, location, and systemic pressures influence leadership would bring greater clarity and inclusiveness to future Māori leadership development.

There is rich potential to explore leadership of whānau and ākonga. These contributions are vital to the strength and sustainability of kura Māori. Research that focuses on these intergenerational and collective forms of leadership could help reframe what leadership means, and who gets recognised as a leader in Māori education.

In terms of policy and practice, this rangahau highlights the need for education policies that recognise and support kaupapa Māori leadership models as powerful expressions of Māori educational sovereignty in their own right. There needs to be proper investment in succession planning, iwi partnerships, tuakana-teina mentoring, and the infrastructure needed to support kura Māori as places of long-term transformation. Policy must reflect the vital role kura Māori play, not only in education, but in cultural and community wellbeing.

For professional learning and leadership development, this rangahau shows that leadership in kaupapa Māori settings is relational, intergenerational, and grounded in tikanga. PLD must reflect these realities to be more kaupapa based, and whānau informed. The role of kaumātua/kuia and whānau in leadership development must be acknowledged, valued, and supported. These are the people who carry the tikanga and ensure its continuity. Leadership must be built around Māori ways of knowing, being, and doing.

In conclusion, if the education system wants to support “Māori success as Māori” (Ministry of Education, 2020), then it must be willing to listen, learn and act from Māori leadership on Māori terms. That includes resourcing Māori-led innovation and ensuring Māori ways of leading are not just supported but upheld as central to the future of education in Aotearoa. This rangahau affirms that kaupapa Māori leadership is already shaping that future. The challenge now is for the system to catch up.

Ngā tohutoru
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